

LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH: A LOOK AT RACE IN TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

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Abstract

This research paper looks at the different types of child adoption, in particular to transracial adoption. There is an emphasis in the role of race in transracial adoption and how transracial adoption can benefit and/or affect the children who are part of it. There has been a long fought debate regarding transracial adoption. Those who favor transracial adoption state that the children are receiving a home that they would otherwise not get. On the contrary, those who oppose transracial adoption state that the children are deprived from their heritage. However, the main thing that should be taken into account is the best interest of the children. Thousands of children are adopted and of those many are adopted transracially each year on the basis of love. However, love is not enough in transracial adoption. Studies have shown that the children's heritages need to be taken into account and changes in lifestyle need to be made to accommodate the children.

Keywords: child adoption, transracial adoption, race

Since the day my mother brought me to the United States from Guatemala she has told me that I am adopted. Even though I have known this since I was very young, it was not until I was four that I understood what this really meant. I was watching the popular children's show titled "Sesame Street" one day, and I remember that the episode was about one of the characters giving birth. I specifically remember that the mother had dark colored skin and so did her newborn. I immediately ran to my mother (who has white skin), and held my arm up next to her and said, "My skin is a different color than yours, why?" My mother was shocked, because she thought that I would not mention race until I was much older."(VanderMolen, 2005).

These are situations that many children who are transracially adopted face.

Things like this may be taken as just a question of curiosity on behalf of the children; however, it is a lot more profound than that. Children at an early age are aware of the racial differences, yet they might not know what those differences will mean in their life. People who adopt, adopt on a love basis, nevertheless, sometimes fail to realize that love is not enough and other things need to be taken into account. Things like their race and where they come from. Those things can have an impact in the later life of the child when they are adopted. In this research paper, I am going to focus on the role that race plays in child adoption process. I will be focusing specifically in transracial adoption. I will start with the definition of adoption and then highlight the different types of adoption with an emphasis on transracial adoption. I will then explore the pros and cons of transracial adoption and discuss what leads people to adopt transracially or not. Finally, I will end with a discussion about the result of transracial adoption and what can be done to improve the adoption placements.

Child adoption

According to Vandivere , Malm and Radel from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services “Adoption establishes a legal parent-child relationship between a child and one or two adults who are not the child’s biological parents. Once finalized, adoption affords adoptive parents rights and responsibilities identical to those of biological parents.” Adoption for a child who does not have a family could mean a second chance for a better life. Unfortunately, that second chance in life can become challenging. Child adoption can become a complex situation depending on the type of adoption, especially when the type of adoption involves differences in race between the child and the adoptive parent/parents.

There are multiple types of adoption. As the social worker, Ruth McRoy (2011), stated in an interview for Social Work Podcast, there is the transracial, inter-country, foster care, kinship, and foster parent adoptions. Transracial adoptions are when a child is of a racial background different to that of the family that is adopting the child. Inter-country adoptions are those where a child is adopted from another country. Foster care adoptions are those where a child is removed from biological parents and placed into the foster care system. Once in the foster care system children might be open to adoption. There is also the foster parent adoption where those who have served as foster parents can adopt the child. Finally, there are the Kinship adoptions, where related family members can adopt the child when the parents’ rights have been terminated. Even though all of these adoptions options are available; they are not exempt of the problems that can arise especially when race is taken into account.

History of Transracial Adoption

The origins of transracial adoption can be traced to activities of the Children's Service Center and a group of parents from Quebec, Canada (Simon and Altstein, 2000). In 1960, the Children's Services and the group of parents founded what was known as the Open Door Society. The Children's center sought placement for black children with black adoptive parents; however, they did not have much success with that. As a result, they turned to white adoptive parents, which is how the first transracial adoptions came to be. A year later, 1961, we see the beginnings of what came to be transracial adoption in the United States. It starts with the birth of the PAMY (Minnesota of Parents to Adopt Minority Youngsters) organization which also sought placement for black children, however, just like Open Door Society, it was not too successful and it turned to white adoptive parents. PAMMY was able to place about twenty children with white adoptive parents. By 1969, there were forty-seven organizations like the Open Door Society.

Nevertheless, there were many people, agencies as well as the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) that opposed this practice calling it a "particular form of Genocide." After the statement to the NABSW, transracial adoption had a rapid decline, and it took a while for it to come back. In the years preceding the resolution of the NABSW, 2,274 black children were adopted by white families, in 1970, 2,574 were adopted in 1971, and 1,596, were adopted in 1972. But in 1973, there were only a little more than 1,000 Black children adopted by White families (Simon and Altstein, 2000).

At the same time, there was an increase in discrimination in the adoption process toward the people that wanted to adopt transracially. As a way to take into account for the discrimination and racism, the NABSW then passed the 1994 Multiethnic Placement Act (MPA), which made it illegal for agencies to refuse to place a child with parents of another race (Jennings, 2006). Hence, the MPA also stated the following: "An agency may consider the cultural, ethnic, or racial background of the child and the capacity of the prospective foster or adoptive parents to meet the needs of the child of his background as one of a number of factors used to determine the best interest of the child" (Simon and Altstein, 2000). At the same time, the MPA gave rise once again to acceptance of transracial adoption. However, there have been some heated debates due to the consequences of these adoptions. One of the consequences as you will see later on the paper is the fact that Whites are highly represented in the adoption of African American children.

Child Adoption Statistics

The current statistics with regards to child adoption from a 2007 National Survey of Adoptive Parents (Vandivere, Malm and Radel), state that one out of four children were adopted from other nations; of the remaining children adopted domestically, half were adopted from foster care and half from private sources" In the United States, Adoption is certainly a very common occurrence however, no official and complete counts of adoptions exist, but estimates are that about 4% of Americans are adopted about half of these have been adopted by persons not related to them by birth

(Fisher, 2003). Other statistics according to the 2007 National Survey of Adoptive Parents include the following:

- “Adopted children are less likely to be white or of Hispanic origin than children in the general U.S. population, and they are more likely to be black”
- “The race and ethnic distribution of adopted children is different from that of adoptive parents. Whereas a majority of adopted children are nonwhite, the majority of these children’s parents are white (73 percent)”.
- “Adopted children are less likely than children in the general population to live in families with incomes below the poverty threshold, and they are more likely to have a parent who has completed education beyond high school.”
- Though limited both by selection of states as well as methodology, a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001) on the number and characteristics of foster children reveals that about 127,000 children were waiting to be adopted in 1999. The largest racial or ethnic group of waiting children were African American (42 percent), 15 percent were Latino, 2 percent were Native American or Asian or Pacific Islander, 8 percent were undetermined, and the remaining 32 percent were Caucasian and non-Latino (Brooks, James and Barth, 2002).
- “Black children make up two-fifths of the foster care population, although they represent less than one-fifth of the nation’s children.” Roberts (2005).

From the statistics above, it can be seen that there are many children who are waiting to be adopted. However, those children have to wait longer because they have to wait until the White children have been adopted. The overwhelming majority of children, who are waiting to be adopted, are children of color. Many of these children are discriminated against due to their age, skin pigment, gender and 'special needs.' As was stated by Barth (1997), prospective adopters typically are interested in adopting infants and younger children. Older age is a substantial barrier to placement, particularly for foster children. Barth (1997) finds that age has as significant association on the odds of adoption for children placed in out-of-home care as does race, with children 4–6 years old having five times lower odds than infants of getting adopted versus remaining in care.

Pros and Cons for Transracial Adoption

Trans-racial adoption has received the most attention from all of the other options of adoption due to the fact that it deals directly with race. There are people who applaud this procedure because it breaks the 'traditional' family unit and it shows acceptance toward other people. After all, the children are going to have a home, which ultimately, is better for a child than being at a foster home. As stated by Morrison (2004), "First, and perhaps most importantly, TRA helps find homes for children who would otherwise be "denied the benefits of a permanent and healthy home, either for a significant period of time or, often, forever" (Morrison, 2004). Those who favor transracial adoption also mention that if it were not for transracial adoption children of

color would spent more time on foster home and probably age out of it. They further state that, "Race matching is not in the "best interest" of the child to the extent that it delays and jeopardizes their opportunity to be placed in a permanent home" (Morrison, 2004). Other arguments for transracial adoption are that same race placements discriminate against the people who want to adopt transracially. Same race placement would not allow them (especially white prospective parents) to adopt whoever they want.

Conversely, there are people who criticize transracial adoption, because it deprives the child of their culture. For example, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), say that it is "[a] particular form of genocide" (Simon and Altstein, 2000). The NABSW opposed transracial adoption because the procedure diminishes black children, as was stated by Bremner (1974),

Those born of black-white alliances are no longer black as decreed by immutable law and social custom for centuries. They are now black-white, inter-racial, bi-racial, emphasizing the whiteness as the adoptable quality; a further subtle, but vicious design to further diminish black and accentuate white. We resent this high-handed arrogance and are insulted by this further assignment of chattel status to black people. (Bremner, 1974)

The NABSW also accused white society of perpetuating its most "malevolent scheme, that of seeking to deny the Native Americans their future by taking away their children." This was in argument for the Native American children, where it is required to take race into account when it comes to adoption. The NABSW's arguments also pose that black children should be with people like them so that they can be socialized and know how to deal with the discrimination that they are faced with in a daily basis

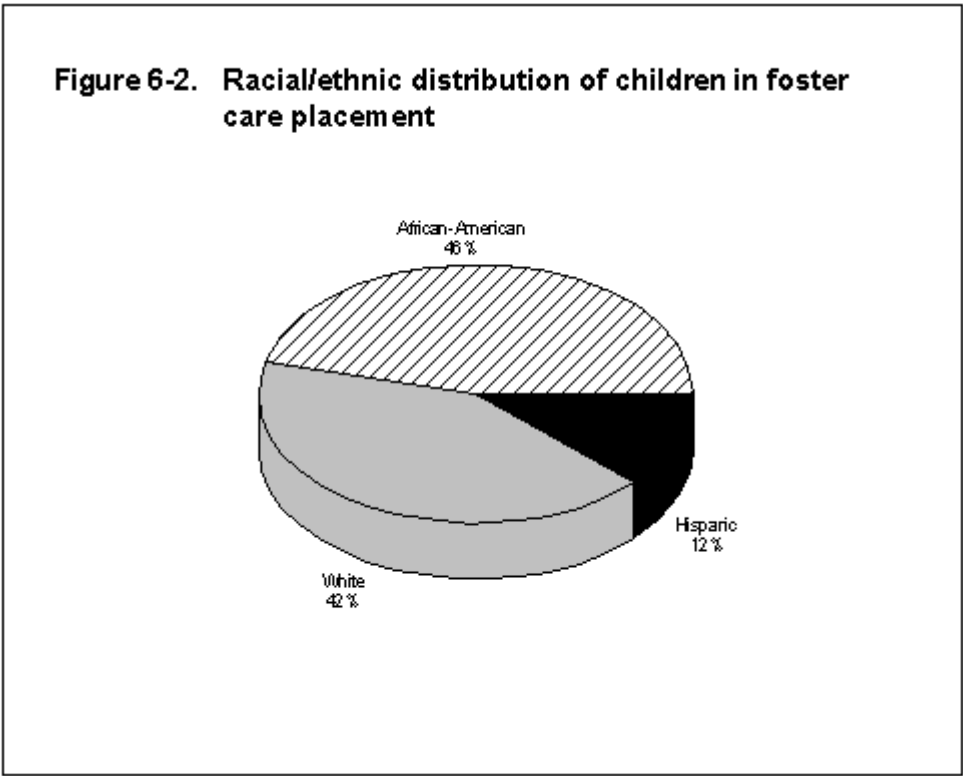
(Bremner, 1974). Other critics of the transracial adoption assert that being adopted by White parents may cause minority children to have difficulties in developing a sense of ethnic identity, be ashamed of their birth culture, and not be able to experience life apart from dominant White culture (DOcan-Morgan, 2010).

In order to understand the opposition of transracial adoption we have to realize that African Americans have been put into its own culture different from that of everybody else due to its history of struggles. According to symbolic interactionism, humans become social beings through a process of interaction and communication with others. Symbols, such as language and rituals, facilitate this process (Hollingsworth, L. 1999). Therefore, Hollingsworth, L. (1999), proposed that the African American community consists of people and institutions similar in their African heritage and in their experience with racism and oppression thus, he states that African American community is central in the socialization of African American children. For that reason, The NBSW organization asserted that because "human beings are products of their environment and develop their sense of values, attitudes, and self-concepts within their own family structure... black children in white homes [would be] cut off from the healthy development of themselves as black people." According to symbolic interactionism Hollingsworth (1999) states that, it is through contact with others in the social group that children learn a sense of "I," "my," and "mine," as well as a concept of "we". If the individual is to develop an African American self-identity, it is necessary that it be acquired in a family in which African Americans are present" Hollingsworth, L. (1999).

As I previously stated, African Americans come from a history of struggles such as abuse and discrimination. Many people tend to avoid talking about that part of history stating that it part of history and that is where it should stay. For that reason, they fail to understand why African Americans have such centered values and want to keep each other together. As Hollingsworth (1999) states, Promoters of transracial adoption, generally have failed to frame the controversy within African-centered values and context. "Instead a different discourse has been introduced. This discourse ignores what has been written of African American culture and tradition and frames the problem as a crisis of the foster care system. The removal of barriers to transracial adoption is then presented as a natural solution." This means that by ignoring what has happened, transracial adoption is a solution to the situations that African Americans are faced with.

Personally, while I think that transracial adoption can become complicated, I believe that it is a path to ease the racial tensions that exist, yet, I feel that there is a need to recognize and not forget that we are different and that everybody has gone and will go through different experience due to our color of skin (unfortunately). For example, in the foster care system African American children are overwhelmingly represented. According to the Children's Bureau, in 2009, there were an estimated 423,773 children in foster care. Of those, African American children made up 30% or 127,821 of the children in foster care although they represented 15% of the child population in 2009. As can also be seen in the graph below (US department of health and human services), African American children are over represented in the foster care system in comparison

with Hispanic who make up 12%, and white children with 42%. These children are already at a disadvantage because they don't have their parents and are more likely to be going from home to home and in their process lose their childhood and a chance to be part a community like them.



At the same time, I feel that saying that transracial adoption is a form of genocide is taking the issue too far. According to Schvey (2008), "Genocide is

defined as killing members of the group, causing serious bodily harm to members of the group, or otherwise attempting to bring about its destruction, including preventing births or transferring children away from the group". I don't feel that the essence of transracial adoption is to do that. Transracial adoption does provide a home for many children that would otherwise probably age out of the system. These children also get a chance in life. However, what I do see is that as a result of transracial adoption is that white children are valued more than children of color. Adoptive parents tend to turn to

children of color when it is difficult to adopt which children. There are also some discrepancies in the procedure of adoption, and that is the white adoptive parents are overwhelmingly represented. As Jennings (2006) states in her article, “Critics see adoption policies, laws, and practices as benefiting White, middle-class couples at the expense of poor women of color and poor White women in the United States and across the globe.”

Desirable characteristic of children

The best available empirical evidence about the preferences of prospective adopters comes from a national probability sample of ever-married women (ages 18–44) examined in the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) (Chandra et al. 1999). They found that 16 percent of all women in the study had ever taken steps toward adoption. These women also expressed strong preferences for certain characteristics in adoptive children with regard to race, age, disability status, and number of children, but they claim to be willing to accept children with “less-desired” traits.

“Less-desired traits?” What does this mean and according to whom? A lot of these statistics show how people are not looking for a child to love. It sounds more like when a person is going to buy a house. Before they decide what house they are going to buy, they are shown numerous homes, some are big some are small, some are painted in a light color, others a darker color, some need repairs and others are ready to be moved in. This process is similar to that of what prospective adoptive parents go through. They are asked what kind of child they want and are then shown pictures of prospective

children until they find the one that has the “desired traits” that they are looking for in the child. For example, in a study to examine if adoptive parents’ have preferences for certain characteristics in adoptive children in order to determine whether current child-welfare policies are sufficient for achieving permanency through adoption for available foster children (Brooks, James and Barth, 2002), they found that prospective Caucasian adopters prefer Caucasian children over children of color.

Race is a huge factor that prospective adoptive parents consider when they are looking for a child. A study of the impact of race conducted by Jennings (2006) focused on three questions: (1.) Do White, middle-class, infertile women view transracial adoption as a viable way to meet their childrearing needs? (2.) How is race negotiated and renegotiated as women transition from fertility treatment to adoption? (3.) How is race negotiated and renegotiated as women move through the adoption process?

Jennings (2006), found that that race relations shaped women’s perceptions of “appropriate” placements. She then divided those perceptions into four categories: (1.) Choosing against Transracial Adoption, (2) Rethinking Race: The Transition to Transracial Adoption, (3) The Colorblind Approach to Children of Color, and (4) A Different Way of Thinking: Moving toward an Antiracist Approach to Adoption. In the first category she describes that women decide against transracial adoption because they want somebody that will fit into their family and at the same time they stated that they were concerned that if they adopted a child of color, the child might be harmed by racist comments from other people and/or family. To add to that, Jennings found that women have different perceptions of the biological mothers of the children. For

example, if the mother is a white teenager, they consider her as a “self-sacrificing” because they are willing to go through the pregnancy while still in school. On the contrary, if women of color were to get pregnant and give the child in adoption, they would be considered as deviants.

In the second category, Jennings, mentions that “although maternal and practical concerns played a role in the decision to conduct an international adoption, race thinking also informed this choice.” Some of the women who moved from White infant adoption to international transracial adoption viewed children from certain countries as children who could more easily assimilate into a middle-class lifestyle while other would be considered as a problem child. Thus, this means that the child would probably fit into their family because their skin color is not different from theirs and that they would not be face with discrimination. In the third category, Jennings puts the color blind approach.

The color blind approach in adoption is the idea that that race should not matter in adoption; racism can be eradicated through transracial adoption; and individual rights should be exercised without the interference of the state (Quiroz, 2007). While the color blind approach sounds very appealing it can create some problems as Jennings states, “On the surface, a colorblind approach to race relations appears progressive, as this approach aims to render race invisible, to make race unimportant. However, a colorblind approach inadvertently centers White, middle-class values as normative and thus works to deny the salience of racial differences.” Once we take race out of the

picture in case of adoption, we take out the importance of differences among people. The color-blind approach is supposed to make it so that there is no distinction between races; however, by applying the colorblind approach they are reaffirming that there is difference among people by subtly privileging whiteness. Therefore, they are contradicting what their philosophy is all about—treaty everybody equally. In addition, people are being coerced to be like “them.” Another problem with the color blind approach is that people don’t take into account how a child will feel when he/she realizes that their color skin looks different form that of the others round them. Like the story that I presented earlier, children become aware of the difference at an early age, and for them situation can become confusing and overwhelming, especially if the parents have little understanding of how race will affect their life.

Jennings also states, that the women who drew on a colorblind approach “saw adoption as a form of race and class uplift—as a way to give children of color a chance at a “stable” life.” In other words, they feel that they are giving the child a better life then the one that they currently have. “Transracial adoption provides the quality of salvation and redemption....Not only does it representational provide for the "salvation" of inner-city Black children, but it also allows for the redemption of Whites from the "burdens" of racism and guilt by affirming a s "color-blind""(Jennings, 2006). Although it is a ‘colorblind’ approach people cannot hide the obvious, white people still consider themselves better and they think that they are doing the people of color a favor by adopting them, because they are allowing them into their world. A world, in where they don’t have to worry about the color of their skin to determine their opportunities

in life. In addition, with that they try to show that they are not racist, but as mentioned by Fogg-Davis 1970) “colorblind defenders of TRA focus narrowly on the racial discrimination of public adoption agencies, ignoring the racial discrimination of adopters when their selection of a child is based on his or her racial classification.”

For example, in the movie *The Blind Side* (2004), Sandra Bullock plays a role of a kind and loving person who adopted a black child, and was able to lift him up from the ground, protect him from those who hurt him and give him an education that he would probably not have a chance at. Although this movie is based on a true story, it portrays the idea how the white parent comes into the life of the black child and changes their life drastically for the better. However, what would the other story look like? What if we had the black parents to be highly represented in the adoption of white children? What would the situation look like; will those parents also be portrayed as the family that changed the life of the children for the better? One should not take color blind as an approach to race, rather, we should be conscious that there are differences between the each race and we should learn to live with them and not pretend that they don't exist. Howe (2008) states, “To deny the reality that continuing racial hostilities and inequalities abound in our society because of a belief that society is “color blind” is irresponsible and unethical.”

Finally, in the fourth category, the women who fell in this category were aware of the situations of privilege and oppression that exist. At the same time, they were not trying to erase those differences. The characteristics that distinguished these women

from other women in this study were their willingness to struggle with race. In my opinion, this is the way that racial relations should be heading towards. One cannot hide the obvious; unfortunately, race plays a huge role in the life of many people and in the life of the children that are adopted transracially. Even though one tries to be color blind about the issue, one cannot hide from it, it will always be present. As Jennings (2006) states, in a study that was conducted by Feagin and Vera (2002), on antiracist Whites, they found that antiracist Whites seek out interactions with people of color, and while admitting that it is difficult to fully comprehend the Black experience, they strive to understand how Blacks experience a racist society.

Does Transracial Adoption work?

We have looked at why people decide to adopt transracially or in some instances decide not too and how they feel about the issue. On the other hand, if we take a look at the adoptees and what they have to say about their experiences as a transracially adopted children, many of them have had positive experiences. In a study conducted by Simon, on Korean children that were adopted by white families, Simon found that, nearly all of the adoptive parents (95%) said they “would do it again,” and 90% said they would recommend adoption to other families. More than 85% of the adoptees said they considered themselves either “very close” or “fairly close” to their adoptive mothers, and 76% said the same of their adoptive fathers. Seven in eight adoptees (87%) said that they would urge social workers and adoption agencies to place Korean children in white homes; only 9% agreed with the statement, “Whites simply can’t

understand what it means to be Asian.” Although, the outcomes seem positive, there were many Korean adoptees who felt that they did not fit in because they did not pass as “White” and that they felt many internal tensions (Fisher, 2003). In another study monitored by Meier (1999), of 23 adult (ages 19–35) Korean-American adoptees living in Minneapolis-St. Paul, he found that:

The most recurrent theme expressed in interviews was “not fitting in” and not feeling “a sense of home either in the U.S. or Korea.” This feeling was particularly common in adolescence. One adoptee stated, “I hated being Korean because I was different... I tried as much as I possibly could to convince myself that I wasn’t Korean.” Even in young adulthood many of Meier’s interviewees still felt that they had a “double consciousness.” One interviewee stated, “In America I’m not accepted because I’m not white, and in Korea I’m not accepted because I’m adopted (Fisher, 2003).

As can be seen, many of the adoptees were happy to be welcomed into another family; however, there were struggles that they were faced with in the process. They were already dealing with an adoption, which is not an easy situation and on top of that they had to deal with the fact that they were adopted from parents of a race different than theirs. Even though they were raised in a white community, they still felt that they could not fit in because they knew that they were different and a lot of times they were not accepted. Sadly, this situation is not only relevant to Asian adoptees but it also applies to the other adoptees that are adopted transracially or from inter-country boundaries.

Those same adoptees stated that their views of themselves and their “Asianness,” and others’ views of them, had undergone a “critical developmental shift” as they left adolescence and became independent adults, particularly when they left home to go to college.” As one of them stated, “For the first time, when I went off to

college, I felt as though I were in a minority, because I wasn't with my white parents." This situation shows that no matter who you have been raised with, those racial discriminations will always follow them.

Yet, in a longitudinal study (206- families which focused on black and Korean children adopted by white parents) that was run by Simon from 1971 to 1991, she found that children that were adopted transracially were happy with their families. "Simon found that children adopted by parents of another race were happy with their families, saw their adoptive parents as their own parents and grew up just as well-adjusted as their non-adopted siblings. In general, the participants had no identity issues as they entered adulthood" (Woolf, 2006). However, Wolf (2006) also found that "love is not enough" but that it is important that adoptive parents integrate the child's heritage in their life. She states that those positive results were due in large part to the parents' efforts to integrate the child's heritage into family life. "This started with discussing race at home, displaying a photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr., or cooking Korean food, and often went as far as joining a black church or moving to an ethnically diverse neighborhood. Simon found that this was the single most important type of adjustment a family could—and should—make" (Woolf, 2006). You can love the child and want and have the best intentions toward him/her, but if their race is not taken into account, things can get challenging. For this reason, the color blind approach can play against those who adopt with the color blind mentality. Since race differences are so prevalent in

this country, not taken it into account when you have adopted a child it's like avoiding reality, and tends to reproduce inequality.

As mentioned by Simon, it is important to take race into account when adopting a child transracially because we live in a society whether we agree with it or not, racism still occurs. If one is considering adopting a child transracially once has to be willing to make changes to accommodate the child's needs so that he/she can have a sense of heritage. However, it is not just the child's heritage that parents need to take into account but also their sense of being. As Mohanty states, "Ethnic and racial socialization has been identified as important to the mental health and ethnic identity development of adopted children" According to Mohanty, Ethnic and racial socialization has been defined in a variety of ways; however, the core element of this concept involves the manner in which minority parents help their children to feel proud about their ethnic/racial identity and prepare them to be aware of discrimination and prejudice. People opposing transracial adoption argue that white parent cannot ethnically and racially socialize children because they have not experienced discrimination. Many of these parents do not understand what it feels like to be looked down upon, or to be rejected from a job because of their skin color. They don't understand why everybody can't just get along and forget about the past! Children need to know what their history is so that they can understand why things are the way they currently are.

What leads children into the foster care system?

One thing that should be taken into account whether one is in favor or against transracial adoption, is that transracial adoption is an approach to solve a problem. As Howes (2008) states, "I view TRA as "a classic example of embracing and promoting a solution without accurately defining the problem" that affirms the validity of the maxim, "Once an indivisible problem is divided, nothing effective can be done about it." The problem here is not whether it is right or wrong for white people to adopt Black children, the problem is why African American children are highly represented in the foster care system in comparison to white children. What is it that is pushing children into the foster care system? It cannot be blamed to lack of parenting skills of African Americans parents because that would be like saying that they are not capable of rearing children. There are stronger forces that are pulling black children into adoption, forces that many people are unwilling to explore. Those forces, such as poverty, discrimination, lack of healthcare, to mention a few, are the ones that need to be addressed order to bring about change in the lives of the black children that are in the foster system. As Howes (2008) states,

To break the cycle of poverty and dysfunction that is passed from generation to generation, we need to find more meaningful solutions than just foster care and adoption, which seem to be metaphorically like building a hospital at the bottom of the cliff instead of precautions at the top of the cliff. What is needed? Simply, (1) employment opportunities that pay enough to meet a family's basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter; (2) housing that is affordable and in neighborhoods with a range of basic social programs to support parents and families in rearing their children; and (3) educational systems that connect with youngsters through love and respect and motivate them to develop a sustained love of learning with equal emphasis on the arts, humanities, and sciences, so that once grown, they can be contributors to society (Howes, 2008).

Just as Howes, states, there are more things that need to be done, other than placing children in foster care system that is not working, where children are more likely to end in the situation that they parents are. The problem has to be taken to its roots, instead of trying to solve the consequences of the problem. Once children are taken away from their family, they are denied to be part of a family and a culture. One that they are probably not going to be a part of once they are place with another family, especially if they are of different race. Children end up having to give up their heritage to follow that of some strangers.

Also, according to the NABSW there are other circumstances that negatively affected the status of African American children in the child welfare system. First, experience with the child welfare system did not demonstrate a commitment to the preservation of African American families (Hollingsworth, 1999). For example, Children frequently were removed from their families because of neglect. "Although neglect has been shown to be associated with poverty, the economic condition of these families that may have given rise to the neglect of children seldom was addressed." Many parents have to work day and night to be able to bring money home so that they can provide for their family. However, if families were to be provided with employment that paid enough to meets the basic needs, many parents would not be forced to work two jobs and sometimes even three. As a consequence, many parents are not able to spend more time with their children.

The number one reason why many children are taken away from their families is due to negligence. According to Szilagyi (2007), "Most children in foster care are from poor families. About 70% of the children in foster care are put there by child protective services because the child has been abused or neglected." What is considered child neglect? According to federal law (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008), child neglect is defined as the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. The basic needs can include, physical (which includes, failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision), medical (failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment), educational (failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs), and emotionally (inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs). Yet, how can these parents provide their children with the basic needs when the people that are supposed to help them are giving them their back. Those same people keep cutting funds and taking away the opportunity to have access to those basic needs for the children. It is not entirely the parents' lack of care for the children that are causing the negligence, other factors are included. Many parents work day and night to be able to provide for something that more often than not, they do not have control off. This situation perpetuates the child abuse and the removal of the child into a system that further sets them behind. Children have to further have to wait until somebody can adopt them or when they can be placed back with their parents.

Not only are children being removed from their parents for reason that many times are not under their control. At the same time, agencies fail to recruit more

prospective adoptive parents, which have created a system that does not work. For example, According to Craig (1995), the reason for why there are so many children waiting for adoption is not because of lack of prospective parents but is due to the existing adoption system. As she states, the adoption system is “a public funding scheme that rewards and extends poor-quality foster care; an anti- adoption bias that creates numerous legal and regulatory barriers; and a culture of victimization that places the whims of irresponsible parents above the well-being of their children. Parents are blamed for not being able to care for their children and as a consequence they are seen as unsuitable parents. Craig (1995) further states that, “The problem with foster care is not the level of government spending; it is the structure of that spending. The funding system gives child-welfare bureaucracies incentives to keep even free-to-be-adopted kids in state care. State-social-service agencies are neither rewarded for helping children find adoptive homes nor penalized for failing to do so in a reasonable amount of time. There is no financial incentive to recruit adoptive families. And as more children enter the system, so does the tax money to support them in substitute care. “

Conclusion

Adoption is a serious step that should be taken as so, especially when it deals with race differences. Unfortunately, many people decide on what type of adoption they are going through based on the type of relations or experiences they have had with other races as Jennings (2006) stated. Due to those experiences there are people that might want to stay away from adopting transracially. There are people who do decide for transracial adoption, however, they tend to do it in a colorblind approach and fail to recognize the importance that race plays in the lives of many of those children. I feel that the colorblind approach should not be the way transracial adoption should be approached. First, we cannot hide the fact that we are different and unfortunately, our

color of skin does influence our experiences. Also, if transracial adoption is taken in colorblind approach, children are going to have to give up from whom they came to adjust to groups' point of view, and most likely, that is going to be that of the white people.

Conversely, there are people that are aware of the disadvantages that many people of color are faced with. These people adopt racially conscious and are willing work with those difficulties and incorporate the heritage of those children into their daily life so that they won't have a hard time adjusting to the change. At the same time, these children can acquire a sense of belonging. Racially conscious is the way child adoption should be encouraged. As we have seen, there are many factors that push children of color to the foster care system where race place a huge role. And those same issues that pushed them there once can also play a role later on in their future because of their skin color. Being able to address those issues early on in the life of the child can make a difference in their life, because they are able to understand why they are in the situation that they currently are.

At the same time, there needs to be change in the way that social workers view transracial adoption. As Hollingsworth (1999) states, social work scholars should continue to examine scientifically the questions that have been set forth regarding transracial adoption. "Theory building and empirical falsification continue to be the standards that are used by scholars to examine research questions. This work should be conducted from an African-centered ideological perspective where the experiences of

African American are examined. Hollingsworth also suggested that social workers should become familiar with theories that have already been developed about African American life and culture and with research that has been conducted with regard to questions of racial identity and self-esteem effects of transracial adoption. Third, Hollingsworth states that the social workers should be familiar with the realities faced by African American children and families in the child welfare system. Finally, social workers should advocate for public policies and agency practices that recognize the African American family as a unique cultural group, offering a valuable socialization experience for African American children. To better serve the children, it is crucial that social workers are aware of the experiences that children go through. Being aware to those experiences can help social workers make better decision with regards of where children should be placed.

Finally, it is important to realize that many adoptions are based on the idea of “loving parent/s who want to give a child that love that they did not receive from their biological parents. However, one must not forget about the most important thing that should be taken into account when it comes to adoption—the well being of the children. Is transracial adoption well with the child? Adults dealing with adoption often times forget about the needs of children and focus on what they want—in their ideal to have a child. Some adoptive parents might want a child that is from a different race; reasoning that they are giving the child a better life. However, they don’t ask if that is what is going to be best for children. As Howes (2008) mentions, “In any discussion of

adoption,... we must not lose sight of its primary goal: to provide a permanent, secure, loving home for a child whose birth parents are unable or unwilling to meet the child's needs. Throughout... we must never cease to ask the basic question: "Is it well with the child?"

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