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**Exploring the Relationships between Interracial Adoption, Adoptees' Identity
Development and Mental Health: A Systematic Literature Review**

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MSW5010-A: MSW Capstone Seminar

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Abstract

Interracial adoption, which is the practice of placing a child or youth of a specific race or ethnicity with a family of a contrasting race or ethnicity, has become more prevalent in today's world because of the overrepresentation of children and youth of color in the child welfare system. Although interracial adoption has been a controversial topic with little information in the past, it is known that identity plays a huge role in the development of children and youth as they grow. Experts have expressed concerns that interracially adopted children and youth are at risk for loss of identity including culture, heritage, and tradition, as their adoptive families often lack the comprehensive education and cultural awareness that is needed to support them. Loss of cultural identity and tradition may also increase an individual's mental health challenges.

This systematic literature review evaluates recent studies related to racial and ethnic identity, self-esteem, parent-child relationships, child development, and various education interventions and tools to understand and examine the relationship between interracial adoption on the adoptees experiencing it. Findings suggest interventions and strategies that are effective and beneficial for adoptees and families that are involved in interracial adoption.

Keywords: Interracial adoption, child, youth, identity development, mental health, ADD
more

Introduction

Adoption looks very different for many individuals and families. Although adoption is a legal process, it is also a very emotional and social process that can affect individuals and families in various ways. There are also many types of adoption. This systematic literature review will dive deep into adoption, specifically interracial (also known as transracial or transcultural) adoption, and the relationship it has on adoptees' identity development, mental health, and overall well-being. Lack of information regarding this topic will also be addressed while looking at strategies and various supports that can help families adopt interracially so that their children can thrive and develop positive self-autonomy. Education, awareness, and inclusivity are a must in positive interracial adoptions for the adoptees'. Further research has to be done regarding the amount of information there is available on adoption, and more specifically interracial adoption.

Adoption

There are many reasons individuals and families may choose to adopt including infertility, health complications, single parent, gender preference, same-sex relationships, spiritual reasons, culture, etc. Adoption's general definition is the legal shift of parental rights and responsibilities from a child's birth parents to adults who are going to raise that child (Reitz & Watson, 1992, as cited in Wiley, 2017).

There are two kinds of adoption, domestic and international adoption. Domestic adoption is when the child being adopted, their biological family, and the adoption family are from the same country. Domestic adoptions can occur through the child welfare system or privately (Pinderhughes, Matthews, Deoudes, & Pertman, 2013, as cited in Wiley, 2017). A child adopted through the child welfare system typically happens with children who have been removed from

their biological families by the state. In private domestic adoptions, the biological parents legally renounce their child to adoption (Pinderhughes, et al., 2013, as cited in Wiley, 2017). Finally, international adoption also known as intercountry, places children from their countries of origin with families in other countries (Pinderhughes, et al., 2013, as cited in Wiley, 2017). The United States reached a high of intercountry adoption in 2004 when Americans adopted 22,989 children in the United States, but this has dropped significantly with only 4,058 adoptions of children in 2018 (U.S. Department of State, 2019, as cited in Neville & Rotabi 2020). A greater part of children who are adopted internationally have resided in a residential care unit (Peñarrubia et al., 2022). Residential care, also known as institutional care is when a child is not taken care of by a stable primary caregiver but rather taken care of by various amount of professional caregivers, with a rigid routine that is usually not applicable to the child's specific needs (Berens & Nelson, 2015, as cited in Peñarrubia et al., 2022).

Adoption can be characterized by legal recognition of a parent-child relationship, whereas other adoptions can be informal, where a family member or close friend takes the responsibility of raising a child without legal recognition or standing (Stolley, 1993, as cited in Marr, 2017). Children can also be adopted by stepparents or grandparents (Biafora & Esposito, 2007; Kreider & Lofquist, 2014, as cited in Marr, 2017).

In regards to the United States, there was a decrease in adoptions from foster care in the fiscal year of 2019 to 2021 (National Council for Adoption, 2024). 19,130 individuals aged out of foster care without a permanent family, and 113,589 were still waiting to be adopted at the end of the fiscal year of 2021(National Council for Adoption, 2024).

Interracial Adoption

There have been drastic changes in adoption in the last couple of years. One change is a huge decrease in intercountry adoption and an increase in adoptions from the U.S. child welfare system, which has led to a rise in interracial adoptions (Wiley, 2017). Interracial adoption, also known as transracial adoption, has been a controversial practice in the United States (Simon & Altstein, 1977, as cited in Marr, 2017). Interracial adoption is when an individual or family adopts a child of a different race and ethnicity than their own (Simon & Altstein, 1977, as cited in Marr, 2017). Although this has been a controversial practice in the past it is now looked at as a solution to the number of children of color who want or are looking to be adopted because of the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system (Abdullah, 1996, as cited in Marr, 2017). Youth placed with families of a different race, ethnicity, or culture, can be jeopardized in regards to their birth culture, for example, loss or minimal exposure to their heritage, customs, food, religious practices, friends, etc (Buehler, et al., 2006; Yancy, 1998, as cited in Coakley, et al., 2015).

United States adoption agencies used to only match adoptees with families of the same race, ethnicity, and religion until the 1960s when fewer white infants were accessible through adoption and families became more open to adopting non-white children (Simon & Altstein, 1977, as cited in Marr, 2017). Although these interracial placements came second to inracial placements, a lot of African American and American Indian groups had questions and doubts about culture loss and the effects on the interracially adopted children (Patton, 2000; Simon & Altstein, 2000, as cited in Marr, 2017). In 1933 federal legislation removed all obstacles to interracial placements, the Multiethnic Placement Act and the 1977 Adoption and Safe Families Act forbid race to delay or stop the placement of a child through adoption or foster care. In the

2000s, adoption agencies who refused to match children interracially would be punished by the legislation (Simon & Altstein, 2000, as cited in Marr, 2017).

As United States history grows, there have been more changes in race classification which has increased the number of interracial relationships (Marr, 2017). The 21st century is when individuals started considering themselves biracial or multicultural, compared to the past when a lot of individuals mostly identified as monoracially, either Black or White (Ballantine, Roberts & Korgen, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b, as cited in Marr, 2017). As history and time passes, more individuals are marrying across racial groups, rather than of the same race or ethnicity as themselves (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998, as cited in Marr, 2017). These changes and increases in different racial relationships and classifications result in interracial adoption being a more familiar and frequent concept in today's world, as well as seeing what adoptions can be described as interracial (Marr, 2017). There have been a lot of different definitions and criteria when it comes to the concept of interracial adoption, which proves that this concept is not set in stone, and therefore adds a lot of complication to the research behind this topic (Marr, 2017). With the rise of interracial adoptions, there are fears about placements and how they might hinder the child from developing their own positive racial-ethnic identity, which in turn may inhibit their ability to progress positive coping skills and effectively face discrimination and racism (Dunbar et al., 2017, as cited in (Pettis & Sonnentag, 2023).

This systematic literature review evaluates recent studies related to racial and ethnic identity, self-esteem, parent-child relationships, and various education interventions and tools to understand and examine the effects of interracial adoption on the adoptees experiencing it.

Findings suggest interventions and strategies that are effective and beneficial for adoptees and families that are involved in interracial adoption.

Mental Health

Mental health is a crucial part of every child's developing life. Mental health can affect how a child thinks, feels, and acts, and can play a part in how a child handles stressors, connects with others, and makes safe and healthy choices (Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health | CDC, 2022). The most common mental disorders diagnosed in children in the United States are ADHD, anxiety, behavioral problems, and depression (Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health | CDC, 2022).

One area that highly affects a child's mental health is Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs). In 2016-2019, it was found that children ranging in ages 6 to 17, who were discriminated against regarding their race or ethnicity, had a higher chance of one or more physical and one or more mental conditions (Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health | CDC, 2022). Discrimination involving race and ethnicity was seven times more common for these children with additional ACEs in comparison to children with no ACEs (Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health | CDC, 2022). Children who are placed in the child welfare system, before adoption or permanency happens, may have faced prior trauma, which resulted in their removal from their home. Children in the system and children who are adopted can be at a higher risk of negative mental health, possibly resulting from the placement they are in as well.

Different situations and experiences regarding interracial adoption may affect a child's mental health. Part of this systemic literature review will aim to explore children's relationship with their mental health in various ways after being placed in a family of a differing race or ethnicity. This is important to explore because we want to be able to implement education and services for these

children and families experiencing blending different races and ethnicities. Having services implemented and knowledge on the topic can enhance the child and family's experience, identity, mental health, and more.

Method

To discover research that adhered to the topic of interracial adoption, the researcher used Merrimack College's McQuade Library MACKsearch Basic and Advanced Search database (EBSCOHost). At first, the topic of adoption, in general, did not have that much general or accurate information. It took a lot of work to find concrete articles related to the topic in mind. The researcher changed the keywords around many times. Some terms and words the researcher used were "interracial or transracial adoption", "interracial or transracial adoption related to mental health", "history of adoption of child", and "interracial or transracial adoption effects on identity development".

Before the researcher set specific guidelines on the Merrimack College's MACKsearch Basic and Advanced Search database (EBSCOHost) regarding the searches that were going to be applied for the research, there were around 540 results. After the researcher plugged in the specific criteria, the number of hits kept decreasing and was able to find articles best suited for the topic of interracial adoption and the effects on the adoptees that experience it.

To narrow down the search the researcher set specific guidelines for the searches ensuring the full text was online and available, the information was peer-reviewed, and was dated back for ten years, which brought the results to 65. The researcher excluded duplicate articles, any articles that did not relate directly to my research question e.g. animal adoption, and any that were not in English. The researcher had a difficult time finding articles related directly to this topic. Due to the lack of information, the researcher sorted through the articles that were from the database that

fit the research question the best. After carefully considering each article, the research finalized the references with 20 peer-reviewed articles for the systematic literature review. Some additional references are also included for background information and were not peer-reviewed.

Results

After reading through all the articles, the researcher separated them into different categories based on their information, data, and overarching themes. The researcher was then able to see which themes were more prevalent regarding the topic of interracial adoption and the relationship it has with the adoptees. The three recurring themes the researcher decided to discuss in this systemic literature review are Racial and Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem, Parent-Child Relationships and Family Outcomes, and Education and Positive Support. Looking at these themes will allow future researchers and individuals involved or in the process of interracial adoption to be more competent, aware, and supportive of raising a child of a different race or ethnicity in today's world. Individuals in or going through the process of interracial adoption may be more aware of their community and the influence it can have on adoptees.

Racial and Ethnic Identity and Self-Esteem

Ethnic discrimination can be described as an unwarranted negative behavior initiated by individuals of a more dominant group directed at slandering and rejecting other individuals or members from another ethnic group (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003, as cited in (Ferrari et al., 2017). This kind of discrimination can negatively impact many different groups and individuals, but especially interracial adoptees' transitioning into a family of a different ethnic background than theirs. Identity in general can be difficult to navigate for adolescents, especially ethnic identity and discovering your own personal culture and how you connect to it. This section will further explain the relationship racial and ethnic identity has on interracial adoptees'

and how that might influence or affect their self-esteem in their own lives or regarding their family situation.

There has been pushback and concern in the United States from justice organizations regarding White parents parenting children of a different race in a traditional colonializing way (Barn, 2013, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). Individuals were hesitant about interracial adoption, with thoughts that it would turn into a form of “cultural genocide” where the children would not be able to develop their own racial and ethnic identity, but rather conform to their White parents' ethnicity and culture (Lazarus et al., 2002, p.8, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). Other concerns regarded forced assimilation, where children adopted into a different race or background, would lose their links to the cultural, racial, and ethnic communities (Baden, Treweeke, & Alhuwalia, 2012, as cited in Branco, 2022). This theme will discuss the concerns and complexity of interracial adoption and the argument that adoptees adopted by individuals from different backgrounds should be able to have knowledge of their birth culture, family, and identifications that make them who they are (Hollingsworth, 2003, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020).

Identity can be a hard issue to navigate while developing and learning about yourself and the world around you. Identity can have many different meanings and contexts. Identity is not the same for everyone and will fluctuate depending on the situation you are in. Families can differ by age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc. Growing up in a “traditional family”, identity could be more apparent and easier to connect with. Adoptees of interracial adoption can have conflicting views on their identity solely because of the environment they become accustomed to or are adopted into.

Ethnic identity is thoughts or feelings about an ethnic group, feelings of being included in that group, and the acceptance of any tradition or customs that comes with that specific group (Boivin & Hassan, 2015, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). Ethnic identity promotes an individual's meaning, continuity, belongingness, distinctiveness, efficacy, and self-esteem (Vignoles et al., 2006, p. 168, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). An issue that interracial adoption brings up is the inability to create a sense of racial and ethnic identity, which could translate into decreased well-being and psychosocial outcomes (Boivin & Hassan, 2015; Else-Quest & Morse, 2015; Ferrari et al., 2015; Vignoles, et al., 2006, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). In a study involving Korean interracial adoptees, they described feelings of anger, shame, and humiliation while looking in the mirror and being able to recognize themselves as a “white woman inside” but not being able to recognize the Korean face that was staring back in the mirror (Yngvesson & Mahoney, 2000, p. 101, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). When adoptees are allowed to view both their birth culture and their mainstream culture, also referred to as the culture they are involved in, together and not against each other, there are more positive psychosocial outcomes (Manzi et al., 2014, p. 898, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020).

Incorporating and teaching your interracial adoptees' culture, heritage, practice, etc is pivotal in ethnic and racial identity, also known as racial-ethnic socialization (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020). In more defined words, “A transcultural style of racial-ethnic socialization, embraces the integration of the intricacies of race and ethnicity into everyday life, demonstrates a cognizance of the transformational impact of becoming a mixed family, and claims support networks that are racially and culturally diverse” (Barn, 2013, p. 1287, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020, p. 268). Parents of interracial children would be open to

accepting differing cultures and continuing positive aspects of their child's culture and diversity (Gibbers, 2017, as cited in Marcelli et al., 2020).

One article relating to a different sense of identity spoke about White families adopting Chinese children, specifically females. The article discussed how these children were mostly from abandoned families and spent most of their lives in orphanages so they did not have knowledge of their personal background including their birth family or date of birth (Galvin, 2003; Pertman, 2011, as cited in Tan & Liu, 2019). This can be even more confusing and harmful for the child and their family because they are unaware of their roots and where they originally came from. This may make it harder for the individuals to create a sense of personal identity and more hesitant to bring up conversations around their biological background and integrate those specific traditions or cultures into their adoptive family. These individuals were then left to question their identity even more. This was through adoptive identity, which looks at three different questions, “Who am I as an adopted person?”, “What does being adopted mean to me?”, “and “How does my adoption fit into my understanding of myself, my relationships, my family, and my culture?” (Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011, as cited in Tan & Liu, 2019). This type of identity formulation relates to identity development and has to do with the whole family environment and the social-cultural context (Galvin, 2003; Grotevant et al., 2000, as cited in Tan & Liu, 2019). Adoptive identity is contradicted or asserted by remarks or beliefs from members outside of the direct family and how adoptive parents respond to those remarks (Tan & Liu, 2019).

Parent-Child Relationships and Family Outcomes

Attributes like skin color, eyes, hair color, height, and language accents are popularly used to connect a child with their family, but with interracial adoption that is not the case

(Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Lash Esau, 2000, as cited in Marr, 2017). There have been a lot of research attempts to learn about interracial adoptions, and how adoptees and their adoptive parents operate as a family in the United States, when outside individuals often assume family members will have similar physical features (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Lash Esau, 2000, as cited in Marr, 2017).

Attachment representations can be very solid, but can actively change over time and through experiences and environments, which can continue being effective in the child's life (Steele et al., 2008, as cited in Peñarrubia et al., 2022). Peer interaction and bonding with other adult figures can have a significant impact on the adoptees' attachment representations (Peñarrubia et al., 2022). Therefore, interracial families would benefit by introducing and intertwining their child's race and background with theirs, for a higher chance of inclusion and attachment.

An article that spoke about internationally and interracially adopted Korean children and adolescents, focused on development, and how certain development can affect racial and ethnic experiences in the eyes of these Korean-adopted children and adolescents (Wu et al., 2022). More specifically it spoke about family dynamics and how these adopted children and adolescents were raised. These Korean children and adolescents often felt they were raised and treated like they were White by their White parents (Lee, 2003, as cited in Wu et al., 2022). These parents can often forget their child's race exists or forget to highlight the importance of their race (Loyd & Gaither, 2018, as cited in Wu et al., 2022). Certain experiences that occur in this type of family dynamic may have to do with White parents being nonresponsive or not ready to have conversations that are brought up by the adopted child of a differing race about their

specific experiences related to racism or discrimination they face (Docan-Morgan, 2011, as cited in Wu et al., 2022).

Another study examined the relationship between parental recognition of differences in the adoptive family life along with the psychological welfare of the individuals who are the adopted family members (Brodzinsky, 1987, as cited in, Mohanty, 2015). Brodzinsky proposed that rejecting or insisting on the differences between the family members may enhance the adoptees' feelings of being isolated or disengaged from the family (Brodzinsky, 1987, as cited in, Mohanty, 2015). Brodzinsky developed a model of adoptive family coping, which has been shown to promote adopted family differences and open up communication styles for families to discuss adoption (e.g., Brodzinsky, 2006; Le Mare & Audet, 2011, as cited in, Mohanty, 2015). Specifically, there was one study that showed Korean adoptees who were less likely to display delinquent behaviors if there was family recognition of the difference they had related to ethnicity and race (Anderson, Lee, Rueter, & Kim, 2015, as cited in, Mohanty, 2015).

Another study utilized questionnaires to look at parent-child communication about race and ethnicity, which was explained with parent reports and child reports. The same questionnaire was used for both the adoptee and the parents, which was the Adoptive Adolescent/Young Adult Questionnaire (Yoon, 2000, as cited in, Hamilton et al., 2015). The Adoptive Adolescent/Young Adult Questionnaire measured the adoptees' insight into the communication and environmental support they receive from their parents regarding their own racial and ethnic background as well as the parent's insight into the communication and support they give (Hamilton et al., 2015). The questionnaire asked the adoptee questions such as, "I feel comfortable talking about racial issues with my parent(s)," "If someone made fun of me because of my race, I would feel comfortable telling my parent(s) about it," "My parent(s) would feel

uncomfortable about my dating someone who is from a different race than I am,” “My parent(s) don’t talk with me about my racial background” (Hamilton et al., 2015). The parent questionnaire focused on similar questions with one example being, “I don’t talk with my child about his/her racial background” (Hamilton et al., 2015). The findings of the parent report indicated that mothers and fathers of same-race White adoptees’ talked less about race when in comparison to all other interracial groups, which included mothers and fathers of interracial Asian, Black, Latino, and other mixed adoptees (Hamilton et al., 2015). It also found that mothers and fathers of interracial Black adoptees’ reported increased discussion around race with their child compared to mothers and fathers of interracial Asian, Latino, and other mixed adoptees’ (Hamilton et al., 2015). The child report showed a significant difference as well when compared to the discussion of race among different families. The findings for the child report showed that same-race White adoptees’ discussed less about race with their parents when compared to interracial Asian and Latino adoptees’ (Hamilton et al., 2015). There was no difference in the child's report regarding communication with parents between same-race White and interracial Black adoptees’ or between same-race White and other mixed interracial adoptees’ (Hamilton et al., 2015). One specific question on the questionnaire that was argued to be very important was, “My parent(s) don’t talk with my about my racial background” (Hamilton et al., 2015). This question was reported significantly lower for Asian and Latino adoptees compared to same-race White adoptees, and there was so significant difference for Black adoptees’ (Hamilton et al., 2015). These findings concluded that Black and other interracial adopted children might not agree with their parents in regards to how much they talk about race in their relationships (Hamilton et al., 2015).

Interviews are vital in the process of understanding interracial adoptions and feelings around adoptees' having their race and ethnicity integrated into their adoptive home. Another study looked at Interracial Korean American adoptees and interviews to learn about feelings and experiences associated with the theme of cultural socialization from parents (Lee, 2016). One interviewee expressed her strong connection to her Korean culture because of the way she looked on the outside but felt unsupported at home when showing interest in her culture (Lee, 2016). This specific interviewee felt that discussion around her culture was lacking, her parents did not make it a regular part of their lives and lacked openness when it came to discussing the issues they were experiencing as a family regarding adoption (Lee, 2016). There are a lot of families that are naturally affected by interracial adoptions, and this interviewee recognized the lack of cultural support her parents had by coming from a White background who did not share similar traditions or experiences but also stated that her parents could have been much more motivated to discuss their issues and differences and be more open to creating a supportive environment for an interracially adopted child (Lee, 2016).

Education and Positive Support

Interracial relationships and adoption are going to continue to grow and become more apparent in today's world. Even though there are risks when adopting interracially, it can be a positive experience you share with your family and child. Preparing families with education and specific examples of how to properly integrate their child's heritage, culture, and biological background into their new life will be beneficial in interracial parenting and adoption.

Children can learn and take in a lot from their parents and caregivers subconsciously or consciously. Parental socialization examples or practices can help children of color identify,

recognize, counter, or not, deal with the impact of racism and microaggressions (Umaña-Taylor & Hill, 2020, as cited in Branco, 2022).

Preparing families and children for interracial adoption is very important and beneficial. Children adopted interracially have a higher chance of losing their biological backgrounds including culture, heritage, and traditions. One practice that can be used is racial and cultural socialization. Racial and cultural socialization prepares families in interracial adoptions for bias and cultural socialization (Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018, as cited in Simon & Farr, 2021). Interracial adoptees whose parents have been involved in more cultural socialization have explained having greater perceptions of parent-child closeness in their adoptive families (Montgomery & Jordan, 2018, as cited in Simon & Farr, 2021). One study looked at assessing parents' involvement in cultural socialization. The study asked questions about family involvement in religious, social, tribal, or recreational activities that reflect their race, culture, or ethnicity (Vonk, et al., 2010, as cited in Simon & Farr, 2021). One specific question asked if the child had had books read to them about their heritage or cultural group (Vonk, et al., 2010, as cited in Simon & Farr, 2021).

Parents or families who do adopt interracially must engage in strategies to engage their children in their own birth culture. Two strategies include enculturation and preparation for bias. Enculturation is the transition of values, knowledge, pride, and beliefs about the child's birth culture and incorporates appropriate cultural opportunities to promote awareness, knowledge, and pride around that specific culture (Lee et al., 2010, as cited in Ferrari, 2015). Preparing for bias includes parents or families teaching their children different coping styles or strategies to help combat discrimination and racism (Lee et al., 2010, as cited in Ferrari, 2015).

Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) is a helpful framework that highlights connections through relationships, keeping cultural context in mind, and being relevant and appropriate for school, mental health, and family counselors (Hartling & Richards, 2008, as cited in Branco, 2022). RCT highlights multiple different areas that help interracial adopted children in their lifetimes through, mutuality, relational differentiation, mutual empathy and empowerment, mutual development, and authentic engagement (Jordan, 2000, p. 1007, as cited in Branco, 2022).

One way of promoting your child's ethnic identity is completing activities that connect the child to their birth culture, this can include visiting the child's birth homeland, participating in a language class, and keeping contact with individuals from the child's cultural background (Brocius, 2017). Some interracial parents have also expressed that parenting classes would help address certain issues and situations that might occur when raising a child of color and how beneficial it would be (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003, as cited in, Heiden-Rootes et al., 2019). More specifically, there could be classes offered that go over specific developmental periods in a child's life (Dhami et al., 2007; Wind et al., 2007, as cited in, Heiden-Rootes et al., 2019).

Discussion

Looking at these themes will allow future researchers and individuals involved or in the process of interracial adoption to be more competent, aware, and supportive of raising a child of a different race or ethnicity in today's world. It will also prepare professionals to be intentional and informed of all adoptees' and families' backgrounds so that placing children in specific homes will be beneficial to both the child and the family. It will also allow professionals to recognize the extra support and resources interracial families may need to best support their

child and their transition into a new environment. There can also be more investigation around the specific ways parents and families communicate race and ethnicity to their interracial adolescents and how that can affect the adoptee (Hamilton et al., 2015).

Future research, discussions, and implementation will help social workers when it comes to interracial adoption. It will raise awareness of the issues of interracial adoption and will make social workers more competent in supporting and placing children of differing backgrounds with certain families. Interracially adoptive parents have regularly reported that social workers are an asset in raising their adopted children (Vonk et al., 2007,2010, as cited in Lee et al., 2021).

Families raising children who are adopted can be a huge shift in family dynamics and a wide range of experiences and emotions, especially if the child's biological background and culture are not being supported. Social workers can help families going through this process with counseling, regular visits, check-ins, support through difficult conversations, integrating mentors and the community, etc. Social workers are skilled professionals who continue to learn every day about the effects and struggles individuals and groups may be experiencing. The more interracial adoption is made aware of and talked about, the more families, social workers, and communities can help in making the adoptees' lives and experiences more stable, supported, and heard.

Limitations

There is a lack of information on the number of interracial adoptions and adoptees in the United States. The lack of this information stems from three challenges including different types of adoption and associated data documentation, changes regarding race and interracial relationships, and a lack of interracial adoption-specific information in adoption publications. (Gailey, 2010; Simon & Altstein, 2000, as cited in Marr, 2017). There is also a lack of information when it comes to cultural socialization when relating specifically to the exploration

and affirmation of ethnic identity (Lee, et al., 2010, as cited in Ferrari, 2015). There is an increase of interest regarding international interracial adoptees' experiences and how they navigate through adolescence and emerging adulthood but limited data and information regarding the discussion of these developmental stages (Ferrari et al., 2017).

Another major limitation is the services offered to families post-adoption. This can be especially hard for families who do adopt interracially. The children and families who are going through adoption in general, but then having to adjust to different races and cultures can be a very intense and long process, with differing family dynamics and traditions ((Baden et al. 2013; Dekker et al. 2017; Lamanna et al. 2018, as cited in Cloonan et al., 2023). Support for families and the children post-adoption can help them grow as a family and recognize the differences they may have, but the resources and plans they can put in place to be a successful and stable family that promotes positive relationships, growth, and differences. There has been support and advocacy around increasing comprehensive training and transparency that comes from adoption agencies to promote social justice within the adoption process and practices (Branco 2021; Mounts and Bradley 2020, as cited in Cloonan et al., 2023).

After reading all the articles, there was also limited information on interracially adopted children placed in a household or family with a single parent or a parent/parents who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community. The articles mostly spoke about White families, or families that consisted of a mother and a father.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review evaluated recent studies related to racial and ethnic identity, self-esteem, parent-child relationships, and various education interventions and tools to help families, communities, and adoptees navigate their personal experience with interracial

adoption or interracial adoption in general as it is becoming more of a frequent practice.

Incorporating and teaching your interracial adoptees' culture, heritage, practice, etc is pivotal in ethnic and racial identity, also known as racial-ethnic socialization (Marcelli et al., 2020).

Education and integration are important, as well as awareness and competence. Being aware of the struggles and difficulties interracially adopted individuals will face as they transition into a new family, environment, or community is vital. Families need to be willing to have hard discussions around race, discrimination, identity, etc, as well as inform others around them who will be involved in the child's life. There also needs to be more services and resources provided to these families and adoptees' who are experiencing interracial adoption in multiple different ways.

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