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The Development of Racial Identity Versus a Life Without Permanence: A Comparative Analysis Regarding the Willingness of African American Youth to be Placed Transracially in White Adoptive Homes

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL IDENTITY VERSUS A LIFE WITHOUT

PERMANENCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS REGARDING THE WILLINGNESS OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH TO BE PLACED TRANSRACIALLY IN WHITE

ADOPTIVE HOMES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2012

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Title: The Development of Racial Identity Versus a Life Without Permanence: A Comparative
Analysis Regarding the Willingness of African American Youth to be Placed
Transracially in White Adoptive Homes

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Numerous studies have been conducted regarding transracial adoptions, many of which address the racial and cultural needs and the development of positive self identities in the children involved. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to evaluate the racial identity development in youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system, in relationship to their willingness to be placed transracially.

This study sought to discover if a relationship exists between the level of racial identity development of African American youth and their opinions with regards to being adopted by White families. The length of time the youth have been involved in the child welfare system will also be examined as it relates to their perceptions of transracial adoption. Additionally, literature regarding racial identity development in African American youth indicates the importance of a positive racial identity in increasing the likelihood of the youth achieving successful emotional, academic and social outcomes. Positive racial identity is assisted by the socializations messages African American youth receive from their parents and other adult caregivers. This study sought to discover if a difference exists with regards to the level of youth's racial identity and to what extent they received racial socialization messages. To address this issue participants were given the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t), and the Teenager Experience

with Racial Socialization scale (TERS) to gauge their current level of racial identity and the racial socialization messages they have received. In-depth interviews were also conducted to provide the perceptions of these youth with regards to the transracial adoption of African American children by White families.

The data obtained and its relationship to this group's willingness to have been placed with a White family rather than age out of the child welfare system will provide information to those on both sides of the transracial adoption debate, as well as child welfare organizations that are in charge of obtaining permanent placements for youth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and compare the racial identity development of older African American youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system. This study sought to discover if a relationship exists between the level of racial identity development of the sample population and their opinions with regards to being adopted by White families. The length of time the youth have been involved in the child welfare system was also examined as it relates to their perceptions of transracial adoption. This study also examined the level of racial identity development as it relates to the types of socialization messages provided.

Background of Problem

Transracial adoptions of African American children by Caucasian families have taken place for decades. While such transracial adoptions are an increasingly common practice, the conversation regarding the practice continues to be as controversial as it was in the past (Hayes, 1993; Teicher, 1999; Park & Green, 2000; Burrow & Finley, 2001; Burrow & Finley, 2004). Social workers are often faced with deciding whether or not it is right for Caucasian families to adopt and parent African American children. At the foundation of this issue is the belief that African American children adopted transracially will be raised outside of their culture, be unable to develop positive racial identities, grow up without the knowledge of their rich heritage, and be ill-prepared to deal with the harsh realities that racism continues to exist in this country (Smith, 1996). Issues as simple as parents' ability to properly care for the child's hair and skin to the more serious issues of dealing with being called the 'N' word or how to respond when stopped by the police often fuel this debate. For opponents of transracial adoption, recognition of these

issues, as well as the child's participation in cultural traditions, is viewed as vital in the development of a positive self image. Conversely, supporters of the practice argue that adoption should be colorblind (Bradley, & Hawkins-Leon, 2002), with providing families for children being of primary concern.

While there are numerous studies examining the opinions of professionals and adoptive parents with regards to transracial adoptions, no literature was found that gives voice to the youth impacted by the practice. It is evident through the paucity of research that the feelings of youth who have recently "aged out" of group home facilities have not been considered in determining the suitability of being placed in a family of a different race and culture than their own. In addition, the question of whether or not African-American youth receive positive racial socialization while residing at group home facilities has also not been explored. As these group home facilities are the "default" solution for youth who are not placed in families, the question of the kind of racial identity African-American youth develop in these homes is as crucial as that of the kinds of racial identity they develop when placed in white adoptive homes.

The present study is designed to fill some of the gaps in our existing knowledge of racial identity formation and adoption preferences of African-American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system. To address this gap, information was gathered on a small group of 30 African-American youth ages 18-21 who have aged out of the child welfare system in Western Pennsylvania. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted with 11 of these youth to obtain specific information with regards to their personal opinions and experiences. Most often unprepared for a life of independence, these youth are often confronted with the dilemma of facing life without positive familial supports or seeking out and returning to birth parents who

likely have not resolved the issues that precipitated the child's initial removal and placement into foster care.

Statement of Problem

According to the 2006 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), nationally there are approximately 120,000 children at any given time with the goal of adoption. When broken down by race, the report identifies 37% of these children as white and 40% being African American (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Given that African Americans comprise only 13% of the population (US Census Bureau, 2008), the number of children of African American parentage waiting adoption is disproportionate and disconcerting. The report also reveals 51% of children in need of adoptive placement are nine years of age or older. On average, African American youth remain in foster care 9 months longer than their white peers. Additionally, once their parental rights have been terminated, African American youth have a lower rate of adoption than white children (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008).

Furthermore, approximately 25,000 youth turn 18 each year and age out of the child welfare system before an adoptive home is found. In Pennsylvania 1025 children exited foster care during 2004 and another 949 in 2005 due to the lack of a permanent adoptive home (Administration of Children and Families, 2009). Unprepared to live independently, youth who age out of the foster care system face bleak outcomes, including being under-educated and under-employed and having an increased likelihood of being homeless or involved in the criminal justice and mental health systems (Reilly, 2003).

The consequences to youth aging out of the foster care system lend credence to the practice of transracial adoptions. However, the need for children to also develop a positive racial and cultural identity is at the forefront of the debate against this practice. With the passing of legislation prohibiting the consideration of the child's racial and cultural needs in adoption placement decisions, there is concern that African American children placed in white homes will be unprepared to handle the racism that continues to exist in society.

Significance of Study

Federal, state and local legislators currently lack the full information needed to formulate policies regarding the transracial placement of youth in out-of-home care that are realistic and serve the best interests of the youth in question. In efforts to address the disproportionate number of African American youth in the child welfare system waiting for adoptive homes, current policies prohibit looking at the race of either the child or adoptive family when making placement decisions; these policies have been made based on claims-makers assertions that adoptions should be color-blind. Furthermore, current legislation indicates that potential White families willing to adopt African American youth may not be singled out for training that would enhance their knowledge of racial identity, thereby giving them the tools necessary to promote a healthy and positive racial sense of self. Child welfare administrators and service providers are therefore left to make placement decisions that may not always be in the best interest of the child, or risk being in violation of the law, which is punishable by the loss of much needed federal funding. However, current legislation does not take into account the unfortunate fact that racism continues to be pervasive in society, and the inability to provide both physical and emotional safety to youth can be detrimental to their total well-being.

Experiencing covert and overt acts of racism is a very traumatic experience, particularly for the African American adolescent who is already struggling with the developmental issues of self identity (Erikson, 1964). Failure of African American youth to develop a positive racial identity has been found to negatively affect their academic performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Davis, Aronson & Steele, 2006), as well as their mental health status (Whittaker & Neville, 2010; Jones, Cross & Dufour, 2007).

While numerous studies exist voicing both support and opposition to the practice of transracial adoption, none have been found taking into account the perspectives of the youth who have aged out of the child welfare system. While the older adolescent is often asked their willingness to be adopted, review of existing literature found no analysis of their willingness to be placed transracially, the state of their racial identity development, and its correlation to that willingness. This study will fill the gap in existing literature by providing information with regards to the correlation between an African American youth's willingness to be placed transracially in relationship to their racial identity. This study will encourage those in leadership roles to include the racial and cultural needs of the many African American youth in need of permanent adoptive families, in the assessment of their emotional, educational and social needs.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to obtain the opinions of young people who could be impacted by the practice of transracial adoptions. The questions to be answered by this study are as follows:

1)   To what extent do African American youth who have recently aged out of the child welfare system in Western Pennsylvania express a retrospective willingness to have been placed transracially in White homes?

    a) What factors influence these African American youth's willingness to be placed transracially in White homes?

2)   To what extent have African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system developed a sense of racial identity?

3)   To what extent do African American youth express having received racial socialization messages that help to buffer experiences of racism and discrimination while involved in the child welfare system?

    a) What factors exist that influence whether African American youth received racial socialization messages?

4)   Does a relationship exist between socialization messages received and the racial identity of African American youth?

5)   Does the length of time an African American youth spent in the child welfare system have an effect on their willingness to be placed transracially?

Research Hypotheses

1) African American youth who have exited the foster care system through emancipation (aging out) will express a willingness to have been considered being placed transracially, rather than aging out without a familial relationship.

2) The length of time an African American youth was in the foster care system will be positively correlated to their willingness to have considered a transracial placement.

3) Youth who have left the child welfare system are likely to report not having received racial socialization messages that encourage positive racial identity development.

Research Approach

This study sought to obtain the perspectives of Black youth involved in the child welfare system, with regards to their willingness to be placed transracially in White adoptive homes, their development of a positive racial identity while in the child welfare system, and their perception of the ability of white adoptive families to facilitate the development of a positive racial identity. Study participants consisted of 30 youth 18 to 21 years of age, who have been discharged to independent living without having benefit of a permanent family. Participants were drawn from the Allegheny County Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Children, Youth and Families.

In order to acquire the information needed to address the research questions and hypotheses, the researcher utilized a mixed method research design. A review of the literature indicates most of the research in this area is based on quantitative research. The dearth of qualitative inquiry has left a void in the existing literature with regards to giving voice to those affected by current adoption policies. The utilization of mixed method designs are often beneficial to research as it ascertains knowledge from both the interpretive and positivist points of view. As Maxwell (2005) explains interpretive analysis of qualitative data seeks to understand the reality of participants as they see it. This study endeavors to gain an understanding of how Black youth feel about being transracially placed in White adoptive homes, and the meanings they construct around issues of racial identity. Through the use of in-depth individual interviews with 11 study participants, this study seeks to discover if a

relationship exists between the willingness to be placed transracially and possible mitigating factors such as length of time a youth has spent in the child welfare system, the amount and type of racial socialization messages they have received, and the youths' level of racial identity development.

In contrast to the interpretivist paradigm, positivism uses rigorous quantitative techniques to identify distributions of and relationships between phenomena which may not be immediately apparent to those individuals exhibiting/experiencing those phenomena. Looking at issues scientifically (Babbie, 2008) the emphasis shifts from understanding meaning to predicting causal relationships and identifying persistent patterns among variables. The objective of the quantitative analysis is to utilize survey data to assess whether a relationship exists between African American youths' willingness to be adopted by a White family, how salient they hold being African American, and the types of racial socialization messages they receive from adults and other significant caregivers who have assumed the role of pseudo parent to these youth.

While the goal for each paradigm appears to vary in purpose, both are intended to provide information that will advance the literature with regard to the issue of transracial adoption and the racial identity of Black youth who could be impacted by the practice. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) termed this type of mixed method approach as complimentarity because of the use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis of different facets of the research problem. Schifferdecker and Reed (2009) further elaborate on Greene's concept of complimentarity, indicating its purpose as the "enhancing, elaborating, illustrating or clarifying [of] results" (p. 638). This approach to mixed methods is appropriate for this study because of the need to obtain a broader understanding of African American youth's perception with regards to what it means

to be adopted transracially. This discovery will enhance and substantiate the data collected regarding racial identity with the rich description of the lived experiences of the youth involved.

Assumptions

As previously indicated in the problem statement, African American youth are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. Not only do they enter the system at a higher percentage of the African American population, than do their White peers, they remain in the system for a longer period of time. To address the issue of disproportionality, legislation has been passed that supports the placement of African American youth in White adoptive homes. The controversy that has ensued with regards to transracial adoption stems largely around the debate on the importance of racial identity.

Having worked within the child welfare system for over 25 years, I have witnessed the evolution of transracial adoption through the increased numbers of African American youth placed in White adoptive homes. However, with this increase is the continued struggle of administrators and caseworkers to ensure the placement is appropriate and in the best interest of the youth involved. While the practice of having older youth participate in the decision making process has increased, there appears to be no documentation that correlates their willingness to be placed transracially and the youth's racial identity development.

In evaluating the concept of willingness of transracial adoption and racial identity development, several assumptions are held. The first assumption is that if deemed by the courts to be unable to return to their birth families, African American youth would prefer to be placed with African American families. This assumption is based on the thought that these youth would find it more comfortable residing with a family of the same race, as opposed to with a family

where it is evident that they are adopted and therefore, different than their parents. Second, youth who have spent several years residing in a group home setting will be more willing to consider being placed transracially. This assumption is made based on the notion that youth will prefer residing with a family of any race, rather than having a long-term residence in congregate care. Finally, African American youth who have resided in group home facilities staffed primarily by White individuals will have received less assistance in the development of their racial identity, than those youth who reside in placements with a representation of African American staff. Assuming White staff lacks the full understanding of the importance of racial identity, they will not be cognizant of the need to provide the tools necessary for African American youth to successfully transition through this developmental process.

Rationale and Significance

Working for an organization that focuses on the adoption of older children, with a program specifically geared to increasing the number of African American families available to African American youth, it is disheartening to see the same children waiting for adoptive placements year after year. Most of these children reside in group homes and other residential facilities and are becoming more institutionalized each year they remain in the child welfare system. As they linger in the system that has taken on the role of parent, many of these children begin to believe they are not adoptable and settle in to the probability that they will turn 18 and age out of the system. Even more discouraging is that many caseworkers, too, begin to believe these youth are not adoptable and put less energy in their efforts to find permanent homes for them. This is often compounded by workers allowing youth, often as young as 14 and 15 years of age, to make the decision to not be adopted. For these youth, their permanency goal becomes

either emancipation or another planned permanent living situation (APPLA). Since these terms are legally acceptable forms of permanency, these youth are not included in the numbers of those who have been officially deemed as having aged out of the system. Unfortunately, these legally acceptable labels do not change the fact that these children are being discharged to themselves, facing the same bleak outcomes as their aged out peers.

While African American families do come forward to adopt, the number doing so does not meet the disproportionate number of African American children in need of adoptive homes. While most Caucasian families desiring to adopt (74%) are interested in same race placements (Courtney, 1997), many are interested in making a difference in the life of any child and are willing to adopt transracially. While research has been conducted to determine the types of services that should be developed and implemented to ensure the success of families adopting transracially (Lee, et al., 2006; Vonk & Angaran, 2003; Howard, Royce & Skerl, 1997), this issue is not the focus of this study and will not be specifically addressed.

When looking for adoptive families, many county employees include youth in some aspects of the decision making process. However, this is most often done once the worker has completed a screening and selection process of the many families expressing interest in the particular youth. It is during this process that families deemed inappropriate to meet the youth's needs are eliminated and only the few considered suitable are presented to the youth for his input prior to making the final decision. While this process is positive, the question regarding the older youth's willingness to be placed transracially remains. Through personal contact with many of these youth, their fear of what lies before them upon being discharged is consistently repeated. Given the choice between the fear of an uncertain living situation and the fear of living in a stable family of a different race, I would postulate that many would choose the latter.

This study cannot be inclusive of every variable that could affect support for or against transracial adoption for teens. However, the goal is to provide data that will provoke additional conversations on the topic that encourages the development of appropriate legislative policies that take into account the perspective of those impacted.

Researcher Perspectives

At the time of this study, I have been employed as the CEO of one of the largest full-service adoption agencies in Pennsylvania for over 12 years. In this capacity I have been named as a member of the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN), which oversees the State contract to ensure youth in the child welfare system obtain permanency in an expeditious manner. I also sit on the Board of Directors of Voice for Adoption, a national advocacy organization that tracks, recommends and reviews current and pending federal legislation, as well as the Board of Directors of the Adoption Exchange Association, which holds the federal Adopt US Kids grant to remove barriers associated with and to promote adoption from the child welfare system. Each of these organizations recognizes the issue of disproportionate representation of African American youth in the child welfare system, and has as one of their goals effectively and significantly decreasing this number. Additionally, I serve on the Advisory Council for the University Of Pittsburgh School Of Social Work. Prior to my current position, I was employed with a foster care agency where I worked as a caseworker, supervisor, and finally Director of Foster Care.

Because of the work I have done in adoption, I have been nominated by my U. S. Congressman, and received an Angel of Adoption Award for Pennsylvania, presented by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

My wealth of experience in the field of child welfare has afforded me the opportunity to service youth and families from the time of initial placement in to foster care, to the provision of therapeutic support services after the adoption has been finalized. It has also provided firsthand experience with regards to the placement of African American youth with White families. By conducting mandatory diversity training for all families, as well as ongoing placement support, families are encouraged to move from color-blindness to color consciousness. With this process, families are given a greater appreciation of the need for the inclusion of African American literature, artwork and toys in their homes, in addition to the importance of socializing youth in the African American culture, in order to promote a positive racial identity.

While this knowledge and experience are beneficial to understanding the issue under study, it also brings with it the potential of unintentional bias during the data collection and analysis phases of this research. In order to address this issue, I have put into place safeguards to aid in eliminating the possibility of researcher bias. Safeguards include sample population anonymity during the gathering of quantitative data, eliminating youth with whom I have a direct relationship and triangulation of research methods.

Definition of Terms

- Transracial Adoption (TRA) - As used in this dissertation, the adoption of a Black child by a White family.

- Multi-ethnic Placement Amendment (MEPA) - Legislation passed in 1994 prohibiting making adoption placement decisions solely on the race of the child or family.

- Inter-ethnic Placement Amendment (IEP) - Amendment to MEPA (above) removing the word solely from the original language, making it illegal to make adoption placement decisions based on the race of the child or family

- Aging out – The process by which a child in the foster care system turns 18 and is discharged with no familial relationships.

- Child Welfare system - The governmental body with the authority to investigate child abuse and neglect allegations and to make the determination if a child's removal from their birth family is warranted.

- Out-of-Home Care – Placements of children who have been removed from their birth families, including foster care, group home and other residential locations.

Delimitations

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the opinions of African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system, regarding their level of racial identity as it directly relates to their willingness to be placed transracially in a White home. While this research could have been extended to all African American youth in the child welfare system, a conscious decision was made to exclude them from the present study. Likewise, was the decision to limit the scope of this study to only those youth who were place through Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families. Furthermore, this study was intended to neither support nor oppose the practice of transracially placing Black children in White homes. Rather, it is anticipated that the information acquired will further the existing knowledge by understanding the needs and desires of Black adolescents and how best to ensure successful outcomes for them.

Limitations

The primary limitation to this research was in the inability to obtain a larger study sample. Because of the unstable living situations for youth who have aged out of the child welfare system, the researcher was limited in how the sample population was chosen, which was based wholly on the individuals who voluntarily attended a scheduled independent living program meeting. The second limitation was in regards to utilizing youth under the age of 18 for the research project. Permission to utilize this age group was granted by Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families. However, the legal process of obtaining permission for those youth for whom parental rights were still intact was quite arduous. The process of obtaining parental permission, which might include contacting an incarcerated parent, was too time intensive for this study.

Chapter Summary

The disproportionate representation of African American youth in the child welfare system has resulted in an increase in the transracial adoptions of African American youth in White families. The succeeding controversy over the practice of transracial adoption has many people divided into two positions; the first being that adoptions should be colorblind. The second position, of those who oppose the practice, argues transracial adoptions fail to acknowledge the need for African American youth to develop a positive racial identity. While numerous research projects have been conducted regarding this issue, there is a dearth of literature representing the voices of youth who could possibly benefit from a transracial placement, rather than risk turning 18 and aging out of the child welfare system without a familial relationship.

This study sought to examine the perspectives of a group of older African American youth for whom an adoptive family was not found, resulting in their aging out of the child welfare system. This study endeavors to discover the willingness of this group of youth to be placed transracially with a White family. To address the debate regarding racial identity, the youth's acceptance of transracial adoption will be reviewed in relationship with the level of their racial identity, the length of time they were involved in the child welfare system and the types of racial socialization messages they received from group home staff.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess and understand the racial identity development of older African American youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system. This study sought to discover if a relationship exists between the level of racial identity development of the study participants, their opinions with regards to transracial adoption, and their willingness to having been adopted by White families. The length of time the youth have been involved in the child welfare system will also be examined as it relates to their perceptions of transracial adoption. This study also examined the level of racial identity development as it relates to the types of socialization messages youth received while residing in group home facilities.

A thorough literature review was performed exploring the state of adoption in the United States, including the issue of disproportionate representation of African American youth in the child welfare system. Utilizing racial identity development as the theoretical framework, this chapter covers the concept of racial identity development in African American youth in relationship to normal adolescence and the development of a positive self identity.

History of Transracial Adoption in America

Silverman (1993) defines transracial adoption as the "joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families" (p104). This practice, which is generally the placement of racially different children in White homes, can be traced in the United States, back to the end of WWII. At this time, children of Japanese and Chinese parentage were internationally adopted by White families. The next wave of international adoptions occurs

following the Korean War with the adoption of Korean children by White families. During this time, there were few transracial adoptions of Black children by White families. With the exception of international adoptions, most White families were interested in being racially matched with White children. With out-of-wedlock births becoming less taboo, the availability of White infants through private adoptions, decreased. Because of the continual increase of Black children in the child welfare system, White families began to consider transracial adoption of Black children from the child welfare system as a means to creating a family.

Disproportionality of Specific Groups of Children in the Foster Care System

On any given day in the United States, an estimated 500,000 children are in out-of-home placement in the child welfare system. (United States Government Accountability Office, 2007). This large number of children in the child welfare system has been stable since it reached its peak in the 1970's (The Adoption History Project, 2003). Removed for reasons of abuse and neglect, children are placed in foster care, group homes or other residential treatment facilities. Of these, approximately 120,000 children have been deemed unable to return to their birth families and are available for adoption. The present concern regarding these numbers is the startling statistic that Black children make up approximately 40% of this population. With Blacks comprising 13% of the general population, the number in foster care has created an issue of disproportionality within the child welfare system.

The current issue of disproportionality of specific groups of children in the foster care system can be traced back centuries. The practice of removing children from poor immigrant families can be found as early as the 1800's (Hacsi, 1995). In Post-colonial times children of poor immigrant families were routinely placed in homes of more well-off families or institutions.

The goal of this practice was to provide these children with an appropriate upbringing and to teach them proper work ethics (Trattner, 1999). It was believed that by doing this, these children would become contributing members of society. It was further hoped that by becoming part of the work force, these children would break the cycle of prolonged poverty held onto by their birth parents. While such removals and placements provided permanent homes for children, the practice also contributed significant free labor to the families with whom the children were placed (Cahn, 2002).

Unfortunately, because of the lack of any system to monitor such placements, many children ended up as indentured servants and/or suffered abuse and neglect at the hands of those in whose care they were entrusted (Trattner, 1999). Children were often ill-fed, were not provided proper health care made to work for their board and were not educated while in out- of-home placements. Recognizing that abuse and neglect continued even after children were removed from their birth families, the transition to placing children in approved families with continuous monitoring began at the end of the nineteenth century.

Establishment of the Children's Bureau

In response to the problem of children being removed from their families and subsequently abused in out- of- home placements, the National Child Labor Committee which advocated for children's rights and child labor laws, actively campaigned to the federal government for the establishment of a governmental organization that focused on the welfare of children. Taking place in the early twentieth century, the concept of a government- supported child welfare program received a great deal of initial support. After three years of debate, the first White House Conference on Children was held in 1909. It was at this conference that

President Roosevelt declared the impoverishment of parents to be an insufficient cause for removing children from their homes. The White House conference also formalized foster care and the expansion of adoption agencies. This conference marked a significant time in the development of child welfare legislation in the United States.

Acknowledging the importance of the birth family unit and the negative impact removal from their families had on children, President Taft later signed into law the bill which formally created the Children's Bureau in 1912 (United States Social Security Administration, 2009). The primary charge to the Bureau was to investigate and provide information on all aspects of child welfare and well being. The creation of the Children's Bureau brought to light the important role family stability played on the healthy emotional development of children.

With foster care now being regulated and monitored by the government (Trattner, 1999), the removal of children from their birth families theoretically transitioned from being based on the financial condition of the parents to the safety and well being of children. Best practice within the Child Welfare system was now to be dedicated to what was in the best interest of the child as the basis of their removal from the home.

Later, implementation of the provisions of Title V of the Social Security Act of 1935, Grants to the States for Maternal and Child Welfare (United States Social Security Administration, 2009) was placed with the Children's Bureau, establishing for the first time, federal funding for child welfare services. With an initial authorization of over $24,000,000 states were provided funding to support dependent children who were removed from their birth families. These funds were also available to assist low income families who may otherwise have no choice but to have their children removed and placed in the child welfare system (The Adoption History Project (2003). Despite this, by 1910 there were over 1000 orphanages in

America (The Adoption History Project, 2003). Unfortunately, as with other policies during this era, the negative racial climate in the United States resulted in Black children being excluded from the benefits afforded by this policy to their White peers (Abramovitz, 1996). In fact, services to Black children were denied until the mid 1940's (Cahn, 2002). This lack of access to services, such as health care, food and adequate housing, led to increased numbers of Black children living in poverty (Figure 1).
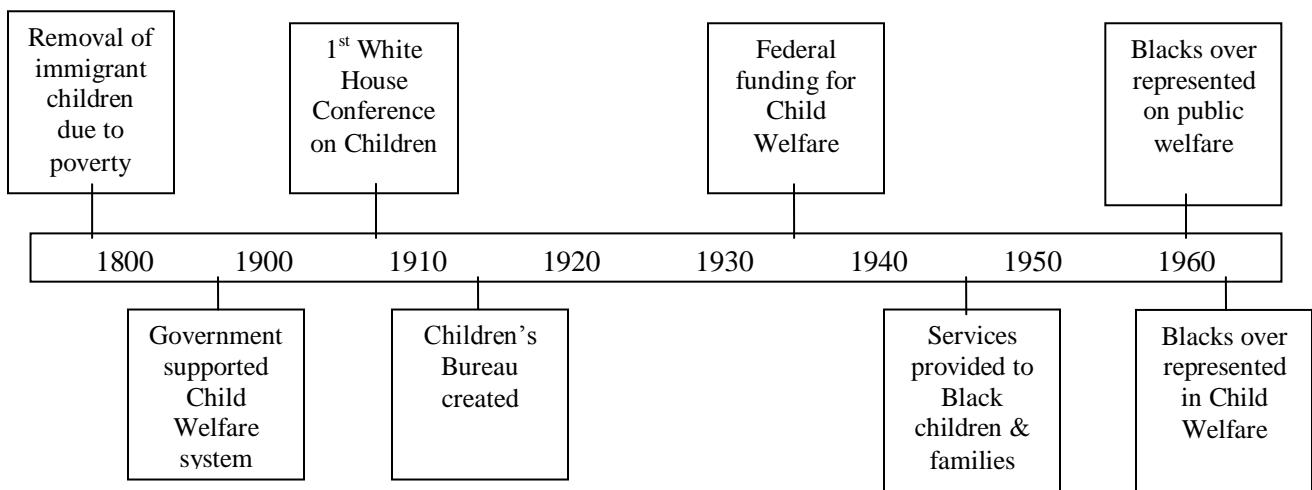
Figure 1. The Development of Child Welfare and the Disproportionate Representation of African Americans

Increase of African Americans in the Child Welfare System

Once federal assistance became available to Blacks in the 1940's through the Maternal and Child Welfare grants, the number of Blacks receiving this help increased significantly, thereby becoming disproportionately represented by on the public welfare rolls by the 1960's (United States Government Accountability Office, 2007). By 1961, Blacks represented over 50% of those receiving public assistance (Abramovitz, 1996). While the Social Security Act of 1935

provided much needed regulation and assistance to needy children, it did little to decrease the number of Black children entering out-of-home placements due to poverty.

   With the continued existence of systemic racism in the United States, Blacks continued to have less access to proper health care, employment and education. Still today, many Blacks live in communities that are ravaged by poor housing conditions, single-parent households, crime and drugs. This has resulted in their ongoing disproportionate representation among those living in poverty. Although data on poverty was not collected by the government until 1960, the following figures illustrate that while there has been some change with regards to Blacks in American society, they continue to be over-represented among the impoverished.

Table 1
Individuals Living Below Poverty Level by Race[1]

Year	Total Population	White (%)	Black (%)	% Black children under 18
1960	39,851	25,309 (17.8%)	9,927 (51%)	65.5%
1970	25,420	17,484 (9.9%)	7548 (33.5%)	41.5%
1980	29,272	19699 (10.2%)	8579 (32.5%)	42.1%
2009[2]	43,569	29,830 (12.3%)	9,944 (25.8%)	
2010[2]	46,180	31,650 (13%)	10,675 (27.4%)	

Table 2
Individuals Living 125% Below Poverty Level by Race[1]

Year	Total Population	White (%)	Black (%)	% Black children under 18
1960	50,658	41,126 (25.9%)	11,282 (53%) *	62.8%
1970	35,624	25,373 (14.3%)	9,668 (42.9%)	52.3%
1980	54,560	28,682 (14.9%)	10,625 (40.2%)	49.8%

[1] US Department of Commerce – Bureau of the Census – Current Population Reports
[2] US Department of Commerce – Income, Poverty & Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010
   * Data reported for 1967

History of the Increase in the Transracial Adoption of African American Youth

Beliefs that Black children could be successfully placed in White homes were developed based on earlier practices of transracially placing Native Americans (Lee, 2003). Between 1958 and 1967, Native American children were routinely removed from their families and placed with Whtie families in oefforts to give them a better, more civilized life. During this timeframe an estimated 25% to 30% of Native American children were removed from reservations (Thunder Hawk, 2000) and placed with White families. This practice, known as the Indian Adoption Project (Lee, 2003), was done in order to integrate these children into the norms of mainstream society. Protesting removal and placement of their children, the Native American community was able to end this practice by appealing to the legislature for the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA). In order to preserve the cultural identity of Native American children, ICWA legislates that the adoption of Native American children should first be done with family members. Failing this, preference is to be given to members of the child's tribe and finally members of other Indian families (Bausch & Serpe, 1997).

Following the concept of the Indian Adoption Project, many adoption agencies were prompted to develop and implement similar programs to address the disproportionate numbers of Black children needing adoptive families (Lee, 2003). With these new endeavors, the notion of placing Black children within White families appeared to gain in popularity during the 1960's. As White families became increasingly aware of the need for families for Black children, many were willing to adopt a child regardless of the child's race. Furthermore, because of the Civil Rights movement, many White families wanted to adopt Black children in attempts to bring the races together (Smith, 1996). These developments significantly increased the number of families

available to Black children, and the total number of transracial adoptions quickly rose to approximately 20,000 by 1972.

With its increase in occurrence, the controversy surrounding the practice of transracial adoption ensued. The most significant voice of opposition came from the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) (Lee, 2003). In a widely publicized opinion, the NABSW vehemently opposed the transracial adoption of Black children. In their report, the group went so far as to call the practice cultural and racial genocide for Black children. Being denied their culture and the healthy development of a Black identity, NABSW believed that being placed in white homes left Black children unprepared to deal with the racism that continues to be present in society. Upon the release of this opinion, many organizations across the country, including the Child Welfare League of America, ended the practice of transracially placing Black children in White homes and returned to racially matched placements.

With there still being an inadequate pool of Black adoptive families, Black children continued to languish in the child welfare system. However, an increasing number of White families continued to come forward willing to parent them, but were denied the opportunity. Because of this, proponents of transracial adoption began openly denouncing the practice of racially matching children and families (Smith, 1996). Those in support of transracial adoption contended that denying children a permanent family on the basis of race was in violation of their civil rights.

Further influencing legislative action that resulted in proposing MEPA/IEP (which will be discussed in greater detail throughout this document) was a television program decrying the practice of racial matching, which aired on 60 Minutes (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2007). The segment, which discussed the negative impact racial matching had on Black children

in need of adoptive homes, led to a commitment by Senator Metzenbaum to propose and ensure the passing of MEPA (McRoy, Mica, Freundlich & Kroll, 2007).

The Impact of Poverty

Due to their prolonged state of poverty, Blacks became heavily reliant on public assistance for sustenance of their basic needs. With so many Blacks living in poverty, the lack of income results in residing in sub-standard housing and inadequate healthcare. Being disproportionately represented in the public welfare system, Blacks became more likely to be reported as unfit parents (Cahn, 2002). Because of their likelihood of utilizing emergency rooms and public clinics because of not having private insurance, Black families are more likely to be reported by physicians and medical social workers for providing inadequate health care to their children, their drug and alcohol abuse and suspected child abuse. Furthermore, personal biases of teachers, police officers and county caseworkers, may impact the frequency by which they (as mandated reporters) report such incidences as neglect and abuse. These factors increase the likelihood of Black parents having their children removed from the home.

While dire circumstances certainly warrant extreme measures such as removal there are times when not understanding Black culture has resulted in a child's removal and unnecessary trauma. Consider the newborn removed from her mother at the time of birth for testing positive for drugs. While the mother admittedly was a drug user, she was adamant that she had ended this practice once finding out she was pregnant. For six months the caseworker from the contracted foster care agency attempted to obtain the birth records to either support or refute the mother's comments. Upon finally receiving the hospital records, it was found that the mother was indeed correct and that the substance found in the infant's blood was caffeine. Not understanding the

process of trying to remain drug free, both the hospital staff and the caseworker failed to recognize that recovering addicts drink an inordinate amount of coffee and caffeine soft drinks. At the next court hearing, the courts ordered the child returned to her birth mother. While delighted with this outcome, the crucial bonding between mother and child was interrupted for 7 months.

With the percentage of poor Blacks being disproportionate to their number in the general population, the number of children removed based on poverty and neglect also became disproportionately represented by Blacks (United States Government Accountability Office, 2007). As the number of Black children in the child welfare system increased, so did the need for families to accommodate them. Because same-race adoptive placements were the normal practice, Black families were encouraged to come forward to adopt the Black children in need of homes. However, the unintentional and intentional racial biases of caseworkers resulted in many potential Black families being screened out of the adoption process. These biases' include such issues as the community in which the family resided, believing a family already has enough children in the home and the belief that the family's income was not sufficient to accommodate an additional person. For example, a young White caseworker who was raised in suburbia by two parents may find it hard to understand how a large family may be successfully living in a two-bedroom apartment.

This issue, in addition to the lack of accessible services to address the reasons that precipitated the child's removal from the home (such as alcohol and drug treatment facilities), has led to the Black child remaining in the child welfare system longer than their White counterparts and directly contributed to the disproportionate representation of Black children that continues to exist today.

The Birth Family Dilemma

Upon having their children removed and placed in the child welfare system, family service plans are created outlining the goals to be achieved prior to the child's return to the birth family. Goals may include obtaining proper housing, attending parenting classes and drug and alcohol treatment. These goals are to be achieved while maintaining contact with the placed child. However, what has often occurred is families living in poverty are often reliant upon public transportation to get to appointments, as well as having to accomplish these tasks during normal working hours. Current State regulations mandate agencies schedule 1 hour visits two times per month between parents and children. In efforts to allow for appropriate bonding and relationship building, many county agencies and courts are requiring these visits occur more often, some being court ordered for several times and several hours per week. In order to not add to the burden of trying to successfully accomplish all of their goals, many visits take place after normal business hours. Despite this effort, families often find that there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish the list of goals required prior to being reunified with their children.

Because of legislation entitled the Adoption and Safe Families Act (which will be discussed in greater detail later), children who are in care 15 of the past 22 months must be referred for adoption. While this legislation was enacted to reduce the number of children who remain in the child welfare system for long periods of time, the aforementioned conditions lead to more Black children being referred for adoption than their White peers.

White Families Desire to Adopt African American Youth

The issue of disproportionality, which involves the length of time Black children remain in care, the insufficient number of Black families available as resources, and the perceived

negative impact of racial matching, was the main impetus in the eventual implementation of the Multiethnic Placement Act/Interethnic Placement Act.

As society became increasingly aware of the disproportionate representation of Black children waiting for adoption, many White families expressed a willingness to parent them. White families began considering this option due to the dearth of White children available to them, while others have come to this conclusion based on the theory that adoptions should be colorblind, believing that this may be an opportunity to end the racial divide in the county. However, since the placement of children with families was based on racial matching, White families were routinely denied the transracial placement of Black children. Initially, this was the case based on the desire to have children closely resemble their adoptive parents, so as not to 'appear' to have been adopted. Until recently, many families did not inform their children of their adopted status, preferring to keep this knowledge secret. Furthermore, following the denunciation of the practice of transracial adoption by the National Association of Black Social Workers, adoption agencies across the country ended any practice of placing Black children with White families.

Regardless of the reason behind the desire to adopt transracially, White families continued their efforts to stop the racial matching of parents and children in order to adopt the many Black children who were over-represented in the child welfare system. After much public and media outcry regarding the over-representation of Black children in the foster care system, and the denial of White families to adopt them, President Clinton signed the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) into law in 1994 (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2007). Enacted as Title V, part E of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (U. S. Department of Health

& Human Services, 2006), MEPA prohibits the denial of a child's placement into a family based *solely* (italics added) on the race of the child or the adoptive parent.

This researcher has had a White family placed with a Black child ask if Black children would lose their coloring after receiving regular bathing. Another family indicated their willingness to incorporate their Black child's culture by cooking 'Black' food such a 'fried chicken'. On yet a third occasion a Black female child was brought to the office for a birth family visit. Indicating they did not know how to undo braids, the White family had cut the child's hair to the scalp. These incidents resulted in the implementation of mandatory training with regards to race, culture and diversity. The initial language of MEPA also allowed for families to not be approved for the placement of Black children based on their lack of understanding of the Black race and culture. Families could also be rejected for the placement of a Black child if the caseworker found that extended family members and/or the community where the family resided was racist, and posed a potential physical and emotional threat on the child. The use of the word solely gave child placing organizations the latitude to assess a family's ability to meet the cultural, as well as physical and emotional needs, of the child.

However, White families continued to express their desire to adopt Black children, many feeling they were unjustly disqualified to do so, based on the professional opinion of caseworkers regarding the cultural needs of the Black child. Their continued claims that adoption should be colorblind, once again came to the attention of legislators who insisted on addressing this issue to further clarify and strengthen MEPA's original intent. The Interethnic Placement Act (IEP) was enacted under SEC 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, titled Removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoptions. IEP removed the term solely from the original language of MEPA, thus completely prohibiting the use of the race of either the child or the

adoptive parent when making matching and placement decisions. Both pieces of legislation are supported and supervised by the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race by any organization that receives federal funding.

The amended legislation not only prohibits the consideration of race, but also the discussion of race with regards to a family's understanding of the Black race, the culture or providing White families with training specific to them with regards to these issues. While this legislation was enacted in efforts to eliminate barriers to adoption and directly impact the number of Black children in the child welfare system, it failed to take into account factors of importance to the positive racial identity development of these children, or the racism and discrimination they would experience. A clear example of this is the Black 12 year old male who is placed in with a White family who resides in a White rural community. This youngster was sent to the principal's office after getting into a fight at school because of racial comments being made to him. When the father of the White student arrived at the school, he confronted the youngster in the principal's office by calling him the 'N' word. Recognizing that these types of incidents are harmful for their son, this family is looking into moving to a more racially diverse community in the best interest of their child. While this family understands the needs of their child, other families would not react in this manner, rather attempting to teach the child the old adage that sticks and stones may break their bones, but names will never harm them.

This family's understanding of these issues was enhanced due to a pre-service training that is mandatory for all families seeking approval through the agency where this researcher is employed. Additionally, ongoing trainings have been held throughout the year on diversity and racial identity development that is open to all families to attend in order to obtain their mandated annual hours of training. Currently, Pennsylvania State regulations mandate all families seeking

to be approved as adoptive resources receive 6 hours of pre-service training. The Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network mandates their affiliate agencies provide 24 hours of pre-service training as a matter of best practice. Seeing this as the minimum acceptable number of hours, this researcher's organization developed and implemented a curriculum consisting of 28 hours of mandatory training that has been in effect for the past twelve years. Topics such as child development, cultural diversity and trauma informed care are seen as vital in assisting families through their adoption journey with as much information as possible to make informed decisions with regards to the type of child that would best fit into their family.

The Disproportionate Representation of African American Youth in the Child Welfare System

Over time, the problem of disproportionality persisted and became increasingly difficult to ignore. While the number of Black youth entering the child welfare system grew disproportionately, an equal problem became the length of stay in out- of- home care experienced by these children. Evidence indicates Black children are not only removed from their homes in larger numbers, but they remain in the system longer (Cahn, 2002). The United States Government Accountability Office (2007) reports Black children remain in foster care placement an average of nine months longer than their White peers.

Often lacking outside emotional and familial support, the fact remains that parents of these children continue to live in poverty is something they can't always escape, often prolonging their opportunity for speedy reunification. For instance the parent who is court ordered to in-patient drug treatment is limited to those facilities that accept public assistance payment. Because these facilities most often have a waiting list, the family is out of compliance with the order of the court until such time they are accepted for service. These families also often

face the two edged sword with regards to obtaining appropriate housing. Because of their lack of income, these families must rely on public housing to meet this requirement. While the family needs to apply for enough bedrooms to accommodate their children, public housing organizations most often will not honor this request if the children are not living with the parent at the time of application. The result of this dilemma is that the child remains in the child welfare system due to the parent's continued lack of housing.

Due to the significantly higher number of Black children in out-of-home placement, the need for foster and adoptive families is also significantly higher. While Black families do adopt, the numbers of those doing so has not been significant enough to satisfy the number of children requiring placement. In fact, the number of children entering the child welfare system has witnessed a significant increase since the mid-1980's (Hacsi, 1995). One of the significant factors associated with this increase has been the number of infants born exposed to drugs and young children removed due to drug use by their birth parents. This increase in Black child admissions and the continued lack of available Black families has resulted in Black children often remaining in institutions until the age of 18 (Bausch & Serpe, 2001).

Legislation

In order to address barriers impacting the child welfare system such as the length of time youth remain in placement and the disproportionate representation of Black youth in the system, several pieces of federal legislation have been passed. Receiving bi-partisan support, the federal government has made improving the child welfare system as issue of importance. This next section briefly reviews two of the most recent and relevant pieces of legislation currently being enforced.

Adoption & Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA)

One of the most sweeping child welfare legislations in decades, ASFA mandates agencies document making reasonable efforts to ensure children are placed in permanent homes in an expeditious manner. With the passing of ASFA, county workers were able to begin the process of terminating parental rights if children have been in out-of-home placements 15 of the previous 22 months. It also allows for concurrent planning of reunification with birth parents and adoption in certain circumstances. Furthermore, the Act seeks to eliminate barriers to adoption, including plans developed by states that address the use of cross- jurisdictional placement and diligent recruitment of adoptive families.

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)/ Interethnic Placement Act (IEP)

In order to decrease the disproportionate representation of Black children in the child welfare system, MEPA/IEP is intended to significantly decrease the length of time children remain in the child welfare system while waiting for an adoptive family. Government data shows that in FY2006 303,000 children entered the foster care system (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Of the children entering foster care, 135,354 were White and 80,212 of the children were Black. Conversely 135,945 White children exited the foster care system during the same time frame, while only 77,720 of those exiting were Black. As evidenced by these numbers, fewer Black children exited the foster care system than entered during the aforementioned fiscal year.

Because longer lengths of stay in the foster care system reportedly have negative consequences for children, it is imperative that permanency is achieved in a timely manner. Smith, Stormshak, Chamberlain and Whaley (2001) report the longer a child remains in foster care the greater the likelihood of their experiencing a placement disruption. Placement

disruptions, which are defined as the unplanned change in foster placement (Strijker, Knorth, Knot-Dickscheit, 2008), range as high as 57% for children still in care 18 months after placement (Smith, Stormshak, Chamberlain and Whaley 2001). Having to adjust to new rules, new environments and new schools, each move decreases a child's ability to trust adults and to develop healthy emotional relationships. Not having the psychological support of a stable family, children who remain in foster care experience maladjustment in their adult lives at a rate two to three times higher than their peers who were adopted. Conversely, youth who are adopted tend to develop trust in others and a positive sense of worth (Frey, Cushing, Freundlich and Brenner, 2008).

With placement disruption increasing the likelihood of subsequent disruptions (Smith, Stormshak, Chamberlain and Whaley 2001), failing to provide stability for youth in out- of-home placements heightens the chance that they will remain in the foster care system. Without this stability, teens aging out of the foster care system have less than a 50% rate of high school graduation (Collins, 2001). Less prepared than their peers, for self-sufficiency 30% of aging out youth report relying on public assistance, 50% experience serious money problems, 33% become involved in the criminal justice system and 39% have problems with housing, with 14% of the males and 10% of the females experiencing homelessness within one year of discharge. These statistics are supported by Courtney and Dworsky (2006), who found 37% of the youth in their study failed to graduate from high school or obtain a GED. In addition, 90% of youth earned less than $10,000 annually, causing the majority of the sample to experience financial hardships. Other findings showed 33% exhibited some form of mental illness and 28% and 20% had been arrested or incarcerated, respectively.

In promoting the best interest of the child, the second purpose of MEPA/IEP is to prevent discrimination in the matching and placement process on the basis of race, color or national origin of the child or adoptive family (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Presupposing that the practice of racially matching children and adoptive parents is in violation of the Civil Rights Act, MEPA/IEP prohibits the denial or delay of the placement of a Black child in a White family based on race. By supporting transracial placements, MEPA/IEP desires to eliminate the barrier to adoption previously created by race matching. MEPA/IEP legislates that White parents who are willing to parent Black children should be allowed to do so, rather than risking the possibility of the child's continued tenure in the foster care system.

Strategies to Increase Number of African American Adoptive Parents

The lack of available Black families to adopt should not imply that Blacks don't adopt. To the contrary, approximately 45% of the families inquiring about adoption at this researchers agency, are Black. However, with the number of Black children in the child welfare system within Allegheny County sometimes reaching 80%, the number of Blacks coming forward to adopt does not accommodate the number of children waiting for permanent families. The difference in the number of families agreeing to expand their families through adoption and the number of children waiting, provides the impetus for developing strategies to bring more Black families into the adoption process.

Prior to consenting to this version of MEPA/IEP the Congressional Black Caucus demanded the inclusion of language that mandated states develop and implement a plan of adoptive parent recruitment (McRoy, Mica, Freundlich & Kroll, 2007). In this provision, states are required to provide for the diligent recruitment of families that reflect the racial and cultural

characteristics of the youth who are in need of families (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). Rather than continue the practice of screening Black families out of the adoption approval process (McRoy, Mica, Freundlich & Kroll, 2007), MEPA/IEP dictates the development and implementation of strategies to incorporate cultural differences in the recruitment process. These strategies include targeting communities that reflect the race and culture of the children in care, as well as diverse methods of dissemination of information (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

Because caseworker biases and misunderstanding play a significant role in screening out Black families, the diligent recruitment requirement also mandates the inclusion of staff training in the state plan. Training staff to work with diverse populations should serve to mitigate the occurrence of eliminating individuals that do not fit the middle class definition of family. The inclusion of cultural training for staff is important given the fact that Black youth are 3 times more likely to be adopted by single female households, (McRoy, Mica, Freundlich & Kroll, 2007). Furthermore, 50% of Black adoptive mothers are reported to being at least 50 years of age. Being creative in their recruitment strategies, agencies are encouraged to become more open to other non-traditional families, such as single women and men and families living in low income communities. Increasing the pool of available Black families will increase the opportunity for Black children to be placed in families of the same race. Notwithstanding this however, White families are to be utilized as adoptive resources if a Black family is not available at the time placement is needed.

One Current Strategy to Address the Need to Increase Black Families

Making the increase of available Black families a priority, Allegheny County has contracted with this researcher's organization to develop and implement culturally competent recruitment strategies. Recruitment efforts include intensive community work, requesting the placement of brochures and posters in local businesses, providing coloring books with the organizations logo to schools, pediatrician offices and day care centers and adoption bookmarks in libraries. Making opportunities to speak on television and radio shows, as well as providing public service announcements, are done in markets that focus on the Black demographic. In efforts to recruit from places where Black families frequent, the organization has an intensive Ministry Outreach program and has developed relationships with approximately 100 houses or worship. As partners with the organization houses of worship have creatively offered their support of children in need of adoptive families. From taking special collections, placing pictures of the children in bulletins, allowing staff to speak to congregants and special groups, etc, each has made it a mission to assist the organization in finding families for Black children.

Legal Ramifications

While the focus of this policy is on Black children, theoretically MEPA/IEP covers all children in out –of- home care. The premise of the Act is to ensure all children are placed in stable, nurturing families that are committed to meeting their needs (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

Public and private agencies that practice adoption are also covered by this legislation. MEPA/IEP is guided by the principles of the Civil Rights Act (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2007), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race by any agency that receives

federal funding. Failure of organizations to comply with its mandates can result in the elimination of federal funding.

Implementation of MEPA/IEP has been an arduous process. Agencies have had a long standing history of practicing racial matching of children and adoptive families. Because of this, many agency policies needed to be revised to meet the legislative mandates of the Act (United States General Accounting Office, 1998). The initial enactment of MEPA in 1994 continued to give agencies discretion in their decisions to transracially place a Black child (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2007). However, prior to the dissemination of the regulations for compliance of MEPA, legislation was proposed to remove any barriers to adoption that may occur based on the discretion of caseworkers in the matching process. This led to the 1996 enactment of the Interethnic Placement Act (IEP) that prohibited the use of race in the matching and placement decisions of children in need of adoptive homes. With failure to comply with the mandates of MEPA/IEP resulting in financial penalties, states were forced to quickly develop and implement new adoption policies.

In addition, the Children's Bureau is also responsible for conducting Child and Family Service Reviews (CSFR), in order to monitor the implementation of MEPA/IEP (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). Through the CFSR, the Children's Bureau is able to ensure state compliance with Federal child welfare mandates. The process is established to track outcomes for children, as well as provide states with feedback for improvement of capacity building.

Current Impact of MEPA/IEP

The Government Accountability Office (2007) reports that the adoption of Black children remains consistently lower than that of their White counterparts. Additionally, the number of Black children who are adopted remains lower than the number of those who remain in foster care, at 27% and 32% respectively (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008). Research also indicates transracial adoptions have increased by an average of only 1% since the implementation of MEPA/IEP. Furthermore, the length of time Black children remain in foster care without permanent families has only decreased by one month since MEPA/IEP was enacted (Hansen & Pollack, 2007).

Additional Legislation

Adding to the transracial adoption controversy is the legislation supporting the importance of race and culture when considering the adoption of children from other races and cultures by Caucasian families. The Hague Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 (aka Hague Treaty) (Hawkins-Leon, 1998) requires consideration of a family's ability to meet the cultural needs of children and recommends training of families to increase their ability to do so (U.S. Department of State, 2008). Furthermore, as already mentioned, the Indian Nation took a stand against the placement of children from tribes into the homes of families that did not understand the cultures and traditions of Indian people. Their opposition to this practice led to the 1978 passage of The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which requires children of Indian parentage to be placed in homes that reflect their unique culture (United States Government Accountability Office, 2005). Finally, consideration of the need of the child to be raised in their

ethnic, religious, and cultural background was adopted by the United Nations during the 1989

Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Table 3
Legislative Consideration of Race

Legislation	Date	Comments Regarding the Importance of Race
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	1978	Foster/Adoptive families must reflect the race/culture of the child
Convention on the Rights of the Child**	1989	Placement of a child in a family of their racial background should be considered
Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)	1994	Foster Care/Adoptive placement decisions may not be based solely on the race of the child or family
Interethnic Placement Act (IEPA)	1996	Foster Care/Adoptive placement decisions may not be based on the race of the child or family
The Hague Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act**	2000	Consideration should be made of family's ability to recognize child's race

**** indicates international legislation**

Benefits to Adoption

The economic benefit associated with securing adoptive families can be seen in the

differences in the cost of foster care as compared to the cost of adoption. While the emotional

benefits of adoption are most important, the savings to government are irrefutable. Governmental

and local payments for foster care average approximately $258,000 annually per child (Hansen,

2006). However, the average cost for an adoption is approximately $115,000, yielding a savings

of $143,000 per child. In addition to a decrease in federal expenditures for foster care services,

adopting a child from the foster care system results in other savings to society. For instance,

children who are adopted are 34% less likely to be arrested and become participants in the

criminal justice system. With the annual cost of imprisonment being over $23,000 annually (The

Third Branch, 2004), the improved outcome for adopted youth yields a significant potential cost

savings.

Furthermore, Hansen (2006) found adopted youth earned over $9,000 more per year at the age of 30 than their peers who were not adopted. The differential in wage - earning potential has a direct impact on social welfare participation, adding credence to the need to increase the number of children adopted out of the foster care system.

Similarly, research provides evidence that youth who are adopted are 23% more likely to graduate high school and 110% more likely to graduate from college than their peers who are not adopted and age-out of the foster care system (Hansen, 2006). High school graduation has been found to be the biggest contributor of an adoptive youth's ability to earn a decent wage. Starting at a 37% increase in earnings, each additional year of education obtained beyond high school results in an additional 10% in earnings potential. Therefore, youth adopted from the foster care system have an increased likelihood of realizing the goal of workforce participation, rather than welfare dependency.

<center>The Transracial Adoption Debate</center>

Literature on the impact of transracial adoptions shows strong support both for and against the practice. Most literature regarding transracial adoption seems to fall within three categories (Howard, Royse, and Skerl, 1997): (1) opinions of professionals and adoptive parents, (2) the characteristics of adoptive parents, and (3) agency response to Caucasian families interested in adopting transracially.

The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) vehemently opposed the placement of African American children in Caucasian homes. In a 1972 position paper that discusses the importance of preserving families of African heritage, the NABSW (2003) states; "Culture is the essence of being human. Culture is the bridge that links the present with the past and the past with the future. Culture provides a sense of historical continuity". The concept of

cultural socialization (Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt and Gunnar, 2006) affords youth the opportunity to celebrate the values and traditions of African American culture, thereby building confidence and pride in their heritage. This ability to embrace the African American culture within the family unit is seen as essential in developing a positive self image.

The Importance of Developing a Positive Racial Identity

The issue of cultural awareness and the development of racial identity are the primary concerns of opponents of transracial adoption. It has been suggested that African American children raised by Caucasian parents and living in white neighborhoods would be more likely to develop racial identity problems and poor self esteem (Carter-Black, 2002). At the core of this issue is not the family's willingness, but rather, their ability to assist and encourage an African American youth in maintaining their cultural and racial identity. Because the African American youth is visibly different from the rest of the family, their status as an adopted child is apparent. While he cannot escape feeling different, it is the response received from the adoptive family that will determine the youth's ability to be fully accepting of himself as an African American.

In their discussion of racial identity development, Bianchi, Zea, Belgrave and Echeverry, (2002) discuss Helms' 4 stage process toward positive racial identity among African Americans. These stages include: conformity (internalizing White society's definition of one's racial group), dissonance (ambivalence and confusion regarding one's commitment to White society), resistance (idealizing one's socio-racial group and denigration of white culture), and internalization (positive racial self and ability to recognize and resist negative stereotypes). It is the view of opponents to transracial adoptions that reaching the fourth stage of positive racial

identity can only be obtained when living with a family of the same race. The concern does not necessarily center on a Caucasian family's inability to learn and therefore teach these skills, but rather, the lack of understanding of the emotional impact of racism and the likelihood that Caucasian families are more grounded in being 'colorblind'. It is imperative for white adoptive parents to recognize and celebrate the racial and cultural heritage of their African American child, who will have a more difficult time achieving a positive sense of self (McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, and Anderson, 1982). These researchers found that transracial adoptive parents were 'less likely to deliberately instruct their adopted children in their rich African culture and heritage'. Furthermore, teens adopted by same-race parents were much more open in their discussions about racial experiences with their parents than their Caucasian peers (Bradley, and Hawkins-Leon, 2002). These discussions are most likely to result in the White adoptive parent encouraging the youth to not be angry when confronted with racism, but rather to understand that everyone has to deal with some type of challenge based on the ignorance of others (Chimezie, 1975). Similarly, Lee, Grotevant), Hellerstedt, and Gunnar (2006), using data from the Minnesota International Adoption Project (MIAP), found the more 'colorblind' the adoptive parent the less likely they were to discuss race, culture and the realization of racism, and to participate in activities that celebrate their child's culture.

<center>Colorblindness in Adoption</center>

Those in support of transracial adoptions offer viewpoints as strong as those who oppose the practice. Recognizing the bleak outcomes associated with aging out (e.g., homelessness), proponents feel having a family of a different race outweighs the possibility of living a life of

uncertainty. While extreme in his opinion, Hayes (1993) stated not only do Black children have no need for racial identity, but have no right to develop such an identity or cultural awareness.

This lack of acknowledgement for what is real for the African American youth can lead to a sense of frustration and confusion for the youth. Identity Interruption Theory (Large & Marcussen, 2000) provides an explanation of the potential negative impact colorblindness can have on a youth's mental health. While perhaps unintentional, failure to acknowledge the youth's racial membership may cause psychological distress that, if gone unrecognized, increases in severity. This is supported by research conducted by Phelps, Taylor & Gerard (2001) that found African students attending American universities felt alienated and disconnected from the loss of family close by and their inability to maintain native traditions and ceremonies.

The implication is that youth with a developed racial identity and having the need to exhibit and participate in cultural values and activities will respond to this stress by over-exaggerating their perception of racial identity until the desired recognition is achieved (Burke, 1991). The reverse may also be true, resulting in the teen rejecting his racial identity, and assuming the cultural values of his adoptive family, if he believes that doing so will improve their perceptions of him. The stress associated with the embarrassment of being black is further exacerbated by the denouncement of the youth's race and culture in attempts to counteract the negative stereotypes others have associated with them, in order to gain majority group acceptance (VanderMolen, 2005/2006).

It is this psychological distress and its impending impact on self-esteem that is disconcerting for opponents of transracial adoption. While not discounting that family stability is critical in the development of emotionally healthy individuals, African American youth also need to be secure in their membership in the Black race. Opponents contend Black children need to be

raised in same- race homes in order to learn the process of navigating the majority culture, without needing to feel the pressure to forego the traditions of the African American culture. Referred to as a bi-cultural model of acculturation and assimilation, identity with the majority culture and the African American culture are viewed as separate concepts, with African Americans successfully being able to move within both components at varying times and to varying degrees (Porter & Washington, 1993).

With transracial adoption being mandated by federal regulation, it is imperative that research regarding the impact the practice has on youth continue. Whether for or against transracial adoption, understanding the youth perspective is critical in making these decisions. If a Black youth is against being placed in a White home, being forced into this situation sets both the youth and family up for the possibility of a placement disruption and the youth's return to the child welfare system.

Theoretical Consideration

Racial Identity and Development

At the forefront of the transracial adoption debate is the importance of Black youth to have the opportunity to develop and exhibit a positive racial identity. Those opposed to transracial adoption feel that this positive sense of self is necessary for Black youth to successfully maneuver in a society where racism and stereotypes are pervasive. Conversely, those in support of the practice believe adoption should be colorblind, favoring instead the positive impact associated with having a permanent family. However, race is a visual reality that does not need to be ignored. Love (2004) states colorblindness is a way to insist that race does not matter and to dispute and deny the experience of African Americans. The concept of

colorblindness implies that everyone is equal and fails to acknowledge the negative lived experiences of Blacks that these youth are most likely to encounter.

Predecessors to Racial Identity

In order to understand racial identity, it seems appropriate to first discuss earlier contributions to this concept. A major predecessor to racial identity theory can be found in the works of Mead. Mead (1934) theorized that the self alone did not exist. Instead he posited that the self came alive through the interaction and communication with others in society. According to Mead, the developmental acquisition of the self occurred in two parts; the 'I' which is the unique and creative part of the individual, and the 'Me', which represents the recognition of the expectations society associates with the individual. Being the predictable part of self (Janoski, Greg, Lepadatu 2007), the Me of self develops as it adapts to the experience the individual has with society (Dodds, Lawrence, Valsiner, 1997). According to Mead, this interaction was based on the ability of the mind to interpret symbols in conjunction with the experiences had in society. For Mead these interactions give way to the development of self as individuals assume certain roles, based in part on their interpretation of symbols and the way they are viewed by others. Based on Mead's theory, a child would have no sense of self if left alone in the world. However, it is when she begins interacting and communicating with particular and generalized representatives of society that she learns to interpret the symbols that define her specific role. For instance, a small child interprets the symbols of her role as a girl not based on her biologic makeup, but by playing mommy with her dolls, and house with her pretend kitchen set. The girl would then become competent in the interpretation of social symbols and responds to being

viewed as a girl by others. As the 'Me' of self develops, it continues to be influenced and impacted by the interactions with others.

As per Mead, the self is established based on the views of others in the group in which the individual is a member. Referred to as the generalized other, it is the attitude of the group that, through interaction with it, the individual learns how to internalize the meanings and values placed on the self, responding to them based on the overall expectation of the group (Janoski, Greg, Lepadatu 2007). It is through the control of the generalized other that the individual develops a sense of right and wrong and the foundation of their moral consciousness.

Asking the question of how people interact rather than why they interact, Mead also posited that there was more than one response to a situation, each valid in its own right. This suggests that an individual's roles are adjusted and readjusted based on the generalized other of the specific groups of membership, which directly impacts the interpretation of the current interaction.

As the self develops through societal interactions, there is an increased understanding of the values and meanings others place on the individual. The interpretation of these shared meanings is central to Mead's school of thought. Through the use of symbols, rituals and gestures individuals learn how to communicate, interact, react and respond to their environment.

Termed symbolic interaction by Blumer (1969), through interaction with the environment, individuals continuously interpret the actions of others and their response to those actions, as their experience changes. Important to this concept is the meaning the individual has associated with a particular action, and that these meanings are derived through interactions with others in society. Important to Blumer is the recognition that the interpretation that takes place

within an individual is not based on static, standardized interactions (Stryker, 2001). Rather, it is based on the need to assess, reassess, interpret and reinterpret each situation as they arise.

While Mead and Blumer contributed a great deal to the field, their positions were limited in their concepts of the relationship between the person and society. Their assertion that interpretations and behaviors undergo constant change fails to recognize the stability of society and that once established, meanings attached to objects seldom experience change (Stryker 2001). Developing the concept of structural symbolic interaction, Stryker posits that contemporary society is far more complex due to diversity of group memberships people are involved with. In contrast to the traditional symbolic interaction, Stryker (2007) introduces the notion that the structure of society often places boundaries and constraints on individuals. These constraints place limitations on the possibility of choices available to individuals depending on their membership in particular groups.

As individuals continue this process of becoming socialized in their interaction and communication, the identity begins to emerge. Based on Stryker's concept, as the developing identity of the Black youth is impacted by societal interaction, so does the recognition of the meaning society has placed on his being Black. This acknowledgement is accompanied by the disturbing realization that society has placed limitation on the ability to actualize goals the youth has aspired to.

Adolescent Identity Development

While these contributions offered perhaps preliminary foundation regarding the self, they fail to provide a developmental process to identity formation. One of the earliest contributors to providing this information was Erik Erikson. Erikson developed 8 stages of identity spanning the

life cycle from infancy to adolescence. During each cycle the individual goes through the process of exploring their current stage and the changes required by the next stage. The end of the transition between stages is marked by what Erikson termed 'identity crisis" (Thom & Coetzee, 2004), which is defined as the conflict that is occurring between the two stages.

Important to this particular study is Erikson's fifth stage of identity vs, identity confusion (Atalay, 2007), which occurs during adolescence. It is during this time that the adolescent is concerned not only about how he sees himself, but with how others see him in the world. The lack of continuity between these two concepts results in the inability of the adolescent to find himself and how he fits in the larger society. Successfully emerging from this stage may be challenging for the Black adolescent (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006), who struggles between how he perceives himself and the often times negative perceptions society has of him as a person of color. Confronted with the duality of their identity, Black adolescents must undergo an additional process in order to feel good about and embrace their race, while recognizing that obstacles will be present due to their skin color. Erikson (1964) also discusses the difficulty of Black youth to feel complete if their environment fails to accept them and denies them the right to be proud of their identity and they ways in which they express it.

A longitudinal study conducted by Seaton, Yip and Sellers (2009) seems to support Erikson's assertion. The researchers found that perceived racial discrimination was related to negative views society has towards Blacks. This perception of racism and mistreatment may also be linked to negative outcomes for Black youth if they are not adequately prepared to cope with these experiences. According to Choi, Harachi and Gillmore (as cited by Wakefield and Hudley,2007), the development of a strong positive Black identity is essential in assisting youth in avoiding anti-social behaviors, including drug use and violence. A study to compare the

identity development of Black and White South African adolescents conducted by Thom and

Coetzee (2004) illustrates how continuity between self and societal perception can impact the

identity formation of Black youth. This study found the Black youth in the study had a higher

sense of racial identity than their White peers. One of the proposed reasons for this difference is

in the cultural pride of the adolescents and the recognition of their Blackness following

apartheid. For these young people, the once devalued Black culture had been elevated to a

positive status, resulting in congruence between how they viewed themselves and how they were

viewed by society.

Racial Identity Development

With recognition of the additional steps needed by Black youth in achieving a positive

identity, research began to expand on Erikson's concept by focusing on the development of

racial identity. As previously stated, having to come to terms with the realities of racism and

discrimination due to the color of their skin (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, Foust, 2009), is a step

in the process of Black youth developing a positive identity that their White peers do not face. A

positive racial identity is a necessary development in the Black youth's ability to protect

themselves from acts of racism and discrimination (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

Like all young people, Black youth enter adolescence having previously paid little

attention to race and having little if any knowledge of racism. It is not until their first encounter

with a racist experience that the Black adolescent begins to realize that being racially different is

often seen as negative by others. This is important to this study because many of the youth

participants may have entered adolescence while in the child welfare system and residing in a

residential facility, primarily staffed by White professionals. Not having the emotional support of

their family and community is likely to determine the youth's ability to maneuver their first encounter with racism as well as the development of a positive racial identity, if staffs lack the knowledge necessary to foster such growth.

One of the earliest works of significance in the area of racial identity development was done by Cross (Plummer, 1996), who developed a psychological theory of nigrescence. Defined as the process of becoming Black (1995), Cross proposed nigrescence as a 5 stage process.

During the first stage, pre-encounter, individuals see the world through the framework of the majority culture. For example, concepts such as beauty and intellect are largely associated with the dominant culture (Tatum, 1997). With mainstream media, books and educational materials representing the dominant culture, Blacks in this stage of development are led to believe that being White is superior. Accepting the negativity of being Black associated with the White point of view often results in anti-Black feelings. With this stage of development most associated with the young adolescent, youngsters often prefer to think of society as colorblind, believing racism is non-existent (Plummer, 1996). Those holding this belief often feel that problems experienced by Blacks are due to free will (Cross, 1995). Furthermore, they prefer not to be labeled as Black, but rather as Americans who happen to be Black.

The transition to stage 2, encounter, comes as a result of the individual having a racist experience that opens their eyes to the realities of racism that exists in society. It is during this experience the individual realizes that there is disconnect between how they have been viewing themselves and the way they are viewed by the larger society. Recognizing the salience being Black has in the larger society, individuals in the encounter stage must begin to incorporate this viewpoint into their self-identity. Youth residing in residential facilities may have additional difficulties in this stage if the staff assigned to work with these youth lack the understanding of

the important role this plays in the youth developing a positive racial identity. While the racist experience referenced here is often a major event, it does not have to be (Cross, 1995). The transition to the encounter stage can also come as the result of an accumulation of many seemingly smaller racial episodes that push the individual to their breaking point. Confronted with feelings such as confusion, anger and hurt, it is at this time the individual goes through the first step of the encounter phase (1995) of experiencing and personalizing the event. During the second step in this stage, the individual makes the conscious decision to begin the process of exploring who they are in the quest of developing their new Black identity.

As the Black individual tackles with the development of their new identity, they move into what is considered to be the most difficult stage (Plummer, 1996) in Cross's process of nigrescence. Making the transition to the third stage of immersion/emersion, the individual begins by completely distancing himself from the White culture, including personal interactions, and totally embraces everything that is Black. Perhaps only wearing African garb or participating only in Black cultural and entertainment events, the individual in the stage is attempting to illustrate that they are transforming into a real Black person. As they move through this stage, thoughts that their identity is based on an either/or proposition (1995) begin to become more equalized, The end of this stage is categorized by the development of an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses associated with being Black and the ability to move forward in identity development with a more rational ideology (Cross, 1995).

Having a new self confidence and an inner security regarding their Blackness (1995), the individual is now able to move to the internalization stage where they begin to participate in activities outside of the Black culture. No longer concerned with other's views regarding their Blackness, the individual is able to relinquish anti-white views, while putting the realities of

systemic racism into a proper perspective. The individual achieving this stage is now considered

a psychologically healthy individual. Committed to being Black, the individual in this stage

exhibits self confidence in who she is, while gaining the ability to lose previous prejudices with

regards to race. An important outcome of this stage is the individual's new found ability to

socialize their children in the cultural pride representative of their new identity.

The difference between the internalization stage and the final stage of

internalization/commitment (Cross) is the commitment of the individual to immerse themselves

in Black causes. Those who move into this stage make a conscious effort to become involved in

activities that will have an impact on systemic racism and policies impacting the entire Black

race (Figure 2).

5 Stages of Nigrescence

Internalization - Commitment

Pre-encounter White point of view

Psychologically Healthy Racial Identity

Internalization self confidence

Immersion = All things Black
Emmersion = What it means to be Black

Encounter Experience with racism

Stage 1
Stage 2
Stage 3
Stage 4
Stage 5
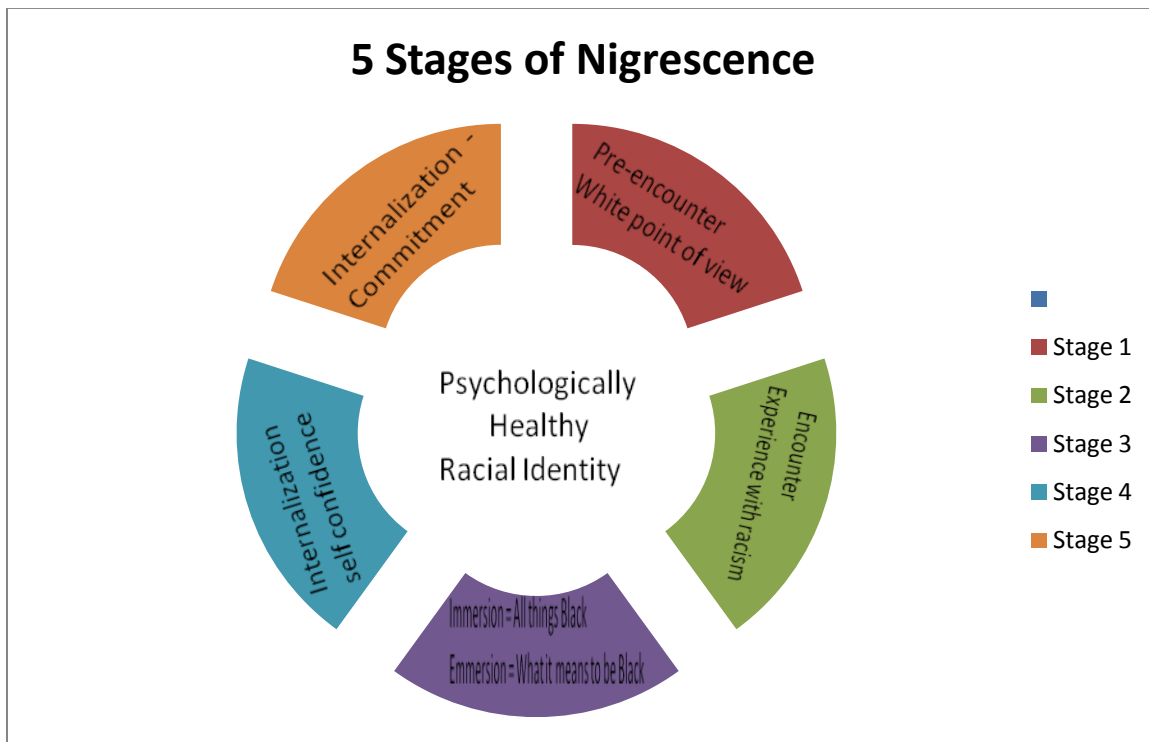
Figure 2. Cross Stages of Nigrescence

In efforts to better describe the process of racial identity development, Cross later modified the language of his model from stages to statuses. Whereas stages denote the successful transition from one step in the process to another (Davis, Aronson & Salinas, 2006), statuses refers to the notion that an individual may in fact navigate between stages as a means to reassessing new experiences with racism. An example of this would be the individual, who after reaching the internalization status, experiences a racist event. He or she might return to the immersion/emersion status to readdress and redefine his/her identity as a Black person.

Similarly, Parham (as cited in Tatum, 1997) describes the concept of statuses as the process as recycling through nigrescence statuses in order to bring a new experience with racism to resolution. In doing this, Parham (1989) suggests that the individual has not changed their Black identity, but rather it is modified and enhanced as they move through various stages of life.

Cross later revised and expanded the nigrescence theory to better describe overarching themes (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002) rather than statuses of racial identity. Eliminating encounter and internalization-commitment, the other statuses found in the original model (pre-encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization) remained with the addition of several sub-categories that further expand the concept of varying degrees of identity. The expanded nigrescence model is as follows (Figure 3):

- Pre-Encounter
    - Assimilation – For individuals in this category, race is not salient (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). Having a pro-American attitude (Jones, Cross &DeFour, 2007), Blacks who are assimilationists refer to themselves as Americans and seldom as a member of a racial group.

- o Miseducation – Blacks in this phase of identity development hold fast to the stereotypical descriptions of Blacks. This would include the belief that Blacks don't work hard enough (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006).

- o Self-Hatred – Individuals in this phase are upset about, and hate being Black (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell & Fhagen-Smith, 2002).

- Immersion/Emersion

  - o Anti-White – After having a personal experience with racism, Blacks transition from pre-encounter to immersion/emersion. During this phase individuals often have a great deal of anger (Worrell & Watson, 2008), both at Whites for the unfair treatment and oppression of Blacks, and themselves for not having previously recognized the racism that exists.

  - o As they begin to emerge from this phase, the decrease in anti-White sentiments begins (Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006) as recognition of differences between Whites and Blacks begin to surface

- Internalization

  - o Afro-centric – Pride in the newly formed positive Black identity is expressed in most aspects of the individual's life (Whitaker & Neville, 2010), with afro-centric attitudes and values being foundational in their daily living (Worrell & Watson, 2008).

  - o Multicultural – Blacks in this final phase of identity development have the ability to recognize and accept other cultural and ethnic groups (Jones, Cross & DeFour, 2007), and consciously socialize with a diverse group of people.

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                        │   Pre-encounter  │
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   │  Assimilation │      │   Self Hate  │      │  Miseducation│
   ╰───────────────╯      ╰──────────────╯      ╰──────────────╯
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                        ◇──────────────────◇
                        │    Experience    │
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                    │   Recognition of Racial  │
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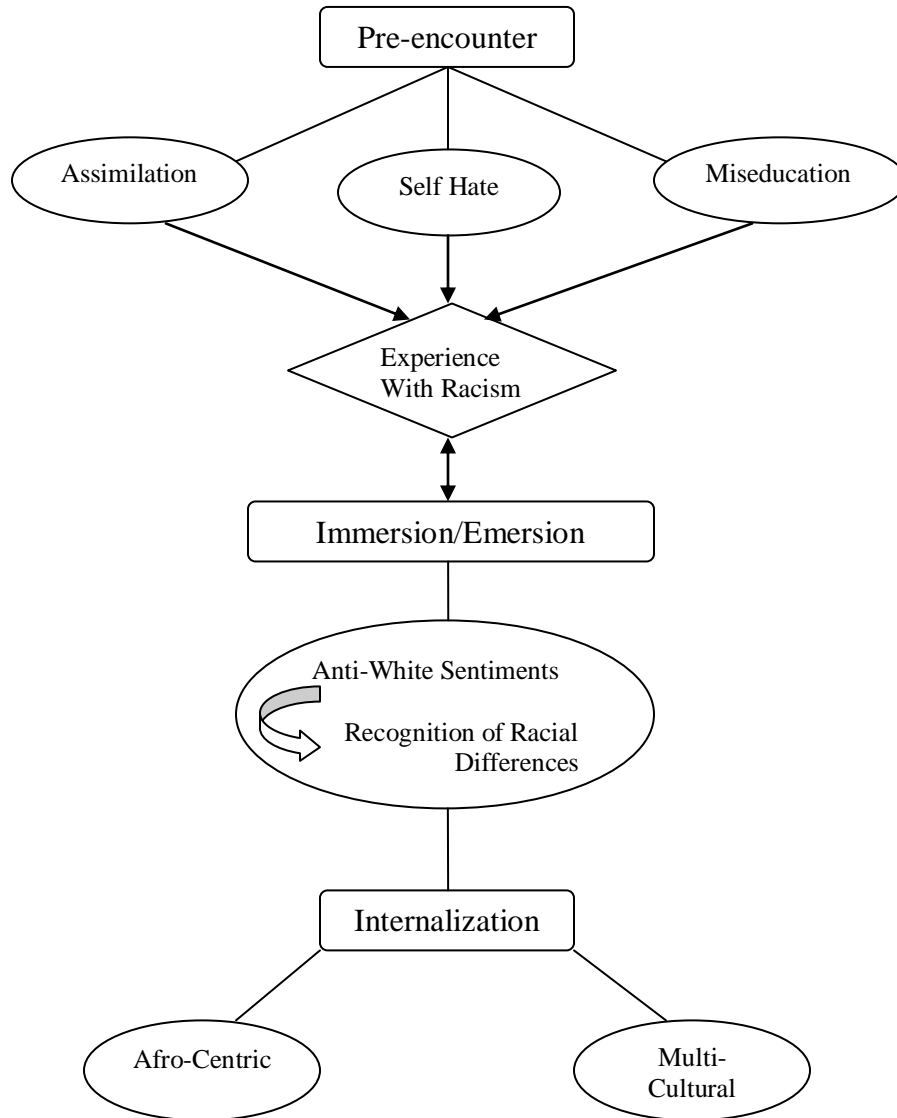
Figure 3. Cross Expanded Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity

  While Cross and his colleagues view racial identity as a developmental process that is

similar to the entire racial group (Vandiver, Worrell & Delgado-Romero, 2009), Sellers suggests

the discussion of racial identity should include the uniqueness of each individual within the

group. The distinctive qualities of each individual are based in part on the significance race plays

in each of their lives. Because each individual assesses different meanings to their racial identity,

it is difficult to collectively place everyone into one category (Hudson Banks & Kohn-Wood,

2007). Rather, Seller's development of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) suggests the ability for individuals to occupy more than one dimension at once. The MMRI is comprised of four components, each measured on a range from low to high.

- Centrality – Describes the significance an individual places on being Black. Centrality takes into account the fact that individuals have multiple identities of which race is only one (Chavous, Hilkene Bernat, Schmeelk-Cone, Caldwell, Kohn-Wood & Zimmerman, 2003). Considered similar to a trait (Vandiver, Worrell & Delgado-Romero, 2009), centrality determines to what level race is at the center of an individual's perception of himself.

- Salience – Describes the importance of race to an individual's identity at a specific point in time (Walsh, 2001). Interacting with the individual's personal definition of race (Vandiver, Worrell & Delgado-Romero, 2009), salience is viewed as the component in Seller's model that influences behaviors and reactions to racist situations and experiences. Because of how it impacts behaviors, salience is viewed as the concept that mediates the other components of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity.

- Racial Regard – Describes to what extent an individual has positive or negative feelings with regards to being Black (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyen, 2008). This dimension is divided into two sub-categories.
  - Private Regard – Is the measure of how positively or negatively an individual views Blacks and their membership in the Black race (Harper, 2007)
  - Public Regard – Measures the individual's perception and beliefs with regards to how society views the Black race.

- Ideology – Refers to the beliefs and attitudes (Hudson Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007) an individual holds with regards to how Blacks should interact with the larger society. The MMRI describes four philosophies an individual can ascribe to. Since the MMRI has been conceptualized as situational, individuals can endorse any one or multiple ideologies.
  - Nationalist – This ideology describes the individual's feelings regarding the uniqueness of the Black race.
  - Oppressed Minority – Embracing this ideology an individual connects the oppression of Blacks with other oppressed populations.
  - Assimilationist – Ascribing to this philosophy individuals endorse the similarities between Blacks and the whole of American society.
  - Humanist – In this category, Blacks see themselves as part of the human race.

While Cross' concept of racial identity development is a process that views Blacks as a homogeneous group, and Sellers looks at the heterogeneity of Black identity (Hudson Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007), it would appear appropriate that both concepts could be used simultaneously. For instance, an individual with low private regard and high humanist ideology (MMRI), would seem likely to fall within the pre-encounter status of the CRIS.

Attempting to master a positive sense of self at the same time as being confronted with racist ideologies that insist one is inferior to the dominant society is an obstacle that Black youth face throughout adolescence. The inability to develop a positive racial identity or having to deal with acts of discrimination can lead to internal trauma and mental health and other negative outcomes. Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards and Ragsdale (2009) found the higher an adolescent's racial identity the less likely they are to exhibit symptoms of depression and

anxiety. While most of the research regarding the psychological impact of racial discrimination has been conducted with adults (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin & Lewis (2006), a brief review of the literature on youth seems to support these findings.

Black Youth Experiences with Stereotypes and Discrimination

In a study of 314 Black youth between eleven and seventeen years of age, Sellers, et. al. (2006) found the majority of adolescents experience acts of discrimination on a regular basis. Experiences of sample participants ranged from being talked down to and thought of as less intelligent, to the more serious incidents of name calling and being threatened. The results of the study indicate that Black youth with high public regard (holding the belief that society holds a positive view of Blacks) also had a high level of psychological well being. Conversely, those youth who perceive the attitudes held regarding Blacks, by others, as being negative experience increased psychological issues including stress and anxiety. However, the latter youth have also developed coping mechanisms that assist them in buffering the effects of the discrimination experienced. The notion of Black youth consistently experiencing discrimination is supported by Banks and Kohn-Wood (2007). The results of the study of 194 Black college students indicated having experienced such events as being stared at, being treated disrespectfully, and the expectation that their work would be inferior.

Similarly, in a study to determine the relationship between self esteem, racial identity and mental health symptoms, Mandara, Richards, Gaylord-Harden and Ragsdale (2009) found that the higher level of racial identity exhibited by an individual the lower the level of depressive symptoms. Furthermore, an increase in racial identity of study participants between the 7th and 8th grades resulted in a significant decrease in depressive symptoms during the same time period.

The psychological impact of having to deal with societal racism and discrimination can have additional negative effects, including on the youth's academic achievement (Lambert, Herman, Bynum & Ialongo, 2009). Perceiving they are considered less intelligent, and therefore not expected or encouraged to excel, by both peers and teachers can weigh having on the minds of Black youth. In addition to traversing through the challenge of normal adolescent identity development, Black youth who experience racism at this young age are shown to have lower self esteem (Nyborg & Curry, 2003) and feelings of hopelessness. Because the color of their skin is not a factor in their ability to become successful (Ford & Harris, 1997), White teens are spared the addition of race related stress and anxiety during adolescent development. Consistent with Stryker's (2007) thought that Black youth undergo the process of understanding that societal racism places barriers with regards to their ability to fully realizing their desires, these feelings of hopelessness yield a decrease in academic performance (Lambert, Herman, Bynum & Ialongo, 2009). Realizing that many teachers hold the belief that Black students are not capable of academic achievement, many Black youth become anxious and depressed, subsequently giving up on their educational pursuit.

With the circulation of news stories, such as Don Imus referring to the Black females of Rutger's basketball team as 'nappy headed ho's', Susan Smith who blamed the death of her children on a Black man who jumped in her car and drove away with them, and most recently the New York nun who stated she was raped by a Black man, Black youth are left to wonder why they are so despised and rejected by the society they are a part of. When faced with academic tasks, the performance of Black youth is often hindered by thoughts of being targeted or judged (Steele & Aronson, 1995) if they do not perform as well as their White peers. Termed stereotype threat, many Black youth become so anxious about the fear of confirming these negative beliefs

(Harper, 2007), that they either disengage from the academic process or are highly motivated to perform.

How a youth responds to stereotype threat has been found to be related with the type of threat they are confronted with. Davis, Aronson and Salinas (2006) found that low stereotype threat, which is associated with non-evaluative academic processes, yield equal results for both Black and White students. Conversely, high threat diagnostic test resulted in an increase in anxiety for Black youth over being thought of as less intelligent, ultimately impacting their performance. Even youth who would be considered as scoring high on the internalization status discussed by Cross (1995), and who do not believe the stereotypes, have their performance effected in high stereotype threat situations (Aronson, Fried & Good, 2002), due to the anxiety over their desire to dispel the myths regarding their ability.

With regards to low stereotype threat in particular, Davis, Aronson and Salinas (2006) found that positive racial identity does act as a buffer to internalizing the negative beliefs of others. While some Black youth buffer stereotypes by downplaying their race and taking on the characteristics associated with being White (Harper, 2007), they do not do as well academically as their Black peers who embrace and celebrate their Black culture and the historical importance of education and academic achievement.

Assistance from Parents

Black youth who are able to achieve academically despite the stereotypes and racism that impede others, have been found to be grounded in the messages they receive regarding these issues, from their parents. Parental lessons ranging from instilling positive self esteem to teaching children the Black history that is consistently omitted from mainstream education to the

unfortunate truth that the interaction had with Officer Friendly in Kindergarten is quite different and often dangerous for the Black male child, are provided to children as they transition into adolescence. Racial socialization is defined by Hughes (2003) as communicating the values and attitudes about race to their children. Positive racial socialization of children by their parents has been found to be correlated with improved adolescent outcomes. Recognizing that experiences with racism and discrimination can have negative effects on their children (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009; Davis, Aronson and Salinas, 2006; Steele & Aronson, 1995), black parents feel responsible for ensuring their children are prepared for the inevitable experience of discrimination.

There are several types of messages given by parents to their children that aid in assisting them in dealing with societal racism and discrimination (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Two of the most common messages are racial/cultural pride and preparation for bias. In the first racial socialization technique of cultural and racial pride, parents provide strong, positive images of being Black. These interactions result in the likelihood that their children will hold race as positively salient in their lives. Parents' overtly convey this message by telling and instilling in their children, that despite the obstacles and barriers that will be placed before them, that through perseverance their dreams can become reality (Davis & Stevenson, 2006). Parents also provide information regarding Black history and the important people who have helped shape society (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). While these messages may be subtle when children are younger, they are likely to be increased and intensified as youth transition into adolescence (Hughes & Chen, 1997) and are cognitively able to understand the impact of discrimination. Overt messages that promote racial pride include Black artwork and literature in the home as well as attending and participating in cultural events and activities.

Part of this maturation process undergone by adolescents entails their becoming more autonomous individuals (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). As they begin to participate in activities independently from their parents there is an increased probability that Black adolescents will also begin to encounter acts of discrimination and racism. Preparation for Bias is the process of parents being proactive in assisting their children in developing protection and coping mechanisms in order to mitigate the effects of racism (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009; Davis & Stevenson, 2006). Preparing adolescents to deal with acts of discrimination means openly discussing the painful truth of the probability of their being treated unfairly based on their skin color.

As difficult as these messages may be to give to their children, research indicates that doing so increases wellbeing outcomes for the adolescent. Harris-Britt, Valrie and Kurtz-Costes (2007) found that adolescents that received little racial pride and bias preparation messages from their parents had an increased occurrence of low self esteem. This would appear to be related to the youth not having the coping mechanisms in place to effectively handle being confronted with discriminatory and racists acts. Similarly, Davis and Stevenson (2006) found the positive racial messages conveyed by Black parents were positively related to decreased reports of depressive symptoms. This supports other research (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Neblett, White, Ford, Philip, Nguyen & Sellers, 2008), which indicate racial socialization provide Black adolescents with the emotional protection needed to improve self esteem and academic achievement, as well as the ability to deal with systemic racism and societal discrimination.

One of the main tenants of this study is the racial identity development of Black adolescents as it pertains to their willingness to be placed transracially in White adoptive families.

Racial Identity Development of White Youth and the Concept of White Privilege

For White teens, the challenge of normal adolescent development is not compounded by their race. This is not to suggest Whites do not go through a process of identity. Through the development of racial identity, Whites must acknowledge the white privilege they are afforded and recognize the systemic racism that exists in society (Tatum, 1997)

To understand the concept of white privilege, White individuals must come to a conscious realization that the color of their skin affords them certain benefits not provided to non-whites (Applebaum, 2008). While most White's are taught that racism is an act that denies individuals complete freedom, they are not taught that privilege is in fact a part of that act. Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes white privilege as being "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (p.109). In her essay 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, McIntosh provides a list of 50 items that she can be confident in based on privilege. These items include:

1) If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.

2) I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

3) While most Whites will assert that they are not racist, reviewing items such as those listed above brings with it the reality that the United States is not a meritocracy (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994) where all members have been assimilated. To obtain a complete picture of racial identity, research has begun investigating White racial identity development. Since race is a social construct based on skin color, most Whites don't think in personal terms of race; rather, White is the benchmark/standard by which other races are held up to (Applebaum, 2008). The ability for Whites to acknowledge their Whiteness (Hardiman as cited in Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001) is important in understanding the development of White racial identity and how racism also affects White people.

4) One of the earliest tools to assess the process of White identity development was created by Janet Helms (as cited in Tatum, (1997), who posits the process as going from "abandonment of individual racism to the recognition of and opposition to institutional and cultural racism". According to Helms, this process occurs in six statuses (p 94-95).

5) Status 1: Contact – In this first stage of development Whites generally approach their whiteness as a non-issue. Considering themselves as being normal, many lack an understanding of the benefits from privilege they have been afforded. Even those individuals who consider themselves colorblind don't challenge the racial status quo (Hardiman as cited in Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001) and how not doing so makes them participants in the systemic racism in society. Despite having good intentions, colorblindness attempts to make injustice invisible (Applebaum, 2008) in a society where race still matters and people are treated differently because of it.

6) Status 2: Disintegration – This stage is marked by the development of a close relationship between a White individual and someone of color. It is through these relationships that Whites begin noticing signs of racism (Tatum, 1997) and the recognition of their receiving differential treatment. The anxiety invoked in Whites due to this realization results in either an avoidance of inter-racial interactions (Hays, Chang & Havice, 2008) and/or discussion about race with other Whites who continue to believe the non-existence of racism.

7) Status 3: Reintegration – Following the moral dilemma of having to choose between one's racial group and humanism (Hardiman as cited in Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001), the third stage of White identity development is marked with the idealization of the White race. Having the need to relieve the stress and anxiety associated with the previous stage (Tatum, 1997), Whites revert to the notion that racism really doesn't exist. The tendency at this stage is to blame Blacks for their situation and their ability to change things if they would get with the program. Understanding and accepting the benefits that go along with being White, the extreme views during this stage encompass the feelings of white superiority being innate (Marshall, 2002), with some going as far to perceive that it is they who are being persecuted for their whiteness by non-whites.

8) Status 4: Pseudo-independence – Beginning to feel as comfortable interacting with Blacks as they are with Whites (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994), individuals who have transitioned to this stage often have a deceptive tolerance for non-whites (Hardiman as cited in Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001), and/or are very comfortable when in conversation with Black acquaintances (Tatum, 1997). Furthermore, while Whites in

this stage intellectually understand systemic and institutional racism, they quite often are not sure what to do about it.

9) Status 5: Immersion/Emersion – As they move toward completion of identity development, Whites in this stage seek out other like-minded individuals who are further ahead in the process (Tatum, 1997). Having arrived at an understanding of the racist ideologies that permeate society (Daniels, 2001), these individuals find overt expressions of racism intolerable (Marshall, 2002). Those in this stage of development acknowledge that they have benefitted from White privilege (Hardiman as cited in Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001), which has, perhaps unintentionally, made them participants in societal racism. Because of this, they have seriously explored the process of redefining their Whiteness in a positive manner (Marshall, 2002) and not one as victimizer (Tatum, 1997).

10) Status 6: Autonomy – With a heightened awareness of White privilege and racism, individuals in this final stage of development desire to advocate for social injustice and inequality (Hays, Chang & Havice, 2008).

Like the status process described in Helm's Black racial identity model, having reached self-actualization at this stage, is not the culmination of the developmental process. Rather, as the individual experiences new events and challenges related to race, they will cycle through the statuses (Tatum, 1997), re-examining and re-defining their Whiteness.

White Colorblindness and It's Potential Consequences on Black Youth

With Whites not experiencing events of racism and discrimination, most lack a clear understanding of the potential detrimental effects these events have on Blacks. For White teens,

the challenge of normal adolescent development is not compounded by the need to assess where and how they fit in to the larger society based on their race. This is not to suggest Whites do not go through a process of identity. However, whereas the goal of the Black adolescent is the development of a healthy racial identity, Tatum (1997) states the goal for Whites is to develop an identity based on what is reality rather than that of White privilege.

This concept is particularly important as it relates to Black youth residing in group home facilities that are staffed by White individuals. If these workers believe in the notion of colorblindness, and lack an understanding of the impact of White privilege, they may not have a conscious realization that the color of their skin affords them certain benefits not provided to non-whites (Applebaum, 2008). Playing a pseudo-parental role for youth in congregate care, Black youth are reliant on their White caregivers to provide them with the racial socialization messages (Davis & Stevenson, 2006) that are necessary to assist them in overcoming obstacles and racial barriers. This becomes particularly important as the Black youth become more autonomous and receives the privilege of participating in activities apart from the group home, where they are protected from many overt racist experiences. Activities such as going to the mall, participating in community sports and seeking employment can be troubling to the Black youth if they have not received messages of racial pride and preparation for bias (Hughes & Chen, 1997) that adequately prepare them (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009) for the racism that exists outside of the group home world in which they live.

Racial Identity Measurements

Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS)

Several tools of racial identity development have been developed to measure Cross's nigrescence model. One of the most widely used tools, the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS), was developed in 1990 by Helms and Parham (as cited in Davis, Aronson & Salinas, 2006) and is used to assess an individual's level of racial identity. The BRIAS is a 60-item, paper and pencil self report questionnaire that assesses the process of moving from downgrading one's Blackness (I believe that White people are more intelligent than Blacks) (Harkley, McLellan & Randall, 2002), to full acceptance and embracing of their membership in the Black community (I have a positive attitude about myself because I am Black), based on the attitudes of respondents.

In their review of the literature, Lemon and Waehler (1996) cite research that questions the validity of the BRIAS. In efforts to assess the stability and construct validity of the BRIAS, these researchers conducted a test-retest study of the instrument. Using a sample of 77 Black college students, Lemon and Waehler found that while the coefficients were statistically significant at p<,01, the psychometric properties of the BRIAS range between .52 and .66, falling below the recommended minimum of .70. While these numbers might suggest problems with the measurement, Lemon and Waehler discuss a possible explanation for this lack of stability. Citing Parham (1989), Lemon and Waehler discuss the possible cyclical nature of Black identity, indicating that while individuals may fall in the same nigrescence status, they may be doing so at different times in life experiences. Rather than dismissing the use of the BRIAS, the researchers suggest further users of the tool indicate in their findings that the results are based on that specific time period and conditions.

Later research using the BRIAS, provide statistics that appear to increase the validity and reliability of the measurement. Pillay (2005) utilized the BRIAS to study the relationship between racial identity attitudes, acculturation and gender and the psychological health of Black college students. Using a sample of 136 Black college students, Pillay found a significant relationship between the four statues of the BRIAS, (pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization) and psychological mental health. However, taken alone the pre-encounter and encounter statuses showed stronger relationships as predictors of psychological health. The weaker relationships found in the immersion-emersion and internalization statuses may be explained due to the lack of ability for the students to emerge themselves in Black culture and activities and/or withdraw from interactions with Whites because of their attendance at a predominantly White institution in a mostly White area.

Davis, Aronson and Salinas (2006) conducted a study to assess the effect racial identity has as a moderator of stereotype threat. In this study, the BRIAS was utilized to assess 120 Black college students who were presented with one of three stereotype threat situations with regards to taking the practice GRE exam:

- Low threat: Verbal instructions indicated research was only concerned about participant responses to challenging situations
- Medium & High Threat: Verbal instructions indicated that the completion of the task was directly measuring their intellectual ability.

The results of this study indicated that the absence of anxiety over performing poorly as stereotypically expected because of their race was positively correlated with the outcomes of the GRE practice test. Furthermore, those students with an internalized racial identity, thereby

confident in their status as a member of the Black race, also performed better on the exam than their peers who had not achieved the internalization status of identity development.

Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS)

The CRIS is a measurement tool also developed to operationalize Cross' nigrescence theory of racial identity development. Questions on the CRIS indicate the movement through and level of racial identity development of respondents (Worrell & Watson, 2008), from I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American (Pre Encounter), to Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black (Pre-Encounter Self Hatred), to I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone (Internalization Multiculturalist). Having been used in multiple studies, Simmons, Worrell and Berry (2008) sought to assess the internal consistency and validity of several racial identity measurements, including the CRIS. Using a sample of 225 Black college students from both predominantly White and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU's), participants completed the CRIS which was then quantitatively analyzed. Scores for reliability, based on Cronbach's Alpha ranged from .76 to .88 for all CRIS subscales. These scores would support the replicability of the CRIS to other studies. Additionally, the study found significant validity in the CRIS, which when combined with the reliability scores, supports the use of the CRIS in research involving racial identity.

Jones, Cross and DuFour (2007) conducted a study using the CRIS to assess if racial identity acts as a buffer to racist stress events, racist stress appraisal and mental health. Using a sample of 310 Black females (self identified as Afro-Caribbean or African American), who attended 3 colleges in urban settings, the findings of this study support other research (Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards & Ragsdale, 2009; Sellers, et. al, 2006; Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007;

Lambert, et. al, 2009) which suggest those with higher racial internalization scores are less likely to experience mental health related issues despite experience with racism.

Whittaker and Neville (2010) studied the relationship between patterns of racial identity attitudes and psychological well-being. Cluster analyses to determine if meaningful groups emerge were conducted to determine if a pattern exists that would be consistent with Cross' model of racial identity development. Sampling a group of 317 Black college students, results of this study indicate a positive relationship between those endorsing the internalization-multiculturalists ideology and the highest level of psychological well-being. As previously aforementioned in the discussion regarding Cross' extended nigrescence model of racial identity development, it is posited that those embracing the internalization-multiculturalist ideology are comfortable both with their pro-Black attitude and in their ability and desire to interact with all races and cultures.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity- Teen (MIBI-t)

The original version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) was developed by Sellers et al (1997) to operationalize the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. Recognizing the MIBI, in addition to other measurements of racial identity, focused on the late adolescents and emerging adults, Scottham, Sellers and Nguyen (2008) developed the MIBI-t for use with early to middle aged adolescents. Both the MIBI and the MIBI-t operationalize three dimensions; centrality (I feel close to other Black people), regard (I am proud to be Black) and, ideology Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in this society) of the MMRI.

In order to validate the development and use of the MIBI, Scottham et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal study on a sample of 489 Black teens, to assess the psychometric characters of the instrument. Through the use of focus groups, the researchers developed a 37-item tool that includes 7 sub-scales of 3 items each. Using Cronbach's Alpha, followed by the Spearman Brown formula, the resulting alpha scores ranged from .75 to .88, placing all dimensions of the scale above the recommended minimum alpha of .70. The results of this study indicate good internal validity, making the MIBI-t a good fit with the MMRI as a tool to measure the racial identity of the younger adolescent.

Smalls, White, Chavous and Sellers (2007), utilized the MIBI-t to explore the understanding teens have with relation to racial identity, socialization and racial experiences and how this understanding influences academic outcomes. This article reports wave one of a longitudinal study sampling 390 7th to 10th grade students. The results of this study indicated that those students who endorsed the assimilationist ideology of the MMRI have increased anxiety over the possibility of being considered over-achievers by their peers. This group was also found to experience more school related behavior problems than their peers. Conversely, those who positively endorse their Black identity were more likely to have better academic achievement outcomes.

Stevenson and Arrington (2009) utilized the MIBI-t with 108 6th to 10th graders to determine if racial socialization acts as a mediator of positive racial identity and perceived racism on adolescents. The results of the study indicate that older youth report experiencing racism more than their younger peers. Furthermore, youth who reported living in Black communities and having discussions with their parents regarding racial pride and legacy were better prepared to deal with experiences with racism than their peers who lived lifestyles where

nationalist ideology and colorblindness were foundational. Similarly, youth with high racial

centrality had lower public regard scores which is indicative of not placing as much weight on

the feelings society has of Blacks; showing instead higher scores on private regard with regards

to their membership in the Black race.

Additional Measurements

Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization (TERS)

The TERS was created by Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor and Davis (2002), in

efforts to develop a tool to evaluate the importance of racial socialization messages parents have

with children.

A factor analysis was conducted on a sample of 260 Black youth, from which five factors

emerged, each including several questions on a 3-point agreement scale (e.g. never, a few times

and lots of times). Cronbach's Alpha was performed to assess the reliability of the TERS. Scores

for this test were above the recommended minimum of .70 for adequate reliability, ranging from

.71 to .85. In addition, high order analysis shows validity for the TERS as a one-dimensional

measure as well as a measure for each distinct aspect of the tool.

- Factor 1: Cultural Coping with Antagonism – These are messages regarding how to
  successfully work through racial hostilities and the role religion plays in this process.

- Factor 2: Cultural Pride Reinforcement – These messages involve teaching Black pride
  and not being ashamed of who you are as a member of the Black race.

- Factor 3: Cultural Appreciation of Legacy – Teaches historical lessons, such as slavery,
  that enforces being descendants of African royalty.

- Factor 4: Cultural Alertness to Discrimination – Messages of instruction regarding being aware of systemic acts of racism and the problems that may arise with race relations.

- Factor 5: Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream – Messages indicating the importance of mainstream culture and the benefits Blacks can receive if they attend White institutions of learning. Also included in this factor are messages that suggest race, discussions about racism and participation in Black cultural activities as being irrelevant.

Davis and Stevenson (2006) conducted a study utilizing the TERS to evaluate the relationship between racial socialization and symptoms of depression in Black adolescents. Using the responses of 160 teenagers, with a mean age of 15.4 years, the authors empirically analyzed the moderating effects of parental racial socialization.

Results of the study indicate that racial socialization does have an impact on depressive symptoms. Specifically, youth who primarily received mainstream fit messages, experienced reporting a greater degree of depressive symptoms. This can be explained by the notion that the American dream feels unattainable due to the racism they have no control over. Conversely, those teens who reported receiving messages of racial pride and cultural legacy were more motivated to trust their individual potential and experience academic success. Results also indicated youth who perceived their communities as lacking in resources seem to take an emotional hit due to the deficiency in support. However, the study did not evaluate the difference between these youth and their peers from the same communities who did not suffer emotionally from this condition, and if their ability to persevere was the result of racial socialization messages.

Stevenson and Arrington (2009) also utilized the TERS to evaluate in what way racial socialization mediates perceived racism and the racial identity of Black adolescents. Conducting

several hierarchical multiple regressions on the dimensions of the multidimensional model of racial identity, this research supports the idea that generally, parental racial socialization messages assists in buffering the effects of racism among Black teens. Parents appear most proactive in communicating racial socialization messages when they are fearful society (e.g. schools) will be unwilling or unable to meet the racial/cultural needs of their children. The study specifically revealed as youth experienced racism, there was a decrease in their public regard (feeling that others feel negatively about Blacks), and an increase in private regard. Another finding suggests messages of cultural legacy resulted in an increase of youth centrality, where youth receiving mainstream fit messages did not hold race as central to their concept of self.

Comparison Between the Study Population and the Experience of Biracial Youth

To gain a better understanding regarding the challenges in race identity development of Black youth residing in group home facilities, it may be beneficial to review the concept in relation to biracial youth of African American and White parentage. While biracial youth are very often viewed as African American, they also have one White parent that directly immerses them into the majority culture. The struggles these youth may have in balancing and honoring both cultures may be similar to the experience of Black youth who have White caregivers. The experience of biracial youth may provide some insight into the unique identity development of these particular youth and the strategies necessary to promote a positive sense of their racial self.

Referring to Erikson's adolescent stage of development, biracial youth, similar to single race African American adolescents, are likely to have additional struggles as they transition through this stage of development. These struggles are often related to having the Black racial

identity assumed and/or forced upon them (Henriksen & Trusty, 2004), while dealing with the reality of having dual identities.

Defined as marginal by Stonequist (1935) in his discussion on biracial individuals, Black youth being cared for by White individuals while living in group homes, are often attempting to live within and between two cultures, not willing to relinquish their identity of the minority culture, yet not fully accepted by the majority culture. The desire of Black youth residing in congregate care to be accepted by the majority culture in which they reside and are cared for is very similar to the experience of biracial teens. With many of the group home facilities located in White communities, Black youth desire to fit in with the mainstream culture, only to come to the realization that they may not be fully accepted as members of that community.

Not having a complete understanding of the racial identity of Black youth, providing adequate socialization (McClurg, 2004) can be difficult for the White group home staff member, who has in a sense taken on a pseudo-parental role. This lack of understanding results in a decreased ability to provide guidance and support to the Black adolescent as they struggle through this process. In a qualitative study conducted by Kelch-Oliver & Leslie (2006), females of color who were raised by White mothers had a difficult time discussing race with them because of their lack of understanding regarding the lived experience as a person of color.

Important in the socialization process is staff to assist Black youth in developing a positive racial identity by endorsing the positive aspects of both cultures (McClurg, 2004). This can be done by incorporating such things as artwork, books and activities inclusive of both races. Hughes & Chen, (1997) indicate the increased importance of this as the youth moves into adolescence and becomes more cognizant of race and the impact of discrimination.

The Importance of Racial Identity Development and Black Youth Residing in Group Home

Facilities

Considering the pseudo-parental role of White staff to Black youth residing in group homes, it is notable that research has indicated that there is no difference between the level of self esteem exhibited by Black youth who are parented by White families (McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale and Anderson 1982) and those who are not. Research does indicate however, that African American children reared by White parents who downplay Black identity have an increased likelihood that they too will downplay and fail to acknowledge their Black race. McRoy et. al (1984), found that Black youth parented by White individuals that failed to have discussions regarding racial issues felt themselves to be different from other Blacks and had negative perceptions about the Black race. Twine (2004) found White parental figures who engaged Black youth in discussions regarding race, actively sought out activities and groups that celebrate and enhance positive feelings of Blackness, and decorated their home with items that incorporated Black culture and traditions, took protective steps taken to equip the youth with the mechanisms needed not only to confront the myths and stereotypes associated with systemic racism, but that aided in the development of a positive racial identity.

The importance of White group home staff in the assistance in the racial identity development of African American youth in placement is illustrated in a longitudinal study conducted by Johnson, Shireman, and Watson, (1987). Similar to the living situations of African American youth prior to entering the child welfare system, most of the sample families initially resided in diverse communities. However, by the time the youth were eight, 75% of the families had moved to predominantly White communities. For these families, a difference emerged between those who maintained contact with other Blacks and those who made the decision to

downplay the racial identity of their Black child. The latter group of youth showed no growth in their racial identity development, whereas, the former group was found to continue in the process of racial identity development. The impact the lack of racial identity growth has on Black youth in the child welfare system is supported by Butler-Sweet (2007), who found an increased likelihood that youth who are unable to adequately develop a racial identity are more likely to be ill-prepared to negotiate the inevitable acts of discrimination and racism they will experience.

Conclusion

An extensive review of the literature suggests the importance of racial identity development for African American youth involved in the child welfare system. Research indicates that in addition to the normal identity development undergone by all adolescents, African American youth must go through the process of reconciling their racial identity and the meaning being Black has in society. Vital in this process is the assistance parents give to youth to buffer and prepare them for the acts of discrimination and racism they will most likely encounter. This holds significant importance for African American youth who reside in group homes and the role White staff play in ensuring this development is positive and healthy. This study will examine the willingness of African American youth to be placed transracially in White adoptive homes, based on their level of racial identity development. It is posited that the racial socialization these youth receive from White staff who have assumed a pseudo parental role, will have a relationship to how willing African American youth are to be placed with White families.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess and understand the racial identity development of older African American youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system, and how racial identity development and other factors affected these youth's attitudes toward transracial adoption. . Building on political discourse over and previous research on transracial adoptions (discussed in the previous chapter), this study examined the following research questions:

(1) Are African American youth who face the possibility of aging out of the child welfare system without permanent familial relationships willing to be placed transracially in White homes?;

    (a) What factors influence the African American youth's willingness to be placed transracially in white homes?

(2) To what extent have African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system developed a sense of racial identity?;

(3) To what extent do African American youth express having received racial socialization messages that help to buffer experiences of racism and discrimination while involved in the child welfare system?;

    (a) What factors influence whether African American youth received racial socialization messages?; and

(4) Does a relationship exist between socialization messages received and the racial identity of African American youth?

In order to obtain the richest data possible, a mixed method research design was chosen, which utilizes both surveys analyzed quantitatively, and in-depth interviews analyzed qualitatively.

Surveys allowed for gathering less in-depth information from more youth via a format that was less threatening, giving them the ability to keep their opinions private. Furthermore, since the surveys were conducted first they provided valuable insight into the development of the interview guide for the qualitative portion of this study.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the methodology utilized for the study, to provide an understanding of and support for the research methods chosen. Following this is a discussion of the instruments and data collection procedures used as they relate to the research questions and hypotheses, as well as the methodology.

Survey/Quantitative Methods

Sources of Data

Target Population

The population for this study involved African American youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who had aged out of the child welfares system. All of the youth had been placed through Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families and were participants in the county's independent living program. This age group was selected due to the potential benefit that may have been afforded them if the pool of potential adoptive homes included White families interested in adopting transracially.

The initial design of this study was to compare the above age group with their younger peers between 16 and 18 years of age, who were still actively involved in the child welfare

system. The original goal was to examine if a relationship existed between the findings of the two groups of youth with regards to their perceptions on transracial adoption. Unfortunately, several challenges made excluding this group necessary. After making contact with several group home facilities and obtaining the names of youth, the first challenge was making contact with county caseworkers to ascertain information with regards to the youths' appropriateness for participating in the study, Where contact with the county worker was made, and the youth were determined to be appropriate for participation, the primary challenge became the fact that parental rights were still intact. Because parental rights had not been terminated, permission for participation would have to be obtained from parents prior to being able to participate in the study. Not knowing the whereabouts of some of the parents, or if they were still involved in behaviors that precipitated the removal of the youth from their homes, the decision was made to eliminate this younger population from the present research.

Sampling Technique and Survey Administration

Youth who have aged out of the child welfare system are a challenging group to study. Their lack of stability, inherent in this population, makes maintaining ongoing contact difficult. With the primary mode of initial contact with these youth being through their independent living programs, the voluntary nature associated with attendance, made it difficult to determine the number of youth who would be involved on any given day (see further details below). When these difficulties are combined with an interest in the real lived experiences and voices of the study participants, randomization from the total population of African American youth (18 – 21 years of age) who have aged out of the child welfare system in Western Pennsylvania was not possible and not necessary to the study purpose. Rather, the deliberate selection of study

participants, known as purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2005), was determined to be more appropriate because it allowed the researcher to tap into the first-hand knowledge and experience the particular youth from the target population she was able, though difficult (see below) to survey and interview for the study (Richards and Morse, 2007).

Prior to making contact with potential study participants, permission to utilize these youth in the study was obtained from the Director of Allegheny County Department of Human Services. The letter to and email response from the Allegheny County granting permission can be found in Appendix G and H. Four organizations in Allegheny County providing independent living services for teens that have aged out of the child welfare system were contacted to obtain the sample population. Program administrators were contacted via telephone to explain the purpose of the study and to answer any questions they had prior to agreeing to participation. Each program administrator was also provided with hard copies of each measurement tool, as well as the consent form to inform their decision. Administrators were then asked to sign a form (Appendix I), placed on their letterhead, granting permission for this researcher to visit their facility for the purpose of conducting the surveys with their youth. While not examined in this study, it is important to note that each independent living program administrator was a African American female. Each form was provided to the IRB for verification of approval.

At each site visited, information/study packets were provided to the youth. Included in the packets were introductions and explanation of the project, the informed consent, which included a statement of confidentiality ensuring participants' anonymity, a list of mental health providers, should participants become overwhelmed by the information contained in the instruments, and the survey instruments. Having knowledge of the varying educational abilities of the sample population, this researcher read the informed consent form to ensure each

participant fully understood the nature of the study, their voluntary participation, and that they

may be asked to participate in the focus groups and/or one on one interview portion of the study.

A second copy of the informed consent was included in the packet for respondents to keep for

their personal records. Each envelope and its contents were number coded to ensure accuracy of

data collection from each respondent. Through this process, 32 youth agreed to participate in the

research (two were subsequently eliminated because they did not fall within the targeted age

parameters). Because of the need for this researcher to attend various meetings and locations to

solicit participants, it took a total of five moths to obtain the 30 responses utilized in this study.

At each location, the youth who agreed to participate were given the survey packet and the

researcher explained the purpose and process of the study to the group. Acknowledging their

understanding of the process as explained, this researcher then read the informed consent form to

the group to ensure their understanding of what was read and to answer any questions they may

have had. Youth who chose not to participate were either dismissed from program (if my

attendance was at the end of the program day), or went to a different location within the room to

interact with peers (when my attendance was at the beginning of programming).

After all 30 surveys were returned, this researcher completed a cursory review of the

packets to ensure all surveys and signed consent forms were included to make certain none had

to be removed from the sample. As explained above, during this initial review of the initial data,

2 individuals did not fall within the age parameter of 18 – 21 years old, and were eliminated

from the sample population. This resulted in a total sample population of n=30. Furthermore, as

permitted by the Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families, one youth had signed a

waiver with Allegheny County indicating his/her desire to remain in the foster care system until

the completion of their education program. This waiver is presented to foster care youth once

they turn 18, but have not yet completed their educational program. Since the age of this youth was within the age parameters of this study, and based on the knowledge of this researcher that this waiver can be revoked at any time, either by the decision of the youth, or the county if the youth fails to follow through on the educational goal, this youth was retained in the study population. The breakdown of study participants as represented by the four independent living programs was as follows: Program #1 (4); Program #2 (5); Program #3 (10); and Program #4 (11).

Instrumentation and Measurement

This study examined at the level of racial identity in African American youth who have aged out of the Child Welfare system, along with their willingness to have been placed transracially with a White family. As discussed in the previous chapter several instruments exist measuring the racial identity development of African Americans. After reviewing each instrument the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t) seemed best suited for the present study. The second instrument used, the Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization, was selected for its assessment of racial socialization messages youth receive. The combined usage of these tools allowed this researcher to examine not only the level of racial identity development of study participants, but the possible connection between their identity and the types of socialization messages received.

While both of these instruments work well for Black youth, alone they do not take into account the lives of youth in the child welfare system, and specifically those who have aged out of that system. To address factors related to this population, such as length of time in child welfare and the impact these factors have on these youths' willingness to be adopted

transracially, as well as the development of racial identity and racial socialization this researcher developed the Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale. The next section of this chapter will describe each of these scales in more detail.

Description of Survey Instruments

As explained above, the surveys were included in the packets distributed to the youth, once they had indicated their agreement to participate. Prior to completing the surveys, each measurement was explained to the youth allowing them the opportunity to ask any questions before beginning. As indicated, these instruments were selected for use due to their relevance to the topic under study. Table 4 (below) illustrates the relationship between each survey instrument and the research questions addressed.

Table 4

Variables, Research Questions and Survey Instruments

Dependent Variables	Research Question	Instruments
Willingness to be placed with a White family	#1 - Are African American youth who face the possibility of aging out of the child welfare system without permanent familial relationships willing to be placed transracially in White homes? #1a - What factors exist that influence the African American youth's willingness to be placed transracially in White homes? #4 - Does a relationship exist between socialization messages received and the racial identity of African American youth?	• Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale • Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale • The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-teen • Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale
Level of Racial Identity Development	#2 - To What extent have African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system developed a sense of racial identity? #3 - To what extent do African American youth express having received racial socialization messages that help to buffer experiences of racism and discrimination while involved in the child welfare system? #3a - What factors exist that influence whether African American youth received racial socialization messages?	• The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-teen • Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale • Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale • Transracial Adoption willingness Scale

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t)

The MIBI-*t* was developed to assess the racial identity of the younger adolescent. While the original Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) was developed for the young adult, the recognition that many of the youth in the child welfare system experience educational and emotional challenges, which could make taking the more adult-focused tool inappropriate, the decision was made to utilize the teen version of the instrument. Scottham, Sellers and Nguyen (2008) developed the MIBI-t (Appendix E) to operationalize the three stable dimensions of racial identity (centrality, regard and ideology) as identified by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. This likert type scale consists of 7 subscales consisting of 3 items each. Study participants were to rate each of the items based on their importance on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'really disagree' and 5 being 'really agree'. Scores on the MIBI-t are utilized to determine how salient race is, in the life of youth. Unique from other racial identity scales, the MIBI-t does not force participants into one dimension of racial identity; rather it is designed to capture the individuality of youth, allowing for the possibility to score high in one dimension and low in another.

Teenager Experience with Racial Socialization (TERS)

The TERS (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor and Davis, 2002) was developed to measure the level of racial socialization messages received by adolescents by their parents. Since youth in this study have been removed from their birth parents and spent time in facilities that may not have employed a diverse staff, it was important to utilize this instrument to examine the impact, if any, being in such facilities had on youth receiving such messages and the relationship to their willingness to be placed transracially. Also a likert type scale, the TERS (Appendix C)

consists of 40 items that encompass racial socializations messages provided by Black parents as a means to protect youth from experiences of racism and discrimination. With responses ranging from 1 (never) to 3 (lots of times), youth were instructed to answer each question based on the frequency they were received.

The Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale

The Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale (Appendix D) which was developed by this researcher is divided into two sections. The first section asks 17 questions that provided demographic information on (e.g. gender, length of time in the child welfare system) and the experiences of youth participants while in the child welfare system. The second section of the instrument is a likert type scale consisting of 19 items developed to determine the degree to which respondents were willing to be placed transracially. Typically, it is desirable to perform a pilot study of newly developed tools to validate their usefulness. However, because of the small size and specificity of the target population available to this researcher, conducting a pilot study on the transracial adoption willingness scale would create a significant overlap in the pilot and actual study sample populations, thus rendering the effective use of such a pilot implausible.

Establishing Validity

It is critical to any research study to establish validity of the data. Important to this study is the reporting of convergent findings. Part of construct validity, convergent findings indicates how well the measures used actually operationalize the theoretical construct of scientific discovery (Klahr & Simon, 1999, p. 524). Convergent findings are best obtained when the use of multiple measures of analysis yield the same results that are significantly different from zero

(Peter, 1981). Validity of results provides the truth in the findings sought in quantitative research (Winter, 2000). Based on the results of previous research, both the MIBI-t (Scottham, et al (2008), Smalls, White, Chavous & Sellers (2007), and Stevenson & Arrington 2009)) and the TERS (Stevensonm Herrero-Taylor & Davis (2002), Davis & Stevenson (2006), and Davis & Stevenson, (2009)), have been found to possess appropriate validity that would suggest its appropriateness for further use.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Using SPSS statistical software, independent-samples *t* tests, chi-square test of independence, spearman's rho and simple linear regressions were conducted. The quantitative portion of this mixed methods analysis began with a series of frequency distributions to obtain initial data regarding the study participants' willingness to have been placed transracially, as well as their opinion on placing Black children in White homes for adoption. Exploration of the initial data obtained was done by conducting an Independent-Samples *t* Test with willingness to be placed in a white home as the dependent variable, and the individual items on the Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale to analyze the differences between the means of the dependent and independent variables. In order to determine the strength of the relationships between the variables found significant in the Independent Samples t Tests, a Spearman rho correlation coefficient was calculated. This analysis was chosen due to the assumption that the variables do not have to be normally distributed. Multiple linear regressions were also performed to determine the strength, if any, of relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable of 'youths willingness to be placed transracially'.

Qualitative Inquiry

Introduction

As indicated, a mixed methods research design was chosen in order to capture the real lived experiences of youth who have aged out of the child welfare system, through qualitative inquiry. Obtaining the voices of these youth provides an understanding of transracial adoption through rich, interpretive data that would not be available through the sole use of quantitative analysis.

This section will begin with a discussion of the sample population as well as the interview guide used to obtain the information presented in chapter 4. This will be followed by an explanation of the interview process, the methods data collection, the analysis of the data and the issues of credibility and trustworthiness. The chapter will conclude with an overview of ethical considerations.

Qualitative Sample

The qualitative portion of this study began by making contacting with the 30 individuals who completed the quantitative surveys to ask if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group and/or interview. The telephone numbers for each participant were provided on the informed consent form, as well as the best time of day to make contact. Once all questionnaires were completed, 16 participants were randomly selected to be contacted and invited to take part in one of two focus groups. However, due to the transient nature of youth who have aged out of the child welfare system and the resulting financial hardships most endure, many of these youth were not available for contact. Of the initial 30 participants, the telephone numbers of 14 of them had been disconnected and 3 indicated they were not available to

participate. Of the remaining youth, 6 were selected and scheduled for the first focus group. After agreeing to participate, a reminder telephone call was made the evening before the scheduled group. However, only 1 youth attended this meeting. Follow-up telephone calls were attempted to those who did not attend, but went unanswered. This resulted in a less than adequate number of youth necessary to conduct the focus group aspect of the study.

As a result of this difficulty, focus groups initially planned were eliminated from the study due to the inability to obtain the minimum number of participants needed to effectively carry out this qualitative technique. The data collections procedures to this point, which included the process of attending the program meetings and obtaining the surveys and scheduling the focus groups, had taken a total of 5 months. In hopes of not losing contact with yet more members of this transient population, telephone calls to schedule in-depth interviews began immediately following the decision to cancel further efforts to conduct focus groups. After eliminating the telephone numbers that had been disconnected, calls were made to the 16 remaining youth. Of these, 11 youth agreed to schedule a telephone interview and were used as the primary sources used as the data for this analysis. While this resulted in a smaller number of interviews than originally planned, the process of obtaining even these 11 interviews was a taxing one.

<div align="center">Semi-Structured Interview Guide</div>

The qualitative interview is generally designed to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and behaviors of study participants (Frankel & Devers, 2000). The semi-structured interview was utilized to obtain a descriptive analysis of youths' opinions regarding transracial adoption, including a discussion regarding how willing they would have been to be placed

transracially, rather than aging out of the child welfare system without any significant familial support. This technique is appropriate for this research based on the existing knowledge the researcher has (Richards & Morse, 2007) regarding the phenomenon under study.

The open-ended interview questions were asked in a manner that avoided yes or no answers, but rather would elicit discussion from the youth. Based on the questions developed for this study, participants were presented with the following:

(1)   As you are aware, I am doing a research study regarding the opinion of African American youth on the issue of transracial adoption. Can you talk to me a little about your feelings regarding Black children being placed in White homes for adoption?

(2)   Can you talk to me a little regarding if you would have been willing to be placed in a White home?

(3)   What things would be important for a White family to be willing to do or know in making your decision to be placed in the home?

(4)   Were you ever asked if you were willing to be placed with a White family?

These questions were also asked due to their relationship to the data obtained from the quantitative analysis performed and the desire to determine if the analysis was supported by qualitative inquiry. Additional questions were asked as necessary for clarification of the answers given. These sources, as well as my personal experience working within the foster care and adoption field, have informed my knowledge on this subject.

The Interview Process

Because none of the participants were willing to meet face to face, the interviews were conducted on the phone. While face to face interviews have been thought the best way of obtaining an increased understanding of the views, experiences and opinions of participants (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002), telephone interviews have been gaining in acceptance (Langer, 1996). To ensure accuracy in data collection, this researcher took careful notes of each interview while they were being audio taped. Prior to the start of the interview, each participant was made aware that they would be audio taped and permission was obtained before starting the recording. Youth were also informed that the interview would last approximately 30 minutes. Prior to staring the actual interview, participants were asked to verify on tape their full name and that they were voluntary participants in the interview process. At the end of each interview, participants were read the notes that were taken during the discussion and asked if they accurately reflected what they stated. This researcher also reminded participants that one of the goals of this study was to hear the voices of youth who had aged out of the child welfare system, and asked if there was anything else they wanted to share, that perhaps had not been covered. This was done in efforts to decrease researcher bias.

Telephone interviews occurred over a one week time period. Because they were scheduled in advance, the interviews occurred during various times of the day, based on the availability of the youth. Each youth seemed comfortable with the topic of discussion; however, a few were more talkative than others. While the average interview lasted approximately 20 minutes, two lasted well over 30 minutes. Furthermore, despite efforts to increase the discussion of one participant, this interview lasted less than 15 minutes. This researcher transcribed the audio tapes immediately following the interviews. Most of the transcripts were one page, single

spaced, in length. However, as would be expected based on the length of the actual interviews, 2 transcriptions were over 1 page, and one approximately one half page in length.

Data Analysis

During the review of the interview transcriptions, the concept of abduction was utilized (Bazeley, 2007), to begin the process of identifying themes and patterns within the sources. As themes began to emerge, first cycle coding was developed. Several first cycle codes described in Saldana (2009) were used in this step of the process. Specifically, these codes were: (1) attribute (demographic information – e.g. age & gender), (2) magnitude, (3) In Vivo - words or short phrases from actual passages, and (4) values/attitudes/beliefs. Additionally, two researcher codes were developed (1) Opinions ('my opinion was never asked'; if they wanted my opinion they would have asked'), and (2) Family Necessities ('the family would need to allow me to go to a Black church) in order to gather information on themes specifically related to the questions posed. Table 5 provides an example of the types of comments made during the interview process, or information obtained as it related to each of these first cycle coding themes.

Table 5
Example of First Cycle Coding Themes

Attribute	Age, Gender, 'Are you willing to be placed in a White home'
Magnitude	(Transracial Adoption) 'has its ups and downs - it has its pro and cons. I personally am against it'
In Vivo	'As a kid in foster care I always wished I could be placed with Caucasian family because every home I was in I was mistreated and I think if I was placed in a Caucasian home I would have been treated fairly. All the homes I was placed in were African American'.
Values/Attitudes/Beliefs	'I'm a Christian and I'm not going to change my beliefs for anyone'. 'Sometimes it's hard to be accepted by other races. If there were more of your own people at the school that would be better'.

Moving inductively through the data, an analysis of the information contained in the first cycle coding was conducted in order to further narrow down the emergent themes. From this, eight new second level codes labeled why TRA is good/bad, opinions were asked, opinions were never asked, why for/against TRA, family necessities, supportive of me, school attend, religious beliefs and other, were developed and used to house information from the parent nodes. The final step in this process narrowed the coding even further into third level codes. Seven third level codes were developed. These nodes labeled youth deserve a voice, probable response, racism exists, people are people, need a home/nowhere to go, cultural issues and being uncomfortable, were created based on repeated themes that were emerging during the coding process.
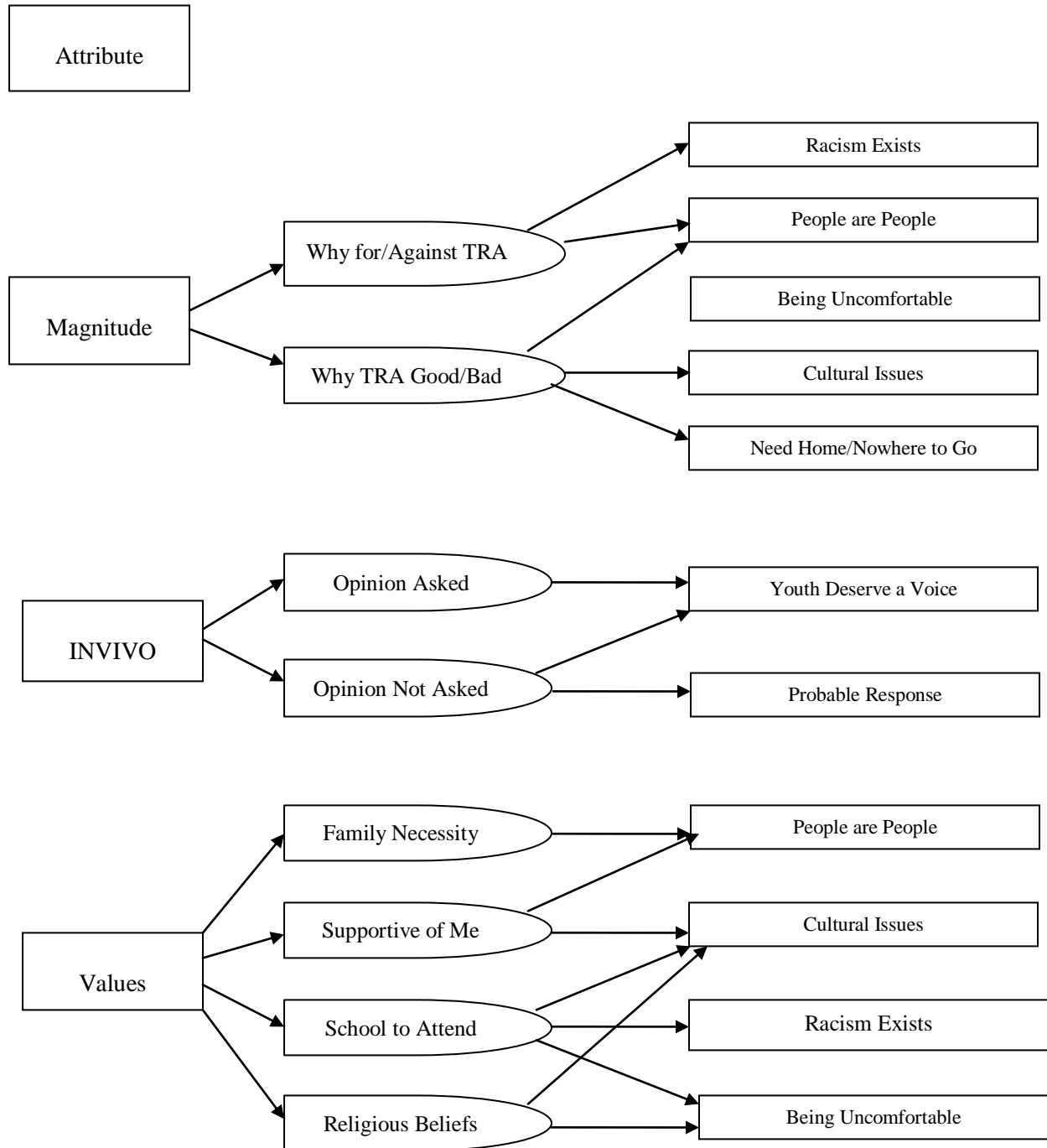
Figure 4. Development of Codes Based on Emergent Themes

Figure 4 illustrates how the coding levels developed as new themes emerged. As can be

seen in this figure, it was possible for second level coding themes to encompass more than one

emergent theme in the third level of coding. This happened due to youth mentioning themes such as racism exists, cultural issues and being uncomfortable various times during the interview process.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In contrast to validity in the positivist view, the goal of qualitative studies is to provide results that are trustworthy. Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research entails persuading the reader (Sanders, 1997) that the study and results have value. In order to establish trustworthiness this researcher has provided 'thick description' (Curtin & Fossey, 2007) by presenting detailed information regarding the methods and analysis of data utilized in this study. Furthermore, the concept of triangulation, which is defined by Maxwell, (2005), as the collection of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods (p. 112) was also done. To provide the most robust results despite having a modest sample size, two types of triangulation was carried out.

Methodological Triangulation

The use of a mixed methods research design provides triangulation of methods (Willis, 2007). In this study, information obtained from the 3 survey instruments was analyzed to ascertain if a relationship existed between multiple variables (e.g. length of time spent in the child welfare system) and the willingness of study participants' to have been placed transracially in White homes. In efforts to strengthen these findings this study qualitatively shared the voices of these youth through the use of in-depth interviews, providing a redundancy of data needed (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009) to establish trustworthiness.

Data Triangulation

    <u>*Space*</u>. As previously discussed youth in this study were participants of four independent living programs in Allegheny County. While the goal of independent living program is to assist these youth achieve self sufficiency, each organization is self-governing and designed its program independent from one another. Obtaining participants from various programs (Curtin & Fossey, 2007) provides consistency in the data that may otherwise be lacking if all youth participated in the same program, under the same programming and staffing influence.

    <u>*Time*</u>. The time period between obtaining the first survey responses and conducting the in-depth interviews was five months. This allowed for youth participants to engage in the in-depth interviews with a fresh perspective, decreasing any influence items on the survey instruments may have had on the opinions expressed.

<div align="center">Ethical Consideration</div>

    The importance of conducting research in an ethical manner cannot be overlooked. Paying appropriate attention to ethical issues ensures consideration has been given to the potential physical and psychological harm that may be present for the sample under study. Maxwell (2005) indicates that giving consideration to ethics in a research project adds validity and trustworthiness of the research results.

    The primary ethical consideration involves the possible mental health status of the proposed study sample. Because many youth in the child welfare system have been diagnosed with mental health issues, their ability to participate in this process and any possible safeguards necessary were put in place.

Once contact was made with the Independent Living administrators, this researcher attended the regularly scheduled meetings held at each site to discuss the purpose of the study. Youth were instructed that their information would remain confidential and they will not be identified as participants. The voluntary nature of the study was explicitly stated, as was their ability to withdraw from the study without repercussion. Youth were also informed of the list of mental health professionals that was included in their packet and should be utilized if they feel any discomfort due to their participation in this study. Youth were then asked to sign the Informed Consent form indicating their understanding of and their willingness to participate in the research project. A second copy of the form was included in the packet for youth to keep for their records.

Because of my position as CEO of an adoption agency within Allegheny County, it was imperative that steps be taken to ensure there was no power relationship implied or real in this process. To address this issue, young people were excluded who were currently working with the researcher's organization and/or where personal contact had been made.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided detailed description regarding the methods used to conduct the present study. How participants were obtained for survey completion and in-depth interviews, as well as the process of conducting the research, provides the foundation for understanding the analyses that will be presented in Chapter Four. While this study utilizes a modest sample size, the level of detail provided assists in informing on the transferability of this study to other possible populations, including younger youth in the child welfare system and/or those youth adopted internationally. The next chapter shows the exhaustive analyses performed and

discussions of the findings with regards to the perceptions of study participants with regards to issues related to transracial adoption.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS: YOUTH ACCEPTANCE OF TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess and understand the racial identity development of older African American youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system. This study sought to discover if a relationship exists between the level of racial identity development of the study participants, their opinions with regards to transracial adoption, and their willingness to having been adopted by White families. The length of time the youth have been involved in the child welfare system, as well as the presence of Black group home staff and previous placements in White foster homes, was also examined as it relates to their perceptions of transracial adoption. This study also examined the types of socialization messages provided to these youth while residing in the Child Welfare system.

This chapter presents the findings based on the analyses of the researcher developed Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale. Results of the telephone interviews that were also conducted are incorporated within the statistical analyses. The in-depth interviews provided youth with the seldom offered opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions regarding transracial adoption.

Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods this chapter will allow the reader to view the connectedness between the data and the real lived experiences of the youth who participated in the study. The analyses performed provide an unassuming foundation regarding the current racial identity status of study participants, that can be taken into consideration in future research

Chapter Organization

This chapter begins with descriptives of study participants, which include participant demographics, the length of time spent in the child welfare system, the racial composition of group home facilities they resided and if they had ever been placed in a White home. This is followed by possible correlations between the descriptives and youths' attitudes toward transracial adoption. The chapter concludes with information on the youths' willingness to be placed transracially and the various factors that affect this opinion, including their perceptions of the Child Welfare system.

Descriptive Findings

Demographics of Study Participants

In order to obtain survey participants contact was made to the independent living programs operating in Allegheny County. Of the three programs contacted, two granted access to this researcher to attend and meet with youth during one of their regularly scheduled monthly meetings. These meetings are designed to provide youth with the information and support necessary to promote healthy lifestyles in efforts to mitigate the negative outcomes associated with youth who have aged out of the Child Welfare system. Fifty percent of survey respondents (15) were obtained from these groups. Allegheny County also holds a monthly meeting for all youth who have a court ordered goal of independent living and/or those who have already turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system. While youth as young as 16 are encouraged to attend the monthly group, only those who were 18 years or older fit the criteria for this study. Of those youth in attendance during this researcher's visit, 4 volunteered to complete the survey instruments. The final 11 surveys were obtained from youth who attend an Allegheny county

funded Independent Living day program. In addition to providing independent living skills, this program has an educational component that provides youth with the teaching and support needed to successfully complete their GED.

While the majority of youth participating in this study have aged out of the child welfare system, one participant is currently still involved in the system. Youth on the verge of aging out, are now given the opportunity to sign a waiver, indicating their desire to remain in the child welfare system until the age of 21, or they complete their education. This young person has accepted this option and continues to reside in a foster home placement.

Analysis of the survey data began by performing frequencies on basic demographic information provided by the participants. Table 6 shows that of the 30 participants, 20% (n=6) were 18 years of age; 40% (n=12) were 19 years of age; 26.7% (n=8) were 20 years of age; and 10% (n=3) were 21 years of age. There was 1 (3.3%) missing value where the information was not provided. Additionally, Table 7 provides the breakdown of participants by gender with 43.3% of participants being male (n=13) and 56.7% female (n=17). Table 8 provides a breakdown with regards to the length of time the study participants were placed in the child welfare system.

This survey question did not distinguish between placement in a foster home or group home setting. This researcher is aware that younger children are routinely placed in foster homes. Furthermore, because foster care is the preferred placement type, foster homes are often sought first even for the older child, with placement in group home settings occurring when no foster home is available. Also, older children are often court ordered to be placed in group homes after attempts at foster home placement has failed, and it is found that placement in a group home facility is in the child's best interest. Based on the frequencies performed, the youth participants

were in the foster care system from 1 to 18 years, with 6 individuals either not completing this question or making statements indicating they did not remember. Table 9 gives central tendency information based on participants' responses indicating 5 years as being the median length of time spent in the child welfare system. Equally important to considering the length of time spent in the child welfare system, is the number of placement moves experienced by these youth. Table 10 shows that the 24 youth responding to this item experienced as many as 15 placement moves, with almost 30% indicating they have been moved 5 times or more. Table 11 provides the central tendency, indicating 5 as being the median number of placement moves experienced by these youth.

Table 6

Frequency: Age of Survey Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 years old	6	20.0	20.7	20.7
	19 years old	12	40.0	41.4	62.1
	20 years old	8	26.7	27.6	89.7
	21 years old	3	10.0	10.3	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 7

Frequency: Gender of Survey Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	female	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

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Table 8

Frequency: Length of Time Survey Respondents Were in Child Welfare System

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	one year	5	16.7	20.8	20.8
	two years	1	3.3	4.2	25.0
	three years	4	13.3	16.7	41.7
	four years	2	6.7	8.3	50.0
	six years	1	3.3	4.2	54.2
	eight years	1	3.3	4.2	58.3
	nine years	1	3.3	4.2	62.5
	eleven years	1	3.3	4.2	66.7
	twelve years	1	3.3	4.2	70.8
	thirteen years	1	3.3	4.2	75.0
	fifteen years	2	6.7	8.3	83.3
	eighteen years	4	13.3	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	80.0	100.0	
Missing	System	6	20.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 9

Central Tendency on Length of Time Survey Respondents Were in Child Welfare System

N	Valid	24
	Missing	6
	Mean	8
	Median	5
	Mode	1

Table 10
Number of Moves Experienced by Survey Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	one	1	3.3	4.2	4.2
	two	5	16.7	20.8	25.0
	three	4	13.3	16.7	41.7
	four	4	13.3	16.7	58.3
	five	2	6.7	8.3	66.7
	six	2	6.7	8.3	75.0
	seven	2	6.7	8.3	83.3
	ten	2	6.7	8.3	91.7
	more than 10	1	3.3	4.2	95.8
	15	1	3.3	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	80.0	100.0	
Missing	System	6	20.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 11
Central Tendency on Number of Placement Moves
Experienced by Survey Respondents

N	Valid	24
	Missing	6
	Mean	5
	Median	4
	Mode	2

Racial Composition of Group Home Employees

As was shown in Table 9, the median length of time youth in this study spent in the child

welfare system was five years. Given that the child welfare system sees the age of 18 as the

transition into adulthood, youth participating in this study, on average spent almost 28% of their childhood in the child welfare system. This information is crucial to understanding the amount of racial socializations messages received during childhood and adolescence and the impact being in the child welfare system for this amount of time, may have on the racial identity development of study participants.

Because of the importance of racial socialization messages particularly as it relates to the amount of time survey participants spent in the child welfare system, it was important to obtain information with regards to the racial composition of the residential staff at the facilities where many of the children have been placed. This researcher is aware that the composition of group home facilities varies by location, type and Department of Public Welfare licensure. Some are single free standing buildings housing several children with similar issues and challenges. Other facilities have multiple sites operated under the umbrella of one organization, and still others resemble a campus, having several cottages on site.

Because of the different types of group homes, staffing is also varied based on design and program. Pennsylvania state regulations Title 55 Chapter 3800 (Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare) governing group home facilities mandate an 8:1 child to child care worker ratio during waking hours, for youth over the age of six. The complete complement of staff may also include therapists, cooks, supervisors and administrative support staff. The classification of the employee is of little concern to this study. While professional/casework staff spend a great deal of time with youth individually and in group sessions, it is often the informal conversations with support staff where youth also receive the emotional support often given by parents.

In efforts to assess the effect having Black employees has on the racial identity of youth, Table 12 provides frequency data regarding the reported presence of Black staff at the group

home facilities where the youth resided. This is followed by table 13, which describes the

number of Black staff as reported by respondents.

Table 12
*Survey Responses to Presence of Black Staff at Group Ho*me

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	10	33.3	40.0	40.0
	yes	15	50.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	25	83.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	16.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 13
Survey Responses to Number of Black Staff at Group Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	two	2	6.7	13.3	13.3
	three	2	6.7	13.3	26.7
	four	2	6.7	13.3	40.0
	five	2	6.7	13.3	53.3
	six or more	7	23.3	46.7	100.0
	Total	15	50.0	100.0	
Missing	System	15	50.0		
Total		30	100.0		

The above tables show 50% of the study participants resided in group home facilities that

had Black employees with seven of the youth indicating the presence of 6 or more such

employees. Here an assumption can be made that those youth residing at facilities where there

was no presence of Black staff, were placed in locations outside of the city of Pittsburgh.

Organizations in more rural settings certainly must face the challenge of not having a pool of

Black individuals to draw from for employment. It is also likely that those youth who resided at

group home facilities with higher numbers of Black employees were located in the greater

Pittsburgh (Allegheny County) area, which has actively engaged facilities to diversify their

employees in efforts to better represent the clientele they service. Facilities located within

Allegheny County would also have a larger pool of Black individuals from which to draw from

for employment.

Placement in White Foster/Adoptive Homes

Those opposed to transracially placing Black children in White homes, do so on the

belief that White families are unable to assist with the development of racial identity, thus

leaving the Black child ill-prepared to deal with racist and discriminatory experiences. This can

be particularly important for the older Black child who does not have parental protection when

maneuvering through society as they begin to exercise increased independence. Things such as

being profiled as suspicious, or thought less than adequate educationally are realities that Black

youth must learn how to address and overcome. Having not lived such experiences, it is felt

White families would lack the ability to provide the emotional protection necessary to avoid the

negative impact these types of incidences can cause. In assessing the racial identity development

of study participants, it was important to understand what if any impact being placed with a

White family may have had on these youth. Table 14 (below) presents the frequency results

regarding the number of respondents who were placed with a White family during their tenure in

the child welfare system.

Table 14

Ever Placed in a White home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	19	63.3	65.5	65.5
	yes	9	30.0	31.0	96.6
	Refused to answer	1	3.3	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 6 informs that 30% of study participants had been placed in White homes. Having this large number of youth transracially placed in White homes, with a similar number (33%) placed in group homes with no presence of Black staff would suggest that this would be significant in understanding the impact these placements have on the racial identity of Black youth in the child welfare system. However, this study has not taken into account the length of time these youth spent in their transracial placements, their age at the time of placement, or the type of community where the family resided, factors which could influence the placement experience with regards to racial identity.

Youth Attitudes Toward Transracial Adoption

Willingness to be Placed Transracially

Both sides of the transracial adoption debate claim the basis of their argument as being in the best interest of the child. Since 1972 the NABSW has been the loudest voice against the practice of placing Black children in White homes, stating White families are unable to assist these youth in developing a positive racial identity. Those is support of transracial adoption

firmly believe that adoption should be colorblind and having permanency should be seen as most important, rather than allowing youth to age out of the child welfare system without a family. While it appears each group makes valid arguments, neither side has approached their argument by understanding the willingness of the youth who are at the center of the debate. In this research, a modest effort was made to address this gap in both the scholarly literature and the broader public debate on this issue. This was done by using surveys and in-depth interviews to 'give voice' to 30 Black youth who had aged out of the child welfare system in Western Pennsylvania. This section reports these youths' views on transracial adoption.

Using data obtained from the Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale, a frequency distribution was performed to obtain initial data regarding the study participants' willingness to have been placed in White homes for adoption. Table 15 (below) indicates an equal distribution (36.7%) of those who stated they would have been willing to have been placed transracially while still in the child welfare system and those who indicated they would not have been willing. The remaining 27% either did not know their level of willingness for transracial adoption, or else did not answer the question. Interestingly, when responding to the question 'do you think it is okay for Black children to be placed transracially in White adoptive homes, 63.3% of the study participants indicated this was an appropriate practice (Table 16).

Table 15

Survey Respondents Willingness to Have Been Placed in White Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	11	36.7	37.9	37.9
	yes	11	36.7	37.9	75.9
	don't know	7	23.3	24.1	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 16

Survey Respondents Opinion on the Acceptability of Placing Black Children in White Homes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	refused to answer	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	no	6	20.0	20.0	26.7
	yes	19	63.3	63.3	90.0
	don't know	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Subsequent sections of this chapter present additional statistical analyses to identify factor which correlate with youths' views on transracial adoption. This section will first report the responses from the in-depth interviews to provide greater depth and insight into how these youth think and feel about the issue of transracial adoption. As the following discussion demonstrates, youth expressed views compatible with both sides of the transracial adoption debate. What is not clear is rather these views came from their exposure to different claimsmakers involved in the debate or were independently arrived at based on the youths' own

experiences. Concerns expressed by these youth regarding being placed in White families include their observations that 'racism exists', issues pertaining to their African American culture, and the concern that they would be uncomfortable living in an exclusively or largely White environment. Conversely, those youth who view transracial adoption as an acceptable practice concur with claimsmakers that feel adoption should be colorblind. These youth also expressed views such as having a better, more structured life and being assisted with staying away from drugs and gangs.

Reasons Youth Opposed Transracial Adoption

Racism Exists

The inability of White families to raise a Black child who is prepared to handle the systemic racism that exists in society is one of the tenets of those opposed to transracial adoption. The ability to understand and deal with racism and discrimination largely impacts a child's development of a positive racial identity. When asked during the in-depth interview if they agree with the practice of transracial adoption, several statements from the youth participants concurred with this sentiment. When discussing why they are opposed to transracial adoption the following statements were made:

> *I would feel like an outsider – lots of White people judge Black people. They think they are ghetto or low class. – (Source 1)*

> *I would prefer not to be placed – I actually lived in a home with a White wife and a Black husband – it's kosher – I can say they can make you feel safe if that's their job. I can actually say I have never been around long enough to see the type of people that say we're dangerous. – And know that you just can't stereotype a person just because they're White – like you can't judge all black people and say they are ghetto. There is always going to be that Black and White issue I don't care what people say. – (Source 8)*

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The preceding views interpret the existence of racism in two different ways. The first quotation indicates the youth being concerned with racism within the adoptive home. The concern of living in an environment where one is constantly made to feel different and inferior creates a feeling that would make the proposition of being placed transracially, unpalatable. In the second quotation, the youth acknowledges the existence of racism in society. While not discounting the possibility of White parents accepting them and making them to feel as part of the family, for this youth, this is not a sufficient enough reason to be personally willing to be placed transracially. While they may feel safe in the home environment, this youth expresses concern over the ability to maneuver the racism that occurs in the broader society.

Cultural Issues

Similar to the realities of racism, is the need for Black children to develop pride in their culture and heritage. Opponents to the practice of transracial adoption feel that without having lived the Black experience, White families would have a difficult time assisting Black children in embracing the Black culture. Furthermore, with federal legislation prohibiting training of White families who are interested in transracially adopting, the likelihood of their fully being able to understand and embrace Black culture can be limited. Young people who are both for and against transracial adoption generalize this sentiment in the following ways.

> *I don't see nothing wrong with it (placing black children in white homes) – but the way society is set up today – it would be difficult to place black children in white homes because the culture is different. If a Black kid placed in white family could have the same opportunity by living in a white family, it could be ok. But the way media is today – - things that are placed in kids' heads are negative. – (Source 6)*

> *I don't think it's a good idea – no not at all – like well I'm in foster care – but I'm fortunate to be placed with my family. If I was in that situation I would like to be with a family that is the same race. I mean how can you*

relate to a kid that is a different race? I think it's more challenging if you have a kid that especially is not yours - it would be more challenging because there are certain things about your child's culture you have to introduce to them – would be challenging because of how you're not able to understand the culture – (Source 3)
I believe that it (transracial adoption) is ok because people are people regardless of the color of their skin. There may be some obstacles they might have to get over like something as simple as brushing and taking care of a Black child's hair, but at the end of the day people are people and if you are willing to take a Black child into your home then I think you're a wonderful person for doing that. – (Source 4)

The need to maintain their cultural identity is important for these youth. These youth are proud of being members of the Black race, despite any racial or discriminatory practices they may experience. The following tables (17, 18, 19) share responses from these youth, to items on the Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization Scale (TERS). This scale, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, was developed to ascertain the level and types of racial socialization messages received by youth.

Table 17
Knowing Your African Heritage is Important for Your Survival

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	50.0
	lots of times	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 18
You Are Connected to a History that Goes Back to African Royalty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	53.3
	lots of times	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 19

You Should Know About Black History so That You Will Be a Better Person

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.8	13.8
	a few times	14	46.7	48.3	62.1
	lots of times	11	36.7	37.9	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Supporting the comments expressed earlier, the above tables the importance of White families to not only acknowledge, but embrace Black culture if they are willing to accept the placement of a Black child into their family. A family's willingness to celebrate the richness of Black history in their home and by finding opportunities in the community shows their commitment to truly including the youth as a member of the family. Accomplishing this could be as simple as having Black books and pictures in the home, to attending Black plays, visiting Black museums, and taking part in cultural activities in the Black community.

Being Uncomfortable

Closely related to cultural differences and the need to embrace the uniqueness of the Black culture, as well recognizing that racism exists, is the ability for Black youth to be comfortable in their environment. Many Black youth are hesitant to agree with the practice of transracial adoption because of how it might feel being in an environment where they are looked at as being different. The voices of these three young people support this sentiment.

> *I don't know how I feel about Black kids being placed in white homes. I*
> *would not want to be placed – I don't know -I would feel uncomfortable. I*

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just don't think Black children should be placed in white homes. – (Source 10)

When I was living in that home – they were friends of the family. So it's not like they were complete strangers. I felt welcome and safe when I was there. I think if both (parents) were white I would have felt uncomfortable (As discussed above, the husband was Black and the wife was White). I was able to see the best of both worlds.

I think it would be kind of awkward if a Black child is adopted by White parents. If you're a Black child and you're living with White parents you would probably think it's a little weird. – (Source 11)

Similar to the previous discussions regarding racism, youth here express how they believe Black children would feel if placed with a White family. While not specifically discussed, this discomfort seems to stem from the possibility of being looked down upon and considered inferior. Feeling alienated from those who resemble them would be compounded if the family is unable to understand and embrace the youth's culture.

Sources of Tension that Racial Differences Might Exacerbate

The emotional feelings associated with being placed in the child welfare system are felt by all youth impacted by having to be removed from their birth parents. For the older child particularly, the arrival of a new face in the community or at school, signals their being different, regardless of their race or ethnicity. These feelings must certainly be compounded for the Black youth placed with a White family. This section will cover the following issues related to how racial issues may be exacerbated with transracial adoption: 1) the obviousness of being a foster/adoptive child, 2) religious differences.

The Obviousness of Being a Foster/Adoptive Child

Placement into foster care is traumatic for any child. Regardless of the reason for placement, the experience of being removed is an emotionally challenging one. However, when a child is racially matched with the foster/adoptive family the likelihood of strangers and acquaintances seeing them as anything other than a member of the family, decreases. In contrast, youth who are placed transracially are obviously different. Despite how comfortable the youth may feel in the family, their racial differences are made apparent by the stares and questions made by insensitive individuals.

Youth who have spent several years in the child welfare system and have often times experienced multiple moves between foster homes and residential group home facilities, often begin feeling like they will never experience belonging to a family. Most often, when youth are moved, their belongings are sent with them in trash bags. Having their most precious belongings carried in trash bags, adds to the feeling of instability and loss of hope for permanency. For these youth, the desire to find a place where they 'fit in' is both a pressing need and a challenge. That transracial placements can make the obviousness of the foster or adoptive placement more apparent can be seen in the following quotation from a youth who is discussing being different in the context of possibly having to attend a predominately White school, if placed with a White family.

> ....sit down with me to discuss what school do you think would be in my best interest. Instead of being in a White school where I might be teased – especially because everyone knows you're a foster child cause you're with a White family.

Religious Differences

Historically, the Black church has served as a place where Blacks could find a source of strength and hope (Frazier, Mintz & Mobley, 2005). Regardless of life circumstances, it has been the church where Blacks congregate for the sense of community (Watlington & Murphy, 2006), collective comfort and an outlet for positive social change (Chardy (2011). Presumably, the importance youth in this study place on religion indicates many have received some religious upbringing regarding its cultural significance to the Black community. The following youth describe this issue as it relates to a friend that was placed transracially.

> *It (transracial adoption) has its ups and downs – it has its pro can cons. I personally am against it – I am and I'm not…. Sometime it can be abusive – sometime some Black children are very religious and some families won't let them pursue that – and would make them do what they want them to do, basically. And as far as schooling and friends they're allowed to hang with. I actually have a friend that was in a White home and there were things she just didn't like. Like the structure that was okay – but the school they made her go to and the friends she hung with…. Things she didn't believe in they made her believe in. … Like her family grew up with Christianity and the family was Catholic and she was being something she didn't want to be. But she wanted to be accepted by the family – and she had to fit in to that – she thought it was better than having to move from home to home even though she didn't like it. She was happy to get out of there – when she turned 18 she left. – (Source 2)*

> *…. Being able to go to a black church would make me feel comfortable. – (Source 1)*

In the first quotation, we see two factors interacting. As mentioned previously, this youth is discussing how uncomfortable her friend felt being in an environment that was exclusively White. Being made to attend an all White school and associate with all White friends appears to have placed pressure on the youth to 'fit in' to a culture that was out of her comfort zone. This certainly seems to have been exacerbated by having been made to practice the Catholic faith. The quotation of the second youth reiterates the need to interact with persons who resemble you. One

can speculate that living in a racially diverse community and allowing the youth to maintain their

religious beliefs, would provide the cultural support needed to overcome any barriers related to

being placed transracially and living in a White envirnonment.

The views of these youth are further substantiated in the following frequencies. This data

suggests these youth appear to have received messages with regards to the importance of religion

to the Black community.

Table 20
Families Who Go to Church or Mosque Will Be Close and Stay Together

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	19	63.3	63.3	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 21
Religion is an Important Part of a Person's Life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	7.1	7.1
	a few times	13	43.3	46.4	53.6
	lots of times	13	43.3	46.4	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 22

A Belief in God Can Help a Person Deal With Tough Life Struggles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	12	40.0	40.0	50.0
	lots of times	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 23

Black Children Should Be Taught Early That God Can Protect Them
From Racial Hatred

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	73.3
	lots of times	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

As is observed in the above tables, these youth have been educated in the knowledge that a belief in God is a vital part of living the Black experience. Drawing its high level of spiritual expressions from its West African roots (McCollough-Chavis, 2004), it has been through the Black church where people congregate for emotional release and support. Having been considered the most religiously oriented group in America (Carter. 2008), the Black church has been instrumental in the Black family and community. The responses of these youth, with regards to having received such messages to the survey items: 'Families who go to church or mosque will be close and stay together' (76.6%); 'Religion is an important part of a person's life' (86.6%); 'A belief in God can help a person deal with tough life struggles' (90%); and 'Black

children should be taught early that God can protect them from racial hatred' (76.6), illustrates the importance maintaining their religious connection has on their emotional well-being and a source of assistance in overcoming life challenges.

<center>*School Attendance*</center>

Once a child enters the education system, more awake time is often spent at school than in the home. The school setting is where peer relationships are developed and the art of social interaction is learned. For the Black adolescent, it is also the time when development of racial identity is most critical. Going through the normal adolescent cycle of identity-identity confusion (Atalay, 2007) adolescents begin to look at themselves as the world views them. This phase is exacerbated for the Black youth who begins to recognize that the world view of him is negative (Erikson, 1964). The Black youth who is placed transracially and who has to attend an exclusively White school, is faced with the challenge of navigating this phase independent of support from individuals of the same racial background. The youth in this study describe this as being comfortable when having other students in the school that look like them.

> *I think probably neighborhood and schooling (are important)– like if we were to let kids be with families of another race we have to look at certain things like school – sometimes it's hard to be accepted by other races if there were more of your own people at the school that would be better. – (Source 3)*

> *I don't know what they (a White family) would have to do – yeah maybe going to a black school would help a lot…. because you are around your own kind. – (Source 11)*

The above quotations were made in response to being asked what things would be important for a White family to address when the youth is considering being placed transracially. Both of the youth respondents indicate the need to be around the familiar in order to be accepted

based on their racial characteristics. The ability to associate with same raced peers reiterates, again, the desire of these youth to be comfortable in their environment, decreasing their their feelings of being 'different'. Datnow and Cooper (1997) indicate that the Black youth who are able to associate with other Blacks in a predominately White school setting, are better able to "negotiate their outsider-within status at the school (p. 63), which seems to support the opinions of these youth. Frequency analyses from the TERS scale provides information on specific messages these youth have received regarding the importance of having Black peers in the educational setting.

Table 24
Getting a Good Education is Still the Best Way to Get Ahead

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	10	33.3	33.3	36.7
	lots of times	19	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 25
Going to a Black School Will Help Black Children Feel Better About Themselves

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	20	66.7	66.7	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 26

Black Children Will Learn More if They Go to a Mostly White School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	9	30.0	31.0	31.0
	a few times	15	50.0	51.7	82.8
	lots of times	5	16.7	17.2	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

As informed by the data youth participants recognize the correlation between education and being successful. Despite 93.6% of survey respondents indicating the importance of education (Table 24), successful completion of this endeavor is challenging for those who age out of the child welfare system. Also noted in the above tables, these youth believe attending school with other's of the same race is important to them if placed in a White family. Viewing tables 25 and 26, at first glance, might appear to present contradictory information. However, both tables support the desire of these youth to attend a school where they are able to interact with others of the Black race. While Table 25 indicates the thought that going to an all Black school makes children feel better about themselves, Table 26 does not discount the possibility of attending a school with White students. What both these tables do support are the comments made by these youth regarding the need to feel comfortable in their environment. While these youth recognize the importance of education, it is unfortunate that being uneducated or under-educated are likely prognoses for youth who age out of the child welfare system. The good news is that these youth recognize this and are making the efforts to change the statistical odds that face them.

Table 27

Current Education Level of Survey Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	9th grade	1	3.3	3.6	3.6
	11th grade	4	13.3	14.3	17.9
	12th grade/GED	17	56.7	60.7	78.6
	college	4	13.3	14.3	92.9
	less than 9th grade	2	6.7	7.1	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 27 (above) shows that 56.7% of youth respondents have completed the 12th grade. However, having direct contact with these youth, this researcher is aware that almost all of these youth had previously dropped out of school and are now currently involved in preparing for the GED exam. Another 13.3% are currently enrolled in Community College. Based on these results, the presumption may be made that the desire of these youth to complete their education was instilled in them through the socialization messages they received.

Reasons Youth Support Transracial Adoption

As indicated by the data, many of the youth respondents support the practice of transracially placing Black children in White homes. Several themes emerged during the in-depth interviews explaining the opinions of these youth (1) Concurring with claimsmakers that advocate for the practice, these youth embrace the notice that adoption should be colorblind. (2) Living in a stable environment regardless of the race of the family, is better than living without

stability. (3) Because of their experiences in the child welfare system, some of these youth believe they would have had a better life if they would have been placed transracially. As will be noted from the following quotations, these youth did not necessarily dismiss the importance of race and culture. Rather, they are of the opinion that these issues can be addressed with families so the significance of race and culture are understood and embraced.

Adoption Should Be Colorblind

While youth respondents indicate their need to have interactions with other Black people, they are also of the opinion that this should not eliminate White families from the pool of possible adoptive resources. This opinion may be due to youth living in a more diverse world and recognizing that interactions among and between the races is inevitable.

> *– I'm not racist or prejudiced so I think anybody can go anywhere as long as they are willing to work together understand each other. Biggest problem with people across the country is that they don't understand each other and they don't care to get to know each other. – Source 5*

> *Doesn't matter if child is placed in a white home as long as family is optimistic and can teach them how to strive and work hard and to appreciate(their life). – Source 6*

> *If it was me – I would just want to talk to the people to see where their head is- maybe meet with them a few times to get a feel for them and them get a feel for me to make sure we're a right fit for someone – no matter what the race is when you are going to adopt somebody it's a big step. Need to make sure you are ready to make that commitment. – Source 7*

What is evident from the above quotations is the youths' feeling that there needs to be a balance between transracial adoption and the family's need to embrace the Black race and culture. While legislation prohibits taking into account race when making placement decisions, these youth clearly indicate the need for communication if transracial adoption is to be

successful. With adoptive families gaining an understanding of what is important for these youth, they fully show their support for the practice of placing Black children with White families.

Living in a Stable Environment

With survey respondents experiencing an average of 5 and as many as 15 moves while in placement, the desire to live in a stable environment regardless of the race of the family, is understandable. Having the benefit of a permanent home certainly relieves a great deal of stress from youth who should be spending their time struggling through the normal aspects of adolescence. Indicating their desire to belong, survey respondents voice their willingness to have been placed in a White home, especially if they have nowhere else to go.

> *Sometime I feel it's kind of good and sometime I feel it's bad. (It's) good when kids are abandoned and have nowhere else to go and the White home would treat them better than the Black home – Source 1*
>
> *-- race doesn't really dawn on me – if you're Black your Black and-if you're purple you're purple it doesn't matter…. if I'm in the system and don't have no place else to go and I want to be adopted and they ask me if I want to go to a White family I would say sure – but someone else might say no – but as long as it's a good family. Source 9*

Each time a youth in the child welfare system experiences a placement move, they are forced to learn new rules and expectations of the new family (Unrau, Seita & Putney, 2008). Furthermore, these youth have also experienced the loss of community ties and friendships, leaving them uncertain and out of control of their lives. For these youth, it is evident that their preference would have been to be placed with a family of a different race, than to have remained in the child welfare system.

Opportunity for a Better Life

As indicated in the literature, youth who age out of the child welfare system face poorer

outcomes than their peers who have familial relationships. Being at greater risk for being

uneducated, under-employed and experiencing homelessness (Reilly, 2003), these youth are

likely to live in poverty (Henig, 2009). For youth in this study, the possibility of having a better

life would have played a role in their decision to be placed transracially. Perhaps, looking at this

issue in hindsight, these youth appear to feel that the potential for a stable family structure should

be considered for Black children in need of adoptive homes.

> *If I had a choice to be placed in a white home – I honestly believe I would
> have. Like I said I'm for it and I'm not – they have a lot of structure and
> the family I grew up in we didn't have much structure – I think White
> families help you - they show you more attention. Honestly – I mean I'm
> not going to say all of them, I'm sure you have heard some stories. But if I
> had the choice and I was in foster care I would have –(been placed
> transracially).. In the back of my mind I think if I were still in placement I
> believe that if I would have been in a white home, my life would be
> different. If I was in a white home I wouldn't have been running the street
> and wanting to party. I would have been in the house doing my homework
> and playing video games or something. I mean the way I'm living my life
> now is good – but I believe that if I was in a white home it would be better.
> Source 2*
>
> *…. White or black family –just from their lives being positive – would
> make my life better. When you grow up thinking the world is good and you
> have 2 parents who love me even if I'm black – as long as I appreciate it –
> I will grow up to be successful. – Source 6*

The youth respondents above share their belief that being in a White home would have

provided them more structure and consistency. Thinking that White families may give more

attention to their children, the preceding quotes indicate that these youth feel they would have

benefited from this. Because this study didn't look specifically at why youth held certain

opinions, it is not possible to ascertain how these perceptions were developed. Because of

reasons precipitating their initial placement in the child welfare system, the types of communities they may currently live and the negative visualizations of Blacks in the media, it is possible that these youth have not had the opportunity to experience positive Black role models, and witness Black families interacting in the ways expressed above.

Possible Correlates with Attitudes Toward Transracial Adoption

Gender

Exploration of the data was done in order to determine if a difference existed between male and female youth who have aged out of the child welfare system and their willingness to have been placed transracially. Frequencies distributions based on the gender of participants show results similar to those of the total participants with regards to the youth's willingness to be placed transracially in White homes. Results shown in Table 28 and Table 29 indicate that both male and female participants are relatively equally divided in their willingness to be placed with a White family.

Table 28
Frequency - Willing to Be Placed in White Home (Males)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	5	38.5	41.7	41.7
	yes	4	30.8	33.3	75.0
	don't know	3	23.1	25.0	100.0
	Total	12	92.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	7.7		
Total		13	100.0		

Table 29

Frequency - Willing to Be Placed in White Home (Females)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	6	35.3	35.3	35.3
	yes	7	41.2	41.2	76.5
	don't know	4	23.5	23.5	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

The frequencies shown in table 30 and table 31 indicate the respondents who feel it is an appropriate practice to place Black children in White adoptive homes is also equally distributed between males and females. While the number of females indicating their agreement to this practice is greater than their male peers, this difference is not statistically different. With there being more Black males in the child welfare system than female, this information can prove important with regards to the potential matching of this group of youth with White families, thereby decreasing their higher representation in group home placements. Similarly, the frequency distributions in Table 32 and Table 33 show the vast majority of both male and female respondents were never presented with transracial placement as a permanency option.

Table 30

Frequency - Ok for Black Children to Be Placed in White Home (Males)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	refused to answer	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	no	3	23.1	23.1	30.8
	yes	8	61.5	61.5	92.3
	don't know	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Table 31

Frequency - Ok for Black Children to Be Placed in White Home (Females)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	refused to answer	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
	no	3	17.6	17.6	23.5
	yes	11	64.7	64.7	88.2
	don't know	2	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

Table 32

Frequency - Asked Opinion About Placement in White Home (Males)

Males		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	8	66.7	88.9	88.9
	Yes	1	8.3	11.1	100.0
	Total	9	75.0	100.0	
Missing	refused to answer	1	8.3		
	don't know	2	16.7		
	Total	3	25.0		
Total		12	100.0		

Table 33

Frequency - Asked Opinion About Placement in White Home (Females)

Females		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	14	87.5	87.5	87.5
	Yes	2	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	16	100.0	100.0	

While legislation has been passed to decrease the disproportionate representation of Black youth in the child welfare system, the number of children aging out of the system since the passing of MEPA has remained relatively stable at 25,000 youth annually. Despite their feelings for or against transracial adoption, 50% of the study participants clearly indicate they would have chosen being transracially placed if the option had been given to them. Despite this split in their personal preference regarding placement in a White home, study participants overwhelmingly believe it is an acceptable practice to place Black children with White families.

In order to test the level of independence of the variables found to be significantly related to Black youth's willingness to be placed transracially in White homes, the chi-square test of independence was calculated. Because this test is a nonparametric analysis using either nominal or ordinal variables, there are no assumptions made regarding the normality of the distribution. The first tests were calculated using the gender of participants as the dependent variable.

Table 34 tests the calculations comparing the results of gender and willingness to be placed with a White family if the family will support me even though I am not perfect. No significant relationship was found ($X^2(1) = .002$, $p > .05$). Therefore, responses to this variable, based on gender appear to be independent events.

Table 34

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Will Support Me Even Though I'm Not Perfect - Gender

			white family if will support me if not perfect		
			somewhat important	very important	Total
Gender of participants	male	Count	2	7	9
		% within Gender of participants	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
	female	Count	3	10	13
		% within Gender of participants	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%
	Total	Count	5	17	22
		% within Gender of participants	22.7%	77.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.002[a]	1	.962		
Continuity Correction[b]	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.002	1	.962		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.684
Linear-by-Linear Association	.002	1	.963		
N of Valid Cases	22				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.05.

Table 35 tests the calculations comparing the results of gender and willingness to be placed with a White family if the family allowed me to have Black and White friends. No significant relationship was found ($X^2(2) = 2.769$, p > .05). Therefore, responses to this variable, based on gender appear to be independent events.

Table 35

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Allowed Me to Have Black Friends - Gender

			white family if allowed to have black friends				
			not important	somewhat important	very important	don't know	Total
Gender of participants	male	Count	2	2	8	1	13
		% within Gender of participants	15.4%	15.4%	61.5%	7.7%	100.0%
	female	Count	0	3	12	2	17
		% within Gender of participants	.0%	17.6%	70.6%	11.8%	100.0%
	Total	Count	2	5	20	3	30
		% within Gender of participants	6.7%	16.7%	66.7%	10.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.851[a]	3	.415
Likelihood Ratio	3.584	3	.310
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.532	1	.216
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 6 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .87.

Table 36 tests the calculations comparing the results of gender and willingness to be placed with a White family if the family is able to assist me when confronted with racist situations. No significant relationship was found ($X^2(2) = 3.468$, p > .05). Therefore, responses to this variable, based on gender appear to be independent events.

Table 36

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family is Able to Assist Me When Confronted With Racist Situations

- Gender

			white family if can help me w/ racist situations			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Gender of participants	male	Count	0	2	8	10
		% within Gender of participants	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	female	Count	1	0	12	13
		% within Gender of participants	7.7%	.0%	92.3%	100.0%
	Total	Count	1	2	20	23
		% within Gender of participants	4.3%	8.7%	87.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.468[a]	2	.177
Likelihood Ratio	4.572	2	.102
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.823
N of Valid Cases	23		

a. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected

count is .43.

Table 37 tests the calculations comparing the results of gender and willingness to be

placed with a White family if the family is able to assist me when confronted with racist

situations. No significant relationship was found ($X^2(2) = 2.222$, $p > .05$). Therefore, responses

to this variable, based on gender appear to be independent events.

Table 37

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Will Include Black Culture in Lifestyle - Gender

			white family if include black culture in lifestyle			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Gender of participants	male	Count	0	2	8	10
		% within Gender of participants	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	female	Count	2	1	12	15
		% within Gender of participants	13.3%	6.7%	80.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	2	3	20	25
		% within Gender of participants	8.0%	12.0%	80.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.851[a]	3	.415
Likelihood Ratio	3.584	3	.310
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.532	1	.216
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 6 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected

count is .87.

Table 38 tests the calculations comparing the results of gender and willingness to be

placed with a White family if the family is able to assist me when confronted with racist

situations. No significant relationship was found ($X^2(2) = 2.841$, $p > .05$). Therefore, responses

to this variable, based on gender appear to be independent events.

Table 38

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Can Teach Me to Be a Positive Adult - Gender

			white family if can teach to be positive adult			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Gender of participants	male	Count	1	0	9	10
		% within Gender of participants	10.0%	.0%	90.0%	100.0%
	female	Count	0	2	13	15
		% within Gender of participants	.0%	13.3%	86.7%	100.0%
	Total	Count	1	2	22	25
		% within Gender of participants	4.0%	8.0%	88.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.841[a]	2	.242
Likelihood Ratio	3.883	2	.143
Linear-by-Linear Association	.119	1	.730
N of Valid Cases	25		

Age

Chi Square Tests of Independence were also calculated using age of the participants as the dependent variable. As was the comparison with gender, tables 39 through 44 find that no significant relationships were found with ($X^2(3) = 6.417$, p > .05), ($X^2(6) = 5.720$, p > .05), ($X^2(6) = 3.961$, p > .05), ($X^2(6) = 4.473$, p > .05), and ($X^2(6)$ 2.544, p > .05) respectively.

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Table 39

Chi Square Test of Independence –

Case Summary - Age

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age of participants * white fam if will support me if not perfect	24	80.0%	6	20.0%	30	100.0%
Age of participants * white fam if allowed to have black friends	26	86.7%	4	13.3%	30	100.0%
Age of participants * white fam if can help me w/ racist situations	25	83.3%	5	16.7%	30	100.0%
Age of participants * white fam if include black culture in lifestyle	27	90.0%	3	10.0%	30	100.0%
Age of participants * white fam if can teach to be positive adult	27	90.0%	3	10.0%	30	100.0%

Table 40

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Will Support Me If I Am Not Perfect – Age

			white family if will support me if not perfect		
			somewhat important	very important	Total
Age of participants	18 years old	Count	0	5	5
		% within Age of participants	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	19 years old	Count	1	9	10
		% within Age of participants	10.0%	90.0%	100.0%
	20 years old	Count	2	4	6
		% within Age of participants	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	21 years old	Count	2	1	3
		% within Age of participants	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	Total	Count	5	19	24
		% within Age of participants	20.8%	79.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.417[a]	3	.093
Likelihood Ratio	6.605	3	.086
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.719	1	.017
N of Valid Cases	24		

a. 7 cells (87.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .63.

Table 41

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Allowed Me to Have Black Friends - Age

			white family if allowed to have black friends			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Age of participants	18 years old	Count	0	0	5	5
		% within Age of participants	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	19 years old	Count	2	1	7	10
		% within Age of participants	20.0%	10.0%	70.0%	100.0%
	20 years old	Count	0	2	6	8
		% within Age of participants	.0%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	21 years old	Count	0	1	2	3
		% within Age of participants	.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	4	20	26
		% within Age of participants	7.7%	15.4%	76.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.720[a]	6	.455
Likelihood Ratio	6.876	6	.332
Linear-by-Linear Association	.181	1	.670
N of Valid Cases	26		

a. 10 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected

count is .23.

Table 42

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family is Able to Assist Me When Confronted With Racist Situations

			white family if can help me w/ racist situations			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Age of participants	18 years old	Count	0	0	5	5
		% within Age of participants	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	19 years old	Count	0	1	9	10
		% within Age of participants	.0%	10.0%	90.0%	100.0%
	20 years old	Count	1	1	5	7
		% within Age of participants	14.3%	14.3%	71.4%	100.0%
	21 years old	Count	0	0	3	3
		% within Age of participants	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	1	2	22	25
		% within Age of participants	4.0%	8.0%	88.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.961[a]	6	.682
Likelihood Ratio	4.515	6	.607
Linear-by-Linear Association	.618	1	.432
N of Valid Cases	25		

a. 10 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .12.

Table 43

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Will Include Black Culture Into Their Lifestyle

			white family if include black culture in lifestyle			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Age of participants	18 years old	Count	1	0	5	6
		% within Age of participants	16.7%	.0%	83.3%	100.0%
	19 years old	Count	0	2	8	10
		% within Age of participants	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	20 years old	Count	1	2	5	8
		% within Age of participants	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%	100.0%
	21 years old	Count	0	0	3	3
		% within Age of participants	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	4	21	27
		% within Age of participants	7.4%	14.8%	77.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.473[a]	6	.613
Likelihood Ratio	6.423	6	.377
Linear-by-Linear Association	.016	1	.900
N of Valid Cases	27		

a. 10 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .22.

Table 44

Chi Square Test of Independence -

Willingness to Be Placed: If Family Can Teach Me to Be a Positive Adult

			white family if can teach to be positive adult			
			not important	somewhat important	very important	Total
Age of participants	18 years old	Count	0	0	5	5
		% within Age of participants	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	19 years old	Count	1	1	9	11
		% within Age of participants	9.1%	9.1%	81.8%	100.0%
	20 years old	Count	0	1	7	8
		% within Age of participants	.0%	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
	21 years old	Count	0	0	3	3
		% within Age of participants	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1	2	24	27
		% within Age of participants	3.7%	7.4%	88.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.544[a]	6	.864
Likelihood Ratio	3.424	6	.754
Linear-by-Linear Association	.024	1	.876
N of Valid Cases	27		

a. 10 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .11.

The above data indicates the Black youth participating in this study have strong opinions regarding what is important to them in considering transracial placements. However, the passing of MEPA which is intended to eliminate any barriers related to race matching children to potential adoptive parents in efforts to address the issue of disproportionality prohibits discussion of these issues with families in order to make placement decisions. Explicit in this legislation is the prohibition of caseworkers to use the race of either the child or adoptive parent in making the decision to place a child with a family. However, these modest results indicate that these factors are important to the youth who can most benefit from the practice of transracial adoption.

Length of Time Spent in Child Welfare System

It was hypothesized that the length of time a youth would spend in the child welfare system would influence their willingness to be placed transracially. This was based on the thought that youth who had been in the child welfare system for longer periods of time would accept transracial placement in a White home as a means of being discharged from group home care. Linear regressions were also conducted to determine if a relationship exists between

youth's willingness to be placed transracially and the length of time they were in the child welfare system.

As indicated in Table 45 (below), the regression equation is not significant ($F_{(1,21)}$ = 3.479, p > .05) with an R^2 of .142. This is further explained in the coefficient output. The predicted value (.043) of the length of time youth have spent in the child welfare system shows no statistical difference (p, .076 > .05) with regards to their willingness to be placed transracially. Therefore, the length of time a youth has been/ was in the child welfare system is not a predictor of their willingness to be placed transracially in a White home.

Table 45
Regression Model Summary -
Length of Time in Child Welfare System

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.377[a]	.142	.101	.713

a. Predictors: (Constant), How long have been/were in foster care

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.767	1	1.767	3.479	.076[a]
	Residual	10.668	21	.508		
	Total	12.435	22			

a. Predictors: (Constant), How long have been/were in foster care

b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.409	.231		6.091	.000
	How long have been/were in foster care	.043	.023	.377	1.865	.076

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

This data informs us that for these youth, the length of time spent in the child welfare system had no effect on their having been willing to be placed transracially. With the median length of time in the child welfare system being 5 years, it can be assumed that the option for transracial adoptive placement can be given early on in the decision making process. For those youth who feel transracial adoption is an appropriate practice for Black youth, the pool of possible adoptive family resources may be expanded, perhaps decreasing the possibility of their turning 18 and aging out of the child welfare system.

Placement in White Foster/Adoptive Home

With survey respondents experiencing an average of 5 moves while in the child welfare system, a frequency analysis was conducted to determine the number of these youth who have been placed with a White family. Table 46 (below) indicates 9 of the 29 youth responding to this survey question, had been placed with a White family while in the child welfare system.

Table 46

Frequency - Ever Placed in a White Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	19	63.3	65.5	65.5
	yes	9	30.0	31.0	96.6
	3	1	3.3	3.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Given this low number, it is not surprising that the regression analysis performed (Table 47) is not significant. As seen below, the regression equation $F(1,14) = 1.689$, $p > .05$, with an R square of .025, indicate previous placements in a White home is not a significant indicator of the willingness of these youth to being adopted by a White family. The predictive value (-.347) of previous placements in a White family shows no statistical difference (p, .205 > .05) with regards to these youths' willingness to be placed transracially. Therefore, having been previously placed with a White family does not predict the willingness of these youth to be placed transracially.

Table 47

Regression Model Summary -

Respondents Previous Placement in White Homes

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.247[a]	.061	.025	.776

a.   Predictors: (Constant), Ever placed in a White home

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.018	1	1.018	1.689	.205[a]
	Residual	15.661	26	.602		
	Total	16.679	27			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ever placed in a White home

b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.364	.391		6.042	.000
	Ever placed in a White home	-.347	.267	-.247	-1.300	.205

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Presence and Number of Black Staff at Group Home Facilities

Research indicates the development of positive racial identity occurs partly because of the socialization messages youth receive from their parents. Because many older youth in the child welfare system are placed in group homes, it would seem necessary to have a representation of Blacks employed at these facilities to ensure youth receive these messages. As previously shown, the presence of Black employees at the group home facilities where these youth resided ranged from none to more than 6 employees. With the willingness of survey respondents to be placed transracially, being equally divided, it was important to this research to determine if a relationship existed between the existence of Black group home staff and the likelihood of youth indicating their agreement to living with a White family. The frequency shown in Table 48 (below) indicates 15 participants responded to this survey question. Of those

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responding, 8 youth report the presence of 2 through 5 Black staff persons at the group home

facilities where they resided. The remaining 7 youth report the presence of 6 or more Black

group home staff.

Table 48
Frequency - Number of Black Staff Employed at Group Home Facilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	two	2	6.7	13.3	13.3
	three	2	6.7	13.3	26.7
	four	2	6.7	13.3	40.0
	five	2	6.7	13.3	53.3
	six or more	7	23.3	46.7	100.0
	Total	15	50.0	100.0	
Missing	System	15	50.0		
Total		30	100.0		

A linear regression was then conducted to determine the predictability of the presence of

Black group home staff with regards to youths' willingness to be transracially placed. As seen in

Table 49, the regression equation ($F(1, 13) = .158$, $p > .05$) with an R^2 of .012 is not significant.

The predictive value (-.267) of the presence of Black employees at group home facilities shows

no statistical difference ($p, .293 > .05$) with regards to these youth expressing a willingness to be

placed transracially in a White home. Therefore, having Black employees at the group home

residences where youth lived is not a predictor of youth's willingness to be placed transracially

with a White family.

Table 49
Regression Model Summary -
Presence of Black Staff at Group Home Facilities

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.110[a]	.012	-.064	.726

a. Predictors: (Constant), If yes to #17, how many

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.083	1	.083	.158	.697[a]
	Residual	6.850	13	.527		
	Total	6.933	14			

a. Predictors: (Constant), If yes to #17, how many

b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.267	.512		4.425	.000
	Any Black workers at facility	-.267	.306	-.179	-.871	.393

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

With neither being previously placed in a White home and the presence of Black group home staff being predictors of these youths' willingness to be transracially placed, it can be assumed that these youth have formed their own opinion based on other factors. This study did not look into other relational factors that may have contributed to the opinions of these youth. However, it seems apparent that some other influence has helped to shape these feelings.

Making Transracial Adoption More Palatable: What Youth Would Want From White Adoptive

Families

Youth Responses to Survey

The Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale was utilized to obtain the opinion of study

participants regarding issues of importance when making the choice for transracial adoption. The

primary question was; if you were given the choice to be placed with a White adoptive family,

what things would be important in making your decision? Using the Likert type scale

participants were asked to respond to 19 specific items on a scale of 1, being not important, to 3,

being very important to their being able to make the decision to be transracially placed. The

items addressed issues related to the transracial adoption debate (e.g. if the family is able to help

me when I am confronted with racist situations), as well as those related to adoption in general

(e.g. If the family will support me even though I am not perfect). Independent-Samples *t* Tests,

with willingness to be placed in a white home as the dependent variable, were performed to

analyze the differences between the means of the dependent and independent variables. Group

statistics for the entire list of willingness issues, including the number of participants responding

to each question and the mean score for each issue can be found in Appendix A.

Qualities of Importance for White Families

The results of the Independent Samples t Tests (Table 50) suggests youth who have aged

out of the child welfare system believe several issues are important aspects of a White family

that they would need to take under consideration before making the decision to be placed

transracially. A significant difference between the means of the dependent variable (willingness

to be placed transracially) and the independent variables; 'if the family will support me even

though I am not perfect' ($t(16) = -1.512$, p < .05), 'if the family allowed me to have Black and White friends' ($t(17) = -1.435$, p <.05), 'if the family is able to help me when I am confronted with racist situations ($t(15) = -1.065$, p <.05), ' if family can teach me how to become a positive young adult' ($t(17) = -1.330$, p < .05); 'if family is willing to include African American culture in to their lifestyle' ($t(17) = -1.496$, p < .05). These results suggest equal importance is placed on both racial and general adoption issues.

Table 50
Independent Samples t Test -
Willingness of Survey Respondents to Be Placed Transracially

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
White family if lived in mixed community	Equal variances assumed	1.702	.213	-.152	14	.882	-.048	.314	-.721	.625
	Equal variances not assumed			-.159	13.865	.876	-.048	.299	-.690	.595
white family if can attend mixed school	Equal variances assumed	.002	.963	-.154	15	.879	-.056	.360	-.822	.711
	Equal variances not assumed			-.154	14.601	.880	-.056	.361	-.826	.715
white family if blacks live in community	Equal variances assumed	2.789	.113	.449	17	.659	.144	.321	-.534	.823
	Equal variances not assumed			.460	15.457	.652	.144	.314	-.523	.812

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
white family if will support me if not perfect	Equal variances assumed	17.920	.001	-1.512	16	.150	-.222	.147	-.534	.089
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.512	8.000	.169	-.222	.147	-.561	.117
white family if I can attend black church	Equal variances assumed	.433	.519	1.141	17	.270	.444	.390	-.378	1.266
	Equal variances not assumed			1.136	16.419	.272	.444	.391	-.383	1.272
white family if can help me overcome problems	Equal variances assumed	1.472	.242	-.506	17	.620	-.133	.264	-.690	.423
	Equal variances not assumed			-.492	12.776	.631	-.133	.271	-.719	.453
white family if allowed to have black friends	Equal variances assumed	11.133	.004	-1.435	17	.169	-.443	.309	-1.095	.208
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.280	8.999	.232	-.443	.346	-1.226	.340
white family if can stay in contact with family	Equal variances assumed	1.045	.322	.447	16	.661	.111	.248	-.416	.638
	Equal variances not assumed			.447	11.765	.663	.111	.248	-.431	.654
white family if they love me	Equal variances assumed	1.996	.176	.786	17	.443	.278	.353	-.468	1.023
	Equal variances not assumed			.797	16.721	.437	.278	.349	-.459	1.014
white family if can help me w/ racist situations	Equal variances assumed	z6.176	.025	-1.065	15	.304	-.125	.117	-.375	.125
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.000	7.000	.351	-.125	.125	-.421	.171
white family if can teach me to be a positive adult	Equal variances assumed	10.330	.005	-1.330	17	.201	-.300	.226	-.776	.176
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.406	9.000	.193	-.300	.213	-.783	.183

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
white family if treat me like their own children	Equal variances assumed	1.531	.232	.600	18	.556	.100	.167	-.250	.450
	Equal variances not assumed			.600	16.691	.557	.100	.167	-.252	.452
white family if willing to learn black culture	Equal variances assumed	2.632	.127	.335	14	.743	.127	.379	-.687	.941
	Equal variances not assumed			.356	13.366	.727	.127	.357	-.641	.895
white family if stick through good and bad times	Equal variances assumed	4.513	.050	.860	16	.403	.275	.320	-.403	.953
	Equal variances not assumed			.934	12.607	.368	.275	.295	-.363	.913
white family if they have black friends	Equal variances assumed	.470	.502	-.490	18	.630	-.200	.408	-1.058	.658
	Equal variances not assumed			-.490	17.886	.630	-.200	.408	-1.058	.658
white family if will attend black events w/ me	Equal variances assumed	.067	.799	-.318	18	.754	-.100	.314	-.761	.561
	Equal variances not assumed			-.318	17.998	.754	-.100	.314	-.761	.561
white family if include black culture in lifestyle	Equal variances assumed	13.701	.002	-1.496	17	.153	-.333	.223	-.804	.137
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.414	8.000	.195	-.333	.236	-.877	.210
white family if supports me being proud of Black	Equal variances assumed	2.525	.130	-1.074	17	.298	-.378	.352	-1.120	.364
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.088	16.752	.292	-.378	.347	-1.111	.355
white family if believes blacks equal to whites	Equal variances assumed	.294	.595	-.343	16	.736	-.111	.324	-.798	.576
	Equal variances not assumed			-.343	15.945	.736	-.111	.324	-.798	.576

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In order to determine the strength of the relationships between the variables found significant in the Independent Samples t Tests, a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was calculated. This analysis was chosen because the assumption is that the variables do not have to be normally distributed. Supporting the data obtained from the Independent Samples *t* Test, the output from the Spearman's rho correlation (Table 51) shows very strong positive correlations (p < .01) between the following variables:

a) A White family if the family will support me even though I am not perfect

      i. If I am allowed to have Black and White friendships ($r(20 = .506$, p < .01)

      ii. If the family can help me when I am confronted with racist situations ($r(21) = .733$, p < .01)

b) A White family if I am allowed to have Black and White friendships

      i. If can teach me to be a positive adult ($r(23) = .656$, p < .01

The output also shows strong correlations (p < .05) between the following variables:

c) A White family if they can help me when I am confronted with racist situations

      i. If the family is willing to include Black culture in to their lifestyle ($r(22) = .480$, p < .05)

d) A White family if I am allowed to have Black and White friendships

      i. If the family can help me when confronted with racist situations ($r(23) = .514$, p < .05

Table 51

Spearman's rho Correlation –

Willingness to Be Placed in White Home Based on Positive Correlations

			Willing to be placed in white home	white family if will support me if not perfect	white family if allowed to have black friends	white family if can help me w/ racist situations	white family if include black culture in lifestyle	white family if can teach to be positive adult
Spearman's rho	Willing to be placed in white home	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.354	.265	.265	.361	.325
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.150	.274	.304	.129	.175
		N	22	18	19	17	19	19
	white family if will support me if not perfect	Correlation Coefficient	.354	1.000	.560**	.733**	.186	.195
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.150	.	.007	.000	.396	.373
		N	18	24	22	23	23	23
	white family if allowed to have black friends	Correlation Coefficient	.265	.560**	1.000	.514*	.028	.656**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.274	.007	.	.010	.894	.000
		N	19	22	27	24	25	25
	white family if can help me w/ racist situations	Correlation Coefficient	.265	.733**	.514*	1.000	.480*	.358
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.304	.000	.010	.	.018	.086
		N	17	23	24	25	24	24
	white family if include black culture in lifestyle	Correlation Coefficient	.361	.186	.028	.480*	1.000	.235
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.129	.396	.894	.018	.	.247
		N	19	23	25	24	27	26
	white family if can teach to be positive adult	Correlation Coefficient	.325	.195	.656**	.358	.235	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.175	.373	.000	.086	.247	.
		N	19	23	25	24	26	27

The preceding two analyses show results that confirm earlier discussions regarding study participants' willingness to be placed transracially. What is clear from the shaded areas, these youth are equally concerned with a family's ability to assist them with transitioning into adulthood, as they are with the family's ability to embrace the Black cultural and encourage a positive racial identity. Like their Black peers who have not been part of the child welfare system, these youth desire to be part of a family that prepares them to be successful in society which is inclusive of the reality of race, but not solely focused upon it.

Insights Gained From In-Depth Interviews

As indicated previously, legislation prohibits caseworkers from questioning a family's ability to parent a child of a different race or culture, or providing training specific to White families to increase their knowledge of the racial and cultural needs of Black children. However, this research has found these issues to be important to survey respondents. To give voice to these youth, they were asked to discuss specific factors they view as important in the practice of transracial adoption. Their responses are indicative of the needs of families to acknowledge their racial differences and take steps necessary in providing and advocating for an inclusive and safe environment. Following are the thoughts of the youth supporting the previous survey analyses.

Understanding Black Culture

The comments made by youth participants repeat opinions previously discussed. These youth clearly speak on the importance of a White family to be willing to make Black culture part of their family life. This researcher routinely tells White families interested in being placed with a

Black child that upon placement, they are should not consider themselves a White family who has

adopted transracially, but as a transracial family.

> *A child doesn't think that far - some kids do - but the average child does not have the mind to think about the long run. They think about why I have to stay in this person's house and they don't look like me – you know that's just a kid – this is not where I'm from they do things different – a child tries to see the negative instead of the positive of where they should be at. I mean one important thing is communication….you have to talk to the child to let them know….somebody cares about them. The culture thing is the last thing a kid is thinking about - like at school when people want to know your background. There are things kids need to know because they are different. White families need to make sure of things like black history month, taking kids to museums and about black history in the home. – (Source 8)*

> *I would just want them to be open to my culture to teach me about things that I don't know. Not saying that I wouldn't be interested in their culture but I would want something that focuses on my culture --- you know maybe celebrate some of the holidays. I know everybody celebrates black history month at work and in school – but maybe also in the home. Teaching me about black authors, slavery, things like that. I just want them to be totally open to things I want to learn and to be involved in. – (Source 7)*

> *They would need to let me know about my black culture – and that my swag might be different – that blacks are filled with so much soul and creativity. – I would feel some type of way if I couldn't have or missed out on that. But I would be appreciative of what I can learn and get from them. – (Source 6)*

Each of the quotations above, stress the importance of open communication among

family members. Because the issue of race is often a difficult topic, a family's inability to discuss

the unfortunate realities of racism and discrimination, as well as celebrate the uniqueness of the

Black culture, would leave these youth feeling alienated and not full members of the family.

Knowing that home is a safe place to have these discussions and for developing strategies for

confronting negative situations would increase the level of comfort these youth previously

discussed.

School Attendance and Religious Beliefs

Ingrained in the concept of understanding the Black culture, these youth often spoke

about having voice in the school they would attend and the religious services they might

participate in. The following youngster summarizes the thoughts of several study participants.

> *....as far as religion – what they believe in – I'm a Christian and I'm not
> going to change my beliefs for anyone. Allow me to be independent as well
> as have structure. Not necessarily let me choose the school I would attend
> but to sit down and have a conversation as to what school I would attend.
> – (Source 2)*

This youth echo's the thoughts of other study participants with regards to the desire to

have a balance between living with a White family and being able to remain true to their Black

culture. The ability to attend a Black church or a mixed school would provide these youth with a

connection to the Black community, perhaps to keep them grounded in its historical roots. These

youth previously discussed the need to be comfortable in their home environment. One can

presume that the ability to have these connections would allow them the vehicle to receive the

encouragement and messages that would help them withstand those feelings of discomfort, as

well as the racism and discrimination they would likely face.

Wanting a Family that is Supportive

Adolescence is a challenging time for all teenagers. As teenagers begin testing their

independence, they begin to spend more time away from their families and more time with

friends (Moretti & Peled, 2004). While this is the case, parents continue to provide a great deal

of emotional health to youth during this time. Strong relationships between adolescents and their

parents decrease the likelihood that the youth will participate in risky behaviors.

Youth in the child welfare system often lack this emotional parental attachment, which

upon aging out and being discharged from the system, contributes to the poor prognoses

discussed earlier. The ability to talk with parents regarding thing of importance to them is

something study participants desired in a family.

> *.....acceptance as a person – more understanding of who I am – as a*
> *person. Like I wouldn't want to go into a home where no one cared about*
> *me or wanted to know who I am. I would want someone to want to get to*
> *know me. That's not just race. – Source 3*
>
> *I would want to make sure they (White families) are open to – like if I*
> *wanted to stay in contact with my (birth) parents, and they had no problem*
> *with it. Or they wouldn't have a no problem with me hanging with my*
> *Black friends and that they were ok with me being me – a Black young*
> *lady. – Source 7*
>
> *– I feel like if they are going to love and care for them like their own than*
> *that would be good. – Source 1*

The quotations of these three youth speak on the need for familial relationships that

accept them, not just as a person of Black parentage, but as their own children. The voice of the

first youth the opinions of youth in this study that feel transracial adoption is an appropriate

practice for Black children. 'It's not just race' informs us that for many of these youth that it is

not only about race, but it is about belonging.

As is most likely the desire of any young person being placed in an adoptive home, study

participants believe a family that will support them though they are not perfect, and are able to

teach them to be positive adults, are very important to them. Equally important to study

participants are the issues related to race and culture. Of particular concern for them is the

family's ability to help them deal with racist situations, their willingness to include Black culture

in the home and being permitted to have Black friends. This suggests that while they may agree

to a transracial placement, youth in this study seem to feel families that are unable or unwilling

to do these things, would not be appropriate adoptive resources.

Making Transracial Adoption More Palatable: Youth Speak About the Adoption Process

Having spent an average of 5 years in the child welfare system, study participants have

firsthand experience of how that system operates on their behalf. This researcher is aware that

Allegheny County has quarterly court hearings in order to review the case of each child placed in

the child welfare system. For these hearings, the county, birth parents (if parental rights are still

intact), and the child are represented by legal counsel. Testimony is generally provided by the

county caseworker regarding the progress made on goals established for the case. These reports

are developed through personal caseworker contact with the child, as well as contact with staff

form service provider (group homes/foster care) agencies. With so much contact with the court

system, study participants have formed opinions on how the system operates. When discussing

the willingness of these youth to be placed transracially, their responses during the in-depth

interviews led this researcher to ask if the possibility of transracial adoption had ever been asked

of them. The following section shares the voices of some of these youth. This is followed by the

feelings these youth expressed with regards to the need for communication between them and all

facets of the child welfare system.

Youth Opinion Sought in Placement Decisions

Although youth in the sample were equally divided in their willingness to be placed

transracially, Table 35 (below) shows that a majority of them (80%) indicate their opinion was

never sought from professionals responsible for making placement decisions. Protocols for

having such discussions with youth are already in place. Working in the field of adoption, this

researcher is aware that once a youth turns 14 years of age, it is required that they participate in

the development of their individual service plan, which outlines the child's goal for permanence,

including adoption. Also, the court routinely asks the older youth their opinion regarding

adoption, often giving them the option of adoption, long term foster care, or independent living.

Furthermore, Pennsylvania provides child specific recruitment to youth for whom finding an

adoptive placement has been difficult. Having monthly face-to-face visits with youth,

professionals work to locate families based on the needs and desires of youth. Youth are often

asked questions such as 'what type of family do you want to live with?', 'do you want

older/younger siblings?' and 'what type of community do you want to live in'? However, the

results of the frequencies (Table 52) suggest that youth are not routinely asked if they are willing

to be placed transracially.

Table 52
Frequency –
Asked Opinion About Placement in White Home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	24	80.0	88.9	88.9
	Yes	3	10.0	11.1	100.0
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
Missing	refused to answer	1	3.3		
	don't know	2	6.7		
	Total	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Importance of Communication

Upon being asked if their opinion was ever asked regarding their willingness to be placed transracially with a White family, study participants indicated that communication with young people should play a bigger role when making placement decisions, particularly those involving the placement of Black children in White homes. Because the older youth could possibly benefit from being placed transracially, rather than aging out of the child welfare system, knowing their thoughts is imperative. Almost unanimously, youth who participated in the individual interviews report that their opinions were never sought. When older youth are asked about their desire to be adopted, the conversation may entail in what type of family they would like to live (e.g. siblings, 2 parents, etc), however the conversation seems not to address the possibility of being placed transracially. Given that many of the youth indicate they would have accepted a transracial placement, inquiring their opinion may have made the difference in their being discharged without a permanent familial relationship. These statements describe the youth's feelings.

> *They never asked my opinion – it's important to know my opinion. If they wanted my opinion they would have asked me. Cause if they don't ask it's like they don't care about it. If you ask I'll tell you. If you don't ask it don't really matter. If someone asked a question they obviously want to know your opinion if they don't want my opinion they don't ask. I don't know why they didn't ask me but I think if they wanted my opinion they would have asked me. Important to ask if I am going to go live with somebody - I would want them to ask me how do I feel about it and what do I want to get out of it. Like what do I want in life. – (Source 9)*

> *I just want us as a people to be able to voice our opinions even if we're not able to make the decision. I wish people – CYF - would think of us first when thinking about what's best for us. Like ask us, instead of just throwing us anywhere. Like Kids Voice doesn't work either. If I'm 14 to 18 I want to be heard. I want my opinion to be heard. I don't want my opinion to be thrown on the sideline like they don't care– I want to be heard. – (Source 2)*

If you don't listen to a child's opinion you will never get to prove if it's right or wrong. Then it would be too late because you never communicated with the child – kids and teens. I know the law says not til you're 14 years old – that's when they can have a say so, but that's not fair because a child knows what they want and what makes them uncomfortable. When it all boils down it's all about the child nobody else. It's about the child. – (Source 8)

Well like I said earlier – if I was given the choice – I don't know if right off hand I would choose to be in a Caucasian household. But yes of course I would have said I would be placed. I was never asked or given a choice. I was asked where I wanted to live and that's when I said my aunt. Maybe then I could have said I want to be placed in a White home. I think they should ask and give options instead of asking it and leaving it as an open ended question – maybe that would help. – (Source 4)

A Family that is Supportive of Me

As is most likely the desire of any young person being placed in an adoptive home, study participants believe a family that will support them though they are not perfect, and are able to teach them to be positive adults, are very important to them. Equally important to study participants are the issues related to race and culture.

Make sure they (White families) are open to - if I wanted to stay in contact with parents, and they had no problem with it. Or no problem with me hanging with my black friends and that they were ok with me being me – Not saying that I wouldn't be interested in their culture but I would want something that focuses on my culture --- you know maybe celebrate some of the holidays. I know everybody celebrates Black history month at work and in school – but maybe also doing it in the home. Teaching me about black authors, slavery things like that. I just want them to be totally open to things I wanted to learn and to be involved in.– Source 7

As heard from the voice of the above youth, of particular concern for them is the family's ability to help them deal with racist situations, their willingness to include Black culture in the home and being permitted to have Black friends. This suggests that while they may agree to a

transracial placement, youth in this study seem to feel families that are unable or unwilling to do these things, would not be appropriate adoptive resources.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the results of the Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale. This researcher developed measurement was used to gather demographic information on study participants, including gender, age, the length of time spent in the child welfare system, previous placements in White homes, and the presence of Black staff in the group homes where respondents resided. This information was analyzed to determine if a relationship exists with the willingness of these youth to have been placed transracially in White homes and their opinion on the general issue of transracial adoption.

Findings indicate that these youth have clear opinions regarding the placement of Black children in White adoptive homes, with more than 63% expressing the view that this is an acceptable practice for children. This opinion was virtually equally expressed between the female and male survey respondents with 64.7% and 61.5% respectively. However, only 36.7% of these youth indicate they would have been willing to have been placed with a White family. While 41.2% of the females, as compared to 30.8% of the males, expressed their willingness to have been placed transracially, the opinion of these youth within gender, was relatively equal.

Multiple analyses were then conducted to determine if a relationship existed between the willingness of these youth to be placed transracially and the presence of Black group home staff, as well as any previous placements in White homes. Because this study sought to determine the racial identity of these youths, it was important to examine if these issues had an impact on

respondents. Similar analyses were conducted taking into account the opinions of these youth with regards to their opinions on the general issue of transracial adoption.

Survey respondents report spending an average of 5 years, and experiencing 5 placement moves, while in the child welfare system. Findings indicate that despite the instability that occurred in their lives, there was no effect on these youths' opinion on transracial adoption or their willingness to have been placed in White homes.

In-depth telephone interviews conducted with these youth support the statistical findings. Youth opposed to transracial adoption report the Black child's being uncomfortable in a living situation that was exclusive of other Black people. Youth who expressed a willingness to have been placed with a White family also discuss a preference to have the ability to interact with other Black people. However, similar to claimsmakers in the literature, comments made by these youth are supportive of an adoption process that is more colorblind.

This is not to say the latter group of youth was naïve about societal racism and discrimination. When asked what things White families would need to embrace in order for transracial adoption to be acceptable, youth on both sides of the transracial adoption debate report similar views. The ability to go to a mixed school, have Black friends, maintain their religious affiliations and the incorporation of Black culture into the family lifestyle, were important issues for youth respondents.

The next chapter will further examine these issues as related to the racial identity of these youth, and the effect their opinions have on their level of racial identity development.

CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS: THE RACIAL IDENTITY OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess and understand the racial identity development of older African American youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system. This study sought to discover if a relationship exists between the level of racial identity development of the study participants, their opinions with regards to transracial adoption, and their willingness to having been adopted by White families. The length of time the youth have been involved in the child welfare system, as well as the presence of Black group home staff and previous placements in White foster homes, was also examined as it relates to their perceptions of transracial adoption. This study examined the types of socialization messages provided to these youth while residing in the Child Welfare system.

As stated previously, the positive development of racial identity is important to the emotional well-being of Black youth. Being prepared to confront systemic racism and discrimination is a key component of this identity. It is also a primary issue in the transracial adoption debate. Those in support of transracial adoption believe that adoption should be colorblind in order to ensure Black youth, who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system may be placed in permanent families. However, those oppose to this practice contend that White families are unable to assist Black youth in the development of a positive racial identity; thereby leaving them ill-prepared to handle the racism that is inherent in society. Assisting Black youth in developing a positive racial identity entails parents providing racial socialization messages. These messages that are both verbal and non-verbal are strategies used to buffer and protect youth from negative racial stereotypes and experiences.

As described in Chapter 4, 50% of youth in this study would have been willing to be placed transracially. Additionally, 76% of these youth believe that transracial adoption of Black children by White families is an acceptable practice. This chapter looks at the relationship of the findings in Chapter 4 and the level of racial identity development of these youth, the types of racial socialization messages received as they relate to their racial identity, and how these influence the opinions of these youth regarding transracial adoption.

Chapter Organization

This chapter begins with a review of the racial identity development of Black youth. This will include discussions and analyses of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t) and the Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization (TERS) scales. Descriptive findings are presented that inform the reader of the levels of racial identity development and the racial socialization messages received by the youth in this study. This chapter also provides the findings of analyses conducted on these measurements and their relationship to study participants' willingness to be adopted transracially.

The Development of Racial Identity

For Black youth, developing a positive racial identity is related to their ability to have positive life outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 2, having positive feelings about ones membership in the Black community has been positively correlated to better academic performance and mental health status for Black youth. As discussed, the previous chapter presented findings on the willingness of study participants to have been placed in White homes, rather than aging out of the child welfare system without a permanent familial relationship. The

findings show that about half of these youth would have accepted a transracial placement, had the option been offered to them. The fact that these youth are proud of being Black and hold fast to their Black culture does not appear to influence their opinion for or against the practice of placing Black children in White adoptive homes. To further explore this issue, the level and type of racial identity development of these youth was examined to assess if their racial identity was a factor in their acceptance of transracial adoption as a general practice and their willingness to have been placed transracially.

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t)

As previously explained, the MIBI-t is a tool developed to assess the three stable dimensions of racial identity labeled Centrality, Regard, and Ideology.   The next section provides specific explanation as well as, presents findings on the descriptive information on the three dimensions of the MIBI-t.

Centrality

The Centrality dimension of the MIBI-t assesses to what extent youth embrace their Blackness and view race as central to the youth's concept of self. With possible scores ranging between 1 and 5, participants in this study appear to have a positive connection to being Black on each of the components in the centrality dimension, with mean scores of 3.53, 3.33 and 3.00 respectively (Table 53).

Table 53
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Centrality Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel close to other black people	30	1	5	3.53	1.224
I have a strong sense of belonging to other black people	30	2	5	3.33	.959
If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things I would say is that I'm black	28	1	5	3.00	1.515
Valid N (listwise)	28				

This information confirms the findings in the previous chapter where the youth acknowledge their membership in the Black race While the information in Table 36.1 shows these youth are connected to being Black, it only lays a foundation for other factors that may influence how salient race is in their lives. As with all adolescents, this period is the time teens begin to see themselves as others in the larger society view them. For the Black adolescent this includes having the understanding that race plays a part in how they are perceived by others. The next dimension, Regard, is divided into two sub-categories that address the extent to which the views of others effect these youth; these sub-categories are:

Private Regard

The Private Regard dimension assesses youth's feelings regarding their being Black. A higher score in this dimension is indicative of youth having positive mind-sets about their membership in the Black race. Having a positive perception about being Black shows the youth does not internalize the negative views others in society hold regarding Black people. As seen in Table 54, the youth in this study appear to be proud of their membership in the Black race despite the opinions of others, with mean scores of 4.27, 4.38 and 3.97 respectively.

Table 54
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Private Regard Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am happy that I am black	30	2	5	4.27	1.048
I am proud to be black	29	2	5	4.38	1.015
I feel good about black people	30	1	5	3.97	1.299
Valid N (listwise)	29				

Public Regard

The Public Regard dimension assesses the importance Black youth place on the viewpoints of others on their being Black. A higher mean score in this dimension would indicate a higher value being placed on others' perceptions about the Black race. As discussed in the literature review, a high score in this dimension could result in a lower self esteem in youth if the perceived opinions of others are negative. Table 55 shows youth in the present study had mean scores of 3.13, 3.03 and 3.47 respectively on items on this scale.

Table 55
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Public Regard Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Most people think that blacks are as smart as people from other races	30	1	5	3.13	1.306
Most people think that blacks are as good as people from other races	30	1	5	3.03	1.159
People from other races think that blacks have made important contributions	30	1	5	3.47	1.252
Valid N (listwise)	30				

This difference in mean scores between the private and public regard scales indicate that these youth hold their personal (positive) feelings with regards to being Black in higher esteem

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than the feelings they believe others have about the Black race. Embracing the private regard statement 'I am proud to be Black' supports the mean scores obtained on the centrality scale, indicating that these youth do indeed hold race salient in their lives. While these youth are cognizant of the reality of racism, as a group, this has not negatively impacted how they feel about themselves as members of the Black race. In terms of their willingness to having been placed with a White family, comments such as, transracial adoption is fine as long as the family is 'ok with me being me – a black young lady' illustrates the need for White families to positively acknowledge the race of these youth, rather than look at adoption as colorblind. When referring to the factors that would make transracial adoption palatable for these youth, the request for the inclusion of Black culture into the home is necessary for these youth to not only feel good about themselves but to be truly accepted as a member of the family.

Ideology

The dimension of Ideology assesses youth's opinions and beliefs with regards to how Blacks should interact in society. The ideology of these youth is important, given the previous discussion regarding the need to feel comfortable. This need to be at ease in their environment is intensified for the Black youth placed in a White home where only interactions with other White people is available to them. As discussed in the previous chapter, the comfort level of these youth would be improved if they are allowed to attend school or religious services with other Blacks. The MIBI-t is comprised of four ideology subscales (Nationalist, Minority, Assimilation, and Humanist). While individuals may lean more heavily in one ideology subscale than another, it is possible to possess beliefs within more than one category. This section will discuss each ideology subscale in detail.

Assimilation

Those holding the assimilation ideology believe that Blacks should fully integrate themselves in the mainstream culture. Rather than highlighting the differences between races, those with high assimilation beliefs prefer to focus on what is similar. The concept of assimilation would be highly correlated with individuals who believe adoption should be colorblind. However, with assimilation comes the disappearance of the culture that is made to blend in to the mainstream (Bhugra, 2004). The distress caused by relinquishing cultural values and traditions can result in increased occurrences of mental health problems.

With mean scores falling below average (2.30, 1.93, and 2.10), it appears that study participants do not feel an absolute need to assimilate with mainstream society, at the expense of dismissing their own culture (Table 56). Previous comments such as, 'going to a black school would help a lot, and black churches, because you are around your own kind' illustrates the commitment of these youth to maintain their Black heritage.

Table 56
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Assimilation Ideology Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
It is important that blacks go to white schools so that they can learn how to act around whites	30	1	5	2.30	1.368
I think it is important for blacks not to act black around white people	30	1	5	1.93	1.172
Blacks should act more like whites to be successful in this society	30	1	5	2.10	1.398
Valid N (listwise)	30				

The items is this Assimilation portion of the ideology scale are meant to measure whether Black respondents believe Blacks in general – behave in a manner that should be avoided when

around White individuals. The low mean scores from the assimilation subscale, as well as the much higher mean scores from the Private Regard scale (discussed above) indicate these youth embrace their Black identity and see no need to try to "pass" as white. This also suggests these youth would not do well if put into an adoptive environment where they either overtly pressured to "act white", and/or had their Black culture devalued or ignored. These youth indicate the need for White families to embrace their Black race and culture in order for them to consider being transracially placed.

Nationalism

On the opposite side of the ideology spectrum, those holding nationalist attitudes emphasize the uniqueness of the Black culture and believe this should be expressed in interactions with society.

Table 57
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Nationalist Ideology Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Black parents should surround their children with black art and black books	30	1	5	2.77	1.040
Whenever possible, blacks should buy from black businesses	30	1	5	2.90	1.242
Blacks should support black entertainment by going to black movies and watching black TV shows	30	1	5	3.20	1.126
Valid N (listwise)	30				

While their mean scores in this area (Table 57) were slightly higher than in the assimilation ideology (2.77, 2.90 and 3.20); youth in this sample also do not fully embrace this concept. The comment, *'I'm not saying that I wouldn't be interested in their culture but I would want something that focuses on my culture'* would suggest study participants recognize the need to balance their racial pride with their ability to effectively maneuver through mainstream society.

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This is also important with regards to their willingness to be placed in a White home if the family is able/willing to also make the Black culture important in the overall life experiences of the family.

Humanist

Where the youth participants appear to have stronger ideological connections is on the humanist and minority Ideology subscales. Those holding views within the Humanist subscale believe that despite intrinsic differences, their preference is to focus on similarities within the races. Conforming to the notion that people are people, the youth in this study had significant mean scores (3.93, 4.03, and 3.83) on each of the humanist categories (Table 58).

Table 58
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Humanist Ideology Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as black	30	1	5	3.93	1.337
Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks	30	1	5	4.03	1.217
Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see	29	1	5	3.83	1.466
Valid N (listwise)	29				

The notion that people are people was expressed several times by youth participants in this study. The statement, '*I would want someone to want to get to know me. That's not just race*' expresses the thoughts of these youth that having a family that cares about them as a person, regardless of the race was, for many of these youth more important than aging out of the child welfare system

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and facing life independently. Recalling that these youth spent an average of 5 years and experienced an average of 5 moves while in the child welfare system, the desire for stability and permanence holds as much importance to their being able to openly express pride in being Black.

Minority

In spite of having humanist attitudes, these youth also seem appropriately aware of the fact that racism and discrimination do exist. Significant mean scores of 3.87, 3.93, and 4.07, respectively on the minority subscale (Table 59), are indicative of youth attitudes that other minority groups face similar discrimination, and addressing the issue of discrimination should be a joint effort between the groups.

Table 59
Descriptive Statistics -
MIBI-t Minority Ideology Dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination	30	1	5	3.87	1.167
There are other people who experience discrimination similar to blacks	30	2	5	3.93	1.143
Blacks should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups	30	2	5	4.07	.980
Valid N (listwise)	30				

The preceding analyses indicate African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system have a solid sense of who they are racially. The information also informs that

while they are proud of their membership in the Black community, they subscribe to the attitude that they are also members in the human race. These findings support previous analyses indicating study participants feeling transracial adoption is an acceptable practice that should be considered for children in need of permanent homes. Regardless of their possible ultimate desire to be placed in a family of the same race, being placed in a White home is an option several would have considered. While not stated directly, youth seem to embrace the concept of adoption being a practice of color consciousness versus colorblind.

Transracial Adoption and Youths' Racial Identity Development

Findings from the previous section show that youth participants in the present study had significant mean scores in the private regard, minority and humanist scales on the MIBI-t. As discussed, these scores are representative of these youths having a positively developed raciall identity. These findings also correlate to the factors these youth request White families to embrace if they were to consider being placed transracially. This section presents the findings regarding the private regard, minority and humanist scales as they are related to these youths' willingness to have been placed transracially in a White home.

Being Placed Transracially and Private Regard

The analyses previously performed have indicated that study participants are proud of their membership in the Black race, with half also indicated their willingness to have been placed transracially. To determine if indeed a relationship exists between these variables this researcher performed Spearman rho correlation coefficients on each item in the private regard scale (Table 60).

Table 60
Spearman's rho Correlation -
Willingness to Be Placed in White Home and MIBI-t Private Regard

			Willing to be placed in white home	I am happy that I am black	I am proud to be black	I feel good about black people
Spearman's rho	Willing to be placed in white home	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.309	.297	.154
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.161	.191	.494
		N	22	22	21	22
	I am happy that I am black	Correlation Coefficient	.309	1.000	.810[**]	.679[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.161	.	.000	.000
		N	22	30	29	30
	I am proud to be black	Correlation Coefficient	.297	.810[**]	1.000	.599[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.191	.000	.	.001
		N	21	29	29	29
	I feel good about black people	Correlation Coefficient	.154	.679[**]	.599[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.494	.000	.001	.
		N	22	30	29	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in the above calculations outputs there is a relationship between these youth feeling good about Black people and their being proud to be Black. However, the outputs also show that no significant relationship exists between how African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system embrace being Black (Private Regard) and their willingness to accept placement in a White adoptive home. This result supports previous comments that suggest the willingness of these teens to be place in White homes is not based solely on race, but

the desire of most youth to have a stable and nurturing home environment. Similar results were obtained for the Minority subscale.

Being Placed Transracially and Minority Subscale

As explained earlier, the Minority subscale assesses to what extent Black youth believe they should focus on the racial struggles of all minorities, rather than placing ones total focus on the racism and discrimination experienced by Blacks. Table 61 (below) shows that similar to the private regard scale, there is no relationship between the willingness of the youth in the present study to have agreed to be placed transracially and their scores on the Minority subscale.

Table 61

Spearman's rho Correlation –
Willingness to be Placed in White Home and MIBI-t Minority Ideology

		Willing to be placed in white home	People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination	There are other people who experience discrimination similar to blacks	Blacks should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups
Willing to be placed in white ome	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.296	.273	.274
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.180	.219	.217
	N	22.000	22	22	22
People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination	Pearson Correlation	.296	1.000	.588**	.491**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.180		.001	.006
	N	22	30.000	30	30
There are other people who experience discrimination similar to blacks	Pearson Correlation	.273	.588**	1.000	.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.219	.001		.009
	N	22	30	30.000	30
Blacks should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups	Pearson Correlation	.274	.491**	.466**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.217	.006	.009	
	N	22	30	30	30.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table does inform that these youth do have an understanding of the fact that

other minority groups experience acts of racism and discrimination, and that these groups should

work collaboratively to combat the negative stereotypes often expressed in society.

Being Placed Transracially and Humanist Subscale

While no relationship is evident between the private regard and minority subscales, Spearman rho coefficients performed on the Humanist subscale and youths' willingness to be placed transracially (Table 62) did yield one positive relationship. Of the three items on this subscale, only the statement, "Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see" showed a positive relationship to these youths' willingness to be placed transracially (rho (19) = .454, p < .05). These calculations appear to minimally confirm the previous chi square results indicating youth attitudes that membership in the human race is of equal importance as is their membership in the Black race.

Table 62

Spearman's rho Correlation -

Willingness to Be Placed in White Home and MIBI-t Humanist Ideology

			Willing to be placed in white home	Being an individual is more important than identifying hyourself as black	Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks	Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see
Spearman's rho	Willing to be placed in white home	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.360	.307	.456[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.055	.105	.015
		N	29	29	29	28
	Being an individual is more important than identifying hyourself as black	Correlation Coefficient	.360	1.000	.512[**]	.453[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.	.004	.014
		N	29	30	30	29
	Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks	Correlation Coefficient	.307	.512[**]	1.000	.644[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.105	.004	.	.000
		N	29	30	30	29
	Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see	Correlation Coefficient	.456[*]	.453[*]	.644[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.014	.000	.
		N	28	29	29	29

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Predicting Willingness for Transracial Placement Based on Racial Identity Dimensions

Findings from Chapter 4 indicate most of the youth in this study believe transracial

adoption is an acceptable practice to be considered when making placement decisions for Black

youth. The findings also inform that the presence of Black group home staff or having resided in White homes had no effect on this opinion. However, comments made by youth suggest that several factors would need to be considered if they were to make the personal decision for this type of placement. These discussions support the above analyses suggesting that these youth are positively grounded in their racial identity, having a strong connection to the humanist ideology subscale on the MIBI-t. This next section will assess if a youth's willingness to be placed transracially can be predicted by their falling within humanist ideology subscale.

Willingness to be Placed Transracially and MIBI-t Humanist Subscale

In order to determine the statistical ability to predict the relationships between the youth's willingness to be transracially adopted and the items within the Humanist ideology dimension, a multivariate regression was conducted. As seen in Table 63, the regression equation is not significant ($F (3, 24) = 2.635$, $p > .05$) with an R^2 of .248. The predictive values of each item on the Humanist subscale, 'Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to see ($b = .245$, $p = .082 > .05$)', 'Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as Black' $b = .058$, $p = .692 > .05$), and 'Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as Blacks' ($b = -.003$, $p = .988 > .05$, are not a significant with regards to youths' willingness to be placed transracially. Therefore, the total humanist subscale does not predict youths' willingness to be placed transracially.

Table 63

Regression Model Summary – Willingness to Be Placed in White
Home and Total Humanist Subscale

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.498[a]	.248	.154	.723

a. Predictors: (Constant), Black people should not consider race when deciding
what movies to go see, Being an individual is more important than identifying
yourself as black, Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.132	3	1.377	2.635	.073[a]
	Residual	12.547	24	.523		
	Total	16.679	27			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see,
Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as black, Blacks should think of themselves
as individuals, not as blacks -- b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.747	.520		1.436	.164
	Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as black	.058	.144	.092	.401	.692
	Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks	-.003	.191	-.004	-.015	.988
	Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see	.245	.135	.459	1.815	.082

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

However, since the Spearman rho coefficient in the preceding section indicated a relationship between youth these youths' willingness to be placed transracially and the statement 'Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see', regressions were performed (Tables 64 – 65 – 66 below) on the individual items of the Humanist ideology subscale to assess if any item predicts their willingness to be placed transracially.

Table 64

Regression Model Summary - Being an Individual is More Important Than Identifying Yourself as Black

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.322[a]	.104	.071	.761

a. Predictors: (Constant), Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as black

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.813	1	1.813	3.131	.088[a]
	Residual	15.635	27	.579		
	Total	17.448	28			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as black

b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.125	.440		2.558	.016
	Being an individual is more important than identifying hyourself as black	.189	.107	.322	1.769	.088

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

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Table 65

Regression Model Summary – Blacks Should Think of
Themselves as Individuals Not as Blacks

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.332[a]	.111	.078	.758

a. Predictors: (Constant), Blacks should think of themselves as

individuals, not as blacks

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.929	1	1.929	3.355	.078[a]
	Residual	15.520	27	.575		
	Total	17.448	28			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks

b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.005	.489		2.056	.050
	Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as blacks	.214	.117	.332	1.832	.078

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Table 66

Regression Model Summary -
Black People Should Not Consider Race When Deciding What Movies to See

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.491[a]	.241	.212	.698

a. Predictors: (Constant), Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.017	1	4.017	8.248	.008[a]
	Residual	12.662	26	.487		
	Total	16.679	27			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see

b. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.903	.369		2.445	.022
	Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see	.262	.091	.491	2.872	.008

a. Dependent Variable: Willing to be placed in white home

As seen in the above analyses, when individually analyzing each item in the humanist ideology dimension, the item 'Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see', was the only item in the humanist dimension found to be significant ($F (1, 26) =$ 8.248, $p < .05$, with an R^2 of .241with regards to youth being willing to be placed with a White family (table 60). The prediction equation .903 (willingness) + .262 (not considering race when deciding on movies to go see), $p < .05$ indicates that for each movie a youth makes the decision to go see without considering race their willingness to be placed transracially increases..

The findings in this section confirm that youth in this study have a positive racial identity. These youth are proud of their membership in the Black race and view the participation in the Black culture as important. Important in these findings is the confirming information that these youth desire to be thought of as individuals and not looked at solely on the basis of their race.

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Having significant strength in the Humanist ideology dimension provides reason for these youths' finding transracial adoption as an acceptable practice for Black youth in need of adoptive homes. Findings in this section regarding racism and the need to be among others from the Black race, also support findings in Chapter 4 where youth request to attend Black schools and religious services in order to be comfortable living in a White environment. As reported in the previous chapter, the youth in this study had spent an average of 5 years in the child welfare system, and as many as 18 years. Experiencing an average of 5 placement moves, these youth were placed in both foster homes and group home facilities. Important in the development of racial identity are the racial socialization messages youth receive from their parent or adult caregivers. Despite the experiences of these youth while in the child welfare system, they appear to have developed positive racial identities. The next section will examine the racial socialization messages received by these youth and their relationship with their racial identity.

Effect of Racial Socialization Messages Received on Racial Identity Development

The Teenager Experience of Racial Socialization (TERS) is a tool developed to assess the level of messages received and how they serve to buffer racism and discrimination experienced by youth. The TERS is divided into 5 dimensions (Cultural Coping with Antagonism, Cultural Pride Reinforcement, Cultural Appreciation of Legacy, Cultural Alertness to Discrimination, and Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream). These proactive and protective messages are central to the development of a positive racial identity. Given that the youth in the present study hold their Black race salient, this section examined if a relationship existed between the racial identity of these youth and the types of racial socialization messages they received. This section will

begin with an analysis of each dimension of the TERS and will be followed by analyses of the TERS with the MIBI-t.

Messages that Assist the Black Youth to Cope With Antagonism

The cultural coping with antagonism dimension consists of items related to the importance of religion and how to successfully deal with racial negativity when it occurs. The next series of frequency distributions (Tables 67 – 79) illustrate how often the youth in this study received these types of messages.

Table 67
Frequency - Families Who Go to Church or Mosque Will Be Close and Stay Together

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	19	63.3	63.3	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 68
Frequency - Relatives Can Help Black Parents Raise Their Children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	18	60.0	60.0	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 69

Frequency - Religion Is an Important Part of a Person's Life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	7.1	7.1
	a few times	13	43.3	46.4	53.6
	lots of times	13	43.3	46.4	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 70

*Frequency - Having Large Families Can Help Many Black Families
Survive Life Struggles*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	18	60.0	60.0	70.0
	lots of times	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 71

*Frequency - Schools Should be Required to Teach All Children About
Black History*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	a few times	10	33.3	33.3	46.7
	lots of times	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 72

Frequency - Depending on Religion and God Will Help You Live a
Good Life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 73

Frequency - Families Who Talk Openly About Religion or God Will
Help Each Other Grow

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	17	56.7	56.7	76.7
	lots of times	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 74

Frequency - Teachers Can Help Black Children Grow by Showing
Signs of Black Culture in the Classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	17	56.7	56.7	73.3
	lots of times	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 75

Frequency - Spiritual Battles that People Fight are More Important than the Physical Battles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	24.1	24.1
	a few times	12	40.0	41.4	65.5
	lots of times	10	33.3	34.5	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 76

Frequency - You Should Know About Black History So That You Will Be a Better Person

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.8	13.8
	a few times	14	46.7	48.3	62.1
	lots of times	11	36.7	37.9	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 77

Frequency - Going to a Black School Will Help Black Children Feel Good About Themselves

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	20	66.7	66.7	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 78

Frequency - Black Children Should be Taught Early That God Can Protect Them From Racial Hatred

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	73.3
	lots of times	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 79

Frequency - Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go and He Will Not Turn Away From It

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	a few times	19	63.3	63.3	76.7
	lots of times	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The items in the preceding analyses highlight the importance of religion, school and familial relationships to the Black community. Ranging from a high frequency of 91.6% to a low of 73.3%, the tables above show most of the study participants received messages from this TERS dimension. This information further supports the findings and comments made by youth in the previous chapter, regarding the value they place on religious traditions. These findings indicate the need, expressed by these youth, for White families to not only understand the cultural significance of religion, but to encourage these youths' participation.

Messages that Encourage Pride in Their Black Culture

Cultural pride reinforcement is the TERS dimension that teaches Black youth to be proud of their culture. The following frequencies (Tables 80 – 88) illustrate how often study participants received these messages.

Table 80
Frequency - You Should Be Proud to be Black

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a few times	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	lots of times	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 81
Frequency - If You Work Hard Then You Can Overcome Barriers in Life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a few times	7	23.3	25.0	25.0
	lots of time	21	70.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 82
Frequency - A Belief in God Can Help A Person Deal With Tough Life Struggles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	12	40.0	40.0	50.0
	lots of times	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 83
Frequency - Getting a Good Education is Still the Best Way For You to Get Ahead

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	10	33.3	33.3	36.7
	lots of times	19	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 84
Frequency - Don't Forget Who Your People Are Because You May Need Them Someday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	14	46.7	46.7	53.3
	lots of times	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 85
Frequency - Be Proud of Who You Are

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	a few times	5	16.7	17.2	27.6
	lots of times	21	70.0	72.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 86
Frequency - You Need to Learn How to Live in a White World and A Black World

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	a few times	14	46.7	48.3	58.6
	lots of times	12	40.0	41.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 87
Frequency - Never Be Ashamed of Your Color

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	8	26.7	26.7	33.3
	lots of times	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 88

Frequency - Racism is Not as Bad Today as it Used to Be Before the 1990's

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	a few times	18	60.0	62.1	72.4
	lots of times	8	26.7	27.6	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

As the preceding analyses inform, most of the youth participating in this study have received socialization messages that encourage pride in the Black race. Of note is the item 'You should be proud to be Black', on which 100% of these youth indicate having received this message. This is an important factor when considering some of these youth have been placed with White foster families, and/or have been placed in group homes staff primarily with White staff. The strength in this number also suggests that their willingness for transracial adoption, has no effect on the racial pride felt by these youth.

Messages that Teach African American Legacy

The Cultural Appreciation of Legacy dimension of the TERS teaches the Black youth about the important contributions African Americans have made, as well as the experience of slavery. The following series of tables (89 - 93) illustrate that study participants have indeed received instruction on the topics included in this dimension.

Table 89

Frequency - Black Slavery is Important to Never Forget

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	9	30.0	30.0	33.3
	lots of times	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 90

Frequency - Racism and Discrimination Are the Hardest Things a Black Child Has to Face

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	12	40.0	40.0	43.3
	lots of times	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 91

Frequency - Knowing Your African Heritage is Important for Your Survival

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	50.0
	lots of times	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 92

Frequency - *Racism is Real and You Have to Understand It or It Will Hurt You*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.9	6.9
	a few times	12	40.0	41.4	48.3
	lots of times	15	50.0	51.7	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

93

Frequency - You are Connected to a History that Goes Back to African Royalty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	53.3
	lots of times	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Celebrating the contributions Blacks have made to society are important messages primarily received from parents or adult caregivers. Since most educational systems only incorporate Black history into a limited curriculum during Black History Month, it is important that Black youth understand the contributions of Blacks to history was far more encompassing. With between 90% and 96.7% of study participants indicating they had received messages on each of these topics, it can be assumed that these comments are related to the racial pride that has been instilled.

Messages that Teach the Realism of Discrimination

Acts of racism and discrimination are experiences that Black youth will almost certainly face. This lesson on cultural alertness to discrimination becomes more important as Black youth enter adolescence and begin to experience society without the presence and emotional protection of their parents. The following tables (94 - 99) illustrates to what extent youth in this study have received such messages.

Table 94
Frequency - You Have to Work Twice as Hard as Whites in Order to Get Ahead in This World

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 95
Frequency - Whites Make it Hard to Get Ahead in This World

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	17	56.7	56.7	80.0
	lots of times	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 96
Frequency - Whites Have More Opportunities Than Blacks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	60.0
	lots of times	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 97
Frequency - A Black Child or Teenager Will be Harassed Just Because S/he is Black

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	18	60.0	60.0	83.3
	lots of times	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 98
Frequency - More Job Opportunities Would be Open to Blacks if People Were Not Racist

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	11	36.7	36.7	60.0
	lots of times	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 99
Frequency - Blacks Don't Always Have the Same Opportunities as Whites

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Messages that Endorse Mainstream Society

This final TERS dimension, cultural endorsement of the mainstream examines messages that solely endorse mainstream society. High frequencies on this dimension would indicate messages given focused more on assimilating into the mainstream, focusing less on cultural traditions and values specific to Black culture. The following tables (100 - 106) show the responses of youth participants in this study.

Table 100
Frequency - American Society is Fair Toward Blacks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	23	76.7	76.7	93.3
	lots of times	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 101

Frequency - Black Children Feel Better About Themselves if They Go to School With Mostly White People

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	a few times	16	53.3	53.3	96.7
	lots of times	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 102

Frequency - All Races Are Equal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	70.0
	lots of times	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 103

Frequency - Black Children Will Learn More if They Go to a Mostly White School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	9	30.0	31.0	31.0
	a few times	15	50.0	51.7	82.8
	lots of times	5	16.7	17.2	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Table 104

*Frequency - Too Much Talk About Racism Will Keep Your From
Reaching Your Goals in Life*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 105

*Frequency - Only People Who Are Blood Related to You Should be
Called Your Family*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	a few times	16	53.3	53.3	93.3
	lots of times	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 106

*Frequency - Black Children Don't Have to Know About Africa in
Order to Survive Life in America*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	a few times	16	53.3	53.3	80.0
	lots of times	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Frequency results from this dimension show that youth received these results fewer times than each of the other dimensions. As discussed in the literature review, lower frequencies on this dimension correspond to better connections to Black identity and culture. Specifically, the lowest frequencies, 'Too much talk about racism will keep you from reaching your goals in life' (56.6%) and 'Black children will feel better about themselves if they go to a school with mostly White children (56.6%), support comments from these youth regarding their understanding that racism exists. These finding also further confirm the desire of study participants to be permitted to attend Black schools and maintain their cultural connections, when taking being placed transracially into consideration.

While this study did not examine from whom youth participants received racial socialization messages, as evidenced by the preceding analyses, it is clear that instruction on all areas of the dimensions of the TERS have been provided. The next section will discuss findings on the relationship between the TERS dimensions and the racial identity dimensions of the MIBI-t dimensions.

The Relationship Between Racial Identity Development and Racial Socialization Messages

Messages from parents and adult caregivers that encourage pride in being Black are critical components in the development of a positive racial identity. Findings from the previous sections show that the youth in this study appear to be grounded in their racial identity, and it can be assumed that the pride they have in their race and culture was developed through the internalization of positive racial socialization messages. This section will present findings of analyses performed to assess if dimensions of the TERS are predictors of the dimensions of the MIBI-t found to be most prevalent among survey participants.

TERS Dimensions as Predictors of Racial Centrality

To begin the analysis, a multivariate regression was conducted consisting of all dimensions of the TERS scale regressed on the MIBI-t dimension of centrality. As seen in Table 107, the linear regression equation ($F_{(5, 18)} = 2.528$, $p > .05$ indicated that the combined dimensions of the TERS scale is not significant with regards to how salient these youth hold their membership in the Black race. As illustrated by the coefficients, youths' predicted level of centrality also show no statistical significance when the TERS dimensions are regressed jointly. Because of the modest strength shown in the model ($R^2 = .249$), the next step in the process was to eliminate independent variables to determine if a change in significance would result.

Table 107

Regression Model Summary – TERS Scale Regressed on
Centrality Dimension

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.642[a]	.413	.249	2.75535

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSendorsemain, TERSculturalappre,

TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalpride, TERSculturalcoping

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	95.970	5	19.194	2.528	.067[a]
	Residual	136.655	18	7.592		
	Total	232.625	23			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSendorsemain, TERSculturalappre, TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalpride,

TERSculturalcoping

c.   Dependent Variable: TotCentScale

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.155	9.533		.226	.824
TERSculturalcoping	.393	.203	.606	1.939	.068
TERSculturalpride	-.279	.402	-.211	-.693	.497
TERSculturalappre	-.462	.573	-.306	-.806	.431
TERSalertdiscrim	.538	.338	.440	1.593	.129
TERSendorsemain	.180	.465	.091	.387	.703

a. Dependent Variable: TotCentScale

Table 108 (below) presents the results after the dimension Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream was eliminated from the regression. As seen by the table, the new regression, ($F_{(4, 19)} = 3.269$ p, $< .05$, is significant for receiving messages from the combined TERS dimensions of Cultural Coping with Antagonism, Cultural Pride Reinforcement, Cultural Appreciation of Legacy and Cultural Alertness to Discrimination with regards to the racial identity of youth who participated in this study. Within these variables, the predicted level of centrality (b = 5.110 +.428) is significant for the receipt of cultural coping with antagonism messages (p < .05). This finding confirms earlier discussions with regards to the Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream dimension. Because youth have not received a great deal of these messages, which lead to a lower perception of Black identity, the improvement in the strength of the model ($R^2 = .283$) is expected.

Table 108

Regression Model Summary – TERS Scale Regressed on
Centrality Dimension (Cultural Endorsement of
Mainstream Eliminated)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.638[a]	.408	.283	2.69302

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalpride,

TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalappre

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	94.830	4	23.708	3.269	.034[a]
	Residual	137.795	19	7.252		
	Total	232.625	23			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalpride, TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalappre

b. Dependent Variable: TotCentScale

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.110	5.587		.915	.372
	TERSculturalcoping	.428	.178	.659	2.401	.027
	TERSculturalpride	-.349	.351	-.264	-.995	.332
	TERSculturalappre	-.398	.536	-.264	-.742	.467
	TERSalertdiscrim	.477	.291	.390	1.635	.119

a. Dependent Variable: TotCentScale

TERS Dimensions as Predictors of Private Regard

As previously discussed, the MIBI-t dimension of Private Regard assesses to what extent

Black youth hold a positive personal opinion regarding their membership in the Black race,

regardless of the perceptions held by others in society. Presumably, the socialization messages received by these youth would be central in the positive sense of racial self they have achieved. To determine if the TERS dimensions are predictors of the racial identity dimension of private regard, the following regression analysis was performed (Table 109).

Table 109
Regression Model Summary –
TERS Scale Regressed on Private Regard

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.511[a]	.262	.056	2.92557

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSendorsemain, TERSculturalpride, TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalappre

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.563	5	10.913	1.275	.317[a]
	Residual	154.062	18	8.559		
	Total	208.625	23			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSendorsemain, TERSculturalpride, TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalappre

b. Dependent Variable: TotPrivRegard

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	12.029	9.604		1.252	.226
	TERSculturalcoping	.415	.212	.672	1.961	.065
	TERSculturalpride	-.268	.400	-.229	-.671	.511
	TERSculturalappre	-.217	.609	-.154	-.356	.726
	TERSalertdiscrim	.127	.360	.107	.352	.729
	TERSendorsemain	-.272	.492	-.143	-.552	.588

a. Dependent Variable: TotPrivRegard

As shown in the above table, the regression equation ($F_{(5, 18)} = 1.275$, $p > .05$ indicates that the combined TERS scale are not significant for these youth being strong in the Private Regard dimension of the MIBI-t. The significance of the beta's also show that the combined dimensions of the TERS scale are not predictors of the level of these youths' private regard. However, unlike in the above table, the significance does not change when the dimension Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream (Table 110) is eliminated ($F_{(4, 19)} = 1.575$, $p > .05$).

Table 110

Regression Model Summary - TERS Scale Regressed on Private Regard (Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream Eliminated)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.499^a	.249	.091	2.87151

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalpride,
TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalappre

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	51.959	4	12.990	1.575	.222[a]
	Residual	156.666	19	8.246		
	Total	208.625	23			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalpride, TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalappre

b. Dependent Variable: TotPrivRegard

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.775	5.617		1.384	.182
	TERSculturalcoping	.365	.188	.592	1.945	.067
	TERSculturalpride	-.173	.354	-.148	-.489	.631
	TERSculturalappre	-.315	.571	-.224	-.551	.588
	TERSalertdiscrim	.219	.312	.186	.703	.490

a. Dependent Variable: TotPrivRegard

In efforts to determine if any items from the TERS scale predicted these youths' racial identity, several regressions were performed, each eliminating another TERS dimension for examination. However, only the dimension, Cultural Coping with Antagonism (Table 111) showed significance (F (1, 23) = 5.430, p < .05.

Table 111

Regression Model Summary - TERS Scale Cultural
Coping with Antagonism Regressed on Private Regard

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.437[a]	.191	.156	2.91611

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSculturalcoping

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.176	1	46.176	5.430	.029[a]
	Residual	195.584	23	8.504		
	Total	241.760	24			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSculturalcoping

b. Dependent Variable: TotPrivRegard

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.583	3.506		1.307	.204
	TERSculturalcoping	.289	.124	.437	2.330	.029

a. Dependent Variable: TotPrivRegard

These findings suggest that, with the exception of those messages intended to assist these youth in coping with experiences of racism and discrimination, the racial socialization messages on the TERS scale are not predictors of these youths' development of a positive racial identity. The level of private regard 4.583 + .289 (cultural coping with antagonism), p < .05 indicates the amount of value these youth place on their personal feelings about being Black, despite the opinions of others, increases as the receive messages that assist in their coping with antagonism.

TERS Dimensions as Predictors of Humanist Ideology

The youth in this study have a desire to be classified as part of the human race. This ideology appears to have a direct correlation to half of these youth indicating their willingness to have been placed transracially, and a majority reporting this as an appropriate option for Black

children in need of adoptive homes. The following regression (Table 112) was performed to

determine if racial socialization messages received by these youth predicts their humanist beliefs.

Table 112

Regression Model Summary – TERS Scale Regressed on

Humanist Ideology

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.451[a]	.203	-.018	3.42248

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSendorsemain, TERSculturalappre,

TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalcoping, TERSculturalpride

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.784	5	10.757	.918	.491[a]
	Residual	210.841	18	11.713		
	Total	264.625	23			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TERSendorsemain, TERSculturalappre, TERSalertdiscrim, TERSculturalcoping,

TERSculturalpride

b. Dependent Variable: TotIdeolHuman

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	23.696	11.337		2.090	.051
	TERSculturalcoping	.332	.249	.481	1.334	.199
	TERSculturalpride	-.702	.502	-.536	-1.400	.178
	TERSculturalappre	.262	.760	.166	.345	.734
	TERSalertdiscrim	.063	.419	.048	.150	.883
	TERSendorsemain	-.681	.574	-.318	-1.186	.251

a. Dependent Variable: TotIdeolHuman

The regression equation (F (5, 18) = .918, p > .05, as shown above finds that the TERS scale does is not significant for these youth falling within the Humanist ideology dimension of the MIBI-t. The beta coefficients indicating that none of these items predicts youths' falling within the Humanist dimension, supports the regression equation. Additional regression analyses performed regressing each individual item on the TERS on the Humanist ideology subscale resulted in the similar findings.

Chapter Summary

The findings of this chapter inform that these Black youth, while having spent time in foster homes and group home facilities, have a developed sense of racial identity. This was the case regardless if the facility employed Black staff or not. While this study did not look at from whom study participants were given racial socialization, it is also clear that these messages that are geared to protect and buffer, were received. As has been found in the literature, the racial socialization messages with regards to cultural coping with antagonism and cultural alertness to discrimination, were predictors of youths' embracing their membership in the Black race. The findings in this chapter closely relate to those in the preceding chapter, providing further support for the opinions presented by the youth involved in this study regarding transracial adoption.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess and understand the racial identity development of older African American youth who have turned 18 and aged out of the child welfare system. This mixed methods research approach sought to discover if a relationship exists between the level of racial identity development of study participants and their opinions with regards to being adopted by White families. The length of time the youth have been involved in the child welfare system, as well as the effect the presence of Black group home employees has on youths' racial identity development were also assessed as they relate to youth's perceptions of transracial adoption. Additionally, this study examined if study participants received racial socialization messages necessary to protect and buffer Black youth from the negative impact of racist and discriminatory experiences.

Thirty youth were identified as survey participants from four independent living programs operating in Allegheny County. At each regularly scheduled independent living program meeting, study participants completed the 3 survey instruments, which are discussed in greater detail below. After completing the survey instruments youth were asked about their willingness to participate in the next phase of this research. From this group of you, 11 agreed to participate in the in-depth telephone interviews.

The young adult participants in this study had all turned 18 years of age while being involved in the child welfare system. With the exception of one youth who was still active in the system, all other participants have aged out and have been discharged to independent living. In care an average of 5 years, these youth have spent a considerable amount of their adolescence in

the child welfare system. Also experiencing an average of 5 placement moves while in the child welfare system, this study has shown the resilience of this particular group of youth and their desire to be successful at life.

This study serves to fill existing gaps in the literature with regards to transracial adoption. Existing research focuses on information provided by caseworkers/professionals and adoptive parents (Carter & Black, (2002); Bradey & Hawkins-Leon (2002); Chimezie (1975); Courtney, (1997); Hansen & Pollack, (2007). However, a thorough search of the literature failed to identify any existing research which investigated the opinions and thoughts of the youth who could likely benefit from being transracially placed, rather than aging out of the child welfare system. Furthermore, when looking at the negative outcomes of aged out youth such as homelessness, poor mental health, under-educated, under-employed and increased criminal justice involvement, (Courtney & Dworsky, (2006); Freudlich & Avery, (2006); Reilly, (2003); Roman & Wolfe, (1997), gaining an understanding of the older youth's willingness to be placed transracially could result in policy changes which would serve to improve these results

Chapter Organization

This chapter begins with discussing the findings of this study as related to each of the four research questions examined by this study, followed with a brief discussion of the findings relevant to the initial hypotheses posed. The chapter ends with a discussion of the policy implications of the research, and recommendations for future research..

Study Findings as Related to Research Questions

Research Question #1 & 1a

To what extent do African American youth who have recently aged out of the child welfare system in Western Pennsylvania express a retrospective willingness to have been placed transracially in White homes? What factors influence these African American youth's willingness to be placed transracially in White homes?

Results of the quantitative analysis indicate that African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system are equally divided as to their willingness to have been placed transracially, which 36.7% of the youth indicating they would have been willing to have been placed transracially and 36.7% indicate they would have not been willing. Over 23% of the remaining youth responded not knowing their willingness to have been placed transracially, with the final 3.3% not responding to the survey question. While respondents' personal preferences for being placed in a White home were divided, there appears to be support for transracial adoption in general. Sixty-three percent of these youth reported it being appropriate to place African American youth in White homes for adoption. This analysis was supported by the qualitative inquiry conducted. During the semi structured interviews, the vast majority of youth responded that placing African American children in White homes was an appropriate practice, regardless of their personal preference on being placed transracially.

Data analysis also found specific factors positively related to these African American youth's willingness to be placed transracially in White homes. Of the 19 possible factors listed on the Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale five were found to be positively correlated. These factors, 'if the family will support me even though I am not perfect' ($t(16) = -1.512$, p < .05), 'if the family allowed me to have Black and White friends' ($t(17) = -1.435$, p <.05), 'if the family is

able to help me when I am confronted with racist situations ($t(15) = -1.065$, p <.05), ' if family

can teach me how to become a positive young adult' ($t(17) = -1.330$, p < .05); 'if family is

willing to include African American culture in to their lifestyle' ($t(17) = -1.496$, p < .05), suggest

that African American youth find items related to both racial/cultural identity, as well as basic

emotional needs of youth, as vital in their decision to accept being transracially placed. These

results also indicate study participants are not naïve to the cultural issues raised by opponents of

transracial adoption. Despite the current MEPA/IEP law prohibiting the discussion of race when

making adoption placement decisions, the youth who participated in this study are clear on the

need to do so. One of the themes to emerge during the in-depth interviews was related to these

youths' need for open communication. Wanting to feel comfortable in their environment, these

youth indicated the need to talk with perspective White families regarding the factors listed

above. Also included in communication was the issue that these youth clearly stated that they

opinion was never sought with regards to transracial adoption. Without the ability to have such

discussions, study participants indicated they would be unable to make the decision to accept

being placed transracially, nor would caseworkers and the courts know their willingness to

consider being placed with a White family.

Research Question #2

To what extent have African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system

developed a sense of racial identity?

A series of statistical analyses were conducted to determine if African American youth

who have aged out of the child welfare system have developed an appropriate racial identity.

Findings indicate that these youth do positively embrace their Black race and culture. Youth

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obtained significant mean scores on both the centrality (3.53) and private regard (4.38)

dimensions of the MIBI-*t*. These mean scores are indicative of youth holding their Black race

salient, and having positive opinions about their membership in the Black race. Additionally,

mean scores of 4.07 and 4.03 on the minority and humanist ideology subscales, respectively,

demonstrated that these youth were also cognizant of the reality of racism while also embracing

the belief that regardless of a person's skin color, we are all members of the human race. These

findings also support the earlier results regarding respondents' beliefs that it is an acceptable

practice to place African American children transracially in White homes. Actual comments

received from participants during the semi structured interviews also confirm these results with

the majority of study participants supporting transracial adoption despite their personal

preference for being placed with a White family.

Research Question #3 & 3a

To what extent do African American youth express having received racial socialization messages

that help to buffer experiences of racism and discrimination while involved in the child welfare

system? What factors influence whether African American youth received racial socialization

messages?

Central to the development of a positive racial identity is the receipt of racial

socialization messages. These messages are viewed as protective buffers for youth, preparing

them for experiences of racism and discrimination. The TERS scale was utilized to ascertain if

African American youth who have aged out of the child welfare system, have received adequate

socialization messages as they prepare for independence.

The first three dimensions on the TERS (cultural coping with antagonism, cultural pride reinforcement and cultural appreciation of legacy) are messages that encourage the importance of religion to the African American community, racial pride and honoring the rich cultural history of African Americans. Findings on the items of each of these dimensions - 73.3% - 93%, 86.7% - 100%, and 87.9 - 96.7% respectively, - show that African American youth have received racial socialization messages that endorse and embrace their racial identity, assisting too in the development of positive self esteem. While the finding on the cultural alertness to discrimination subscale had an overall lower range than those mentioned above (76.6% – 83.3%), it is evident that study participants have received messages that inform them of racial discrimination and prepares them for the inevitability of its occurrence. The final finding (56.6% - 83.4%) on the cultural endorsement of the mainstream subscale informs that the African American youth in this study have received fewer messages in this area. As discussed in the literature review, youth who report receiving these messages, also feel the need to downplay their Black race and culture, and report experiencing more emotional and academic problems, than their peers who do not receive these messages. Because this dimension endorses messages that indicate too much discussion about racism hinders an individual's ability to reach their goals in life, the lower percentage is correlated to having a positive racial identity.

With a positive racial identity having been found by other researchers to result in positive academic and emotional success (Sellers, et. al, 2006; Mandara, et.al., 2009; Nybort & Curry, 2003), these findings are important. While they may be experiencing some struggles presently, this researcher found the youth in this study to be focused on what lies ahead for them. They all are active participants in an Independent Living program, are intent on obtaining their GED and obtaining viable employment; these youth also showed a level of maturity, many young adults

lack at this age. It is also important to note that each of the independent living programs is supervised by an African American. While not specifically looked at in this study, it may be assumed that study participants are encouraged to see positive, educated individuals in leadership positions that resemble them, and that these individuals are likely providing these youth with positive racial socialization messages.

Research Question #4

Does a relationship exist between socialization messages received and the racial identity of African American youth?

Despite their experiences in the child welfare system, the youth in this study are grounded in their racial identity which appears to have been assisted by the racial socialization messages received. Results of analyses found that the racial socialization message dimensions of Alertness to discrimination, cultural pride reinforcement, cultural coping with antagonism and cultural appreciation of legacy, are predictors of these youths' holding racial identity as central in their lives. Additionally, findings on the dimension of cultural coping with antagonism show this dimension predicts private regard ideology of these youth. This indicates that the opinion youth hold of themselves regarding their race is not contingent on the opinions held by others. These findings support those of previous research that indicate the receipt of racial socialization messages assist youth in feeling good about their being Black in spite of negative stereotypes held by others. Important for the self esteem of Black youth who are going through the adolescent life cycle of identity-identity confusion, this finding is very important in the lives of the Black child who has experienced life in the child welfare system. Recognizing that a little over one third of these youth would have considered being placed transracially with a White

family, these findings provide information to child welfare administrators and lawmakers when making adoptive placement decisions.

Research Question #5

Does the length of time an African American youth spent in the child welfare system have an effect on their willingness to be placed transracially?

The analyses performed in this study found that no relationship exists between the youth's length of time in the child welfare system and their willingness to be placed transracially. With 50% of study participants indicating they would have considered being transracially placed, this result was surprising. However, as already stated, what is clear is that study participants hold strong opinions with regards to their being transracially placed, and these opinions seem to not waver despite the number of years spent in the child welfare system

Research Hypotheses

H1: African American youth who have exited the foster care system through emancipation (aging out) will express a willingness to have been considered being placed transracially, rather than aging out without a familial relationship. This hypothesis was not supported in the existing research study.

H2: The length of time an African American youth was in the foster care system will be positively correlated to their willingness to have considered a transracial placement. This hypothesis was not supported in the existing research study.

H3: Youth who have left the child welfare system are likely to report not having received racial socialization messages that encourage positive racial identity development. This hypothesis was not support in the existing research study.

Implications of Findings

African American children have consistently been disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. While African Americans comprise only 13% of the population (US Census Bureau, 2008), African American youth make up 40% of the child welfare population (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Furthermore, African American youth remain in the foster care system longer than their White peers (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008). The disproportionate representation of African American youth in the child welfare system leads to a disproportionate number from this population being among those youth who age out without a permanent familial relationship. Long term effects such as the increased probability of experiencing homelessness, mental health problems, being under educated, and living in poverty, makes finding adoptive families for these young people critical to their being able to live stable, productive lives. Furthermore, with African American youth remaining in the child welfare system longer than their White peers, the possibility of increasing the number of adoptive families available to them through transracial placement, may lead to positive outcomes for them.

While transracial adoptions may have positive results with regards to youths' permanency, achieving a positive racial identity is equally important to their emotional, social and academic status. Receiving positive verbal and non-verbal instruction with regards to the African American race and culture, increases youths' sense of self and prepares them for future

racist and discriminatory experiences. Proponents of transracial adoption are of the opinion that adoption should be colorblind, with finding a family being most important in achieving successful outcomes for youth. However, those opposed to transracial adoption believe White families are not able to provide this instruction to African American youth, leaving them ill-prepared when confronted with systemic racism.

In efforts to address the issue of disproportionality, transracial adoptions have increased in popularity in the United States since the 1960's (Smith 1996). As the practice of transracially placing African American children in White homes for adoption has increased, so has the opposition against it.

The largest voice of opposition has been the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), insisting that Black children adopted by White families risk not being able to develop a positive racial identity. However, it was with the passing of the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA/IEP) that the transracial adoption debate has escalated. Prohibiting caseworkers from taking the race of the family or child into consideration when making placement decisions, has resulted in discussions regarding what is in the best interest of the child. Since the outcry from the NABSW, many studies have been conducted that attempt to support or oppose this opinion. However, the existing body of knowledge fails to recognize the opinion of young people. With 25,000 children annually aging out of the foster care system nationally (Administration of Children and Families, 2009), obtaining the voice of youth who could be impacted by transracial placement, may hold the key to the ongoing debate.

This study found that African American youth who have aged out of the system are split in their desire to be placed transracially in a White home. However, these same youth are in agreement that transracial adoption should be a viable option for youth in need of adoptive

placements. Of importance to youth is the issue of communication. Youth resoundingly state that the possibility of being placed with a White family has never been discussed with them. Given the option, many youth would have been willing to accept this option in order to have stability in their lives. This finding is important to the routine practices of adoption caseworkers, administrators and judges. While as standard practice, older youth are asked their opinion regarding being adopted in general, youth believe that this question should be expanded to specifically ask their willingness to be placed transracially.

Listening to the voice of the youth also informs the child welfare community that they are positively grounded in their racial identity. While this research did not discover if youth were racially socialized by their birth families or group home staff, findings are clear that they have received the buffering and protective strategies that encourage and embrace their membership in the Black culture. Furthermore, the findings in this research should prove important for policy makers. While current legislation does not allow for special questioning regards to a family's ability to adopt transracially, youth are clear on the need of doing so, in their desire to make an informed decision with regards to placement.

Implications for Further Research

While the findings in this study are important additions to the existing body of knowledge regarding transracial adoption, they are not without limitations and should be considered cautiously. Because of the modest sample size, it is not possible to generalize these findings to the total population of Black youth who have aged out of the Child Welfare system. To strengthen these findings, future research should be inclusive of a larger study sample. Repeating findings under these conditions would provide validity and reliability for the results. When

looking at a larger population for study, emphasis should be made on including youth from a variety of demographic and geographic locations. African American youth in placement in rural areas, or at facilities and families primarily staffed by Whites, may have different experiences with regards to racial identity development and receiving racial socialization messages that will buffer and protect them from the experiences of racism and discrimination. This study focused on the opinions of youth who have already aged out of the child welfare system. It is possible that the findings in this research come as a result of these youth experiencing the challenges associated with being discharged without being adequately prepared for independence. Additional research should be conducted to ascertain information from youth under the age of 18, and who are in danger of aging out of the child welfare system. While it is too late for the participants of this research study to be adopted, their voices are relevant for those youth who remain in the system and are in need of permanent placements.

Conclusion

As indicated, the purpose of this paper was not to arrive at a causal relationship with regards to transracial adoption and the consequences claimed by those who oppose or are in favor of the practice. However, the findings in this research can lead to immediate and long-term changes in the child welfare system.

While budgetary constraints often limit the implementation of new child welfare programs, several findings in this research can be instituted immediately and with no cost. Of importance is the need of child welfare staff to become comfortable enough with the issues of race and racism to speak openly with youth regarding transracial adoption. While findings indicate that not all youth will decide to accept being placed in a White home, there was a

consensus that being asked would have, at the very least, allowed for discussion. For those youth who would be willing to be transracially placed, the number of potential adoptive families would have significantly increased. It is clear that this communication should become routine practice for adoption professionals.

Finally, providing the findings of this research to legislators could have a long-term impact on the practice of transracial adoption. With current legislation prohibiting conversations regarding race, policies are not taking into account the voices of the young people who could benefit most. These young people are clear on the need for White families to be adequate in embracing the Black culture and assisting them as they maneuver racist and discriminatory experiences in order for them to be comfortable in a transracial environment. Until this time, the voices of these youth were not heard, with legislation being developed in what has been thought to be their best interest. This study did not seek to dismiss current legislation. However, findings indicate the need for changes that include the opinions of youth in efforts to strengthen existing laws and truly address the issue of disproportional representation of African American youth in the child welfare system.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Youth Willingness to be Placed in a White Home With the TERS Scale

Group Statistics

	Willing to be placed in white home	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
White family if lived in mixed community	no	7	2.29	.488	.184
	yes	9	2.33	.707	.236
white family if can attend mixed school	no	9	2.44	.726	.242
	yes	8	2.50	.756	.267
white family if blacks live in community	no	9	2.44	.527	.176
	yes	10	2.30	.823	.260
white family if will support me if not perfect	no	9	2.78	.441	.147
	yes	9	3.00	.000	.000
white family if I can attend black church	no	10	2.00	.816	.258
	yes	9	1.56	.882	.294
white family if can help me overcome problems	no	9	2.67	.707	.236
	yes	10	2.80	.422	.133
white family if allowed to have black friends	no	8	2.38	.916	.324
	yes	11	2.82	.405	.122
white family if can stay in contact with family	no	9	2.89	.333	.111
	yes	9	2.78	.667	.222
white family if they love me	no	9	2.78	.667	.222
	yes	10	2.50	.850	.269
white family if can help me w/ racist situations	no	8	2.88	.354	.125
	yes	9	3.00	.000	.000
white family if can teach to be positive adult	no	10	2.70	.675	.213
	yes	9	3.00	.000	.000

white family if treat me like their own children	no	10	2.90	.316	.100
	yes	10	2.80	.422	.133
white family if willing to learn black culture	no	7	2.57	.535	.202
	yes	9	2.44	.882	.294
white family if stick through good and bad times	no	8	2.88	.354	.125
	yes	10	2.60	.843	.267
white family if they have black friends	no	10	2.10	.876	.277
	yes	10	2.30	.949	.300
white family if will attend black events w/ me	no	10	2.50	.707	.224
	yes	10	2.60	.699	.221
white family if include black culture in lifestyle	no	9	2.67	.707	.236
	yes	10	3.00	.000	.000
white family if supports me being proud of Black	no	10	2.40	.843	.267
	yes	9	2.78	.667	.222
white family if believes blacks equal to whites	no	9	2.67	.707	.236
	yes	9	2.78	.667	.222

Cultural Coping with Antagonism

Families who go to church or mosque will be close and stay together

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	19	63.3	63.3	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Relatives can help black parents raise their children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	18	60.0	60.0	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Religion is an important part of a person's life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	7.1	7.1
	a few times	13	43.3	46.4	53.6
	lots of times	13	43.3	46.4	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Spiritual battles tht people fight are more important than the physical battles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	24.1	24.1
	a few times	12	40.0	41.4	65.5
	lots of times	10	33.3	34.5	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Going to a black school will help black children feel better about themselves

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	20	66.7	66.7	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Having large families can help black families many black families survive life struggles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	18	60.0	60.0	70.0
	lots of times	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Schools should be required to teach all children about black history

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	a few times	10	33.3	33.3	46.7
	lots of times	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

You should know about black history so that you will be a better person

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.8	13.8
	a few times	14	46.7	48.3	62.1
	lots of times	11	36.7	37.9	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Depending on religion and God will help you live a good life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Train up a child in the way he should go and he will not turn away from it

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	a few times	19	63.3	63.3	76.7
	lots of times	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Teachers can help black children grow by showing signs of black culture in the classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	17	56.7	56.7	73.3
	lots of times	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Families who talk openly about religion or God will help each other to grow

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	a few times	17	56.7	56.7	76.7
	lots of times	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Black children should be taught early that God can protect them from racial hatred

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	73.3
	lots of times	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Cultural Pride Reinforcement

Getting a good education is still the best way for you to get ahead

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	10	33.3	33.3	36.7
	lots of times	19	63.3	63.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Be proud of who you are

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	a few times	5	16.7	17.2	27.6
	lots of times	21	70.0	72.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Never be ashamed of your color

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	8	26.7	26.7	33.3
	lots of times	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

You should be proud to be black

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a few times	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	lots of times	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

If you work hard then you can overcome barriers in life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	a few times	7	23.3	25.0	25.0
	lots of time	21	70.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	28	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	2	6.7		
Total		30	100.0		

Don't forget who your people are because you may need them someday

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	14	46.7	46.7	53.3
	lots of times	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

A belief in God can help a person deal with tough life struggles

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	12	40.0	40.0	50.0
	lots of times	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

You need to learn how to live in a white world and a black world

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	a few times	14	46.7	48.3	58.6
	lots of times	12	40.0	41.4	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Racism is not as bad today as it used to be before the 1990's

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.3	10.3
	a few times	18	60.0	62.1	72.4
	lots of times	8	26.7	27.6	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Cultural Appreciation of Legacy

You are connected to a history that goes back to African royalty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	53.3
	lots of times	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Racism is real, and you hace to understand it or it will hurt you

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.9	6.9
	a few times	12	40.0	41.4	48.3
	lots of times	15	50.0	51.7	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Knowing your african heritage is important for your survival

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	50.0
	lots of times	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Racism and discrimination are the hardest things a black child has to face

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	12	40.0	40.0	43.3
	lots of times	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Black slavery is important to never forget

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	a few times	9	30.0	30.0	33.3
	lots of times	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Cultural Alertness to Discrimination

Whites have more opportunities that blacks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	60.0
	lots of times	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Blacks don't always have the same opportunities as whites

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

You have to work twice as hard as whites in order to get ahead in this world

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	15	50.0	50.0	66.7
	lots of times	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Whites make it hard to get ahead in this world

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	17	56.7	56.7	80.0
	lots of times	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

A black child or teenager will be harassed just becaue s/he is black

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	18	60.0	60.0	83.3
	lots of times	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

More job opportunities would be open to African Americans if people were not racist

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	a few times	11	36.7	36.7	60.0
	lots of times	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream

black children feel better about themselves if go to a school with mostly white people

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	a few times	16	53.3	53.3	96.7
	lots of times	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

American society if fair toward blacks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	a few times	23	76.7	76.7	93.3
	lots of times	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Black children will learn more if they go to a mostly white school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	9	30.0	31.0	31.0
	a few times	15	50.0	51.7	82.8
	lots of times	5	16.7	17.2	100.0
	Total	29	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.3		
Total		30	100.0		

Too much talk about racism will keep you from reaching your goals in life

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	86.7
	lots of times	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Black children don'thave toknowabout Africa in order to survive life in America

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	a few times	16	53.3	53.3	80.0
	lots of times	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Only people who are blood related to you should be called your 'family'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
	a few times	16	53.3	53.3	93.3
	lots of times	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

All Races Are Equal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	never	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
	a few times	13	43.3	43.3	70.0
	lots of times	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix C

Teenager Experience with Racial Socialization Scale (TERS)

Do your parents or any of your caregivers say to you any of the following statements now or when you were younger? Circle the number on the line depending on how often you remember hearing any of these messages: 1 = never, 2 = a few times, 3 = lots of times. Circle only ONE number per question. Thank you.

	1 Never	2 A few times	3 Lots of times
1) American society is fair toward Black people			
2) Black children will feel better about themselves if they go to a school with mostly White children			
3) Families who go to a church or mosque will be close and stay together			
4) Black slavery is important to never forget			
5) Relatives can help Black parents raise their children			
6) Religion is an important part of a person's life			
7) Racism and discrimination are the hardest things a Black child has to face			
8) Having large families can help many Black families survive life struggles			
9) You should be proud to be Black			
10) All races are equal			
11) If you work hard then you can overcome barriers in life			
12) A belief in God can help a person deal with tough life struggles			
13) Black children will learn more if they go to a mostly White school			
14) Knowing your African heritage is important for your survival			
15) Racism is real, and you have to understand it or it will hurt you			
16) You are connected to a history that goes back to African royalty			
17) Too much talk about racism will keep you from reaching your goals in life			
18) Schools should be required to teach all children about Black history			
19) Depending on religion and God will help you live a good life			
20) Families who talk openly about religion or God will help each other to grow			
21) Teachers can help Black children grow by showing signs of Black culture in the classroom			
22) Only people who are blood-related to you should be called your "family"			
23) Getting a good education is still the best way for you to get ahead			
24) "Don't forget who your people are because you may need them someday"			
25) Spiritual battles that people fight are more important than the physical battles			
26) You should know about Black history so that you will be a better person			
27) "Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not turn away from it"			
28) You have to work twice as hard as Whites in order to get ahead in this world			
29) Whites make it hard for people to get ahead in this world			
30) Be proud of who you are			
31) Going to a Black school will help Black children feel better about themselves			
32) You need to learn how to live in a White world and a Black world			
33) Never be ashamed of your color			
34) Whites have more opportunities than Blacks			
35) A Black child or teenager will be harassed just because s/he is Black			
36) More job opportunities would be open to African Americans if people were not racist			
37) Black children should be taught early that God can protect them from racial hatred			
38) Blacks don't always have the same opportunities as Whites			
39) Black children don't have to know about Africa in order to survive life in America			
40) Racism is not as bad today as it used to be before the 1990's			

Questions organized by TERS Dimensions

Dimension	#	Question
Cultural coping with antagonism (α = .85)		
	37	Black children should be taught early that God can protect them from racial hatred
	20	Families who talk openly about religion or God will help each other grow
	21	Teachers can help Black children grow by showing signs of Black culture in the classroom
	27	"Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not turn away from it"
	19	Depending on religion and God will help you live a good life
	26	You should know about Black history so that you will be a better person
	18	Schools should be required to teach all children about Black history
	8	Having large families can help many Black families survive life struggles
	31	Going to a Black school will help Black children feel better about themselves
	25	Spiritual battles that people fight are more important than the physical battles
	6	Religion is an important part of a person's life
	5	Relatives can help Black parents raise their children
	3	Families who go to a church or mosque will be close and stay together
Cultural pride reinforcement (α = .83)		
	23	Getting a good education is still the best way for you to get ahead
	30	Be proud of who you are
	33	Never be ashamed of your color
	9	You should be proud to be Black
	11	If you work hard then you can overcome barriers in life
	24	"Don't forget who your people are because you may need them someday"
	12	A belief in God can help a person deal with tough life struggles
	32	You need to learn how to live in a White world and a Black world
	40	Racism is not as bad today as it used to be before the 1990's
Cultural appreciation of legacy (α - .74)		
	16	You are connected to a history that goes back to African royalty
	15	Racism is real, and you have to understand it or it will hurt you
	7	Racism and discrimination are the hardest things a Black child has to face
	4	Black slavery is important to never forget
	14	Knowing your African heritage is important for your survival
Cultural alertness to discrimination (α = .76)		
	34	Whites have more opportunities than Blacks
	28	You have to work twice as hard as Whites in order to get ahead in this world
	38	Blacks don't always have the same opportunities as Whites
	29	Whites make it hard for people to get ahead in this world
	35	A Black child or teenager will be harassed just because s/he is Black
	36	More job opportunities would be open to African Americans if people were not racist
Cultural endorsement of the mainstream (α = .71)		
	2	Black children will feel better about themselves if they go to a school with mostly White children
	13	Black children will learn more if they go to a mostly White school
	1	American society is fair toward Black people
	17	Too much talk about racism will keep you from reaching your goals in life
	39	Black children don't have to know about Africa in order to survive in America
	22	Only people who are blood related to you should be called your "family"
	10	All races are equal

Appendix D

Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale

The following questions were developed to obtain information regarding your experience in the child welfare/foster care system and your opinion regarding placing African American children and youth with White adoptive families. Please answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible. While your identity will never be revealed your opinions will be shared with others.

(1) Gender
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Refused to answer

(2) Age   _____

(3) Current Living Arrangement
- ☐ Returned home to live with birth parents
- ☐ Live with friends
- ☐ Live with other relatives
- ☐ Independent Living Facility
- ☐ Refused to answer
- ☐ Other _____

(4) What age were you when you were first placed in foster care   _____

(5) How long have you been (were you) in the foster care system (out of home placement)   _____

(6) How many placements (moves) did you have while in the foster care system   _____

(7) Have you even been placed in an adoptive home that you had to leave because things didn't work out
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Refused to answer

     7a) If yes, how many times?   _____

(8) Have you ever been placed in a Caucasian (White) home
- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Refused to answer
- 8a. How many times?   _____
- 8b. For how long?   _____

(9) Is the school you attend (or previously attended)

☐ Mostly African American (Black)
☐ Mostly Caucasian (White)
☐ Mixed (both Black and White)
☐ Don't know
☐ Refused to answer

(10) Are you comfortable around White people in various situations (e.g. school, mall, community)
☐ No
☐ Yes
☐ Don't know
☐ Refused to answer

(11)   Do you have White friends
☐ No
☐ Yes
☐ Don't know
☐ Refused to answer

(12)   Do you think it is ok for Black youth to be placed with White adoptive families
☐ No (I don't think black youth should be placed with white families)
☐ Yes (I think it is ok for black youth to be placed with white families)
☐ Don't know
☐ Refused to answer

(13)   Given the opportunity, would you have been willing to be placed with a White adoptive family
☐ No
☐ Yes
☐ Don't know
☐ Refused to answer

(14)   Were you ever asked your opinion about being placed with a White adoptive family
☐ No
☐ Yes
☐ Don't know
☐ Refused to answer

(15)   What is your current grade in school (If you are no longer in school, what is the last grade you attended   _____

(16)   What are you religious beliefs
☐ Protestant (Baptist, AME)
☐ Catholic
☐ Pentecostal
☐ Muslim
☐ Jehovah Witness
☐ None
☐ Other _____
(17) Are there any Black workers at the group home facility where you live (or used to live)
☐ Yes
☐ No
       (17a) If yes, how many _____

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If you were given the choice to be placed with a White adoptive family, what things would be important in making your decision?

1 = Not Important; **2** = somewhat important; **3** = Very Important; **DK** = Don't know; **R** = Refused to answer

	1	2	3	DK	R
a) If the family lived in a racially mixed community (both Black and White)					
b) If I would be able to go to a racially mixed school					
c) If other African American families and children live in the community					
d) If the family will support me even though I am not perfect					
e) If I could attend a Black church					
f) If the family is able to help me overcome my problems					
g) If the family allowed me to have Black and White friendships					
h) If the family allowed me to stay in contact with some of my family members					
i) If the family loved me					
j) If the family is able to help me when I am confronted with racist situations					
k) If the family is able to teach me how to become a positive young adult					
l) If the family is able to treat me like one of their own children					
m) If the family was willing to learn about the Black culture					
n) If the family is willing to stick it out with me through the good and bad times					
o) If the family has Black friends					
p) If the family is willing to attend African American events with me					
q) If the family is willing to include African American culture in to their lifestyle					
s) If the family supports me in being proud of being African American					
t) If the family believes African Americans are equal to Whites					

Please feel free to add your thoughts and feelings:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix E

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t)

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity –teen (MIBI-t) assesses the three stable dimensions of racial identity identified by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (Centrality, Regard, Ideology) in African American early and middle adolescents. The MIBI-t consists of seven subscales comprised of three items each. Please answer each statement based on how much you agree or disagree with it using a 5-point scale with 1 = really disagree and 5 = really agree. Respond to each statement with your hones opinion. There are no right or wrong answers.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Really Disagree	Kind of Disagree	Neutral	Kind of Agree	Really Agree
CENTRALITY SCALE					
1) I feel close to other Black people.					
2) I have a strong sense of belonging to other Black people.					
3) If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I'm Black.					
REGARD SCALE (Private Regard)					
4) I am happy that I am Black.					
5) I am proud to be Black.					
6) I feel good about Black people.					
REGARD SCALE (Public Regard)					
7) Most people think that Blacks are as smart as people of other races.					
8) People think that Blacks are as good as people from other races.					
9) People from other races think that Blacks have made important contributions.					
IDEOLOGY SCALE (Assimilation Subscale)					
10) It is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can learn how to act around Whites.					
11) I think it is important for Blacks not to act Black around White people.					
12) Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in this society					
IDEOLOGY SCALE (Humanist Subscale)					

	Really Disagree	Kind of Disagree	Neutral	Kind of Agree	Really Agree
13) Being an individual is more important than identifying yourself as Black.					
14) Blacks should think of themselves as individuals, not as Blacks.					
15) Black people should not consider race when deciding what movies to go see.					
IDEOLOGY SCALE (Minority Subscale)					
16) People of all minority groups should stick together and fight discrimination					
17) There are other people who experience discrimination similar to Blacks.					
18) Blacks should spend less time focusing on how we differ from other minority groups and more time focusing on how we are similar to people from other minority groups.					
IDEOLOGY SCALE (Nationalist Subscale)					
19) Black parents should surround their children with Black art and Black books.					
20) Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from Black businesses.					
21) Blacks should support Black entertainment by going to Black movies and watching Black TV shows.					
	Really Disagree	Kind of Disagree	Neutral	Kind of Agree	Really Agree

**The Development of Racial Identity VS. A Life Without Permanence: A Comparative Analysis
Regarding The Youth Perspective on the Transracial Adoption Debate**

You are invited to participate in this research study that is being done as part of a dissertation for the completion of requirements for the Sociology department of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are a youth who is 18 - 21 years of age and currently residing in foster or group home care, or (b) were discharged from foster/group home care when you turned 18.

The purpose of this study is to compare the opinions regarding Black youth being placed with White families for adoption. This study will also look at the level of Black identity comparing to see if there is a difference based on living situations, age and other factors. Participation in this study will require a maximum of 4 hours of your time which will be divided into two (2) one hour sessions and one (1) 2-hour session. Participation or non-participation in this study **will NOT** affect your current placement or living situation, or your goals for discharge. The first step in participation will be completing three (3) survey forms. The two survey forms will provide information regarding your level of racial identity. The final survey form will ask questions regarding your feelings and opinions regarding Black children being placed with White families for adoption and your willingness to be placed (or to have been placed) in this type of family situation. After you have completed these forms (if you have been selected) you will participate in a focus group with your peers and/or an interview where you will be asked to openly share your feelings and opinions. Focus groups and interviews will be taped to ensure your comments and opinions are accurately captured. You will be contacted and presented with the transcript of these sessions to make sure your opinions and comments were correctly captured. There are no known risks associated with this research.

Your participation in this study will provide valuable information to child welfare administrators, caseworkers and lawmakers, who make decisions regarding long term permanency options for youth involved in the foster care system.

Your participation in this study is **<u>VOLUNTARY</u>**. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or you may choose to withdraw from participating at any time without fear of punishment from this investigator, your caseworker or any other person involved in your case. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits or services you are currently receiving or are entitled to. If you choose to withdraw, you may do so at any time by notifying this investigator, your caseworker, foster parent, or group home staff person. If you choose to withdraw from participating from the study, all information on you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information you provide will be held in strict confidence. The information you provide will be kept for three (3) years in a secure location. At no time will your information be given to another person or organization. No information that can identity you as a participant will be included in the final write-up of the study results. **The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.**

If you feel any discomfort while participating in this study, please inform this investigator immediately who will notify your caseworker of the possible need for an assessment. A list of therapeutic providers is also attached for your use if needed.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete and sign the attached consent form and deposit in the designated box by the door. Take the extra unsigned copy with you. If you choose not to participate, simply leave the form on the table and you may feel free to leave at this time.

**Project Director: Ms. Jacqueline Wilson; PhD Candidate
Faculty Advisor/Committee Chair: Dr. Valerie Gunter
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Sociology Department/Administration and Leadership Studies
McElhaney Hall
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15701
(412) 260-7086**

<u>This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).</u>

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

The Development of Racial Identity
VS.
A Life Without Permanence:
A Comparative Analysis Regarding
The Youth Perspective on the Transracial Adoption Debate

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. In addition to completing survey forms, I also understand that I may be randomly selected to participate in the focus group and/or interview parts of this study.

I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name **(PLEASE PRINT)** _____

Signature_____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached

    _____

    _____

Best days and times to reach you

    _____

    _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____   _____
    Date   **Investigator's Signature**

Therapeutic/Mental Health Services

Mercy Behavioral Health (1-877) 637-2924
- Crisis Walk-in Center – 264 S. 9th St. – Pittsburgh, PA 15203
- East Commons Center (North Side) – 412 East Commons – Pittsburgh, PA 15212
- South Side Location – 330 S. 9th St. – Pittsburgh, PA 15203
- East Liberty Center – 5704 Penn Ave. – Pittsburgh, PA 15206
- North Hills Center – 9983 Perry Highway – Wexford, PA 15090
- Downtown (Penn Ave.) Center – 925 Penn Ave. – Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Adelphoi Village
- MST Program – 1119 Village Way – Latrobe, PA 15601 (724) 520-1111

Family Services of Western PA
- Adolescent Diversion & Stabilization Program – 321 East Fifth Ave – Tarentum, PA 15084
  (724) 226-0664

Three Rivers Adoption Council
- Connections Program – 307 Fourth Ave – Ste 310 – Pittsburgh, PA 15222 (412) 471-8722

Resolve Crisis Network
- (1-888) 7-YOU CAN

Make sure you discuss your feelings with your counselor or caseworker so they can quickly assess your situation. There are many other service providers available to assist you in solving problems. Your caseworker is available to help determine the best service for your needs.

Jacqueline D. Wilson

May 5, 2011

Mr. Marc Cherna
Director; Allegheny County Department of Human Services
One Smithfield Street
4th Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Mr. Cherna:

As per our earlier conversation, I am currently pursuing a Ph. D. in Administration and Leadership Studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the program, I am preparing to conduct a research study in my field of interest. The title of this project is:

The Development of Racial Identity vs. A Life Without Permanence:
A Comparative Analysis Regarding The Willingness of African American Youth
to be Placed Transracially in White Adoptive Homes

The goal of this research is to further the existing body of literature that addresses the racial identity development of older Black youth and their willingness to be placed transracially in a White home. Included in the evaluation are the types of racial socialization messages youth receive that act as potential buffers to experiences of discrimination. As a comparative analysis, I am interested in the opinions and real lived experiences of youth 16-18 years of age who have a current goal of independent living (including APPLA), as well as youth 18-21 who have aged out of the child welfare system. The proposed study will be conducted in three (3) phases.

- Phase 1: Youth will be asked to complete 3 survey questionnaires (*A copy of the surveys are included with this mailing. Please note that they may be adapted prior to actual use).
  - The Multidimensional Inventory on Black Identity-Teen (MIBI-t)
  - The Teenager Experience with Racial Socialization (TERS)
  - Transracial Adoption Willingness Scale

- Phase 2: Focus groups will be conducted to allow peers to discuss the practice of transracial adoption, as well as their experiences with racism and discrimination.
- Phase 3: Face-to-Face interviews will be conducted to allow youth the opportunity to express opinions in a private, safe environment.

I am anticipating that minor youth participants will be drawn from those residing in group and/or foster homes. Because of the unstable living situations often associated with those young people who

have aged out of the system, I am hoping to utilize the youth involved in the Independent Living Advisory Board or the Bridge of Pittsburgh.

Youth participation in the study will be completely voluntary with each having the right to withdraw at any time without repercussion. Furthermore, the identity of participants will be held in strict confidence, as will any information that will directly identify them as participants of the study(*A copy of the Informed Consent Form to be given to each participant is included in this mailing).

While there is no known risk to participation in this study, youth involved in the child welfare system are considered a vulnerable population. Since the normal practice of obtaining parental consent, specifically for youth under the age of 18, is not possible, I am requesting your permission for the aforementioned groups of youth to participate in the proposed study. Furthermore, when it is not deemed appropriate to conduct portions of this project where the youth reside, I am seeking permission to utilize one of the meeting spaces at One Smithfield Street.

If you should need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at J.D.Wilson4@iup.edu or (412)260-7086. I look forward to this opportunity to provide information that can be critical in the practice of transracial adoption.

With Regards,

Jacqueline D. Wilson

Enclosures

Appendix H

Approval Email from Allegheny County Director - Department of Human Services

Hi,

Here is your answer.

Look forward to the results of your work,

Erin

-----Original Message-----

From: Sturdivant, Marcia

Sent: Tuesday, June 07, 2011 10:50 AM

To: Dalton, Erin

Subject: RE: Research

If the rights are terminated and the child has not been adopted, the County, i.e. me would sign.

----- Original Message -----

From: Jacqueline D Wilson [mailto:j.d.wilson4@iup.edu]

Sent: Monday, June 06, 2011 11:33 PM

To: Dalton, Erin

Subject: Re: Research

Erin

Thanks so much for getting back to me --- no apologies needed, I am well aware of how busy Marc's schedule is, so I don't

take this response lightly. With regards to youth who are under the age of 18 and for who parental rights are terminated,

what would I need to do to obtain parental support? Is this something I have to ask the judge for

- or is the youth allowed to give their own consent (since they will most likely be 16 years of age). Again, thanks for getting

back to me, this is very much appreciated, Jackie

On Mon, 6 Jun 2011 16:05:18 -0400

   "Dalton, Erin" <Erin.Dalton@AlleghenyCounty.US> wrote:

> Hi,

>> Marc asked me to follow-up with you on your letter detailing your

>research project (The Development of Racial Identity). First, sorry

>for the delay - Marc takes some blame and I take the rest. In any

>case, DHS is supportive of your research and would be happy to work

>with you to support it. We look forward to you receiving full IRB

>approval. I know this is a long way off but we do ask researchers who

>work with our data/clients to consider publishing an article for our

>audience. Our template is attached. When your research is closer to

>complete, we can discuss.

>

> On the issue of consent, your letter included the following statement.

>At this point, we are not granting permission for these youth to

>participate, but do support your approach to obtain the

>child's/parent's consent.

>

> [since the normal practice of obtaining parental consent, specifically

>for youth under 18, is not possible, I am requesting your permission

>for the aforementioned groups of youth to participate in the proposed

>study]

>> If we can help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

August 23, 2011

Dear:

I am currently pursuing a Ph. D. in Administration and Leadership Studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the program, I am preparing to conduct a research study in my field of interest. The title of this project is:

The Development of Racial Identity
vs.
A Life Without Permanence:
A Comparative Analysis Regarding
The Willingness of African American Youth
to be
Placed Transracially in White Adoptive Homes

I am interested in the opinions and real lived experiences of youth 18-21 who have aged out of the child welfare system.
The proposed study will be conducted in three (3) phases.
- Phase 1: Youth will be asked to complete 3 survey questionnaires
- Phase 2: Focus groups will be conducted to allow peers to discuss the practice of transracial adoption, the types of socialization messages received, as well as their experiences with racism and discrimination.
- Phase 3: Face-to-Face interviews will be conducted to allow youth the opportunity to express opinions in a private, safe environment.

Permission has been granted by Marc Cherna; Director of Allegheny County Health and Human Services, to proceed with this research project utilizing Allegheny County youth. Prior to visiting your organization to meet with the identified youth, I am requesting your signature below, indicating your permission to visit and to be on the premises of your facility. It may take 3 to 5 visits to complete all phases of data collection. All dates of visits will be cleared by administration and/or the designated staff person, and will be confirmed prior to my arrival.
If you should have any questions regarding this, please feel free to contact me at (412) 260-7086 or via email at J.D.Wilson4@iup.edu.

Regards,

Jacqueline D. Wilson
Primary Investigator

NOTE This form must be placed on your organization's letterhead**
Please complete and sign below. I have read the above information and understand the aforementioned research study has been approved by Allegheny County Department of Health & Human Service for the participation of County youth in the project. My signature below indicates permission for the investigator to conduct this project on the premises of this facility.

Name of Organization
Locations: Contact Person _____
                                                        Phone   _____

                    Other   Contact Person _____
                                                        Phone   _____

_____   _____
                    Authorized Signature/Title   Date

_____
                    Printed Name

**Return entire letter to the address above ~or fax to (412) 471-4861 ~or via email to
J.D.Wilson4@iup.edu**

Appendix J

Sources for Qualitative Inquiry

Source	Identifier	Gender	Current Age	Age at Placement
#1	D. W.	Female	20	6
#2	S. J.	Female	20	14
#3	M. M.	Female	18	5
#4	C. C.	Male	20	Infant
#5	J. W.	Male	18	18 months
#6	A. J.	Male	19	2
#7	J. R.	Female	20	Did Not Answer
#8	N. C.	Female	19	6 Months
#9	Z. D.	Male	Did Not Answer	14
#10	K. H.	Female	18	Does Not Recall
#11	M. H.	Male	20	8