

4-27-2026

Human Service Professionals' Perceptions Culturally Competent Resources for Transracial Adoption

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Rachelle Tau-Stewart

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2026

Abstract

Human Service Professionals' Perceptions Culturally Competent Resources for

Transracial Adoption

by

Rachelle Tau-Stewart

MA, Multnomah University, 2021

BS, Multnomah University, 2019

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Human Services

Walden University

August 2026

Abstract

Transracial adoption continues to increase in the United States, particularly in states with predominantly White populations; yet, culturally competent preparation and postadoption resources remain limited, placing transracially adopted youth at increased risk for identity disruption, mental health challenges, and experiences of racism and microaggressions.

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to explore human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption in Washington State. The Transracial Adoption Parenting Series framework developed by the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families, was used to frame the study. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 10 human service professionals working in or partnered with adoption agencies in Washington State. Data were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis to identify themes. Findings revealed intentional cultural socialization strengthens adoptee identity development; culturally competent, relational support enhances family outcomes; cultural connection and mentorship foster belonging and identity; consistent emotional and professional support improves long-term outcomes; insufficient cultural competence limits effective transracial adoption support; comprehensive, trauma-informed supports promote belonging and well-being; and ethical, culturally competent practice requires lifelong accountability and support. The study contributes to positive social change by informing human service organizations and policymakers of the need to integrate culturally responsive frameworks, training, and resources into adoption services to better support transracially adopted youth and their families.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to transracial adoptees whose lived experiences continue to reveal the gaps between intention and impact within adoption systems. It is also dedicated to practitioners, advocates, and families committed to confronting discomfort, challenging color-evasive practices, and advancing culturally responsive care. May this work contribute to more intentional, informed, and humane approaches to transracial adoption.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my committee chair and committee members for their guidance, insight, and commitment throughout this doctoral process. Your expertise and feedback strengthened both this study and my development as a scholar-practitioner.

I am deeply appreciative of the human service professionals who participated in this study and generously shared their perspectives and experiences. Your contributions provided the foundation for this research and its implications for practice and social change.

I would also like to acknowledge my family, colleagues, and community for their ongoing support and encouragement throughout this journey. Your belief in the importance of this work made its completion possible.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Problem

Background of the Human Services Program

Historically, transracial adoption was implemented to reduce the length of time non-White children were spending in the foster care system. The definition of transracial adoption is parents of a certain racial group adopting a child of a different race or ethnic group (Castner et al., 2022). One of the first attempts to influence and implement transracial adoption was the Indian Adoption Project. The Indian Adoption Project was an initiative that launched the normalization of interracial adoptions in the 1960s by promoting adoptions for Native American children to be placed in primarily White family homes (Palmiste, 2023). The adoption project was thought to increase the idea of equality across the enforced separation of Native children from their culture and their relatives. The byproducts of transracial adoptions included cultural assimilation of the adoptees and behaviors by the adoptive parents that failed to consider the unique racial and ethnic experiences (Palmiste, 2023). The intentional consideration for maintaining a child's cultural background and developing their identity may be missing from the upbringing of TRA youth.

Transracial adoption continued to be encouraged for years by different initiatives with the intent to decrease the number of children in the foster care system, primarily children of color. The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) was enacted to prohibit "race matching" and to prevent adoption agencies from making adoption placement decisions or foster care placements based on skin color, race, or national origin (National Council for Adoption et al., 2021). MEPA was a reaction to the disproportionate number of Black

and Brown children in the system and the delays in placing them in homes (Branco, 2022). The removal of the consideration of race impacted placement; however, it also impacted adoptees' formation of their racial identity, culture, and overall mental health. White (2024) described the impact of transracial adoption on TRA children when it came to the development of their identity, with being met with opposing racial lenses, lack of experience and exposure to their cultural and racial upbringing, and the "colorblind" mindset upheld by many families. The intention of MEPA was to intervene and assist in the placement of children of color; however, it did not address how to transition the adoptees to their different-race families.

Social Problem

TRA has lacked the needed emphasis on cultural socialization. The process of cultural socialization typically involves White adoptive parents who may not be equipped to provide trauma-informed and culturally competent care that their transracially adoptive children need (Leonard, 2022). Cultural socialization is the method through which socializing agents, being guardians, educate the cultural beliefs, views, traditions, and expectations that are linked with their culture (Martinez et al., 2022). This is thought to be a key familial process in transracially adopted families for expecting positive developmental results and outcomes for transracially adopted youth (Leonard, 2022). This concept is important for the transition and development for TRA youth but has been overlooked by adoption and placement agencies.

Youth involved in transracial adoption are more susceptible to increased risk of struggles around their racial and cultural identity and risks to their mental health. This

increased risk includes a wide scope of physical and mental health weaknesses and vulnerabilities (Leonard, 2022) and has commonly been linked to experiences of racism and microaggressions (Branco, 2022). Families and TRA youth can be faced with a combination of ethnic identity and psychological adjustment, including discrimination and problems developing racial identity for TRA children (Baden et al., 2023). The lack of understanding and preparation for families and TRA youth leaves them open to obstacles that arise from being of a different race or navigating a certain racial identity in the world.

Local Problem

In Washington state, a small percentage of the population is made up of minorities. Asians make up the largest minority racial group, being 10.3%, and non-White racial groups represented 27.7% of the population in 2022 (Office of Financial Management, 2023). In addition, Washington state's number of transracial adoptions continues to increase over time. Between 2005 and 2007 and 2017 and 2019, the number of transracial adoptions in Washington grew from 340 to 1,432 (Office of Financial Management, 2023). These data address the increase in transracial adoptions in a state that is predominantly White.

There are many challenges that can arise when raising TRA youth in a less diversified state like Washington. According to an article in the South Seattle Emerald (2018), families of TRA youth reported that what they can offer their TRA Black adolescents is limited, and they hoped to see a community that mirrored and reflected their children to help them navigate shared challenges. Similarly, in the *Washington Post*,

Hatzipanagos (2021) highlighted that TRA youths described how they consistently reflected on the racism they experienced in their community and how it was rarely addressed. The article stated how adoption agencies often took a colorblind or color-evasive stance, signaling to prospective guardians wanting to adopt that race is not needed to be an important consideration when making their decision about adoption (Hatzipanagos, 2021). The experience and reports of adoptees and their families show how certain preparation, training, and conversations need to be available to mitigate some of these impacts on TRA youth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to explore human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption in Washington State. Transracial adoptions continue to grow in the United States and have outgrown same-race adoptions. The increase in transracial adoptions invokes the need to address the overall challenges children and families might have during the process and transition after adoption when navigating the combination of family cultures and the development of the children's racial identities.

Research Question

What are the human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption in Washington State?

Conceptual Framework

The Transracial Adoption program webinars created by the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families (2022) serve as the framework for this study. The

Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families prioritized providing opportunities for continued learning and awareness by ensuring families and caregivers have the support and tools they need to support TRA youth. The Coalition for Children, Youth and Families created webinars in the *Parenting Series* to provide concepts related to the TRA process, such as forming cultural connections, antiracist parenting strategies, discussing culture and race, caring for different types of hair, and navigating as a multicultural family. The Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families expounded that this series is intended to bring a greater awareness of the significance of racial and ethnic identity to a transracial child's healthy development. Their webinars provide the knowledge and information needed for parents involved in, or potentially involved in, TRA. The webinars emphasized the importance of gaining a deeper appreciation of the role they play in raising a child of a different race who feels connected to their culture and who grows to develop a positive self-identity (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, 2022). The webinars demonstrate the kind of foundational learning essential for TRA youth and families, and how it can be encouraged before or during the adoption process.

I chose the Transracial Adoption series because the webinars address multiple aspects of racial identity, including the considerations and knowledge about race and culture needed in a multicultural home, the aspects of race to seek out in their community, and the necessary conversations for addressing race inside and outside the home. The series relates to my study problem by providing a foundation of knowledge for TRA families. Furthermore, this framework provides adoption staff with the tools to

effectively educate parents on the information needed to protect the cultural needs and considerations for TRA youth.

Nature of the Study

To address the research questions in this qualitative study, the approach will include action research. Action research (AR) involves problem-solving and providing information while investigating an issue (Stringer & Aragón, 2021). AR is a research design that employs a cyclical approach, involving invested stakeholders and participants as coresearchers in the development and process of the research (Obershmidt et al., 2022). I will use action research to gather viewpoints from human service professionals who are directly involved in and working within the system to understand the training and resources needed for a successful transracial adoption process. I will recruit adoption staff in Washington State who work with transracial adoptions for individual, semistructured interviews. An interview protocol will be created to collect data to answer the research question. A thematic analysis will be utilized to analyze the data.

Defined Terms

Cultural assimilation: When immigrant groups are encouraged to adopt the culture, values, and social behaviors of their host nation (Soken-Huberty, 2022).

Colorblindness: Refers to individual and systemic discourses and practices that operate under the guise of race-neutrality (Toraif et al., 2023).

Color evasive: Denying the societal experience of race and the existence of racism (Campbell, 2022).

Privacy Turbulence: is a breakdown in the coordination of personal information boundaries with others (“Cases on Organizational Communication and Understanding Understudied Groups,” 2022).

Transracial/ transcultural adoption: A child of one race or ethnic group placed with parent(s) of a different race or ethnic group (Castner et al., 2022).

Significance of the Study

Significance of the Study for Community or Organization

This study is significant in that it addresses the gap in practice on the need for more opportunities for training and resources for parents and guardians involved in the transracial adoption process in Washington State. In Washington state, there has been an increase in transracial adoptions (Office of Financial Management, 2023). The study results are important for the local community or state due to this increase in TRA, showcasing the need for tools around raising their TRA youth from different cultures and races. Currently, there are not enough pre- or post-adoption resources centered around youth and families navigating and developing race and cultural identity at this time (*Washington Foster Care and Adoption Guidelines*, n.d.). These outcomes of the study may be utilized to implement change to address this gap in services for TRA youth and families.

Significance of the Study for Human Services

The findings of this study may provide human service professionals with a structured approach and framework that can be utilized to help prepare youth and families involved in transracial adoption to navigate issues regarding culture and race.

The result of this study has the potential to foster positive social change by providing possible strategies to parents and families that could impact the lives of transracially adoptive youth in a positive way, by equipping families with essential tools and insights related to race when raising their child. The outcomes may also be utilized as a reference or an outline for the larger national or global human services community to improve the consideration of culture and racial identity when it comes to TRA.

Literature Review

Literature Search Strategy

I completed a comprehensive literature review by utilizing scholarly resources provided by the Walden Library. To find literature, the databases used were EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, and PsycINFO. I searched for peer-reviewed scholarly journals only, full text, and with publications within the last 4 years, from 2019 to 2024. When searching for sources, I used the following key terms: *transracial adoption, interracial adoption, racial socialization, and adoption process.*

Conceptual Framework

The Transracial Adoption Program, established by the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families (n.d.), serves as the guiding framework for this study. The Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families explained that this series of webinars is intended to bring a greater awareness of the importance of racial and ethnic identity to a transracial child's healthy development. The webinars cover various topics pertinent to the transracial adoption process, like creating cultural connections, antiracist parenting techniques, having discussions about race, hair care, and navigating as a multicultural

family (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). These equip parents and families with the foundation to prepare and equip themselves with strategies and education to help them in raising children of a different race.

The coalition webinars are facilitated and utilized as resources by clinicians, social workers, agencies, and self-guided parents needing further education on transracial adoption. The transracial parenting series was created in response to families who are parenting children of color, or a child of a race other than their own are realizing more and more that race and culture matter in foster care, kinship care, and adoption (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). The coalition witnessed this growing need and presented this series to families to educate and challenge their own beliefs and biases (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). This series, along with other resources, is available to the public for free and open to be used for education, resources, and guidance.

Transracial Parenting Series: Introduction to Transracial Parenting

The first course is on the introduction to transracial parenting. It provides the foundation for defining both transracial parenting and antiracist parenting and challenges parents to consider and grow in these areas (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). It aims to assist parents in identifying their beliefs and values and how having a child of a different race might change those beliefs, values, and traditions (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). This webinar provides a space for parents to reflect on their privilege, explore strategies for recognizing its role, and plan how they will embrace race and culture.

Cultural Connections: Promoting a Healthy Cultural Identity for Children

The cultural connections course emphasizes the development of a healthy racial and cultural identity. It explores the steps to be aware of and understand race and culture (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). This course aims to increase awareness of cultural humility and our positions on race and ethnicity. It prepares parents to better understand the vital role of racial and cultural identities in a child's development (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). This course helps parents understand that children will need them to help navigate racial bias and other issues that arise when it comes to their children's racial identities.

Next Steps: Foundations for Transracial and Anti-Racist Parenting

The transracial parenting course guides parents through practical approaches. It explores parenting children of a different racial or ethnic background in healthy, productive ways (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). The course describes the words, phrases, and terms specific to racial dialogue within families. The course fosters an understanding of privilege, institutionalized racism, and microaggressions (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). It helps parents establish an antiracist standard of living and how that journey will be for their family.

Discussions about Race and Transracial Families

This course recognizes the responsibilities of parenting a child of a different race and culture. It consists of a recording of adoptive parents and their kids, where they talk openly about their lessons, observations, and experiences around racism (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). A facilitated panel discussion follows with

foster/adoptive parents and adult adoptees. It gives insight into everyday struggles raising a transracially adopted youth and how these issues can be avoided.

Three Dads: A Diversity Conversation

This course highlights the importance of racial and ethnic identity to a child's healthy development. It is a recording of dads exploring race construction in the United States (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). The facilitators and participants discuss the benefits of cultural exchange and examine race, culture, and identity concerning parenting. This gives parents parenting perspectives of the intersectionality of identity regarding their families and their children.

Hair Care and Identity in Black Culture: The Importance of Confidence and Connection

The following course concerns hair care and identity in Black culture, and how they correlate with confidence and connection. Many parents who foster or adopt transracially find themselves needing education in the proper care of hair that may be different than their own (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). This webinar explains hair's historical, social, and emotional importance on Black identity, culture, and self-esteem. The facilitator utilizes haircare education with transracial families as a facilitator for building connections along with celebrating diversity (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). This webinar aims to give context and explain the importance of haircare for black and brown children and how it is an essential part of their culture, racial development, and identity.

Transracial Adoptee Panel

This webinar includes a recorded panel with four adult adoptees who discuss their experiences. Each panelist has a different perspective, whether international, private, or adoption from foster care, and they share both challenges and ways their parents were able to walk beside them on their journey (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). The panel discusses race and racism, and being raised in a transracial adoptive family, and how it has affected them as adults. It provides adoptees with ways to prepare themselves and be mindful of their cultural identity and racial journey.

Antiracist Parenting: Inside Transracial Adoption

This webinar explores how multiracial families thrive, what support is needed, and how to navigate conversations and questions outside the family system. It describes the struggles and difficulties of transracial adoption (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). It discusses steps parents can take to talk to their kids about racism and to go beyond acknowledging racial injustice to celebrating the beauty, creativity, and resilience of our children's racial and cultural heritage (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). It gives context to a child of color being raised in a home with White parents and how to examine oneself as a parent.

Multiracial Families that Thrive

Parenting kids of a different skin color can be challenging. This course elaborates on those challenges, hoping families will utilize these strategies and education to thrive. From teaching kids about their culture to navigating the questions from friends, family, and even strangers, who need support navigating the parenting journey (Coalition for

Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). It aims to help parents be more aware of themselves and their children to create a better environment for their adoptee and their families.

Understanding and Supporting Your Transracial Adoptee

Adoptee perspectives are needed to communicate the experience of transracially adopted youth. In this webinar, a transracially adopted person shares his experiences as a transracial adoptee and presents practical strategies for preparing to foster or adopt transracially (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). The adoptee explores how parents can help their child/youth feel supported, understand bias, encourage positive racial identity development, and engage in conversations about racism and identity. This knowledge prepares parents and equips adoptees with information and conversations that could benefit them in their racial development.

Creating Belonging

This webinar recognizes creating belonging for transracially adopted youth as a fundamental human need. It outlines that adoptees' feeling a sense of belonging can be challenging for the child or youth with adverse childhood experiences, so creating a healthy development depends on their sense of belonging (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). The most significant difference we can make in youth's lives is creating spaces, moments, memories, and relationships of belonging, and this webinar gives ways and strategies for this. Parents will better understand what belonging is, why it is essential, and how they can intentionally implement it to help our children heal.

Themes and Subthemes of Literature Related to Human Services Problem

Guardian Racial Socialization of Adopted Children Who are of a Different Race

Racial socialization can impact how transracial adoptees develop their ethnic and racial identities. Cultural and racial socialization involve experience to the traditions and customs of transracial youths' cultures (Atkin et al., 2022). Racial socialization experiences are different based on the parent's approach. Monoracial standards have been upheld by families and continue to impact transracial children's experiences in the world and the parents' involvement in their socialization (Atkin et al., 2022). Parents mainly acknowledge their children's various racial identities using labels, although most socialize their TRA youth as monoracial minorities (Wu et al., 2021). In addition, some parents only talk about each racial group independently with limited conversation about multiracial experiences and identities (Atkin et al., 2022). This approach to socialization only presets a limited perspective of an adoptees multiracial identity and dismisses the transracial adoptee's full identity.

Parents involved in transracial adoption could choose to not address their child's full racial identity. However, there is a positive correlation between cultural socialization amid adoptive parents who engage in cultural activities and conversations compared to parents who dismiss the adoptees birth identity (Montgomery et al., 2021). International adoption parents tend to have more multiracial and multicultural conversations and experiences and engage in more preparation for multicultural activities with their transracial adoptees (Heiden-Rootes, 2019). The increased availability of transracial adoption support and adoption services were more predominant among transnational

adoptive parents for both pre- and post-adoption and resulted in a positive impact on the transracial adoptees' racial development and socialization (Heiden-Rootes, 2019). This approach to racial and cultural socialization explores the importance of using a holistic lens to understand how parents should approach racial-ethnic socialization and what actions are needed to integrate the multiple racial identities transracial adoptees hold.

Parents with transracially adopted children need to have a readiness to engage in their child's racial growth to assist in their child's well-being. Parents have the responsibility of identifying what is needed for their child's healthy racial development, both inside and outside the home. Transracially adopted youth need to have friends or a community that shares their background (Simon et al., 2021). It is encouraged to seek culturally relevant reading, move to attend a racially/culturally diverse neighborhood, participate in ethnic holidays, prepare culturally relevant foods, participate in recreational activities, and choose childcare providers who reflect the adopted child are also necessary for the development of transracially adopted youth (Simon et al., 2021). Parents may approach the multicultural identity in their adolescents and as a family with elements like interracial identities, environment, geographical location, and the multicultural interracial family background (Wu et al., 2021). These practices may create a better relationship between families and adoptees.

Some parents and guardians participate in a different approach when navigating socialization, with some parents and families not connecting with the adoptee's birth culture and not viewing the mentioned practices as a necessity for healthy growth. Parents may believe that their children could face several life circumstances involving

racial issues if they raise them to be strong, confident individuals, with their culture being created by the families who develop and raise them instead of where the adoptees were born (Breshears, 2021). Integrating their child's birth culture seemed to concern some parents, and they believed culturally socializing their TRA children to the culture they were born into would emphasize their differences from their nonadopted relatives (Breshears, 2021). Many adoptive parents are unfamiliar with their children's culture of origin, while others resist prioritizing cultural socialization in their family life (Zhang et al., 2023). This lack of socialization of their children's multiple racial identities could lead to higher levels of depressive and externalizing symptoms and a lack of belonging in and outside the home (Schires et al., 2020). There can be a disconnect in transracial adoptees' cultural and racial socialization if it is not prioritized or communicated in their racial development.

Guardians of transracial adoptees' own cultural identity affects their child's formation of their identity. Colorblindness and Whiteness are concepts that continue through parenting based on the parents' perspectives when parenting the adoptees (Brun, 2022). Whiteness is explained as explicit and subconscious socialization practices and processes, systems, laws, privileges, and experiences in life that support the White racial group above all other groups (Schooley et al., 2019). Colorblindness suggests that individual and systemic structures function beneath the pretense of race-neutrality (Toraif et al., 2023). Prior socialization and colorblind temperaments that have been assumed and adopted by families prior to the adoption may be unchanged by the involvement and experience of transracial child-rearing (Brun, 2022). Transracial adoptees report that their

experiences associated with adoption and race growing up considerably affected their identity and how they navigated the world as TRA children (Reynolds et al., 2021). This is an important position to be aware of when considering parenting decisions regarding socialization and approaching their transracially adopted children's racial development.

Transracial adoptees' upbringing and development around racial socialization can continue to impact them as adults. Therefore, the presence or absence of multicultural and multiracial identity domestically, and how it serves as a foundation for cultural socialization for transracial adoptees, is significant for adoptees' socialization (Wu et al., 2021). Parents' engagement and teaching of racial socialization and their experiencing of racial bias for their adopted children proved to help mitigate discrimination and mental health struggles (Schires et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of providing education and teaching how essential racial socialization is for transracially adopted youth and their families.

Parents need education to give them the tools and knowledge to facilitate and build cultural connections and further racial development for their transracially adopted children. There have been increased links between cultural events and familial gratification regarding cultural activities, adoption, and close attachment with the child, and cultural events and academic results (Montgomery et al., 2021). Connections to their culture may provide groundwork for adoptees to follow their identity development journey as youth (Zhang et al., 2023). Montgomery et al. (2021) emphasized that the techniques to successfully encourage racial socialization between adoptive parents, such as engaging in cultural events and activities, were found to guide phases of child

development involving educational performance. Parents can use the racial community in which the transracially adopted youth is born to assist in the development of the adoptee's racial identity. Cultural connection can be beneficial to the development of transracially adopted youths' racial socialization.

Adoptee Formation of Racial/Cultural Identity

It is imperative to understand better how multiracial individuals navigate and form meanings of racial socialization and identities within their multiracial families. Multinational adoption can affect the development of an adoptee's identity and overall formation for a TRA adopted youth (Cloonan et al., 2023). The adoptees explained their difficulty when selecting a racial label or checking a box picking their race in the U.S. Census form, because a lot of them felt that they were of mixed races that are not integrated in the provided answers to demographic surveys of the United States (Cloonan et al., 2023). Adoptees often explained the lengthy foundation of experienced contradictions, having ambivalence, aside from exclusion and otherness when navigating their racial identity (Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2023). Parents need to be aware that, when adoptees are pressured into feeling that they have to assimilate into their families' dominant culture, it may lead to them suppressing aspects of their racial identity to be accepted, which may negatively affect their racial and cultural formation.

The idea that transracially adopted children can be raised without acknowledging their race is proving to be harmful, as race and culture are essential to their development and identity. Ahuriri-Driscoll et al. (2023) interviewed transracially adopted individuals in New Zealand and found that adoptees spoke explicitly about the effects of their

socialization within their White-European household, amid numerous internalizing their adoptive family's perception of them as "honorary Whites." They recalled times "feeling White" and their identities being interrupted by statements of others or when they viewed themselves in family photos (Ahuriri-Driscoll et al., 2023). Adoptees may feel they do not belong, caught between almost sameness and almost otherness (Wyver, 2021). The cultural practices of transracially adopted, adoptive parents are dominant and have little to no cultural practices of their birth parents (Hartlep et al., 2023). These experiences and perspectives should be discussed with parents ahead of time when choosing to adopt transracially. Parents should be equipped to support their child in learning about their racial identity, their cultural tradition, how they could find community and belonging, and recognize the preexisting presence of racial prejudice and how to cope with it.

When exploring what is needed to develop a healthy racial and cultural identity in transracial adoptees, examining what adoptees are exposed to and what resources are available to support their cultural identity is essential. There is a prevalence of Western cultural values and silence when it comes to discussions about race within multiracial families and the experience of discrimination and racism (Robinson et al., 2021). Adoptees may have to rely on other adoptees' perspectives or literature to better understand their experience. Sun (2021) analyzed 36 contemporary realistic picture books about transracial Chinese adoption and how the books portrayed the complexities of transnational adoption, revealing discourse about transracial Chinese adoption that provoked dialogue about sociocultural identities, power dynamics, choices, and how children are positioned. The literature continued to include some troubling assumptions,

oversimplifications, and distortions about Chinese adoption (Sun, 2021). The harmful ideologies and stereotypes held in literature not only about Chinese transracial adoptees, but also about other races and cultures, may often be the only point of reference for adoptees to understand their cultural identity.

Furthermore, the narratives that exist within families are just as impactful as the narratives that assist in the racial and cultural development of transracially adopted youth. Adoption is seen as a generous deed, connecting adoptees to their “forever family,” which signifies the biological family to a past that has been overcome, minimal, or ultimately concluded (Laybourn, 2024). This narrative creates a disconnect between children and their birthplace. This narrative may result in adoptees' racial identity lying with their birth parents (Hartlep et al., 2023). This narrative must be explained to parents wanting to participate in transracial adoption. It can result in adoptees distancing themselves from the part of themselves that they are told has ended. This may create incongruence within their identity formation further in life.

A part of navigating adoption and the formation of their child's racial and cultural identity for families is navigating information about their adoptee's biological family and the adoption process. This is especially important to consider in a transracial adoption household when there are different racial identities present. Parents may benefit from an extended understanding about the importance of using narrative processes with families that have chosen to adopt to explain language and how it is utilized to define how adoptees may perceive the adoption process, their experiences, and situations (Canzi et al., 2021). Adoptive parents' openness regarding adoption may adversely predict TRAs'

concern and apprehension with adoption (Suter et al., 2022). Parental narratives highlight the intricacy and unpredictability of meaning-making in the adoption process (Canzi et al., 2021). The way that parents understand and communicate the adoption process is important for transracial adoptees to understand how they may define adoption.

Adoptees' racial and cultural formation can be impacted by their parents, education, environment, and interests, allowing them to explore their identity. For some, their racial identity lies with their birth parents (Hartlep et al., 2023). However, other transracial families find success in choosing one aspect of their adoptee's birth culture, like the adoptee's language. Luyt et al. (2023) studied the loss of language among internationally adopted children experience in South Africa and the efforts parents make to facilitate learning their native language and found that the adoptive families acknowledged the necessary requisite for their TRA children to have the opportunity to talk with their racial community and contemplated supporting their adopted children in understanding the African language as well as learn an African language themselves. Families with younger kids are more persistent about their intent to educate their adoptees concerning the language connected with their biological family (Luyt et al., 2023). People with older children are more inclined to favor what is realistic or possible (Luyt et al., 2023). Adoptees who know their birth culture and language may use this information to positively create their racial identity. Language can be a start, but it is vital to encourage the immersion of transracial adoptees to be educated about their birth culture and not be raised to reject one racial identity over the other. Their whole identity needs to be acknowledged.

When examining what is needed to help transracially adopted youth form their racial and cultural identity, families should understand the overall trauma that comes along with adoption, specifically adoption into a family of a different race. Transracially adopted youth navigate among states of recognition, rejection, assimilation, and embrace their cultural identities, like the grief process (Sasson, 2024). This can be addressed by education inside and outside the home, and giving parents resources to utilize in the development of their transracially adopted youth. When it comes to systemically managing and tackling trauma, it can involve utilizing combined and shared nonverbal language that is vital in assisting TRAs discover their identity using culturally appropriate methods and methods in art psychotherapy (Morrison-Derbyshire, 2023). Art-based research and therapy could address adoptees' challenges in forming their cultural identities (Sasson, 2024). These different forms of expression and education can be used to assist families who want to transracially adopt and give their adoptees the tools to help them process themselves.

There are positive impacts on transracial adoptees' racial and cultural identity when transracial adoptees have the opportunity to be around transracially adopted individuals from the exact birthplace, or within the community, of the adoptee's birthplace. Adoptees report that first-family influences, a pilot between their different families, and the reclamation of their identities were matters involved when reuniting with their families and being around their culture (Branco et al., 2022). Transnational adoptees reconfigured and reclaimed their family constellations and identities (Branco et al., 2022). Myers et al. (2020) examined the experience of transracial adoptees who

gathered in their birthplace, Hong Kong, with other adoptees and found that participants reported greater ease with their Hong Kong identities after their visit. Adoptees explained that the return to Hong Kong had affected their perceptions and emotions about Hong Kong, their cultural and racial identity, and adoption overall by gaining experiences and emotions while meeting and connecting with other adoptees (Myers et al., 2020).

Allowing adoptees the opportunity to be exposed to their birthplace and their cultural community is essential to their racial identity. It may positively impact how they view themselves and their place of origin.

Impacts of Transracial Adoption on Adoptees

Adoptee Experiences of Racial Discrimination. Transracial adoption may involve adoptees having to navigate microaggressions and discrimination. Adoptive families and their adopted children may experience microaggressions regarding their adoption label, country of origin, and racial identity (Miller et al., 2020). There are some adoptive guardians who do not acknowledge the significance of race (Reynolds et al., 2024). Parents tended to have high awareness of the adoption microaggressions and racial microaggressions that they experienced from others; yet this awareness did not exclude them from committing racial microaggressions and adoption microaggressions within their transracially adoptive family (Baden et al., 2024). These experiences of adoptees describe the discrimination they can experience in and outside of their homes.

Adoptees may need help understanding their experiences and challenges with racism, discrimination, and their intersectional identities within their households. Many adoptees report a color-blind outlook and attitude from their adoptive families, with

adoptive parents explaining that they “raised them to be White” (Reynolds et al., 2024). The color-blind approach utilized by parents seemed to devalue the participants’ race and culture of origin, and they felt this as they grew up (Reynolds et al., 2024). This internalized racism diminished the correlation between age-related development and ethnic-racial identity clarity (Wu et al., 2023). This approach shows the discrimination adoptees experience in addition to the structures in which that discrimination can occur.

Adoptee Experiences of Familial/Cultural Belonging. The transition into a new family and forming secure attachments with parents is an important aspect of a transracial adoptee’s development. Peñarrubia et al. (2023) examined attachment representations that adoptees had in their adolescence and found that adoptees were dismissing, secure, inattentive, and disorganized in how they represented attachment. Many adoptees experienced struggles considering attachment shown in adolescence, and following adulthood, rather than during their youth (Winkenweder et al., 2022). Attachment for adopted children is a continuous journey, and support agencies consider its impact and the need for support when providing and developing services (Winkenweder et al., 2022). It is important to consider how this transition can be better supported for families in the adoption process and how they can better prepare for attachment struggles.

The relationships and attachments adoptees build and form within their families are essential to how they form belonging within their transracially adopted families. Adoptees describe challenges for both them and their adoptive parents regarding the creation and familiarity of attachment. This example can be seen when children are adopted when they are older, and their racial or cultural experience is different from that

of their adoptive parents (Winkenweder et al., 2022). Neil et al. (2023) found mainly supportive and positive connections and relationships within the adoptive family, frequently demonstrating key themes of communion, love, and closeness despite struggles that would arise. This positive perspective of adoptees' views of their families can have a positive impact on their identity and development as they navigate being adopted. It is important for parents to know how to strengthen relationships between themselves and adoptees to better prepare, grow, and maintain a healthy attachment with their transracially adopted youth.

Adoptee Mental Health Struggles. Mental health struggles and substance abuse can increase among transracial adoptees. Transracial and international adoptees are at a greater risk of disorders involving substances than nonadopted children and adolescents (Baden et al., 2022). The adoptees experience unique and distinct stressors related to the pre- and post-adoption period (Baden et al., 2022). Adoptees explained that they experience a chain of challenging and stressful life events centered around struggling with unresolved traumas/losses (Neil et al., 2023). Adopted children may experience more psychological and behavioral difficulties, and these need to be addressed to better support them in their development and adulthood.

It is essential to address how children can go through the adoption process and the possibility that they may have mental health needs. There is a higher probability of mental health problems post-adoption (Olsen, 2022). Furthermore, adoptees at 1-year-old and older all have a considerably greater likelihood of psychiatric contact than adoptees who have been adopted before 1-year-old (Olsen, 2022). Mental health and attachment

vulnerabilities can linger into adulthood, affecting their romantic relationships and friendships (Despax et al., 2022). It is imperative to recognize the longstanding impacts adoption can have on adoptees so that the services can better equip adoptees and parents for the adoption process and mitigate mental health struggles by connecting them with the right resources and education.

Adoption can cause adoptees to experience an elevated risk for some mental health struggles and externalized disorders like ADHD or OCD, affecting people from childhood into adulthood. This may be a result of negative experiences related to an adoptee's experience in their adoption journey. Adverse experiences and community support may affect adoptive children's happiness in life (Ahn, 2020). Adopted children may describe feeling different and misunderstood by their peers (Miller et al., 2020). It is important to communicate to adoptees how to navigate these potential negative experiences before they occur and provide strategies for how to navigate through them.

Parents' Navigation of Transracial Adoption. There are many aspects of how parents navigate and approach transracial adoption that should be considered to create positive outcomes and experiences for transracially adopted youth. This can be examined through how parents view adoption. Some parents reported being unwilling, concerned, and mindful but cautious and purposeful when considering and approaching adoption (Goldberg et al., 2022). The belief in humanitarianism as a way to view adoption is a prominent view inside TRA populations in the United States (Goss, 2022). Some families viewed their family as a humanitarian project in three common ways: (a) choosing to remake the belief of adoption of transracial youth as humanitarianism for them personally

(b) helping them to rediscover themselves and their familial stories about adoption apart from humanitarianism, and (c) actively battling the humanitarian parts of transracial adoption overall (Goss, 2022). When answering what motivated families to adopt, infertility was most commonly named as the motivating cause in parents' adoption decision (Bergquist, 2021). Transracial family members have various perspectives on how they view and understand transracial adoption, and it is important to name these beliefs and adjust them for the development of their children.

Transracially adoptive families and parents' experiences and attitudes to navigating their children's different intersections are another important aspect to consider when considering how parents navigate and approach transracial adoption. It is the TRA parents' duty to deliver ethnic-racial socialization practices to support adoptive children's identity development and equip them to cope with bias and discrimination with both adoption and race (Pinderhughes et al., 2021). Goldberg et al. (2022) examined White parents and their parenting to their transracially adopted Black children. Goldberg et al. found that the contemporary White-identifying parents were constrained to the "White racial frame" of thinking, and the younger parents or parents with children who only have one racial identity were able to easily translate the complexities involved with raising an adopted Black child to be more meaningful when it came to action and understanding. Parents would benefit from thinking about their intentions and driving force to raise a transracially adopted youth and all its complexities to be better prepared and support the youth.

The navigation of adoption is an ongoing process and depends on continued learning. TRA parents' absence of a shared cultural heritage and history with their adopted children may result in limited experience navigating adoption identity formation and racial discrimination. This may result in families doing more work in supporting their adoptees by gaining more education and strategies in their approach with adoption and recognizing what influenced and nuanced their approach to parenting (Pinderhughes et al., 2021). Adoptive families reported strategies including demonstrating and mentoring; the genuine communication of their cultural background through family; and being overt cultural language in school, traveling to their children's birthplaces, and providing access to communities with other adoptees (Bergquist, 2021). Parents need to consider their responsibility to help develop and grow their children's identity and what strategies and interventions are available to them before and during the adoption process.

When considering parents' navigation of transracial adoption, utilizing the adoptee's birth culture and background is mentioned frequently. Education towards the policy and legal structure of transracial adoption impacts decisions for placement, support and preparation offered after placements, and issues surfaced by adoption practitioners; and the support for transracial adoptions (Luyt et al, 2023). Evidence of parents developing rules and criteria for instruction formation in the organization of their adoptees personal information propose methods that transracial parents might be able to evade their children's birth information boundaries being crossed (Morr et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to recognize how parents plan to approach birth information

and privacy with their children to know what past or cultural information will be integrated, communicated, or used to their adoptees.

When parents are better prepared for managing privacy information for adoptees, it may result in a smoother transitioning process. Parents communicated at least one change regarding their youth's private adoption-related knowledge over time (Simon et al., 2022). The catalysts that prompt these changes may include the adoptees development formation, the parent or guardians' lived experience, and privacy turbulence (Simon et al., 2022). Privacy turbulence, also known as boundary turbulence, is a breakdown in the coordination of personal information boundaries with others ("Cases on Organizational Communication and Understanding Understudied Groups," 2022). Parents reported various motivations for privacy management (Simon et al., 2022). Expressive need and preventing hurt often represented the predominant postchange motivations reported (Simon et al., 2022). Parents not being prepared and thinking though how they will navigate adoption and their child's birth information were more susceptible to boundary rule mistakes and obstacles, that led to an increased number of instances of turbulence (Morr et al., 2022). There is a lot of consideration and decision making that comes with transracial adoption, and if these aspects of adoption are not discussed and prepared for, they could have lasting effects on adoptees.

Transracial Adoption and Prevalence in Literature and Media. Transracial adoption can be influenced by transracial adoptees and transracial families through media outlets and adoption literature. For many adoptees, seeing adoption through what they watch and read could be one of the first times that they see their life experience reflected.

Adoptees express the need to see themselves reflected in main characters from books and movies to grow a strong feeling of self-worth and authenticity (Kleinbardt et al., 2024). Families may feel that these outlets depict how much culture and race can be involved in their adoptee's identity and life. how similar their bonds with their children were to the clips, and how important it is to maintain a learning spirit when involved in transracial adoption (Moss et al., 2024). What adoptees get exposed to is important to consider when raising a transracial adoptee, and being aware of what narratives and experiences about adoption they are exposed to.

The way that media and literature depict transracial adoption can affect the way parents view getting a child of a different race, and it may feed into stereotypes that exist about having minority children. Media coverage largely downplays the significance of race in the adoption process (Kirton, 2020). There was a perspective in the media that critiqued deracialization through ethnic matching, along with equally racializing the broader field of adoption to exaggerate its adverse impact (Kirton, 2020). Implicit racial bias may predict the disposition to adopt Black children and the attitudes held when placing Black foster children with potential families (Bell et al., 2023). Implicit bias contributes to various aspects of racial disparities outside of explicit bias, including how implicit bias has a greater effect than explicit bias on families wanting to adopt a Black child when it comes to potential adoptee parents (Bell et al., 2023). Parents must have an understanding of transracial adoption to educate and communicate to their adopted children what is accurate and what may be understood as biased information in media and literature.

Families considering transracial adoption should consider the racial stereotypes, barriers, and biases that exist in media and literature about adoption. This consideration may be apparent with the adoption of Black children. In the adoption system Black children are often underrepresented, with the probability of adoption for Black children being one-third lower than that for their White counterparts (Cho et al., 2023). The narrative about Black children communicated in the media may affect the adoptees involved in transracial adoption. Adoptees report experiencing long-standing fluctuations of emotions, both negative and positive, in their efforts to seek information related to their adoption narratives, which resulted in various emotions surfacing for adoptees (Branco, 2021). Certain narratives can affect minority adoptees to have to see specifics about their adoption process from a negative perspective, making it beneficial for parents to be aware and mitigate it before exposure to media and literature portrayals and definitions happen.

Summary

This section introduced the social problem and local problem that showed what can help benefit adoptees and their families in preparation for developing their adoptees racial and cultural identity. It defined the purpose of the study and the research question. The first section included the nature of the study, defined terms, and significance of the study for both the community or organizations involved and human services.

The literature review was included in this section, including the search strategy and conceptual framework. The Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families Transracial Parenting series was the conceptual framework chosen to bring a greater awareness of the

importance of racial and ethnic identity to a transracial child's healthy development (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, n.d.-b). Section 1 defined transracial adoption and the experience of what both parents and adoptees may experience and how these different experiences can be affected by different approaches and decisions. The introduction outlined the approaches that can benefit adoptees and their families in preparation for developing their adoptees racial and cultural identity. This section highlighted the transracial parenting framework that can be utilized to educate and prepare potential families. The framework showed that educating families and challenging their own beliefs and biases can help their children navigate the challenges they will face (Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, 2022). Understanding what transracial adoption is, its impact, and how parents can prepare themselves by integrating this framework and utilizing approaches that have been linked to success in adoptees development may be beneficial for adoptees and families.

The themes presented in the literature review focused on the many factors to consider when raising and developing a transracial adoptee. Both the history of adoption and a cultural identity are connected with risks associated to health and protecting factors for behavior, educational, and social outcomes (Castner, 2022). Parents need to know the impact of adoption, being part of a family from a different race, and how they navigate both identities for their adoptees. Scholars have described how imperative it is to an adoptee's growth and development of their racial and cultural identities that families help in their socialization and educate them on how to socialize them effectively (Reynolds, 2021). TRA youth and adolescents can be susceptible to increased risks to their identity

development and mental health due to microaggressions and racism (Branco, 2022). Adoptees and families must have the space and be given the tools and education to prepare themselves for the journey and process for transracial adoption.

The adoption process and experience of adoptees portrayed through media, literature, and other forms have been shown to impact the adoptees and their families negatively or positively. Literature and media do not always accurately portray adoptees and their experiences (Park, 2009). Clarifying the importance for parents to be aware of this ahead of time and share the narratives and education adoptees need to process their experience better is essential. The next section will describe the project design and plan for researching the resources needed for adoptive parents of transracial children to employ in learning related to the ethnicity and race of their TRA children. The section will break down the different components of the methodology of the research.

Section 2: The Project

Introduction

Section 2 will explain the project design and methods including the role the researcher will play, known biases, participant recruitment and sampling strategy, and data collection. The data analysis plan will be outlined in this section along with ethical considerations that are considered in data collection. The ethical considerations will describe the treatment of data and participants involved.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this modified action research study is to explore human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption in Washington State. Transracial adoptions continue to grow in the United States and have outgrown same-race adoptions (Office of Financial Management, 2023). The increase of transracial adoptions invokes the need to address the overall challenges children and families might have during the process and transition after adoption when navigating the combining of family cultures and the development of the children's racial identities.

Project Design

Appendix A includes the study's white paper. The white paper outlines a detailed analysis of the data, shares findings and conclusions, and provides recommendations for human service professionals on potential services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoptees and their families (Walden University, n.d.). It summarizes the stakeholders' recommendations to address the practice problem and

communicate the social change needed. The purpose of the white paper is to identify a gap in practice to help human service professionals address a social problem or make a decision about their beliefs or positions on the issue presented (Walden University, n.d.). It is a way for other human service professionals to gain an understanding of the lack of cultural education and interventions for transracial families by concisely advocating for culturally competent resources (Ordway, 2022). It will communicate to human service professionals the importance of educating and supporting transracial families in addressing issues related to culture and race. My white paper can inform advocacy for transracial adoptees and their adoptive families to receive culturally relevant interventions and resources that could benefit their overall development and transition. It includes perspectives and recommendations from stakeholders and human services professionals in the adoption field in Washington. It may encourage readers to see the gap in services for transracial adoptees as a problem that should be assessed regarding how prepared families and adoptees are for the racial and cultural journey intertwined in adoption.

Methods

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a role in the research process and data analysis. The role of the researcher is to be the central instrument in all phases of the research process, including being responsible for collecting and analyzing data (Pyo et al., 2023). My responsibility as the researcher is to collect and interpret the data. In that process, I must recruit participants using social media to find the right human services

professionals willing to participate in the study. My role as a researcher included establishing rapport with participants, conducting interviews, and analyzing the collected data. This further included recording the interview and transcribing it for further interpretation and analysis.

When considering my role as a researcher, I had to address bias and preconceived ideas about the study. Research bias refers to any step in the research process that leads to results or conclusions that are consistently different from the actual truth. This includes aspects like the design, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of the research (Yarborough, 2021). Bias can occur in the planning of research, data collection, and analysis (Florczak, 2021). The presence of bias and its potential to affect the study must be addressed and mitigated in a qualitative research study.

As the researcher, it was important to acknowledge my professional experience as a mental health therapist working with transracial adoptees. My work experience and the history of hearing feedback from adoptees and their families could influence how I interpret the participants' answers and perspectives. I planned to mitigate bias by bracketing, an approach that requires a researcher to address and object to their prejudices and judgments about the occurrence (Habibullah et al., 2023). The bracketing experiences are recorded in the research journal and continued throughout the research study, as suggested by Thomas and Sohn (2023). Bracketing will allow me to gather observations and integrate them into my ongoing journal, which I will keep until the conclusion of the research to document continuing perceptions about data and self-discovery. Employing

this approach is essential to minimize the influence of researcher bias and ensure a more accurate representation of data and participants' perspectives.

Participant Recruitment and Sampling Strategy

The population recruited was human services professionals working in or partnered with an adoption agency in Washington state. The specific individuals that researchers need to study are defined as the target population (Hossan et al., 2023). Participants pulled from this sample are a representation of the target population (Sirwan, 2024). Researchers determine the sampling frame to identify individuals to participate in a study (Hossan et al., 2023). Recruiting professionals and stakeholders who work within an adoption agency ensured participants had a standard level of consideration for adoption perspectives and practice in the adoption process's strengths and growth areas.

In this qualitative study, purposive sampling was the technique utilized to obtain participants. In purposive sampling, participants are selected by the researcher based on their expected contribution to obtaining the required data to answer the research question (Sirwan, 2024). Normally, this method is used in research involving specific individuals with specific expertise or characteristics (Noor et al., 2022). I obtained potential participants through social media communities related to transracial adoption in Washington state. I selected this method to locate populations that have a specific expertise related to answering the research question and could provide the relevant insights needed for the study.

I stated the inclusion criteria to ensure that the study participants are well-suited for the study. Studies have eligibility criteria that incorporate both exclusion and

inclusion criteria (Capili, 2021). The criteria for participants to participate in my study were being at least 18 years old, living in Washington state, and holding current or past employment as a human services professional, within the past 10 years, working in or partnered with an adoption agency in Washington state, with relevant experience working with transracially adopted youth and families. The criteria that excluded participants involve characteristics of potential participants who meet the inclusion criteria but have circumstances that may affect the study's results (Capili, 2021). Exclusion of participants would include those who have not worked with or partnered with an adoption agency or been involved in the process for more than 10 years. It was essential for me to ensure participants had relevant, up-to-date information and insight into the transracial adoption process in Washington state to ensure the study's success.

I proposed interviewing 10 to 15 participants for the study. In a qualitative study, a modestly small and carefully selected sample may be used to achieve greater depth of understanding for human service professionals and experts in the field (Campbell et al., 2020). It was important that the sample size aligns with the specific theoretical frameworks, research questions, and the target population, suggesting a recommended 10-15 participants to provide sufficient identified themes and depth to the study.

The sample size should align with the specific research questions, theoretical frameworks, and the diversity of the target population; a suggested number of 10–15 participants was recommended, as these numbers can provide sufficient depth to identify key themes (Ahmed, 2024). I focused on recruiting up to 12 participants to ensure I had a sufficient number to achieve saturation and collect rich data.

I used social media to post a recruitment message about my study, the criteria for participants, and how to message me for further details. Using social media to advertise various research opportunities and recruit participants enables and facilitates access for participants from broad geographical areas and diverse populations (Darko et al., 2022). Once the participant contacted me, I explained the purpose of the study and the interview process, informed them that a gift card would be provided for participation, and obtained informed consent to ensure they understood their rights as participants, as suggested by Capili (2021). When a participant indicated interest, I sent a follow-up email to determine their eligibility. Once I had determined that they met the study criteria, I obtained informed consent by getting a response stating that they consented.

In qualitative research, saturation is a common guiding principle for purposive samples (Hennik & Kaiser, 2022). When used in research, saturation serves as a keystone notion that indicates that data collection ends once no new themes or patterns develop (Ahmed, 2024). Saturation is essential for attaining methodological rigor, bolstering the comprehensiveness and credibility of my research findings. Data saturation was achieved when there were no recurring themes or patterns, and new participants did not provide any significantly new insights or information.

Data Collection

I created an interview protocol that contained semistructured interviews with participants to collect the data. According to Crabtree and Miller (2022), interviews are a particular qualitative data gathering process designed to generate narratives that focus on interview questions. The semistructured interview approach enabled me to clarify

questions or probe to gain more information in the interview while staying on track (Ruslin et al., 2022). I used this approach to provide participants with the opportunity to answer questions and express their views and perspectives freely.

I formed this interview protocol by considering my research study, the field and culture my participants were in, and what questions would help further the themes and patterns needed for clarity and saturation. The interview protocol (Appendix C) was created following Crabtree and Miller's (2022) approach to data collection and steps to developing an interview process. The interview protocol provided a framework for the interview and allowed me to examine in-depth into the volunteer's interview responses (Jordan et al., 2021). The complete interview to transcription process included a sequence of intently created steps that mapped out the research (Crabtree & Miller, 2022). I used this interview protocol as a foundation to gather data and information from the participants for my study.

Content validity of the interview protocol was established by me asking other professionals in the field to look at the protocol and offer feedback. The protocol proved to be more trustworthy when more evidence was gathered to support its development or choice of questions (Jordan et al., 2021). Using a subject-matter expert who has specialist skills, knowledge, and experience in the field allowed me to receive relevant and accurate reviews and feedback on my study (Curry, 2022). I used this process of content validity to ensure my interview protocol was understood by my participants and provided the necessary information to gain insight.

I used an expert panel to review my interview protocol to ensure content validity and provide a focused and systematized approach to gathering reliable information from participants during the interview process. It was important for researchers to review literature and pursue feedback from experts in the field to use their expertise to create interview questions (Jordan et al., 2021). Indication of content validity could be gathered using qualitative and/or quantitative methods and was commonly based on the judgment and decisions of people considered professionals from the field of study being directed (Dinnesen et al., 2020). My expert panel consisted of human service professionals with specialized knowledge in the social and human services field. One of the panelists had a master's in social work and worked professionally with transracial adoptees and families in family therapy settings. Two panelists had a master's in social work and conducted home studies for the state in preparation for foster and adoption placements. The expert panel emailed minor revisions regarding my interview protocol. The revisions advised me to change certain words to communicate my questions better to participants. Most of the feedback explained that I had adequate questions, and the questions were broad enough to obtain valuable information.

Semistructured interviews were conducted one time for an hour. Data was collected, recorded, and stored using Zoom, a video conferencing software, followed by backing the videos up on a flash drive. Transcription included the complex process of interpreting oral dialogue to written language and creating a text for later analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 2022). Manual transcribing facilitated efficient coding and thematic analysis because of the in-depth familiarization and immersion of data (Khan &

MacEachen, 2022). This evaluation process was used to guarantee the quality of the recording and interview, as well as any underlying intentions, potential miscommunications, and new revelations (Crabtree & Miller, 2022). I transcribed the interviews live using Zoom and verified the transcriptions' accuracy by watching the video and making necessary corrections.

In the follow-up after the interviews had taken place, I emailed participants thanking them for their participation, sent them the transcript of their interviews, and allowed them to make revisions. Study participants wanted to be thanked for their participation in research and reported finding value in the acknowledgement and the effort shown by researchers after they had been involved (Corneli et al., 2021). It was imperative that researchers reflect on the research framework in which the research was commenced in order to provide sufficient contextual understanding for the reader including explanations of findings, processes, and approaches of analysis (Dunwoodie et al., 2022). I followed up the conclusion of the participants' involvement in the study by sending the participants their gift card, sending the transcript, asking them to verify that I accurately captured their ideas, and then sending them the white paper after the study was completed.

Data Analysis Plan

The process of a thematic analysis, as explained by Saldana (2016), was used to analyze my data and codes. This method involved cycles I followed to interpret the research data. According to Saldaña's process to conduct a thematic analysis of the data,

the first cycle was to identify codes in the data. The first cycle of coding approached the research with inductive coding. This coding method allowed codes to be developed directly from the data rather than being predetermined (Saldaña, 2016). This approach allowed the data to inform the analysis process (Saldaña, 2016). After I transcribed the data, I imported the interview transcripts into Microsoft Word where I broke down the data and formed codes.

Cycle 2 involved reassessing and redefining the codes established in the first cycle. The cycle of coding involved pattern coding. Pattern coding was a way that a researcher could group summaries of codes into a more narrow and smaller number of sets or constructs (Saldaña, 2016). When creating codes to categories, I needed to synthesize the collective codes into a consolidated meaning (Saldaña, 2016). This was where I dove deeper into the categories by systematically developing labels that were descriptive and interpretive.

After forming and examining codes, the researcher categorized them according to commonality and in order of their possible groupings and relationships (Saldaña, 2016). This moved beyond the surface-level descriptive labeling process, calling for a more organized approach to grouping codes, aiming to find a common premise or idea among them to place them in categories (Saldaña, 2016). This cycle of reevaluating and rethinking codes when developing more specific categories revealed meaningful connections and nuances in the data. The categories were used to develop overarching themes that connected to form a consistent story about the data (Saldaña, 2016). In

analyzing data, themes contained ideas of behavior within a culture, descriptions for why something occurs, beliefs from participant narratives, and important knowledge from the information gathered (Saldaña, 2016). I developed themes from categories by synthesizing the recurring patterns in the categories into more abstract themes, capturing what was happening within the data.

The software that I utilized to conduct part of the data analysis process was Excel. Excel is a common tool for navigating, managing, and evaluating data in many businesses due to its functionality and availability (Mahmud et al., 2024). Using Excel, I created a format to organize frequent terms, patterns, or optical elements and labeled these elements as keywords. This allowed me to choose the appropriate keywords and citations, then code and establish them into groupings based on their shared features.

When completing my data analysis, I was prepared for an outlier or any discrepant cases in the organization coding of data. An outlier can be explained as data appearing as inconsistent, or that deviates drastically from other data (Nowak-Brzezińska & Łazarz, 2021). Researchers must review outliers to determine if it is significant, represents a valuable perspective, or should be a subtheme (Guest et al., 2020). In my findings, I mentioned significant outliers and outlined how they could provide an unaddressed point in data and recommendations for future research.

Ethical Considerations for Data Collection

Ensuring I always considered ethics and protocols for data collection, I did not collect anything from participants without receiving informed consent. The concept of

informed consent was developed to help create study relationships and connections that were built on trust and honesty while also guarding people's autonomy to participate in research (Klykken, 2022). This process was ongoing and involved three main components: delivering relevant information to prospective participants, confirming competence of the individual, and confirming that the information was easily understood, while also guaranteeing that participation was voluntary (Dongre, 2023). I ensured that participants agreed to informed consent, and I received institutional review board (IRB) approval by submitting a description of data sources before beginning the process.

A part of informed consent and ethical considerations was protecting participants and ensuring confidentiality. While researchers interview vulnerable participants on guarantees of confidentiality, sensitive topics, and privacy, researchers aimed to obtain honest, dependable feedback and responses (Dougherty, 2022). Anonymization in qualitative research involved removing the names of volunteers, participants, or research sites, and not incorporating contexts that could cause participants or research sites to be known (Itzik & Walsh, 2023). I removed identifiable details in transcripts and data collection to preserve confidentiality for my participants along with uploading my files on a flash drive that was kept in a locked compartment.

In my data collection and recruitment process, I wanted to mitigate any ethical concerns associated with recruitment processes and materials. I followed ethical codes and guidelines used by IRB to regulate research conducted with participants (Taquette et al., 2022). During an interview in qualitative research, assurances of confidentiality,

voluntary contribution, privacy, incentive requirements and background, decision to opt out, and avoiding mismanagement of results were ethical considerations that needed to be observed by the researcher (Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). While prioritizing informed consent, in-depth explanations about incentives, confidentiality, and the overall wellbeing of my participants prioritized upholding a safe and private data collection process.

I gathered and stored my research data electronically. It was important that electronic data were gathered on a private, authorized server and were not transferred by means of unencrypted portable media tools like thumb drives (Dhudasia et al., 2023). All activities related to a research project were backed up, and multiple versions were saved (Kanza & Knight, 2022). I kept the electronic data stored on an encrypted flash drive and a backup drive for up to 5 years. I also stored any paper data in a cabinet that had a lock to protect data and secure information. When the 5 years concluded, I cleared and wiped the flash drives clean to dispose of the data and information.

Summary

This section introduced the project plan and the process for how I conducted and completed my research study. This included the purpose of the study, the outline of the white paper, and the methods I utilized to approach aspects of the study. Elements of the process in this section included the role of the researcher, my participation in recruitment, and the sampling strategy along with the chosen data collection method and technique. It defined my role in the process and the steps I took to recruit participants, the number of participants, and how I used purposive sampling and social media to recruit participants. I

explained how my recruitment strategy and sampling approach fit my study and allowed me to identify populations specifically significant to the research question in greater depth.

Data collection was discussed in this section, describing how I created my interview protocol. I explained the use and benefit of semistructured interviews and how they were considered by open-ended questions and the use of an interview protocol that encompassed the study's wide-ranging areas of interest, sometimes including sub-questions, were outlined. This section provided clarity on my approach to working with participants, ensuring undue influence and a clear participation process. My data analysis steps and process were outlined in this section, along with ethical considerations that needed to be reflected and addressed before involving participants and getting the required IRB approvals. Section 3 presented the presentation of results.

Section 3: Results of the Study

Introduction

Section 3 explained the presentation of results by the themes found. The results were organized according to the patterns and themes that emerged from the interview data. This section focused on how the findings answered the research question and highlighted key insights shared by participants.

Research Question

What are the human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption in Washington State?

Presentation of the Results

Intentional Cultural Socialization Strengthens Adoptee Identity Development

Human service professionals described the importance of helping families be intentional about cultural socialization when considering or engaging in transracial adoption. Participant 2 explained, "Helping the child understand and embrace their heritage while integrating into a family with a different racial or cultural background." Professionals emphasized that families should not only acknowledge a child's heritage, culture, and race but also actively embrace these identities and create opportunities for exploration and acceptance. Participant 10 noted that families often struggle with cultural preparation, stating, "They wanted to support their child's heritage but didn't always know how to begin." These findings highlight a need for human service professionals involved in the transracial adoption process to guide families on both the importance of

cultural socialization and practical ways to begin supporting their child's identity development related to heritage and birth culture.

Human service professionals also recommended training rooted in cultural awareness and cultural competence to support intentional cultural socialization and to strengthen adoptee identity development. Participant 9 described that “some parents may feel unprepared to talk about their own race, racism, and cultural differences,” noting that children may experience confusion or shame about their identity when families avoid these conversations. Professionals emphasized that families need more than education on the importance of discussing race and culture; they also require training on how to engage in these conversations effectively. Participant 10 further explained, “Families would benefit from more consistent follow-up services, so support doesn't end too early. Then, in a private adoption agency, there will be stronger requirements for cultural competency training for both staff and adoptive parents.” Education and training related to cultural competence and cultural socialization should be intentionally embedded within the transracial adoption process and extended through postadoption follow-up services as adoptees continue to develop their identities.

Culturally Competent, Relational Support Enhances Family Outcomes

Families' connections to culturally competent, relational support can enhance family outcomes in the transracial adoption process. Participants emphasized the importance of community-based approaches that integrate mentorship and social-emotional support. Participant 2 stated that families need to consider “peer and community support network,” and that “connecting families with others who have

experienced transracial adoption provides guidance, shared experience, and emotional support.” Relational resources can provide normalization and reduce isolation by ensuring that families are supported by others with shared lived experience. Participant 5 reinforced the importance of structured peer support, stating.

Support groups should also be assisting me. Where adoptive parents and the adoptees can share their experience so that they could normalize, the challenges.

This could also reduce isolation so everyone can share their experience, and whoever is lacking in a particular place will be able to fit in.

Peer-based relational supports strengthen family functioning by increasing connection, shared understanding, and collective coping.

Access to counseling and mental health services was also identified as critical to improving family outcomes for transracial adoptive families. Participants described counseling as a support that can help families navigate identity development and race-related stressors over time. Participant 2 recommended, “counseling and mental health support that helps both the child and the family navigate identity, racial, or microaggressions that they may encounter.” This recommendation reflects the need for services that are responsive to racial identity development and the lived experiences connected to transracial adoption. Participant 7 also emphasized the value of therapy and broader mental health access when families face emotional strain across developmental stages. Mental health supports can improve outcomes by promoting coping skills, strengthening family relationships, and addressing race-related challenges with professional guidance.

Cultural Connection and Mentorship Foster Belonging and Identity

Intentional connection to a child's birth culture can foster belonging and identity development for transracially adopted youth. Participants described cultural exposure as essential for supporting adoptees' self-understanding and social connection. Participant 1 explained,

The child will feel a sense of belonging, he'll be able to understand with his own peers, people that look like him, and also have a comfortable family at home, despite the fact that they don't look at him. It brings him a sense of warmth, both from the community inside and out.

Cultural connection supports identity development by offering both community validation and emotional safety. Participant 7 further emphasized the importance of proactive planning, stating, "Preparation should include concrete steps, visiting cultural centers, meeting mentors, attending heritage events before the child even comes home. This way, families are already building networks and don't scramble after challenges arise." Early cultural engagement promotes belonging by building consistent relationships and increasing the family's readiness to support identity development.

Ongoing education and mentorship were also described as key supports for strengthening resilience and reducing isolation for transracial adoptive families. Participants emphasized that mentorship should include perspectives from adults and peers who share the child's racial or cultural background. Participant 7 described that

Families should hear directly from adults, adoptees of colors, and mentors from the child cultural background. Every family should be connected with another

family raising a transrational adoptee. These peer support relationships are often the difference between isolation and resilience.

This statement highlights mentorship as a protective factor that supports connection and sustained learning over time. Participant 3 also emphasized the value of mentorship programs, stating, “having mentorship programs that would actually help the parents navigate the identity development as the child grows.” Mentorship improves outcomes by helping families sustain cultural learning and support identity development across developmental stages.

Consistent Emotional and Professional Support Improves Long-Term Outcomes

Participants emphasized that emotional support should be consistent and proactive across the adoption timeline, rather than limited to preplacement services. Human service professionals described ongoing access to therapy and peer supports as essential as new developmental or environmental challenges arise. Participant 2 explained, “continued access to therapy or support groups for both the child and parent as new issues arise, like school experience or cultural identity questions, or encounter with bias.” Race-related stressors and identity development needs can emerge over time, requiring sustained access to services. Participant 9 also highlighted the importance of peer connection for adoptees, stating, “I think that for the kids, a peer support group with other adoptees is powerful.” Consistent emotional supports promote long-term well-being by offering stable spaces for processing identity development, bias, and belonging-related challenges.

In addition to mental health services, participants emphasized the importance of continued professional follow-up after adoption finalization. Participants described

ongoing check-ins as a mechanism for ensuring that families have access to guidance, support, and referrals when challenges emerge. Participant 2 elaborated that

Referring to the support and check in that happens after the adoption is finalized, not just, like, during the adoption process itself, that ongoing social work visits or calls, like, after the child might have joined the family, a trained professional might check in periodically to see how the child and family are addressing any challenges and other guidance.

This reflects a need for structured continuity of care that extends beyond placement. Participant 8 also emphasized programmatic supports through structured learning and communication accommodations, referencing “diversity and inclusion workshop promotes the understanding and respect for the diverse adoptees, and for the birth processes, and we provide the language support, providing language Assistance, such as translated materials, ensuring effective communication.” Ongoing professional contact and structured services can strengthen outcomes by supporting families’ evolving needs and improving access to culturally responsive resources.

Insufficient Cultural Competence Limits Effective Transracial Adoption Support

Participants identified limited cultural competence resources and inconsistent training as barriers that reduce families’ ability to support transracial adoptees. When families lack ongoing education, they may be less prepared to navigate racism, identity development, and culturally responsive parenting demands. Participant 2 stated, “limited cultural competence resources.” Participant 3 further described,

One of the gaps, I have seen in the current, services for, public content transracial adoption should be, the one-time training, versus the ongoing support. You know, so many agencies provide cultural competence training, only before placement.

They don't actually do it after placement.

These statements point to a service gap in which training is treated as a single event instead of a sustained process. Insufficient cultural competence support limits effectiveness by leaving families without continued guidance as the child's needs evolve.

Participants also emphasized that meaningful cultural competence requires families to engage intentionally and to develop skills that support adoptees' identity formation. Human service professionals described culturally responsive education as necessary for preparing families to recognize and address race-related challenges.

Participant 4 explained, "I think families and adoptees across racial and cultural lines need education from the way we have started educating them in the importance of them seeing racism differently as something that they should actually adapt to themselves."

Participant 7 reinforced the importance of intentional engagement, stating, "Yeah, the bottom line is raising a transnational adoptee means choosing intentionality over comfort.

The more families lean into cultural community and conversations, the stronger and healthier the child's identity will be." Cultural competence strengthens outcomes by supporting adoptees' racial identity development, improving families' responsiveness to bias, and encouraging active engagement with the cultural community.

Comprehensive, Trauma-Informed Supports Promote Belonging and Well-Being

Participants described comprehensive, trauma-informed supports as critical to adoptees' belonging and well-being, particularly when services address race and identity. Human service professionals identified their role in supporting identity development and creating safe spaces for adoptees to explore personal and cultural experiences. Participant 2 explained, "I feel our role includes helping children explore and embrace their racial, cultural, and personal identity in a safe, supportive environment." Trauma-informed practice includes identity-affirming approaches that validate adoptees' lived realities. Participant 2 also described how professionals can support parents, stating that they could "help parents learn about their child's cultural and racial background. Teaching them how to learn traditions, then discuss race, openly, and address bias effectively." Trauma-informed supports improve outcomes by strengthening parents' capacity to engage in culturally responsive parenting while supporting adoptees' identity development.

Participants also emphasized that comprehensive services should include structured cultural competency training that builds practical knowledge and ongoing skill development. Participant 2 recommended that human services professionals implement cultural competency training, describing "a workshop on cultural awareness that has interactive sessions where families learn about their child's cultural norms, traditions, history, and social experience. For instance, a workshop on African American history for families adopting Black children." This recommendation supports the need for tangible educational structures rather than general guidance. Participant 9 explained,

When families actually practice cultural competence, I see adoptees grow up with a stronger sense of who they are. Yeah, they are less likely to struggle with identity confusion, and more likely to feel comfortable navigating between their adoptive family's world and their culture.

Comprehensive services promote well-being by strengthening identity development, reducing confusion, and increasing adoptees' ability to navigate multiple cultural contexts with confidence.

Ethical, Culturally Competent Practice Requires Lifelong Accountability and Support

Participants emphasized that ethical, culturally competent practice requires accountability, sustained follow-through, and high standards across agencies involved in transracial adoption. Human service professionals described cultural competence as an ongoing responsibility that includes training, follow-up, and access to supports such as mentorship and funding. Participant 5 described the need for high standards and follow-through, stating,

As meeting these high standards would help in the cultural competency, and people keep up to their standard. Yeah, where there is need for training. Training should be done. Where there's a need for follow-up, follow-up should be done. Where there's need for funding and mentorship programs, it should be done. Keeping up to these high standards enables higher competency.

This perspective frames ethical practice as requiring measurable action and sustained service delivery. Participant 8 explained, "cultural preparedness for the transition for

transracial adopted children, like preparedness figures widely. Some agencies provide cultural competency training while others barely touch on the topic.” Ethical practice requires consistency across agencies so families receive equitable preparation and long-term culturally responsive support.

Participants also emphasized that adoption-related policies and services should reflect the lifelong nature of adoption, especially regarding racial identity development. Human service professionals described the need to move beyond short-term support models and encourage families to engage sustained cultural mentorship and follow-up services. Participant 9 explained,

I’d love to say that we need to remember adoption doesn’t end at financial support. I would love to say that our policies should reflect the lifelong nature of adoption in terms of racial identity. That’s what I would love to say. I would like to contribute something the importance of cultural competency.

Participant 10 stated,

I would advise them to remember that adoption is not just about bringing the child home, yeah. But we’re just really just, bringing the child home, then it’s about building a lifelong connection. From my work, I would advise families to use every resource offered. Especially follow-up sessions, like, follow-up services, instead of trying to do everything on their own. In a private adoption agency, I would encourage families to actively seek cultural mentors and community groups, so their child sees their heritage honored, and family-like.

Ethical, culturally competent practice requires long-term accountability, continued resources, and policies that support adoptees' identity development across the life span.

Summary

Section 3 presented the results of the study organized by the themes that emerged from the data. This section focused on answering the research question by presenting findings through the themes and patterns identified from the experiences, observations, and concerns shared by human service professionals during interviews. The results highlighted four themes: intentional cultural socialization strengthens adoptee identity development, culturally competent, relational support enhances family outcomes, cultural connection and mentorship foster belonging and identity, and consistent emotional and professional support improves long-term outcomes. Overall, Section 3 explained what the data revealed by presenting the main themes and findings related to what is missing and what is needed to better support transracial adoption.

Section 4: Conclusion and Reflections

Introduction

Section 4 introduced and elaborated on my experience in the doctoral program. This section reflected on my growth throughout the doctoral process and the challenges I encountered. It also discussed how this experience influenced my development as a scholar-practitioner in the human services field.

Reflection of Self

During my doctoral journey, one of the biggest challenges I experienced was time management, something they warned me about, but I didn't fully understand until I was actually in it. I learned quickly that it was not just about getting the work done. It was about managing the mental load that comes with learning at this level. The learning itself takes up mental and emotional space, and that space had to be intentionally planned for in my day and my week. As the first person in my family to pursue a terminal degree and make it this far academically, I did not have anyone around me who had been through this process. When I was already in the thick of it, there was no one I could ask for advice or support, which made the experience feel isolating at times.

When it came to preparation, I learned that I could only truly prepare for what was within my control. While in the doctoral program, I advanced into a program director role, managing over 10 staff members across three sites, while also working as a mental health therapist with a caseload of about 30 clients. At the same time, I was raising two children and navigating multiple health challenges that came up during this process. All of this happened while still having to meet weekly academic expectations, including

revisions, discussions, and major writing assignments. Through this experience, I learned the importance of follow-through, accountability, and pushing through moments that felt overwhelming in order to stay committed to my long-term goals.

Reflection of Scholar-Practitioner

As a scholar-practitioner, this experience has shaped my approach and strategy as a leader and human services professional in many ways. Through coursework completed before beginning formal research, I had the opportunity to explore how this work impacts those being served and how leadership approaches and available resources influence service effectiveness. The coursework allowed me to examine how similar challenges have been addressed historically across different environments, often with limited resources or existing gaps. This led me to think more broadly beyond my immediate community and consider how collaboration with neighboring professionals could expand the impact of this work in the future.

Another important learning that emerged from both the coursework and the research process was the value of shared experience, feedback, and the voices and stories of those involved in service delivery. I understand the importance of narrative in human services work; however, this experience highlighted the professional responsibility to intentionally create space for those voices in research. Involving human service professionals, specifically those engaged in direct service, provided meaningful insight into real-world practice. This research reinforced the importance of listening to and incorporating feedback from professionals who are doing hands-on work so that gaps, needs, and opportunities for improvement can be accurately identified and addressed.

One challenge that arose for me during my doctoral journey was scholarly writing within research. Master's-level counseling training emphasizes clinical voice, reflective practice, and applied documentation, which supports direct service work and client-centered experiences. This doctoral program required a shift to a more analytical, synthesized, and evidence-driven writing style. I had to be intentional in developing doctoral-level paragraph structure, avoiding APA grammatical errors, and using this shift as an opportunity to think more critically and engage with the literature at a higher level.

Recommendations for Human Services Field Advocacy

One recommendation for the local community is the implementation of mandatory, ongoing cultural competency training for adoption-related human service professionals. Human service professionals are often the first point of contact for families seeking to adopt transracially, and they play a role in preparation and ongoing support. Participants identified gaps in cultural competence that affect how professionals prepare and guide families. When professionals are equipped with appropriate knowledge and training, they are more confident in educating families, asking critical questions, and directing families to relevant resources.

Another recommendation for the local community is the standardization of preadoption preparation for transracial adoptive families. Participants reported that families varied in their level of preparedness to raise a transracial adoptee. Human service agencies should consider implementing a standardized preparation protocol that requires families to demonstrate awareness of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions, an understanding of racial identity development, and a willingness to engage in ongoing

cultural learning. This process should not be presented as a deterrent to adoption, but rather as an opportunity for families to reflect on their readiness and identify areas where further education and preparation may be needed before moving forward.

Summary

This study explored human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption. The findings identified the following themes: intentional cultural socialization strengthens adoptee identity development; culturally competent, relational support enhances family outcomes; cultural connection and mentorship foster belonging and identity; and consistent emotional and professional support improves long-term outcomes. Recommendations for the local community include ongoing cultural competency training for human service professionals and standardized preadoption preparation for transracial adoptive families. Supporting transracial adoptees in their racial identity development and ensuring families feel prepared to support that process is essential. Human service professionals must be equipped to address these challenges proactively rather than reactively. Addressing these gaps in practice may allow organizations to better position themselves to create positive change within the local community through culturally responsive and grounded adoption services.

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Appendix A: White Paper

Executive Summary

Transracial adoption continues to increase across the United States and within Washington State, creating an ongoing need for culturally competent preparation and support for adoptive families and adoptees. While transracial adoption policies have prioritized adoptees having a permanent home and placement efficiency, less emphasis has been placed on equipping families to support adoptees' racial identity development and long-term psychosocial well-being. Findings from this qualitative action research study indicated that human service professionals perceive gaps in standardized cultural competency training and limited postadoption supports for racial and cultural identity development. This white paper presents key findings and informed recommendations from human service professionals to strengthen culturally responsive transracial adoption services across Washington State.

Background

Transracial adoption refers to the placement of children into adoptive families of a different racial or ethnic background. Although transracial adoption has been framed as a way to reduce time spent in foster care and increase stable home outcomes, adoptees often face challenges related to racial identity development, cultural belonging, and mental health. In Washington State, adoption services frequently emphasize legal permanency while providing limited guidance on navigating racialized experiences, discrimination, and identity formation. Human service professionals working within

adoption systems often have the responsibility of supporting families without sufficient training or resources to address the complex situations and experiences they face.

Existing literature emphasizes the importance of cultural socialization, racial awareness, and community connection for transracially adopted youth. However, gaps continue between policy intentions and service delivery practices. Color-blind frameworks remain common in adoption preparation and postplacement services, minimizing the impact of race and racism on adoptees' lived experiences. These gaps highlight the need for culturally competent, developmentally informed resources that extend beyond pre-adoption training and into long-term family support.

Methods Overview

This qualitative action research study explored human service professionals' perceptions of culturally competent resources needed to support transracial adoption in Washington State. Participants included professionals currently or previously employed in adoption-related services, including child welfare, mental health, and postadoption support roles. Semistructured interviews were conducted to capture participants' professional experiences, observations, and recommendations. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes relevant to culturally responsive adoption practice.

Key Findings

1. **Intentional Cultural Socialization Strengthens Adoptee Identity Development:**
Participants emphasized that adoptees benefit when families are equipped to engage in intentional cultural socialization practices, including open

discussions about race, exposure to cultural traditions, and preparation for racialized experiences.

2. **Culturally Competent, Relational Support Enhances Family Outcomes:**

Human service professionals highlighted the importance of relational, trust-based support that is culturally competent and developmentally informed, enabling families to navigate identity development and relational challenges over time.

3. **Cultural Connection and Mentorship Foster Belonging and Identity:**

Participants consistently noted that access to culturally specific communities, mentors, and role models fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens racial and cultural identity for transracially adopted youth.

4. **Consistent Emotional and Professional Support Improves Long-Term**

Outcomes: Findings indicated that sustained emotional support and ongoing professional guidance across developmental stages are critical to long-term adoptee well-being and family stability.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on study findings, several practice and policy recommendations emerged:

- For Adoption Agencies:
 - Integrate mandatory, ongoing cultural competency training across pre- and post-adoption services.
 - Incorporate explicit discussions of race, racism, and identity development into family preparation curricula.

- For Clinicians and Service Providers:
 - Utilize culturally responsive and trauma-informed approaches when supporting transracially adopted youth.
 - Provide guidance to families on racial socialization strategies and community engagement.
- For Policymakers and Systems Leaders:
 - Allocate funding for post-adoption supports focused on racial identity development.
 - Promote collaboration between adoption agencies and culturally specific community organizations.

Conclusion

As transracial adoption continues to serve as a pathway to a permanent home for children in Washington State, addressing gaps in culturally competent preparation and long-term support is essential. Human service professionals are positioned to advocate for and implement practices that recognize and address the role of race, culture, and identity in adoptees' well-being. By prioritizing intentional cultural socialization, relationally grounded support, cultural connection, and consistency of care (pre- and post-adoption), adoption systems can better promote positive identity development and long-term outcomes for transracially adopted individuals and families.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction

You have been selected to be in an interview with me today because you have been identified as someone who has experience to share about transracial adoption and the adoption process in Washington state. My research study focuses on exploring human service professionals' perceptions of the services needed to provide culturally competent resources for transracial adoption in Washington State. My study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, I aim to try and learn more about services that are needed and recommended by professionals like yourself to improve and provide resources for families wanting to be involved in transracial adoption.

Before we get started, I would like to verify again that you are giving me your informed consent to move forward in this interview and participate in this study. If yes, are you okay with me recording this interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Main Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the transracial adoption process within Washington?
2. From your experience, what is important to address concerning race and culture in the adoption process with families?
3. What specific considerations, if any, should it be implemented for families considering transracial adoption?
4. What culturally competent resources are currently available to parents involved in transracial adoption?

5. What resources for cultural competence are currently available for transracially adopted children?
6. What would you recommend that would better support cultural competence in the preparation for transracial adoption?
7. For families that have already adopted transracially, what are recommendations that you feel would help support them raising a transracial adoptee?
8. Before we conclude this interview, what else would you like to tell me about cultural competence within transracial adoption?

Closing

Thank you for meeting with me and providing me your perspective about an important topic. In conclusion for your interview participation, I will be sending you a gift card through your email. I will also be sending the transcript of this interview for your review along with an executive summary of the study results once the study has been completed. Please contact me through email if you have any questions or concerns from this process. I appreciate your time, perspective, and feedback.