A Study of Indian Adoptions in India and Norway

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- Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences
Program Evaluation/Descriptive Research

There are specific values to conducting descriptive research.

First, descriptive research tells "what is." It tells you what is going on and how subjects (families) feel about a specific issue. In evaluating programs, data from such studies are often the most helpful in generating specific policies and practices that can be changed to improve programs.

Two, description facilitates prediction because past behavior is often a good predictor of future behavior. Knowing the issues that adoptive families and children experience at various stages is helpful in developing some understanding of what others may experience during the same time period.

Finally, description facilitates explanation because once we know what happens, we may take steps to find out why it happens. So, description would suggest that more research needs to be done once we have significant findings in a specific area or areas.
INDIAN ADOPTIONS 1995-2000
Source: CARA
Indian Families who Adopted: The Agency Context

Program evaluation of the domestic adoption program of Bharatiya Samaj Seva Kendra in Pune, India

- 2001 (spring), planned study
- 2001 (fall), collected data
- 2002 (early), finished report
Agency Domestic Adoptions

Number of Domestic Adoptions at BSSK, 1981-2000
Phase II—Indian Children Adopted to Norway

Program evaluation of the international adoption program of Children of the World, Norway

- 2003 (spring), planned study
- 2003 (summer), collected pilot data
- 2003 (fall), collected data
- 2004 (summer), translation of written comments
- 2004 (early fall), finished report
From 1982 through 2003, CWN has facilitated the adoption of 398 children from India by Norwegian families.

During all but a few of those years, by far, the majority of Norwegian adoptions of Indian children overall were facilitated by CWN.

Almost half of the children (52%, n=206) were from Mumbai and 45% (n=179) were from Pune.
Number of Adoptions in Norway through Children of the World Norway by Country of Origin

County of Origin of Adoptions

- Korea
- China
- India
- Thailand
- Romania
- Russia
- Brazil
- S. Africa
- Other
Indian Families who Adopted: Our Sample

The in-country breakdown used in this project was:

- 374 families in Pune City
- 672 families in other parts of India
- 1046 Total in-country adoptions
Indian Families who Adopted: Our Method to Gather Information

**Pune**
- Random sample of 187 from 374 families
- No address 49 (26%)
- Mailed survey to 138
- 94 responded (68%)
- Interview requested (138)
- 113 responded (82%)

**Outside Pune**
- Random sample of 336 from 672 families
- No address 63 (19%)
- Mailed survey to 273
- 136 responded (50%)
- No interview requested
Sampling Strategy in Norway

- Data were collected through a mailed survey.
- Two hundred seventy six 276 adoptive families of Indian children in Norway were sent a mailed questionnaire in October 2003.
- These families contained 398 children.
- Mailed surveys were returned to the participating adoption agency (Children of the World-Norway) in stamped envelopes that were enclosed with the questionnaires.
- Reminder notices were sent to families to prompt them to return the questionnaires; they were mailed 30 days after the questionnaires were mailed.
- All questionnaires were mailed to the investigator in the United States for data entry and analysis.
- Responses were anonymous and confidential.
Data were collected on 192 children from 142 families, representing 52% of the families who received the survey.

We consider the response rate to be quite good for several reasons.

- This was also the first time researchers who were not Norwegian conducted a study of Norwegian adoptive families, which might have influenced some parents about their participation.
- There is some indication from adoption workers that adoptive families are experience research fatigue—they feel that they have been studied too much. As such, some chose not to participate.
- Finally, the questionnaire was long compared to other questionnaires used in previous research in Norway; the length affected response rates.
Overview of Children’s Characteristics

**Indian Domestic Adoptions**
- 53% female
- Placement age=8 months
- 93% placed under 2 years
- Study age=7.3 years
- In adoptive home=6.6 years
- The majority of the children (95%) had been in an orphanage or institution before placement, for an average of 4.6 months.
- About 16% of children had been in a foster family prior to adoption.

**Norwegian Indian Adoptions**
- 69% female
- Placement age=18 months
- 87% placed under 2 years
- Study age=9.8 years
- In adoptive home=8.1 years
- The majority of the children (99%) had been in an orphanage or institution before placement, for an average of 4.6 months.
- About 11% of children had been in a foster family prior to adoption.
Overview of the Adoptive Parents

Adoptive Father-India
- 38.6 years old at adoption
- 46.7 at time of study
- 55% completed survey

Adoptive Father-Norway
- 37.2 years old at adoption
- 45.5 at time of study
- 23% completed survey

Adoptive Mother-India
- 35.5 years old at adoption
- 41.2 at time of study
- 33% completed survey

Adoptive Mother-Norway
- 34.9 years old at adoption
- 43.3 at time of study
- 73% completed survey
Overview of Child Functioning

- Overall, these children do not have special physical or health needs.
- The majority of children did not have developmental delays at placement or at the time of the study.
  - Indian families, less that 1% at placement and 1% or less at time of study
  - Norwegian families, 15% at placement and 10% at time of study
- The majority of children had no sensory problems.
- For the few children entering the family with some sensory difficulties, most of these children had improved at the time of the study with the exception of activity level being too high.
- While activity level too high was evident at placement for 8% of the domestically adopted Indian children, the amount had almost doubled (15%) at the time of the study. This pattern was not the same in Norwegian families (5% at placement % 3% at the time of the study)

- Attachment relationships were very positive.
- The majority of children do not have behavior problems with the multiple measures used to assess behavior. However, in about 10% of the Indian families and 3 to 5% of Norwegian families, children had serious emotional and behavioral problems.
- All families easily identified strengths in their children.
Overview of the Adoptive Families

Indian Adoptive Families
- 20% of families had other children in the home (15% adopted and 10% birth children)
- The primary reason families adopted was infertility (81%)
  - Mother (43%) was infertile or could not conceive (19%)
  - Infertile father (15%)
  - Both (5%)

Norwegian Adoptive Families
- 80% of families had other children in the home (90% adopted)
- The primary reason families adopted stated explicitly was infertility (54%); only 4% of the families expressed strictly humanitarian reasons for adopting
Adoption Impact on Family

Indian Adoptive Families

- Very Positive
- Positive
- Mixed
- Mostly Negative

Norwegian Adoptive Families

- Very Positive
- Positive
- Mixed
# Adoption Stability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall, during the past year has the adoption been:</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoother than expected</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About as you expected</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had more “ups and downs”</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever thought of ending the adoptive placement?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you think of ending the adoptive placement?</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Not very often</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Birth Family Information—Indian Families

**Birth Mother**
- ages 13 to 35 at the time of the child’s birth; 20.9 years old on average
- About 50% were under the age of 20.
- About 20% of birth mothers were students, 57% were laborers/blue collar workers, and 20% were unemployed.
- Education ranged from illiterate to 15th grade; average grade was 7.6.
- Most birth mothers (63%) were single and about 18% were married.

**Birth Father**
- 21 to 50 at the time of the child’s birth; 27.4 years old on average
- About 25% of birth fathers were under the age of 22 and 50% were under the age of 25.
- About 11% of birth fathers were students, 44% were laborers, 20% were professionals, 6% were unemployed and 6% were in the military.
- Education ranged from illiterate to 12th grade; average grade was 7.8.
- Most of the birth fathers were single (54%) and about 18% were married to someone else other than the birth mother.
## Birth Family Information—Norwegian Families

(less than 1/3 of families had information on birth moms and less than 5% had info on birth dads)

### Birth Mother
- ages 13 to 33 at the time of the child’s birth; 20.1 years old on average
- About 50% were under the age of 20.
- About 17% of birth mothers were students and 72% were laborers/blue collar workers.
- Sixty percent of birth moms had less than a middle school education.
- Most birth mothers (83%) were single.

### Birth Father
- 18 to 40 at the time of the child’s birth; 23.9 years old on average.
- About 33% of birth fathers were students and 44% were laborers/blue collar workers.
Adoption Issues in the Indian Adoptive Families

- In many cases (38%), the child had not been told that they were adopted.
- The conversations about adoption was anxiety producing for many families.
  - Many of them discussed how they needed assistance in talking about adoption with their child.
  - They also commented about needing help as the child gets older in dealing with adoption issues.
  - They struggled with the nature of discussions when children were at various ages and wanted more preparation and assistance in dealing with adoption issues over time.
Adoption Issues in the Norwegian Adoptive Family

- Most of the children have had some negative experiences related to the color of their skin, suggesting that prejudicial attitudes are still a significant part of Norwegian culture. This suggests that more needs to be done to educate Norwegians about diversity and how to respond to diverse people.

- There is an association between bicultural activities and attitudes. While it can’t be determined which comprises cause and/or effect, it is easier to engage families in bicultural activities than to affect attitudes directly.

- Adoption preparation groups should be a requirement for all families adopting.
  - Preparing families for adoption helps them to cognitively orient themselves to the difficulties they may encounter.
  - It helps them to better appraise their support systems and the resources in their lives, including the gaps that need to be filled.
Services for Indian Families

- Families living outside Pune relied more on the agency and evaluated the parent support group experience more positively than families living in Pune. This may be, in part, to the fact that families living in a large metropolitan area such as Pune have access to a wider array of services and opportunities for support and assistance than do families who do not live in a metropolitan area.

- A few families who adopted older children commented that the social worker providing post-placement services was supportive but too young and without sufficient professional experience to assist them when issues arose.

- The one area of concern to many parents was the court system.
Services for Norwegian Families

Areas for improvement for the public system

- While problems are few, every effort should be made to reach out to those families who have children with problems to see if there is any additional support or guidance that public system could give them.
- School functioning was the only area in which there may be some issues. The public system might want to probe more deeply in order to achieve a more thorough understanding of the school issues families are encountering.
- Adoption preparation groups should be a requirement for all families adopting. Preparing families for adoption helps them to cognitively orient themselves to the difficulties they may encounter. Many families reported that the process was more difficult than they expected. Adoption preparation should tackle this issue.
Adoption Preparation

- series of activities designed to both gather information as part of the home study/family assessment
- adoption preparation assists the family in understanding the unique issues in forming a family or adding to a family through adoption
- preparation is both a process and outcome
- inadequate preparation cannot be compensated for later
- successful adoptions depend less on the child and more on parental characteristics which allow a child to be incorporated into the family without an intolerable level of family distress or chronic crisis
What Should be Included in Adoption Preparation?

- the logistics of adoption
- the three critical tasks in adoption: entitlement (claiming), assimilation (accepting differences) & integration (creating something new from similarities and differences); preparation helps families begin these processes
- adoptive parents need to learn about phases in adoption adjustment (honeymoon period, testing & acceptance/rejection) as well as the unique life cycle issues of triad members (birth, adoptive parents, adoptee)
What Should be Included in Adoption Preparation? (continued)

- the marital relationship changes
- the meaning of parenthood changes
- the paradox of infertility
- a child's problems (for older and internationally adopted children) won't necessarily disappear after placement
- three models of the way families deal with the differences inherent in adoption (reject difference, insist on difference, or accept difference)
What Happens to Families during Adoption Preparation?

- Most families benefit from preparation and begin to grapple with the tasks in adoption.
- Some families, given accurate information, will screen themselves out from pursuing adoption.
- Many families will be able to make the changes necessary for them to be successful adopters.
- It underscores for families that adoption is a lifelong process.