Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection   SIT Study Abroad

Spring 2015

Transracial Adoption in Cape Town, South Africa: The Perspectives of Black Young Adults

Emma Bilodeau
SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection

Part of the African Studies Commons, Community-Based Research Commons, Family, Life Course, and Society Commons, Race and Ethnicity Commons, and the Sociology of Culture Commons

Transracial Adoption in Cape Town, South Africa: The Perspectives of Black Young Adults

Emma Bilodeau
Academic Director: Stewart Chirova
Advisor: Shifra Jacobson

Bates College
Sociology

<u>Abstract</u>

This independent research project focuses on transracial adoption in Cape Town, South Africa. Specifically, this project tries to fill in the gaps of past research by providing how black young adults perceive white adoptive parents adopting black children in Cape Town. Past research has not focused solely on the perspectives of blacks. Therefore, this research will be increasing the literature around transracial adoption in Cape Town and in South Africa.

Since this form of adoption was only made legal in 1991, it is an extremely relevant issue in this country particularly since the minority race (whites) is adopting the majority race (blacks). This research is useful to South Africa and its people because increasing the knowledge of each races' opinions will help for a healthy and successful transracial adoption discussion to happen and hopefully improve transracial adoption. From the findings, it is thought that black young adults currently in the Cape Town area have positive opinions towards whites adopting and raising black children. Furthermore, while these participants perceived transracial adoption as a positive form of adoption, they also expressed the importance of adoptive parents being culturally conscious when raising their adopted children.

Dedication

This research project is dedicated to my younger siblings, Audrey and Chase, who have unknowingly impacted my life in immeasurable ways, and to my parents, who put their all into raising us with a passion for the world, a strong sense of individuality, and love of difference.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Table of Contents

Introduction

Transracial adoption in South Africa is a fairly recent phenomenon that is currently growing in popularity and in controversy. Having only been officially legalized in 1991, this type of adoption has very little research done on it and even fewer studies into the opinions and perceptions surrounding it. Two main studies have been done in South Africa on transracial adoption and both were based in Cape Town. Since neither of these studies focused solely on the black South African perspective, it is important to find out what the black perspective is.

Statement of Intent

This project focused on transracial adoption in Cape Town, South Africa. Transracial adoption in this instance primarily looked at the adoption of black children by white adoptive parents. Specifically, this study looked at the perspectives of black young adults in Cape Town on transracial adoption through interviews. These interviewees were found in various parts of Cape Town, and each interviewee had a unique and different background. The reason for interviewing black young adults is due to the lack of research into the perspectives of blacks. Other studies have been done looking into the opinions of white adoptive parents and students of varying races in a class, which led to choosing black young adults, preferably between the ages of 18 and 25. This study was done under the guidance of Shifra, who not only has a lot of knowledge on this topic but has also been a part of transracial adoption in Cape Town.

Literature Review

Transracial Adoption in the United States Context

Since gaining numbers in the 1960's, transracial adoption has been discussed in terms of its growing popularity and growing controversy. These discussions have primarily focused on the question: What is best for the child? Two main policies surfaced in United States law to answer this question. The first, a race matching policy, sought to match adoptive parents to children of the same race, which would be the "natural" occurrence in biological families and thus provide the child with a like-culture. However, following the Civil Rights Movement, studies found that there weren't enough minority families to adopt the minority children in need of homes and, because of this, minority children were being left in foster care and without the proper maternal needs being met. Even so, the National Association for Black Social Workers (NABSW) vehemently argued against transracial adoption, stating that it essentially performs cultural genocide (or racial suicide) by placing minority children in homes that do not share their culture and therefore the children will assimilate to the culture of their adoptive parents. To appease both sides, some states began instituting laws that minority children be held for a certain period of time to make sure there were no suitable same-race families to adopt them before allowing transracial adoption to occur. Today, most state laws allow transracial adoption. However, the debate over what is best for the child still remains. (Perez, 1998)

Significant amounts of literature discuss color-blind adoption policies. Color-blind individualism is a discourse within adoption policy that bonds with the promotion of transracial and transnational adoption in an attempt to solve poverty and family disruptions by viewing race as a factor that shouldn't be

considered in everyday life (Smith et al., 2011, Quiroz, 2007). Using a color-blind method of dealing with adoption policy and the child welfare system has created a "racist system where families are monitored, regulated, and punished for being poor and black" (Quiroz, 2007). While some advocate for color-conscious adoption policy that requires placing African-American children with same-race families believe that color-blind adoption essentially performs racial suicide, or the erasing of a race's culture by placing children with different-race parents, it is known that a color-blind policy in which children are placed in a home regardless of race, provides for faster adoption and less chance that a black child will spend their childhood years in foster care waiting to be adopted by a black family (Quiroz, 2007).

Legal History in South Africa

Adoption in South Africa was legally recognized in 1923 as part of the Adoption of Children's Act. However, this Act did not recognize transracial adoption, due to transracial adoption not occurring because of the strong racial attitudes and segregation at that time (Gishen, 1996). By 1960, transracial adoption was legally prohibited, with laws saying, "a child shall not be placed in or transferred to the custody of any person whose classification in terms of the Population Registration Act is not the same as that of the child, except where such a person is the parent or guardian of that child" (Gishen, 1996). This meant that children could not be placed with a person(s) who was registered as a different race than that of the child. In 1991, this law was revised under the Children's Act, which read, "determination of custody of children – regard shall be had to the religious and cultural background of the child concerned and of his parents as against that of the person in or to whose custody he is to be placed or

transferred" (Gishen, 1996). The addition of religion and culture in consideration to the qualification of adoptive parents subtly suggests that race-matching is preferred but is not legally mandated. Today, anyone over the age of eighteen can adopt given their approval as fit to raise a child, and can adopt regardless of their employment status, marital status, financial status, sexual orientation, and HIV status (Gerrand, 2015).

As a result of the growing number of black and coloured children up for adoption and an overwhelmingly large portion of adoptive parents being white, legalization of transracial adoption was essentially necessary for South Africa. The Johannesburg Child Welfare Society used this detail as one point of argument in 1991 as to why transracial adoption needed to be made legal, along with their second argument that children who are placed in homes at a young age, regardless of race, religion, and culture, tend to receive strong attachment to their family, which is found to correlate with a healthy and strong upbringing (Gerrand, 2015). However, there were many who disagreed that a child of a different race than their parents could grow up emotionally healthy. A 1979 study done in Britain compared 30 transracially adopted children's adjustments to 30 in-racially adopted children's adjustments and found little to no difference between the two, but doubts still remained (Gerrand, 2015). These doubts focused mainly around three possible consequences of transracial adoption: identity crisis for child, racial prejudice from adoptive parents, and the child not being able to affiliate with their adoptive parent's racial group nor their own racial group (Gerrand, 2015). These are consequences that are still being argued in recent times in South Africa, as well as, Britain and the United States of America.

Child Abandonment

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 has defined child abandonment in South Africa as being "a child who has obviously been deserted by the parent, guardian or care-giver, or who has, for no apparent reason, had no contact with the parent, guardian, or care-giver for the period of at least three months" (Blackie, 2014). There are two types of abandonment, safe and unsafe. Safe abandonment refers to a child being left at a hospital or children's home. An unsafe abandonment is when the child is left in the streets or other life-threatening places. If a parent or caregiver is found of unsafely abandoning a child they can be arrested for concealment of birth or even attempted murder. After a child is abandoned they are given a social worker and a foster home to temporarily stay in while their social worker attempts to find their biological mother, father, or relatives. If no one is found they will be considered for adoption. In the past 5 years, child abandonment has been rising in South Africa and approximately 5% of children are either adopted, living in foster care or a child headed household, or living on the streets. (Blackie, 2014).

Adoption in the Black South African Context

There has been recent discussion and research around the issue of culture's relation to adoption in South Africa. Gerrand (2015) discusses that because so many children up for adoption are black, black citizens should be a targeted group to adopt these children, but adoption would have to correspond with black's cultural norms, values, expectancies, and values ('culturally sensitive'). This means that adoption would need to be legally noticed in the way that blacks practice cultural and ancestral belief systems. In other words, black citizens would rather have a joint adoption where the child is raised by both the

adoptive parent and the biological family to maintain the child's clan name and cultural practices. Gerrand (2015) goes on to explain that it may be useful to center a culturally sensitive adoption policy on the concept of Ubuntu, the African ideology that values humanity. Joint adoption could have the potential to be beneficial for South Africa because it would "ensure a stronger and committed network of primary caregivers to meet the best interests of the adoptable child" (Gerrand, 2015). Another aspect of black South Africans adopting is an age issue. Many blacks who are unable to have children end up raising the child of a relative. This unofficial adoption is generally not fulfilling for the parents raising the child, but by the time the child has grown and they are able to go through the adoption process for another child, they could be 50-years-old (Gerrand, 2015). Because of this, many adoption agencies in South Africa have extended their age-restriction up to 55-years-old to allow for more black South Africans to adopt children (Gerrand, 2015).

Adoptive Parent's Attitudes

A 1996 study looked at the impact that transracial adoption has on South African families. By finding a purposive/snowball sample and conducting surveys, the researcher found that parents found transracial adoption to have been positive and successful (Gishen, 1996). Adoptive parents also recognized the importance of raising their children with a sense of racial and ethnic identity, even though most parents in this study were initially hoping to adopt a child of the same race, and those who didn't planned to adopt a child of a different race for humanitarian reasons (Gishen, 1996). Furthermore, 65% of parents who took this survey recognized the importance in raising their child in a mixed neighborhood, sending them to a mixed school, providing role models of the

same race, and socializing their children with others of their children's same race (Gishen, 1996). However, the researcher felt that transracial adoption needed some aid in terms of education for the parents and for the community in terms of ecological, friendship, religious, recreational, and ethical systems (Gishen, 1996). This was considered necessary because of the psychologically ingrained thought-processes that apartheid has left on the people of South Africa (Gishen, 1996).

South African Student's Views

Given that the majority of criticism against transracial adoption focuses on the possible consequence of the adopted child losing their culture, it is interesting to note the results from a study that was done on the views transracial adoption receives from students at the University of Western Cape, Cape Town. A survey was given to 78 students, only 12 of whom are white, in an introductory psychology course.

The results of the survey showed that 87% of the students disagreed with the notion that black children should only be raised by black people, while 96% of the students believed that black children being raised by white people would not lose their culture, a popular belief among critics (Moos, 2007). Furthermore, 88% of the students thought that transracial adoption could improve racial and cultural tolerance in South Africa (Moos, 2007). These results seem to align with the results from the transracial adoptive parents study, which showed that adoptive parents do understand the importance of their child's culture and socializing them to that culture through people, school, neighborhood, etc..

Recent Contextual Information

Recent articles have been published in South Africa in the past year about transracial adoption and its various issues. Two articles in particular stood out as

popular and particularly relevant. *Transracial Adoption: Loving Gift or Theft of Culture* and *Adoption and Race: We Unpack the Issues* both assert issues of race in adoption as it relates to culture and the consequences that transracial adoption may have on the children being adopted. Race in adoption was seen as something that should be taken into consideration as it resembles a "natural family" (Ntongana, 2014) to have child and parent as same-race. However, the issue still remains that this race-matching system of adoption just isn't logical for the adoption system in South Africa. Currently, there are 520 children waiting to be adopted and of these children only 21 are non-black (Brown, 2014). On the other side, 351 families are waiting to adopt, with 12 of them being black, 215 white, 72 Indian, and 50 coloured, and of these families only 70 are willing to adopt a black child.

However, the most controversial issue isn't the drastic numbers but rather the question: "Can white people raise black kids?" A mother of adopted children in Brown's (2014) article questioned the need for culture and race to be taken into consideration, "Does it matter what language and culture a child has as long as they have a loving family?" This is exactly the issue that is being disapproved of. In Ntongana's (2014) article, Dr. Mndende of UCT suggested that black children adopted by white parents lost touch with their culture and identity, and that "We shouldn't only look at finance, education and the fact that they have a roof over their heads. We should look at the growth of the child as a whole in terms of their identity."

Scholars in the United States have also studied this issue of race and identity in transracial adoption. These scholars have focused primarily on childrearing techniques and defined childrearing as having two possible methods,

color-blind childrearing or color-conscious childrearing. Colorblind childrearing refers to parents who raise their adopted minority children as they would white children, with little attention given to their children's race (Smith et al., 2011). Interestingly, many parents also express adoption as God's plan and use religion to deal with racial issues. Religious beliefs can sometimes conflict with aspects of cultural competence, making their childrearing more color-blind (Crolley-Simic and Vonk, 2010). Colorblind childrearing essentially does not bring attention to race and does not bring awareness to the child's identity as a black person; a consequence advocates of color-conscious policy think can be avoided by same-race adoption (Smith et al., 2011 and Quiroz, 2007). Instead of colorblind childrearing, which teaches children to assimilate into mainstream white culture, a more racially aware color-conscious approach may provide the child with a more solidified identity (Smith et al., 2011). White parents of different-race children in a color-conscious approach teach their children what Smith et al. (2011) calls "race lessons." These lessons focus on celebrating diversity, educating other white people, how to get along with whites, and black culture. Another aspect of these lessons is cultural socialization. This process instills a sense of cultural identity by exposing the children to images of same-race people and even moving children to schools with more diversity, as well as teaching them race lessons (Seligmann, 2013 and Smith, 2011). Color-conscious childrearing can allow parents themselves to grow in their thoughts on race and push racial boundaries by adopting "interracial convergence" (Maillard and McDonald, 2008). "Biologically they represent the traditional conception of white but their internal view of their own identity and privileges may be placed somewhere on the transformative continuum of interracial convergence. They

Bilodeau 9

may not perform completely as white...Some of these whites may choose to challenge the perceptions imposed by others about their expected performance of a white identity" (Maillard and McDonald, 2008). These color-conscious approaches are examples of how color-blind policies that allow a parent of any race adopt a child of any race can still raise their child without inflicting a forced racial and cultural assimilation (Quiroz, 2007 and Sweeney, 2013).

Methodology

This research was conducted qualitatively by doing interviews. Five interviews were conducted over the course of two weeks. The sample was convenient, purposive, and a snowball sample. All participants were older than 18 years of age and signed their consent to being interviewed, in person or electronically, and knew that they could stop answering questions at any time, and that the interview will remain confidential and it will maintain their anonymity.

Since this study was conducted with participants close in age to myself, the power levels were fairly even as I would like this to be a proactive discussion around their opinions of transracial adoption rather than an interrogation. However, being a white person asking black people about their perspective I was wary of being thought of as intrusive. I also made it known how my own experience with transracial adoption has led me to want to do this study, and gave my opinions if they wished to hear them. This research is similar to two previous projects I performed in the United States, which focused primarily on the ways in which white adoptive parents chose to raise their black adopted children (color conscious vs. color-blind) and how their opinions on the legal process of adoption

aligns with how they are raising their children. This study proved to have findings that intrigue me, and it will turn into a comparative analysis study for my Senior Thesis. Since this will not put any of my interviewees at risk, there are no ethical concerns beyond keeping confidentiality and maintaining a healthy interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Self-Reflexivity

My interest in this field of study stems directly from my siblings being transracially adopted by my parents while I was growing up. Because of this close and personal connection with transracial adoption, I understand that I may have strong feelings and bias. However, I encourage participants to be as open as they are willing and not hold back in fear of offending me, because even though my siblings are a product of transracial adoption, I have a lot of criticisms towards this form of adoption and of course a lot of positive feelings.

Sample

The sample this study worked with was a sample of five people in the Cape Town area. These people are all black African. All participants are between 18-years-old and 25-years-old. Because of Cape Town's multicultural background, participants are very different from each other in ethnicity, country of origin, and residence, but all have been living in Cape Town for at least two years. Two participants are from outside of South Africa, Kenya and Cameroon, and the other three participants are from South Africa, but one is Xhosa and the other two are Zulu. These participants were found as a result of a convenient sample of people who I know, and a snowball sample resulting from names I was given from some of the participants.

Ethics

The clearance gained for this research was granted by the Local Review Board at SIT. All participants have given me consent to interview them by signing a consent form, agreeing to the interview and asking for anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were also allowed to opt out at any point if they felt uncomfortable.

Significance of Study

Transracial adoption is a phenomenon that is growing globally. With its growth, transracial adoption has spurred controversy around what is best for the child when they are raised by a family of a different color. This controversy is apparent in South Africa, where a high amount of orphaned black children and low number of black adoptive families forces the country to place black children with non-black families. Currently, there are 520 children waiting to be adopted and of these children only 21 are non-black (Brown, 2014). On the other side, 351 families are waiting to adopt, with 12 of them being black, 215 white, 72 Indian, and 50 coloured, and of these families only 70 are willing to adopt a black child. Due to the necessity of transracial adoption, it is important to have discussion and explore how those who transracially adopt can best raise their children in a way that promotes healthy identity growth. Furthermore, because the majority of children being adopted are black, it is important to hear what the black community has to say regarding this issue and their perspectives on the issue, because it is beneficial for all. Studying this raises understanding of transracial adoption and the perspectives of all racial groups.

Research Findings

After completing five interviews (Appendix A) around the question, "how do black young adults perceive transracial adoption," five main themes emerged, which gave lens into the perceptions that black young adults in the Cape Town area have about transracial adoption. From these themes it became clear that black young adults in Cape Town have generally positive perceptions towards transracial adoption, and were primarily concerned with the adopted child being placed in a home that could financially support it and raise it in a culturally-conscious way.

Love or Money?

An important aspect of this study was assessing what black young adults think, very generally, about what qualifications adoptive parents need in order to adopt. Every participant, except for one, answered that the adoptive parents need to be financially stable enough to adopt. One interviewee, Sophia, stated that the adoptive parents need "enough money to take care of the kids and the ability to love the kids." Mike, another interviewee, was the only participant who didn't mention money but instead focused on adoptive parents needing love and understanding to qualify. Two of the other interviewees, Jonah and Chris, focused more on the logistics of adoption. Chris answered that "factors such as the parents age, their ability to provide for the child's basic needs, and a clear understanding of the intentions the parents have for the child they will be adopting and raising." Similarly, Jonah described adoptive parents qualifications as being "financially stable, they should have the right mental state, and they should have a good reason to adopt the kid," later adding that a full background check should also be performed. Interestingly, one interviewee, Harrison, who

comes from West Africa, strongly stated that the parents should be financially able to raise the child primarily so that the child does not go hungry. He explained that birth parents often "give up babies because they can't afford them so the adoptive parents should be able to [afford them]…so they don't go hungry."

Race, Culture, and Religion: Dependent Upon Age

Another theme that arose from the interviews was around the question of how much importance should be given to the race, culture, and religion of child and adoptive parents when matching the two. This answer was divided among the interviewees, with all participants but two viewing race, culture, and religion as variables that don't need to be considered when matching parents to a child, but only if the child is a baby. Jonah and Mike were the interviewees that didn't see this as a necessary aspect of the matching process, Jonah said, "as long as they are offering a place that's all that matters." Mike answered that "No, I don't think it matters. If the parents love the baby then that is enough." However, Chris, Sophia, and Harrison all viewed age of the child as an important factor. Chris explained that "if the parents hold feelings of love and good intentions for themselves and the child then that should be considered first before race, culture, and religion. But, depending on the age of the child then I feel race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration as it will be more difficult for an older child to adopt his or her new parent's culture and religion." Similarly, Sophia explained a conflicting response, "Yes [I think it has importance] and no. Yes, because maybe if the child is white they will feel more comfortable with a white family. No, because what if the child doesn't connect with their birth parent's religion for instance? Then it just is what it is." Like Sophia and Chris, Harrison

explained a similar reasoning behind age being a variable that changes the importance of race, culture, and religion when matching parents to a child, however, he also added that as a man from West Africa, he had to adapt to life in Cape Town and the culture here when he came, so, a child can "do that too" with a family.

Racial Comfort Zone

While every participant said that white people are capable of raising an adopted black child, all interviewees but one said that they felt a black child would be more comfortable with a black family and a white child would be more comfortable in a white family. Mike said that black children might feel more comfortable in a black home because as black people, they will all share similar roots. Jonah explained that, "if they get adopted by a black family then they already feel at home. For a white family it will be uncomfortable if they [the child] are older, but even if they are adopted as babies they will still have questions when they are older." Sophia made a similar comment, "You won't feel different in terms of race if a black child is with a black family." Chris asserted that when there is race-matching in the adoption process that the child will grow up in a "somewhat 'normal' way." He said:

> "If an African family adopts an African child the child will grow up in a somewhat 'normal' way. And if a Caucasian family adopts a Caucasian child, then they will also grow up in a somewhat 'normal' way. But say an African family adopts a Caucasian child and a Caucasian family adopts an African child, then the child and family could be subject to facing various societal stigmas but also various compliments and positive remarks maybe on how they chose to satisfy their need of raising a child regardless of the race of the child. The benefit is that the adopted child has a chance to have a better future. But also I feel in South Africa if an African is adopted into a Caucasian family or vice versa their experience of life is different from kids who are in same race families."

Different from the other interviewees, Harrison felt that race didn't matter and said, "the main thing is that if the family can take care of the child. It's not all about race."

Color Shouldn't Matter…

Although most of the participants felt that black children would fair more comfortably in a "natural" family environment if placed with a black family, three of the five participants felt that white adoptive parents should not go out of their way to raise their adopted children in a race conscious way. In other words, three of the interviewees felt that white parents don't need to raise black children by intentionally raising them as a "black child" but rather as a "child." Sophia and Jonah both made similar comments about the lack of importance race has when choosing how to raise an adopted child. Sophia said, "they should raise them how they would raise children of the same race because we should be at a state where we don't care about color and just accept," while Jonah explained that "they should be normal parents and not try to force something, but they [the child] should know that they are black but that they aren't different from anyone else." Even though Jonah acknowledged that the child should be aware of their blackness, which is an inevitable finding regardless of parenting, he also maintained that they shouldn't try to "force" something and remain "normal." On a similar path, Harrison bluntly explained that "black is just a color, there is no difference," and continued by saying:

> "It would be good [for whites to raise black children]. I feel like white people are more advanced so putting black people in that space makes blacks better, not that blacks don't have anything but it can be better for them, plus it means the world is changing where colors won't matter."

Mike, however, did mention that white parents should educate their children about their race.

…But Culture Does Matter

The final theme that emerged from these interviews was elicited from the last question of the interview: In what ways can a white family raise a black child with a sense of their individual culture (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.)? Responses to this question were all very similar, with interviewees generally thinking that culture should be something parents learn about and introduce to their adopted child. Interestingly, this received very different responses than the question of how parents can raise their adopted children in terms of their race. Only two interviewees, Chris and Mike, responded to both questions, how parents can raise their children in terms of race and in terms of culture, the same way. Chris responded, "Depending on the child's original culture I think parents can try and make an effort to learn about the culture the child belongs to and then introduce this culture to the child." This was different from the other participants who all agreed that race shouldn't matter. However, these three provided very similar answers to Chris and Mike in relation to culture. Jonah explained that "the parents should tell them and teach them a little about their culture because it would be good, everyone wants to know where they come from." Similarly, Sophia said, "in this situation they…should let their child know about where they are from and who they are and even learn the language a bit because that's where they originate." Mike also said that white parents should take the time to educate their adopted children about their roots and cultural identity. Finally, Harrison answered the question a little differently. Although he found culture to be important, his view of how a child gets culture was more fluid, "A child below

Bilodeau 17

one year has no culture, so, it can have any culture. But, if it is older and has been raised in a culture then it needs that."

Discussion/Analysis

This study was done in order to answer the question: What are black young adult's perceptions of transracial adoption? It was initially theorized that perceptions might be negative, since transracial adoption is seen as controversial, especially in South Africa, where it was only made legal in 1991. However, findings show that black young adults in Cape Town generally perceive transracial adoption as positive, and while this sample did not emphasize the need to raise children color consciously, they did find importance in raising the child culturally-conscious. All participants maintained that they feel white people are capable of raising black children, and that it is not a deficit to the child. This finding was consistent with Moos (2007) study, which found that 87% of the students in a class at the University of Western Cape disagreed with the notion that black children should only be raised by black people, while 96% of the students believed that black children being raised by white people would not lose their culture.

Culture and Financial Stability: Both Important

While the findings showed that black young adults tend to not consider race, culture, and religion as important factors when matching a child with a family, all interviewees expressed importance in making sure an adopted child knows who he or she is in relation to their biological parent's culture. This is supportive of Dr. Mndende's thoughts on transracial adoption, which emphasize the importance of culture and identity in a child's life over the need for a financially stable adoptive family (Ntongana, 2014). However, this is also where

the findings do not support Dr. Mndende, because the participants not only thought it important to teach the child their culture, but also to provide them with a financially stable home, because as one interviewee explained, "birth parents often give up babies because they can't afford them so the adoptive parents should be able to…so they don't go hungry."

Culture vs. Race

Participants also gave very interesting responses to the questions that focused on how white parents should raise their adopted child in terms of race, and then in terms of culture. While three of the five interviewees said that white parents shouldn't go out of their way to raise their black child differently than they would a white child, all participants said that adoptive parents should make the effort to learn about the culture their adopted child comes from and then introduce that culture to their child via aspects of the culture like language. It was somewhat surprising that color was not highlighted as an important aspect of a child's being, but rather their culture was. Culture was seen as where a child originates from; who they are, where they come from, and an aspect that forms their "roots." Culture was also discussed in such a way that made it sound as if culture was something apart from race. In the United States, it is often understood that race goes hand in hand with culture, but with obvious variations among the various ethnicities within each race. Because of this and my understandings of this subject being from the United States context, it was striking to see a unanimous answer that culture should be an aspect of the child that adoptive parents make an effort to learn and to teach, but when it came to race only two interviewees thought that this was something parents should make an effort toward.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that black young adults perceive transracial adoption, specifically the adoption of black children by white parents, as a positive adoption option that provides children with stable homes. It was thought that the families should be loving and caring, but primarily financially able to raise a child. Furthermore, while the majority of participants found it unnecessary white adoptive parents raise their black children any different than they would a child of the same race, they all expressed the importance of raising the child with a sense of who they are as it pertains to their culture, not their race.

While this study served its purpose by answering the initial question of how young black adults perceive transracial adoption in Cape Town, South Africa, further research could be done to make this a stronger and more in-depth analysis of these perceptions and the reasoning behind them. This research could manifest itself in interviews by doing more than what was done here to create a larger sample, therefore increasing the reliability of these results. It could also manifest itself in more research being done surrounding the concept of race and culture and how black Africans view race and culture separately and comparatively. Finally, a study comparing cross-culturally the perceptions black young Americans have towards transracial adoption with these results could possibly show differences or similarities in perceptions, especially when it comes to childrearing.

Glossary of Terms

Transracial Adoption: (also referred to as interracial adoption) the act of placing a child of one racial or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another racial or ethnic group.

Colorblind Policy: laws pertaining to adoption that do not match child to parent on the basis of race, but rather with a disregard for race.

Color-conscious Policy: laws pertaining to adoption that match child to parent on the basis of race (race-matching). However, because this is unconstitutional, this can sometimes manifest itself as a "waiting period," where a child of color waits for a certain period of time and if no adoptive family of the same race is discovered, they are placed with a family of any race.

Colorblind Childrearing: a method of raising a child that does not bring attention to their race. Oftentimes parents will highlight that "we are all the same" or "color doesn't matter."

Color-Conscious Childrearing: a method of raising a child that does bring attention to race by having open discussion about the race of the child as well as showing positive images (books, shows, dolls) to the child. In this instance, color does matter.

References

Blackie, D. (2014). Sad, Bad, and Mad: Exploring Child Abandonment in South Africa. *University of Witwatersrand Dissertation*. 1-107.

Brown, R. (2014). Transracial Adoption: Loving Gift or Theft of Culture. *Mail & Guardian: Africa's Best Read.* Retrieved from: http://mg.co.za/article/2014-11-06-transracial-adoption-loving-gift-or-theft-of-culture

Crolley-Simic, J., Vonk, M. 2010. White International Transracial Adoptive Mothers' Reflections on Race. *Child & Family Social Work* (16), 169-178.

Gerrand, P. (2015). Developing a Culturally Relevant Adoption Model in South Africa: The Way Forward. *International Social Work, 58(1),* 55-62.

Gishen, D. (1996). Transracial Adoption in South Africa. *Rand Afrikaans University Thesis.* 1-130.

Maillard, K., McDonald, J. 2008. The Anatomy of Grey: A Theory of Interracial Convergence. *College of Law Faculty Scholarship.* (74).

Moos, A. (2007). Beliefs and Attitudes About Transracial Adoption Among a Sample of South African Students. *Social Behavior and Personality, 35(8),* 1115-1120.

Ntongana, T. (2014). Adoption and Race: We Unpack the Issues. *GroundUp.* Retrieved from: http://groundup.org.za/article/adoption-and-race-we-unpack-issues_2294

Perez, Amanda. 1998. Transracial Adoption and the Federal Adoption Subsidy. *Yale Law & Policy Review, Inc. 17 (1), 46.*

Quiroz, Pamela Anne. 2007. *Adoption in a Color-Blind Society.* Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Seligmann, Linda. 2013. *Broken Links, Enduring Ties: American Adoption Across Race, Class, and Nation.* California: Stanford University Press.

Smith, D., Jacobson, C., Juarez, B. 2011. *White Parents, Black Children: Experiencing Transracial Adoption.* Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Sweeney, Kathryn A. 2013. "Race-Conscious Adoption Choices, Multiraciality, and Color-Blind Racial Ideology." *Family Relations.* 42-57.

<center>**Appendix A**</center>

Jonah: Kenyan, 24, in Cape Town for 2 years.
-What do you think should qualify parents to be able to adopt a child?
> They should be financially stable, they should have the right mental state, and they should have a good reason why to adopt a kid. And a full background check should be done on the parents.

-Do you think race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration?
> No as long as they are offering a place for the child that's all that matters.

-Do you think white people can raise black children?
> Yes I think they can, it isn't a matter of who color but of who can be a parent.

-In what ways do you think that black children would benefit by being adopted by a black family? A white family?
> I think if they get adopted by a black family then they already feel at home. For a white family it will be uncomfortable if they are older but even if they were adopted as babies they will still have questions when they are older.

-How can a white family raise a black child in a way that promotes a healthy individual sense of blackness?
> I think they should be normal parents and not try to force something. But they should know that they are black but that they are not different from anyone else.

-In what ways can a white family raise a black child with a sense of their individual culture (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.)?
> I think the parent should tell them and teach them a little bit about their culture because it would be good, everyone wants to know where they come from.

Chris: South African (Zulu), originally from Durban, lives in Cape Town, 25

-What do you think should qualify parents to be able to adopt a child?

> Factors such as the parents' age, their ability to provide for the child's basic needs, and a clear understanding on the intentions the parents have for the child they will be adopting and raising.

 -Do you think race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration?

> No, I think if parents hold feelings of love and have good intentions for themselves and the child then that should be considered first before race, culture, and religion. But depending on the age of the child then I feel race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration as it will be more difficult for an older child to adopt to his or her new parents culture and religion.

-What are your opinions on white people adopting black children?

I will relate this answer to South Africa. There are more Caucasian people who are interested in adopting children than any other race in South Africa. And there are more African children available for adoption than any other race in South Africa. So it's almost a catch 22 as parents and kids who enter an adoption arrangement will be 90% more likely to be from different races and sects. There is just a stigma with people adopting children which do not match their race. It's sad as it's based on the opinions of society, say an innocent loving Caucasian couple adopt an African child the couple can be subject to various negative and positive opinions and reactions from society. So I'm sure some people are prone not to adopt or can easily shy away from adopting a child from another race purely because they are not willing to go through the opinions and reactions from society and their own family.

I've dated two African ladies from two separate families who were adopted by a Caucasian family. They both grew up in a very loving and accepting family environment, where they had Caucasian siblings, they were adopted very young so I feel the adjustment was quite easier for the family and siblings. They were raised her according to their adopted parents own culture and religion. So I feel it's not a bad thing at all if people have good reasons for adopting then it shouldn't matter if the child is African.

Do you think white people can raise black children?

Yes, so long as they can provide the child with their basic physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs I don't see why they can't.

-In what ways do you think that black children would benefit by being adopted by a black family? A white family?

If an African family adopts an African child the child will grow up in a somewhat 'normal' way. And if a Caucasian family adopts a Caucasian child, then they will also grow up in a somewhat 'normal' way. But say an African family adopts a Caucasian child and a Caucasian family adopts an African child, then the child and family could be subject to facing various societal stigmas but also various compliments and positive remarks maybe on how they chose to satisfy their need of raising a child regardless the race of the child. The benefit is that the adopted child has a chance to have a better future. But also I feel in South Africa if an African is adopted into a Caucasian family or vice versa their experience of life is different from kids who are in same race families.

-How can a white family raise a black child in a way that promotes a healthy individual sense of blackness?

Depending on the child's original culture I think parents can try and make an effort to learn about the culture the child belongs to and then introduce this culture to their child.

-In what ways can a white family raise a black child with a sense of their individual culture (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.)?

> I will use the same answer as above.

> Depending on the child's original culture I think parents can try and make an effort to learn about the culture the child belongs to and then introduce this culture to their child.

Do you think that it is necessary white parents raise their children in this way?

> No I don't think it's necessary it shouldn't be a rule, parents should have a choice of what culture they would like to raise their kids in.

Sophia: South African (Xhosa), from Cape Town, 18 yrs.

-What do you think should qualify parents to be able to adopt a child?

> Enough money to take care of the kids and the ability to love the kids.

-Do you think race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration?

> Yes and no. Yes because maybe if the child is white they feel more comfortable with a white family. No because what if the child doesn't connect with their birth parent's religion for instance, then it just is what it is.

-Do you think white people can raise black children?

> I think yes because I know a few people who have been adopted and they aren't any different from me, we are both black, they just have a mom of a different race.

-In what ways do you think that black children would benefit by being adopted by a black family?

> You wont feel any different in terms of race if a black child is with a black family.

-How can a white family raise a black child in a way that promotes a healthy individual sense of blackness?

> They should raise them how they would raise children of their own race because we should be at a state where we don't care about color and just accept.

-In what ways can a white family raise a black child with a sense of their individual culture (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.)?

> In this situation I think they should let their child know about where they are from and who they are and even learn the language a bit because that's where they originate.

Do you think that it is necessary white parents raise their children in this way?

> I think so, so, that the child can know who they are.

Harrison: From Cameroon, lived in Cape Town for 5 years, 25 yrs.

-What do you think should qualify parents to be able to adopt a child?

> If you want to adopt you have to have the means of taking care of the child so they don't go hungry, to be able to afford the child because most times people give up babies because they can't afford them so the parents adopting them should be able to.

-Do you think race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration?

> Yes, but it depends on the age of the child. If it's a baby then you bring the child your own way but if it's older then yes because it already will have it's own culture. When I came to South Africa I had to adapt to the culture here and the child can do that too.

-Do you think white people can raise black children?

> Yes actually it would be good. I feel like white people are more advanced so putting black people in that space makes blacks better, not that blacks don't have anything but it can be better for them plus it means the world is changing where colors won't matter.

-In what ways do you think that black children would benefit by being adopted by a black family?

> The main thing is that if the family can take care of the child it's not all about the race. Each family that can afford it is ok.

-How can a white family raise a black child in a way that promotes a healthy individual sense of blackness?

> Black is just a color, there is no difference.

-In what ways can a white family raise a black child with a sense of their individual culture (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.)?

> A child below one year is like a brand new thing, it has no culture, so it can have any culture. But if it's older and has some culture it has been raised in then it needs that culture.

Mike: 22 yrs, from Durban, Zulu, lives in Cape Town

-What do you think should qualify parents to be able to adopt a child?
Understanding, loving.

-Do you think race, culture, and religion should be taken into consideration?

No, I don't think it matters. If the parents love the baby then that is enough.

-Do you think white people can raise black children?

Yes.

-In what ways do you think that black children would benefit by being adopted by a black family?

Their roots and where they come from.

-How can a white family raise a black child in a way that promotes a healthy individual sense of blackness?

Educate them about where they came from.

-In what ways can a white family raise a black child with a sense of their individual culture (Xhosa, Zulu, etc.)?

Educate them about where they came from.

Consent to Use of Independent Study Project (ISP)

Student Name:____Emma Bilodeau_____

Title of ISP:_Transracial Adoption in Cape Town, South Africa: Perspectives of Black Young Adults___

Program and Term: __Spring 2015: Multiculturalism and Human Rights, Cape Town_____

1. When you submit your ISP to your Academic Director, World Learning/SIT Study Abroad would like to include and archive it in the permanent library collection at the SIT Study Abroad program office in the country where you studied and/or at any World Learning office. Please indicate below whether you grant us the permission to do so.

2. In some cases, individuals, organizations, or libraries in the host country may request a copy of the ISP for inclusion in their own national, regional, or local collections for enrichment and use of host country nationals and other library patrons. Please indicate below whether SIT/World Learning may release your ISP to host country individuals, organizations, or libraries for educational purposes as determined by SIT.

3. In addition, World Learning/SIT Study Abroad seeks to include your ISP paper in our digital online collection housed on World Learning's public website. Granting World Learning/SIT Study Abroad the permission to publish your ISP on its website, and to reproduce and/or transmit your ISP electronically will enable us to share your ISP with interested members of the World Learning community and the broader public who will be able to access it through ordinary Internet searches. Please sign the permission form below in order to grant us the permission to digitize and publish your ISP on our website and publicly available digital collection.

Please indicate your permission by checking the corresponding boxes below:

☒	I hereby grant permission for World Learning to include my ISP in its permanent library collection.
☒	I hereby grant permission for World Learning to release my ISP in any format to individuals, organizations, or libraries in the host country for educational purposes as determined by SIT.
☒	I hereby grant permission for World Learning to publish my ISP on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, and to reproduce and transmit my ISP electronically. I understand that World Learning's websites and digital collections are publicly available via the Internet. I agree that World Learning is NOT responsible for any unauthorized use of my ISP by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.

Student Signature:_____ Date:____May 6, 2015_____