TRANSNATIONALIZING FAMILIES: RACE, MULTICULTURALISM AND
TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes how people situate race when defining their own families through transnational adoption. Drawing from literature on multiculturalism, post civil rights colorblind racism, and family formation, I argue that perspectives on multiculturalism, colorblind ideology, and existing racial hierarchy significantly affect how prospective adoptive parents and adoption agency workers view race after the decision to create a family through transnational adoption.

I first outline a brief history of transnational adoption and introduce some of the key actors that are involved in transnational adoption processes. I, then, provide an overview of demographic characteristics of families that contain adopted children from overseas by using data drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census. These analyses show that in cases where the parents' race does not match their adopted child's race, an overwhelming number of parents adopt Asian children. Turning to the data drawn from interviews and participant observation, I discuss how the adoption agencies educate adoptive parents in regards to how those parents build multicultural/multiracial families. I argue that presumptive notions of multiculturalism and acknowledgements of racism have influenced how adoption agencies educate adoptive parents. Finally, drawing on my interviews with adoptive parents, I examine how they internalize ideas about different racial groups. The discussion includes how adoptive parents decide to adopt transnationally as opposed to adopting domestically. I also investigate how their own perceptions of racial stereotypes and their perceptions of the communities in which they reside influence their understanding of race.

To Father and Mother

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Family formation usually involves having children. While many couples start

a family by having biological children, many decide to do so through adoption.

Creating families through adoption is by no means a new practice in the United

States. Transnational adoption, however, emerged as a new alternative for interested

parents after World War II and grew popular in the 1980s. By the turn of 21st

Century, the United States had granted over 200,000 entry visas for children to be

adopted from over 100 countries around the globe (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration

Services 2003). One important outcome of transnational adoption is the creation of

transracial families. My dissertation, therefore, analyzes how family formation is

affected by race in examination of recent transnational adoption practices in the

United States. I draw upon a rich assortment of data based on US Census figures,

ethnographic studies of two adoption agencies in the Midwest, and in-depth

interviews with agency staff and adoptive parents.

Unlike families created biologically, adoptive families with a "stranger"—

where there is no genetic kinship between parents and the child—are created through

a series of legal processes (Melosh 2002). For transnational adoption, there are even

more layers of procedures parents need to go through. One important layer of the

legality is how race has historically played a role in the creation of families. Until the

1960s, many states not only outlawed miscegenation, but also made interracial

adoption illegal (Freundlich 2000). Within the legal, political, and social climate of

the time, "racial matching" between adoptive parents and children was highly

desirable and "racial mixing" was viewed as unacceptable (Freundlich 2000). The

reconsideration of race led by the civil rights movement influenced the breakdown of the consensus on race-matching practices of adoption. As a result, many adoption agencies became more open to interracial placement while many still remained closed to the possibility of transracial placement (Moran 2001).

Nonetheless, interracial adoption continued to be an unacceptable practice with one "acceptable exception," which was the small number of adoptions of Asian children (Freundlich 2000). The adoption of Asian children after WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War can certainly explain the emergence of institutionalized adoption practices from Asia and the way in which this newly emergent practice was viewed as a "humanitarian act" (Freundlich 2000; Fisher 2003). However, this explanation still leaves unanswered how placement of children from Asia has become an "acceptable exception" while "racial mixing" still remains viewed as more controversial for domestic adoption. How has international adoption become associated with a "humanitarian act" whereas domestic interracial adoption is still viewed somewhat controversially? My response to this query is that the distinct ways in which groups are racialized has partially determined why domestic, interracial adoption remains controversial. However, this dissertation focuses upon responding to a more sociologically pertinent question: How do people situate race when defining their own families?

Focusing on the formation of contemporary transnational adoptive families in the United States, I examine how adoptive parents articulate the meaning of race in the context of family formation. My analysis especially focuses on how parents' decisions are intertwined with the ways in which race and the "international" label

attached to children in foreign countries are integrated in the discourse and practice of adoption in the United States.

The present study contributes to studies of family formation that particularly focus on families that are created through transracial and transnational adoption. From the late 1980s through the 1990s, a number of studies made significant contributions to our understanding of transracial adoptive families, with extensive focus on medical and psychological outcomes of non-white children who were adopted by white parents. Since the mid 1990s, however, studies on transnational adoption have emerged that center more on the racial choices made by adoptive parents.

My analysis aligns with the latter ones but also features an extensive analysis of roles played by other entities such as adoption agencies and national welfare agencies. The study also contributes to the different ways in which scholars analyze multiculturalism and race. One of the debates in the literature is whether race should be a part of analysis when understanding multiculturalism. I demonstrate how the discourse and the practice of transnational adoption shows that the normative meaning of multiculturalism plays an important role in transnational adoptive family formation, but it nevertheless always plays out within the shadow of race. The adoption professionals and the adoptive parents in this study more or less understand race is an important issue. They often concede that extant racial inequalities have important implications when building a family so that adoptive parents must be "trained" about race and racism. But the adoption professionals' celebratory notion of multiculturalism prevents many parents from having ambivalent thoughts about forming an interracial family. Therefore, the study contributes to the debates by

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showing how the relation of multiculturalism and race is a dialectical one; each needs the other for its existence.

The following section traces important background context, focusing on how the United States as a nation-state has been involved in institutionalizing transnational adoption as well as the characteristics of the each actor involved in the transnational adoption process. The first sub-section describes the history of transnational adoption in the United States. Turning to the characteristics of each actor, the second sub-section discusses how welfare agencies and the governments of sending countries work within the web of the adoption process. The third sub-section describes the responses some in the international community, such as the United Nations and The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, have made to transnational adoption. Then I will turn to the adoption agencies themselves in the fourth sub-section, focusing on their roles in facilitating transnational adoption, as well as the role of a national agency for adoption professionals in the United States. The fifth sub-section discusses adoptive parents. Finally, the last sub-section describes adopted children. The third section of this chapter outlines the dissertation's substantive chapters.

1.2 BACKGROUND: HISTORY OF TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION AND ACTORS INVOLVED IN MAKING OF TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

A man who sat next to me on the airplane was very curious about what I do as my profession. I explained my research on transnational adoption as briefly as possible. This man turned out to be a retired professor who now teaches part-time at a college and takes care of his children's families. During the flight we discussed a wide variety of subjects, yet the last thing he said to me was that "my daughter is looking to adopt an infant possibly from China,

please inform me if you know of a healthy mother who's looking to adopt her baby. My daughter is a terrific mother."[1]

Transnational adoption involves many steps. We as adoption professionals work as educators and take the intermediary role between the parents and the states of the U.S. government, the government of sending countries, the international organizations, and the child welfare agencies of the sending countries.

-An adoption agency staff member.

Although creating families through transnational adoption has become, especially over the last two decades, popular in the United States, its background may not be properly understood by society at large or even by the very social actors working within the industry. My observation and the excerpt from my conversation with an adoption agency staff member indicate a gap in how people understand what has been involved in instituting transnational adoption. The man I met on the airplane was very casual about the process of finding a child for his daughter. However, as indicated by the agency staff member, there are many layers of bureaucratic processes prospective adoptive parents have to go through. Thus, it is important to examine how transnational adoption has been institutionalized, including who and what agencies are involved in the process, to acquire a better understanding of why transnational adoption offers more appeal than domestic adoption for many American parents.

On a very obvious note, it is not so simple to create a family through transnational adoption. Since there have recently been many transnational adoption stories covered by the media, the general U.S. public might already have some ideas about how the creation of such families could happen. Thus, the fact that

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[1]. From author's ethnographic notes on February 21, 2007.

transnational adoption involves many actors may not be surprising to them. However, many still think that adoption primarily involves only three parties—the birth parents, the adoptive parents, and an adoptive child—and that it is a simple procedure, involving the three parties and possibly a lawyer. Indeed, before U.S. state legislatures created a legal framework for adoption in the 19th Century, many domestic adoption arrangements were made quite informally with a minimum number of parties involved (Carp 2002). In 1851 Massachusetts instituted the first law to recognize adoption from the perspective of child welfare rather than adult interests. In 1917, Minnesota passed laws that required mandatory investigations of all adoption cases (Hermann 2007). These acts were followed throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries by more laws regarding legalization of adoption at both the state and federal levels, which were passed with the active involvement of child welfare agencies, private adoption placement agencies, and parents.[2]

As transnational adoption became more common for interested parents after the end of World War II, the procedure was mostly administrated by private adoption agencies following similar procedures to those required for domestic adoption with added regulations from sending countries. As such adoption placements became more popular in the 1970s and 1980s, sending countries began to impose much stricter regulations with the intent to prevent both exploitation of birth parents' rights and child trafficking (Freundlich 2000; Simon and Altstein 2000). Therefore, prospective adoptive parents must now complete a substantially larger number of bureaucratic procedures. Although the transnational adoption procedure varies depending on

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[2]. See Wayne E. Carp's Introduction in *Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives* (2002) for a comprehensive historical accounts of institutionalization of adoption in the United States.

which country parents adopt a child from, prospective parents must always work with certain bureaucracies, such as state offices and adoption agencies, in order to accomplish creating families through transnational adoption.

In this section, I will first trace a brief background of transnational adoption in the United States; and then I will investigate the roles of the adoption agencies, a national welfare organization for transnational adoption, and the adopting parents as the key actors in assisting those families in their adoption process. Additionally, other parties, such as the United States government, the governments of sending countries, international communities, and, most importantly, adopted children are all very much involved in the web of the adoption process. Thus, the bulk of this section describes those actors who are important in making families through transnational adoption. One very important set of actors in the process this research does not cover is biological parents. For transnationally adopted children and their adoptive families, a shadow of their biological parents more or less exists in their consciousness (Dorow 2006a). However, from a legal point of view, in the case of transnational adoption, after biological parents legally relinquish their child, they do not play a major role in the bureaucratic process of transnational adoption. Figure 1 shows the way this type of family is constructed through a series of bureaucratic steps among formal agencies. As the figure indicates, the ways each actor works with one another creates a web of working relationships for completing adoption of children from a sending country to an adoptive parent in the United States. In the following description, I show how these steps are all essential parts of the process.

1.2.1 History of Transnational Adoption in the United States

Some forms of informal adoption—among relatives, as apprentices or indentured servants—were already common practice during the colonial era. More formalized adoption practices have been institutionalized with a series of laws and regulations since the mid nineteenth century. Since adoption records were often closed from public view, however, only in last ten years have several insightful comprehensive historical studies of adoption started to shed light on the legal history of adoption (Carp 2002). Transnational adoption, however, is a more recent phenomenon. Even though the adoption of post WWI and WWII war orphans occasionally occurred, transnational adoption has become a popular and common way to create a family only in the past twenty years. Nevertheless, transnational adoption is very much part of the long history of institutionalizing adoption in the United States, and it cannot be described independently from domestic adoption's history.

Adopting foreign orphans is often viewed as "charitable" and "humane" by people in the host countries in the West (Altstein and Simon 1991), but some historical studies of adoption in the US show that this view does not characterize transnational stories exclusively. During the first decade of the 1900s, when transnational adoption was not yet practiced in the United States, there was a campaign to raise consciousness among women/mothers to view adoption as rescuing children at a time when adoption was not socially accepted. The social stigma surrounding infertile women that existed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gradually diminished as the humanitarian aspect of adoption—rescuing orphans—emerged in public consciousness during the 1930s (Berebitsky 2002). "The construction of adoption as rescue" helped interested women to avoid disapproval and

may have motivated them to adopt (Berebitsky 2002). By the time American parents started to adopt WWI orphans from overseas in the 1930s, an ideology of adoption as rescuing had already begun to be constructed, and this played an important role in institutionalizing transnational adoption.

Indeed the idea of adoption as rescuing children was already in place before World War I, but the prevalence of US involvement in wars throughout the twentieth century was instrumental to the institutionalization of transnational adoption. As fallout of the wars, war orphans became available as potential family members in American homes. A small number of foreign children, mostly from France, was adopted by Americans after World War I (Kuhn 1950). By the 1940s, there were a small number of Canadian orphans adopted by American parents; however, the pool of potential adoptees was not limited to the West (Pettiss 1958). After World War II, more American parents demonstrated interest in adopting children from the countries that had been affected by the military conflict with the United States (Freundlich 2000).

With regard to the history of transnational adoption and its relationship with the wars, the United States navigated adoption of foreign children differently depending upon the country from which children were adopted (Gail 2000). For example, in the 1940s and 1950s transnational adoption was mainly "the U.S. post de-Nazification Program" in that most of the children adopted were from Germany and other European countries, such as Poland, Greece, and Italy (Freundlich 2000) and adoption was based on religious and racial matching, which at that time were still strictly regulated under the state adoption laws. There was no policy or regulation enforced by the U.S. military to deal with foreign adoption until a few years after

World War II, even with the surge of war orphans being adopted during the inter-war periods (Weil 1984). Recognizing the increase of the adoption of foreign orphans, in 1948, the U.S. Congress and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) formulated the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 which states the criteria of eligible "displaced orphans" as certain European displaced persons under age of 16 (Displaced Person Act of 1948). The INS documents that 4065 orphans were allowed to enter the U.S. and a little under 30% of them came from Germany (Weil 1984).

Significantly, there was the increased number of adoptions from Asia that was primarily due to the wars in the Pacific. For example, the number of homeless children had increased in Japan by 1946, and U.S. military men adopted these children and brought them to the U.S. Similar increases occurred after the Korean War and the Vietnam War. After the Korean War in the 1950s and 1960s, adoption was mainly of transracial children with U.S. fathers and Korean mothers; often these children were not welcomed in Korean families (Gailey 2000). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1957, which followed by The Refugee Relief Act of 1953, allowed eligible war orphans who were under age 14 to enter with special non-quota immigrant visas (The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1957). It is probable that the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1957 was enacted because there were an extensive number of war orphans in Korea as a result of the destruction caused by the Korean War. Between 1963 and 1975, the INS records that about 42% of all foreign adoptions in the U.S came from South Korea (Weil 1984).

An increasing number of American parents adopted their children from foreign countries during the 1970s through the 1980s. The United States regulated international adoption processes based on bilateral agreements with sending countries.

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The role the United States plays in institutionalizing international adoption has gradually become much more visible since the 1990s. One of the most significant events that triggered a more active involvement of the state was The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption in 1993. The Hague Convention called for more internationally regulated adoption processes to strive for an ethical adoption practice (The details of The Hague Convention will be discussed in the later section). When the United States signed the Convention in 1994 and ratified The Hague Convention in 2000, The U.S. Department of State became the central authority to implement the requirements for Convention countries.

The Hague Convention was implemented in April 2008 and the U.S. Department of State has instituted the requirements that are organized into the four main components: 1. Requiring adoption agencies that work with the Convention countries to be accredited by the state appointed organization, 2. Requiring all accredited agencies to be transparent about fees and expenses, 3. Requiring all adopted children to be certified by a U.S council officer based on the Hague requirements, 4. Requiring adoptive parents to complete forms updated specifically to meet The Convention requirements (U.S. Department of State 2009a). The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is another state entity that has been an important actor in regulating international adoption. Among its main roles are recording applicants' fingerprints (prospective adoptive parents) for FBI criminal background checks and requiring applicants to complete immigration documents such as "Immigrant Petition for Orphan (Adoption)" and "Advance Processing; Immigrant Petition for Orphan (Adoption)" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2008).

USCIS administers the four components of the Convention requirements implemented by the U.S. Department of State. The field research for the present study was conducted in 2004 and 2005; therefore, the adoption placements for the parents who shared their stories with me took place before The Hague Convention was implemented. Yet, I witnessed many concerns expressed by both the agency staff and the parents regarding the Conventions' implementation during my study.

1.2.2 Sending Countries

In the 1940s and 1950s, most children adopted from overseas originated from European countries such as Germany (Gailey 2000). After the 1950s adoptions from Asian countries, especially from Korea, increased due to the occurrence of wars in the Pacific Arena (Gailey 2000; Weil 1984). As the global political and economic climate changed in the 1990s, China and Russia replaced Korea and other Asian countries as the major sources of internationally adopted children. By 2000, Guatemala had become another popular sending country that more American parents have been adopting from. This section details some background information on how some of the major sending countries emerged as popular sites for prospective adoptive American parents.

Subsequent to the Korean War, the number of children adopted from South Korea to families in the United States steadily increased. Between the early 1950s and the 1980s, the estimated number of Korean children adopted was more than 100,000 (Altstein and Simon 1991). However, this trend started to change in the late 1980s when South Korea began to experience economic growth. Around this time, Korean society as a whole began to pay more attention to adoption and to consider it

as a national embarrassment since it had drawn so much international publicity during the 1988 Olympics in Seoul (Altstein and Simon 1991). As a result, the South Korean government started to regulate transnational adoption more strictly in terms of who could qualify as adopting parents. South Korea also instituted an annual quota for the number of passports issued for those children who are adopted, and promoted their own domestic adoption program (Pertman 2000; United Nations 1994).

Table 1 shows the trend of adoption in South Korea from 1958 to 1993. The total number of adoptions, including both domestic and international adoptions, peaked between 1971 and 1980 (63,551), and about 76% of these adoptees were sent to homes abroad. The number of adoptions began to decrease in 1981, and between 1991 and 1993 the numbers of international adoptions in South Korea remained approximately 2,000 (2,197, 2,045, and 2,290 respectively). The ratio of domestic adoption in South Korea, indeed, showed an increase from 1981-1985(26.8%) to 1991(36.1%), but never exceeded the number of Korean children adopted into homes abroad. Parents in the United States adopted 78% of available Korean children from 1958 to 1993. By the mid 1990s, the number of Korean children adopted into American families each year stabilized between 1,500-1,600 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 1997 and 2003).

As the Korean adoption program became more restrictive, prospective adoptive parents turned their attention to other countries. China, for example, opened up their adoption program during the1990s. The number of adoptees from China was 787 in 1994, and it almost tripled in 1995, to 2,130 adoptions. Between 1997 and 2005, the number of adoptees from China rose from approximately 3,200 to 7,000 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2005). Adoption professionals and

researchers often attribute this to the increase in the number of abandoned baby girls due to China's strict one-child policy, which the country began to implement in the late 1970s to control the country's population growth. The one-child policy restricts couples to one child, though the regulations vary across urban and metropolitan areas and are also dependent upon parents' ethnic membership.

This policy has had some unintended consequences. Because couples have a strong preference for having at least one son, many couples have felt that they do not have any choice but to abandon daughters born to them (Volkman 2003). The Chinese government initially had instituted strict requirements for transnational adoption. However, with the increasing pressure on state-run orphanages to take care of a large number of girls, the government enacted adoption laws in 1991 that made the requirements more relaxed which, along with other related social and cultural factors may have led to the high availability of Chinese girls for transnational adoption (Rojewski and Rojewski 2001).

While each case is unique depending on which country children are adopted from, the case of China illustrates an interesting example of how regulation around transnational adoption is developed in relation to other factors such as economic strategy, population control policy, and U.S. sociopolitical conditions. Some critics of China's human rights record argue that the growing number of adopted Chinese children is partially a result of the Chinese government's effort to bring foreign currency into China's economy: children have become one of China's exports, and "international adoption brings in U.S. $3000 per capita in mandatory orphanage donations and an additional U.S. $1000-2000 in other fees and expenses paid by adoptive parents in China." (Johnson 2002: 388). Johnson (2002) states that this is an

insignificant fraction of the Chinese economy, but there is no doubt that those fees contributed to improvement of the welfare system, especially to the financial management of the state-run orphanages that were suffering from increasing numbers of orphans during the beginning of the 1990s.

The influence of the "one-child policy", China's state population control policy in the 1980s and 1990s, has intertwined with China's adoption policy (both domestic and international). Johnson (2002) states that the Chinese government enforced its first adoption law in 1991, requiring adopting parents to be older than 35 for both domestic and international adoption. This, she argues, was instituted by the Chinese government to enforce the "one child policy" as it makes it impossible for most first-time Chinese parents to adopt because they may be too young. Conversely, by age 35, most parents in China already have a child in the household and the "one-child policy" prevents them from adopting the Chinese orphans. Through this adoption law, the Chinese government also intended to prevent birthparents from giving up their "excess" daughters so that they could try to have a son (Johnson, Banghan, and Liyao 1998). One of the consequences of these policies was the opening of international adoption from countries where interested parents tended to be older and their desire for healthy infants was relatively high (Johnson 2002). This has served many prospective adoptive American parents well, due to sociopolitical conditions in the U.S. Vonk, Simms, and Nackerud (1999) specifically address sociopolitical and personal conditions in both China and the U.S. that have influenced the current condition of international adoption. For example, Vonk et al. (1999) argue that China's adoption guidelines, which favor a single parent or childless couples over

the age of thirty-five, are a good fit for U.S. couples who have postponed adoption due to lengthy infertility treatments or career development, especially for women.

Since the fall of the communist political system of the former Soviet Union in 1989, Russia and Eastern European countries such as Romania have also attracted many parents interested in adoption. In the midst of the political, economic, and social instability experienced by these countries, thousands of children placed in orphanages certainly drew a lot of attention and sympathy from parents who were looking to adopt (Freundlich 2000). This is indicated by the steady increase of the number of Russian children adopted into American families, from 3,626 in 1997 to 5,878 in 2004 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 1998; U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2006). However, Russian adoption is almost always followed by some controversies among the Russian public that American parents abuse Russian adopted children. This has triggered some tensions between the two countries regarding adoption (Freundlich 2000).

American adoption from Central and South American countries has shown steady growth since the 1970s and grew more rapidly in 1990s (Freundlich 2000). Adoptions from Central and South American countries increased starting in the mid-1970s in response to civil wars and economic instability (Altstein and Simon 1991). Transnational adoption with Guatemala started to accelerate after the civil war there ended in 1996, and now Guatemala is the third most popular country for transnational adoption into the United States (adoption.com 2007). In 2002, there were 2,419 Guatemalan children adopted, and the number nearly doubled by 2006, when 4,135 children were adopted by American parents (U.S. Department of State 2007a). One of the reasons why adopting Guatemalan children has become attractive to Americans

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is that there are fewer layers of bureaucracy in the adoption procedure, so that the process usually moves much faster than with other countries' programs (adoption.com 2007).

Despite the popularity of adoption from China, Russia, and Guatemala in recent years, the number of children adopted from these three countries may soon start to decrease. At the end of 2006, China announced that it would enforce much stricter requirements for foreign prospective adoptive parents, such as limits on body weight and age (Belluck and Yardley 2006). Welfare agencies in Russia that had contracts to work with accredited adoption agencies in the United States stopped renewing those contracts. The last accredited agency's contract expired on April 11, 2007 (Koch 2007). No agencies were allowed by the Russian government to renew the contracts until June 2007 (U.S. Department of State 2007b). As for Guatemala, the lack of regulation there has become a significant issue in terms of conducting ethical placement practices. Indeed, the United States has officially published a statement that indicates a strong possibility of terminating the adoption program with Guatemala if the Guatemalan government does not comply with U.S. regulation as well as the Hague Conventions by early 2008 (U.S. Department of State 2007c).

1.2.3 International Communities

Another layer within the legal arena regarding international adoption is at the international institutions of governance. When American parents adopted French children after World War I, the legal procedure for transnational adoption was done bilaterally and at issue was whether to follow French or U.S. law. Kuhn (1950) argued that efforts must be made to integrate adoption policy into the international

legal arena in order to maintain a close social and economic relationship between the friendly nations of the West. Over time, as major sending countries have spread all over the world, various international communities have raised growing concerns.

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 29 May 1993 was held to recognize inter-country adoption as a global issue and to impose some kind of international control over inter-country adoption (Duncan 2000). While Mexico, Romania, and Sri Lanka were the first three countries to ratify the convention in 1995, the US Congress did not pass an act to ratify the Hague Convention until 2000. This act, the Inter-country Adoption Act of 2000, was fully implemented in April 2008 (U.S. Department of State 2006). The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services currently regulate transnational adoption in the US. As a consequences of these governmental entities working to implement The Hague Convention, facilitating adoptions from certain countries such as Russia and Guatemala became more restricted for adoption agencies Harnott (2000) argues, however, that in the United Kingdom the implementation of The Hague Convention has resulted in the creation of local adoption services, which in turn has led to an improvement in international adoption procedures. These improvements include providing advice and assistance in the matching process and court process. Important to note here is that The Hague Convention was held not only to advocate for stricter regulation of transnational adoption. In fact at the 1993 meeting, an ethical policy was proposed which would prioritize domestic adoption over transnational adoption. It was reasoned that separating children from their countries and culture should be a last resort for adoptive placement. However, The Hague Convention and other international legal

codes in fact act against this proposed preference for domestic adoption by narrowing

and postulating the definition of adoption to assume what "an ideal family" should be.

This ideal family favors wealthier and nuclear families, and therefore closes doors for

many domestic options and opens the possibility for foreign parents (Yngvesson

2000). This is because the biological parents of infants in sending countries are often

single parents or are experiencing economic hardship that makes it difficult to support

children.

A preference for children to be raised within their "birth culture," as well as

the interests of a nation-state in preventing the loss of its children, are paralleled in

regulations instituted in recent years by a number of individual sending countries. For

example, Yngvesson (2002) stresses the significant role the states play in determining

which children are "adoptable" and these children's right to have an identity—a

name, a nation state, and a family—are constituted by conventions with agreement by

participating states. Ukraine, for example, only allows transnational adoption after

one year waiting period, so that first priority is given to domestic placement (U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services 2005). [3]

1.2.4 Role of Adoption Agencies and National Welfare Agency

Once prospective adoptive parents decide to adopt from the overseas, they

usually gather information through Internet searches, books, magazines, and their

social networks. They then discover that they will have to find an adoption agency

that will help them throughout the long process. In order for prospective adoptive

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[3]. See Ishizawa et al. for more detailed discussion on regulations by individual sending countries that institute specific guidelines for parents age, race, and marital status.

parents to complete the transnational adoption process, they need to follow many bureaucratic steps and compile complicated documents, and so, as recommended by U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services (2005), most transnational adoption placements are facilitated by adoption agencies.

There are several types of adoption agencies in the United States. Many only facilitate domestic adoption, some only work with transnational adoption, and some provide facilitating services for both domestic and transnational adoption. Agencies that facilitate transnational adoption are usually specialized for a few specific countries. In order for those adoption agencies to be eligible to facilitate transnational adoption, they must be licensed by the state where they are located, follow the procedures regulated by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, find a welfare agency in the sending country, and follow the regulations of the sending country. Thus, adoption agencies should be able to guide prospective parents as they go through the various bureaucratic steps. As the United States prepares to fully implement The Hague Convention by 2008, it is now a federal requirement that all the agencies that facilitate transnational adoption be accredited under the new regulation (U.S. Department of State 2005). This adds another bureaucratic layer to adoption agencies in the provision of services to interested adoptive parents.

Moreover, adoption agencies that facilitate transnational adoption are also expected to be "experts" not only in the adoption laws and procedures, but also in many different issues related to adoption such as the health of children from particular countries, attachment issues, the cultures of countries they work with, and building multicultural adoptive families. One of the important responsibilities of adoption agencies is to teach prospective parents about these issues.

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With so many layers of bureaucratic procedures that adoption agencies need to be knowledgeable about, it is very important for those agencies to be well networked. Recognizing this necessity, the Joint Council on International Children's Services (JCICS), a national non-profit welfare organization, has established a network for adoption agencies that facilitate transnational adoption in the United States. JCICS is a membership organization for licensed non-profit transnational adoption placement agencies, child advocacy groups, parent support groups and medical clinics. Today the organization represents more than two hundred agencies which support over seventy-five percent of children transnationally adopted from fifty-one countries by U.S. citizens. JCICS plays a mediatory role for and among member agencies, medical professionals, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS), foreign ministries and governments, and the U.S. Congress for implementing successful transnational adoption. Most importantly, they claim to advocate for the best interest of adoptive children.

One central task JCICS has been engaged in is to work with the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of State to implement the Hague Convention. JCICS collects updated information from the Congress and the Department of the State, then publicizes relevant information on their website for their members. Another important role JCICS plays is organizing an annual conference every year for their members to attend. The topics of the conference are usually organized around adoption regulations such as implementation of The Hague Convention; adoptees' health issues; national and international regulations; and other related topics such as culture, race, and attachment issues. JCICS proclaims that all children all over the world should be raised in a family and that it serves an important role in orchestrating

the U.S government, sending countries, international communities, and agencies to aid the transnational adoption process.

1.2.5 The Adoptive Parents

When people think about who adopts a child today, they generally imagine a middle class couple without biological children who would very much like to create a family by adopting a child relinquished by a young unmarried woman (Porter 2002). The tendency of households with adopted children to be middle class in the United States is not just a recent phenomenon. Some elements of this stereotype are true. For example, about 80 percent of adoptive fathers whose children were placed during the post World War II period (1940-1970) by a private statewide organization in the state of Washington had high-prestige jobs such as professionals or managers. Also, of these adoptive fathers, over 80 percent were homeowners (Carp and Leon-Guerrero 2002). Today, when considering transnational adoption only, because of the expense of the process, American families with children adopted from abroad tend to be economically well off with a mean income of over $110,000 and a median income of $85,100 (Ishizawa, Kenney, Kubo and Stevens 2006).

However, in contrast to the image of adopting parents not having biological children, many do in fact already have children in the household. While it is true that many adoptive couples have gone through a period of infertility, many already had one or more biological children prior to adopting a child either domestically or transnationally. Based on data drawn from Census 2000, over a quarter of the households with transnationally adopted children contained at least one child who was biologically related to the householders (Ishizawa, Kenney, Kubo and Stevens 2006).

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Parents who adopt are not necessarily married and many single parents have also adopted a child domestically and from abroad. Single parent adoption depends on how sending countries regulate prospective adoptive parents' marital status. A single person was once considered an unfit parent and many states prohibited single parent adoption before the 1970s. Since the 1970s, with less social stigma attached to being a single parent, there have been an increasing number of unmarried men and women adopting children, and today about five percent of all adoptions are by single parents (adoption.com 2003). Still, based on the data drawn from Census 2000, the majority of adoptive parents (78 percent) in the United States were married in 2000 (Kreider 2003). Many interested single people have been adopting transnationally. Many countries, including India, China, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Mexico, The Philippines, Ukraine, Russia, and Vietnam, recognize unmarried individuals as eligible adoptive parents.

Historically, adoption in the United States has been practiced overwhelmingly by white rather than non-white parents. President Theodore Roosevelt, in the early twentieth century, evoked images of the white middle class family raising children for the good of the country as the national ideal (Hart 2002). The spread of the ideal also promoted what ideal civic motherhood should be, which is "…for the native-born, white middle class to reproduce itself…to [the] point [where] adoption as a 'cure' for the reproductive and civic 'failure' of infertile couples" (Hart 2002). Among the adoption placements facilitated through major adoption agencies in Pittsburgh in the 1950s, only 20 percent of black parents completed the process while 40 percent of white parents' applications were successfully completed. In part, black applicants could not qualify because of the extensive and intrusive application process. Being

unable to prove their infertility, black applicants were more likely to be denied (Gill 2002). However, today adoption is practiced by parents of different races. For example, in 2000, 75% of all adoptive parents whose adopted children were under age 18 were whites, 15% of them were blacks, and only 2.3% of them were Asians (Kreider 2003). These percentages closely correspond to the racial distribution of the total population in the US in 2000—75% were whites; 12% were blacks; and 3.6% were Asians (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). As for transnational adoption, however, 95% of all adoptive parents with children adopted from the abroad were whites in 2000.

1.2.6 Foreign Adopted Children in the United States

     Children available for transnational adoption tend to be younger than children available for domestic adoption. For example, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2003) reports that about 45% of children adopted transnationally are less than 1 year old. While there is a high desire among parents to adopt infants, because of the waiting period most countries require, many children are already toddlers by the time adoption is finalized. Thus 42% of all transnationally adopted children are between one and four years old (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2003). There are, indeed, fewer infants available for domestic adoption, but there are still many young children waiting to be adopted in the United States. By 2004, for example, 24% of all children waiting to be adopted were less than one year old and 43% of them were between ages one and six (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). Therefore, the age of children available for domestic adoption is not as drastically older as one might suspect it would be.

As for the gender of available children for transnational adoption, parents may desire to only adopt a girl or boy specifically. For those parents who wish to adopt a girl or do not care about the sex of the child, China often is an ideal country to adopt from because over 90% of available children are girls (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2007). As parents develop a general understanding of characteristics of children available in various countries including age, race, gender, health, cost, and timelines, then, the option to adopt transnationally might have more appeal to them based on characteristics of children available.

1.3 CHAPTERS OVERVIEW

Chapter 2, "Literature Review and Theories," provides a review of past research on interracial and transnational adoption in the United States and a theoretical framework through which the data of my research is analyzed. The review of adoption literature particularly focuses upon how "race" was treated, considered, and practiced by the legal institutions, adoption professionals and adoptive parents. The theoretical framework includes the way in which the ideas of multiculturalism and race are conceptualized and the transformation of the meanings of families in the United States. Chapter 3, "Methods and Data," outlines the methods and data employed for this study. In this chapter, I will detail out how I utilize the Census data, my ethnographic studies of adoption agencies, and my interviews with adoption agency staff and adoptive parents.

Chapter 4, "The Recent Patterns of Adoption in the United States," provides an overview of characteristics of families with children that are adopted transnationally by using data drawn from U.S Census 2000. The 2000 census data

constitutes the most comprehensive data source on adoption available since 1975. By using the data drawn from the U.S. 2000 Census Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5 percent file, this chapter also illustrates racial matching of parents and their adopted children. The racial matching data shows that there is a strong tendency among white-only parents to match their race with their adoptees' race. At the same time, it appears that an overwhelming number of parents prefer to adopt Asians over the other races when parents' race does not match with their adoptees' race. Thus, this chapter draws up the "big picture" of racial composition of families created through transnational adoption.

Chapter 5, "Transcending Race?: The Role of Adoption Agencies in Transnational Adoption and the Dilemma of Multiculturalism," turns to the data drawn from my interviews and participant observations, and shows how adoption agencies promote adopting children from overseas. This chapter shows how crucial the adoption agency's role is for implementing transnational adoption processes. For example, adoption agencies inform parents of the pros and cons about both domestic and transnational adoption and legal issues through a number of private meetings and by requiring parents to attend workshops. This chapter discusses how the celebration of multiculturalism and existence of racism have influenced adoption agencies when "training" prospective adoptive parents. Adoptive parents (all white in my data) are taught to embrace different races and cultures, yet they are also taught to recognize in their parenting how racism still is very much a part of the social problems in the United States.

Drawing from the interviews with the adoptive parents, Chapter 6, "Desirable Difference: The Shadow of Racial Stereotypes in Creating Transracial Families

through Transnational Adoption," shows how the meaning of race is articulated by adoptive parents. These results reinforce "difference" among children of different racial groups. With a deep recognition of the parents' best intentions to bring a new child into their family, this chapter illuminates how adoptive parents, based on what they have learned from the adoption agencies, invoke their own perception of racial stereotypes. Further, the parents choose their child based upon assessment of the communities into which the children will be incorporated. This combination of racial stereotypes and assessment of their own mostly white neighborhoods illustrates how race is a salient factor. Such decision-making processes, therefore, create a racial hierarchy among children both domestically and internationally when considering adopting children.

In the concluding chapter, I tie together the themes discussed throughout the chapters—multiculturalism, color-blind ideology, and the realization of racial hierarchy—to address what they imply within the context of the formation of transracial families through transnational adoption. I argue that a range of desirability of children on the basis on race is produced through the inconsistent co-existence of these three themes: *Multiculturalism* as a safe deracializing space to enjoy differences, *Colorblind Ideology* as a hegemonic space where white privilege is maintained through culturally distinct rhetoric (e.g. the model minority myth), and *Realization of Racial Hierarchy* through constant everyday confrontation with society.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORIES

2.1 CELEBRATING MULTICULTURALISM AND PRODUCING RACIAL HIERARCHY IN FAMILY FORMATION THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

Transnational adoption is one of many ways American families are created. In spite of the normative belief of family as being represented by the nuclear family with heterosexual parents and two or three biologically related children living under one roof, there is no doubt that there is diversity in how people form their families—through extended family members, single mother/father headed households, step-parents and siblings, and adoption. My study of transnational adoption shows a kind of family formation that lies over the juncture of the normative belief versus the more diverse family formation and the ideal versus non-ideal ways in how people conceptualize family. I will situate my study within this juncture of family formation where multiculturalism is celebrated and the meanings of race are articulated.

"Building multicultural families" is a phrase that is frequently used by adoption professionals, especially, when they facilitate workshops, events, and training sessions for prospective adoptive parents. Race and racism are also emphasized in these training sessions. However, the negative ideas that racism evokes make it difficult for the adoption professionals, as well as for the parents, to sustain a deep examination with thoughts of racism. Thus, the normative idea of multiculturalism—embracing differences and equality—becomes necessary and is a more palatable ingredient for creating a family through transnational adoption for both adoption professionals and parents.

This, however, does not mean that race does not factor into their decision making process. Adoption decisions by some white parents, for example, are made in line with a discourse that racializes black women. White parents do not feel they should be subjected to being deemed worthy by black women to adopt black children. This requires an examination of how racial stereotypes of different racial groups in the U.S. maneuver transnationally through parents' decision making processes. The racial stereotypes observed and practiced in the domestic arena translate over to parents' imagination of children in foreign countries. For instance, those who adopted from China felt that Asian children are more assimilable than black children based on their assessment of perceived Asian superiority. Race therefore plays an important part in adoption decision process for many parents in that they in fact make a racially particular choice when creating a family. But building a multicultural family is something to be celebrated for these families where race plays a prominent role because phenotypic differences among parents and their adopted child can contribute to the "difference" that is to be celebrated.

This chapter first reviews some literature on how adoption issues in the United States have been studied specifically in relation to race. The literature shows how race plays a part in a variety of issues such as: changes in adoption laws, the outcome of adopted children growing up in a multiracial family, and adoption decisions and practices that influence and are influenced by the racialization of different racial groups. The third section illustrates scholarly thoughts on multiculturalism and its relation to race. It is particularly important to look at this, as my analysis of the adoption agencies and the adoptive parents is largely framed within the discourse of multiculturalism and racism observed through my ethnographic accounts and the

interview data. In order to examine how the adoptive parents articulate the meaning of race through their adoption decisions, the fourth section draws on the concept of racial triangulation and how Asian children are racialized in the US. As the present study examines how the meanings of race is articulated through constructing adoptive families, it is beneficial to frame "family" as a space where social meanings are produced and negotiated. Moreover, in the case of family formation through transnational adoption, these social meanings, such as multiculturalism, racial stereotypes, and racial hierarchy, move across national boundaries. Thus, the fifth section reviews literature that provides a variety of thoughts when defining "family." The overview of literature on family and multiculturalism and race provides a theoretical backbone to better understand how race is situated within the decision-making process adoptive parents undergo in creating a family through transnational adoption.

2.2 ADOPTION AND RACE

In the past decade, scholars in various disciplines have engaged issues concerning transnational adoption from different perspectives. Studies published in the late 1980s and the early 1990s discuss the history of transnational adoption, health perspectives, transnational adoption from European perspectives, and policy formation.[4] Along with transracial adoption through domestic adoption, social

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[4]. For a brief case study of inter-country adoption from Korea, see Altstein (1984) "Transracial and Intercountry Adoptions: A Comparison" in *Adoption: Current Issues And Trends* edited by Sachdev. For health perspectives and policy formation, see Bagley (1993), *International and Transracial Adoptions: A Mental Health Perspective*. For a general history of inter-country adoption, see Simon and Altstein (1987), *Transracial Adoptees and Their Families: A Study of Identity and Commitment*, and see also, *Inter-Country Adoption: Practical Experiences* edited by Humphrey and Humphrey (1993). For legal perspectives in Europe, see "Inter-country Adoption in European Legislation" by Caiani-Praturlon in *Adoption: International Perspectives* edited by Euthymia D. Hibbs (1991).

scientists witnessed the increase of transracial adoption as a consequence of transnational adoption. As a result many scholars also studied how race influenced adoptive family formation in the United States.

Thousands of orphans in many parts of the world were the fallout of World War II. With these children, transracial adoption began both domestically and transnationally (McRoy and Zurcher 1983; Simon and Altstein 2002). Owen Gill and Barbara Jackson (1983) define the term transracial adoption as "children being adopted by parents of a different racial origin of their own" (1). The practice of transracial placement, which first gained attention when black children were adopted by white families, was considered deviant and untraditional. At this time, child welfare agencies aimed to match children's physical, intellectual, social, religious and other characteristics with those of adoptive families (McRoy and Zurcher 1983; Bagley 1993).

Transracial adoptions increased in the mid-1950s, decreased then increased again during the 1960s, and began to diminish in the mid-1970s (Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994). Fluctuations in the 1960s and 1970s are explained by social movements that occurred during the period. In 1961, Parents to Adopt Minority Youngsters (PAMY), founded in Minnesota, actively promoted placement of black children in white families (Simon and Altstein 2000). Agencies, however, quickly geared their service away from transracial adoption when the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) condemned transracial adoption by calling it " a particular form of genocide" (Simon and Altstein 2000).

The development of transracial adoption, Simon et al. (1994) argue, did not happen with a deliberate program by agencies to serve populations in need, but was rather "an accommodation to reality" (1). Simon et al. (1994) state that

> Social changes in the United States--changes regarding abortion, contraception, and reproduction in general—significantly reduced the number of white children available for adoption, leaving nonwhite children as the largest available source. Changes had also occurred regarding the willingness of white couples to adopt nonwhite children. Whatever the reasons, in order to remain "in business," adoption agencies were forced by a combination of social conditions to reevaluate their ideology, traditionally geared toward the matching concept, in order to serve the joint needs of parentless children and couples seeking to adopt (1).

Along with these social changes, Simon and Altstein (2000) note that white couples became more willing to adopt nonwhite children and challenged those who opposed transracial adoption by arguing that there were not sufficient numbers of black parents willing to adopt black children. Furthermore, having black children permanently adopted into white families was seen by many interested parents as a more advantageous situation for the children than temporary placement at foster homes or institutions.

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 and 1996 prohibits a state or other entities that receive federal assistance from denying or delaying the placement of a child for adoption or foster home placement on the basis of race, color, or national origin of either the adoptive or foster parent or the child involved. Yet, most agencies, at the time, were unwilling to place black children with white families (Simon and Altstein 2000). This could be because MEPA also included a passage that allows agencies to consider the cultural, ethnic, or racial background of the child and the ability of foster or adoptive parents to determine whether such placement

serves the best interest of the child (Hollinger and The ABA Center on Children and the Law National Resource Center on Legal and Court Issues 1998).

William Feigelman and Arnold R. Silverman's study (1983), contrary to critics of transracial adoption, suggests there are more serious consequences for children due to delayed placement as compared to the consequences of rejection that black adoptees may experience while growing up in a white family. Christopher Bagley (1993), in his comparison study of a group of twenty seven transracial adoptees with a group of twenty five in-racially adopted white children, argues that the adjustment of transracially adopted children is no different than that of children who are adopted by parents of their own racial background. Simon and Altstein (1992) and Simon et. al. (1994) conducted a twenty-year longitudinal study of transracial adoptees starting in 1972 and continued in 1979, 1984, and 1991. The study conducted 204 interviews with parents and 366 interviews with children and asked questions about racial attitudes, racial awareness, and racial identity among adopted and birth children (Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994). This study, like the others, showed no difference between the transracial adoptees and the birth children in terms of their self-esteem and family integration-scales (Simon et al. 1994).

The existing studies of transracial adoption, such as those described above, do not separate non-white children adopted domestically and children adopted transnationally. Since the studies' focus is the "outcome" of placement of non-white children in white adoptive families, studying the adopted children inclusively regardless of whether children are adopted domestically or transnationally might not have a significant impact on study results. It should, however, matter significantly when examining how the racial identity of both adoptive parents and children impacts

the formation of adoptive families. Furthermore, it is an intriguing issue as to how adoptive parents come to decide to adopt children from overseas while there are many children in the US waiting to be placed permanently with adoptive families.

Some white families willing to adopt non-white American children or children from other countries see forming transracial and transnational families as "a hopeful harbinger of an imagined future-beyond tolerance and civil rights to color-blind mutuality…" for the former, and as "a Judeo-Christian ethos of humanitarian outreach that affirmed human community over ethnic and racial difference" (Melosh 2002). Fogg-Davis (2002) states the reason why many white adoptive parents turn towards transnational adoption is because of the stigma attached to adopting non-white children, particularly black children, due to a long history of racial segregation in the U.S. Another explanation is characteristics of children available for domestic adoption. Altstein (1984) and Melosh (2002) stress the importance of children's age upon adoption and the waiting period. Because of the scarcity of healthy white infants available in the U.S., the waiting period for placement can be more than three years, whereas the waiting period is usually shorter for healthy infants available in other countries (Altstein 1984).

These accounts certainly have implications for whether racial identity of children is important or not for adoptive families. As transnational adoption was rapidly institutionalized and more and more American parents desired to adopt from overseas, the racial aspects of creating families through transnational adoption began to intrigue scholars. For example, sociological studies use transnational adoption as a lens for comparative ethnic and racial studies by analyzing the racial preferences of adoptive parents. Shiao, Tuan, and Rienzi (2004) found that the racial divide in the

United States has changed from white and non-white to black versus non-black which is apparent in adoptive parents' preference to adopt Asian children, based on their belief that Asian children are more assimilable to the mainstream white culture than black children. Dorow's (2006a) study of US-China transnational adoption also argues how white parents' decision to adopt an Asian child is based on their perception of the racial burden put on different racial groups. They consider foreign Chinese children as rescuable and baggage-free compared to black children available for domestic adoption. The results shown in Ishizawa et al. (2006) suggest that the racial boundary in constructing interracial families through transnational adoption is easier to cross between white and Asian or between white and Hispanic compared to between white and black.

The present study is a contribution to this newly emerging field that examines changing racial relations through the lens of the formation of transracial/transnational adoptive families. This study attempts to show how adoptive parents' decision to create a multiracial family through transnational adoption is, in fact, limited to certain races of children—especially Asian—and that the racial choices the parents make are structurally rooted in existing racial hierarchies in the United States.

2.3 MULTICULTURALISM AND RACE: THE THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

When multiculturalism is defined, it draws comparisons to assimilation. For example, scholars, politicians, and educators often use multiculturalism to envision a society as a "salad bowl"—maintaining the distinctiveness of different groups—as opposed to the "melting pot" metaphor used to describe an assimilated society (Glazer 1997; Lambert 1998). Assimilation theory was an analytical tool for intellectuals as

well as for public policy makers and had widespread appeal after World War II. But by the 1970s it was replaced by cultural pluralism (Kivisto 2002; Webster 1997). Multiculturalism, defined as minority groups maintaining their "heritage culture" as much as possible (Lambert 1998), is prominent in the U.S. This definition has become normative in the way we talk about multiculturalism. The definition is a useful tool to analyze the role of the adoption agencies I studied because they believe in respecting and maintaining the culture of countries where their children are from.

With multiculturalism gaining popularity in Western societies—mainly in Canada since the 1970s, Australia, and the United States—many scholars offered their analyses (Kymlicka 2001).[5] Resisting comparison between multiculturalism and assimilation, Einstein (1996) argues that multiculturalism carries different meanings to different people as it explains origins of the U.S., delineates new immigration flows, and signifies a plural and democratic society. Mahajan (2002), for example, integrates the issues of equality into his discussion of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, she argues, emphasizes the co-existence of different communities living peacefully together as equals in the public arena. She further notes that multiculturalism promotes cultural diversity through preserving minority cultures. Therefore, multiculturalism is actually a democratic project.

Other writings on multiculturalism promote the view that multiculturalism can be transformed as a result of intervention by the state as well as negotiations between the state and minority community. Parekh (2005) explores the logic of multiculturalism as a philosophical and political movement. Its transformation may

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[5]. Canada was the first nation-state to legally institute a multiculturalism policy at the federal level. Other countries that followed this are Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. The United States does not have a federal level multicultural policy (Kymlicka 2001).

very well be initiated by the state in that the state can intervene in the internal life of a

cultural community and ban some of its unacceptable practices (Parekh 2005).

Parekh (2005) argues that the state can legitimately ban a community's practices

when they stir racial, religious, or ethnic hatred, or when they rebel against the state.

This view implies that the idea of multiculturalism does not guarantee a preservation

of different cultures, rather multiculturalism is a negotiable ethos. Maiz and Requejo

(2005) elaborate on this point by indicating that multiculturalism implies

"intercultural dialogue" and a "living system of meaning" contrary to seeing culture

as a static object (p.6).

　　　Parekh's point could very well contribute to Kymlicka's (2001) analysis of

multiculturalism. Formerly, Parekh (1997) along with Forst (1997) challenged

Kymlicka's definition of multiculturalism, stating that Kymlicka's theory (1995) on

multiculturalism is overly uncritical of universal liberal values and offers insufficient

treatment of cultural differences—viewing culture as essential. It is in Kymlicka's

(2001) later response where some commonalities are found with Parekh's assertion.

In his clarification, Kymlicka (2001) argues that it is inadequate to view

multiculturalism as a "clash of civilizations"—Western liberalism versus minorities

resisting with "their culture" (p. 61). He contends that multiculturalism is not about

whether the principles of liberal democracy are legitimate; rather, it is about how we

to interpret those principles (Kymlicka 2001). Multiculturalism, Kymlicka (2001)

argues, has indeed created a space for negotiation between the state and minority

communities. However, such debate usually is counterproductive in that it deepens

the distance between them—the liberal authority viewing minority groups as illiberal.

Drawn from Parekh's (2005) argument discussed above, neither Parekh nor Kymlicka

would disagree on this view on multiculturalism as a generator for debates between the state and minority groups.

What separates Kymlicka's argument is his view of minority groups' inevitable integration into the mainstream society. Thus, for Kymlicka, multiculturalism creates a space for negotiation, but that negotiation revolves around

> …accepting the principle of state-prescribed integration, but renegotiating the terms of integration. And immigrant groups fully recognize and accept this. They accept the expectation that they will integrate into the larger society, as they have always done (Kymlicka 2001: 169).

There seems to be a tendency in recent writings on immigration and ethnic studies to reexamine assimilation within a context of multiculturalism (e.g., Alba and Nee 1997; Alexander 2001; Gans 1997; Glazer 1997; Kivisto 2005; Portes and Zhou 1993). Glazer (1997) for example, proclaims that multiculturalism is a stage that Americans needed to pass through to see the inadequacy of celebrating difference in terms of integrating minorities, and that America needs to recognize again "the power of the integrating values of [its] common society" (p. 159). Recent scholarly interests on assimilation call for careful examination of what it is that new immigrants are incorporated into in terms of economy, politics, and culture (Kivisto 2005). In Kivisto's (2002) review of past discussions about multiculturalism, he shows how it is counterproductive to analyze assimilation theory and multiculturalism as contrasting analytical concepts. The argument is particularly applicable in understanding how newcomers preserve their ethnic heritage while finding a shared citizenship that creates unity among different groups (e.g., Hollinger 1995; Parekh 2000).

A pitfall of these discussions is that they have created a theoretical dilemma as to how we discuss race within the context of multiculturalism. That is to argue, on the

one hand, a white-black racial line is not applicable anymore, thus, ethnicity or culture

are better analytical tools to examine multiculturalism. On the other hand, how the

meaning of race is articulated over time should be central to or at least a starting point

of the discussion of multiculturalism. Some scholars argue for keeping race in the

discussion as an analytical point in the age of multiculturalism. For example, the

racial line is not divided between white and black anymore because of newer

immigrants from Mexico, Central and South American countries, and Asian countries,

therefore it needs to be reconsidered (Kivisto 2002; Bean and Stevens 2003). Kivisto

(2002) argues that ethnicity has much greater analytical possibility than race because

it does not have a discredited biological basis as race does. Kivisto (2002) does not

necessarily call for banning the use of 'race', rather, he proposes to understand race as

a "category of practice" instead of a "category of analysis." (see Loveman 1999).

Spencer (1994), on the other hand, specifically ties multiculturalism to the

development of American cultural identity by describing the case of African

Americans since the post–civil rights movement. He explains that multiculturalism is

the latest version of new visions of American society developed from the struggle of

people of color to overcome their historical exclusion from the American cultural

identity (Spencer 1994). Spencer (1994) further argues "…multiculturalism can be

seen as a specific aspect of the broader movement of 'political correctness,' which is

itself a product of the collective construction and reconstruction of identity in

America" (p. 548). For example, he states that:

> Political correctness resulted from a confluence of other streams of liberation,
> including those of the other peoples of color, flowing into the post-civil rights
> movement of Black Power, and subsequently the development of 'African
> Americanism,' i.e., the identity of African American, and the cultural
> movement of Afrocentrism. These other movements included feminism, gay

liberation, and the movement for the interests of the handicapped. These movements joined, in an informal way, to generate a common political mood of victimization, moral indignation, and a self-righteous hostility against the common enemy—the White male (Spencer 1994: 559).

Thus, Spencer (1994) argues that, in ethnic and racial politics, political correctness appears simultaneously with multiculturalism and that multiculturalism does not necessarily function as an equalizer of all cultural traditions.

The importance of situating racial relations at the center when examining multiculturalism is argued in Joppke's comparative study of multiculturalism in the United States, Germany, and Great Britain (Joppke 1996). Joppke (1996) asserts, "the origin of American multiculturalism is the unresolved race question" (p. 465). He points out the paradox of the civil right revolution of the 1960s in that the movement made the United States a color-conscious society in spite of its attempt to turn the United States into a color-blind society (Joppke 1996).

This point is explained well by Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation (1994) and Bonilla-Silva's study of color-blind racism (2003). Omi and Winant's (1994) examination of race indicates how racial meaning is articulated and rearticulated over time. Articulation of the meaning of race cannot be done without the intervention of "the racial state" (Omi and Winant 1994). They define the racial state as "…historically constructed by racial movements; it consists of agencies and programs which are the institutionalized responses to racial movements of the past" (Omi and Winant 1994: 86). This rather broad yet profound concept of articulation of race indeed explains the shift of racial position and articulation overtime—from overt practices (Jim Crow) to covert practices (color blind ideology). In this regard Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues:

Much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre-Civil Rights era, color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era. And the beauty of this new ideology is that it aids in the maintenance of privilege without fanfare, without naming those who it subjects and those who it rewards (3).

During the 1950s and 1960s, a series of racial minority movements explored "new conceptions of racial identity, its meaning, new modes of political organization and confrontation, and new definitions of the state's role in promoting and achieving 'equality'" (Omi and Winant 1994: 95). These movements declined by the 1970s because of repression, co-optation, and fragmentation. In the 1980s and 1990s, multiculturalism and political correctness were the new form of racial hegemony designed, rearticulated, and instituted during the Reagan-Bush years (Omi and Winant 1994; (Laham 1998). As the movement declined, Carr (1997) argues that colorblindness, prompted by neoconservatives, was instituted in politics, the economy, and education. Carr (1997) adds that colorblind ideology is the latest manifestation of racism because evidence shows that racial discrimination especially against African Americans is very much present. Further, Carr (1997) observes increased income inequality, persistent residential segregation, and underemployment. Indeed, multiculturalism is now institutionalized and its discourse is widely utilized in political and the educational arena and it is also very much embedded in our every day experiences. In spite of the premises of multiculturalism—maintaining equality among different cultural groups— recurring racial discrimination is still very much present. This may be because, unlike the fluid characteristics of ethnicities and cultures, persistent reproduction of racial categories over time creates hierarchy among racial groups (Collins 2001; Omi and Winant 1994).

Therefore, articulation of racial meanings and the current racial politics of colorblind ideology should be central in the examination of multiculturalism in the United States. The present study examines how the way in which adoption agencies train prospective parents on building multicultural and multiracial families reveal some inconsistencies in the incorporation of race into a discourse of multiculturalism. Based on my observations of agency training sessions and interviews with the agency staff, it is apparent that they emphasized multiculturalism as a philosophy, which embraces all different cultures. However, as scholars of multiculturalism did, agencies amplified dilemmas when they mentioned race and the presence of racism because race contradicts not only the normative ideology of multiculturalism, but also normative colorblind ideology. As they promoted transnational adoption to prospective parents, agencies placed a strong emphasis on embracing all cultures. Simultaneously, they urged the parents to seriously consider the existence of racism when deciding which children to adopt, which certainly challenges the premises of multiculturalism.

2.4 TRIANGULATING RACE: REIFYING RACIAL HIERARCHY

In relation to choosing domestic or transnational adoption, I asked the adoptive parents whether the racial identity of children mattered to them. The ways in which they understood the racial hierarchy in the United States clearly reflected in their choices. This observation is not particular to family formation through transracial adoption, but some recent sociological studies of transracial marriage also show some similarities in how people's beliefs about race and racial stratification influence the formation of transracial relationships. Although a color-blind ideology

has emerged as part of the main-stream ideology in the U.S., those who attempt to cross the color line often face racially hostile experiences which contradicts the colorblind ideology (Rockquemore and Henderson 2009). Similarly, the present study of transracial/national adoption shows a racial ambivalence expressed by parents who praise the color-blind ideology on one hand, but make racially specific choices on the other. They often acknowledge the racial hierarchy in the U.S by internalizing existing racial stereotypes of different minority groups—professing the model minority myth of Asian Americans and expressing condescension towards poor blacks. It became evident that white parents feel Asian children are more assimilable to mainstream white culture than black children, and the choice has become more about whether to adopt black versus non-black (Shiao et al. 2004). In her recent study, for example, Dorow (2006b) analyzes how China-U.S adoption "unsettles" and "reproduces" racial hierarchy. She argues for the importance of "the American imaginary of China *and* its relationship to the black-white binary" when considering race in the adoption of Chinese children into white families (Dorow2006b: 2). More specifically, black children have become the "foil" to foreign Asian children (Dorow 2006b: 2).

Most of the parents in my study expressed their openness for 'multicultural families,' however what this delineates is that they may not be as open to 'multiracial families.' More precisely, they may not be open for certain types of multiracialism—adopting a black child as supposed to adopting an Asian child or a Latino child. The conscious choice they made is racialized (Dorow 2006b) which is produced concurrently through *racial triangulation* and reifying racial hierarchy by the states, adoption agencies and parents themselves. The concept of *racial triangulation* is

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mapped out by Kim's study (1999) by exemplifying the racial positions of white, blacks, and Asian Americans. Kim (1999) argues that the racialization of Asian Americans has been carried out not independently from other racial groups, but in interaction with whites and blacks.

Kim (1999) argues, racial groups are stratified into a racial based on one dimension, usually by groups' socio-economic statuses. Song (2004), in her review of scholarship of racial hierarchies in the U.S. and Britain, also problematizes that the strong consensus among the scholars to view the racial hierarchy in the U.S. as a "top-down picture"—whites at the top, blacks at the bottom, and everybody else in the between. The usefulness of *"racial triangulation"* as a theoretical framework for scholars of race and racism is Kim's (1999) conceptualization of "racial position" which allows us to examine relationally more dimensions such as history, the state's role, and culture without falling into the normative premise of multiculturalism— "equal differences" (Song 2004: 873).

Through her conceptualization of "racial position," Kim (1999) theorizes the *"racial triangulation of Asian Americans"* by pointing out that "maintaining white privilege" is historically rooted in the U.S. through the simultaneously perpetuated practice of "relative valorization" and "civic ostracizing" of Asian Americans and blacks. The salient point here is that through the processes of "civic ostracism," Asian Americans are constructed as "immutably foreign and unassimilable with whites," while African Americans are considered "insiders", but "inferior" to both whites and Asian Americans (Kim 2004: 107).

The racial construction of Asian Americans as foreigners is notably observed by a number of scholars. For example, Tuan (1998) claims that Asian Americans are

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racialized as foreign subjects in their public lives even though it is evident that those who are third plus generation have acquired similar lifestyles to whites and exercise ethnic options in the comparable way as whites do. Their public lives, which are largely influenced through the series of legal inclusion and exclusion of Asians, have rendered the racial construction of Asian Americans as "unassimilable" and "foreigners" (Kim 1999). Omi and Winant's (1994) concept of *racial projects* is useful to understand how racialization can be socially institutionalized. *Racial projects* work as interpretations and representations of racial dynamics, and racial projects can also do "ideological" work when *racial formation* processes make a linkage between structure and representation. In terms of the U.S. state's racial policy and law, Omi and Winant (1994) argue that the state plays an important role through practicing repression and exclusion, and this practice by the state is an important component of the racial formation process. The way in which the racial ideology has been constructed though constituting a nation-state, especially with the entry of the immigrant into a racially divided state such as the U.S., provides a point of analysis for scholars of race (Chang 1999).

The dynamics of *racial projects* can be examined as immigrants enter the political, cultural, and legal space of the United States. Lowe (1996) states that understanding Asian immigration is crucial to recognizing the nation's economy and political foundation which have been historically racialized. The administration of citizenship towards Asian Americans was a "technology" of racialization (Lowe 1994). Lowe (1994) argues,

The racialization of Asian Americans in relation to the state locates Asian American culture as a site for the emergence of another kind of political subject, one who has a historically 'alienated' relation to the category of citizenship (12).

Although Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Asian Indian, and Filipino immigrants historically and materially played crucial roles in the building of America, they are always seen as the foreigner-within--- as immigrants, not as citizens (Lowe 1994).

In the post-civil rights era, *racial triangulation* is practiced by politicians as well as in the media where culturally distinctive rhetoric has been manufactured in which Asian Americans are a "model minority," and blacks remain the "deficient American minority" (Kim 1999). Racial triangulation normalizes the racialized way of thinking about Asian Americans and blacks while maintaining whites' position as "superior" and "insider" in the triangulation (Kim 1999). Producing racialized subjects that are embedded in "culture" is crucial to understanding racial relations in the United States in the post civil-rights era. Goldberg (1993) defines racist culture as the "normalized process" of racial thinking and racial articulation that led to naturalizing racial dynamics and racist exclusions. This "normalized process" (ibid.) works to create racial solidarity among whites so that "white habitus" (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006: 247) conditions whites' perception that the "white lifestyle is the correct and 'normal' way of doing things," (ibid.) which, in turn, legitimizes whites' racialized attitudes toward other racial groups, especially blacks.

The choices white adoptive parents make about a new member of their family contributes to the concept of *racial triangulation* because of their constant evaluation of their own culture as whites, the community they live in (whether racially diverse or

not), and the perception of different racial groups in the U.S. While many choose to adopt white children domestically and transnationally, many choose to adopt non-white children. The parents I interviewed who had adopted non-white children had almost always thought about or imagined how it would be if they had adopted a black child, but in the end they turned to foreign countries, mostly Asian countries, to adopt because they perceived Asian children as a better fit for their family than black children.

Still, Kim's (1999) claim about Asians being constantly viewed as "unassimilable" and "foreigners" needs to be reconsidered for the case of Asian adoptees. The image of the "foreignness" of Asian Americans may be in those parents' minds, but that image might also obscure the certain perceptions white adoptive parents have about whether Chinese or Korean babies are "baggage free" and "rescuable" compared to black children in the United States (Dorow 2006a; Dorow 2006b). Then again the image can also be colored by their perceptions of where Asian Americans are placed in the racial hierarchy altered by the model minority stereotype, which makes Asian as a better-fit race for their family, if not "assimilable." Thus, the racialized choices (Dorow 2006b) adoptive parents make is a product of *racial triangulation*, but they also reify the racial hierarchy in a way that reproduces white attitudes that "recycle" and "legitimate" their prejudices against Blacks (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006) and positions Asians as a racial group that is more capable of assimilating to white dominant culture, while still maintaining the image of its foreignness.

2.5 DEFINING FAMILY

Recent family scholars urge us to revaluate how our own understanding of family is formulated (Allen et al. 2000; Coontz 2000). Coontz (2000) admits that her own understanding of family was once limited by the idea of family as "static arrangement"—the traditional nuclear family structure composed with certain sex and gender, racial and ethnic composition. She suggests the importance of rethinking our definition of family by taking historical perspectives into account in our analysis. In her examination of American family from the European colonization period, through the early industrializing economy in the 19th century and the emergence of consumer economy in the early 20th century, Coontz (2000) shows how people organized family to adapt to the changing economic structure and social conditions. Further, she argues that celebrating family diversity beyond the normative family or nuclear family represents recognition by society at-large of the shifting configurations of family. Thus, by holding up family diversity in a positive light, people are able to minimize the vulnerabilities that non-normative families experience.

The notion of the normative family in Western societies, and the United States in particular, has centered on as heterosexual nuclear families that traditionally have been legalized and institutionalized. This notion, for example, was advocated by a number of family scholars during the post World War II period in the United States. A theory of family modernization was developed which argues that modern construction of the nuclear family as part of the "Western cultural model" and a "product of enlightenment progress and democracy" that would spread throughout the industrial and modernizing world (Goode 1963: Laslett 1965). However, in the U.S. history, it is evident that Western values of gender and family patterns were imposed

on indigenous people, which was not reflective of democratic values (Stacey 1996).

Recognizing this contradiction between theories of the superiority of Western families

expounded by post World War II scholars and the way this ideology was imposed

upon certain groups of people, contemporary scholars of family attempt to contest this

normative notion of family.

Based on her fieldwork among working class families, Stacey (1990), for

example, finds that the postindustrial dislocation of job opportunities led them to

struggle to navigate new gender, family and work conditions. These changes in

economy, while causing a shift in gender relations within families as a result of

working class men who were unable to earn enough income to support a full-time

housewife and their children, opened up potential for introducing greater democracy,

equality, and choice as it became necessary for women to contribute financial support

to their families (Stacey 1996). Regarding the increase in divorce rate, falling birth

rates, and rising rates of unmarried parents and step and blended families, Stacey

(1996) portrays them as the condition of pluralism and flexibility, which represents a

possible democratization of gender, sexual, and family relationships.

For the scholars who investigate families of "minority groups" in the U.S., one

of the concerns is that the most of the studies on families of African Americans,

Latina/Latinos, and Asian American are done in ways that reinforce stereotypes of

each group—African American families characterized as fragmented, Latino families

as homogenous, and Asian American families as "traditional." For example, in the

case of African American families, the holistic perspective (Du Bois 1898; Billingsley

1992; Hill 1993; Taylor 2000) should include analyses of the history of the families

that points out to misconception about the quality of family life during and following

the experience of slavery. The holistic perspective also urges scholar of the family to pay attention to recent social economic and political development in relation to patterns of marriage and family composition among African Americans (Taylor 2000). For the analysis of Latino families, Zinn and Wells (2000) argue that several macrostructural conditions such as sociohistorical context, the structure of economic opportunity, and reorganization of global economy as well as immigration, are important because these conditions produce broader family variation among Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and others. Ishii-Kuntz (2000) critiques the persistent trend in studies of Asian American families where they are homogenized by being identified as rooted in Confucianism and argues that we need, instead, to examine the various influences of immigration laws and the history of racial discrimination in order to show diversified Asian American experiences which shape their lives in the United States. The contribution of these studies to the scholarship of family study is the understanding of family formation as a complex social process, which occurs at the intersection of social, economical, political, and legal changes. More specifically, Zinn (1994) urges us to abandon the idea that only one family form is ideal and all others are "cultural variation"; rather, she states that family formation needs to be understood, especially with the recent increase in new immigrants, with attention to how racialized social structure plays an important part in situating families.

While many of these scholars succeed in showing the gap between the complex realities of family and the social, intellectual, and political forces arguing for the normative family form, they do not point to the fact that many people desire to follow the normative path—such as getting married—in forming families. Gay and

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lesbian couples, for instance, desire to form families that are recognized by both the state and various other institutions such as religion, despite the dominant belief that gay and lesbians are inherently "antifamily" on the basis of their nonprocreative sexuality (Weston 1991). Cherlin (2004) points to a contradictory phenomenon in the US where fewer Americans are marrying compared to the peak years in the mid-20th century even as many believe having a good marriage remains an important part of their lives. In the case of transracial adoption, the adoptive parents in the present studies recognize that the racial diversity being incorporated into their own families was not considered "normal" in both legal and social senses until recently. Those parents, though, have a positive attitude about racial diversity within their families. Yet, they desire to hold on to the white middle class normative family values by not choosing to adopt black or mixed race children domestically, which I will discuss in Chapter 6. This tension between accepting diversity and desiring what is considered normative is the space where much of my analysis is focused.

Furthermore, this tension is accentuated with orchestrated facilitation from actors such as states, international/domestic adoption regulations, and adoption agencies in the creation of a new type of family. The desire for the normative family is evaluated by the parents as a lost value in the contemporary US. Thus, these parents travel across national boundaries in search of an ideal child, who, in their imagined domain, can best contribute to creating the family they desire. Putting it in a context of transnational family formation, for example, the relationship between family and nations is one of the important theoretical points that is worthy of discussion (Bryceson et al. 2003). Families and nations can be seen as imagined communities in that in spite of people's inclination to "naturalize " their citizenship of

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one nation state or their sense of belonging to a family, the sense of membership to both nation and family is a matter of choice and negotiation through various exchanges and points of contact (Anderson 1985). The analysis of family and nations as "imagined" provides the sense and tool to look at constructing families as a fluid and flexible process. This aids my study in explaining how those adoptive parents' imagination of children from overseas is made to revive the ideal family value that, in their estimation, has been lost in the United States while their day-to-day observations of families at home discourage them from domestic adoption.

2.6. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The present study shows how families are created outside of the normative way of forming families. These children are adopted transracially and transnationally and this process is rooted in structural changes. At the same time, it shows how the parents desire to maintain socially institutionalized ideas of practicing family life such as building close-knit and child centered families; thus children who are identified with certain racial groups may be excluded from their adoption choice. Furthermore, this study shows a complex interaction between family formation, the celebration of multiculturalism, and race. In other words, this study considers family as a space in which racial meanings are revaluated and racial hierarchy is realized while racially limited multiculturalism is celebrated.

While the analysis of my observation is supported by the theoretical literature discussed in this chapter, the present study aims to show how *racial triangulation* theory can be further extended through the analysis of family formation with transnational adoption. *Racial triangulation*, as discussed by Claire Kim (1999),

argues that the maintenance of white privilege is produced and internalized through triangulating (not merely hierarchizing) historically and culturally constructed racial stereotypes—Asian Americans as "model minority" but foreigners and African Americans as an "inferior" group but Americans (insiders). This explains how some white parents in my study chose to adopt Asian children rather than African American children, based on their assessment that Asian Americans are viewed as a more socially and economically successful minority group, and therefore are more accepted by mainstream society than African Americans are. This often makes their choice to adopt Asian children an easier decision.

While *racial triangulation* gives a helpful theoretical framework for the present study, putting the racially particular choices made by the parents in the context of family formation shows an extension of how the "foreignness" attached to Asian children became not only a "racialized choice" (Dorow 2006b), but also a *desirable* choice in the creation of a family. The foreignness attached to Asian American is translated, in the case of adopting a foreign Asian child, as "baggage free" (Dorow 2006b) where those children can start anew in a new family in a new country as opposed to adopting an African American child whom some white parents consider carry a lot of baggage right here at home. Moreover, the present study shows an interesting "twist" wherein "foreignness" versus "insider" becomes "assimilable" versus "unassimilable." The present study shows how the "foreignness" that Asian children, as well as other foreign children carry, is interpreted by many white parents as something an indication that those children can be more easily included in the process of making a normative American family.

The normative multicultural discourse—embracing differences—plays an important role in a way, which it encourages many interested parents to cross the racial lines when they make adoption choices. It creates a deracialized space where those parents feel safe to adopt a child whose race is different from theirs. Despite the racial difference within their family, the present study shows how parents are committed to creating a normal American family. Although the normative multicultural discourse encourages them in forming multicultural and multiracial families, my study shows some limitations on letting them truly "transcend" race. Many parents in my study anticipate some difficulties envisioning adopting an African American child into their families as opposed to adopting an Asian child. Within the context of family formation through transnational adoption in this study, the foreignness attached to Asian as discussed in *racial triangulation* theory does not only mean that they are outsiders to the American society, but the meaning also extends to "assimilable" where Asian children could easily assimilate to the mainstream white culture and society.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND DATA

3.1 METHODS

In this thesis, I employ three different methods to investigate how people situate race when defining their families. First, I describe the demographic characteristics of children adopted from overseas. I also describe the racial composition of recent households with transnationally adopted children in the U.S., based on data drawn from Census 2000. Second, in order to examine how and to what extent adoption agencies take race and a multicultural issues into consideration when facilitating adoption, I employ ethnographic studies of two adoption agencies and interviews with staff members of the adoption agencies. Third, after conducting interviews with adoptive parents, I analyze how adoptive parents articulate the meaning of race when deciding from where they choose to adopt children.

Employing multiple methods is necessary to examine how changing meanings of race play a role in the formation of adoptive families in the United States for the following reasons. The statistical data drawn from U.S. Census 2000 allows me to observe the pattern of "racial matching" between adoptive parents and their adopted children. Several inferences can be drawn from the data about whether the race of adoptive parents and adopted children have an impact on parents' willingness to form interracial families and also on their decision to adopt domestically or internationally. Such implications play a helpful role when analyzing other questions about the role of adoption agencies and adoptive parents. Another significant characteristic of using the census data in my thesis is the scarcity of adoption studies that draw analyses from census data. The pattern of racial matching between parents and their adopted children shows not only the actual racially specific practice in forming a family, but

also indicates some possible reasons why children of certain races are adopted by American parents.

Consequently, by employing an ethnographic study of adoption agencies and interviews with adoptive parents, I show how changing meanings of race play a role in forming adoptive families, and how interracial adoption through both domestic and international adoption has influenced the institution of the family in the United States. Moreover, conducting an ethnographic study of adoption agencies illuminates how adoption agencies understand and interpret adoption laws and regulations in order to facilitate the adoption processes for the prospective adoptive parents. The participant observation and interview data aids in understanding how agencies construct what constitutes adoptive families, i.e., who can adopt and who will be adopted. The data drawn from the participant observation of the agency-sponsored events and workshops for parents illuminate how adoption agencies use their expertise in the adoption laws and other related issues to educate parents. Furthermore, the interviews illustrate how the agencies promote their own interests through facilitating adoption. Another important aim here is to examine whether transformations of laws, regulations, and the ways in which adoption agencies facilitate adoption have influenced adoptive parents' decisions on which children to adopt and from where. In-depth interviews with the parents are crucial in assessing the significance of children's racial identity as parents ponder the creation of a family through adoption.

3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics of Adoptive Families

The statistical data produced by U.S. Census 2000 offers a demographic

portrait of adopted children and adoptive parents. In 2003, the Census Bureau

published the "Special Report on Adopted Children and Stepchildren." In 2000, for

the first time, the U.S. Census included "adopted son/daughter" as one of the

categories of relationship to the householder; thus it is possible to ascertain whether

children are adopted. The term 'adopted' has a wide-ranging application. It can refer

to the adoption of biologically related and unrelated children, stepchildren, adoption

through private and public agencies, domestic or international adoption, and

independent and informal adoption. The report includes detailed demographic data of

both American-born adopted children and foreign-born adopted children as well as

their adoptive parents. I constructed descriptive statistical data from the report in

order to present a general pattern of the demographic characteristics of adoptive

families in the U.S. that includes age of parents and children, income level of parents,

and education level of parents. The present study also shows a racial matching of

parents and their adopted children among the households that contain children

adopted from overseas. This allows the study to examine whether there is a certain

pattern in how the race of parents are matched or unmatched with the race of their

adopted children.

3.1.1.1 Summary of Census 2000 Report on Adoptive Families

The 2000 census includes various types of adoption in the adoption categories,

such as: adoption of biologically related and unrelated children, adoption of

stepchildren, adoption through private and public agencies, transnational adoptions,

and independent and informal adoptions. However, because of the different

understanding of people as to what constitutes an "adoptive" or "step" parent-child relationship, the data shown in the 2000 census do not distinguish among different types of adoptions except for those who were adopted transnationally. The data includes information on 2.1 million adopted children. The sex ratio of adopted children indicates there are more girls adopted than boys, particularly among children under six years old.

The 2000 Census also collected detailed data of the place of birth of foreign-born adopted children. The special report (Kreider 2003) shows that 257,792 adopted children (13%), out of a total of 2,058,915 adopted children, were foreign born (Kreider 2003). About half (122,899) of the foreign born children were born in Asia (China, India, Korea, Philippines, and Vietnam), about one-third (83,940) in Latin America (Central America, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, South America, and Colombia), and about one-sixth (42,370) in Europe (Russia, Romania, and Ukraine) (Kreider 2003). As for adoption of European-born children, about 10% of all adopted children were over 18 and over, as opposed to 27% for those under 6 (Kreider 2003), which suggests that cases of European adoption may have increased in recent years. A large proportion of European children adopted under the age of six were from Russia and Romania. The increase of adopted children under 12 might have been associated with the dissolving of the Soviet Union, which has resulted economic and social changes; thus large numbers of children might have become available for adoption (Selman 2000).

Among Asian countries, the largest single-country source of foreign-born adopted children was Korea providing 22% of all foreign adopted children. It is significant that about three percent of all adopted children were born in China but

28% of those are under age six compared to 15% among Korean born children. This suggests that there might have been a rapid growth in the adoption of Chinese children in the late 1990s, which could also be indirectly related to the enforcement of the one-child policy in China (Johnson 2002; Johnson, Banghan, and Liyao 1998). In 1991, there were only 61 U.S. entry immigrant visas issued to Chinese orphans, but the number of visas issued increased to 5,053 in 2000 and 7,906 in 2005 (U.S. Department of State 2006). Among Latin American countries, the largest source country was Mexico. About one third of all children adopted from Latin America were of Mexican origin (Kreider 2003). However, only between 50 and 200 immigrant visas were issued to Mexican children per year during the 1990s and 60 to 110 between 2000 and 2005 (U.S. Department of State 2006).[6] It is unclear what precisely this indicates, but one possible answer to this is that relatives may have adopted many of Mexican children informally.

As for "Disability Status", it is important to note that 150,451 adopted children out of 1,279,174 (age 5 to 17) are marked as having at least one disability (Kreider 2003). The definition of "Mental disability," as 132,700 are marked, includes a person who has difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating. This category contains the highest number across stepchildren and biological children; therefore, this could be an indication that having a mental disability is not necessarily a unique characteristic among adopted children.

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[6]. According to the "Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Services" of 2003, 2004, and 2005 (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services), there are an increasing number of children from Guatemala. This indicates that Guatemala has become a major sending country among the Latin American countries since 2000.

The 2000 census provides information about socioeconomic characteristics of the households that contain adopted, biological and step children. It indicates that 33.6% of adopted children who are under 18 lived with householders who earn more than $75,000 annually compared to 25% of stepchildren and 27% of biological children (Kreider 2003). This may be an indication that only householders who have relatively high incomes are able to pay the high cost of transnational adoption processes. Accordingly, the educational attainment of the parents of adoptive children is higher than that of stepchildren and biological children—33.4% of householders with adoptive children have bachelor's and/or graduate degree compared to 15.7% of householders with stepchildren and 25.8% of householders with only biological children (Kreider 2003).

3.1.2 Field Research

While the investigation of published documents can provide insight into the varied aspects of adoption, analyses of specific settings and "actors", as Miles et al. (1994) suggests, puts flesh on the bones of general constructs and helps to define the interaction of those constructs. To illuminate the experience of adoptive parents' decision process, the core of my research is based on four interviews with the staff of two adoption agencies and thirty-four in-depth interviews of adoptive parents. Qualitative research methods, however, have to be designed and derived from pre-acquired knowledge, concepts, and framework (Ragin 1994). The descriptions derived from the US Census data along with the analyses of secondary sources became the important backbone in conducting the participant observations and

interviews. The ethnographic and interview data complement the census data in analysis of the specific parent/child racial matching patterns.

Family formation through marriage, divorce, remarriage, and having children biologically, adoption, and/or step parenting is a process that is just as vulnerable to social, economic, and political changes as any other social phenomenon. Part of the dynamism of families with transnationally adopted children is shown through the US Census data. Another goal of this research is to learn and gain knowledge on the participants' views in regards to the "subjective meanings of experiences." Those distinct experiences and their subjective interpretation will vary depending on participants' historical and cultural background (Cresswell 2003).

The components of my ethnographic fieldwork consist of participant observations of two whole day agency sponsored workshops, one whole day agency sponsored family event, and a nationwide conference for adoption professionals in 2005. Participant observation is usually defined as an observer fully immersed into a particular social setting where he/she learns about the daily lives of others with and emphasis on the systemic learning of people's mundane experiences while being a part of a society (Emerson et al. 1995).

My aim, however, in this study is not to understand what agency staff and parents experience in their day-to-day life. Rather, it is to unpack in what ways adoption decisions made by the parents are—partially or substantially—influenced by adoption agencies. That is, the decision to adopt from abroad should not be understood as being solely managed by parents. Adoption agencies—often they are, in essence, adoption brokers—are integral to creating the environment and mindset in

which parents will make their decision. Specifically, the agencies play a key role in regards to how they talk about race framed within a discourse of multiculturalism.

Therefore, the sites selected for my participant observation are more event-oriented than sites such as agency offices where I would have observed what happens in the offices every day. In the agency sponsored workshops, I was able to observe how the agency staff conveys what they regard as important issues related to adoption decisions to prospective adoptive parents and how the parents as a group participated in the workshops. Through participation in the agency-sponsored family event, I was able to observe culture specific programs the agency planned according to which countries the children (as event participants) are adopted. At the nationwide conference for adoption professionals, I, as a conference participant, took intensive notes about how the international adoption issues are framed nationally through meetings with the representatives from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and country specific adoption programs. Additionally, I learned adoption professionals' concerns about the issues through panel discussions and conversations over lunch, breaks, and dinners. The meanings of all these observations and experiences as a participant researcher did not come clear just by "being there." My interpretation of these "experiences as data" came together through engagement in the simultaneous activities of observation, writing, and thinking on the series of workshops, events, and conferences. In all the observations, I made my position as a researcher very clear to whoever was interested in knowing who I was. However, I admit that the distinction between "them and I" sometimes became blurred, particularly when I was with the agency staff during the

workshops. Even then, however, the distinction remained, for the most, clearly defined.

Interviews as unstructured yet sociologically directed conversations with the agency staff and the parents are integral parts of this project. The interviews are necessary in placing the research on the path to locating and understanding how the articulation of race and racial identity intersect with family formation via adoption. The merit of employing unstructured open-ended interviews is that the setting provides respondents some freedom to tell "their story" from their own interpretation of topics (Hakim 2000). Though the content of the interviews was guided by me, giving my respondents some flexibility was particularly important for this part of research for two major reasons. One concerns the respondents revealing their private experiences to the stranger. A substantial part of the interviews had to do with my respondents talking about their journeys through their adoption process. For example, based on my limited knowledge about people who wish to adopt, it is common for them to experience infertility which I imagined would be hard for many people to talk about. Therefore it was important to give them as much flexibility as possible so that they could feel comfortable enough to talk about some difficult issue if they choose to do so.

Another reason has to do with the fact that this project is primarily about race. There are different approaches to race and ethnicity among scholars that there has been hardly a consensus in terms of the definition of the terms (Cornell and Hartmann 2003). Since it was virtually unknown to me how my respondents would approach the topic of race and ethnicity, I had to rely on methods employed in some of the recent studies. For example, Bonilla-Silva (2001) conducted both surveys and in-

depth interviews to examine how racism still exists in the post-civil rights era. In his

intricate analysis of his respondents' stories, Bonilla-Silva argues that whites did not

express racial prejudices overtly, but rather, they were uttered in quite nuanced ways,

which he contextualizes with social, political, and economical changes. Therefore,

the stories he inserts as direct quotations in his study are the significant data for the

readers to understand how the expression of racism has been transformed in the

United States.

In their studies of recent transnational/racial adoption, Dorow (2006a and

2006b) and Shiao et al (2004) use in-depth interview data to show how the racialized

choices (Dorow 2006a and 2006b) adoptive parents make represent the fluidity of the

color line in the United States (Shiao et al 2004). These studies are the driving force

for the present project as I aim to contribute to existing studies on transnational

adoption. The stories given by my respondents are not merely racialized discourses,

rather, they are descriptions of their actions through adoption which, in turn, may be

influenced by racialized discourses surrounding their every day lives. Keeping in

mind the scarcity of studies that look at race and transnational adoption, it is

unfortunately, at this point, a difficult task to develop reliable survey questions to

systematically understand adoptive parents' attitudes toward adopting interracially

and/or internationally.

3.1.2.1 Adoption Agencies

For this phase of the study, I conducted in-depth interviews with the staff of

adoption agencies that I had identified through careful investigation of online

descriptions of the agencies. My aim was to identify adoption agencies that facilitate

transnational adoption for families living in a state in the Midwest. The rationale

behind limiting the research site to one state rests on the variations between adoption laws and regulations across states. To keep the contexts of the study as consistent as possible, it was necessary to select two agencies that dealt with the same state-specific adoption laws and regulations.

The two selected agencies were an Agency in a Small City (ASC) and an Agency in a Major Metropolitan Area (AMMA). Since I had no prior networking experiences with any adoption agencies, I started out from the local phone book to identify several agencies that specialize in both domestic and international adoption. In order to gain as much knowledge about the agencies as possible, I focused on those that provided their web addresses. I contacted ASC by email to request a short meeting. Fortunately, I was able to meet with three social workers and they allowed me to observe their workshops. As my fieldwork with ASC ended, I started my internet search to make a list of potential agencies for my study site in a major metropolitan area. AMMA is a well-known and highly regarded agency in the area. Meanwhile, I had a chance to meet with a pediatrician who specialized in internationally adopted children's health. He mentioned AMMA and suggested I talk with one of their social workers. After contacting the social worker the pediatrician had mentioned, I was referred to another social worker, who worked closely with prospective parents from the beginning of the process. Although AMMA was more formal and restrictive than ASC, they were very helpful in permitting me to attend their workshop and helped with recruitment of parents for the interviews.

I selected these two agencies in the same state with an intention to compare how similarly and differently these agencies articulate the meaning of race and multiculturalism when they talk to parents at informational meetings and other

workshops they conduct. In addition to conducting interviews with the agency staff I attended several workshops organized for prospective adoptive parents with the agencies' permission. I obtained blank forms that the agencies require prospective parents to fill out for facilitating the adoption process (See Appendices A, B, C, D, and E).

3.1.2.2 Adoptive Parents

To carry out in-depth interviews with adoptive parents, I used a *within-case sampling strategy*. Qualitative research usually works with small samples of people and sampling strategies, for qualitative research tends to be *purposive* (Kuzel 1992). A *Within-case sampling strategy* allows a researcher to choose specific individual cases such as events, times, and locations when sampling informants, and choices of the specific cases must driven by a conceptual question, not so much by a concern for representativeness (Miles et al. 1994). Since there are differences among adoptive parents such as location of residence, time of adoption, methods of adoption, and countries where their children are adopted from, I limited the cases of the adoptive parents to two cases: those who had completed adoption processes within the previous five years and those who were still in the process by using the services from the adoption agencies that I selected and studied for the project. Therefore, the parents who agreed to share their adoption stories with me were selected on the basis of their ongoing relationships with ASC and AMMA.

The method of sampling parents involved asking the adoption agencies to agree to mail a letter of request for an interview along with a self-stamped postcard for response to adoptive parents who have used their service. This way, I did not identify any of parents until I received postcards indicating they had agreed to

participate in my study. I chose to recruit my respondents this way based on prior

experiences during the preliminary research period. Since I did not know many

adoptive parents, I initially thought of the snow-ball sampling method where you are

referred to your respondents through previous ones already in the sample. As I had

opportunities to meet with a few parents who were referred to me by their friends, it

was clear that they did not seem comfortable sharing their stories with a stranger. It

became apparent that they agreed to meet with me unwillingly, and they had done so

because they were "put on the spot" by their friends and me. It was very important

for this research that my respondents feel willing and comfortable enough to talk to a

researcher without concern about their relationship to the agency and/or my

affiliation.

As adoptive parents contacted me, I scheduled interviews to conduct face-to-

face in-depth interviews with them, which were tape-recorded with the respondents'

consent. Most interviews took place at the respondents' homes but others were done

in public places such as a café, a library, or a restaurant depending on their

preferences. Each interview lasted from one hour and a half to two hours.

3.2 DATA

3.2.1 Two Agencies in Midwest

The Agency in the Small City (ASC) used to facilitate placing domestic

children but in recent years, has only been placing children from overseas. Lisa, the

director of ASC is white and holds LSW degree (Licensed Social Worker).[7] Jennifer

and Dena, ASC staff members, are both white and hold LSW degrees. ASC is a

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[7]. All names from my observations and interviews are pseudonyms.

direct child placement agency which has a relationship with governmental entities and agencies abroad. This means that ASC has a responsibility to work with families from the very beginning of the process all the way through to the placement of the child. ASC facilitates transnational adoption, mainly from South Korea, China, Ukraine, and The Philippines, but provides *home study services* for families that adopt domestically and for families that adopt from countries outside of ASC's network. Home study is required by states to ensure prospective adoptive parents are fit to be adoptive parents. It is conducted by licensed social workers who visit prospective parents' homes to inspect houses as well as interview the parents. ASC facilitates about 50 to 80 adoptions per year. ASC holds monthly orientation meetings for parents to provide them with general information about the agency and their adoption programs. They also hold cultural workshops twice a year for parents who are already in the adoption process.

The Agency in a Major Metropolitan Area (AMMA) facilitates both domestic and transnational adoption. AMMA's domestic infant adoption program has a long history, but their transnational adoption program is relatively new. AMMA directly places children from only a few countries, but they also help parents to choose a country that fits their needs and interests, and can refer them to a direct placement agency that specializes in that country if they don't place children from there. This agency places about two hundred children per year, including both domestic and transnational children. At AMMA, I interviewed Pam, one of the adoption program directors who is white and is a licensed professional counselor (LPC).[8]

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[8]. A request for interviews with other staff members was denied by AMMA. However, the program director generously provided me with most of information including written documents.

At both agencies, I conducted participant observations of the agency sponsored workshops for the parents who used the agencies' services. At ASC, I attended one of the cultural workshops that they required the parents to attend. It was a whole day event consisting of presentations by adoption specialists as well as adoptive parents who had adopted children from overseas through ASC. At AMMA, I attended their informational workshop, which parents who are at the very beginning of the adoption process are required to attend. This was a full day workshop with activities and several speakers. At this workshop all the presentations about adoption related issues were conducted by the AMMA's social workers. The speakers were all adoptive families and adult adoptees, who were requested to participate by AMMA.

I conducted the interviews with Lisa, Jennifer, and Dena from ASC separately. I met with Lisa and Jennifer in their office at ASC, but I met with Dena at her house upon her request. I interviewed Pam in her office at AMMA. Each interview lasted between one hour and a half and two hours. The interviews with them were unstructured with several questions that I prepared prior to the interviews. The intent of the questions was to have the interview touch upon important themes of the research. The questions were as follows:

-What is the role of adoption agencies in both domestic and international adoption?

-What services does your agency provide regarding adoption?

-What is involved with domestic/international adoption?

-How have you been coping with adoption regulations (both domestic and international) when working with prospective parents?

-How do you and other social workers in your agency work to assist parents decide what type of adoption (domestic or international? Which country?) they should pursue?

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The interviews did not necessarily follow the above order, but each question was dealt with for considerable amount of time.

3.2.2 A National Conference: Joint Council on International Children's Services

Both ASC and AMMA agencies are members of the Joint Council of International Children's Services (JCICS). JCICS is a membership organization that plays a mediatory role for and among member agencies, medical professionals, USCIS, foreign ministries, and the U.S. Congress for implementing successful transnational adoption. I attended JCICS' 2005 annual conference in Washington D.C. ASA and AMMA staff members also attended the conference. There were more than 200 members, mostly adoption professionals, who attended the conference. JCICS organized panel sessions separately with representatives from the U.S Congress, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and the US Department of State. The conference also organized several panel sessions regarding a variety of issues such as how to educate parents about transracial family and legal issues.

3.2.3 Parents and Children

Thirty-five sets of parents (62 individuals) participated in the study—16 from ASC and 19 from AMMA. All parents were white and their ages ranged from 28 to 47. Twenty-six of them were heterosexual couples and married at the time of interview, and both parents were present during the interviews. Five sets of parents were married at the time of interview, but only one parent participated in the study.

Three parents were single mothers. One lesbian couple participated in the study, and both of the parents were present during that interview as well. About 70 percent of the participants were over 35 at the time of interviews. All were college graduates with professional jobs; several hold post-graduate degrees. Because I wanted to keep the interviews unstructured and conversational, I did not ask about the parents' annual income, but based on my observation of their homes and neighborhoods, it would be safe to say that they were well-to-do families. One of the suburbs where five families that participated in the study live, for example, has a mean income above $120,000 and a median income of $95,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

About 44.7% of the parents adopted children from Russia, 23.4% from China, and 14.9% from South Korea. A small percentage of parents adopted from Ukraine, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Columbia (See Table 2). About 27 percent of all adoptive parents who participated in the study had one to three biological children at home prior to adopting children from abroad. The single parents in this study adopted from Guatemala, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine because these are the countries that allow single parents to adopt.

With the intent of avoiding the creation of a rigid and structured interviewing atmosphere, at the beginning of the each interview, I talked about myself including the research, and assured my respondents that they could ask anything about me as well. I also discussed what I would like them to talk first about, which was to have them explain how they decided to adopt their child or children. This was usually a good way to break the ice as well as to figure out how and which order I should cover the themes I prepared (Fontana and Frey 2008). Below are the themes that each interview was conducted around:

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-What are your reasons to adopt?

-Have you considered domestic adoption? If yes, what were the reasons why
  you did not pursue it?

-What were your reasons to adopt internationally? How did you come to
  decide which country to adopt from?

-How have your experiences working with your agency been?

-Did you consider the differences between yourself and your child—such as
  race, ethnicity, and culture—when you were trying to decide where to
  adopt your child from? How do you feel about those differences now?

-What are the important factors for you in creating a good upbringing
  environment for your child/ren?

-Have your ideas of "family" changed from the pre-adoption to the post-
  adoption experiences?

-General information about the parents—their age, education, and occupation.

-General information about the children—their country of origin, age, and the
  year of adoption).

As each of the interviews was being transcribed, I read the each one of them

carefully to construct some analytical themes in order to code the transcriptions. The

themes for coding include:

1. Race

2. Multiculturalism

3. Domestic vs. International

4. Views on Agency's Education

5. Humanitarianism

6. Reflection of Religious Belief

7. Regulations

8. Views on Family

These themes are derived from a simultaneous process of rereading the transcriptions against theoretical issues presented in the literature on adoption, race, and multiculturalism. Once the transcriptions were coded, I grouped some of the quotations that were to be included in the text accompanied with my analyses. This process was all done through my interpretations of the interview texts and secondary sources as I attempted to make sense of the stories presented to me (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). Lastly, my most challenging methodological goal in this study was where to situate the children in the stories. Although this study does not include adopted children as respondents, they were talked about in the workshops and in the interviews with the social workers and the parents. They were very much "present" throughout my research. This research is about family formation through adopting children. Through my interpretation and writing, it is my hope to make these children as visible as possible.

CHAPTER 4: RECENT PATTERNS OF ADOPTION IN THE UNITED STATES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When parents decide to adopt a child, they usually consider a constellation of factors that help them choose which path to take for creating a new family. In recent years, information on types of children for both domestic adoption and transnational adoption has been accessible to parents from adoption agencies and sources on the Internet. For many parents, adopting a child who is available domestically may be an important factor. Many others may consider a waiting period of adoption, race, age and/or gender as the most important attributes of their prospective adopted children, and they might not be so intent on adopting domestically. Choices that adoptive parents make can vary from same-race or different-race adoption to domestic or transnational adoption. White prospective parents, for example, who initially wish to adopt a healthy white infant domestically, may turn away from this choice eventually upon discovering a seemingly an indefinite waiting list. These parents, then, may feel adopting a white infant domestically is not the only important factor, but having a definite deadline may become more important as they learn that is usually a case for transnational adoption. Moreover, whether parents prefer an infant, toddler, or older child might influence their decision on adopting their child domestically or transnationally, based on an assumption parents make that children available for domestic adoption tend to be older. However, it is not necessarily reasonable to assume that parents can adopt infants through transnational adoption programs.

Since transnational adoption has become more popular over the last 20 years, one can imagine that the characteristics of adoptive families might now look different

than they did in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, between 1997 and 2003, the number of children adopted from foreign countries by American parents almost doubled (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2003; U.S. Citizenship and immigration Services 1997). Table 3 shows the growth of transnationally adopted children from four major sending countries—Russia, China, South Korea, and Guatemala.

Nevertheless, demographic information on adoptive families in the United States is not very abundant compared to information that is widely available on families with biological children, families with stepchildren, and single parent families. Until the 1990s the data available on adoptive families in the United States were compiled at the state level and also by collecting information from adoption agencies throughout the country (Flango and Flango 1993). Also, for a long time, "natural-born son/daughter" and "stepson/stepdaughter" were the only categories of the child's relation to householder included in U.S. census data. The 2000 U.S. census included, for the first time, "adopted son/daughter" as one of the response categories of the relationship-to-the-householder item, and the 2000 census has now become the principal source of data on adopted children and their households on a national level (Kreider 2003). This chapter illustrates demographic characteristics of adoptive families in the United States based on the data taken from the 2000 census. The important implication of laying out demographic characteristics of adoptive families for the present research is that the adoptive parents and their adopted children discussed in this research very well adhere to the characteristics described of the general population in this chapter.

The following section illustrates some of the patterns of adoption including characteristics of adopted children. The first subsection shows the geographical pattern of adoption, which demonstrates the proportion of adopted children among all children in households by four regions—Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. It shows that the Midwest, the chosen region for this study, contains a relatively high proportion of adopted children under the age of 18. The second subsection shows the proportion of adopted children by different age groups, as age of children may be an important factor for parents' decision regarding from where to adopt their child. The third subsection shows the racial distribution of adopted children. The racial distribution of adopted children can indicate what race of children is both available and desirable for adoption placement in the United States.

The third section of the chapter examines whether the race of adopted children matches with the race of their adoptive parents. The first subsection describes the measurement of race in the census and the important changes instituted for the 2000 Census regarding race. I will also discuss some of the possible implications of the racial and ethnic identifications the respondents report. But in the case of identifying race of all household members, the parents, needless to say, not only report their own race, but also report their children's race. This gives an indication that the parents acknowledge their self-identification of race, one of the salient social categories in the United States, as well as their children's. The second subsection shows a possible indicator of a change in recent adoption practice in that the adoptive parents do not necessarily adopt children of the same race. The results shown in this section clearly illustrate the parents' racial preference. The racial matching table shown in this chapter indicates while many white parents prefer to match their race with their

adopted children's, a considerable proportion of white parents adopted Asian children. Since the number of non-white children adopted is skewed toward Asian children as compared to Blacks and Hispanics, there needs to be further investigation on how foreign Asian children are preferred by White parents in the United States, which I will delve into further in Chapter 6.

4.2 THE PATTERN OF RECENT ADOPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOPTED CHILD

4.2.1 The Geographic Pattern of Adoptive Children

There has not been much study on the variation in a number of adoption cases according to different regions in the U.S. My study focuses on adoptive families in the Midwest. Based on my ethnographic study in the Midwest, it is apparent that there is an emergence of adoptive family communities. Also, the number of adoption agencies in the Midwest may be an indication that adoption has become one of the growing strategies for parents to form a family. For example, Illinois is one of the states in which a greatest number of agencies facilitate adoption, third only to New York and California.[9] There are 93 licensed private adoption agencies in Illinois, which had population of 12,852,548 in 2007, compared to 101 agencies in New York (19,297,729 total population) and 125 agencies in California (36,563,215 total

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[9]. According to the membership listing of Joint Council on International Children's Services (http://www.jcics.org/Membership_Directory.htm), the most numbers of JCICS member adoption agencies that facilitate transnational adoption concentrate on three states – New York (19), California (18), and Illinois (13).

population) (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services 2007; New York Adoption Services 2008; California Department of Social Services 2008).[10]

Table 4 shows the percentages of total children and adopted children in four major regions in the U.S.—Northeast, Midwest, South and West. The percentages of adopted children by region are almost identical to that of total children, which indicates that adoption is a family formation strategy that takes place in all regions in similar proportions. However, the percentage of adopted children in Midwest (24.53%) is slightly higher than its percentage of total children (23.56%), while the percentages of adopted children in the other regions are slightly lower than the percentages of total children. As previously mentioned, Illinois has the third largest number of adoption agencies placing internationally of all US states. But the California and New York (the Western and the Eastern regions), in which more agencies are located, do not surpass the proportion of adopted children in the Midwest. Although it is difficult to grasp how transnational adoption has influenced the number of adoptions by region since such information is not available yet, the Midwest—the area focused for the present research, is a certainly significant site to study family formation through transnational adoption.

4.2.2 The Age of Adopted Children

Availability of adoptable children according to different ages may influence from where parents decide to adopt. Furthermore, the age of adopted children can lead to racial preference among adoptive parents on their prospective adopted

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[10]. The total populations of Illinois, New York, and California are taken from U.S. Census Bureau Population Finder (http://www.census.gov).

children. For example, White parents are likely to face the relative scarcity of white infants in the domestic adoption market (Carp 2002; McRoy 1983; Melosh 2002; Simon and Altstein 2002). Those parents, then, might steer their interest toward adopting from abroad, where there often are healthy infants available for adoption. Thus, the age of adopted children is one important factor among the constellation of many other reasons that lead parents to form transracial/transnational families. [11]

Table 5 shows the age distribution of all adopted children, domestically adopted children, and transnationally adopted children. Although the age distributions of the domestically adopted and transnationally adopted children are quite similar, the percentage of transnationally adopted children in the under 6 years category is slightly higher (31.7%) than the all adopted children of the same age groups (23.5%). In fact, among transnationally adopted children, the modal age category is under six years old, whereas for domestic adoptions, the modal age category is six years old to 11 years old.

As I noted above, the age distribution across the three groups is very similar. It is intriguing, however, that the difference between the percentage of domestically adopted children who are under 6 years of age (23.5%) and that of transnationally adopted children (31.7%) is relatively sharper than the other age group categories. This may be because transnational adoption is a relatively new practice compared to domestic adoption, and many children from overseas are adopted before their second birthday. Starting in the early 1990s, there was an increase in the number of

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[11]. See Ishizawa, Hiromi, Catherine T. Kenney, Kazuyo Kubo, and Gillian Stevens. (2006). "Constructing Interracial Families through Intercountry Adoption." *Social Science Quarterly*. In this article we argue that there are many different factors parents consider such as age, gender, and health of children when they decide which children to adopt.

transnationally adopted children (U.S. Department of State 2006), and parents who

faced the scarcity of healthy white infants turned to adoption from abroad where they

could find healthy children who would mostly be toddlers at a time of adoption. This

may have factored into a relatively higher percentage for transnationally adopted

children who were under six years of age. Based on the information I collected from

the interviews with the parents, the age of most of their children when they were

adopted was relatively young—from about 14 months to two years old. But in my

small of pool of informants, there was a pattern depending on the countries from

which those children were adopted.

For example, the children who were adopted from South Korea and China

were under two years old when adopted, but those that were adopted from Russia

tended to be older than six years old. In the case of my study, five sets of the parents

who used the service from Agency in a Small City (ASC) for the completion of the

adoption process, were also connected to an organization that specializes in the

adoption of older Russian children. Thus, it is difficult to say that those parents who

chose to adopt from foreign countries did so because they desired relatively younger

children.

4.2.3 Race of Adopted Children

Since about 16 percent of all adopted children are transnationally adopted

children, it is likely that families created through transnational adoption contributed to

an increase in transracial families. The racial characteristics of children adopted from

abroad are very different from those adopted domestically. As Table 4 shows, many

of the children adopted from abroad are Asian, 50% compared to 7% of all adopted

children. Table 6 provides distributions of both all adopted children and foreign-born adopted children by race.[12] In accordance with the categorizations of race used in US Census data, the race of children is grouped as White, Black, American Indian and Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races.[13]

When racial distribution of foreign-born adopted children is compared with that of all adopted children, the most noticeable difference is the percentages of Asian adopted children. The percentage of Asian children among all adopted children is 7.64%, but it becomes 50.34% when we look at the racial distribution of only foreign-born adopted children. This shows that by 2000, about a half of all foreign-born adopted children were adopted from Asian countries. This might be an indication of how the recent institutionalization of transnational adoption in China and South Korea has allowed more parents to adopt from these countries. On the other hand, the percentage of white children among all adopted children is 64.17%, but among only foreign-born adopted children the percentage is only 25.24%. This pattern shows that white children are preferred by adopted children for both domestic and transnational adoption. However, when parents steer their interest toward transnational adoption, they adopt overwhelmingly more Asian children. This does not mean that parents' preferences shift completely from white children to Asian children. Rather, this could be an indication of other attributes of children such as age, gender, and health that are important to consider for adoptive parents. Nevertheless, the shift might suggest that

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[12]. The racial distributions of foreign adopted children are drawn from the research undertaken by Hiromi Ishizawa, Catherine Kenney, Kazuyo Kubo and Gillian Stevens.
[13]. The number of adopted children for both as the total and the foreign adopted is very small, thus, it is combined with the number of Asian adopted children.

white adoptive parents generally prefer to adopt white children, but when they gear their decision away from domestic adoption, many adoptive parents are faced not only with other characteristics of children to consider, but also with different levels of bureaucratic process according to different countries.

The percentage of black children for all adopted children is 16.03% and 2.17% for foreign-born adopted children, considerably lower than the percentages of white children for both "all adopted" and "foreign-based" adopted children. When compared with Asian children, however, there are about twice as many black children adopted among all adopted children, whereas, there are very small numbers of black children adopted transnationally compared to Asian children. As previously discussed, this might have something to do with the recent institutionalization of Chinese and South Korean adoption in the United States. Since about 16 percent of all adopted children are transnationally adopted children, it is likely that families created through transnational adoption contributed to a greater number of transracial families. The percentages of Hispanic adopted children remain very similar between 13.61% of all adopted and 18.30% of foreign-born adopted children. The racial distribution of adopted children in my data for the present research turned out to be unrepresentative of the general population. The children from adopted from Asia (China and South Korea) in my data comprise only 38% of the total, whereas, the children adopted from the former Soviet Union regions (Russian, Ukraine, Kirghizstan, and Azerbaijan), assuming most of their adoptive parents would identity them as "white," comprise 55.3%. As discussed in Chapter 3, my informants were not randomly selected, thus, it is difficult to conclude whether people in the region I studied are likely to adopt from the former Soviet Union countries. However, the total number of households adopted

from Asia (n=15) almost equals the number of households adopted from the former

Soviet Union countries (n=16). This is because many parents adopted multiple

numbers of children including siblings from Russia.

4.3 RACIAL COMPOSITION OF ADOPTIVE FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES

4.3.1 The Measurement of Race and Self-Report of Racial Category in the Census

The category of race in the census has stirred up many debates among policy

makers, scholars, and activists. It is a representative of the complexity and fluidity of

race and ethnic relations in the United States, and the official categories established in

the census definitely influence the way people perceive the divisions amongst people

based on their race (Snipp 2003). The measurement of race often becomes an

important issue, particularly among social scientists who work with large-scale

surveys such as the census, because the racial characteristics of the respondents are an

integral part of studying various social inequalities including income, employment,

and education. In addition, in the census, for example, the racial category is

significant for the understanding of a household's racial composition.

The racial category employed in the census has been subject to a series of

modifications ever since the census was first established in 1870.[14] To highlight one

particular moment, for example, the Civil Rights movement, especially after the

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[14]. At that time, each black slave counted as three-fifths of a white person, which continued until the
1890 Census. In that same census, "Chinese" and "Japanese" became official categories subsequent to
passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. In 1900, the subdivision of "free or slave" for the black
population ended. In 1930, the census established the one-drop rule for blacks and in 1940 Mexicans
were subsumed under White, which is a reflection of Mexican-American leaders' efforts to not count
them as an ethnic minority (Snipp 2003).

Voters Rights Acts in the 1960s, pushed for stronger minority representation in the political arena. At the same time, the government relied on the census data to institute programs to combat poverty, housing segregation, and employment discrimination. As a part of these efforts, the 1970 census integrated a racial profile of the United States—including blacks, whites, the Spanish-origin populations—with other social characteristics of these groups, whereas racial data had previously been reported separately from other social characteristics (Snipp 2003).

Another major shift in the measurement of racial categories occurred in 1977 when the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed Directive 15. Directive 15 mandated all federal agencies to employ the following categories: non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanics, Asian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan native (Farley 2002; Snipp 2003). By the 1990s, the social impact of this revision was clearly significant, as the new racial measurement was widely used not only at the every level of government but at other institutions as well;. There were growing concerns about the inadequacy of the categories, especially for the collection of data on multiracial individuals, Arab Americans, and individuals of Hispanic origin (Farley 2002; Snipp 2003). After a period of data gathering and recommendations from advocacy organizations, in 1997, the OMB announced a major modification in the racial categories to be used from Census 2000, which would now allow individuals to check all racial identities that apply to them (Farley 2002). Six major categories were used in Census 2000: "White," "Black or African American," "American Indian and Alaska Native," "Asian," "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander," and "Some other race." (Grieco and Cassidy 2001). A category, Hispanic origin was treated as ethnicity rather than race. In the OMB's definition, Hispanic

and Latino are described as "as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (Grieco and Cassidy 2001). The data of the racial characteristics of adoptive parents and their adopted children presented in this chapter, therefore, shows the 6 major racial categories ("Asians" and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander" are merged due to the small number of the latter and "Two or more races" is also included) separated from "Hispanic or Latino of Any Race."

The brief background of the shifts in the racial categories in the census above indicates how construction of the categories mirrors the social climate of the each era regarding racial relations in the Unites States. Not only have the census's racial categories been modified with the impact of the racial and identity politics of different times, the prescribed categories have also influenced the way people articulate how individuals are grouped into different racial categories. One of the ways this process may have been accentuated was through instituting the self-report practice of identifying one's race in the census. Beginning with the 1960 census, the practice of self-report has been used to collect information of individuals' race due to an undercount of non-white population in the 1940 and 1950 censuses and a great improvement in coverage of and the efficiency of counting has been noted (Snipp 2003).

Another important implication of the self-report practice in the census and many other social surveys is how people define and categorize themselves in terms of racial identity. Whereas, in the earlier system the racial categorization of a person was recorded through the enumerator's observations and based on phenotypical appearances such as the person's skin color, hair texture, and other features, the self-

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report practice could very well represent "a manifestation of cultural affiliation and other deeply held personal considerations beyond the pale of conventional demographic inquiry" (Snipp 2003: 570). Moreover, the selection practice of one's racial designation can involve his/her self evaluations of their own skin color, culture, ideology and/or external treatment (e.g. discrimination) when aligning themselves with the groups in American society where race and ethnicity play a salient role in forming one's identity; thus, it is important to study which racial groups individuals believe they belong to in order to understand racial identity formation (Hitlin, Brown, and Elder 2007).

The following section shows racial matching of adoptive parents and their adopted children. Most of the adoptive parents in the data are white, as identified by either themselves or by the head of their household, who is likely to be their spouse. But the race of their adopted children (under age 18) is most likely externally defined by their adoptive parents. Therefore, the data shows an intriguing picture of racial matching of self-defined parents' race and externally defined children's race. This may indicate that parents were aware that they created either a racially matched family or a multiracial family at least at a time when they reported their races in the census form. What the data in this chapter does not show is how those parents articulated the meaning of the existing racial groups when they decided to adopt their children. I wish to fill this gap in Chapter 6 where I present my discussion of the interview data with the adopted parents.

4.3.2 Racial Matching of Parents and Children in Adoptive Families

The results in this section are drawn from the data compiled from the 2000 census Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 5% file (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2003). While the data drawn for the previous sections includes both domestically and transnationally adopted children, the data used for this section extracts only households that contain transnationally adopted children. The analysis sample consists of foreign-born[15] children, aged between 0 to 17, whose relationship to their householders is "adopted son or daughter." Therefore, this sample consists mostly of internationally adopted children. The sample is designed to exclude children of parents who have adopted their spouse's or partner's birth child (that is, adoptions by stepparents) by omitting foreign-born parents. The children of same-sex parents are not included since most of their adoptions are domestic (Pertman 2000). Therefore, children of opposite-sex parents and single-parents are included. This section, thus, shows the recent trend of American adoptive parents' racial preference of children available for transnational adoption.

Adoption is clearly involved in the creation of mixed race families. Table 7 shows that 18% of all adoptive households are composed of children of different race from their parents, while only 9% of all households without adoptive children contain children of a different race from their parents. In terms of ratio, this means that one in five of all households with adopted children contain children of a different race whereas approximately 1 in 11 of all households without adopted children contain children of a different race. Since an increasing number of white parents adopt from

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[15]. Foreign-born children include those who were born abroad to U.S. parents, those born abroad who became naturalized citizens, and those born abroad but not U.S. citizens.

abroad, especially from Asian countries, transnational adoption plays a major role in the creation of racially-mixed adoptive families.

Many adoptive families with children adopted from abroad are transracial families. As Table 8 shows, only 28% of adopted families with transnationally adopted children are same-race families. The rest of the families contain family members whose racial characteristics do not match with others. Among such families, the most common pattern is the racial characteristic of parents match, but their child's do not match with their parents' (57.57%).[16]

Table 9 shows descriptive statistics that compare the race of adopting parents and their adopted children. The majority of adopting mothers and fathers are white, 94 percent and 95 percent respectively. On the other hand, only one-fourth of adopted children are white. Furthermore, about half of adopted children are Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander, and about 18 percent of them are Hispanic. There were only less than two percent of adoptive parents in the each category other than white. Thus, in the United States, at least in 2000, forming families through transnational adoption involves mainly white parents adopting children whose race does not match with their parents'.

In many cases, where the racial characteristic of all family members are identical, the adoptive households contain white parents with white adopted children. If the racial characteristics of family members do not match, parents tend to adopt Asian children versus children of the other racial characteristics. As Figure 2 shows when the race of adopted children and their parents match, the majority of adopted

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[16]. Table 6, Table 7, and Figure 1 are constructed by Hiromi Ishizawa for preliminary research undertaken by Hiromi Ishizawa, Catherine Kenney, Kazuyo Kubo, and Gillian Stevens.

children are white. On the contrary, among children whose race does not match with either the mother or father's race while the mother and father's race match, about 70 percent are Asian, native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander. As for Hispanic adopted children, most are evenly distributed across racial matching categories except for the "child, father, and mother are all matched" category. Among the three other categories, the percentage of adopted children of Hispanic origin ranges from 23 percent to 28 percent.

These results indicate where parents' and their adopted child's race match—the majority of such families are white. The increasing availability of adoptable children from Russian and the Eastern European countries since the beginning of the 1990s may have contributed to this pattern. Among the other families where the parents' race and that of their adopted child do not match, racial distribution of children is not necessarily spread out among non-white races. The racial distribution of adopted children is sharply skewed toward Asians. Within the same category, adopted children of Hispanic or Latino origin came as the second highest. But unlike in the "all match" category where the most of adopted children are white, white adopted children in "parents match but child does not" marked the lowest among the all races of children. This phenomenon coincides with the continuous popularity of adopting children from South Korea as well as the recent increase of children adopted from China and Guatemala (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 1997; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2003). The result from both "all match" and "parents match but child does not" categories show a strong indication that many white parents have a preference to match their race with an adopted child, while the

rapid institutionalization of adoption programs from Asian countries has triggered interest among many parents.

4.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Before Census 2000, studies of adoption suffered from almost non-existent national level data on adoption in the United States. Census 2000 is the first census to inquire in detail about composition of adoptive families, and this chapter presented several aspects of adoptive families including the geographic pattern, age of children, race of children and parents, and racial composition of families formed through transnational adoption in the United States.

Unlike domestic adoption prior to the mid-1950s, in which racial matching between parents and children was practiced under anti-miscegenation laws in many states, the recent institutionalization of transnational adoption allows forming more transracial families in the United States. Transnational adoption has become a more common method of family formation among American parents: the 2000 census reports (U.S. Bureau of Census 2003) that 13 percent of all adoptive families in the United States contain children from abroad. The results presented in this chapter, although they do not give a completely comprehensive view of the pattern of adoptive family formation, show several dimensions of adoptive families in the United States. This chapter mainly illustrates racial aspects of adoptive family formation by examining the extent to which transnational adoption results in the formation of transracial families.

The results suggest that while adoption is practiced throughout every region in the United States, the Midwest shows a slightly higher proportion of adopted children

than the other regions. Although the age distributions of all adopted children and transnationally adopted children are similar, there are 8.2% more transnationally adopted children in the "under 6 years" age group. This may be explained by the emerging popularity of adopting children from overseas such as South Korea and China, where adoptable children are relatively young. The recent increase of transnationally adopted children may have influenced the racial composition of families in the United States. The number of interracial adoptive families is double that of non-adoptive families. This is an indication that race is one of the salient factors for an analysis of adoptive families in the United States.

The Census 2000 special report (Kreider 2003) shows that adoption is mostly practiced by white parents. By focusing on families with transnationally adopted children, the racial matching of adoptive parents and adopted children presented in this chapter suggests that, while white parents are interested in matching their race with a adopted child, there are still many of them who adopt non-white children. Among the parents who adopted children whose race is different from theirs, there was a strong tendency for these children to be adopted from Asian countries. Parents who consider the age of their adopted children as one of the most important attributes and desire to adopt as young child as possible, may opt for adoption from Asian countries where there is a higher availability of younger adoptable children, rather than from Eastern European countries and Russia where children are relatively older.

However, the age of a child does not fully explain why many parents desire to adopt children from Asian countries rather than non-white or interracial children domestically in the United States. There is, indeed, a relative scarcity of healthy white infants available for adoption in the United States, but there are, in fact, many

young black infants and toddlers who are available for adoption through the state, adoption agencies, and also by private placements handled by lawyers. Sixteen percent of all adopted children in the United States were black in 2000 (Kreider 2003), but the recent boom of adopting children from Asian countries may be an indication of a change in the direction of American parents' preference in adoption. This trend may very well be a result of the discourse around domestic adoption and transnational adoption that coincides with the recent changes in laws for both domestic and transnational adoption in the United States, which is a focus of the following chapter. The regulations and discourse around domestic adoption have influenced many parents to turn away from it. On the other hand, as transnational adoption between the United States and several other countries has become more institutionalized, it has provided a more secure path for many parents to have children.

The racial matching tables and figure presented in this chapter should stir up our curiosity about how race plays into formation of families through transnational adoption. It is intriguing that among non-white children, adoptive parents apparently preferred to adopt Asian children than children of other races. While there may be a number of reasons that influence parents' decision to adopt children from Asian countries, it is worthwhile to investigate how transnational adoption is practiced from adoption agencies' points of view and how they "educate" prospective adoptive parents about adopting children from different countries. Thus, the following chapter will discuss how adoption professionals such as adoption agencies and child welfare organizations in the United States have partly shaped discourse on race, racism, and multiculturalism regarding practicing transracial and transnational adoption.

CHAPTER 5: TRANSCENDING RACE? THE DILEMMA OF MULTICULTURALISM IN TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTIVE FAMILY FORMATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

You know, one interesting thing, I thought that might be a little bit negative, but it is amazing to me that to adopt a child you must jump through so many hoops and be approved ... And to be biological [parents], just to have children you don't have to go to a parenting class, you don't have to learn anything.

-Maggie Abbott, Adoptive Mother

Like forming families through transracial marriage, transnational adoption also involves a series of decisions made among adult parties. However, in the case of transnational adoption, intermediary parties—adoption agencies—have a strong presence in the decision process. In order for prospective adoptive parents to complete the transnational adoption process, they need to follow many bureaucratic steps, compile complicated documents, and take required hours of training classes as recommended by the U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services [USCIS] (2005). Given the complex process transnational adoption requires, most transnational adoption placements are facilitated by adoption agencies. This chapter examines how adoption agencies promote adoption from overseas and the parents' perceptions of the adoption process as facilitated by adoption agencies. I will analyze how adoption agencies acquire necessary knowledge to help prospective adoptive parents not only in making their decisions, but also in preparing them for multicultural and multiracial families.

Adoption agencies play crucial roles in implementing transnational adoption procedures for prospective adoptive parents. For example, through private meetings and by workshops, adoption agencies inform prospective parents about the pros and cons of both domestic and transnational adoption and legal issues. For many parents,

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the information they receive through the social workers at the agencies and at the workshops is very important in making their decisions about which children to adopt and from where. The ways in which the adoption agencies inform parents about transnational adoption may add different perceptions or even change parents' ideas of building multiracial and multicultural families.

Some of the major goals of adoption agencies include educating prospective parents in creating the best physical and cultural environment possible for the children's upbringing. Adoption agencies not only assist parents in preparing the physical condition of their houses to meet the state's requirements for foster and adoptive parents, but also teach prospective adoptive parents how important it is to understand and respect the culture of the country in which their child was born. This emphasis on respecting different cultures and equality is an important component of multiculturalism (Mahajan 2002). The main question this chapter deals with, then, is how do racial differences and hierarchy play into the current discussion of multiculturalism through adoption agencies' involvement in facilitating transnational adoption? This is an important question because recent studies on transnational adoption in the U.S. show racial preferences among white parents when they choose to adopt Asian and Hispanic children from overseas (Ishizawa et al. 2006) over Black children available for domestic adoption. (Dorow 2006; Shiao et al. 2004).

In the following section, I will discuss the general roles of adoption agencies in the implementation of transnational adoption procedures. I will also define some specialized terminologies. The third and fourth sections both concern the role of race in multiculturalism discourse for the adoption agencies and the parents. The third section examines how the agencies employ multiculturalism in their training sessions

for prospective adoptive parents. In terms of analyzing race and racism, I contrast presentations given at a conference for adoption professionals with workshops given by two different adoption agencies. The fourth section analyzes how adoption agencies carefully inform prospective adoptive parents about the importance of considering race when parents decide which country to adopt their child from. The fifth section illustrates adoptive parents' perception of the training they received and how they decide to incorporate the idea of multiculturalism into their parenting practices.

In the last section, I revisit major concepts in multiculturalism and discuss how ideas of multiculturalism are incorporated into the adoption agencies' training workshops. I argue that normative perspectives of multiculturalism—embracing differences—provide a convenient and helpful ethos for adoption agencies in promoting transnational adoption to prospective adoptive parents, especially when they discuss race with prospective parents.[17] That is, agencies educate prospective parents about race, but they can be neither too critical nor too dismissive about the existing reality of racism either. This chapter, thus, unpacks multiculturalism by examining the way in which race is incorporated yet obscured in the discourse of multiculturalism. My study of adoption agencies demonstrates how they genuinely try to "transcend race" by relying on the normative multicultural discourse, but they consequently must face the reality of racism, which creates a dilemma between multiculturalism and racism.

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[17]. In this chapter, I distinguish between normative multiculturalism (used in mainstream everyday life) and theoretical analyses of multiculturalism.

5.2 ROLE OF THE AGENCIES

Prospective adoptive parents are required to compile and submit a series of documents for their agency, the state in which they reside, USCIS, and the state of a country they are adopting from. Adoption agencies are required to follow the general regulations of the state they operate in, but states give the agencies the liberty to construct their own application packets, policies, and procedures as long as they are within state regulations (adoption.com 2005).

Depending on which country prospective parents choose, the process of adoption usually takes one year to one and a half years. Jennifer, an ASC (Agency in Small City) staff member, explained that this whole process is similar to going through a nine-month pregnancy because it is emotionally stressful and families must make many arrangements. The documents provided by ASC and the adoptive parents who used AMMA's (Agency in a Major Metropolitan Area) services are extensive and require that prospective adoptive parents go through a number of legal procedures as well as reveal their medical and personal histories.[18] This, indeed, makes it a long journey for prospective adoptive parents and both ASC and AMMA play their role as adoption specialist to guide parents through the process. Here, I will list the documents in the order in which prospective parents complete them.

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[18]. ASC and the adoptive parents I interviewed provided the documents. From ASC, I was able to collect blank application forms their prospective adoptive parents are required to complete. From several parents who used AMMA's services, I obtained sample referrals of a child from different countries, and I received a copy of a home study report for one set of the parents I interviewed. Although the blank forms from AMMA are not available, based on interviews with the adoption director of AMMA and the adoptive parents who used AMMA's services, the formal processes are very similar to those required by ASC. The forms I collected from ASC are available upon request and the copies of documents were voluntarily provided by the prospective parents either during the interview meetings or mailed to me at a later time. All the materials were provided after a consent form was signed.

I. Preliminary Application Form

This is the first form ASC requires prospective parents to fill out. The form not only asks parents' demographic information, it also requires them to give reasons why they want to adopt a child and the type of child they would accept including age ranges, sex, disability, race, and others. This form does not formally begin the process.

II. Formal Application Form

Once prospective adoptive parents contact ASC with their decision to formally proceed, ASC requires them to fill out an application form for transnational adoption. Prospective adoptive parents are asked to list their preferred country(ies) to adopt from. They also have to describe the type of children (age, sex, siblings, and special needs) they feel most comfortable parenting. Whereas the preliminary application form includes child's race, interestingly race is not asked on this form.

III. Home Study

Transnational adoption processes typically involve compiling required information by USCIS, the states of the child's home country, and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of a state where prospective parents reside. Parents typically need to prepare biographical information, medical history, fingerprints for background checks, income and financial verification, and evidence of completion of training sessions for transnational adoption. States require adoptive parents to be licensed as foster homes. Prospective adoptive parents also must prepare a USCIS application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition (Form –600A). This whole process is called home study and the child's

home country requires parents to have all necessary procedures completed and approved by designated governmental entities.

5.3 THE AGENCIES' MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIRACIAL CURRICULUM

The state requires prospective adoptive parents to complete the home study process with an agency. However, state regulations also give agencies the freedom to organize training workshops and to set the numbers of hours of workshops they require prospective adoptive parents to complete (adoption.com 2005). Thus, conducting a series of training sessions is one of the opportunities for the agencies to develop a unique and respectful training agenda to build a good reputation in the community.

Both ASC and AMMA include at least one session on building multicultural and multiracial families. Both agencies require their staff members to be well acquainted with a variety of issues surrounding adoption. All the program directors and social workers I interviewed at both agencies were quite direct when talking about the importance of race in relation to how fit parents are to adopt a child from a different racial background than their own. There seems to be growing focus on providing multicultural and multiracial education on racism. In the section below, I will describe and examine how ASC and AMMA take different approaches in their multicultural and multiracial training sessions.

5.3.1 Multicultural and Multiracial Education: A Workshop for Adoption Professionals

ASC and AMMA agencies were members of the Joint Council of International Children's Services (JCICS). JCICS is a membership organization that plays a mediatory role for and among member agencies, medical professionals, USCIS, foreign ministries and governments, and the U.S. Congress for implementing successful transnational adoption and, most importantly, for protecting the interests of adopted children. Some staff members attended the 2005 annual conference held in Washington D.C. I attended some parts of the conference and observed several sessions. One was a two-hour session on educating parents about building a multicultural and multiracial family. This session was presented by two social workers from Children's Home Society and Family Services (CHSFS).[19]

The presenters emphasized the importance of education on transracial parenting because being different is a key issue for both parents and children. Presenters stressed the existence of a racist society and argued that if parents did not talk about it, it would hurt the parent/child relationship. This was key for CHSFS, where over eighty percent of placements are transracial. At the workshop, which CHSFS requires parents to attend, CHSFS provides "their definition" of race, ethnicity, and culture: "race" is something you are born with such as physical features; "ethnicity" is something you are born into such as religion, geographic origin, language, and food preference; "culture" is something you learn and acquire such as gestures, values, and gender roles. It is intriguing to note here that their

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[19]. From a session entitled "Comprehensive Approach to Educating Families about Transracial Parenting" presented by D. Pilgrim and R. Gibson at Children's Home Society and Family Services in MN. The session was a part of the annual conference of Joint Council on International Children's Services on April 9, 2005 in Washington D.C.

definition of "culture" distinguishes itself from how CHSFS defines "race" and "ethnicity" in that there is not much room left for the trainees (parents) to think of race and ethnicity as socially constructed phenomena. However, their definition of "culture" indicates fluidity of the way in which it is teachable and changeable through learning and acquiring. Therefore, it should give the trainees some hopeful aspects of creating multicultural families.

Most of the participants in the session worked with transracial placement. Presenters emphasized the importance of teaching prospective parents how their family is no longer a "white family," but a "multicultural family." They further argued that parents should not neglect discussions of race with their adopted children, and they teach parents that their adopted children will experience the world differently. For example, they may identify themselves more with their birth culture, their adopted culture, or groups of color. Presenters conveyed a two-fold message: (1) the importance of teaching parents to acknowledge and embrace the differences, but, (2) the parents have to be "color aware, not color blind", and recognize that we live in a society where whites are an advantaged group.

As discussed in the session at the annual conference of JCICS, the directors of both ASC and AMMA strongly believe educating parents is key. Both agencies push parents to embrace differences through conducting workshops and publishing special newsletter issues on transracial parenting. Their educational workshops promote an understanding of different cultures. Consequently, these workshops could reinforce stereotypes by educating parents about family behaviors and cultural patterns of certain racial groups.

5.3.2 The Organization of Training Sessions

5.3.2.1 Agency in a Small City (ASC)

ASC requires all prospective parents who have started their adoption to attend a full-day workshop. At the workshop I attended in 2005, there were approximately one hundred prospective parents, almost all white, grouped according to the different countries from which they were adopting their children: China, South Korea, and Ukraine. The workshop was organized into five main sessions. The first three sessions were organized by the countries the parents planned to adopt from and the final two sessions were conducted with the entire group.

The first session I attended was the China group, which consisted of about two thirds of the workshop attendees. The attendees had to complete homework concerning Chinese culture. As homework, many parents went to Asian grocery stores and Chinese restaurants to explore aspects of Chinese culture. Based on their own interviews, the staff of ASC was keenly aware of the fact that the parents knew little about the country where their children were coming from. Thus, this assignment was ASC's effort to motivate interest in learning about the country.

For the second session, ASC invited speakers from each country. In the Korean session, for example, the purpose of having speakers was to introduce the culture of the countries. The speaker (hereafter referred to as "Dr. Lee") is from South Korea and teaches at a university in Midwest. Dr. Lee devoted most of her talk to contrasting the cultures of Korea and America by referring to her own personal experience as a South Korean woman who settled in the United States. The Ukraine session for this part of training was done in a similar style to the Korean session. For the China session, ASC organized a panel of three speakers.

In the third session of the workshop, the parents were again divided into the separate rooms by different countries. In the Ukraine group, for example, two guest parents, who had adopted their children from Ukraine the previous year, described their experiences when they visited Ukraine to finalize their adoption process.

A professor of Social Work spoke for the fourth session, which was attended by all groups. Some themes of this presentation were: 1) What families do, 2) How adoptive families differ from typical family formation, and 3) What adopted children are conscious about. The last session was on post-placement care. Two specialists on early intervention presented in this session. They talked about when to call for help in relation to child development.

5.3.2.2 Agency in a Major Metropolitan Area (AMMA)

AMMA also requires prospective parents to attend their introductory workshop on adoption. This workshop is a full day program in which social workers from AMMA train prospective adoptive parents on various issues, including openness in adoption, entitlement and attachment, medical development issues, and multiracial/multicultural family. About 40 adoptive parents attended the workshop. Most of the parents were white heterosexual couples, but there were also one African American heterosexual couple, one white lesbian couple, and a white and African American lesbian couple in attendance.

AMMA strongly promote "open adoption," which makes information available about a child's birth mother, his/her extended family members, early caregivers, and country of origin to the adoptive family as well as to the adopted child. AMMA facilitates both domestic and transnational adoption, but open adoption is not practiced for transnational adoption. Thus, prospective parents who do not feel

comfortable with open adoption practices are typically disinterested in pursuing

domestic adoption. According to Pam, the adoption program director I interviewed

and one of the workshop facilitators, about one third of the parents at the introductory

workshop still had not made their decision whether to choose their domestic program

or their transnational program. Erica, the other facilitator at the workshop,

emphasized the merits of open adoption throughout the morning sessions.

The morning session ended with guest speakers. Two sisters who were in

their early twenties and adopted from South Korea gave the first talk. They were not

biologically related and were adopted in different years. The sisters grew up in the

Northeast and moved to the Midwest for their college education. They talked about

their experiences of interacting with other children growing up. Their parents did not

use AMMA's service, but the sisters were referred to them when AMMA sought adult

adopted persons who would be willing to share their experiences. The sisters had

agreed to come to AMMA's workshops often. They seemed to understand their role

as adoptees who give honest testimony of their life experiences growing up in an

adoptive family so that prospective parents could be better educated about what they

might face in a near future.

One of the afternoon sessions was focused on "what it means to be a

multiracial and multicultural family." The last part of the workshop covered

multiracial/multicultural families. The presentation on this topic was briefer than the

others, but Erica noted that the attendees could take an online course on building

multiracial and multicultural families that many other agencies nationwide

recommend. Erica pointed out that even if the child's race is the same as the adoptive

parents' the "tone" of the child's skin might be different. Erica, then, showed pictures

of infants of different races and asked the attendees if they were comfortable and if they could cope with stereotypes and racial slurs. Then, some pictures of adults with different racial characteristics were shown and parents were asked if they could accept them. Erica stressed how the society is not colorblind.

The workshop ended with two multiracial families. They mostly talked about their experiences of raising their adopted children whose race is different from theirs. They talked about how they were involved in learning the culture and language of the country where their children were from. The overall theme from these families was that, regardless of the color of your child, good people accept multiracial families.

5.3.3 Agency's Role as Specialist on Building Multicultural Families

With the freedom given by the state to construct their own training agenda, ASC and AMMA organized their workshops differently. The workshops studied in this section were mandatory for all prospective adoptive parents who were in their home study process. ASC devoted half of the workshop to multicultural issues, and there was much more emphasis on the importance of embracing different cultures, rather than discussing racism in relation to multiracial families. Lisa, Jennifer, and Dena of ASC mentioned that they deal with issues of race and racism more directly at individual meetings. AMMA's workshop, on the other hand, spent relatively shorter time on multicultural issues, but they were more direct in telling the prospective adoptive parents that America is not colorblind and that race does matter. Is it possible to talk of racism while maintaining an ethos of multiculturalism? At JCICS' annual conference, the presenters from CHSFS stressed their strong commitment to multicultural/multiracial education for prospective adoptive parents. They provided

definitions of race, ethnicity, and culture as they usually do in training sessions with their prospective adoptive parents, but all seemed to face difficulties when talking about race within a context of multiculturalism. It may be because the implications of race and multiculturalism contradict each other—the former highlights the existence of racism and the latter suggests equality among different racial/ethnic groups.

In contrast, ASC and AMMA did not provide their definitions of each term. At the AMMA's workshop, Pam and Erica gave thorough definitions of every theme, but not of multicultural and multiracial families. At the ASC's workshop, the guest speakers and the staff certainly mentioned existing racial discrimination, but the emphasis was more on the importance of parents learning culture and engaging in cultural activities of their child's country of origin. In the next section, I focus on how ASC's and AMMA's approach to educating about multicultural and multiracial families exhibits the incorporation of race into their discussion of building multicultural/multiracial families.

5.4 THE ADOPTION AGENCIES' DILEMMA: MULTICULTURALISM AND RACISM

"Transcending race and national boundary for children and family" is a JCICS project slogan. Indeed, both ASC and AMMA promote transnational adoption with the idea that it is in the best interest for children around the world to grow up in loving families regardless of children's race and ethnicity. The slogan suggests that racial and national boundaries should not interfere with the creation of adoptive families through transnational adoption. This indicates how adoption procedures should proceed in a colorblind manner. Although the slogan does not necessarily translate

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into multiculturalism, both ASC and AMMA use a more approachable term such as

"embracing different cultures" for the purpose of educating their prospective adoptive

parents. However, this precludes discussions of race, and this is where both agencies

seem to confront a dilemma in terms of how race should be discussed with the

parents.

The directors and social workers from ASC and AMMA all said in the

interviews that race is explicitly discussed with prospective adoptive parents because

it is obvious, for example, that white parents with their adopted child from China will

stick out in public. Jennifer at ASC described how talking to parents about

"conspicuous family" is important:

> ...We would encourage them to...and it is our job to talk with them and to
> educate them about adoption issues and international adoption issues in
> general...assuming that their adopting from a country where their child is not
> going to be Caucasian like themselves and to educate them about what it means to
> be a conspicuous family, or a family that obviously is an adoptive family, to
> educate them about all those issues and what that's going to mean to them as a
> family. What it means to become a multicultural and multiracial family and what
> it means to become a Korean-American family, or whatever...

When Pam, one of the adoption program directors from AMMA, encounters parents

who are interested in adopting transnationally, but are not sure which country they

should choose, she usually asks them what culture speaks to them the most. The

reason she gave was:

> Because what you're becoming is a multicultural family. It's not that you're
> adopting a child from this culture into your family, you are becoming
> multicultural. So if a Latino culture really excites you and you can really see
> integrating that into your family's style and getting to know the music and the
> food and people, or if you're more inclined, you know, for China, you know, then
> you need to pay attention to that because we want you to feel that this is part of
> your life.

When asked whether how explicitly race is discussed with prospective parents Pam explained;

> [R]ace is something we talk about a lot and we have one of our classes that is about being a conspicuous family and we give them resources and various books to read, trans-racially, and of course, for people who are planning to adopt domestically and are considering an African American or bi-racial child it's a huge issue.

The directors and social workers from ASC and AMMA talk to their prospective adoptive parents about becoming multicultural and multiracial families at individual meetings as well as at more formal settings such as the training sessions they conduct. Based on the explanations they have given above, it is clear both agencies consider discussing race to prospective adoptive parents an essential practice.

There are, however, some differences in how these two agencies approach race and multicultural issues when talking to prospective adoptive parents. My analysis below shows how ASC puts less emphasis on race and racism than AMMA does. The differences may be related to the different adoption placement programs those agencies practice. The ASA facilitates only transnational adoption, whereas AMMA's primary practice is domestic placement. While the ASA staff do talk to their parents to encourage awareness of the racial difference between them and their child, 'cultural difference' based on the countries where those parents adopt from is emphasized more, which I observed at their training workshop as well as family events. This may be because 'the foreignness' of future adopted children is perceived as a more salient issue for the ASA staff, as well as the parents, than considering domestic race issues. AMMA, on the other hand, places domestic children for adoption. They encounter racial imbalance between available children and prospective adoptive parents on a regular basis, and they often place non-white

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domestic children with white parents. As transracial adoption placement in the U.S

has been always publicly debated among social workers at least, the AMMA staff is

candid about emphasizing the existing racism in the U.S. society.

Pam from AMMA expresses her concerns about race and racism in the U.S. as

one of the prominent issues in adoption decisions, and she argues that talking about

race is crucial, particularly for those who plan to adopt an African American or bi-

racial child domestically. While both agencies would agree that race is an important

to issue to discuss with their parents, at ASA's workshop, there was less emphasis on

the existing racism in the U.S. This can be an indication that the agency staff from

AMMA considers white/black division in the US racial structure more salient than

with other races in relation with making adoption choices, especially of domestic

versus transnational. How do, then, agencies incorporate racism into the discourse of

multiculturalism in their education sessions? In what way, do the agencies "transcend

race" in their education of prospective parents within the context of multiculturalism?

I will examine some parts of the training sessions under these themes.

5.4.1 Incorporating Racism into a Discourse of Multiculturalism

As a guest speaker for the Korean group at ASC's workshop, Dr. Lee carefully

addressed the existence of different kinds of prejudice in both Korea and the United

States. Dr. Lee began her talk by noting that America is a multicultural country and

more tolerant of different cultures than Korea. She mentioned that in Korea many of

the older generations are strongly opposed to their children marrying non-Korean

people. Then she detailed the prejudice she has experienced in the United States:

imposing the stereotype of Asian women as submissive and how a certain "facial structure" translates into stereotypes and prejudice in the United States.

It seemed that Dr. Lee purposefully talked rather positively about a higher tolerance level toward multiculturalism among people in the US to ensure that the parents would feel good about their intention to adopt from South Korea. However, Dr. Lee also told parents that the existence of racial and ethnic stereotypes in the United States would very much be a part of their children's upbringing in a racially charged society.

On the other hand, at AMMA's workshop the existence of racism was stressed in a much more straightforward way. They brought in transracial adoptive families as guest speakers who spoke about how good it is to embrace different cultures through adoption. However, when Erica, one of the facilitators from AMMA talked about transracial adoption, the emphasis was more on how the US is not a colorblind society. For example, she stressed that "even though people say color does not matter, the society places race in a stratified way and you need to be aware of that." Thus, Erica pointed out the multiracial families are not suitable for everyone.

Interestingly, Erica interchangeably used multiracial and multicultural in her presentation. This may be because AMMA makes sure that the attendees do not think that there would not be a racial issue if parents adopted same-race children. This reveals the difficulty of mentioning race when talking about multicultural families or vice versa. When agencies promote transnational adoption, they present the positive aspects of multiculturalism—equality among different racial and ethnic groups. But their dilemma, here, is that they still need to talk to prospective adoptive parents how America is a racially charged society.

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This dilemma was evident in the presentation given by the two Korean adopted sisters at AMMA's workshop. One thing Erica stressed before bringing out the sisters was the fact that after the sisters were adopted, their adoptive parents moved to another town where more Asians lived. Later, adoptive parents informed me that social workers at AMMA address the inherent unfairness of raising transracially and transnationally adopted children in a predominantly white community. Indeed, they go so far as to tell prospective parents that they need to move to a more racially diverse community.

For example, the Korean sisters related that, while they were growing up, some children told them how they did not look like their parents, or that they did not have "real" parents." They described another situation when some of their college friends told them "they were not Asian." In addition they had attended an Asian American forum where a speaker talked about how "adoption hurts Chinese culture." They also told the attendees how grateful they were that their parents were always interested in learning Korean culture and language. Their stories show both negative and positive sides of their adoption experiences. As Korean adoptees raised by white parents, the negative experiences they had came both from outside and inside of their own racial group. But their stories also emphasized how good their parents were for embracing Korean culture, which softened their negative experiences.

5.5 TRANSCENDING RACE? HOW AGENCIES ARTICULATE MULTICULTURALSIM

At ASC's workshop, Dr. Lee did not relate her talk to transnational adoption except in her closing remarks. Dr. Lee observed how people in Korea used to be very

suspicious about the reasons why American parents wanted to adopt Korean children who did not have blond hair and blue eyes, and speculated that American people were taking Korean children for slavery. However, Dr. Lee continued that Korean people have changed their perspectives recently after they saw how well Korean adoptees are doing in the United States. With strong admiration, Dr Lee noted that many Korean people eventually saw American people as "angels." At the very end of her closing remarks, Dr. Lee told the parents to teach their children that they are American and they have been given better opportunities in the United States, but to also remind them that they have biological mothers in Korea. Throughout my fieldwork, "biological fathers" rarely were part of any discussion. As shown in Dr, Lee's speech, whenever biological parents were mentioned, it was almost always mothers. This may have to do with the gendered imagery of the poor single mother, whether in the U.S. or in other countries, who has no choice but to relinquish her child in the absence of his/her biological father (Briggs 2003). She also told the parents to be aware of the fact that people would talk to their children differently and see them differently.

Contrary to Dr. Lee's earlier discussion about existing racial and ethnic discrimination, the above stories demonstrate positive attributes of American people adopting children from Korea. There might have been a conscious effort made by the speaker to end the talk on a positive note. Talking about racial stereotypes and racism would not help in promoting transnational adoption; on the contrary, emphasizing "cultural differences" encouraged the prospective adoptive parents to work toward a successful adoption.

Placing the focus on culture rather than race at the workshop blurs how prospective parents see existing racial stereotype in the United States. For example, during a homework session where parents shared their cultural experiences, one couple commented that they had become very emotional when they saw a female Asian server at the Chinese restaurant where they dined, thinking that their Chinese daughter one day might look like her. In spite of the purpose of the workshop, which was to learn about Chinese culture,, these parents revealed how racial physical characteristics were still prominent in how they projected their future Chinese daughter through the Asian server at the restaurant.

At AMMA's workshop, the facilitators, indeed, emphasized the embracing of cultures. For example, they suggested that families/parents join support groups that look like their family, develop friendships and identify positive role models with people of their child's race, and become involved in humanitarian aid projects from the adopted child's country. During the workshop, the importance of being aware about race was briefly mentioned and the online course on multiracial families was recommended. Issues of growing up in a conspicuous family are discussed with greater detail in the online course than at the introductory workshop. The goal of this particular course is to inform prospective adoptive parents what it is like to adopt a child of a different race.

In the section on racial stereotypes, prospective adoptive parents are asked to rank different racial groups—whites, African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics—in terms of how much racial discrimination they experience in American society. Then, they are asked to attach some stereotypes given on the screen such as "hard-working," "religious," "athletic," and "lazy" to each group. The goal of this training, in relation

to becoming multiracial families, is to impress upon parents that they needed to be "color aware" and not colorblind.

The last part of the training offered some strategies for becoming a multiracial family. It is curious that this part of training used "multiracial" and "multicultural" interchangeably as was done at the AMMA workshop. It seems that the term "multiracial" was used whenever it referred to an adopted child's identity and how his/her family should help their child feel comfortable with who they are. As for the term "multiculturalism," the term was used when referring to education tools to create a more inclusive environment.

Although parents were required to reveal a great deal of information about themselves, the forms they had to complete provided them with no opportunity to describe the demographic characteristics of the communities they live in and how they envision building a multicultural/multiracial family. This may be indirectly related to the Multiethnic Placement Act, instituted in 1994, which dictates that governmental, welfare, and child placement agencies are prohibited from terminating or delaying the adoption of a child because of his or her race and ethnicity. This requires that the governmental entities and adoption agencies be colorblind about placement of a child. Thus, for states, the race and ethnicity of a child and prospective parents cannot be considered when parents are evaluated for a foster family home license. This points to a gap in how race is treated. The forms required by the governmental entities are colorblind in that there is no place where parents indicate a racial preference.

Yet, in the applications submitted to agencies, prospective adoptive parents have to specify a racial preference and countries where they wish to adopt from. Warning parents about existing racism, however, creates a dilemma in portraying

multicultural/racial families as enriching for people's lives. At ASC's workshop for example, adoption professionals emphasized that prospective adoptive parents need to consider racial and ethnic discrimination in America when adopting their child whose race is different from their own. Whenever racial and ethnic discrimination was mentioned to the parents, more positive notes immediately followed usually by referring to how multicultural American society neutralized the negative thoughts that racism delivers.

The AMMA facilitators used more direct and instructive terms and phrases— "be color aware, not colorblind" and "this society is not colorblind"—to indicate that racism exists in the U.S. The online training session on multicultural/multiracial families is clear on the need for adoptive parents to pay attention to various racial stereotypes about different racial groups. The online session makes an explicit effort to make prospective adoptive parents aware of existent racism and racial stereotypes for the purpose of appreciating individual differences. On the other hand, AMMA brings in multicultural perspectives as an educational tool for encouraging prospective parents to create a culturally healthy upbringing for transnationally/transracially adopted children.

5.6 PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AGENCIES' TRAINING SESSIONS

My interviews with adoptive parents demonstrated that ASC and AMMA play an important role in shaping prospective adoptive parents' ideas about creating families through adoption. All parents shared their experiences of participating in the agency sponsored training sessions. Rarely, did they express negative feelings about the required sessions. In many ways, the sessions helped interested parents not only

to acquire practical information, but also to resolve some anxiety they may have had by meeting other parents who were going through the same process. Notably, no parents I talked to said that they learned something completely new or enlightening about multiculturalism and/or racism. Some even had opposing point of views. In this section, I will first lay out the parents' general impressions of the training sessions; then I will focus on how some parents felt about the agencies' presentation of multicultural and multiracial topics.

5.6.1 Parents' General Impressions on Adoption Agencies and Training Sessions

Every set of parents I talked to had prepared themselves with some knowledge about transnational adoption before they first contacted the agency, whether through books, Internet searches, or talking with others who had adopted transnationally. Yet, for most of the parents in this study, adopting a child from another country was a still somewhat unexplored area as a new way to build a family, although they were extremely keen to learn more about it. Once they decided to adopt and chose an agency, the agency sponsored events and their social workers became important sources of information. Generally, the parents who used either ASC or AMMA spoke positively about the agency social workers with whom they worked. When asked about the agency and their social worker, most parents, regardless of whether they used ASC or AMMA, expressed how helpful they were throughout the process and the post adoption period. Generally, they were pleased that their social workers were prompt assisting with the bureaucratic steps they had to follow and counseling those parents whose issues differed from the others.

JoAnn Saunders, who adopted two girls from China through ASC, had a great difficulty going through legal processes. JoAnn expressed how helpful ASC was in assisting her with completing all the documents that needed to be submitted, especially after all the paper documents came back for resubmission. Good reviews from other parents and a good reputation in the community certainly influenced how the parents thought about the agency, especially since there were many choices to make—domestic or international; the country of prospective adoptive child's origin; gender of child; and age of child.

For Lynette and Phillip Moore, who were in the process of adopting a girl from Guatemala through AMMA, it was important that they used a reliable agency. Lynette shared her thoughts about AMMA:

> It has very good reputations and it's been around for a long time and has a good solid set of long histories both domestically and internationally, and also they were, you know, they try to educate you quite well….and then narrowed down in terms of domestic and international and if you're in one camp or another, they kind of take you down a path.

Since it is mandatory for prospective adoptive parents to complete a certain number of hours of foster/adoptive parenting training sessions, state licensed agencies typically organize classes on children's health, attachment issues, open adoption, the history and culture of the countries parents plan to adopt from, and the building multicultural and multiracial families, although the subjects may vary. The parents I talked to were generally pleased to take such educational classes. Some, as Maggie Abbot's quote in the beginning of this chapter, felt that they are many "hoops" adoptive parents have to go through that are not required of biological parents. While this can be read as a bitter comment, considering many of the adoptive parents had gone through fertility treatments before deciding to adopt, it can also be understood as

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earning the entitlement to become parents that are just as good as those who have biological children.

The social workers from ASC and AMMA talked about "educating prospective adoptive parents" as one of their most important responsibilities. The way in which the contents of the training sessions are organized at both ASC and AMMA reflects their beliefs about what those parents need to be educated about. ASC and AMMC put emphasis on different issues for their training sessions. When the parents recalled their overall experiences of attending the sessions, most of them seemed quite satisfied with the content. They felt the information provided to them would enable them to become better parents. Megan Gutshall, who at the time of our meeting was still waiting to adopt a girl from Ukraine, said that ASC's training sessions made her aware of some issues she had never thought about before and the resources ASC provided her gave her a sense of security about raising her daughter:

> They [ASC] did make us aware of the post placement issues and the delays that the children will have from being institutionalized and how the children are going to need…probably need help in school and medical help. And just… we've gotten a binder full of, like, Xeroxed copies of magazine articles and a lot of them are from the adoption magazine, whatever it's called, and it's talking about how to get into the Head Start program with the kids and how to be evaluated for attention deficit or the fetal alcohol syndrome issues. That was, you know it's kind of scary to hear about all that because you don't know what you're going to get or what the severity of the problems are going to be, but you do know there are going to be problems, so they made us aware of that.

Besides providing prospective adoptive parents with information related to medical issues, the agencies also cover emotional and social aspects of what adoptive parents need to be aware of. Erica Deller recalled how eye opening some of the issues brought up during the AMMA's training session were:

> And I think [AMMA] does a really good job of helping those families work through the issues, you know, because the child you adopt is not a replacement for

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the child you could not give birth to, and you can't put that on the kid. You need to work through that and you need to deal with whatever grief you're going to have and you need to fully embrace this child for who they are. They're not a replacement or if you lost a child. You know this child is not a replacement. They deserve parents who are as dedicated to them as your birth child would have and I remember from some of the classes, there were some people that you could tell by the questions they were asking and their responses to things that they were really having a hard time totally grasping what it was going to be like a multicultural family.

The social workers from ASC and AMMA whom I have talked to and observed throughout my study demonstrated their strong belief that they had to convey their knowledge on adoption related issues to parents who were adopting while continuing to build upon their own knowledge of the issues. Therefore, education is a vital part of agencies' responsibility and many parents in my study seemed to fit themselves into that atmosphere once they knocked on the door of the agency. There is no doubt that parents have to be guided by professionals through the complex process of transnational adoption, and adoption agencies' play a big role in helping them to accomplish the creation of a family they had longed for. At the same time, another side of this is that those parents had also built their own knowledge and beliefs through education and, in many cases, religion. Thus, when it comes down to some specific issues—especially the cultural and racial identity of children, which both ASC and AMMA put a great emphasis on—many parents seemed less passionate about talking about them in the context of helpfulness of the agencies.

5.6.2 Parents' Views on Agencies' Multicultural Education

When asked about their thoughts on the content of the multicultural training session, the parents initially tended to say little about how some specific information

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had helped them in raising their adopted child; rather, they tended to just trace

through the program of the whole day session. As described above, ASC's one-day

training workshop is mostly on cultural issues with just a few hours on other issues,

such as children's heath and attachment. However, many parents expressed that one

of the most important elements the workshop was meeting other prospective parents

who were in the same process. Albert and Hannah Snyder were in the process of

adopting a girl from China when they attend the workshop. In recalling about the

workshop, Hannah said that:

> **Hannah:** I don't know if they [the sessions] really influenced us, but it was a nice networking thing because we met some other people that were of the same mindset that we were. The best thing about the cultural training was that the Olson's had adopted their first child over there (China) and they actually were speaking there. And we got to meet them and I did not remember them. I saw them at the airport and saw her running around and thought they were the Williamses [Hannah could not remember the Olson's last name correctly] So, I went up and asked them and they said no. And I recognized him and asked if he was at [ASC]. Well he had taught at the [workshop] and they traveled with us to go get their second daughter [from China] when we were getting her [Snyder's daughter]. So we had borne a friendship there.

> **Kazuyo:** Yeah. So do you remember the content of the [workshop]?

> **Hannah:** Let's see, they had the Olson's talking to us about the process of it, and I guess that was helpful in that it made you aware of some people who had gone through the process, and they said it wasn't bad over there. I mean you don't…what you're…I mean you're flying into China and when you're someone like me who's never left the country except to go to Canada.

Albert and Jodi Perry who adopted a Russian boy with ASC's assistance, for example,

thought that they got more helpful information on the particular issues they were

interested in from reading book, but the adoptive families' presentations made a much stronger impression on them:[20]

Kazuyo: Is there anything influencing about the [workshop]?

Albert: I don't think so.

Jodi: I don't think so. I think hearing other families talk about it…families who went through it last year, I think they were more influential than…you know but in the books it talked about…you know, I got more from the books…

One of the workshops AMMA requires all prospective parents to attend is one full day-long introductory workshop which contains multicultural families as one of the themes. Here, the parents talked less about the networking merit of attending the workshop, but they tended to talk more about how all the details were informative yet overwhelming. Since one of the AMMA's important educational themes is open adoption, their workshop combined some issues related to both domestic and transnational adoption with the openness of adoption. The guest speakers consisted of birth mothers, adoptive families—both domestic and transnational—who were practicing open adoption, and several adult adoptees. Lori Adams and her husband (who was not present at the time of the interview) adopted a boy from Korea through AMMA, and she gave her thoughts on the workshop:

> I didn't necessarily like the ones with the birthmothers talking about giving their children up for adoption, and maybe I was still a little but hurt about the fact that I lost a child, and how could these people…but we were there to adopt children and somebody had to give these children up for us to adopt them so…I don't know I just liked that the families went to their adoptive country and they had all kinds of information about their country and I just liked hearing their stories. That's the best part to hear in-detail stories because you know I like to tell my story too, but sometimes people don't really care, and they don't listen, but you know what are you going to do?

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[20] ASC did not facilitate placement of the Russian boy for the Perrys, but conducted home study. The Perrys and several others in my study adopted Russian children from another organization, which is not licensed to conduct home study; therefore, ASC provided home study services and training sessions.

However they express their likes and dislikes about the training workshops, one thing these parents had in common was that they were eager to hear stories from others who had gone through the same adoption process and/or from someone who was currently adopting from another country, as well as the presentations given by adult adoptees.

Given the amount of information presented at the both ASC's and AMMA's workshop and assuming that the parents would initially only tell the parts they learned the most from, it is intriguing how those parents position the educational session on multicultural families and race. I, as an interviewer, often brought up the agencies' multicultural education in particular and asked their thoughts on it. Patrick and Jessie Osborne adopted a girl from China through ASC. They felt that they needed to know more about why so many children became available for adoption in China, but the presentation on China was so focused on the history that they went to other sources to learn about China's current social and political situation:

Jessie: We got [education] on Chinese culture, but what I was disappointed with was they gave us history…China's history and not what China is like now. You know it was all about China's history and dynasty, but…

Patrick: Because the history you know is helpful…it helps you understand where the culture came from. But they didn't talk about where it is now.

Jessie: Right.

Patrick: Very much like it was mostly…

Kazuyo: So, how were the other parents' reactions? There were no questions that came up to this person (the speaker), like how it is now?

Jessie: They really never came up.

Kazuyo: So, the lecture did not really focus on how this situation came about or why you know babies are…

Patrick: As far as, yeah…

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Kazuyo: Available…

Patrick: They talked about it a little but, but it seemed, I don't know, I don't want to exaggerate, but it seemed sort of like a taboo subject but we don't really want to…we want to put a bright…

Jessie: A brighter face on this…

Patrick: Brighter face on this, we don't want to make it sound bad, you know, we want to make this sound good…so, we managed to get that information on the internet.

Patrick and Jessie, like other parents, attended the workshop to learn more about tools to raise their adopted child. Social workers tell them that parents need to be ready for questions from their child as he or she gets older. For those parents, trying to explain to their child why his or her biological mother and/or father could not keep them is one of the hardest things to do. They feel they need to be well prepared for this and make their child feel safe and secure with his or her adoptive parents. As Patrick and Jessie suggested, there may be many parents who wish to openly discuss both the social and political reasons why there are so many abandoned children and methods to talk about this with their child.

"Embracing differences" and "embracing different cultures", the multicultural ideology which both agencies emphasized, became a way in which to teach parents about an unknown area for them: raising a child whose identity is constructed as culturally, and many cases racially, different from their own. In AMMA's workshop, the social workers emphasized how important it is for parents to be "racially aware," not "racially blind." In ASC's workshop also, though not in the same language, the presenters mentioned that there are prejudices against minorities in the United States. But both agencies' intention is not only to make parents feel aware, but also to give

them solutions so that they can feel positively about creating multicultural and multiracial families. Erica Deller recalled how the social worker from the AMMA talked about importance of not treating their child as white, but rather to embrace his or her difference:

> You know [AMMA] really emphasizes that, you know, you cannot treat your children like they're white. You may live in a white community. They many go to school with all white kids and you may be white and they may have all the opportunities of a white child, but they're not white. They're not. They have, you know, a heritage whether it's Russia or, you know, their parents in the United States. They're different and if you don't identify that, and you don't embrace it for them you're communicating to them that there's something wrong with that. There was one family in particular who kept saying, well I don't understand the point of why you have tell them they're adopted. They were adopting from Russia. There was a good chance that their child would sort of look like them in general terms, and why don't we just tell him he's adopted, you know. You could just tell they were…[AMMA] really takes you through steps, and you not only have to give the right answers, but you need to believe them. You really need to embrace, you know, their child's culture and what it's going to mean and how you are going to be a different than people who give birth biologically to children…You have to give her pride in who she is because if she wakes up one day and she's twenty, the world sees her as Chinese.

Patrick and Jessie's thoughts on ASA's workshop reflected how race was absent from the discussion of cultural education; rather, the emphasis was on teaching the parents about the country of their adoptive child's origin, including its history. Whereas, at AMMA's workshop, with the openness of adoption as their main philosophical and educational point, the parents received a more straightforward talk about how parents cannot erase and "whiten" their adopted child's racial characteristics, either visually and socially so they needed to be open about the differences and embrace them.

Whichever approach the agencies take, focusing too much on prejudices, differences among the parents and the child, and/or existing racism is treated as something that parents need to conquer with "right" kinds of tools. Race, therefore,

especially in AMMA's case is presented as something concrete and the reality of racial difference among parents and children cannot be changed. Culture, on the other hand, is treated as a more flexible and teachable concept that could bind the whole family together. Therefore, the example of the "right" kinds of tools that the both agencies advocate utilizes the "child's culture." This usually translates into the parents' responsibility to teach their adopted child his/her culture by using objects such as dolls. This is something that adoption agencies recommend that parents do, and Patrick and Jessie Osborne said that they learned a lot by doing this:

> **Jessie:** Oh dear. Yeah there is one thing I've learned is the importance of teaching her the culture and where she came from at the very beginning. One thing that I found out that a lot of parents do and which we did as well, while we were over there (in China), we bought a gift for her, for every year…for her "got you" day. We celebrate her "got you" day. So we bought a gift for her that we got in China and we give it every year and we tell her where we got it and a little bit about it. You know, do things like that…there's festivals that we can go to throughout the year that each agency offers. And just things like that they stress how important it is to keep that for her and to help her understand where she came from.

> **Kazuyo:** And you felt absolutely fine with that?

> **Patrick:** Yeah.

> **Jessie:** Yeah. We hadn't really thought of that until it was mentioned and then we realized how important that was.

> **Patrick:** There was a lot of things we wouldn't have thought of on our own necessarily. But, you know I think a lot of people, particularly that do domestic adoptions where most of the time your child is the same race as you, it's easy for parents to…you know, you get into this hole where they don't even tell they're adopted until they're 18 or something, you know.

> **Kazuyo:** Because you don't have to probably…

> **Patrick:** You don't have to bring it up…you don't have to.

> **Kazuyo:** It might not come up…

Patrick: You know, in her (their adopted daughter) situation, it's going to be obvious, you know, and so I think in some ways it almost makes it easier because it forces you to talk about those things because I…You know, and she feels like somehow she doesn't measure up or something. So instead of…if you start with her knowing this is my culture that I came from, this is how I got here, this is…you know, I am adopted and it's all right. This is okay. You know, I may be little bit different than other people, but it's all right. You know, it's not a big deal. You know, she can still have self-confidence she can still feel like, you know,…she belongs.

The above quote shows how the agency's cultural education actually taught these parents how the racial barrier between the parents and their adopted child can be "transcended" by parents showing their efforts to embrace "the child's culture." Many white parents that I interviewed who had adopted non-white children recognized that their child was going to look very different from them. They realized through the workshop that they can create a cultural environment from China, Korea, or Guatemala throughout their child's upbringing. The parents understood that not doing so equates raising their child as if he or she was white, and they learned that it was a negative thing to do. Thus, the racial difference within family members here was seen as negative phenomenon, whereas culture was thought of as a tool that could transform negatives to positives, one in which all family members could participate. The critical point here is that it is questionable whether their child feels "at home" when they see the gifts from the place where they were born, whether the parents realize it or not.

Creating an appropriate cultural environment has become an important outlet for the parents, not only to teach their adopted child so that they feel comfortable about being different, but also to normalize the way their family is formed as opposed to the biologically related families. This is shown through the way the agencies suggest the parents craft a life book for their adopted child by using cultural themes.

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One of the common occurrences in my conversations with the parents involved them showing me the life books they created for their children. Many parents I met had made a life book of their adopted child that contained photos and comments of child's life's key events. Patrick and Jessie talked about creating a life book as almost "creating" the child's lineage, beginning with their daughter's journey in China:

> **Jessie:** And basically it's like a scrapbook but we start from the very beginning, even before we even get her, and we just tell the story through pictures, through journaling, that type of thing. And to help her to understand, you know, how it all came about and where she came from.

> **Kazuyo:** So, it has pictures of your trip to China or something? Something about the history?

> **Jessie:** Yeah. Mm-Hmmn things we bought over there or pictures of where we were at, the hotel we were at, and things like that, and also they [ASC] even recommended having a page where she can, like, write and draw a picture on book of what her mom and dad might look like. Her biological mom and dad. So, you know, they even… stress that she has a biological mom and dad…and by allowing her to create that then it'll be easier for her to accept.

> **Kazuyo:** Do you feel that's the way to go, right?

> **Jessie:** Yeah.

Lynette and Phillip Moore who were adopting from Guatemala through AMMA said that they'd never thought about the creating a life book until they attended the workshop. Lynette and Phillip have two biological children, and they never thought about creating one for them, but now they understood that it would be necessary for their adopted daughter. However, they did not want to think of making life books as a necessity only for adopted children.

> **Phillip:** But in the spirit of consistency, if I do that for an [adopted] child, then I'd definitely do the same thing for our biological children, right, put together a life book for them as well because I don't see that as necessarily…It's important for the [adopted] child certainly as they come of age and they want to know more about their past. But I think it's equally important that that not

be seen as an adoption tool or as something as only applies to adopted kids because I don't want to call them out as different in that respect either.

Crafting a life book is not an uncommon activity among middle class parents who want to record their child's life history. The activity itself materializes people's life from the realm of imagination about your heritage to something visual and concrete. The life books that parents showed me during our conversations are full of pictures and drawings that take you from well before the time of adoption—usually something about the country of the child's origin, pictures of the orphanages and their foster parents, since they signify the time when the adoptive parents were looking for her— the day the adoptive parents met her, and up until the present time. For these parents, it is an important activity because they feel that they are creating one coherent family not only for their adopted child, but also for themselves as well.

I also observed the parents who constructed life books integrating some cultural themes that signify the "culture" of the child's country of origin, perhaps to remind their child of her national heritage and to let her know that her mom and dad are celebrating and embracing a culture that is different from their own. Getting cultural objects to celebrate the "got you" day and crafting a life book, both initially introduced by the agencies, have now become the parents' cultural tools to assure them that they do not ignore the differences between them, most notably the racial one. They desire to not let their different races divide their family, thus emphasizing culture has become one of the solutions toward creating a more coherent family. In other words, cultures bind them together, but racial differences may become an obstacle when creating a family. Therefore, the incorporating 'their child's culture' has become one of the ways in which parents believe that they have 'transcended

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race'. The creation of a cultural root for their child with cultural objects is one of such ways. Still, they acknowledge their differences, but normative multicultural thinking aids them in not having to address racial differences in their everyday life. It is their firm belief that people need to 'transcend race' in the sense that race should not be an obstacle when adopting a child. These white parents may believe that they can 'transcend race' through adopting children from Asia, but this position begs the question whether are willing to face the problems associated with raising African American children. I will discuss this issue in the following chapter, but I note here that many parents in my study expressed their problems with adopting African American children, so integrating the cultural tools learned at the agencies' training session was not even a consideration for a certain race, thus contradicting their belief their perceived ability to 'transcend race.'

5.7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on my study of two agencies in the Midwest, it is clear that working with adoption agencies is crucial for prospective adoptive parents to prepare all the necessary documentation required by the state they reside in, USCIS, and the agencies they work with. What is intriguing about the documents is that the application forms that the agencies require are explicit about prospective parents' preferences about race of child while the forms required by the state are not. As long as adoption agencies follow general regulations by the state, agencies are allowed to organize the content of home study and training sessions. Thus, there are differences in terms of how the two agencies I studied approach educating their prospective adoptive parents on building multicultural/multiracial families.

There is no disagreement among the adoption program directors and the social workers from ASC and AMMA about stressing multicultural and multiracial education for prospective adoptive families. Indeed, both include some themes that are related to multicultural and multiracial issues in a context of building adoptive families in their education and training for prospective parents. It is apparent that a discourse of multiculturalism—equality among different racial and ethnic groups— becomes an effective tool for both agencies in their educational training. It is so, because the positive connotation—equality—that a multiculturalist perspective conveys makes it easier to deliver an appropriate phrase like "embracing different cultures." Such a phrase could bring to prospective adoptive parents some positive thoughts about building adoptive families through transnational adoption.

My study of the agencies and the parents' perception of the training discussed above shows the necessity for agencies to value multicultural ideology for the sake of children all over the world. At the same time, and for the same reason (to create the best upbringing for children), it shows that the agencies make sure the parents are not "colorblind" in their assessment of U.S. society. This conflicts with the recent discussion of multiculturalism that strives to focus on culture and ethnicity rather than race. The analysis of my data above shows the dilemma in how the agencies frame multicultural education—transcending race while stressing existing racism. The dilemma may be rooted in how the meaning of race has been changing and the fact that racism, whether overtly or covertly, is still a part of everyday experience in the United States, which unsettles the notion of "transcending race."

The parents' reactions and practices discussed above show the ease and comfort they feel with the cultural activities the agencies recommended. We do not

know, yet, the affect of these cultural practices on identity formation of their children—will they not see the importance in their racial identity? The next chapter, however, shows how race is a salient part of their decision making process, which actually presents a practice that is far from "transcending race." I argue that the multiculturalism perspective, although a useful tool when promoting transnational and transracial adoption, does not lead agencies to utilize it in such a way that parents, the agencies, and the children are able to transcend race.

CHAPTER 6: DESIRABLE DIFFERENCE: THE SHADOW OF RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN CREATING TRANSRACIAL FAMILIES THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the early summer, at a family picnic organized by an adoption agency in a small Midwestern city, there were many children dressed in traditional attire from a number of different countries—China, Korea, The Philippines, and Russia. As they walked across the stage, the proud parents of these children stood in front of the stage in street clothes excitingly taking pictures.[21]

The above observation led me to wonder about differences within families. There was an obvious difference between the parents and their children—white parents and their non-white children—but they were family, the most intimate of social units in most societies. There was no doubt that the parents were proud of their children as they walked across the stage, wearing the traditional dress of "their culture," except most of the children were too young to remember what "their culture" was or to even to apprehend what was constructed as "Chinese culture," "Korean culture," or "Guatemalan culture" when they were adopted by their American parents. The parents of these children probably believed that this was a proper way to embrace different cultures, as they were taught at a series of educational training sessions conducted by their adoption agency. As the previous chapter showed, those parents who adopted a child whose race differed from theirs considered the culture of the child's country of origin as a bridge that connects them. This indicates that the parents were not hesitant to adopt a child of a different race and to become a multicultural and multiracial family when they made their adoption decision. What remains unclear is how they conceptualized the racial composition of their family. In

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[21]. From the author's field notes at a family picnic in the summer of 2004.

other words, it is ambiguous whether they were open to adopting a child of any race and whether they believed *any* difference could be overcome through embracing "the culture" that is different from their own. This chapter, thus, focuses on how parents' perception of building multicultural and multiracial families and the existing racial hierarchy influenced their adoption decisions.

Many adoption agencies organize multicultural events for families with adopted children. For many parents I met, participating in such events is a way for feel that they are no different from the majority of families they see in the area where they live and that there are many other families who are like them. The parents who shared their stories with me recognized that there were racial and cultural differences between them and their future adopted child, but expressed the importance of making an effort to consider "their child's culture" in their decision to adopt from the child's birth country. The adoptive parents do, indeed, recognize the racial and cultural differences, but the question I ask in this chapter is whether the parents thought about those differences in any particular way. What differences are more desirable, and therefore more assimilable, than other differences? What do they think of race and racism? In this chapter I seek answers to the above questions by examining my interviews with adoptive parents that have used the services of two agencies: an agency in a small city, referred to as "ASC" and an agency in a major metropolitan city, referred to as "AMMA."

There is no doubt that all 34 sets of parents who shared their adoption stories with me had the best intentions of creating a loving and caring environment into which to bring a new member into their family. Looking at those stories from one perspective, the parents show such joy in welcoming their new child, especially after

many of them went through painful experiences with infertility and then completed a long series of bureaucratic steps as well, including enduring a long waiting period, before they finally received a child. From another angle, their stories also reveal, in both implicit and explicit ways, that these parents viewed foreign children as more desirable than children available for domestic adoption. Many of the parents I met had first considered adopting domestically, while many others immediately opted to adopt transnationally. They all expressed their concerns with the ways in which domestic adoption is institutionalized in the United States. The parents frequently mentioned the practice of open adoption as one of their reasons why they did not feel comfortable to adopt domestically. But what also became prominent was their preferences regarding the race of their future child, which was almost always wrapped up in some of the problems they perceived in the domestic adoption system.

In this chapter, I examine the latter observation through showing the parents' perceptions of the meaning of race, racism, and racial hierarchy in the United States, and its impact on their family formation process through adoption. More specifically, I analyze what it means for the parents to adopt a child whose race is different from theirs internationally versus domestically. I will look at this from the angle of the social construction of racial meaning attached to particular racial groups, which is apparent in how parents portray transnational adoption as an international humanitarian act. Furthermore, I will also show how racial stereotypes of different racial groups in the U.S. influence prospective adoptive parents' decisions about which children to adopt. This illustrates how the parents carefully considered the culturally distinct rhetoric of Asian Americans as the model minority into their

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decision of adopting Asian babies rather than children of other racial groups, particularly African Americans.

This chapter illustrates how parents' adoption choices are influenced by the changing meaning of race. The following section attempts to untangle whether the parents' perception of "foreignness" attached to overseas children somewhat renders foreign children "raceless." I will do so through an examination of their discourse of domestic adoption versus transnational adoption. The third section shows how the "culture" and race of a child come into a play when the parents consider who better *fits* with the racial composition and class background of their family. This section interrogates how these parents carefully consider the stereotypes of different racial groups and how their observations of the existing racial hierarchy in the U.S are intertwined with their perception of the compatibility of prospective child for their family upon their decision to adopt their child.

The concluding section, then, suggests that, while parents praise the idea of colorblind society, they are very alert and sensitive about the reality of the racial stereotypes that exist in U.S. society. This influences the choice they make—a child of a certain race becomes more desirable than the others. Thus, within the adoptive family making process, the existing racial hierarchy in the U.S. is reproduced, rather than blurred or destroyed. This chapter, therefore, shows how those parents regard a foreign child as more desirable as a new member of their family and how such a consideration is reflective of domestic racial politics. Although the parents' narratives clearly show potentials in the family as a space where racial integration can be created, what they also tell us is that it is a space where racial preference can be practiced. The current social climate certainly praises the celebration of

multiculturalism, which in the case of transnational adoption, can only be afforded by middle class and affluent families. What formation of adoptive families through transnational adoption shows is a contradiction within the premises of multiculturalism itself. While the state, adoption agencies, and parents are all involved in promoting multicultural awareness, ironically the shadow of racial stereotypes and hierarchy and class inequality follows wherever they are. Moreover, that shadow is often (dis)colored with the actors' perception of the "foreignness" of children, which obscures how the racial lines are drawn. It is hard to imagine that any of these actors would feel good about how children adopted in domestic or in foreign countries are valued differently based on their race. In this chapter, I argue that family should be conceptualized as a space where all actors reconsider meanings of race and work toward constructing families where children, regardless of their racial identities, will be less vulnerable despite being raised in a racially charged society such as the United States.

6.2 ARE FOREIGN CHILDREN "RACELESS"? THE PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF DOMESTIC ADOPTION VERSUS TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

Some white families who are willing to adopt non-white American children or children from other countries see the formation of transracial and transnational families as "a hopeful harbinger of an imagined future—beyond tolerance and civil rights to color-blind mutuality…" as it reflects "a Judeo-Christian ethos of humanitarian outreach that affirmed human community over ethnic and racial difference" (Melosh 2002). Dena, one of the ASC staff member I interviewed, expressed her strong opinion about parents bringing up the idea of adopting transnationally as a humanitarian act;

I mean that's another red flag. If people come into international adoption strictly because they want to save a child, that's not... that's not the only…you can't…that can't be your only motivation…I mean, right, I mean this is a two- way street. You know, you're going to get as much as you give from a child. It is. It really is. You know and many people sort of had that as one of their reasons, but it can't be the primary reason because that's…you can't look at that child as a *project*. It's a human being who deserves that love and security of a family (emphasis mine).[22]

This idea does not, however, apply uniformly to all parents. For example, Erica and Chuck, who have adopted a girl from China, emphasized the importance of "giving a family" to those children who were less fortunate than themselves. In their story of why they chose to adopt transnationally, Erica said that;

It's because [many Chinese people] don't have access to birth control; it's because they're too poor to have access to birth control. You know, it's similar, you know, in Haiti. It's horrible that there are children in Haiti where their parents just [] can't afford to keep them because Haiti is another country in which a lot of the children are actually surrendered by their parents, and it's economically [disadvantaged]. I mean how do you pick? We heard about the plight of children in China, and the fact that there were so many girls who were given up simply because they were girls, and it just…it broke our hearts, and we felt like *I can't help all of them but I can help one* (emphasis mine).

When asked whether they had considered domestic adoption, Erica and several other parents who shared their adoption stories with me referred to the humanitarian aspect of their decision to adopt transnationally. Those parents who emphasized the humanitarian aspects of transnational adoption had often educated themselves about the social and cultural backgrounds of the countries where their children came from, through various sources such as books, newspaper and magazine articles, and adoption agencies. However, it is often the case that many parents present only a few sides of the issues, such as lack of access to contraception because of the severe poverty in China and gender inequality. They may have read and heard about the

social problems that countries such as China face at a more holistic level, such as strict governmental family planning regulations with little economic support for people. Erica's story above, for example, does not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of social problems in relation to availability of children, but lack of birth control and abandonment of girls are sufficient facts to make her and many others feel that those children need to be rescued. What has not been explicitly explored here is whether these parents consider adopting a domestic child as a humanitarian act. There is definitely a tendency among these parents to put forth their humanitarianism in their stories usually expressed as "helping" or "saving' a child from a economically disadvantaged country.

A few sets of parents, however, talked about why they chose to adopt transnationally while contrasting it to their thoughts on domestic adoption. Some parents expressed their observations on American family values in comparison to their knowledge about family values in other countries. American family values were usually described negatively whereas they highly praised those of foreign countries. Such a view is usually projected on how they value domestic children versus foreign children, and adopting foreign children, therefore, became more desirable than adopting domestic children. Cindy Flitz who, at the time of the interview, was at the last bureaucratic stage of adopting a boy from South Korea shared the above view;

> I was telling you about different cultures, and how they view families, and how they view their parents. I view America as much more self centered and not---it's an era of trying so hard, and kids are treasured and protected with comments and safety and this and that and everything, but at the same time I want my career, and I want to be fulfilled, and it's kind of mixed up, but people will produce children, they get money from the government for having more and more kinds and the welfare. They get money for having a kid but not to be married. And so you know even there's…even foster parents, there are bad foster parents out there who use the system to get money and I hate to be suspicious of that, but I think in other

cultures where family is valued so much more and you know maybe I'm ignorant, but just, what I see of my fellow friends and how they keep the mom in the house and how they take care of whoever has financial needs, it's a much more…family focused versus selfish…

Cindy works at a hospital where a sizable number of her co-workers are not Americans, and she talked about how much she enjoyed learning about their views on family. "My fellow friends," she refers to above are about her non-American co-workers whom she admires for having such a strict "family focused" values. The "family focused" values in "other cultures" are something Cindy has not experienced, but rather she has imagined them through her personal interactions, which she maintains it as a true value. On the other hand, when American family values are discussed—individualistic and self-centered values coexisting with a strong belief in protection of children—it is based on her observation of what's surrounding her in the U.S.. Her criticism of the domestic foster system along with parenting in America, for example, is much more vividly described than her celebratory comment on family practices in foreign countries. For example,

> I'm thinking about America or the kids that I see at Wal-Mart at 10:30 at night, and there's the mom screaming at the children, and the children are unhappy, and I think, well why aren't the children in bed? This is their bedtime, but the mom's thinking that her children need to be perfectly behaved, and she's yelling and screaming at them, and saying they're horrible, and I'm thinking no, it's the children that need to be in bed. You know, and they're drinking soda and they're this big, and they're eating every kind of snack, and I don't see that as treating your children right. And…I don't think that it would be that way as much in other countries and maybe I'm ignorant about that, but that's from my perspective…I feel parents don't parent the way…I don't blame the children obviously. but I have a very high standard for how I feel a child should be raised and it's much more in line with other countries' expectations and view of things…But if you told me that a child was adopted at the age of five or six in this country from a home, I'd say that kid was a mess. The parents did drugs. The parents did whatever. The parents beat the kid. Automatically that would be what I would think versus an orphanage over there [Foreign countries]. I don't know what kind of kids they've got, but I can tell you that I wouldn't think about the parents

having messed up the child. They may not have raised the child or [they] abandoned the child, or whatever was happened over there [*sic*], but I felt [*sic*] like the people who adopt people from a foreign country can quickly swing things around to undo the things that were there. After going through this process, I have learned because I was like other people who think of if you get them by the time they're two, then it's not bad, then you're OK.

Cindy admitted that she changed her ideas about there being no risk involved in adopting children at an earlier age after completing the ASC training session. But she conveyed a clear sense that adopting older children domestically is riskier, because of their parents' wrongdoings, than adopting foreign children. There is an idea, as Cindy discussed above, that children in foreign countries are better taken care of, whether they are in home with their biological parents, in foster care, or in orphanages. Although expressed somewhat differently, other parents who adopted, especially from South Korea and China, praised how their systems are well developed and organized so that children over there are cared for properly until they are adopted. The parents acquired this information through the adoption agencies and also by learning from those parents who had witnessed how welfare agencies and orphanages work when they went to these countries to adopt their child.

While the way children are taken care of during the pre-adoption period is an important issue considering children's health, the way prospective adoptive parents characterize children who are available for domestic adoption is still troubling. When asked about possibility of adopting a child domestically, a few parents, like Cindy, raised concerns not only about children, but also about their birth parents, characterized as a social group who practice undesirable parenting compared to a more conservative traditional family values, which they believed that people in other countries practice. One way to understand how prospective adoptive parents reason

their decision not to adopt domestically is, I argue, to locate it at the intersection of what they perceive as changing American family values and racialization and the deracialization of children associated with the global humanitarian aspect that is attached to transnational adoption.

In many ways, these criticisms of parenting in the U.S., described as "self-centered" and "too individualistic," represent a dilemma of contemporary family values in America while mourning for white middle class traditional family values. Raising children in a household with their married parents—a breadwinner dad and a stay-home mom—has been the predominant and hegemonic model for the American family. Yet, this model is an idealistic representation of mainly upper and middle class white families. After the 1960s, there have been many changes in American family experiences, including an increase in the number of never-married individuals, more women employed outside of home, and an increased divorce rate (Coontz 2000). Thus, it became more socially understood that the traditional family model is not a realistic one. As people adapted their family life to social and economic changes, family structures that are different from the ideal model, such as single parent families, step-families, and families with cohabitated couples became more apparent.

However, critics of American family have been torn between arguing for a revival of the ideal model and praising family diversity.[23] Both sides consider the importance of raising children in a safe and loving environment. The debate on contemporary American family structure is marked with contention, but it seems the

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[23]. For the scholarly debates, see David Popenoe's " Family Decline in America" and Judith Stacey's "Good Riddance to 'The Family': A Response to David Popenoe" in *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Vol. 55, No.3 (Aug., 1993).

ways people view how children should be raised has not changed. For example, the ways in which children became the center of family rituals, such as birthdays and Christmas, have been encouraged socially, religiously, and politically since the 1920s, and those rituals have become very much sentimentalized and, more importantly, home-centered occasions (Pleck 2000). But with a more diversified family structure led by commercialization, social movements, and the rise of individualism since the 1960s, families have been inventing different ways in celebrating the rituals with their children, and those ritualistic practices are not necessarily occurring at home with immediate, blood-related family members (Pleck 2000).

This new way of celebrating rituals is applicable to situations besides those of having a birthday party or family gathering. Parents in different economic situations, for example, may not be able to put their children in bed at a conventional time, but may take them out for grocery shopping instead, particularly in an era when people work different shifts and have access to 24-hour supermarkets. The parent reflected upon by Cindy in her observations of Wal-Mart demonstrates the tension existent between the idealized family and the difficult economic circumstances families confront. Cindy realizes that her white, middle class, sentimentalized view on children may not be feasible to practice anymore, but she still disapproves of unconventional ways of raising children. While a transformation of "the norm" in American family life may gradually be taking place, a conventional belief of how children should be raised is still at a heart of many American parents. Thus, some prospective adoptive parents' mourning for the child-centered values that they perceive as lacking among American families may trigger them to "imagine," based

on limited information, that children in foreign countries receive better care and nurturance.

These dichotomous descriptions of domestic and foreign children—troubled children in the US versus better cared for children overseas—often came up during the interviews when the parents were asked whether they had considered domestic adoption. The standardized family values that the American middle class attaches to childhood was racialized in the adoptive parents' discourse. Theresa, an adoptive mother of a Korean child, for example, talked about her problem with teenage mothers as typical biological mothers of children who were available for domestic adoption.

> [Domestic adoption was] Never an option. Five years in infertility. I wasn't about to adopt domestically and have some teenage-mother, you know, in the last minute, change her mind, and take the baby away from me that I have been hoping for. We think the American adoption system is very messed [up]. I think it should be just like Korea, that if you don't want your baby and can't take care of your baby, you should relinquish it to either the government agencies or orphanages or whatever, and they should place the child. The birthmother should not have as much say as America gives them…Well, look at all the social problem in America. Maybe if [we] did not have so much social welfare, did not have so much acceptance of teenage mothers, and thirteen year old kids, you know, have babies and keeping them…[*sic*] do you see what I am saying? We just have a lot of problems, I think with Ameri.., [sic] I personally have a lot of problems with the American adoption system.

There was a tendency for the parents to attach negative racial stereotypes, particularly of African Americans, on the characteristics of birthmothers who give up their children for adoption in the United States, and then to stretch that reasoning to explain why they did not adopt domestically.

The above quote shows the adoptive mother's concerns about domestic adoption that extend her discussion to racial and class characteristics of those

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biological mothers. What is particularly important here is how those biological

mothers are covertly racialized through colorblind, coded language such as "welfare

mothers" and "teenage mothers." It is quite clear that "welfare mothers" is a subtext

to describe mothers of color, particularly blacks. Although Theresa does not

explicitly use the term "welfare mothers" in her above quote, she believes that teenage

mothers are given too much social welfare support to keep their children. Putting

their knowledge of the state and institutional practices in the context of American

adoption policy, combined with a racialized characterization of biological mothers

who give up their babies for adoption, makes their decision to adopt internationally

seem "natural" or "inevitable." In other words, cultural logics of poverty created

through domestic welfare systems influence the "racialization" and "biologization" of

the poor and underclass; thus domestic children have become undesirable (Ortiz and

Briggs 2003).

Bob and Kate, who were adopting a baby boy from South Korea at the time of

our meeting, expressed the reason why they were adopting from South Korea, which

reflects their concerns about domestic adoption. In their answer to whether they

considered adopting domestically, Kate explained that:

> We did a little bit since we weren't really…you know, we didn't really
> think…you know, Korea right from the start, and so we did say *there is a big
> need here*. Quite honestly, and we talked this over with our social
> worker…we felt like an Asian child would do better here than maybe an
> African American child...[emphasis mine]

Bob and Kate's story implies that the reason many white adoptive parents turn to

transnational adoption is because of the stigma attached to adopting non-white

children, particularly black children, due to a long history of racial segregation in the

United States (Fogg-Davis 2002). Another issue for the parents about domestic

parents, as their story shows, is the race of children in relation to the type of

community they live in. It was common among the parents to question "the fitness"

of a black child for their family and the community they lived in. While this appeared

to be true for many parents I interviewed, an adoption lawyer I interviewed gave a

different point of view which may very well represent the view of parents who desire

to adopt domestically:

> There seems to be a little bit of a preference for healthy white infants in domestic adoption…It just seems to be the highest preference is for white babies…but for a clear point that a healthy African American baby is very desirable and very adoptable whether transracially or same race. They're certainly not hard to place. I've never had trouble placing healthy African American babies…I guess what I'm trying to make clear [is that] there is a growing demand for African American babies. They're not in as high of a demand as the white babies, but they're in demand. It's wrong to say that they are special needs or that they might end up in foster care.

The parents I met usually had thought about and done their research on domestic and

transnational adoption by the time of the interviews, and they had already decided not

to adopt domestically. Indeed, many of them had imagined adopting a healthy white

child domestically at least once when they began the decision making process.

Unlike, the adoptive parents to whom the adoption lawyer referred when talking about

the desirability of African American children, most parents I interviewed had at least

one issue concerning domestic adoption that made them uncomfortable, and which

became a reason for them not to adopt domestically. When asked whether they had

considered domestic adoption, they often talked about their reasons for not choosing

to adopt domestically by associating it with "problems" with the US adoption system,

including the welfare system and the unfit characteristics of birthmothers as described

by Theresa. From the parents' point of view, the adoption system in America usually

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refs to the open adoption practice widely instituted by private adoption agencies and state adoption laws that usually provide a time period for birthmothers to reverse the decision to give up their children.

Based on what the parents had heard and read about both domestic and transnational adoption, they quickly understood that there is a scarcity of healthy white infants for domestic adoption. Then, it is understandable that many of them considered adopting a non-white child so that there was a better chance to welcome him/her into their family within a more definite waiting period. What needs to be carefully considered here is which color lines they were willing to cross and which ones they were not. The humanitarian aspect attached to orphans in other countries certainly was a motivating factor for these middle class American parents to feel that they could contribute by saving one child from an international humanitarian crisis of some sort. What needs to be interrogated further is why these parents do not consider adopting African American children as a humanitarian act. The images that are portrayed about helpless and motherless children in countries that have been experiencing political, social, and economical turmoil may give these parents an impression that those children's biological mothers had no choice but giving them up for adoption. On the other hand, these parents may blame biological mothers in the United States for 'making a inhumanitarian choice in not raising their children without trying to solve 'the social problems' associated especially with black poverty at home (Ortiz and Briggs 2003). Through examining these parents' stories above, I argue that the desirability of children is associated with their evaluation of how and in what circumstances children become available for adoption.

6.3 A BETTER FIT RACE—THE SHADOW OF RACIAL STEREOTYPE: MOVING TOAWARD MULTIRACIAL FAMILY?

When parents decide to create a family through adoption, they typically evaluate "desirable types" of children before deciding whether to adopt domestically or transnationally. One of the deciding factors is the children's race. Whatever the decision the adoptive parents make, they carefully consider the race of prospective adoptees along with, for example, the racial environment of the communities they live in and/or the already existing biological children in their family. The most compelling point in their stories is how confidently they present themselves as creators of multicultural/multiracial families, yet their confidence is limited to including only a particular race. By carefully observing the existing racial hierarchy in the U.S., they evaluate which race is a better fit for their family and the community they live in. Moreover, many adoptive parents I interviewed considered racial stereotypes of different minority groups in the United States, which led them to adopt from overseas, especially from Asian countries. They acknowledged that many available children for domestic adoption are African Americans. With this in mind, the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans steers their decision to adopt from South Korea or China.

Perhaps one of the most conventional expectations one might imagine is that these parents must desire to have their adopted child's match their own. In fact, three sets of white parents I interviewed consciously sought look-alike children, although they expressed their openness to multiculturalism. Two of these families already had biological children. For one of the families, it was important for them to not let their adopted child stand out too much from his/her future siblings. Doreen and Tim, who

used AMMA's service, have two biological sons and had adopted a girl from Azerbaijan. When I asked them whether the racial characteristic of their future adopted child were important, Doreen, raised her concerns about matching physical characteristics with their two biological sons. After I was introduced to their two sons in their house, Doreen repeatedly mentioned how much they resemble each other. Her worry was that, when their adopted child goes to school, their schoolmates would not believe that they are all siblings because of the differences in his/her physical characteristics. So she had strong desire to adopt a white child. On the other hand, Tim, her husband, was very open about where to adopt their child from:

Tim: Me, on the other hand, I thought it was a great idea because I think the United States can be more…more multiracial, multicultural and I thought we could be a great example of that.

Doreen: And I said I…

Tim: So I thought this is a great way to do it.

Kazuyo: Yeah. Okay.

Doreen: I agree with that theory, I just didn't know that I wanted to be the one to live through it or have my children live through it.

Tim: I think I could deal with it.

Doreen: Right. Well I mean I wouldn't hesitate. You know people "oh she looks like her father," and I'll say "Yeah, she does." You know, or "Her eyes kind of look like yours," and I'm like, "Oh really, thanks," you know or I don't say anything, and then people say I just can't figure out if she looks more like me or more like Tim, and I'll be like, "Well, probably not much like either of us because she's adopted." You know I don't hesitate to talk about it. I'm proud of it, and I think this is a great thing, and we're proud of her country, and what I'm going to teach her about her country and go back and visit with her one-day, but I don't know. I just didn't want for the kids and myself to feel uncomfortable or whatever.

Contrary to "the confidence" Tim showed about having a multicultural family, Doreen was just not comfortable with having a "conspicuous" family. Doreen and

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Tim talked over this issue for a year before Tim finally decided to go along with Doreen's wishes. The obvious choice for them, then, was Russia, but they quickly eliminated it from their list because, based on their research, they learned that Russian children have a high risk of fetal alcoholic syndrome. They narrowed the options down to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, the former Soviet republics. With their preconceived ideas that people from those two countries should be "fair skinned" and have "light hair" like Russians, they started looking through pictures of children who were adopted from the countries. Having a non-conspicuous (or a white) family was very important for Doreen, but it is intriguing that she says she was proud that they had adopted their daughter from Azerbaijan and were willing to teach her about the country. A multiracial or multicultural family sounded good for Doreen, or it was just an ideal—being totally colorblind seemed too high of a hurdle to jump over considering their own family.

Lindsay and Brian adopted a son from Kazakhstan and have three biological children. Besides being concerned about having a "conspicuous family," they thought adopting a child from a country where the culture was similar to theirs was an important factor. Their concern was more about their adopted child not having his "roots" in terms of their birth mother, biological family, and culture. Thus they did not want to adopt from a country whose culture was very foreign to theirs. They felt that Kazakhstan had a similar culture to America which motivated them to adopt from there, and thus they avoided adopting a child from, for example, China which they perceived as being "far" from US culture. When I asked about how similar they think of Kazakhstan culture to American culture as opposed to Chinese culture, Lindsay explained,

It's a western culture so there wasn't nearly as much…I mean we borrowed the books on Kazakhstan so we could show pictures, but as far as you know, I don't know…the food, some of it's different, but it's still westernized over there that… But there's this amazing history, you know what I mean, that's so different than the United States and so different than Europe…This child needs to get in touch with their roots, needs to have a sense of identity [*sic*]…[When] you're formulating your identity, and you have your family tree to draw from and these children don't. They have nothing to draw from because they are displaced. They're brought here. So if you can, you know, really get them in touch with their culture, they can kind of get a sense of who they are and help formulate their identity []we thought it would be easier…I guess it was selfish on our part…easier to you know have something that's not as different from America because again we already had these three biological kids, and if we go to China this child again is going to be a standout, different. It's a completely different culture, and we're going to want to try to get that child in touch with their origins and their roots and everything.

It seems contradictory that Lindsay and Brian want to have similarity in their race and culture, especially, when it comes down to creating a family. Why not adopt an American child then?

The adoptive parents often brought up two reasons why they did not adopt domestically—1) "the problem" of the open adoption process in the United States and 2) the available children tend to be black. Lindsay and Brian were concerned for their adopted son for being "displaced" and intend to help their son develop as stable identity as possible. Yet, ironically, an open adoption practice in the US, in which an adopted child's roots—such as information about their biological family—is available, may have prevented a sense of displacement. Lindsay and Brian did not see it this way. The option of pursuing open adoption just did not fit with their idea of what family should be although their adopted child would know his/her biological family roots as well as his/her "culture." Thus, adopting white children from a foreign country that they consider "western" has become a safe zone for the parents, one where there is no fear for the birth parents of being overly conspicuous.

Some parents did not initially admit to their hesitancy to create multiracial family—more precisely to adopt a black child. For example, when asked whether they had considered adopting a black child through domestic adoption, Debbie and her husband, Jack, who adopted two sons from Russia, said that they did not care much about what race their adopted children would be. Debbie said that they were totally open to a child with any race, but domestic adoption made them feel uncomfortable because of the open adoption practice and the distance with transnational adoption made her feel better. However, when Debbie was asked about the reasons for choosing Russia, she expressed her feeling that matching race may have been important after all:

> I guess it was. It didn't have to be, but it just…I don't know why. Maybe it was partly the race and that. It's like it's either this or that, and this is a big country, and AMMA talked about Russia a lot. Some of the other countries they had talked about maybe weren't as open at the time, you know, or this is oh you know how some countries. they changed their laws or they're not as accessible sometimes, like Russia now where it's becoming much more closed…We live in an area that is so…if we lived in the city you know where the schools are more mixed but it's not. It's not like that here, and you kind of say oh my child is already going to be adopted, already going to have some differences as they grow up and maybe it's best if it's not in their face…You know, like, I don't feel the same way now but at that time…do you know what I mean?

Debbie and her husband's racial preference for their future child was expressed around a number of rationalizations, such as the presentation of sending countries by the agency, changing regulations, and the community environment they lived in. The couple knew of the social and political climate wherein Americans were supposed to support multiculturalism. Unlike the previous two couples, Debbie and her husband do not have biological children so there were no concerns about having a "matching family". But it is clear that they wanted to avoid the obvious visible difference within their family—between themselves and their adopted child. The stories of these three

couples who wanted to match their race with their adopted children show that racial difference was too difficult to overcome, and that multiculturalism and multiracialism, although acknowledged and remained perhaps as a good idea, but was not something that they would put into practice.

Unlike the three sets of adoptive parents stories discussed above, about 70% of the all parents I interviewed adopted non-white children transnationally. For those parents, it was not so important that they adopt a white child, but race was carefully considered in the adoption process. Their stories show their "confidence" about creating multicultural and multiracial families. At the same time, they also reveal that the "confidence" does not necessarily apply to all races. The parents often stated quite clearly that they did not feel as confident about bringing in a black child into their family as they did about Asian or Latino children.

Darren and Keri's adoption story is very different from the other parents I interviewed in that they adopted two children from a Mexican woman who came to the United States to have her babies. Although their case fits neither with the typical transnational adoption nor domestic adoption processes, their stories show how their praise for multiculturalism comes from their confidence in building a multicultural family.

> Yeah definitely…and also it's probably relevant that in my job I had gotten very involved in…I'm a high school teacher, but I had taken a sabbatical just to study educational equity and diversity, and so I had done a ton of studying myself to try to understand more about biases and assumptions, and what it means to be in this country [*sic*]…And so I think we felt…and Darren, you know, knew…heard about what I was up to, and it mattered a lot to us…And we felt like we might be a well equipped family because we committed so much time and wanted to commit so much time to really understanding, and, you know, we felt like we might be in a good position to do a decent job of raising kids that had a different background than our own.

The knowledge they acquired and the time they committed to learn about diversity in the U.S. gave them confidence that they could do "a decent job" of creating a multicultural family. Keri and Darren knew very well that "white healthy infants were at a premium" in the domestic adoption market, but adopting a child who looked like them was not important to them, and it made more sense for them to seek a child who was less likely to be adopted.

They knew that adopting a child who was less likely to be adopted meant adopting a non-white child, but the thought of having a visible difference between them and their adopted children was not so disturbing. While looking at her adopted children, who were preoccupied with playing their toys in the same room, Keri emphasized the importance of showing "very honest, genuine interest and respect for other cultures" so that they could be proud of "their culture." Darren, however, expressed a more blunt and honest view of his adopted children about how they are going to grow up as Americans. Both Darren and Keri envision that being different is something that is very American and reflected the idea of how their own family members came from different countries:

> **Darren:** Well ultimately these children have a connection with Mexico, but what culture are they? Well, they're American. They're growing up in America in an American household, you know…You know it's kind of an American…Yeah, I think about how much of…like all of our families are from other cultures originally, you know. My mother's family is from Lithuania originally, generations ago…My father's family is from Italy…Yeah, and, you know, I think about what part of those cultures have been brought into our lives, and it's also pretty superficial.

> **Keri**: Yeah. I was just going to say that I think that there's a shift in even the American sort of consciousness or whatever that everybody doesn't have to be the same to be American…

Darren's and Keri's willingness to adopt non-white children coincides with the normative belief of multiculturalism that with an emphasis on colorblind practice, racial and cultural differences could be overcome by showing respect. However, they did not feel that it could extend to raising black children. They were open to the idea, but the National Association of Black Social Workers' (NABSW) argument against transracial adoption of black children made them concerned about it:

> We said that we were. We had some real misgivings, but we were aware that the African…the Association of African American Social Workers [*sic*] came out against white families adopting…And that had a big impact I know, I mean I talked a lot about that because it felt important that that group felt it wasn't the right thing for the children. You know, and you can argue, well, is no family better than…so we were taking that seriously. And so, but then when we heard the African American program had even a greater incident of change of heart, we said…So anyway...

As discussed in Chapter Three, the NABSW came out with their strong opposition to the placement of black children to non-black households at the fourth annual conference of NABSW in 1972 (NABSW 2006), which triggered debates among adoption professionals regarding the regulation of transracial adoption in the United States. The debates were followed by a series of regulations, such as The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, which advocates for a colorblind practice of adoption and foster home placement. Most of the families I interviewed had done extensive research on adoption even before they contacted adoption agencies. However, Keri and Dave were the only adoptive parents who brought up NABSW's position as a reason not to adopt a black child. While it is unclear whether they support the NABSW's position that black children should be placed in black households, the divergence among racial groups represented in the debate made them hesitant to cross the specific racial border—white and black.

Many families, however, clearly expressed their feelings of unease about

adopting black children, not because of the NABSW's statement, but based on their

perception of which race fits in better with their *white* family and the *white*

community in which they lived. Bob and Kate, for example, were waiting to adopt a

son from South Korea at the time of the interview. They expressed their concerns

about bringing in an African American child into their community;

> And then we figured, you know, if you were going to adopt domestically, we
> figured the African American or bi-racial children would be fairly accessible for
> us to adopt…You know, and maybe it's not something that we're against. We're
> obviously not prejudiced if we're going to have a Korean child in our family, and
> maybe its something we'll consider in the future, but for some reason we just felt
> like an Asian child might fit better…But we all just kind of said yes an Asian baby
> might do better here in terms of fitting in.

Bob's testimony shows how he thinks that he is not prejudiced since he and his wife

are adopting a son from South Korea. With Bob and Kate, and other parents who did

not want to adopt black children, it was a common discourse to blame the racial

prejudices that exist in their families and the communities in which they lived. Jeff

and Melanie, who adopted siblings from Russia, were initially open to adopting

Asian children but were not open to adopt black children:

> **Melanie:** We weren't looking for an African American child only because,
> unfortunately, my husband works with a lot of African American children so
> that's not a problem, and we now have a brother in law who's African
> American. I have many relatives that are extremely prejudiced and we didn't
> even want to try to get them…and a lot of them live around here, and we
> didn't want to have our child exposed to that. It would have been too hard.
> We would have had to move completely, probably to another state and thought
> that would be a problem. In fact we were a little worried about our children.

> **Kazuyo**: Was there…because, I mean, you talked about African American but did
> you think about other races?

> **Jeff**: Asian…

> **Melanie:** That wouldn't have bothered me.

Kazuyo: Or South American…

Jeff: I don't think that would have bothered us. I really don't.

Whenever the adoptive parents discussed how they had decided to adopt their child

from the particular country or/and the race, it was very common but unsurprising that

they portrayed themselves as the ones who were not prejudiced among their family

members as well we in their residential community. However, their testimony also

exhibited a "racial consciousness" that assessed which racial groups have integrated

better into U.S. society.

Carl and Wendy, who have a biological daughter and an adopted daughter

from China, emphasized how they always were confident about their choice to create

a multiracial family. In fact, Carl proclaimed that he was never conscious about his

adopted daughter being any different from his white nieces and nephews when they

played together. But when asked whether Carl and Wendy had considered any other

races of children into their adoption, he said that his friends adopted an African

American child, so it would have been fine to them, but he and Wendy thought that an

Asian child would do better in the family because "they integrated very very well":

> **Carl:** It's actually interesting because one of the two that I'm closest with, who
> did domestic adoption, one of the children is African American and the other
> is white, and the parents are both white…And so I have been exposed to
> that…Relatively early, and we discussed whether the child would be African
> American or not and it…it was interesting. We had a relative say to us
> something like, I think it's unfair to the child to not be the same race as the
> parents, but they said it only for African American children. For your child
> who's an Asian child is okay.

> **Kazuyo**: I mean you hear this a lot.

> **Carl**: Exactly and people are not afraid to say things about it…Yeah. So it really
> didn't directly get into our decision, but I mean it's certainly, I was aware of it.

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Those parents I interviewed above made it ambiguous whether their preference for

Asian or South American children over domestic black children is a direct reflection

of their own feelings about different racial groups in the U.S. through their narratives

of how their family members are prejudiced against black Americans.

It is clear in their stories that they preferred a certain race of child to be new

members of their family. In several cases adoptive parents showed contradictions

when they talked about how they decided not to adopt an African American child, but

were open to any races because their adopted child would not look like themselves.

For example, Erica and Chuck, who adopted a daughter from China clearly stated that

they were sure they did not want to adopt domestically. When asked for their reasons,

Erica said that:

> Number one, we knew that we did not feel capable of raising an African American child just because in this society, I mean this society is so polarized by color…And it's more by color…it is…it's very much so and… I think it's a balancing act…It's a total balancing act. You know there's…you can't be blind to the fact that you're a multiracial family, and you can't spend everyday, every moment of your life embracing it, carrying the flag. Sometimes you just need to be a family, and that's what we need to communicate to the world…I mean he's Greek, and I'm Polish and Irish. Even if we adopted domestically what's the chance that we would adopt a child that looks anything like us?. I mean we would probably…there's the possibility of adopting a child of European descent, but it wouldn't look anything like us. So why does it matter, and for some reason a child of Asian descent, it seemed like it would be an easier experience for them. It wasn't that I didn't feel like I could love an African American, or that I couldn't love them, or that, you know, I would never feel like they were mine.

Many parents, including Erica, explicitly stated that the "model minority" stereotype

of Asian Americans had an impact on their decision to adopt from South Korea or

China. Erica was not hesitant at all to talk about it:

> Well do you want to get down to brass tacks? The stereotype of Asians is that they're very smart…You know the stereotype of African Americans is a lot more negative…The stereotype of many Hispanics is very negative…And the truth is, you know, maybe my daughter could end up with an IQ of 80 and, you know,

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never graduate from high school and you know she would go through life with everyone saying, "But you're Asian. You're supposed to be smart."

While many parents explicitly associated African American children with domestic adoption, there were some parents who, instead, emphasized how foreign/Asian countries have a much better view of family and this led to a decision to not adopt domestically. Cindy, who was waiting to receive a baby boy from South Korea, claimed that parents, whatever nationality children are, want a perfect, healthy infant. But when I asked about children from America, she responded that;

> No [not from this country]…Yeah, I feel that parents [in America] don't parent the way…I don't blame the children obviously…things are much better here, but I have a very high standard for how I feel a child should be raised, and it's much more in line with other countries' expectations and view of things. Maybe not as strict, you know, as far as expectations as far as you must get straight A's, although she does, but in the view of how the parent has a responsibility to raise the child, it's not about me, it's about the child…I think that foreign countries have a better view of the family…I'd say, like stereotype. You tell me a baby comes from an Asian place; I know that that kid's going to be smart.

The way Theresa and Mark, who adopted their son from South Korea, turned away from domestic adoption shows how the stereotypes about blacks and Asians factored in their decision. Theresa explains:

> …And I have done some research. I am sure you have seen this out there. Was a very interesting book…The ethnicity of your family, and if you adopt an African American, then your family is viewed as minority in the society in the way that you are treated…when you adopt an Asian child, really the society doesn't view you any differently. I think we noticed that too. And I heard that Hispanic just kind of falls in the middle of it, you know, it's not quite as bad as if you have adopted an African American child and not as quite as accepted as an Asian child… When you think about the stereotypes that Americans have, I think I agree with that because I can tell you…when my son was about 1 year and half and somebody there told me, 'Oh, he is gonna be a smart one because all the folks from over there are'…you know, you understand what I am saying, Americans have the stereotypes that they are smart and they are good businessmen and they work harder than we do and, just, that is an American stereotype, then I mean, I won't go to all the negatives about African American stereotypes, but there are negatives about Hispanics, so, so when I read that, I'm like, you know this does

make sense that Asians would be more accepted into the, culturally, into our family...

Through her analysis of the transformation of the recent domestic and transnational adoption policies—from liberal to neoconservative —Dorow (2006b: 9) shows how colorblind racial projects that once promoted domestic transracial adoption in the 1970s, shifted by the mid-1990s to a national agenda on its way to "…a nation both safely white and convincingly colorblind." This was accomplished by shifting the national agenda to institutionalizing the ideology of "…favoring the consumptive choices of white heterosexual families while vilifying single black (read "welfare") mothers." (Dorow 2006b; Patton 2000) At the policy level, while this shift promoted both domestic and transnational adoption, Dorow (2006b) argues that it is racism that maneuvers through the adoption of foreign and domestic children.

6.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Utilizing Kim's (1999) and Dorow's (2006b) discussion of *Triangulating Race*, this chapter illustrated through transnational adoption how the meaning of race is articulated by the inconsistent practices of colorblind/deracializing ideology and enforcing "differences" among different racial groups. While white adoptive parents associate adoption of domestic children with welfare mothers and crack babies— "blackness" – the adoption of foreign children is usually regarded as "baggage free"—"rescuable orphans abroad" (Dorow 2006b). Thus, *triangulating race* through domestic and transnational adoption refers to maintaining white privileges in "…places where histories of colorblindness, salvation, and universal humanism meet

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their dialectical partners of white privilege, marginalization, and particularity"

(Dorow 2006: 7).

The openness to adopt non-black children versus black children (Shiao et al. 2004) seems to have become a patterned or "accepted" idea among the adoptive parents I interviewed. The common discourse that is engendered from their stories is that the racial division between white and black is too wide to cross as opposed to Asians. The parents often proclaimed that they felt adopting Asian would be safer in regards to receiving acceptance from their family members and the communities they live in. Their testimonies above show how the parents' willingness to create a multicultural family was actually limited to specific racial groups and culture. In other words, while most of the parents are ready or even enthusiastic to create a multicultural and multiracial family, it is evident that this does not translate into openness in regards to adopting a black child.

Another prominent characteristic that is obvious in the parents' narratives is how they carefully consider racial stereotypes of different groups in deciding which child to adopt. Although most of them acknowledge that racial stereotypes can work negatively on the image of groups of different races, the "model minority" stereotype of Asian Americans often creates a safe zone where these adoptive parents felt that an Asian children would be accepted by their extended family members and members of communities they belong to. The "model minority" stereotypes of Asian Americans usually refer to their social achievement in higher economic and educational levels, which correspond well with the myth of American meritocracy. As Kim (1999) discusses in her theory of triangulation of race, the way in which Asian Americans are

perceived as the "model minority" is done in relation to how African Americas are racialized through maintaining white privilege.

The adoptive parents' stories discussed in this chapter show how these parents' decisions not to adopt domestically are partly made in reference to how those different racial groups are socially perceived in the U.S. For example, Theresa's story r book on how your family is considered majority or minority based on its racial composition can indicate that racial stereotypes directly or indirectly influence parents' deciding process. The deciding process, by referring to the different racial stereotypes, involves a comparison of the images of different racial groups with their simultaneous rationalizing process by convincing themselves that they are not racist because they are still creating a multiracial family. This is not at all a colorblind process, which MEPA advocates that adoption agencies should practice. Thus, I argue, based on the parents' narratives above, that the way they rearticulate the meaning of race through their creation of adoptive family actually reifies the existent racial hierarchy in the United States.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION—FAMILY AND RACE

As increasing numbers of families are created through transnational adoption, we can witness many adoption stories covered in the media. But these are usually reports of only a few aspects of transnational adoption, such as footage of American parents traveling overseas to pick up their children. Also, the recent heavy media coverage of Angelina Jolie and Madonna's adoption stories may have influenced people to associate transnational adoption only with celebrities' humanitarian actions. In any event, the media coverage of transnational adoption rarely shows the history of who is actually involved in creating families through transnational adoption. Thus, it is not commonly realized that an adoptive family created through transnational adoption is borne out, in fact, not only from the union of parents and children but also through the orchestrated interaction between biological parents, adoptees, the host countries, the sending countries, international communities, national welfare organizations, and adoption agencies.

The present study has discussed how family formation through transnational adoption has been institutionalized through the strategized efforts of different actors, the demographic pattern of adoptive families in the U.S., the employment of multiculturalism as an effective educational tool for adoption agencies and the parents' response to the agencies' education, and lastly, how the race of children is a salient issue for adoptive parents as they think about building their families through transnational adoption. Furthermore, the study focuses how families are created through transnational adoption by illuminating, especially, adoption agencies that serve an intermediary role among the actors mentioned above and how adoptive

parents transmit the knowledge they acquired from agencies and their own ideas about race and family to the adoption decision they made.

As a basis of this study, I discussed a brief overview of the institutionalization of transnational adoption in the United States. There were several conditions that led interested parents to adopt transnationally. For domestic adoption, there was the campaign among middle class women to raise the consciousness to consider adoption as "rescuing children" in the 1930s. Therefore, when the series of wars the United States was involved in resulted in many orphans, it triggered many American parents' interest in adopting those children. Beginning in 1948, transnational adoption was regulated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (currently U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services), and the adoption process was instituted bilaterally. But since The Hague Convention was proposed in 1993, the United States has been working toward multilateral institutionalization of transnational adoption. The Hague Convention was fully implemented in April 2008.

I have also described the key actors that are involved in transnational adoption. The social, political, and economic conditions of sending countries have influenced the availability of children for transnational adoption. The extent of sending countries' regulatory codes in regards to adopted children moves beyond the matters of the children who leave their country of origin. Sending countries regulate quite strictly which foreign prospective parents are qualified to adopt children. As China, Russia, and Guatemala, the recent major sending countries, are either attempting to shift their regulations or resisting doing so, the current era is a critical period that needs to be observed carefully. This possible shift has been greatly influenced by the role taken by The Hague Convention, another actor, which engages

in supranational efforts to conduct transnational adoption ethically. Adoption agencies are also crucial in family formation through transnational adoption, and they are well networked through the efforts of Joint Council of International Children's Services, a national interest group and lobbying organization in the United States.

The demographic characteristics of adopted children from the overseas are detailed in this study. Based on the Census 2000 data, adoption is a family creation strategy practiced in all the regions in the United States. The Midwest where the present project was carried out, however, is the only region where the percentage of adopted children exceeds that of total children compared to the Northeast, South, and West. The age of adopted children is one of the most important factors when considering the reasons why parents turn to transnational adoption. The modal age category for domestically adopted children (6 years old to 11 years old) is higher than that of transnationally adopted children (under 6 years old). This indicates a possibility that parents, who prefer to adopt a younger child, resort to transnational adoption.

As for the race of adopted children in 2000, the most noticeable observation is that the percentage of Asian children among transnationally adopted is notably higher (50%) than that of all adopted children (7%). The rapid institutionalization of transnational adoption from South Korea and China could explain the high percentage of Asian children that were transnationally adopted. As for white children, the percentage of all adopted children is much higher (64.17%) compared to the percentage of white children adopted transnationally (25.24%). Over 90 percent of all parents who adopted their child before 2000 were white. The racial matching between adoptive parents and their transnationally adopted children suggests that

parents may have racially particular preferences when deciding where to adopt from. When parents' and their adopted child's race match, the majority of such families are white, however, when the race of parents and their adopted children do not match, the racial distribution of children is heavily skewed toward Asians. This indicates that there are growing numbers of adoptive families that are transracial. Thus, the way parents conceptualize their own racial identity and that of their adopted child plays an important role in constructing families created through transnational adoption.

This dissertation specifically focuses on the role of adoption agencies in assisting prospective parents' journey to create a family through transnational adoption. The study does not, however, present adoptive parents as passive agents in the process. I argue that the parents in my study actively sought information about adopting a child from a foreign country. Furthermore, while those parents appreciate the education they received from the agencies, their observation of their own white race in relation to what their future child's race would be is often intertwined with their own evaluation of racial stereotypes and racial hierarchy in the United States. This is a lesson that was not necessarily what they were taught from the agencies' training sessions.

The adoption agencies in this study strive to educate parents about what it means to form multicultural families. They do talk about existing racism and how it might influence adopted children negatively, but they are able to promote transnational adoption by emphasizing some positive connotation of what the normative multicultural discourse entails. However, my findings do not only show how those parents practice the premises of multiculturalism in their family building process with their adopted child; they also show how the their realization of existing

racism, racial hierarchy, and racial stereotypes in the United States influences their adoption decision that is racially specific.

Those parents who shared their adoption stories with me were not overly concerned with their family becoming multicultural as they made their decision to adopt from China, South Korea, Russia, or Guatemala. The celebratory connotation that normative multiculturalism entails, in some ways, eases those parents' concerns about the differences within their family. Some of the multicultural family building tools the agencies introduced to the parents, such as crafting a life book, have indeed helped a number of parents who were in search for something that would bind their family together across racial lines. The agencies emphasized the importance of documenting their child's history and lineage and crafting a life book by telling parents to note the difference between themselves and their adopted child. Agencies conveyed a need to send this message to adopted children because it provides the child with a sense that his/her parents actively embraces "his/her culture."

While those parents may be open to the creation of certain multicultural families, they may not be open to creating all configurations of multiracial families. More specifically, they may feel more comfortable adopting Asian children than adopting black children. This was shown when the parents talked about whether they had considered domestic adoption. For some parents, transnational adoption was their only choice. The humanitarian aspect that transnational adoption entails was appealing when they heard about children available in impoverished countries, even though they were aware that they might be some risks involved, mainly with children's health. When asked whether they had considered domestic adoption, some parents were reticent about why they had decided against it. In other words, they did

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not want to talk about the "dark side" of adoption stories that is related to social problems in the United States.

But some were quite vocal about the "problems" that domestic adoption brings out. Among these white middle class parents, their criticism of the United States was usually related to how families do not live up to standard traditional family values, as articulated by one interviewee's observation of the mother and her children at Wal-Mart in the middle of the night when children were supposed to be in bed. More importantly, those "improper" mothers were often racialized as young, black welfare mothers to whom, some adoptive parents believe; the domestic adoption system gives too many rights. The flipside of this is that children available for domestic adoption were devalued based on those parents' assumptions about American families, young black biological mothers, and the domestic adoption system.

On the other hand, children in other countries were valued as more desirable as they did not seem to carry a heavy social baggage that parents perceived in children available for domestic adoption. As the adoption of Korean and Chinese children becomes more institutionalized, many parents leaned toward them because of the repeated positive descriptions of Asian origin children that they hear from the agencies and other parents who have adopted from those countries. Through these parents' narratives, especially among the ones that adopted from South Korea and China, the racial fitness of Asian children into their family and the community they live in became prominent. These parents concluded that an Asian child fits their lives better than a black child, based on their triangulated evaluation of the existing racial hierarchy in the United States in which Asians are regarded as "foreigners" but they

are also regarded as "model minority" children, which makes them socially closer to whites than blacks (Dorow 2006b; Kim 1999).

My conversations with adoptive parents and adoption agency staff and my examination of the role of the governments of the U.S. and sending countries show how a range of desirability of different racial children is produced through the inconsistent co-existence of three everyday practices: 1. Multiculturalism as a safe deracializing space to enjoy differences; 2. Colorblind Ideology as a hegemonic space where white privilege is maintained through culturally distinct rhetoric (e.g. model minority myth); and 3. Realization of racial hierarchy through constant everyday confrontation with society. The third part of the above practices is especially important to accentuate since it shows how the racial difference among the family member always hangs over those parents as they create a family. For example, Erica, a mother who adopted her daughter from China, was conscious about how thoughts about adopting a child made her aware of what family really means. She also expressed her desire to create as racially inclusive an environment as possible for her daughter.

> So I wanted to be in a place where people actively chose to be families and were very committed to it, and I think that's probably what you're finding with adoptive families, you really think about what it is to be a family. It's primarily, yeah…basically we moved for the schools and we chose, you know, this school district, this area where she will go to Morton Elementary School because the majority of the children we knew who were adopted from China who are in our group go to that school. So that I can give her a school where there are faces that look like hers. Where there are families that look like hers that, you know, some of them will be in her class and they will go to school with her for the next twelve years and others will be in the school with her. So I can give her…you know, I could never give her a world in which she fits in easily, but I can give her a world where she's not the only one, where she is used to seeing more than just white faces every single day and being compared to blonde haired blue eyed children.

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Some adoptive parents shared their thoughts on what would be the best environment in which to bring up their adopted children. There were differences in their opinions, mainly depending on the presence of biological children within their family, their, work, and their financial situation which let them move to another area that was more desirable. One thing that several parents expressed particularly stood out to me: their desire to create a family in which their adopted child was not the "only different one" in the community they lived in. In some cases, they were already in what many referred to as an "adoption community" where many parents networked with other parents who have adopted children. Some parents who had adopted a child whose racial characteristic was different from theirs were conscious about not letting their child feel too conspicuous in the living environment. These concerns can be seen in the Erica's testimony above, which expresses a strong desire to live in the area where her daughter could go to school with other girls who had been adopted from China as well.

This indicates how those parents were aware of the racial difference between them and their child; therefore, they were conscious that their family does not fit into the normative family in the United States. But the desire to be recognized as a family which is just as good as or even better than families with biological children is expressed through how adoptive parents are more conscious about being family— "being committed to it" (from Erica's interview quote above). The clear distinction those adoptive parents make between family formation through adoption and having biological children is translated to whether you think about "what it is to be a family" (from Erica's interview quote above). The racial distinction between parents and their

adopted children can contribute to having a strong feeling about putting more effort in thinking about what family means.

The dissertation also examined how adoptive parents articulate the meaning of race when constructing a family through transnational adoption. In adoptive parents' decision making process about the relative desirability of children to be adopted, the changing meaning of race was evaluated by them. This complex process was often wrapped up in the normative discourse of multiculturalism. The normative discourse of multiculturalism—embracing differences—in many ways was a key concept to building a family for many adoptive parents in this study. The feeling and action of being "committed" to family for the parents in my study could come from both imagining and envisioning what your family looks like and from doing/making a family where parents participate in manufacturing a child's culture, which families with only biological children may not be conscious of. The parents worried that their child's non-white race could stigmatize them while growing up, thus they desired tools and knowledge to help them ease their concerns. Many turned to the adoption agencies they had used, books, online resources, and their fellow adoptive parents for educational tools and support as they felt "committed" to be a normal family despite the racial differences within their family.

The kind of family formation this study has discussed is located within a space where multiculturalism, colorblind ideology, and the realization of racial hierarchy are all at work in an intertwined manner that all the actors, especially the adoption agencies and the adoptive parent take a part in. While many issues, such as age, gender, and the health of children, along with the adoption regulations enforced by the United States, sending countries, and the international communities, factor into

parents' adoption decisions, race, I argue, plays an important role in family formation through transnational adoption. This study shows how those families who adopt transnationally do not actually transcend racial differences even though they may have strived do so. They may think that they transcended the racial and cultural barrier by creating a transracial family through adoption, but the racially particular choice these parents make when deciding to adopt transnationally versus domestically is a racialized practice, in which they actually acknowledge the existing racial hierarchy. Through reinforcing the normative multicultural discourse and practices, adoption agencies and the parents may believe that they have transcended race. "Transcending Race" was a slogan at the annual meeting of the Joint Council for International Children in 2005. They advocate the idea that children across all racial and national lines deserve to be raised in a family. But what we also need to realize is that children, whether they are from impoverished countries or more economically advantaged countries such as the United States, can also be stratified and racialized through adoptive family formation processes, which is unjustifiable, though it is a complex issue to solve.

One emerging adoption practice that ushers in a new wave to current thinking on race and its role in family formation through transnational adoption is the emergent trend in adoptions from African countries, especially Ethiopia. While the overall numbers of transnationally adopted children have decreased since 2006, adoption from Guatemala and Ethiopia has shown a steady increase. The total number of adoptions to the United States in 2005 was 22,710, but the number has dropped to 20,705 in 2006, 19,471 in 2007, and 17,436 in 2008 (U.S. Department of Homeland

Security 2006b; 2007, and 2008; U.S. Department of State 2009b). Meanwhile, adoption from Guatemala has been moderately popular in the last seven years, peaking in 2008 when 4,123 Guatemalan children were adopted by the U.S. parents, which exceeded adoptions from China (3,909) for the first time (U.S. Department of State 2009b). However, adoptions from Guatemala are expected to decrease in 2009 since the U.S. government suspended adoption from Guatemala in 2008. This is because, although Guatemala became a Hague Convention enlisted country as of 2003, it has not sufficiently reshaped its adoption program to comply with the regulations enforced in the Convention (U.S. Department of State 2009c).

In 2004 adoptions from African countries accounted for only 2.5% among all the other regions of transnational adoptions, but they rose to 9% in 2007 (U.S. Homeland Security 2006a and 2008). Adoptions from Ethiopia have increased significantly, from 289 in 2004 to 1,725 in 2008, which places Ethiopia as the 4th most popular country that U.S. parents adopted from in 2008, trailing only Guatemala, China, and Russia. Adoptions from African countries were not as popular as adopting from China, Russia, South Korea, and Guatemala until recently in the United States. However in France, for example, the number of adoption were almost equally spread across all regions in 2004—27% from Asia, 27% from Africa, 26% from America, and 20% in Europe (Halifax and Villeneuve-Gokalp 2005). But the growing number of adoptions from Ethiopia indicates that the United States may follow the pattern shown in France. More prospective parents in the U.S. started to consider adopting from Ethiopia as they learned that adoption is well regulated there, and Ethiopian children available for adoption are usually cared for by foster families (adoption.com 2009).

The implications of this recent trend in terms of the role of race in transnational adoption should be explored in future research. The present study discussed how the existing racial hierarchy in the U.S. can influence the parents' decision to adopt transnationally, especially from Asia, as opposed to adopting black children domestically. It is an intriguing social phenomenon that a growing number of prospective adoptive parents in the U.S. are interested in adoption from African countries. A sociological question of interest would be to ask whether those parents are interested in adopting from African countries out of their global humanitarian concerns as poverty continues to hit those countries and the AIDS epidemic remains a great concern. Another potential future research question we might ask is: how some of the prominent social problems in the U.S.—the high poverty level, unemployment, and underemployment among black males— may have resulted in prospective adoptive parents' perception that these problems created the large number of black and mixed race children in the domestic adoption system. Therefore, for these prospective adoptive parents the adoption of children domestically is not defined as a humanitarian because problems of "personal responsibility" caused those children to be placed in foster care or orphanages within the U.S. This is an important issue to consider when thinking about welfare of children all over the world. Lastly, there has been a scarcity in studies of transnational adoption that include children's voices. This present study is no exception in that children's own voices are absent from the analysis. Future research should definitely explore this topic through including children's voices in order to enhance and extend our knowledge of family formation through transnational adoption.

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TABLES

Table 1. The Trend of Adoption in Korea, 1958-1993

Year	Total	Domestic Adoption	International Adoption	Ratio of Domestic Adoption
1958-1960	2,700	168	2,532	6.2
1961-1970	11,481	4,206	7,275	36.6
1971-1980	63,551	15,304	48,247	24.1
1981-1985	50,502	15,424	35,078	30.5
1986-1990	41,332	11,079	30,243	26.8
1991	3,438	1,241	2,197	36.1
1992	3,235	1,190	2,045	36.8
1993	3,444	1,154	2,290	33.5
Total	179,673	49,766	129,907	27.7

Source: *UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC*), UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: State Party Report: Republic of Korea, 30 November 1994. CRC/c/8/Add.21. Online. UNHCR Refworld

Table 2. Percentage of Adopted Children by Country of Origin and Gender

Country of Origin	Percentages	Gender	
		Male	Female
Russia	44.7	61.9	30.7
	(21)	(13)	(8)
Ukraine	4.3	0	7.7
	(2)	(0)	(2)
Kazakhstan	4.3	4.8	3.8
	(2)	(1)	(1)
Azerbaijan	2.1	0	3.8
	(1)	(0)	(1)
China	23.4	0	42.3
	(11)	(0)	(11)
South Korea	14.9	19.0	11.5
	(7)	(4)	(3)
Guatemala	4.3	9.5	0
	(2)	(2)	(0)
Columbia	2.1	4.8	0
	(1)	(1)	(0)
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
	(47)	(21)	(26)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are sample size.

Table 3. Immigrant Orphans Adopted by U.S. Citizens

Country	1997	2003
All Countries	12,596	21,320
Russia	3,626	5,134
China	3,295	6,638
S. Korea	1,506	1,793
Guatemala	725	2,327

Source: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (1997; 2003)

Table 4. Adopted Children Under Age 18 by Region (%), U.S. 2000

Region	All Children	Adopted Children
Northeast	11,793,062	284,242
	(18.24)	(17.92)
Midwest	15,234,402	389,096
	(23.56)	(24.53)
South	22,576,013	548,297
	(34.92)	(34.57)
West	15,048,482	364,369
	(23.28)	(22.97)
All States	64,651,959	1,586,004
	(100)	(100)

Source: Kreider 2003. *Census 2000 Special Report*

Table 5. Percentages of Adopted Children by Children's Age (%), U.S. 2000

| Age | All Children | All Adopted Children | |
		Domestic	Transnational
<6	20,120,106	326,134	63,162
	(31.1)	(23.5)	(31.7)
6-11	22,803,985	536,531	61,795
	(35.3)	(38,7)	(31.0)
12-14	11,200,237	278,795	37,841
	(17.3)	(20.1)	(19.0)
15-17	10,527,631	245,408	36,338
	(16.3)	(17,7)	(18.2)
Total	64,651,959	1,386,868	199,136
	(100)	(100)	(100)

Source: Kreider 2003. *Census Special Report*

Table 6. Percentages of Adopted Children Under 18 by Race, U.S. 2000, U.S. 2000

	Percentages (All Adopted Children)	Percentages (Foreign-Born Adopted Children)
Race		
White	64.17	25.24
Black	16.03	2.17
American Indian and Alaskan	1.62	.51
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander	7.64	50.34
Some other race	5.67	.72
Two or more races	4.89	2.72
Total	100.00	100.00
Hispanic Origin		
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	13.61	18.30

Source: Kreider 2003. *Census 2000 Special Report*

Table 7. Racial Composition of Households with Adopted Children (%), U.S. 2000

Household is Racially	Household w/ Adopted Children	Household w/o Adopted Children
Homogeneous	1,378,981 (81.74)	39,798,366 (90.74)
Heterogeneous	308,127 (18.26)	4,054,575 (9.26)
Total	1,687,108 (100)	43,802,941 (100)

Source: Kreider 2003. *Census 2000 Special Report*

Table 8. Racial Matching of Parents and Adopted Children (Transnationally adopted children only) (%), U.S. 2000

	Household w/ Adopted Children
All match including single parents	1,995
	(27.57)
Parents match but child does not	4,153
	(2.85)
Child match with one parent but parents do not	20
	(2.85)
Not match at all, including single parent	881
	(12.18)
Total	7,235
	(100)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2003. *2000 Census of Population and Housing: Public Use Microdata Samples: 5-percent* [machine readable computer file]

Table 9: Race of Child, Mother, and Father (Households with transnationally adopted children only) (%), U.S. 2000

|	Child	Mother	Father
Hispanic or Latino origin	1,324	127	107
	(18.3)	(1.8)	(1.7)
Non-Hispanic			
White	1,826	6,631	6,001
	(25.2)	(94.3)	(94.5)
Black	157	77	61
	(2.2)	(0.3)	(1.0)
American Indian and Alaska Native	37	19	18
	(0.5)	(0.3)	(0.3)
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander	3,642	112	94
	(50.3)	(1.6)	(1.5)
Some other race	52	3	0
	(0.7)	(0.1)	(0.0)
Two or more major race groups	197	65	67
	(2.7)	(0.9)	(1.1)
Total	7,235	7,034	6,348
	(100)	(100)	(100)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2003. *2000 Census of Population and Housing: Public Use Microdata Samples: 5-percent* [machine readable computer file]

FIGURES

Figure 1. The Key Actors of Transnational Adoption
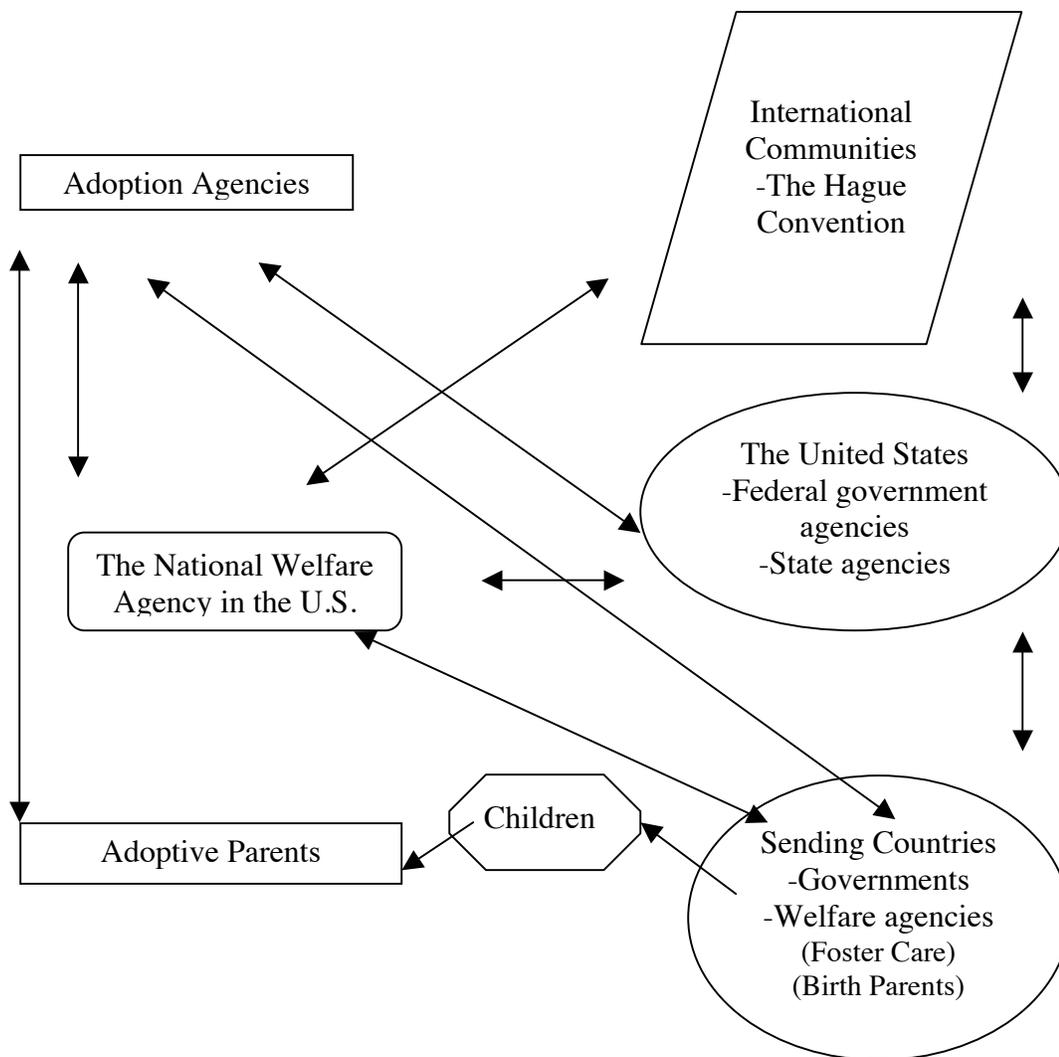
Figure 2. Racial Matching with Parents by Race of Child (N=7,235)
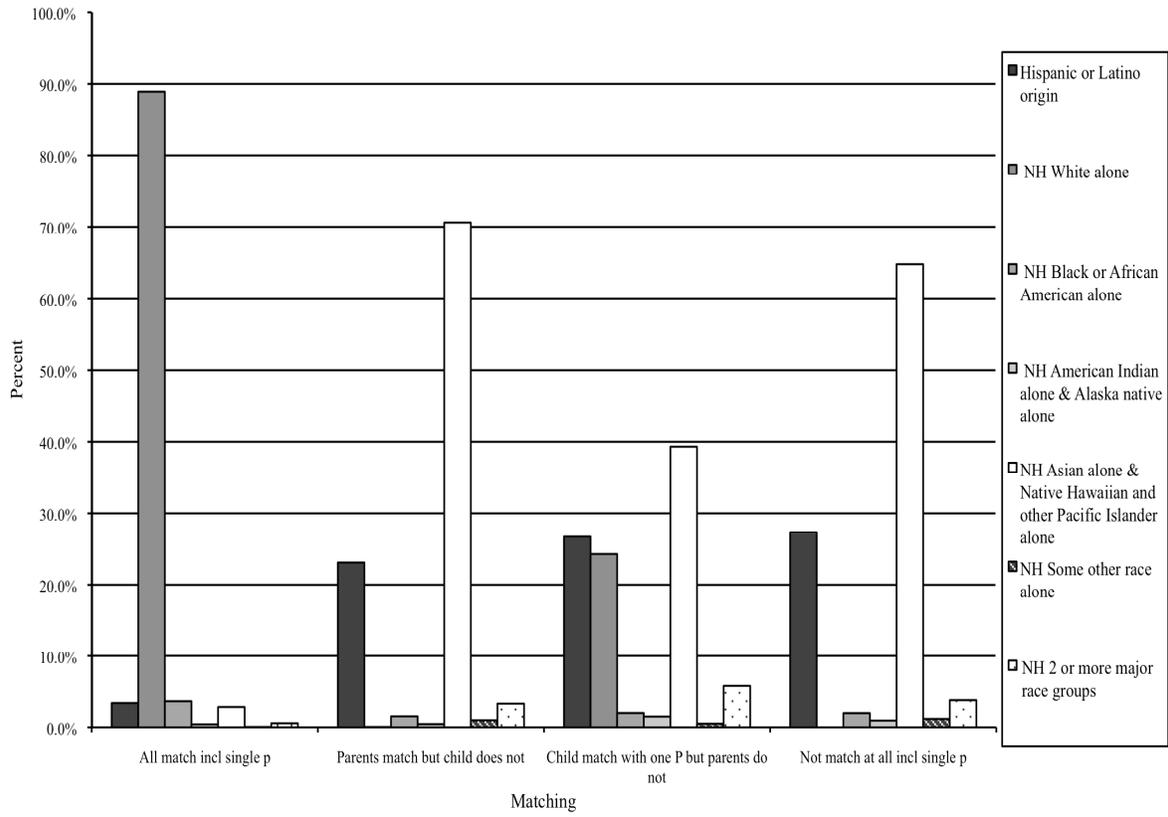
APPENDICES
The following items may be found in the supplementary appendix file labeled
Kubo_Kazuyo_Appendices.pdf.

Appendix A: Preliminary Application Form (ASC)
> This is an application form that interested parents are required to fill out upon
> their initial contact with the Agency in a Small City (ASC).

Appendix B: Formal Application Form (ASC)
> This is an application form that parents are required to fill out in order to start
> the formal adoption process.

Appendix C: Adoptive Self Study Guideline (ASC)
> This is an guideline constructed by ASC to aid parents for writing up a self
> narrative as a part of application materials for foster parents license submitted
> to the state agency.

Appendix D: Child Acceptance Check List (ASC)
> ASC requires parents are to go through the list which includes a list of various
> medical conditions a child may have.

Appendix E: Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition (U.S.
> Department of Justice)
> This is a form required by U.S. Department of Justice for all prospective
> adoptive parents who plan to adopt a child from foreign countries.

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Kazuyo Kubo was born in Osaka, Japan. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1995 with a B.A. and in 1999 with a M.A. in East Asian Studies. She completed doctoral study in sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She taught undergraduate sociology courses at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania during the 2007-2008 academic year. Professor Kubo currently teaches in the department of Race and Ethnic Studies at the University of Redlands in Southern California.