

**Transracial Adoption** Many adoptions are being taken place in America today. These adoptions are not always of the same race, transracial adoption is very popular among eager couples who are willing to adopt. Transracial adoption is the adoption of a child of one race by a couple of another race. Adopting children from different races has brought up many controversies and the government has had to step in. There are mixed views on the case of transracial adoption, some believe it is culturally damaging to the child while others believe there is nothing wrong with it. The primary goal of adoption officials must be to place the child into a home as quickly as possible which will, in turn, minimize the effects that it will have on the child, whether it be a white or black family that it is adopted by. There is nothing wrong with transracial adoption a child can be loved by anyone who is willing to love it because love is colorblind.

There are many minority children who are without permanent homes in the United States, crossing the color bar is frowned upon by many people. The debate over transracial adoption is whether or not it is in the best interest of the child. The problem in today's society is that foster care is preferred over transracial adoption. The reason being the children and youth services would rather put a black child in foster homes of that race instead of letting a white couple adopt it because they are white. They believe that putting a black child in white family would culturally damage that child, that they would grow up not knowing their heritage. They believe that a parent of a different race is not as equipped to educate a child about issues of their racial identity (McNair 1). They do not realize putting a child through years of moving from foster home to foster home would damage them because they would have no sense of family or love. Letting the white couple who are willing to adopt the child would be in the best interest of the child because they would give it a home, family and love. Transracial adoption has a long history with many controversies. Beginning in 1968, a law was passed permitting families to adopt outside of their race. In 1972, an almost unknown black nationalist group called the National Association of Black Social Workers became famous when they spoke out against the practice of transracial adoption. They branded this type of practice was "cultural genocide" (Republic 6). Even though the law passed in 1968 was never changed, in only one year the number of transracial adoptions was cut in half to 1,569. By 1975, it had been drastically cut down again to only 800 (6). Another law regarding transracial adoption was passed in 1980 stating that the Department of Health and Human Services is required to monitor adoptable foster care children every six, twelve, and eighteen months. However this practice is never enforced (6). We realize that the government has recognized that this is problem and in 1994 President Clinton passed the Multiethnic Placement Act (Multi 1).

The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) was proposed by Senator Howard Metzenbaum, it was designed for many reasons. For one is was to prevent discrimination in the placement of children on the basis of race, color of natural origin (Multi 1). It stated that any agency that uses race as a factor in deciding adoptive placements would be denied federal financing (Republic 6). The major goal of the act was to increase the number of children adopted because too many children were waiting too long. A recent study revealed that in a three month period in New York City 262 children were legally adopted, out of those more than fifty percent had lived in foster care for at least six years (Christ 2). Many of those children were held back from being adopted because of racial considerations. How can one hold a child for that long in foster care when there are willing parents ready to adopt. Consider four couples who were willing to adopt four black children who have spent time in the foster care system: one a ten year old boy with severe learning disabilities, a two year old girl with fetal alcohol system, a mildly retarded three year old boy with cerebral palsy and a four year old boy who is one fourth black who was born drug affected and was sexually abused. Each of the four couples who were willing to adopt these children of their dreams were denied adoption permission because they were white (Christ 1). It doesn't matter if the

parents are of a different race because studies have showed that children raised by parents of different race have had normal culturally aware lives. Sandra Illionga, a black woman who was adopted by a white family waited ten years before being adopted she states "What were they doing during those ten years growing my ideal black family from scratch"(Christ 2). So we see these children who wait are put through a lot of stress from moving around to foster homes. The government has realized that there was a problem that is why they passed the MEPA act. MEPA will help by preventing discrimination that can cause delays in or denial of adoptive placements due to race or color.

Today there is split opinion on the adoption of children by a couple of a different race. Many people are beginning to realize that color doesn't matter. There are many organizations out there that support transracial adoption and are helping with adoptions whether they are transracial or not. One organization Americans for African Adoption was started and is also run by Cheryl Shott. She herself is a mother of three adopted African children. As of 1992 her agency has placed eighteen children from Africa and one from Afghanistan with white families in the United States(Vogue 12). Along with these supportive agencies the communities and churches are give their support to transracial adoption. The younger generations are more apt to be willing to adopt out of race because they are the younger generation, they have experienced today's society where interracial couples are becoming more frequent. Less support is seen among the older generations than the younger ones.

The reason there are so many transracial adoptions today is because of the abundance of white couples seeking to adopt and their isn't enough white children for them to adopt. These couples are willing to adopt a child of different race since the abundance of minority children up for adoption is high. These white couples are seeking to adopt because of many reasons one being that they could have a fertility problem. Any couple in that situation would be grateful to adopt a child of a different race it would not stop them from loving it any differently. About half of the adoptable children in foster care are black(Republic 5). With not enough black families showing interest in adopting these children are left waiting for a family to adopt. Before the Multiethnic Placement Act was passed these black children would wait for however long it took for the adoption agency find them same race parents. Now after the act was passed these agencies have to if there is no suitable family of the same race willing to adopt the child allow the white couple to adopt.

Now we are back to the real controversy involving transracial adoption: does transracial adoption culturally damage the child? No. As a child of different race is adopted by a white couple it is essential that the child explore his or her own heritage and ethnic identity. There is a concern that if a child is adopted out of his culture that they are going to lose their cultural ties(Smith 1041). It is important that the ethnic identity of the child be preserved and that the child is able to develop an awareness of their heritage. Many of the children adopted by white couples are proud of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, both the biological and the cultural ones(St. John 152). In a study done by Mcroy and Zurcher, black children raised by white adoptive parents have the same high self esteem and good self concept as did a black child raised by black adoptive parents(Pohl 49). Self esteem is an important aspect for a child that is raised in a transracial family, and the studies all have shown that a child raised in a transracial family adjust as well as those adopted by a family of the same race.

The black children that are raised by white families on the majority has stated that they have a normal life and that their family has brought them up teaching them about their cultural background. One student responded to this by saying that her parents made a conscious effort not only to point out people of color who made positive role models, but also to help her be open to all cultures(St. John 152). A study done by American University concluded after analyzing 240 white families who adopted black children that it does not emotionally hurt the child to be adopted by a white family. They found that these black children who had were given white and black dolls did not think of the white

dolls as any smarter, prettier or nicer than the black ones (Republic 7). Many children through a time of exploring their heritage and they get the best of both worlds. These adopted children believe that race is an unimportant factor. In one study the parents reported that racial identity is not a major problem with their children (Grow 234). Most of the children adopted transracially say that they would not have preferred to have been adopted by parents of the same racial background (Jackson 35). It also appears that they are more accepting of integration and mixed race marriages.

Some people do not like transracial adoption and won't stand for it but it happens to be that white families are more apt to adopt older and disabled black children than to be adopted by a black family (Republic 8). Black couples don't appear to come forth as much as white couples in the interest of adoption (Vogue 32). When black couples don't show as much interest in adopting there still is the same amount of black children up for adoption out there. These children have the right to have a family, they need love. If a white family is willing to adopt them and give them love and life then no one should prevent that from happening because the studies show that these children do not suffer anything that they wouldn't suffer from being adopted by a family of their race.

From compiling this paper I have discovered an enormous quantity of information concerning the practice of transracial adoption and its effects on the adopted children and the adopting families. Prior to writing this paper and doing the research I had the impression that transracial adoptions should not be a problem as long as the child was brought up in loving and caring environment. As long as the child was raised correctly there should not have been any problems with the psychological welfare of the child. Now that I have finished researching this topic I feel even more strongly towards how transracial adoptions will not harm the child in any way, be it physically, psychologically, or socially. In most cases the child feels that they are much happier in a different race family than in a family of their race. Most transracially adopted children feel that they are getting the best of both worlds and that they would not want it any other way. If the children see it an advantage to have inroads into both communities, then how can anyone say that this is detrimental to the child? As long as the child is happy and comfortable with their adopted family, then it should not matter what the color of their skin is. Too many people in today's society base their opinions on race and color. That should not be the case considering that race is not important to the children that are adopted. A human being is a human being no matter what color they are. Everybody is the same inside and everybody has the same feelings. The only difference in the two individuals is their skin color. Granted, adoption agencies should try to find an acceptable black family in which to place a black child, but when one is not available there should be no problem with placing the child in a transracial home. The family structure, ability to support the child, environment, and chemistry between the adopted child and the family should be more important than the skin colors of the child and family. If an acceptable black family is not available, it would be more detrimental to the child to be kept in a foster care system than to be adopted by a white family. They child would then get a feeling of not being loved or accepted by anyone. Feelings that they were not "good enough" would arise inside of them because they think that they are not wanted by anyone. There would be absolutely no love in their lives. This will give rise to deep feelings of inferiority which will never go away once they are begun. These few results of long lengths of time are more disastrous to the child's mental health than a transracial adoption would ever be. It is close to impossible to relieve the foster children of these horrible feelings. Many will live with the feelings acquired during foster care for the remainder of their lives, however all of them will live with the memory of how it felt to be unwanted and unloved.

Transracial adoptions are becoming more and more frequently seen throughout the United States today. Society is left with a choice between the adoption of children of a different race or letting these children grow up without the security of a family of their own. As long as the family offers its undying love and

support to the child, there should be no question as to whether or not that family is allowed to adopt the child of different race. Transracial adoption is the better alternative to long periods of time in foster care. Everyone should be given the chance to see that, as trite it may sound, love really is colorblind.