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An Exploration of Self-Esteem and Racial Identity Among Children Placed in Transracial and Same-Race Foster Homes

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Candidate for Bachelor of Science Degree
in Social Work and Policy Studies with Honors

May 2005

APPROVED

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ADVICE TO FUTURE HONORS STUDENTS

After going through the thesis process the wrong way, the best advice that I can give to future Honors students is to avoid procrastination. I suggest that you start everything in your junior year; therefore, in your senior year you will not be chasing time to finish. Develop a timeline and try to stick to it as best as possible. Also start writing early. Once a portion of your research is finished, write it up; do not wait until the end to write the full thesis. As you get older, all-nighters are no longer an option. Your body will demand that you rest, so don't try to leave big projects or big writing portions until the night before.

You should choose a topic that you are passionate about. The literature review, research and writing will be easier if you are genuinely interested in what you are studying. At times, your drive to know more in your area of research will be the only thing that pushes you forward.

It is also important that you be able to step away from your work. It makes for a clearer mind and a better critical thinker. Senior year will fly by so quickly, so make sure that you are able to balance your social life and your academic commitments.

Don't give up! You will have high expectations for your research, which is great. Just remember not to beat yourself up if you have to change the focus of your research, wait for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and/or do not recruit as many participants as you would like. It is important that you are open to the variety of possible results of your study. If you need an extension make sure you take advantage of that opportunity. It is more important that you turn in

a product that you are proud of. This is your project; make sure you never forget

that. This should be something that you are passionate about. If you are trying to

throw things together in order to be done, it will show. The thesis process is a

long and tedious process. Make sure it is something that you want and not that

other people want for you. Be determined and aggressive in completing your

thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my family, thank you for supporting me in all aspects of my life. I would not be here if it were not for you. I love you! Mom, you will always be my inspiration and motivation. I have gained so much from watching you. Through your enthusiasm, compassion and determination, I am here. I only pray that I will someday have as much courage and strength as you have. Through all the struggles, you have created a woman of mind, body and soul. I dream not for me, but for us. Dad, our relationship continues to grow every year. Although I don't always appreciate the delivery, I will continue to hold onto the message. I am grateful for all the sacrifices you have made for me. You continue to make me proud! Omar, my favorite big brother, I will always be grateful for having you in my life. It may not seem like it, but you have also molded me into the person I am today. I have learned so much from watching you. I hope you never stop being my teacher and protector. Through all of these relationships, I now know true love!

To my Syracuse family, who knew that people could come into my life as friends and turn into family? I would be lost without your continued encouragement, laugher and support. Subrina, I often wonder if I would still be at Syracuse if I had not met you. We are so different, yet so much alike. I am grateful for our many heart to hearts in Day, on Lambreth and then on Chinook. You have helped me to open up and express my feelings. You are a beautiful person both inside and out. Ms. Marsh, thank you for opening my eyes to a world of creativity and art. I struggle to reach a level of passion as deep as yours. I will

always appreciate your dedication to the bettering of my life. I can never repay you for opening your home and your heart to my family. Stefany, your energy and zeal are contagious. You will make a terrific teacher! Lisa and Anna, my New York City girls, I thank you for adding culture, shopping and fashion to my life. I have learned so much from all of you. You four ladies are the bulk of my Syracuse experience, and I would not change that for the world! Sarah, I want to thank you for being more than my advisor. Through my relationship with you, I have also continued to learn a lot about life as well as myself. You have taught me the importance of adding fun and excitement to a professional career. And last but not least, to my senior year partners in crime. Brandy, my birthday twin, I wish you were on this road with me, but we all know how involved a lady of Alpha Kappa Alpha is, and if we ever forget, you will be sure to remind us. You are a strong woman, who has it all together, whether you realize it or not. I will continue to admire your courage and your drive. Thank you for always saying what I'm thinking. Through you I have learned to be more confident and outspoken. Never let anyone get in the way of your success, because you deserve it. Shayla, the other triplet, we have had some great times together. Thank you for your love of life. I will continue to hold on to your boldness. You are clearly a risk taker and I appreciate that. Senior year would not have been the same without you two. I thank you for all the reckless times. You have officially brought me out of my shell. As we all graduate and move on to a new chapter in life, the memories we have created will continue to keep us together. I wish all of you much success in the future!

To my advisors, Dr. Diane Young and Dr. Karen Kirkhart, I know I get on your nerves, but we are family now! I appreciate the continuous support. You had hope when I didn't. It was your encouragement and belief in my success that helped me to get through the process. Thank you for all of your feedback and advice, this thesis would not have been possible without you. You have been great assets to me personally and professionally. I can only hope that I reach your caliber. Words could never express my gratitude!

Linda, Cynthia, Sue and Carolyn, thank you for allowing me to conduct my research at your agency. I appreciate your interests in my work and the fact that at times your enthusiasm for this study exceeded mine. You have provided me with a great experience and positive role models. Being in your presence has aided in my personal and professional growth. You make me happy to be a social worker.

ABSTRACT

The number of children in foster care continues to grow. Unfortunately this increase in children is far greater than the number of foster families available. Children are being placed in homes in which the race of the foster parent is different from that of the foster child. Legislative policies have also been enacted to eliminate discrimination in foster care placement. This study is designed to explore the impact of transracial foster care on adolescent children's racial identity and self-esteem. Three children ages 11-17, who were placed in transracial and same-race foster homes, were interviewed in order to explore whether children in transracial foster care have a racial identity and self-esteem comparable to children in same-race foster care placements. Due to the small sample size, the findings are limited. In this study I also discuss the implications for future research and social work practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

After taking the general honors course, I thought I was done with the Honors Program. I had no intention of writing a thesis. I already knew that I was not a strong writer and had not taken the courses necessary to complete the thesis requirements. I thought it would be impossible to conduct my research and put in the long hours of writing and revising in one semester.

In spring 2004 I was inducted into the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program. This is an opportunity in which incoming juniors and seniors are able to prepare for graduate school through research. It is a requirement that the students in this program conduct a research study. The students are required to come back to school in the summer to take courses that included Research Methodology and Academic Literacy. During this time, I was able to complete the preliminary planning needed to start my research.

It took a lot of thinking to decide on a topic. I wanted to do something that would have a relation to and be meaningful to my majors, Social Work and Policy Studies, as well as my career. My initial topic was the image of social workers. Every time that I tell people that I am preparing to be a social worker they assume that all I want to do is take people's kids. I remember my friend's cousin commenting on my career choice by saying, "You actually have to go to school for four years to take someone's kid." I wanted to do something that explored this myth.

After talking to my research advisor, I decided to change topics to something that would relate to my social work field placement. I had a year long internship in a family foster care program. I was able to work with foster children, foster families and birth families. From this, I decided to switch my focus to foster care. After reviewing the literature, I learned about transracial foster care and the Multiethnic Placement Act. It was important for me to do something that benefited the agency and my understanding of what it means to work in the area of foster care.

Taking courses such as Social Work 361: Research Methods in Social Work Practice and Policy Studies 315: Method/ Public Policy Analysis have prepared me to take on a research project of my own. Social Work 361 provided me with the basic knowledge needed to conduct research. I was taught the terms, format and skills that are essential to any study. In Policy Studies 315, the students are required to conduct a research project for a local agency. For my project, I conducted a consumer survey. Although these courses provided me with the techniques and skills to do this research, they did not prepare me for all the work that I would have to put into this project.

My initial thought was that it would be easy to complete a research study. I had no idea that I would have to receive university approval or that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process would take so long. I thought that I would be able to hand in a proposal of what I was doing and then be able to start from there. After going through IRB revision after revision, I was basically left with a month to recruit participants, administer my questionnaire and write up the thesis paper.

I expected that everyone would be willing to participate in my study. In actuality, it became difficult to recruit participants. I attended foster parent meetings and sent out letters so that I could generate participants, but this turned out not to be as successful as I had thought. I was hoping that my co-workers' support and my having been a part of the agency would have made it much easier for me to get participants for my study. Instead, many of the foster parents were reluctant to have their foster children participate. I was only able to recruit three participants.

After going through the IRB process and not having much success in participant recruitment, I had no intention of turning my research into an honors thesis. I thought that because I had not taken the prep class I would not be able to enter my research for thesis consideration. It was Carolyn Ostrander, from the Honors Program, who informed me that there was still a way. In taking her advice on submitting paperwork for an extended course and a 400 level course not in my major, I could be approved. I then thought that this would be a simple write-up. Little did I know all of the work that it would take to get through the writing process. If I had the opportunity, I would have started this process in the summer when I finalized my research topic.

Overall, conducting this research has been a great experience. I am glad that I am able to help in trying to explore children's needs in foster care placements. There ought to be more exploration into this topic. To insure that foster children are able to experience adequate social and personal development, it is beneficial for social workers to know what services foster children need. If I

decide to go on for my doctorate degree, I will be better prepared for the trials,

tribulation and rewards that come with doing research.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis, <u>An Exploration of Self-Esteem and Racial Identity Among Children Placed in Transracial and Same-Race Foster Homes</u>, examines how a small number of children in transracial or same-race foster care homes score on scales of self-esteem and racial identity. With the enactment of new polices that prevent foster care placement on the basis of race and ethnicity, some foster care children are placed in homes with foster parents that are of a different race. It is important to explore the implications of this in regards to the children's racial identity and self-esteem.

In this context, the term transracial is used to identify children who are placed in a home with foster parents of a different racial identity. Racial Identity is defined as how one identifies with being a part of a particular group of the same-race (Hollingsworth, 1997). There are implications and experiences in the United States that are primarily relevant to the color of one's skin. Because of these events and issues (e.g. racism, discrimination, Slavery, Jim Crow Laws, etc,), race has continued to be a sensitive topic.

As children grow, they are trying to find themselves. In this process they are beginning to build an understanding of what they like and dislike, as well as their future goals and aspirations. By engaging in familial and social interactions, children begin to develop their self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward one's self. It is important to study self-esteem and racial identity together in order to explore whether there is a

correlation between the two. Are children's racial identities, or lack thereof, related to their level of self-esteem?

This research is also significant because there is little known about the impact of transracial foster care. The majority of the literature focuses on transracial adoption. Although the terms, foster care and adoption, may be confused as being synonymous, by those outside of the human services, they are completely different entities. In foster care, children are in the custody of the state. In this circumstance, they may or may not still have ties to their birth parents or birth families. Because there are a limited number of adoptive homes and a preference for younger children, older children are less likely to be adopted. Many children in the foster care system do not make it to adoption; therefore, their experiences are not accounted for in the literature focused on adoption.

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 was established to reduce the waiting time for adoption and to assist the recruitment and preservation of foster and adoptive parents. This policy is also intended to remove the potential obstacles that minority foster or adoptive parents may face and to eliminate discrimination on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the child or prospective parent (Children's Bureau, 2001).

The MEPA has no requirements for the parents that are recruited. They do not need to be culturally sensitive or know anything about the child's race or ethnicity. They also are not required to attend any training in order to deal properly with a child from a different race or ethnicity who is placed in their home.

In 1996 the Interethnic Adoption Provision (IEP) was added to the MEPA. Although adoption is stated in the title, this legislation also applies to foster care. The purpose of IEP is to further clarify that discrimination against children in need of suitable homes or prospective adoptive parents is illegal and to strengthen the rules for compliance and enforcement. It "removed the qualification provided by the earlier act and simply prevented any entity that receives federal funds from denying any person the opportunity to adopt or provide foster care and from delaying or denying the placement of a child on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the adoptive or foster parent or the child involved" (Hollingsworth, 1998, p.108).

This provision also gives the federal government the right to withhold federal funds from agencies and institutions that are not upholding the MEPA regulations. Individuals are also given the right to bring suit against states and agencies in federal court for violations of the MEPA.

The study of transracial foster care is also significant because there is a continued increase in the number of African-American children placed in foster care, but no increase in the number of African-American parented foster homes; therefore, these children are typically placed with parents of a different race. In 2002, African American children constituted 15% of the U.S. child population, but 41% of the foster care population (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002).

Kools (1997) argues that if children in transracial placements leave their foster homes with low self-esteem and little sense of racial identity, they may experience dependence and dysfunction in adulthood. Although it may appear as

though foster care only affects those who have a relative or someone they know in foster care, these children are growing up to be citizens of a community and beyond. Therefore, in order to make sure foster care is producing productive citizens and adults, we all need to get involved.

Within research and the field of social work, there is controversy about the subject of transracial placement. Arguments favoring transracial foster care have cited the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics, the importance of a family home environment and equal opportunity.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics has within in it certain ethical principles and stated commitments to clients that social work professionals are required to follow. These ethical principles reflect the profession's core values and establish a set of specific ethical standards that are used to guide social work practice. In this, social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. The client can be both the child and the foster or adoptive parent in which one person's needs may be compromised in order to come to a solution. Supporters of transracial placements take the position that children should be placed in any home regardless of the race or ethnicity of the foster parent. Along with being placed in a foster home, children can be placed in group homes or facilities. In foster homes, children can get away from the depersonalization and stigma that come with being in a group home. Foster children should be placed in a family environment where there is stability, love and constancy; which is more important than the race of the foster child and foster parent (Hollingsworth, 1997).

Advocates of transracial placement also suggest that anti-transracial policies and procedures result in children being in foster care for an extended period. They imply that there is no clear evidence to suggest that minority parents are better able to socialize minority children than white parents are (Hollingsworth, 1998).

On the other hand, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) has led the conversation for the debate against transracial foster care. This is not to be confused as a battle between the NASW and the NABSW. The NABSW has also adopted the NASW Code of Ethics. Rather, their mission is to focus primarily on the African-American community. The NABSW suggests that children in transracial foster care may experience inadequate cultural, racial and ethnic development and a lack of racial socialization. They argue that children in transracial homes are not being taught their history, the values of their community or the behaviors that are associated with their racial group. They are also not being taught to understand the dynamics of racism. In addition, a majority of African-American children in transracial foster care and adoptive placements are growing up in white homes in predominantly white neighborhoods; therefore, they do not interact with others like themselves. In this, they may develop low self-esteem (McRoy & Grape, 1999).

Barriers to doing research on foster care children include a matter of identity and access. Some children are reluctant to admit that they are in foster care for fear that they may be ridiculed or treated differently. There is a stigma attached to children who have been raised in nontraditional homes. Having

access to this population is also a barrier. Foster children are considered a vulnerable population, therefore there are agency precautions established so that these children do not incur further harm.

As of 1971, states are no longer required to keep records on the number of transracial or same-race placements (Hollingsworth, 1998). Therefore, with the loss of statistical data it is more difficult to assess the effects of each placement or investigate if there are any trends in the types of placements. The goal of this research is to explore whether there are any consistent similarities or differences in racial identity and self-esteem among children in transracial and same-race foster care placements. The findings will be used to examine and explore further implications for social work practice and foster care placements.

Introduction

There is a large amount of current research and literature on adoption and kinship care; however, a lot of children do not reach adoption. They remain in foster care which means their stories are lost and their voices are not heard. Current policy dealing with the issue of foster care and adoption focuses on eliminating any discrimination that foster or adoptive parents and children may face during the placement process. Because policies affect the services that an agency provides, there needs to be constant evaluation of these policies and their effects on the population they address. Within the foster care system there needs to be an exploration into the settings where foster children are placed.

Trend in placement

Over the past couple of years there has been an effort to reduce the number of children in foster care. In this trend there are more occasions when minority children are placed in white homes. Hollingsworth (1997) contributes the increase in transracial placement to (1) the unmet demand by white couples for healthy white infants (2) an attempt to prevent children from being sent to institutions and (3) an effort by white families to reduce racism and discrimination.

Image of foster care

There needs to be an effort to change the face of foster care. Gil & Bogart (1982) suggest that the "conceptions of the foster status and agency role" are "essential to the child's well-being and adjustment in placement" (p.352). The image that most people associate with placement is the removal of children from their homes. This traumatic experience tends to drive the images that foster care placement is a way to hinder children and families instead of helping them.

Placement in care has the potential to create a lasting feeling of unimportance within foster care children (Gil & Bogart, 1982). Stereotypes and discriminatory views of the foster care system can contribute to their negative perception of self (Kools, 1997). It is important to continue to study the mental, emotional and physical effects that foster care has on children in order to establish better care and alternative options for removal.

Group homes vs. family care

There appears to be a trend in the type of children that are placed in group homes or family care. There is a difference in the age and sex distributions in these two settings. It appears that older children and males are increasingly more likely to be assigned to group homes, while younger children and females are assigned to family foster care (Gil & Bogart, 1982).

There are also cost implications to the debate between group homes and family care. Compared to family foster care, group homes tend to cost more to maintain. Group homes are also primarily used to place foster children who have

not been successful in family foster home settings or who require a higher level of care (Gil & Bogart, 1982).

"The criticism of transracial placements was met with the response from advocates that such children benefit more from being in homes with families who love them than they do in foster homes or institutions where they are not part of a permanent, intact family" (Hollingsworth, 1997, p.101). It is important to recognize that children placed in family foster care are more likely to have a higher sense of self-esteem, safety, security, and stability compared to children in group homes. Ultimately, children in family foster care appear to be more satisfied with their current placement (Gil & Bogart, 1982).

Identity development

Foster care has a negative impact on foster care children's identity development. The term foster child has a negative connotation. These children are perceived as bad, damaged or unloved. They are commonly thought to be delinquents or mentally impaired. Children in foster care are not able to develop an identity comparable to that of children not in foster care. They suffer from feelings of inferiority and shame and are more focused on the present and not the future (Kools, 1997).

Racial identity

Children in transracial placements use racial self-descriptors more frequently than do children in same-race placements (Hollingsworth, 1997). This

suggests that the identification of race may be stronger in children placed in transracial placements. Children in transracial placements tend to be more conscious of their racial group membership.

Children in care can also be reluctant to bring up issues of race in regards to discussing their foster families. In a study done by Gil & Bogart (1982), many children appeared hesitant to talk about their racial identity because their foster parents were of a different racial group than themselves.

Regardless of placement, all children are susceptible to racism. In response, children may internalize these belief systems and accept negative images of themselves. Within society there are racial dynamics that parents and children need to be aware of, regardless of the type of placement. Stigma over a child's race or skin color can affect their mental, physical and behavioral capabilities (McRoy & Grape, 1999).

Skin color

Perceptions about skin color influence attitudes toward race. Throughout history there has been a preference in placement based on the skin color match of the foster parents and foster child. This was warranted as a way to eliminate the rejection a dark–skin child may face upon arriving in a foster home. McRoy & Grape (1999) state "children typically learn that family and community attitudes toward them are based upon a hierarchy of preferential physical features, such as skin color and hair texture, that may determine social status, treatment, privileges and other entitlements" (p.677).

In order to avoid talk about racism and differential treatment, transracial families often adopt a colorblind attitude. In which, they may become blind to the social implications that center on skin color. A colorblind attitude does not embrace cultural and racial difference.

Self-esteem

Foster children may face depersonalization and stigmatization, which leads to their devaluation of self. This can be caused by their status as a foster child. These children have a lowered idea of their self-worth and value (Kools, 1997). According to Bradley & Hawkins-Leon (2002), self-esteem in foster care children will continue to decrease when they are placed in transracial placement. Although some research suggests that children's self-esteem will be affected by their particular placement, Hollingsworth (1997) finds that there is no significant difference in the self-esteem of children in transracial placements compared to children in same-race placements.

Interaction with birth family

It is normal for children in foster care to struggle between wanting to belong to their foster family and identifying with their birth family. Foster care is not a replacement of one's birth family, but a substitute environment for a child (Kools, 1997); therefore, a child's racial identity and self-esteem may have to do with the relationship that he or she has with his or her birth family and the environment in which he or she was born.

It is important that children be allowed to visit with their birth parents or at least their birthplace. Salahu-Din & Bollman (1994) study showed that "youth with lower identification with their birth families have lower self-esteem than those with higher birth family identification" (p.123). In situations where this is not suitable, books and historical information should be given to increase identification. Although books and other information are good ways to teach children about themselves and their culture, researchers place an emphasis on interaction. Identifying with one's birth family is believed to be an important avenue to understanding one's history.

Conclusion

More research is needed to fill gaps in the literature that address the issue of transracial placement. Specifically, there needs to be a look into the effects that transracial placement has on children's racial identity and self-esteem. These variables are important in exploring how individuals feel about themselves in regards to their group-identity and self-identity. Racial identity gives a representation of how one feels about being a part of a particular racial group, while self-esteem is used to examine one's perception of his or her self as an individual.

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

Are children in transracial foster care able to develop a level of racial identity and self-esteem comparable to children in same-race foster care placements? The purpose of this study is to investigate the similarities and differences in the development of children in transracial and same-race foster care, identify the needs of children in foster care, and explore the implications for social work practice.

Sampling

The participants in this study were recruited from a non-profit foster care agency located in a city in central New York. This agency has adopted and follows the guidelines of the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA). This location was chosen because the researcher had ongoing contact with the participants, foster parents and birth parents. The participants in this study are all placed in family homes, thus controlling for the type of foster care placement and setting. The researcher interned as a youth specialist at this agency; therefore, a relationship with the participants had already been developed. Having had previous interaction with the participants, she was able to openly address any issues the questionnaire brought up and instruct the participants to discuss these subjects further with their social workers if they wished to do so. The researcher and the director of the foster care department recruited the subjects. The subjects are all clients of the researcher and the agency program director. All children 10-

17 years of age who receive services from this agency were asked to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary. There were 15 children in the program. Out of the total population, three chose to participate in the study. These participants were current clients in the foster care system during September 2004 through March 2005.

The agency holds bi-weekly foster parent meetings. This is a time when the children participate in arts and craft activities while the foster parents meet. The meetings consist of open discussion and social worker facilitated training. The research study was presented to the foster parents on two different occasions. During the first foster parent meeting, the foster parents were first informed by the director of the program that the researcher would be contacting them to see if they would allow their foster children to participate in this research study. The researcher then attended the following foster parent meeting to explain the purpose of the study. The researcher also sent out a letter to all the foster parents (Appendix A). After receiving the names of the foster parents who were willing to allow their foster children to participate, the researcher then called the foster parents to arrange the date, time and place to conduct the interviews. All foster parents and child participants filled out a written informed consent (Appendix B). All interviews took place at either the participant's home or the agency.

There were three children who agreed to participate. They ranged in age from 11 to 17 years old. There were two females and one male participant. The participants are also all identified as white. There were no minority children involved in the study. This will be discussed further in the *discussion* portion of

the paper. All of the participants are in two parent foster homes with other foster children. There was one child who was placed in a transracial foster home and two children who were placed in same-race foster homes. Before any data were collected, the researcher obtained approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Collection

The participants were asked a series of questions from a questionnaire (Appendix C). The questionnaire is composed of questions regarding racial identity and self-esteem. The questionnaire is composed of three different scales: Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS), Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and Scale of Racial Socialization for adolescents (SORS-A). These scales were obtained from the *Measure of Clinical Practice*, a sourcebook by Kevin Corcoran & Joel Fischer (2000).

The HSS is an indicator of self-esteem in relation to peers, home, and school. These are areas of interaction in which children develop a sense of who they are and/or want to be. The scale was altered to read "foster parents" instead of "parents," because this research focuses on children in foster care. Higher score on this scale indicates a higher self-esteem. Participants' scores can range from 30 to 120. This measure was originally tested on 218 fifth and eighth graders. The mean score for this group was 91.1 with a range of 90.4 to 95 (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). "The HSS general scale correlated .83 with both the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale"

(Corcoran & Fischer, 2000, p.550). This scale is appropriate for children 10 years old and older.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) focuses on two aspects: an exploration of racial identity and support, inclusion and dedication (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000). Only statements 1 through 12 were used from this scale because the researcher will already know the information asked on the remainder of the questionnaire. The statements that were omitted were regarding the ethnicity of the participant, participant's father and the participant's mother. This scale was also changed into an ABCD scale instead of a 1234 scale. This was done to provide consistency among the response format of the scales. When scored, the ABCD scale is represented by the numbers 1234, therefore the measuring of the MEIM scale will still remain the same. [A & 1 equal strongly disagree, B & 2 equal disagree, C & 3 equal agree and D & 4 equal strongly agree]. The words "ethnic" and "ethnicity" were replaced by the word "race." This was done in order to provide the participant with a better understanding of what was being asked. The changing of wording did not significantly alter the scale. The researcher changed the wording in order to make the statements more easily understood by children. For the terms of this research, group names such as Latino, Black, White and Asian were considered race not ethnicity as classified by the MEIM scale.

The higher score on the MEIM scale represents a higher sense of ethnic identity. A study on 417 high school students, from Asian, Black, White, and mixed backgrounds, produced an overall mean score of 2.95 on the 14-item scale.

These results are from the use of 14-items on the scale; only 12-items were used in this research study. Overall, the scale has .80 internal consistency among different racial groups and ages (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000).

The full SORS-A scale was not used. Eight statements that were specific to this research were selected and modified. The statements selected were not specific to any particular racial, religious or cultural group. The researcher felt that these statements were relevant to all groups of people. The terms Black, White and African were removed from the questions and replaced with blanks. The researcher was then able to fill in the participant's appropriate race as she read the question to each participant. On this scale "parents" were also changed to "foster parents" and "families" to "foster families." The answer option "not sure" was also eliminated from this study in order to keep the format of scaling the statements consistent throughout the questionnaire.

The purpose of the SORS-A scale is to measure "extended family caring," "cultural pride enforcement," and "racism awareness teaching." The full instrument was initially used to assess 236 African-American children from a wide age range on these variables. The mean score was 44.4 in extended family caring, 27.7 in cultural pride enforcement and 38.8 in racism awareness teaching (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000).

In order to explore whether or not the participant's racial identity had changed due to their current placement, the researcher added additional questions to the end of the questionnaire. These questions included "yes or no: has being a part of this foster family changed the way you feel about being [Race of

respondent]?," "If yes, do you feel more positive or more negative about being [Race of respondent] now?," and "Can you give me an example?"

The researcher read the questions to the participant and filled out the questionnaire to try to minimize errors due to illiteracy among the participants. This interview was comprised of three pages and took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The study did not interfere with the participant's regular services. After the interview was over, the participants had time to ask the researcher questions and discuss any of the issues and/or questions that were included on the questionnaire.

The use of these scales has been useful in other research that explores the topics of racial identity and self-esteem. These particular scales were used because of their relevance to the study and because they had been previously used on children in the same age group. Besides the SORS-A, these scales have also been used across racial backgrounds. Because children are often reluctant to share explicit details or to expand on issues, a structured scale was chosen over open-ended questioning. The original reliability and validity of the scales cannot be attached to this research due to the fact that the questions were slightly modified. This research has face validity. The scales and questions appear to measure racial identity and self-esteem. The participants appeared to understand the questions being asked to them. The participants needed more clarification on the statement "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs." The researcher responded to this question by telling the

participant to "think if there are any activities, foods, holidays or traditions that are specific to white people or white culture."

Variables used in the study

The variables explored in this research were racial identity and self-esteem. These variables were identified because of the current debate in social work practice, literature and research. This debate focuses on whether or not children placed in transracial placements (e.g. foster care and adoption) are able to develop a racial identity and self-esteem comparable to children in same-race placements. The variables: age, gender, race, and length of placement are also identified within the study. These variables may have had an effect on the participants' responses. Although this study focuses on children 11-17 years old, there are likely to be differences in development and understanding of ideas among each age. Males and females may develop at different rates and have a different understanding of racial identity and self-esteem. With females also being considered a "minority," their dual status in society may also have some relevance to how they answered questions on the questionnaire. Due to their diversity in history, culture and background, children in different racial groups may be affected differently in each placement. The length of time that a child has been in placement may have an effect on his or her racial identity and self-esteem. A child that has just been placed may exhibit a lower self-esteem and/or racial identity because he or she is still dealing with the separation from his or her birth

family. More research needs to be done in order to explore the effects these variables may have on a foster child's racial identity and self-esteem.

Data Analysis

The analysis approach used was a case comparison between children in transracial foster homes and children in same-race foster homes. The data collected from the questionnaire were organized using Microsoft Excel. The letters (ABCD) were converted to numbers (1234) in order to attach a value to each response. Negatively worded statements were reverse coded for consistency and accuracy. A total score for each scale and subscale was then calculated. The mean scores for self-esteem and racial identity were also calculated. It was unclear how a total numerical score for the modified version of the Scale of Racial Socialization for Adolescents (SORS-A), used in this research, should be integrated into the study, therefore a numerical value is not reported for this scale. The patterns in the participants' responses are discussed in the *findings* section of the paper. They were found by comparing the participants' general scores and individual responses.

The study produced a small sample size. There were three participants, two females and one male. All the participants are white children ranging in age from 11 to 17 years old. All the participants were in a two parent family foster home from September 2004 to March 2005. One child was placed in a transracial foster care home, and two children were placed in a same-race foster care home. In order to protect privacy, pseudonyms have been given to all the participants.

Youth participants

Susan is a 16-year-old white female residing in a black foster home. She has been placed with this family since August 2004. There are 3 other foster children in the home. All of them are black males. Susan is the only white child in the home as well as the only female foster child in the home. She has been in and out of care since a young age, but this is her first placement with a family of a different race and in a home outside of her birthplace. She currently attends 9th grade in a large middle school.

Charles is a 17-year-old white male. He is currently placed in a same-race foster home. He has been residing with this family since 2001. In this home, he also lives with 2 other foster children, one of which is a 12 year old black male. Charles' birth parents no longer have parental rights, therefore, he is hoping to change his name and remain in the home of his current foster parents. Due to past behavioral and emotional difficulties, Charles attends a small alternative high school.

Kim is an 11-year-old white female. She is currently placed in a same-race foster home. Kim has been residing in this home for a year. She also lives in the home with one other white, female foster child. She currently attends a charter school. Although Kim resides in a same-race home, two months ago while her parents were on vacation, she spent two weeks living with a black foster care family.

Self-esteem

Overall the scores for self-esteem were consistent across peer, home and school environments. The scale ranges from a score of 10 to 40 on each of the subscales and an overall self-esteem score from 30 to 120. Higher scores are representative of higher self-esteem. The mean score on the entire HSS scale from this sample was 82.6. The means for the subscales were as follows: peer self-esteem scale (30.3), home self-esteem scale (27.6) and school self-esteem scale (24.3). The mean self-esteem score of these participants (82.6) was lower than the mean score (91.1) of the 5th and 8th graders who were initially studied using the HSS.

Susan's responses produced a score of 31 on the peer self-esteem scale, a 26 on the home self-esteem scale and a 28 on the school self-esteem scale. Her overall score on the HSS was an 85. The data indicate that Susan has a moderate self-esteem level overall as well as when she is among her peers, at home or in school. However, two most noteworthy responses on this scale were her strong agreement with the statements "I often feel that if they could, my foster parents

would trade me in for another child" and agreement with the statement "I often wish that I had been placed into a different foster family." Susan's answers indicated that she felt replaceable in her foster home and occasionally wanted to be placed with another family.

Charles received an overall score of 74 on the HSS scale. He received a 30 on the peer self-esteem scale, 24 on the home self-esteem scale and 20 on the school self-esteem scale. Charles had the lowest scores on the home and school self-esteem scales. He indicated that he often feels worthless in school, most of his teachers do not understand him, and that he feels he is not an important person in his classroom. At home Charles indicated that his foster family is not proud of him and that they do not pay much attention to him. Within the past year, Charles has also gone from being the only child in the home to being one of three. These dynamics may have an influence on why he responded to often feeling unwanted at his foster home. He may also have a learning disability or have an issue coping in a structured setting. There are many personal and outside influences that affect a person's idea of self and influence their perceptions about what others think of them; therefore, there is probably no one explanation for why he performed below the other participants on these subscales. From Charles' responses, there is an indication that his educational as well as personal needs may not be being met in his home and school environments.

Kim scored a 30 on the peer self-esteem scale, 33 on the home self-esteem scale, and a 25 on the school self-esteem scale. Kim did not answer the question "my foster parents expect too much of me," therefore, her home self-esteem score

was based on a 36 point scale and not a 40 point scale. Overall, she scored 88 out of 116 on the total HSS scale. She did not believe that "in the kinds of things that people her age like to do, she was at least as good as most other people." Kim indicated that she often feels worthless in school and that she is an unimportant person in her class.

In comparing the subscales among the participants, the data shows that a majority of the participant (n=2) have the highest self-esteem in relation to interacting with their peers. Two participants also responded to having the least self-esteem in their school environment.

Racial Identity- Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

Susan scored 18 out of 48 on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), which ranges from 12 to 48. Although Susan takes pride in her white racial group, her responses indicated that she had little understanding of what her racial background was and what it meant to her. In general, she also did not spend any time trying to find out more about her race or join any organizations or groups that included mostly members of her own race.

Charles received a score of 33 on the MEIM scale. Along with Susan, he has not taken the time to find out more about his white racial identity, such as its history, tradition and customs. Charles indicated that he has a strong attachment towards his own racial group although he reports that he does not participate in cultural practices of his own group, such as eating special foods, listening to certain music or participating in specific customs.

Kim scored 36 out of 48 on the MEIM scale. Along with the other participants, she had a high sense of her racial background but did not spend time trying to find out more about her white race. Kim was different from the other two participants in the sense that she is unhappy that she is a member of the group she belongs to. It is interesting that she has a strong racial identity, yet she is not happy that she is white. Kim did not indicate what racial group she wanted to belong to or what she did not like about her own racial group. It is possible that the scale is not measuring the same thing for her.

Two out of three participants appeared to have a healthy sense of their racial identity. Compared to Charles and Kim, Susan answered on the opposite side of the scale to statements such as "I have a clear sense of my racial background and what it means to me" and "I understand pretty well what my racial group membership means to me." Susan's responses indicate that she may have a lower understanding of her racial group membership compared to the other participants. Although these results cannot be generalized, of the three children in this study, the one child placed in the transracial foster home had a less developed sense of racial identity when compared to the two children in same-race foster homes.

Scale of Racial Socialization for Adolescents (SORS-A)

The full SORS-A scale was not used in this study. The researcher selected 8 statements that could be generalized across racial backgrounds. After going through the data, the researcher felt it was not beneficial to attach a numerical

score to the participants' responses on this scale. The full scale was "designed to assess the degree of acceptance within African-American culture. The SORS-A focuses on a multidimensional understanding of African-American life experience and identifies several key areas germane to African-American family functioning" (Corcoran & Fischer, 2000, p. 612). Since this study only received white participants, there is a possibility that all of the statements may have lost their original purpose. Some statements on the scale may have warranted different responses from different racial groups. For example, the statement that reads "racism and discrimination are the hardest things a [Race of respondent] child has to face" might be more likely to evoke a positive response in black children and a negative or neutral response in white children. The initial purpose for including this statement was to explore if there was a difference in responses across foster care placement and race. Yet the study failed to produce a racial diversity of participants. Out of the three participants, Kim is the only one who agreed with the statement. This same participant also agreed with the statement "a mostly white school will help white children learn more than a mostly mixed school." While a majority of the participants (n=2) strongly disagreed that "foster families who talk about racism will lead them to doubt themselves", Susan agreed with the statement.

All of the participants felt it was important for foster families to teach their foster children about racism and being proud to be white. The participants also agreed that foster families should talk about white culture with their foster children. In response to the statement "schools should be required to teach all

children about white culture," the participants either strongly disagreed (n=1) or disagreed (n=2). With the majority of the participants (n=2) being less confident in their school environment, they may be adverse towards what is being taught to them in class. Minority children may have responded differently to this question. Because black history month usually only lasts for 28 days, black children may want their schools to do more to include their race in the class or may have a general interest in learning more about their racial background. None of the participants felt as though being a part of their foster family changed the way they felt about being white. Adding a qualitative component to the study may have been more beneficial in further exploring the topic of racial identity among the participants.

Interpretation of findings

For the participants within this study, the race of their foster parents may not have an overwhelming effect on their racial identity and self-esteem. All three participants appeared to score relatively moderately on their levels of self-esteem and racial identity. There was a pattern in which the participants responded similarly to each of the statements given. Their similarities in self-esteem and racial identity could be attributed to their racial backgrounds, environmental surroundings and outside influences.

Self-esteem

The mean score on the HSS scale was 82.6 out of 120. The data showed a consistent level of peer self-esteem scores. The mean score for this section was 30.3. The participants felt as though they had at least as many friends as peers their age. They also appeared to be happy with the person that they are. This is important to recognize when dealing with children in foster care. Because there continues to be a stigma against children in foster care, they can be faced with images that affect their self-esteem and self-worth. With all of the participants being satisfied with themselves, this finding counters the negative image of foster care.

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized, there was no significant difference in the way the one child placed in a transracial foster home scored on the home self-esteem portion of the questionnaire compared to the two

children in same-race foster homes. The lowest score came from one of the participants who resided in a same-race foster home.

All the participants agreed that their foster parents try to understand. This is important in family dynamics. Because these children also have to deal with issues of past abuse and neglect, it is important that their foster families try to be understanding and accepting of their feelings and needs.

Racial Identity

The participants appeared to be confused by the statement "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs." This could be an indication that they may not have a clear sense of what is considered to be white culture. Through discussion with her advisor, it was brought to the researcher's attention that this question may be problematic when asked of non-minority children. The researcher, who self identifies as black, has a clear sense of what black culture is. She attributes black culture to the traditions, values, music, food, etc. that have been developed and embraced by people of her same race. From the researcher's perspective as a minority in this society, white culture is everything that surrounds her. She feels as though society has continued to be dominated by white culture. This is evident in society's standard of beauty, ideas on social conduct and economic advancement.

In contrast, there may not be a standard tradition of white culture. White culture may not be discussed because it is the basis of American society. It may also bring up a discussion on issues of racism and slavery, in which these negative events may be attributed to white culture. Susan, Charles and Kim have not spent

time trying to find out more about their white race. This could possibly have to do with them not needing to seek information on white culture and history. Unlike minority groups, where it takes more of an effort to learn about positive role models, historical figures and traditions, these ideas of white culture are readily available and prevalent on television and in schools.

The participants may also have blurred lines about the distinction between white culture and black culture because they have continued to have experience living and interacting with foster families or foster family members of a different race. Although Susan is the only participant placed in a transracial foster home, the other two participants have also had experience living with people of a different race. Charles has a black foster brother and Kim has spent two weeks of respite care in a black foster home.

There was an instance which Kim allowed one of the young black children, who she was staying with, to put hair grease in her hair. This was something that she had never done before. She explained the situation by commenting that her "hair was dry, she needed it." Applying grease to one's hair is common in black culture and uncommon in white culture. Although this situation allowed for the crossing of cultural practices, to Kim this was probably an opportunity to build a friendship, not an occasion to embrace black culture.

The difference in race of the researcher may also have had an effect on the participants' responses. They may not have felt comfortable discussing racial identity with someone of a different race. The participants may have responded to the statements in manner they thought would be acceptable to the researcher.

The issue of white culture may be far beyond the thinking or awareness of the ages of the children in this study. The questions were also not intended to conjure up any negative feelings. In this study they were used to examine whether or not the participant thought it was important to seek out things that are central to his or her racial identity and participate in practices that are specific to that group. Although the clients produced a response to the statements, there is no clear evidence that the purpose of the question was accomplished.

Neighborhood

The participants all reside in predominately white neighborhoods. Although Susan lives with a black family, she has constant interactions with other members of her race at home and at school. Her environment is not much different from that of the other two participants. She lives in a neighborhood that is primarily composed of people of her race. This may have continued to be the reason why her responses were similar to that of the other participants in same-race foster care homes. A majority of her day is spent either in school, with her social workers or with friends. All but one of Susan's social workers are also white. These interactions may possibly have a greater influence on her sense of racial identity and self-esteem than the race of her foster family.

Biological parents

Susan and Kim both have weekly contact with their biological families. Their sense of self and racial identity may have little to do with their foster care placements but instead with their connection to their biological families. The

participants may continue to hold on to certain ideas, images and traditions in order to have an avenue to connect with their birth family.

Charles, who scored lowest on the home self-esteem subscale portion of the HSS, has no contact with his biological parents. Although he does not physically interact with them, he may still be holding on to the traditions and customs practiced in their home. These may be different from that of his foster parents' home. On the other hand, he could also be attempting to disassociate himself from the race or identity of his biological parents. It was beyond this study to distinguish whether the participants' self-esteem and racial identity were attributed to their biological family or their foster family. This comparison may provide an important aspect in future research on foster care children.

Limitations

There were many limitations in trying to develop a study that would provide insight on the issues that foster care children face when placed in transracial and same-race foster care homes. This study was unable to produce a conclusion on whether foster children in transracial foster homes are able to develop a level of racial identity and self-esteem comparable to foster children in same-race foster homes.

Data analysis

The size of the sample limited the researcher's ability to draw any general conclusions from the quantitative data and limited the researcher's ability to use tests of statistical significance. In analyzing the data, a comparative approach was

taken to explain the patterns and deviations among the participants' responses. Although the participants' scores and responses can be compared to each other, there is no indication that they are representative of the general population of foster care children, ages 11 to 17 years. The individual scores are therefore specific to that individual participant.

This was also not the population the researcher intended to study. Previous literature on transracial placement focuses on the affects of this care on minority children. The researcher was hoping to get a larger sample of children in transracial foster homes and diversity in racial groups. This is not represented in the homogeneity of the race of the participants.

IRB process

Along with the small sample size there were other limitations to this study. The time limits of this study constrained the development of the study and the recruitment of participants. The research project was developed and designed to be completed in one academic year. This 10 month span included reading previous literature, seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, collecting data, analyzing the results and typing up this thesis.

Because the researcher wanted to study a sensitive population such as children and more specifically foster care children, she had to seek full review board approval from the IRB. This process took longer than the researcher expected. There were instances in which the researcher had to resubmit application copies, additional material and amendments in order to finally be approved for doing this project. Although it is important that the board take time

to fully examine each research study in order to insure the protection of the participants, there needs to be more people working on the IRB. With Syracuse University being a research institution, there is no reason that it should take more time and effort to get started than it does to actually do the research. Because the researcher did not factor in this issue, the length of the IRB process limited the time allotted for particular recruitment.

Population

Foster parents did not readily volunteer their children to participate; thus, only three children participated. There may have been apprehension on the part of the foster parents. They may have been reluctant to sign their foster children up for the study, in fear that the children may face emotional abuse having to address and deal with the issues discussed in this research. The foster parent may not have wanted to put any undue stress on the child. Along with the foster parents' reluctance, the time period of the study may have also been inconvenient for the foster child.

The debate against transracial placement focuses on the discussion of minority children's ability to achieve the same level of self-esteem and racial identity that children in same-race placements are able to achieve. Having only interviewed white children limited the relevance of the data to the original topic of interest.

Gaining access to the foster care population also provides a challenge to this research. The researcher was fortunate enough to have an internship in an agency that serves this population, but the researcher was not able to broaden her

study beyond this organization. Therefore, there may be an agency culture that is specific to where the researcher did her research. It might be possible that this agency receives clients [foster children and foster parents] who are similar in nature. This may have provided me with a homogenous sample.

Subject matter

The subject matter incorporated in this study also appeared to be sensitive. Race and racism are issues that are not widely discussed among people from different races. When the research was presented to the foster families, there was discussion among the group about what is important to children and how they learn to distinguish between races of people. In response to this discussion, a foster mother commented that children learn race and racism from other people. The foster parents might have been afraid that the subject matter might cause their foster children or the agency workers to pay more attention to issues of race, threatening their status as foster parents.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Social workers must be sensitive to the needs of their clients. They must also recognize the cultural and racial experiences faced by people of different racial backgrounds and placements. Social workers have the role of advocating, educating and supporting their clients, therefore it is important that they are aware of the issues that may affect their clients' progression. Due to the lack of research on this topic, it is important that there continue to be an evaluation of the best practices in direct service and administration of legislation that affect foster care.

Foster care children are assigned caseworkers and/or family support staff. It is important for this staff to understand the importance of providing the best care for their clients. They also need to be open to discussing issues of self-esteem, racial identity, racism and discrimination with their clients. Because children in foster care have been exposed to situations of abuse, neglect and maltreatment, they are considered a special needs population; therefore, there should be a higher level of sensitivity expressed by the social workers who work with this population. In attempting to build a connection with this population, social workers should be creative in their efforts at getting these children to openly discuss what they are feeling. For fear of being removed from their current foster home, these children may not want to open up.

With a majority of the participants in this study (n=2) scoring highest on the peer self-esteem subscale, it appears that the participants seemed feel more positively about their peers, therefore peer groups and activities may be an avenue to address children's concerns and issues. This will allow them to build a peer support network. Developing connections with other children their age and in similar situations will show them that they are not alone.

Along with peer development and interaction, there also needs to be an avenue for educating the family. The foster parents who were reluctant to allow their foster children to participate may have trouble discussing certain issues with their foster children. There should be trainings for foster parents so that they can better communicate with their foster children. In understanding the pressures and influences children face, such as peers, sex, drugs, bullying, racism, etc., foster

parents will be better capable to deal with and address their foster children's needs. Having the whole family involved will provide more effective communication.

There also needs to be an increase in agency awareness about the importance of self-esteem and racial identity. It is important that the agency workers have an idea of the types of issues that their clients are facing. This will provide them with ideas on how to administer the best type of care.

It is also important that social workers advocate for their clients. Most policy makers do not have direct contact with the people they are affecting; therefore it is the responsibility of social workers to make sure their clients' voices are heard.

Future research

This study only presented a glimpse into exploring a comparative study on the effects of transracial foster care versus same-race foster care. In order to provide further development in this area of research, there needs to be a look into alternative variables, and the perspectives of additional participants.

Identifying additional variables

A larger and more diverse sample is needed to understand the impact that transracial and same-race placements can have on a child's development. Racial identity and self-esteem may not be the most important variables that placements effect. Other variables such as skin color, length of placement, and reason for placement into care may be important to consider. This study as well as other

studies that explore racial identity among children in transracial placement has failed to examine whether there is significance in the skin color of the foster child and the foster parent. Within each race there is no standard skin tone, therefore the difference in shades of skin color may produce more of an effect than children's identity with a particular racial group. Skin color may also be a significant factor in how children answered the questions. Lighter skin black children may feel more comfortable being in white homes due to the fact that there is not a huge color difference. This may also be the case for white foster care children as well. They may feel more comfortable in a home where the black foster parents are of a lighter skin tone. The foster children as well as the foster parents may feel that there is less of a difference in the way people look at them when they are together. Researchers should study all racial groups in order to explore whether skin color makes a difference in foster care children's comfort level in transracial placements.

In a majority of the studies that the researcher reviewed on racial identity and self-esteem within foster care, there tends to be a length-of-placement criterion that participants must meet. Children who have been in care for less than a year are usually not included. In order to get a wider perspective on whether the length of placement has an affect on the child's racial identity and self-esteem, all children in foster care should be asked to participate in the studies. A child who has recently been placed into care probably has not yet had the services or time to deal with his or her issues of self worth and identity. Yet, a child who has been in care for an extended period may experience a decrease in

self-esteem due to a feeling of worthlessness that may arise from not being adopted or reunified with his or her birth family. Children in short term placement may also be more apprehensive in living with a different family, let alone a family of a different race. As a child is trying to adjust to placement he or she may not be emotionally ready or willing to also adapt to a different culture or way of living. A child who has been in care for a long period of time may also express reluctance in being placed in a different home. They may have been moved around multiple times and may now be fed-up with the foster care system.

A foster child's level of racial identity and self esteem may not be attributed to the type of foster care placement (i.e. transracial or same-race) he or she is currently in, but instead to the reason he or she was placed into care. Self-esteem may be correlated with the abuse or neglect a child has endured before being placed into care. Racial identity may also be an avenue for foster children to either embrace their biological families or disassociate themselves from them. A white child who has been consistently abused by white people may feel more comfortable being in a black home. Gil & Bogart (1982) state that "while researching this population it is difficult to ascertain whether the children's behaviors in care is a direct result of the placement, or the circumstance in his or her biological home which preceded the placement" (p. 352).

This study did not ask questions about the participants' past or present relationship with their biological families. The focus was on how they felt about their foster care homes and not the homes in which they once lived. This was done to decrease the stress a child may feel in talking about their past misfortunes.

There may be a stronger correlation between a birth parents' home and self-esteem and racial identity than a foster parents' home. It would also be interesting to see if foster children who still have a connection with their birth families have a higher or lower level of self-esteem and racial identity than foster children who have no connection with their birth family.

Participant perspectives

Foster care children's perspectives on their own self-esteem and racial identity were the focus of this study. In order to fully understand the effects of transracial and same-race foster care, it would be beneficial to also get the perspectives of the birth parents, foster parents and agency workers. Each participant group would be able to give different insights into what they have observed as growths or hindrances in the child's development process.

Conclusion

The issues of skin color, length of placement, past abuse and neglect and a variety in participant perspectives are not deeply addressed because they were beyond the scope of this study, yet they are still extremely important to fully understanding the phenomenon of transracial foster care. Although there were ample limitations with little being known about this subject, this research may benefit future work focused on exploring racial identity and self-esteem in foster care children. In addressing issues in policy, social work practice and variable identification, this study attempts to address a gap currently in literature. There is

little known about the effects of transracial placement and less known about its impact on children in foster care.

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[Date]

Dear Foster Parent(s),

This letter is in reference to the research project [Name of supervisor] announced in the last foster parent meeting. With the full support of the staff at [Name of agency], your foster child has been invited to participate in a research study. This study is designed to explore if there are any patterns on how foster children respond to questions asked about issues regarding racial identity and self-esteem.

I have included a foster parent consent form with this letter. If you have any questions and/or would like to participate please contact me at [Phone number] or [Name of supervisor] at [Phone number].

Please note that whether or not you or your foster child participates in this study will have <u>NO</u> effect on the services you are receiving from [Name of agency].

Sincerely,

Shanay Barrett-Hugan
[Title]
[Name of agency]
[Address]
[Phone number]
[fax]

INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOSTER PARENT

My name is Shanay Barrett-Hugan, and I am a senior undergraduate student at Syracuse University in the School of Social Work. Currently, I hold a Youth Specialist position at [Name of agency]. I am inviting your foster child to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so your foster child may choose to participate or not. This sheet will explain the study to you. Please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any.

I am interested in learning more about the impact of foster care on adolescents' racial identity and self-esteem. Your foster child will be asked to answer a set of questions. This may take place at either the agency, [Name of agency], or your home, whichever is more convenient for you and your child. The questions will take approximately 30 minutes of his or her time. All information will be kept confidential. Your foster child's set of answers will be stored in a locked safe, with only the researcher and her faculty research advisor having access to it. The researcher will assign a different name to your foster child's questionnaire, and only I will have the key to indicate which name belongs to your foster child.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping us to understand racial identity and self-esteem among adolescents in foster care. This information should help us to better understand the needs of the children placed in foster care. The risks to your foster child participating in this study are that the topics addressed on the questionnaire may cause him/her to emotionally, behaviorally or socially express concerns about his or her current placement. These risks will be minimized by giving your foster child time to talk about the questions afterwards and telling all of the social workers at [Name of agency] that the child may want to talk about these issues in session. If you or your foster child no longer wishes to continue, you both have the right to withdraw from the study, without penalty, at any time. Whether or not your foster child participates in this study will have NO effect on the services you or your foster child receives from [Name of agency].

If you have any questions please feel free to contact my research advisor [Name of advisor] at [Phone number] or the Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered and I give my consent for my foster child _____ to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of participant's foster parent   Date

_____
Print name of participant's foster parent

_____   _____
Name of investigator   Date

INFORMED CONSENT FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANT

My name is Shanay Barrett-Hugan, and I am a senior undergraduate student at Syracuse University in the School of Social Work. Currently, I hold a Youth Specialist position at [Name of agency]. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. This sheet will explain the study to you. Please feel free to ask questions about the research if you have any.

I am interested in learning more about the impact of foster care on adolescents' racial identity and self-esteem. You will be asked to answer a set of questions. The questions will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. All information will be kept confidential. Your questionnaire will be stored in a locked safe. ONLY my faculty research advisor and me will have access to it. I will assign a different name to your questionnaire, and only I will have the key to tell which name belongs to you.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping us to understand racial identity and self-esteem among adolescents in foster care. This information should help us to better understand the needs of the children placed in foster care. The topics on the questionnaire may cause you concerns about your current placement. You will be given time to talk about the questions afterwards. If you feel uncomfortable talking to me, please talk to your foster parent(s) or the social workers at [Name of agency]. If you no longer wish to continue, you have the right to stop the questions, without penalty, at any time. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. Whether or not you participate in this study will have NO effect on the services you or your foster family receives from [Name of agency].

If you have any questions please feel free to contact my research advisor [Name of advisor] at [Phone number] or the Institutional Review Board at 315-443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered and I wish to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____
Print name of participant

_____   _____
Name of investigator   Date

_____   _____
Agency Representative   Date

Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS)

Peer Self-Esteem Scale

I'm going to read 10 statements to you. These statements are designed to find out how you generally feel when you are with other people your age. Using the scale, I want you to answer as best as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

____ 1. I have at least as many friends as other people my age.
____ 2. I am not as popular as other people my age.
____ 3. In the kinds of things that people my age like to do, I am at least as good as most other people.
____ 4. People my age often pick on me.
____ 5. Other people think I am a lot of fun to be with.
____ 6. I usually keep to myself because I am not like other people my age.
____ 7. Other people wish that they were like me.
____ 8. I wish I were a different kind of person because I'd have more friends.
____ 9. If my group of friends decided to vote for leaders of their group I'd be elected to a high position.
____ 10. When things get tough, I am not a person that other people my age would turn to for help.

Home Self-Esteem Scale

I'm going to read 10 statements to you. These sentences are designed to find out how you generally feel when you are with your foster family. Using the scale, I want you to answer as best as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

____ 1. My foster parents are proud of the kind of person I am.
____ 2. No one pays much attention to me at my foster parents' home.
____ 3. My foster parents feel that I can be depended on.
____ 4. I often feel that if they could, my foster parents would trade me in for another child.
____ 5. My foster parents try to understand me.
____ 6. My foster parents expect too much of me.
____ 7. I am an important person to my foster family.
____ 8. I often feel unwanted at home.
____ 9. My foster parents believe that I will be a success in the future.
____ 10. I often wish that I had been placed into a different foster family.

School Self-Esteem Scale

I'm going to read 10 statements to you. These sentences are designed to find out how you generally feel when you are in school. Using the scale, I want you to answer as best as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

_____ 1.   My teacher expects too much of me.
_____ 2.   In the kinds of things we do in school, I am at least as good as other people in my class.
_____ 3.   I often feel worthless in school.
_____ 4.   I am usually proud of my report card.
_____ 5.   School is harder for me than most other people.
_____ 6.   My teachers are usually happy with the kind of work I do.
_____ 7.   Most of my teachers do not understand me.
_____ 8.   I am an important person in my classes.
_____ 9.   It seems that no matter how hard I try, I never get the grades I deserve.
_____ 10. All and all, I feel I've been very fortunate to have had the kinds of teachers I've had since I've started school

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

In this country, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or racial groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of racial groups are Latino, Black, Asian, American Indian and White. These questions are about your race or your racial group and how you feel about it or react to it. Using the scale, I want you to answer as best as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

What race do you consider yourself to be? _____

_____	1.	I have spent time trying to find out more about my race, such as its history, tradition, and customs.
_____	2.	I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own race.
_____	3.	I have a clear sense of my racial background and what it means for me.
_____	4.	I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my racial group membership.
_____	5.	I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.
_____	6.	I have strong sense of belonging to my own racial group.
_____	7.	I understand pretty well what my racial group membership means to me.
_____	8.	In order to learn more about my racial background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.
_____	9.	I have a lot of pride in my racial group.
_____	10.	I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
_____	11.	I feel a strong attachment towards my own racial group.
_____	12.	I feel good about my cultural or racial background.

Scale of Racial Socialization for adolescents (SORS-A)

_____ 1. Racism and discrimination are the hardest things a [Race of respondent] child has to face.

_____ 2. Foster families of [Race of respondent] foster children should teach them to be proud to be [Race of respondent].

_____ 3. A mostly [Race of respondent] school will help [Race of respondent] children learn more than a mostly mixed school.

_____ 4. Foster parents should teach their foster children about racism.

_____ 5. Foster families should talk about [Race of respondent] culture with their foster children.

_____ 6. Foster families who talk about racism to their foster children will lead them to doubt themselves.

_____ 7. Schools should be required to teach all children about [Race of respondent] history.

Additional Questions

For the next question we will not be using the scale. Please continue to answer as best as you can. Again there are no right or wrong answers.

1. Yes or No: Has being a part of this foster family changed the way you feel about being [Race of respondent]?

A. If yes, do you feel more positive or more negative about being [Race of respondent] now?

B. Can you give me an example?

SCALE

A = Strongly Disagree = 1

B = Disagree = 2

C = Agree = 3

D = Strongly Agree = 4