



Transracial and Transcultural Adoption Training Resources Pack

Prepared and delivered by Dr Tam Cane
Senior Lecturer in Social Work, University of Sussex

tam.cane@sussex.ac.uk | <https://profiles.sussex.ac.uk/p444400-tam-cane>

See also <https://transracialadoptionframework.uk>

The intellectual property of this pack is owned by Dr Tam Cane

Introduction

This training is focused on transracial adoption and the needs of children adopted transracially and transculturally from racialised and minoritised ethnic backgrounds. The main aim of this training package is to support both adoptive parents and social workers to understand the needs of children in transracial adoption and what should be put in place to support positive identity outcomes. The training is prepared in an interactive and rich way, as it is evidence-based, drawing from wider research on transracial adoption and recent UK research on transracial adoption conducted by the University of Sussex. It centres on the voices of people with lived experience to enable better understanding. What is included:

Trainer delivery

- Identity needs training
- Identity theories training
- Microaggressions training
- Race trauma training

Lived expertise films

- Navigating identity information
- Cultural Preservation in Transracial Adoption
- Nurturing and sustaining cultural practices
- Roots and voices: Confronting challenges, stereotypes, microaggressions and racism
- Conversation about identity and religious heritage

Animations

- Microaggressions animation
- Cultural Alignment Matching Model animations (developed Dr. Tam Cane)

Terminology:

We acknowledge there are ongoing disagreements regarding the right term for children of Black and Asian heritage in care and those needing adoption. Terminology such as 'global majority' has also recently been used to refer to children of Black and Asian racialised minorities and related mixed identities.

Matching standards mapped to the training package :

- That the welfare of the child is paramount - race trauma, microaggression animation, identity needs, theories, lived expertise films and microaggression and cultural matching animations.
- Child centredness and the child's wishes and feelings - impact across age-groups and all trainer and lived expertise films, cultural matching model animation.
- Duty to ensure every child has every possible opportunity for matching - identity needs, identity theories, lived expertise films, cultural matching animation.
- Care and sensitivity to finding the right adopter able to make adjustments to meet the child's identity and cultural needs - identity needs training, cultural alignment model animation.
- Utilise full information providing the child's holistic developmental needs - identity needs and identity theories films, lived expertise film, microaggressions animation and cultural alignment model animation
- Collaboration with birth families, ensure all information needed is available and recorded - lived expertise films

Definition of transracial adoption

The definition we are using for transracial adoption is as follows:

A family set up where: Adopters of a different racial or ethnic (within these will be different cultural and heritage) background than the child they adopt.

Including:

- Dissimilar cultural groups than the adopted child e.g.
- Differences in Asian or Black cultures and heritage
- Differences in White cultures and heritage.
- We note some religious backgrounds are also seen as heritage for example, in the Islamic faith, the Muslim faith can also be seen as heritage.

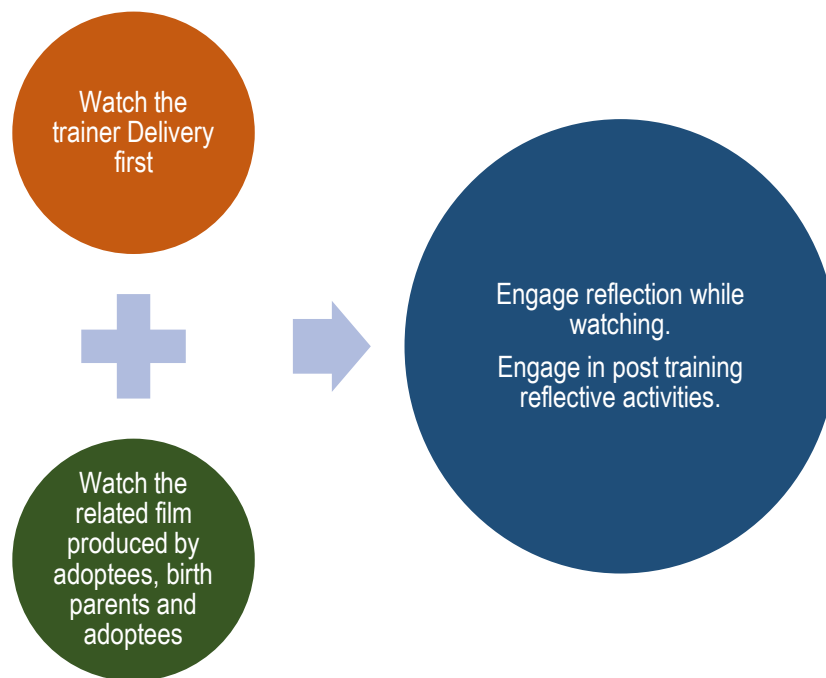
'Transracial Adoption' typically includes the need to bridge racial, ethnic, cultural and religious differences.

- Use documents that accurately represent the adopters' identity and child's holistic needs and identity - lived expertise films, cultural matching animation
- Consideration of transracial adoption should begin in early permanency planning - identity needs, lived expertise film from the adoptee and birth parent perspectives, cultural alignment model animation.

Presentation of the training

This training package is presented through a range of resources, including four videos delivered by Dr Tam Cane, and five supporting educational videos generously produced with and presented by adoptees, birth parents and adopters. We therefore encourage you to watch the training. There are also recommended reflective activities that we encourage you to engage in to broaden your learning and development.

To best engage with the training, we recommend that you listen to the videos in the following sequence:



First Training

Trainer delivery: Understanding the needs of transracially adopted children

This video focuses on understanding the needs of children in transracial adoption, drawing on research. The video discusses the importance of understanding self-identity, as an individual first, using the social identity wheel and considering the needs of children in transracial adoption through the lens of intersectionality, thus looking at race and how it intersects with other factors such as class, gender, disability, sexuality, and religion, and how these intersecting factors exacerbate experiences of marginalisation and discrimination. The video introduces the concepts of racial consciousness and race intentionality in adoption as approaches that can help social workers and adoptive parents to think carefully when matching children and what is needed to support positive identity outcomes in the long term.

Learning from Lived expertise: Navigating Identity Information

This video discusses the importance of connecting with birth heritage, DNA

Case Studies on Intersectionality

Case study 1: Malik with a focus on the intersection of low economic status, race, and gender. Malik is a Black African and Caribbean heritage whose birth parents live in a council estate in a deprived town.

Case study 2: The intersection of race, religion, neurodiversity, and disability in the life of a young Muslim female of South Asian background, Farah. Farah is neurodivergent and has some physical disabilities. She belongs to a marginalised and often stigmatised faith group.

testing, transparency and openness, and sharing information and resources to support transracial adoptive parenting. We learn about the importance of cultural sensitivity and the impact of missing information, as well as the complexities this brings about for the adopted child when parents find ways to help the child understand their identity.

Second Training

Trainer delivery: Identity theories

This video presents a selection of identity theories to aid professionals and adoptive parents in understanding identity development for children entering transracial adoption. Whilst numerous theories exist, those presented here are broadly applicable, though caution should be exercised regarding children's specific developmental needs. These theories are not prescriptive, nor do they suggest a rigid, sequential progression for every child. Rather, they provide a framework for understanding potential developmental patterns.

It is crucial to recognise that identity development is influenced by various factors including culture, religion, gender, ethnicity, and other lifestyle aspects. Consequently, a child's identity development may not align perfectly with any single theory. The purpose of presenting these theories is to encourage reflection among professionals and adoptive parents on children's needs and to provide insight into why children might react, behave, or present themselves in certain ways during different stages of their identity development.

We emphasise the importance of a nuanced, individualised approach when applying these theories, acknowledging the unique circumstances and backgrounds of each child in transracial adoption.

Learning from Lived expertise: Please watch the following videos

- **Cultural Preservation in Transracial Adoption**
- **Nurturing and sustaining cultural practices**

These videos explore the significance of cultural preservation and emphasises the importance of early introduction aspects around ethnic and racial identity care, birth cultures and countries of heritage/origin, rather than delaying until children reach the age of majority. They highlight the value of providing positive information about identity throughout a child's development through racial, ethnic and cultural socialisation. As you watch these videos, consider identity theories presented in the trainer's delivery and reflect on how the lived experiences and recommendations from those with first-hand expertise can aid in supporting adopted children to develop a positive sense of identity and avoid identity impostor syndrome.

We encourage you to critically examine your current practices or approaches in supporting children's cultural preservation, particularly in the context of transracial placements. Consider the following questions:



How do the identity theories presented in the training video help you understand and appreciate the recommendations shared in this video, and how might this synthesis inform your approach to supporting positive identity formation in transracially adopted children?

Third Training

Trainer Delivery: Microaggressions

This training is focused on helping adopters and adoptive parents understand **racial** microaggressions in adoption. Microaggressions are, in fact, racism and are often undermined and dismissed, yet they result in racial trauma and racial identity impostor syndrome. This video explains what that looks like and how to prevent and address these issues to ensure a positive and nurturing transracial adoption experience and positive identity outcomes.

Learning from Lived expertise: Animated video on micro-aggressions

The animations presented here are developed based on children's real lived experiences. They are animated but true stories. As you watch this, please reflect on how the recommendations in the trainer's delivery can be helpful

in supporting you as an adoptive parent, or if you are a social worker, in preparing adoptive parents to challenge microaggressions.

Case study example here is based on the Open Front Door Approach.

OTFD application example 1 : Assuming a family member asked if your daughter was really related to you:

Observation phase: You could say, when you asked my daughter if she was 'really' related to me, I noticed you questioning our family connection.

Think : is about expressing what your interpretation is so you would explain to them that as her parent, I interpreted that as doubting the legitimacy of our family. It made me feel like I have to prove I'm her real parent.

Feel: I felt hurt and frustrated when you questioned if she was 'really' my daughter. You saying that made me feel like I have to prove to you and everyone else that I am her parent.

Desire: In the future, I would appreciate you refraining from questioning my child's relationship with me?

OTFD application example 2:

Common experience linked to children with refugee backgrounds. Your adoptive child has an Iraqi, and Lebanese heritage. They come to you reporting they have experienced a painful comment in the playground. They had been learning about the Middle East so your child expressed excitedly that they will be learning Arabic in preparation to visit the Lebanon one day. In response, a classmate told them they don't belong here and need to make the vacation imminently and not return.

You are a White-Scottish female, with your husband a Black British-Jamaican adoptive parent. You have been both hesitant to commit to your child's language and a visit to Lebanon anyway. So, you respond by telling them that their desire to learn Lebanese is not important but you are all very excited to visit a Lebanese restaurant in Brighton soon.

Where is the double microaggression can be seen in this case ? Apply the Open the Front Door Approach.

Fourth Training

Trainer Delivery: Race Trauma

This training of focused on race trauma. It explains the accumulation of microaggressions, racism and race-based stress for adopted children. The video explains this mental health problems also from pre-birth drawing on challenges associated with systemic racism as experienced within the birth family, the adopted child's experience in care and into and in adoption. Race trauma is explained akin to post traumatic stress disorders however due to the concerns that children of racialised and minoritized backgrounds experience ongoing intersectional discrimination the idea of healing and recovery can be difficult but there is a need to consider supporting professionals to think about preventing and addressing race trauma through the lens of liberation.

Defining race trauma: *Racialised trauma refers to the psychological and emotional distress experienced by individuals as a result of racial discrimination, oppression, or prejudice. It encompasses the cumulative effects of systemic racism, microaggressions and marginalisation. These can be directly or indirectly experienced or witnessed, leading to feelings of alienation, powerlessness and diminished self-worth among affected individuals."*

(Williams, Metzger, Leins, & DeLapp)

Learning from Lived expertise: Roots and voices: Please watch the following two films

- **Conversation about identity and religious heritage**
- **Confronting challenges, stereotypes, microaggressions and racism**

These two films present two different perspectives and complement each other in their consideration of identity and what is needed, as well as the possible impact when identity needs are neglected. The conversation between Debbie and Elinor helps us understand how identity needs can be overlooked and the impact of that in relation to what they call feeling like a fraud in one's identity (sometimes known as impostor syndrome). There are lessons to take from these films: what should be put in place to protect children from feeling like frauds and to ensure they enjoy positive identity outcomes throughout their adoption journey.

Anthony tells us about his experiences in school, and together with Amy, they think through helpful strategies to promote positive and healthy identity. From their reflections, consider how you can creatively find role models and racial mirrors to help promote positive identity development and pride. Follow-up Activity: Reflective

Additional points on racial trauma:

Triggers

- ✓ Direct or indirect exposure to micro-aggression, racist abuse, or discrimination
- ✓ Bullying
- ✓ Negative media representations that can be racist, such as police violence towards unarmed Black people, racial profiling and stereotypes
- ✓ Witnessing or experiencing familial systemic racism and personal lack of equity in accessing resources
- ✓ Lack of exposure to positive views about racial or ethnic people and their communities and lifestyles
- ✓ Invalidation of experiences
- ✓ Memories of race-traumatisation to the self-or-others
- ✓ Ancestry and intergenerational narratives
- ✓ Statues and racist symbols (Oquosa, PhD's work on this)

Symptoms

- ✓ Children struggling to look and people who look like them
- ✓ Avoiding things/people that reminds the child of the trauma
- ✓ Fractured belonging (Tadam's concept)
- ✓ Anxiety, depression or low self-esteem
- ✓ Feeling distracted and lack of concentration
- ✓ Anger (often misunderstood as hostile)
- ✓ Negative thoughts about self
- ✓ Increased sensitivity and reactivity
- ✓ Dissociation – Feeling numb or disconnected
- ✓ Physical pain, digestive issues and somatic feelings

(Villines, 2020)

Race Trauma Birth Parent Example

A transgender Black or Brown parent, identifying as they/them, faces multiple systemic barriers. Unemployed and financially disadvantaged, they have experienced racial discrimination in housing, resulting in substandard accommodation. Their situation is further complicated by a misdiagnosis of schizophrenia, with the correct diagnosis of depression not being updated in social work records.

Throughout their pregnancy, there was a lack of culturally sensitive prenatal care and labour support. Consequently, their child was removed into foster care without adequate family support or culturally tailored interventions. During care proceedings, they had limited access to quality legal representation.

Their mental and physical health deteriorated, exacerbated by experiences of police brutality and racial profiling. Meanwhile, their child was placed in three different non-culturally matched foster homes within five months. Contact visits were frequently cancelled, eventually leading to complete cessation without explanation.

When expressing dissatisfaction with these circumstances, the parent was labelled as 'angry' and 'hostile'. No attempts were made to locate the birth father or discuss arrangements for contact with half-siblings. Records regarding the child's cultural background and the parent's updated diagnosis remained incomplete.

Ultimately, the child was placed in a transracial placement without consultation with the birth parent. This case highlights multiple instances of systemic discrimination and lack of culturally sensitive support across health, social care, and legal systems.

Race Trauma Case Study: Linh Aged 13

Background:

- Born to Vietnamese refugee parents who fled the Vietnam War. Linh was removed from parents at age 2 due to mental health issues and poverty. Placed in foster care, then adopted by a white family.

Key Issues:

Cultural Misunderstandings: Rushed court proceedings with inadequate cultural understanding. There was also misinterpretation of traditional remedies as neglect.

Systemic Biases: Lack of proper interpretation services; harsher scrutiny from social workers and inadequate legal representation.

Identity and Cultural Disconnection: Placement with numerous culturally unaware foster carers. Adoption by family with limited cultural sensitivity and taking a colour- and culture-blind approach.

Racism and Microaggressions: Bullying at school and mispronunciation of name. Also, racial stereotyping by teachers and peers and public experiences of racism and xenophobia.

Mental Health and Trauma: Signs of race trauma include anxiety, low self-esteem, and feelings of rootlessness. Intergenerational trauma from refugee parents, and cumulative racial trauma affecting overall wellbeing

Physical Manifestations: Sleep disorders, abdominal problems, dizziness.

Inadequate Support: Dismissal of racial experiences by adoptive parents. Lack of culturally sensitive mental health services and CAMHS' failure to acknowledge race-related trauma

The Cultural Alignment Matching Model (CAMM) Cane, 2024 University of Sussex

Supporting resource: The Cultural Alignment Matching Model (CAMM)

The Cultural Alignment Matching Model (CAMM), was developed by Cane (2024). It is research-informed to facilitate supportive and nurturing adoptive placements that promote positive identity outcomes for racialised and minoritised ethnic children (example Barn, 2018; Patel, 2022;). Transracial adoption continues in the UK due to a shortage of Black and minoritised racial backgrounds. CAMM supports matching practice around race and culture to promote cultural preservation and identity affirmation within transracial adoptive families.

CAMM encompasses eight components for transracial matching:

1. **Cultural and Racial Alignment:** Assessing adopters' willingness to embrace the child's racial and cultural background, while centring the child's identity needs and prioritising racial equity.
2. **Diversity of Support Networks:** Evaluating the presence of racial mirrors and affirming role models within the adoptive family's support network to foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride in the child.
3. **Cultural Humility:** Ensuring access to education, training, and community resources that enhance cultural humility and prevent racialised trauma, while actively seeking resources specific to the child's identity.
4. **Basic and Specific Needs:** This is your standard cultural parenting capacity assessment including capacity to prevent re-traumatisation.
5. **Cultural Resources:** Assessing commitment to meet and embed the child's cultural traditions, practices, and values in the family, alongside access to literature, media, and community resources and others that reflect the child's cultural identity.
6. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Examining willingness to adapt lifestyle, worldview, and behaviours to accommodate the child's cultural identity, and engage with diverse perspectives. This includes moving home, inclusion of religion and language needs.
7. **No Room for Colour Blindness or Racial Silence:** Assessing readiness to have explicit discussions about race, religion, and taking part in the child's cultural practices at home and in community groups, challenging biases, racism, micro-aggressions and foster racial and cultural pride.
8. **Child's Voice and Advocacy:** assessing the ability to provide an environment that talks about race openly and teaches the child to challenge racism and develop race and cultural pride. Adopters advocate and take part with the child in racial justice activities.

GRADING SCALE

Inadequate Alignment: Lack of racial consciousness, cultural understanding, race and cultural intentionality. Colour blindness.

Minimal Alignment: Recognises importance of child's ethnic/racial/ identity and cultural heritage but minimises differences and lacks sustained commitment.

Moderate Alignment: Actively seeks to incorporate child's heritage, engages with diverse perspectives with superficial cultural awareness and still stereotypical.

Satisfactory Alignment: Strong commitment to nurturing child's identity, proactive engagement with resources and mentors can challenge racism.

Suitable Alignment: Integrates and affirms the child's identity, advocates for inclusion, challenges familial systemic racism, and stands up for the child's need race and cultural identity.

Quiz questions

1. Which of the following is an example of a microaggression that transracially adopted children may face? a) "You're so lucky to have been adopted by such a loving family!" b) "I don't see colour; I just see a beautiful child." c) "Do you know anything about your 'real' parents?" d) All of the above
2. Social workers can promote cultural alignment in transracial adoption by: a) Encouraging families to live in diverse neighbourhoods b) Providing resources and training on cultural competence c) Facilitating connections with the child's birth community d) All of the above
3. Which statement best describes the concept of colour-blindness in the context of transracial adoption? a) A positive approach that treats all children equally, regardless of race b) A harmful ideology that minimises the importance of a child's racial and cultural identity c) A neutral stance that avoids discussions of race and culture d) An effective way to prevent discrimination and racism
4. When considering a transracial adoption match, social workers should prioritise: a) The child's individual needs and the family's ability to meet those needs b) The family's preference for a specific race or culture c) The speed at which the adoption can be finalised d) The proximity of the family to the child's birth community
5. Transracial adoptees often report feeling: a) A strong sense of belonging in both their adoptive and birth cultures b) Completely disconnected from their birth culture c) Pressure to assimilate into their adoptive family's culture d) None of the above
6. Social workers can help transracial adoptive families navigate discussions about race and culture by: a) Encouraging a colour-blind approach to parenting b) Providing age-appropriate resources and conversation starters c) Advising families to wait until the child brings up the topic d) Suggesting that families focus only on the child's birth culture
7. Which of the following is NOT an effective strategy for promoting a positive transracial adoption match? a) Assessing the family's cultural competence and willingness to learn b) Prioritising the child's racial and cultural needs in the matching process c) Assuming that love and good intentions are enough to overcome cultural differences d) Providing ongoing support and resources for both the child and the adoptive family
8. When considering openness in transracial adoption, social workers should: a) Discourage birth parent contact to minimize confusion for the child b) Assess the benefits and challenges of birth parent involvement on a case-by-case basis c) Promote closed adoptions to protect the child's privacy d) Automatically facilitate ongoing contact with birth parents
9. Racial trauma in transracially adopted children can manifest as: a) Anxiety and hypervigilance b) Difficulty forming close relationships c) Internalised racism and self-hatred d) All of the above
10. Social workers can help transracial adoptive families address racial trauma by: a) Encouraging families to avoid discussions of race to minimize discomfort b) Providing access to culturally competent therapists and support services c) Advising families to wait until the child exhibits clear signs of distress d) Focusing solely on promoting a colour-blind approach to parenting
11. Cultural consciousness refers to: a) The awareness and understanding of one's own cultural background and biases b) The belief that all cultures are equal and should be celebrated c) The practice of adopting children from diverse cultural backgrounds d) The assumption that love alone is sufficient for a successful transracial adoption
12. Which statement best describes the link between cultural consciousness and white privilege in transracial adoption? a) White privilege allows adoptive parents to ignore the importance of cultural consciousness b) Cultural consciousness helps white adoptive parents recognize and address the impact of white privilege on their adopted child's experiences c) White privilege and cultural consciousness are unrelated concepts in transracial adoption d) Cultural consciousness ensures that white privilege does not affect transracially adopted children

Answers

1. D
2. D
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. D
10. B
11. A
12. B

Reflective Journaling Instructions

Set aside dedicated time after watching the training videos for reflective journaling every day or every other day after watching the training. Allocate at least 15-20 minutes a day to think carefully about the reality of adopting transracially and what this will mean to you and the adoptive child. You do not have to cover all these questions in one go but to take your time on each question.

Find a quiet, comfortable space where you can write without interruptions.

Begin by exploring your own cultural background. Consider your family history, traditions, values, and beliefs. Reflect on how your cultural experiences have shaped your identity and worldview.

Delve into your prospective/adoptive child's cultural heritage. Research their birth country, customs, language, traditions, language dialects and national history. Examine any biases or preconceptions you may have about their culture.

Reflect on the similarities and differences between your cultural background and your child's. Consider how you can honour and celebrate your child's heritage while also integrating them into your family's culture.

Write about any concerns, fears, or challenges you anticipate in raising a child from a different cultural background. Explore potential strategies for addressing these issues.

Reflect on your media consumption and stereotypical representations. Consider how to minimise adjust the trauma and insecurities that may arise from this.

Conclude each journaling session by identifying one action step you can take to deepen your understanding of your child's culture or to prepare for the challenges of transracial adoption.

Group Discussion and Buddy System Instructions - Adoptive Parents

We are suggesting a buddying system to support reflection and enhance adopter-support during the journey of adopting transracially. However, agencies will need to look at their systems and process to consider ways to support adoptive parents with this process.

Instructions

Engage in the training session that has been offered.

Listen actively to the perspectives of adoptees and experienced adoptive parents.

Seek to understand their unique challenges and learn from their successes.

Be respectful and non-judgmental in your engagement with the filmed resources.

Create a safe, supportive environment where you and your buddies feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings.

Ask your social worker if they can arrange a buddy.

When paired with a buddy, commit to meeting/reflecting to discuss your reflective journaling insights, share resources, and provide mutual support.

Use your buddy meetings as an opportunity to practice active listening, empathy, and problem-solving. Work together to identify strategies for overcoming challenges and celebrating successes in your transracial adoption journeys.

Maintain confidentiality within the group and buddy discussions, ensuring that personal information shared by others is kept private.

Points to consider:

Engage in open, honest discussions about the hopes, joys and fears of transracial adoption.

Share your experiences, concerns, and strategies for cultural alignment and experiencing your child's experiences of possible racism and systemic racial injustices.

Explore how you would develop skills to do this.

Discuss where you are with the concept of white privilege and possible fragility ?

Use your buddy to explore where you are in terms of your own racial consciousness and understanding the child's

Discuss your own experiences of being a minority and how you would empathise with the child

Reflect on how you will address anxieties around entering new and different cultural or racial spaces

Birth parents contact and engagement with them can be uneasy but with buddies you could support each other on overcoming your concerns

Practice with each other 'The Talk'

Guided Discussion Led by Adoption Agencies

We anticipate by this time; agencies will now practitioners trained on transracial adoption or on the framework for transracial adoption. As such we recommend these practitioners provided a guided reflective discussion with prospective adopters.

For this guided discussion.

Come prepared to share your insights and experiences on embracing your child's culture and celebrating diversity within your family. Be open to learning from the perspectives of other adoptive parents, adoptees, and professionals.

Engage in discussions around practical ways to incorporate your child's cultural heritage into daily life, such as:

- a) Celebrating cultural holidays and festivals
- b) Incorporating in your everyday life music, meals' language and traditions from your child's birth culture
- c) Decorating your home with cultural elements and artwork
- d) Attending cultural events and performances as a family
- e) Entering new cultural spaces
- f) Your anxieties around managing racism internally and externally from the family

Share ideas for creating new family traditions that honour both your family's culture and your child's birth culture. Discuss how these traditions can foster a sense of belonging and pride in your child's multicultural identity.

Participate in conversations about promoting resilience in your child as they navigate experiences related to race and racism. Share strategies for:

- a) Building a strong, positive racial identity
- b) Developing coping skills and self-advocacy
- c) Creating a support network of friends, family, and mentors
- d) Engaging in age-appropriate discussions about race and racism

- e) Advocating for your child in educational and social settings

Be open to receiving practical tips and guidance and take note of key strategies and resources shared during the discussions.

Reflect on how you can **apply** the insights gained from these discussions to your own family's unique situation.

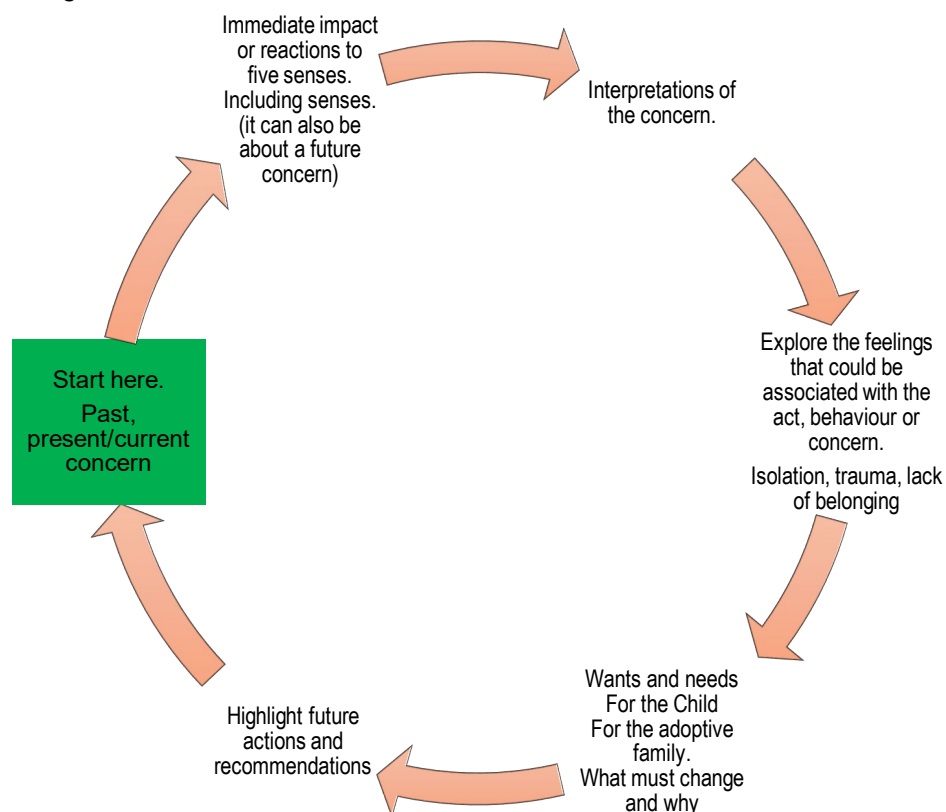
Set personal goals for implementing cultural alignment strategies and promoting resilience in your child.

Provide feedback to the facilitators on the effectiveness of the guided discussions and commit to your next steps.

Dialogue Wheel on Racial Consciousness (lack of) in Transracial Adoption For Social Workers

This Wheel is to support social workers to have conversations about implicit bias, stereotypes and colour-blindness during matching processes. You may use this wheel with adoptive parents as 'direct work'. Apply your good listening skills, sensitivity and relational skills. Once you raise your concerns against each stage of the wheel, please do not interrupt responses. Share your thoughts, and reflections in turns allowing for solutions and recommendations by the end of the wheel.

Fig. 1. The Dialogue Wheel



- Start sentences with explaining what was noticed e.g. In our last meeting, 'I' noticed, heard or observed
- Share your thoughts and emotions-based concerns that are child-centred without criticising.
- Be sensitive and explain challenges that children from racialised and minoritised ethnic groups experience. You can use research or publicly known case reviews as this can be a helpful evidence-based discussion.
- Point to Refer to experiences of integrational racial trauma and concerns about racial isolation, belonging and long-term outcomes for positive identity development.

- Discussions around saviourism and privilege can be supported by research and other White adopters books where their experiences can be good learning for adoptive parents.
- Be curious and observe openness, defensive emotional states.
- Summarise and paraphrase the adoptive parent's thoughts and feelings.
- Invite the adoptive parent(s) to correct your understanding. Encourage them to elaborate by asking them to expand their thoughts.
- The goal is to create a safe, non-judgmental space for both parties to express their thoughts and feelings, ensuring that each person feels heard and understood.
- This open dialogue lays the foundation for addressing concerns, challenging biases, and working together to support the child's well-being in a transracial adoption.

Past present/current concern:

Social Worker: Thank you for meeting with me today. I wanted to discuss some concerns that came up during your adoption linking and matching assessment. You mentioned that you "don't see colour" although you expressed a strong preference for adopting a [Black/Asian/Mixed-race]child of a specific race. I'm worried that these views could indicate a lack of understanding about the realities of racism and the importance of racial identity development in transracial adoption. I also want to explore any potential unconscious biases or fetishization [say specific] that came across in our discussions.

Immediate impact and reactions to the senses (senses):

Social Worker: When I hear statements like "I don't see colour," it sets off alarm bells for me. While well-intentioned, this colour-blind approach can actually invalidate a child's racial identity and experiences. Transracially adopted children need parents who are actively anti-racist and committed to nurturing their child's connection to their racial heritage. I also have concerns that expressing a strong preference because of their skin tone and exotic beauty race could be rooted in problematic stereotypes or fetishization.

Interpretations of the concern:

Adoptive Parent: I appreciate you bringing this up, even though it's uncomfortable to discuss. I genuinely believe that love is enough and that race shouldn't matter. I didn't realise that my "colour-blind" approach could be harmful. And if I'm being honest, I do have a strong affinity for [specific race] culture, but I never considered that it might be seen as fetishization. I can see now how that could be problematic.

Explore the feelings that could be associated with the act, behaviour or concern:

Social Worker: I understand this is a difficult conversation. Many well-meaning people hold these views without realising their impact. I feel concerned that without a deeper understanding of racial identity and a commitment to anti-racism, a transracially adopted child could feel disconnected from their heritage and ill-equipped to navigate racism. I also worry that fetishizing a particular race can lead to unrealistic expectations and harmful stereotyping of a child.

Wants and needs For the Child For the adoptive family What must change and why:

Social Worker: Every child needs to feel seen, valued, and supported in their identity. For transracially adopted children, this means having parents who actively celebrate and nurture their racial identity, who understand the realities of racism, and who are committed to ongoing anti-racism work. Adopters need to move beyond colour-blindness and examine their own biases. Fetishizing a child's race is harmful and can interfere with healthy identity development. These changes are essential for the well-being of the child.

Adoptive Parent: I'm beginning to understand how my views could be harmful, even if that was never my intent. I want to learn and grow so I can be the best possible parent to a child of any race. What do you recommend as next steps?

Social Worker: I'm glad you're open to learning and growth. I'd like to work with you to incorporate anti-racism education and self-reflection into your adoption preparation process. This will include learning about racial identity development, examining unconscious biases, and understanding the experiences of transracial adoptees. It's a lifelong journey, but this work is crucial for creating a safe, supportive environment for your child.

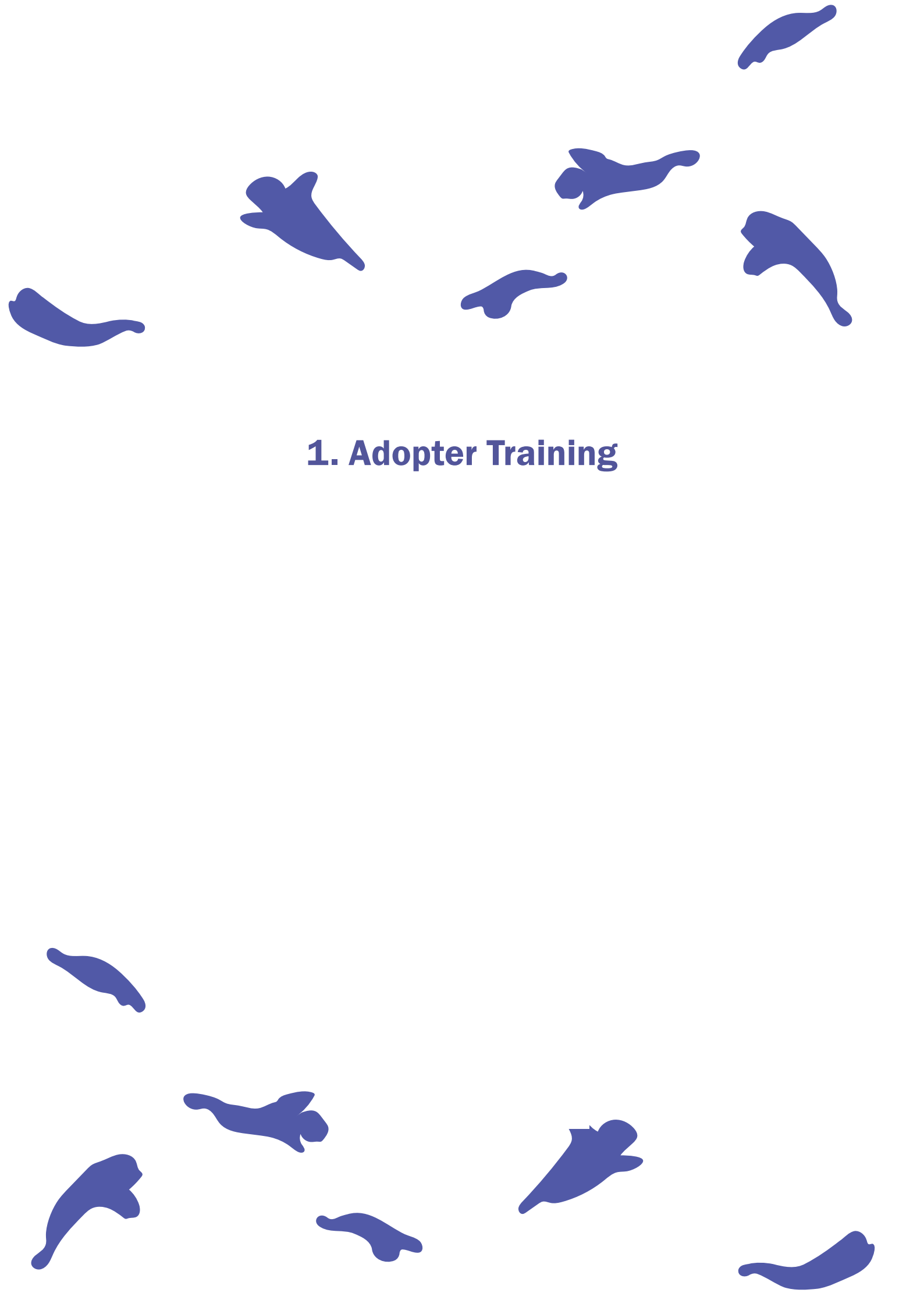
Highlight future actions and recommendations:

Social Worker: I recommend starting with some foundational resources on anti-racism and transracial adoption. We'll work together to help you develop a strong understanding of racial identity, challenge unconscious biases, and build connections within diverse communities. I'd also like to explore your affinity for [specific race] culture more deeply to ensure it's coming from a place of genuine appreciation and not fetishization. Let's schedule a series of meetings to dive into these topics and create an action plan for your growth. How does that sound?

Adoptive Parent: That sounds like a challenging but necessary process. I'm committed to doing the work to be the best parent I can be. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention and for your guidance in helping me grow.

The page features several blue fish silhouettes scattered across the white background. There are seven fish in the top half and seven in the bottom half, arranged in a roughly circular pattern around the central text. Each fish is a simple, stylized outline in a dark blue color.

Supporting PowerPoint Presentations



1. Adopter Training

Adopter Training

Understanding the Needs of Transracially Adopted Children: Racialised and minoritised ethnic children, also known as the 'global majority'



Aims of the training

- 1**

Understand the needs of racialised / minority ethnic / global majority children in transracial adoption
- 2**

Consider ways to support adoptive parents to develop positive racial and cultural identity development
- 3**

Understand micro-aggressions in relation to transracial adoption
- 4**

Apply race and cultural intentionality to foster cultural alignment and promote a sense of belonging in transracially adopted children.

The Social Identity Wheel



Reflection Pause: Using the Social Identity Wheel

List identities you think about and feel most comfortable.



Which ones give you more privilege or power?

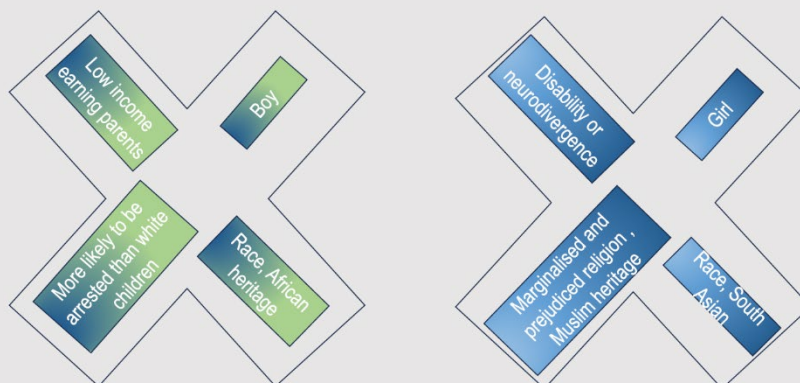
Think about identities that may cause internal conflict or identity confusion in transracially adopted children and how they differ from your own.

Why do they differ from yours, and what is your role as an adopter to address this conflict?

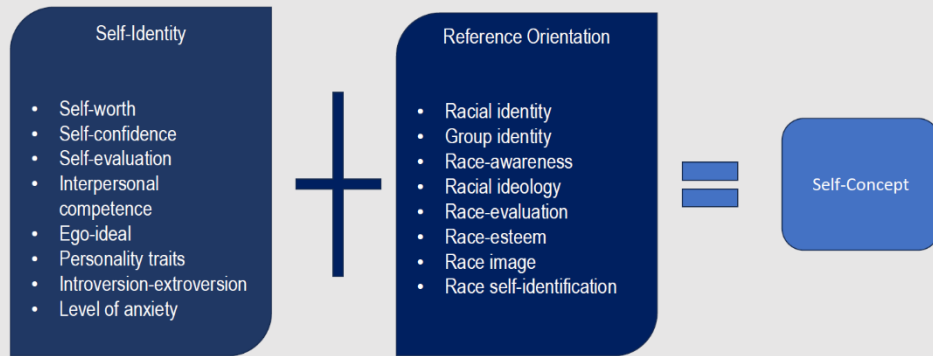


Transracially adopted children are not just their race of culture.
Intersecting identity factors compound their experiences of marginalisation

Example of Intersectionality



What Does This Mean In Adoption



“An optimal sense of identity... is experienced merely as a sense of psychosocial wellbeing. Its most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one’s body, a sense of ‘knowing where one is going’, and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition in those who count.”

(Erickson, 1968, p.165)

Factors that Influence a Positive Identity

- Race, cultural heritage & intersectional factors including language
- Ethnic pride
- Religious affiliation
- Family influences
- Immigration & acculturation experiences
- Peer relationships & social context
- Educational experiences
- Media representation
- Experiences of discrimination & racism
- Political & social movements
- History, slavery & colonial legacies

Where religion is concerned:

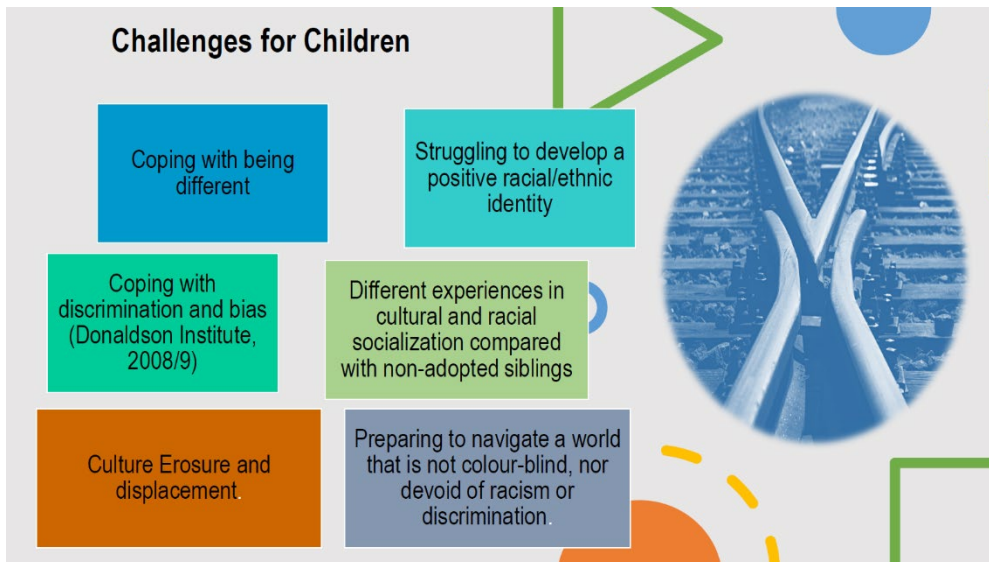
Children will thrive in environments that thrive to understand and make space for their religious needs.

(Cheruvalli-Contractor et al. 2021)



Challenges for Children

- Coping with being different
- Struggling to develop a positive racial/ethnic identity
- Coping with discrimination and bias (Donaldson Institute, 2008/9)
- Different experiences in cultural and racial socialization compared with non-adopted siblings
- Culture Erosion and displacement
- Preparing to navigate a world that is not colour-blind, nor devoid of racism or discrimination.

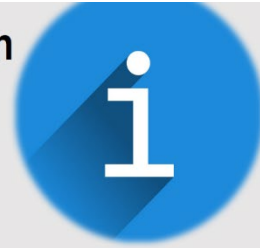


What Does Research Tell Us?

- Lack of awareness around the extent to which racism will factor into their lives
- White privilege is a barrier
- Minimisation of racial differences and colour blindness
- Inability to understand cultural practices and achievement
- Relying on urban street culture and objects for cultural integration

(Butler-Sweet, 2011; Park Nelson 2016; Raleigh 2017; Laybourn, and Goar, 2021)

What If There Was Missing Information



To create an environment that promotes the comprehensive well-being of adopted children of colour, parents adopting transracially cannot rely on passive methods of socialisation (e.g., school, diverse neighbourhoods, social media, restaurants, music)...

They must seek out, develop, and maintain social relationships that contribute to children's identity, belongingness, and culture.

(Barn 2013)

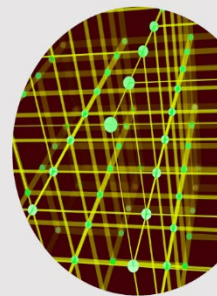
Being Cautions of Contributing to Systemic Racism

Inadequate or limited cultural competence training

Unaddressed cultural insensitivity

Matching processes that result in adoptive parents being selected based on stereotypes

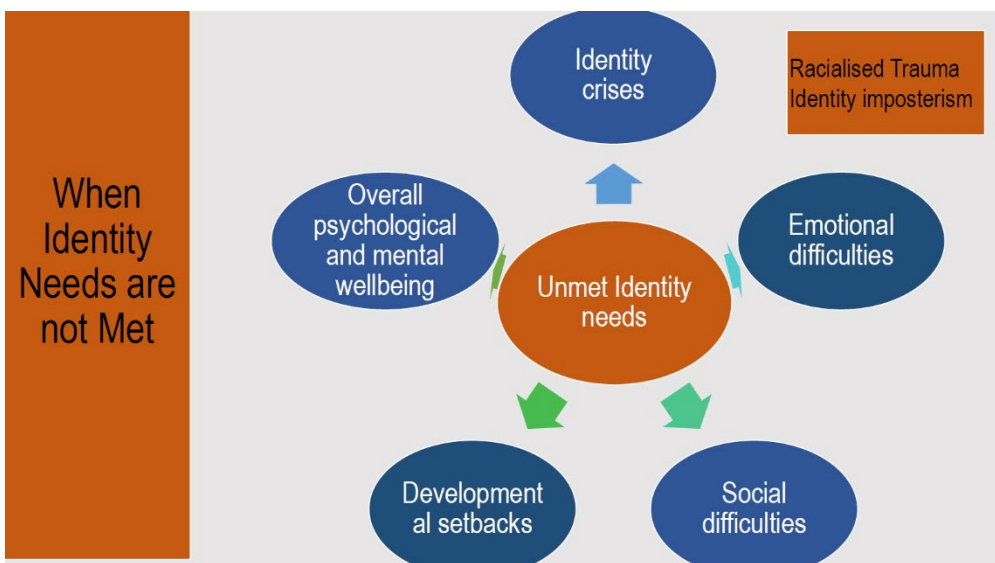
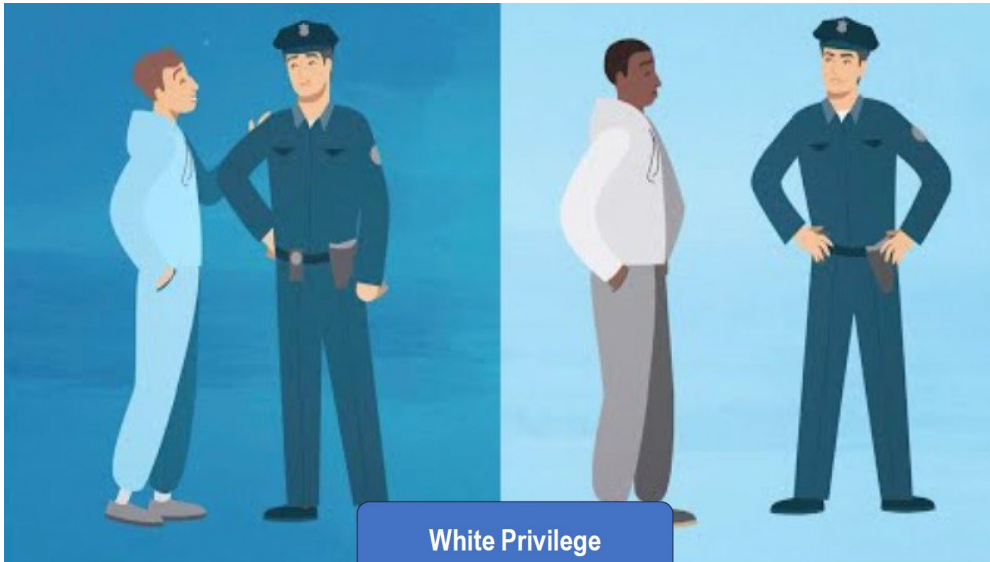
Limited access to cultural resources



How Adopters Contribute to Systemic Racism



- Failing to access support networks for transracial adoptive families
- Hindering exposure to, and understanding of, their racial and cultural heritage
- Making biased comments during the adoption process
- Gaps in accessing post-adoption support services tailored to transracial adoptive families
- No support to gain the skills to address challenges related to racial identity.



Racial Trauma

“Racialised trauma refers to the psychological and emotional distress experienced by individuals as a result of racial discrimination, oppression, or prejudice. It encompasses the cumulative effects of systemic racism, microaggressions and marginalisation.

These can be directly or indirectly experienced or witnessed, leading to feelings of alienation, powerlessness and diminished self-worth among affected individuals.”

(Williams, Metzger, Leins, & DeLapp, 2018)

Imposterism

Feelings of self-doubt, inauthenticity and fraudulence when it comes to one’s cultural background or racial identity compared to that of a dominant.

Cultural imposter syndrome is defined as:

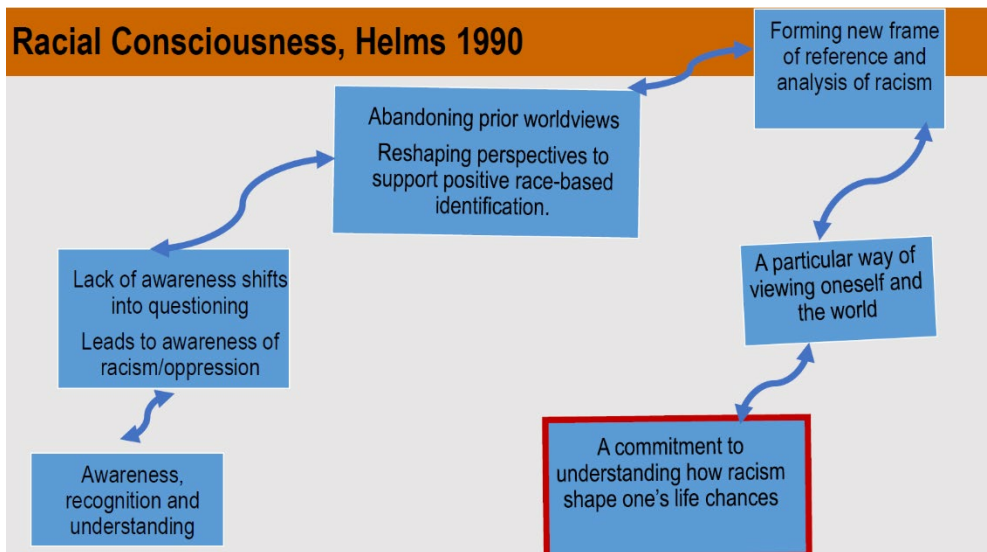
“Inadequacy, insecurity, and self-doubt around one's cultural knowledge and experiences, leading to a sense of being an imposter or fraud.”

Racial Identity imposter syndrome is related and refers to:

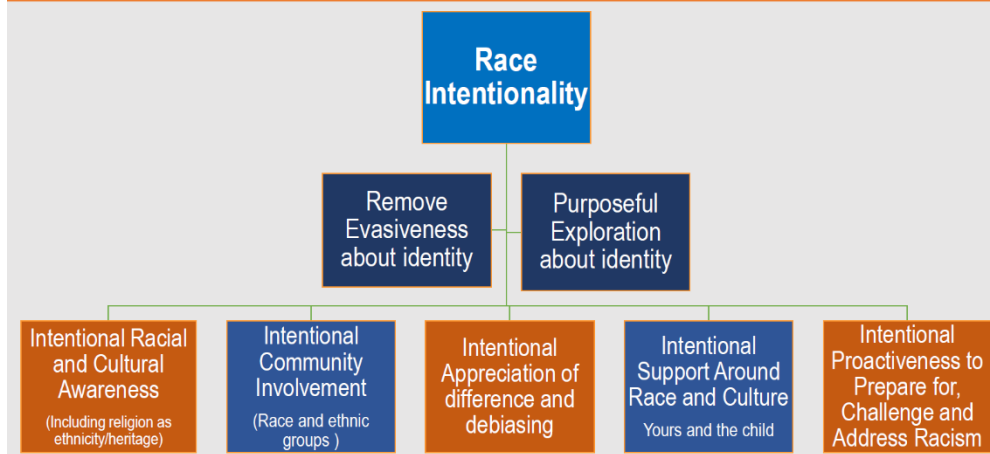
“Feelings of fraudulence and self-doubt in claiming marginalised identity often driven by experiences of oppression.”

(Cokley et al., 2017)

Racial Consciousness, Helms 1990



Race and Cultural Intentionality



What Is Needed From Adopters (1)

- Support with loss
- Active engagement in activities that connect the child to their identity
- Openness towards engagement with birth parents through contact or open adoption
- Preparedness to travel to the child's kinship country
- Understanding and support with adoptee's grief around lost connections
- Racial mirrors
- Support to build racial and ethnic identity – adoptee community

Birth parents from minoritised ethnic groups may classify their children's race differently across various contexts based on physical appearance, cultural norms, traditions, and whether the children are mixed, bi-racial, multi-racial, or have mixed heritage. Some may view racial identity as fluid, while others may emphasise transcending racial identity. In cases where there is uncertainty or lack of clarity about a child's identity, or concerns about shame in accepting a particular identity, it will be harmful to inadvertently impose your own racial or cultural identity on the child, or emphasise the child's link to biological ancestry based on assumptions about physical appearance.

Birth names also often have meaning, it is important to preserve this as name changes can lead to erosion of the child's connection to their roots.

What Is Needed From Adopters (2)

- Community connections including religion and other cultural and ethnic groups
- Affirmation of worth and belonging
- Consideration of enrolment of child into an appropriately racially diverse school
- Emotional tools to cope with discrimination
- Support to build adoptee's resilience, i.e. how to behave/act and respond to racism
- Provide post-adoption support around mental health, wellbeing and identity
- Providing the right and safe platforms and monitoring social media to ensure children access platforms that portray accurate information about children's heritage

What Is Needed From Adopters (3)

- Develop an informed "racial consciousness" and understanding of privilege
- Understand historical and contemporary realities regarding racism
- Actively seek out knowledge that challenges assumptions
- Recognise racial inequalities / understand systemic racism
- Actively develop cross-racial understanding - To be culturally competent and committed to accessing appropriate resources that meet the child's needs

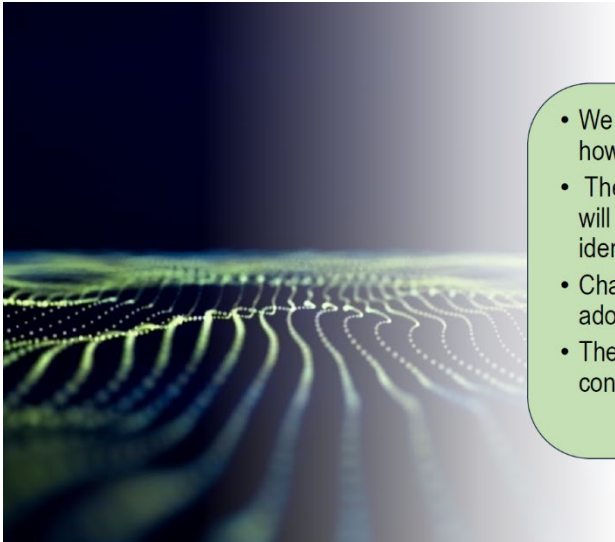


Reflection Pause



How will you actively ensure people in your support network also develop racial consciousness in order to promote the child's sense of belonging.

How do you create a safe and supportive environment for discussions about race within your family, where all voices are valued and respected?



- We looked at the identity wheel and how it supports self-reflection
- Theories of identity and how they will help adopters understand identity development
- Challenges experienced by adoptees
- The importance of racial and cultural consciousness

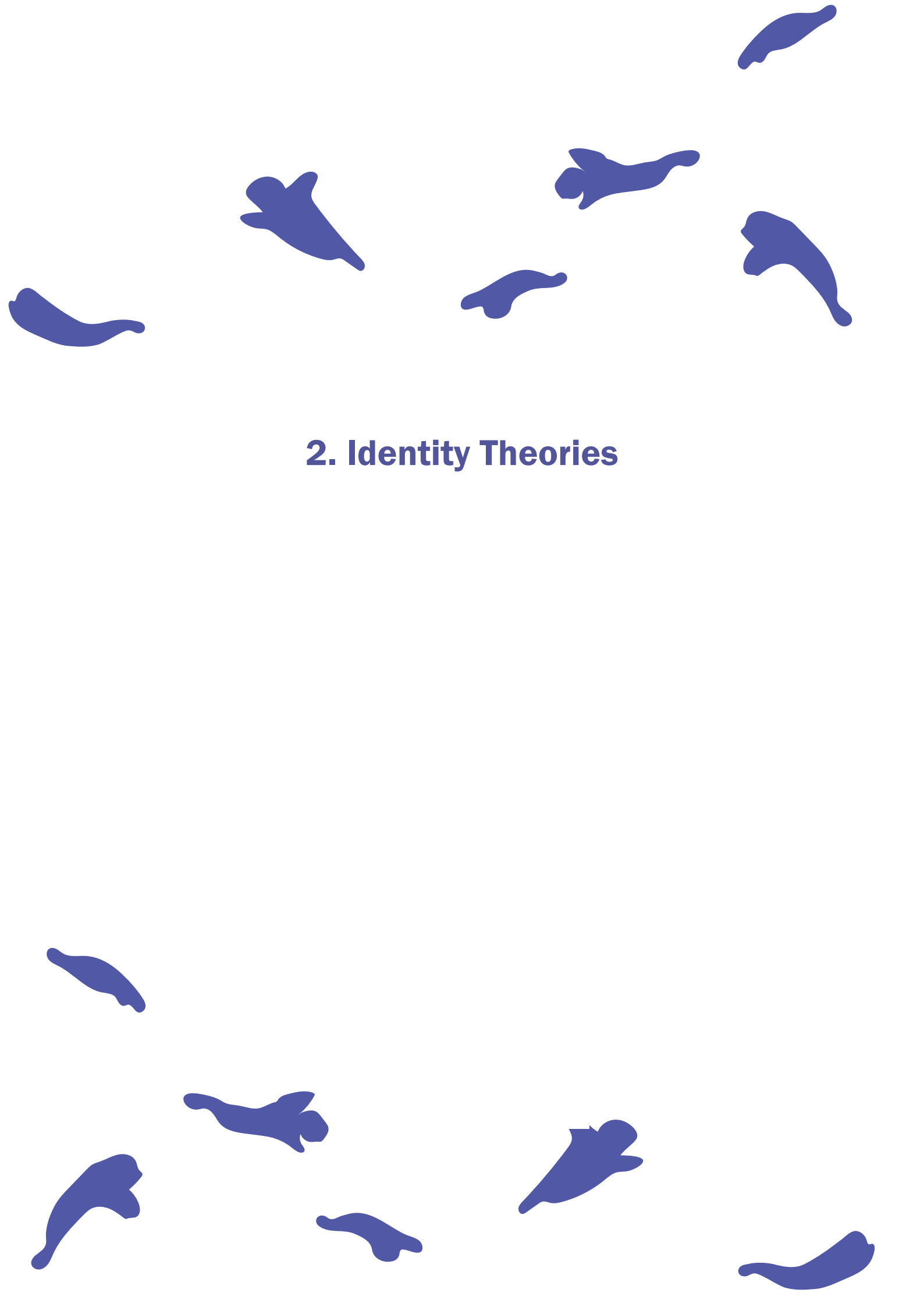
Mapping Training Against Matching Standards

- That the welfare of the child is paramount (race trauma, identity theories, lived expertise narratives)
- Child centredness and the child's wishes and feelings (impact across age-groups)
- Duty to ensure every child has every possible opportunity for matching (unconscious bias)
- Care and sensitivity to finding the right adopter able to make adjustments to meet the child's identity and cultural needs (cultural alignment model)
- Utilise full information providing the child's holistic developmental needs (recording)
- Collaboration with birth families, ensure all information needed is available and recorded (lived expertise narrative)
- Use documents that accurately represent the adopters' identity and child's holistic needs and identity (lived expertise narrative)
- Consideration of transracial adoption should begin in early permanency planning (cultural alignment model)

Thank you for your attention

This presentation was delivered by the University of Sussex
on behalf of Adoption England.

Contact Dr Tam Cane, Senior Lecturer in Social Work & Social Care:
Tam.Cane@sussex.ac.uk



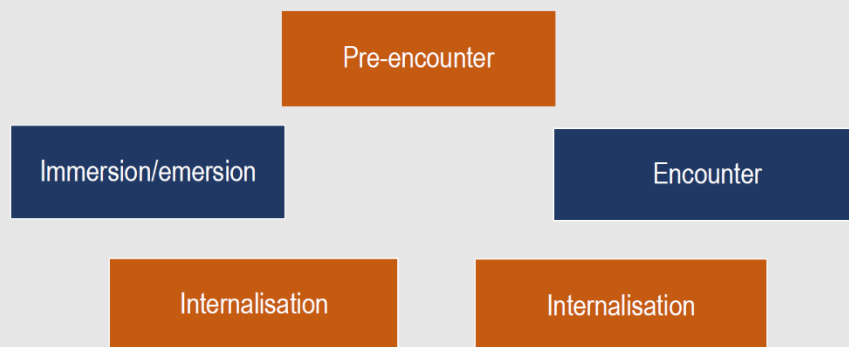
2. Identity Theories

Identity Theories :

Racialised and Minority Ethnic children – also known as the ‘Global Majority’



Black Identity Developmental Theory: Cross 1991, 95



Asian Identity Development Model (Kim, 1981-2001)

Ethnic awareness stage

White identification stage

Awakening to social political consciousness

Redirection stage

Incorporation Stage

Mixed Identity Theory: Root A non linear but circular experience



Transracial Adoption Identity Theory : Palmer (2011)

- **A dance** between racial, White cultural (adopters' identity), and transracial adoption identities
- "Wanting to be like White" and **assimilation** into a White middle-class identity during childhood
- **"Honorary" White status** among families and friends- dance with Whiteness
- **"Opening Pandora's Box"** involves questioning their identity and circumstances surrounding their adoption.
- **Reflection**, self-reflection and exploration of their racial and cultural identities
- **Empowering Experience Stage**: embracing and integrating all aspects of their identity

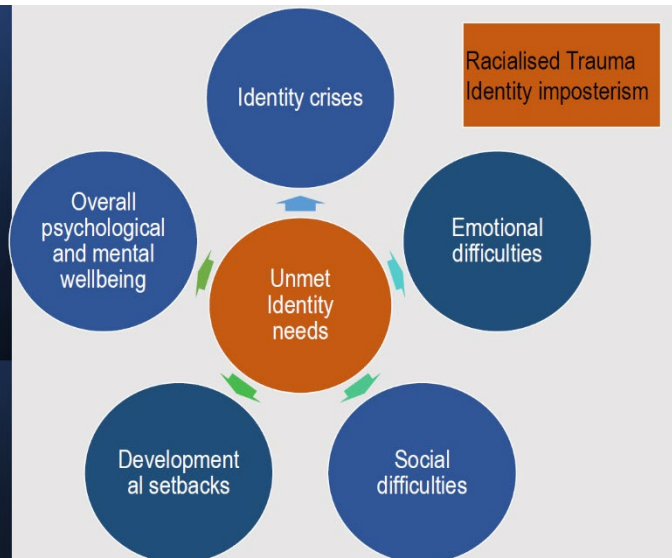
White Consciousness Model: Helms (1990)

- **Contact Stage**: lacks awareness of their own racial identity and the privileges associated with it.
- **Disintegration Stage**: individuals experience cognitive dissonance as they encounter evidence of racial inequality and injustice. Experience feelings of guilt, shame, when confronting privilege and the reality of racism.
- **Reintegration Stage**: attempts to rationalise or justify racial inequalities, often by blaming marginalised groups for their own circumstances. Cling to racist beliefs and a sense of superiority and control.
- **Pseudo-independence Stage**: questions their earlier beliefs and assumptions about race. However, may still hold onto prejudiced attitudes or resist acknowledging complicity in perpetuating racial inequality.
- **Immersion/Emersion Stage**: individuals actively engage in education, training, and discussions to deconstruct their own racial identity. Actively involved in anti-racist efforts, supporting children from racialised minorities, advocating for equitable access to resources.
- **Autonomy Stage**: individuals develop a strong sense of racial identity and commitment to social justice, challenges and disrupts racism

Reflection Pause

1. What stage of identity development do you think the children you are working with are currently experiencing?
 - What factors have you taken into account?
2. What challenges might a social worker with a different racial or cultural identity from the child experience in seeking to explore or understand the child's journey of identity development?
 - How can these be addressed?

When Identity Needs are not Met



Cultural Identity Imposterism

Feelings of self-doubt, inauthenticity and fraudulence when it comes to one's cultural background or identity compared to that of a dominant.

Cultural impostor syndrome is defined as:

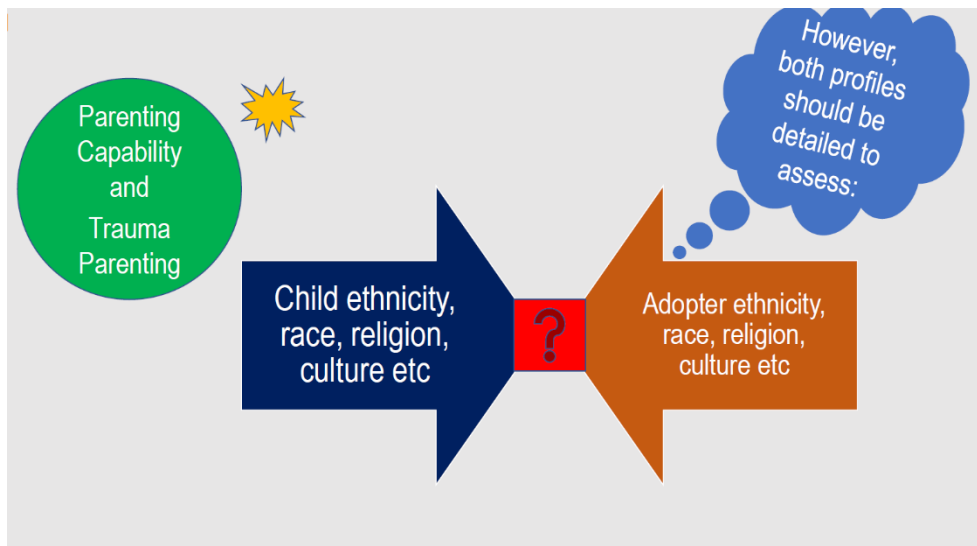
"Inadequacy, insecurity, and self-doubt around one's cultural knowledge and experiences, leading to a sense of being an impostor or fraud."

Racial Identity impostor syndrome is related and refers to:

"Feelings of fraudulence and self-doubt in claiming marginalised identity often driven by experiences of oppression."

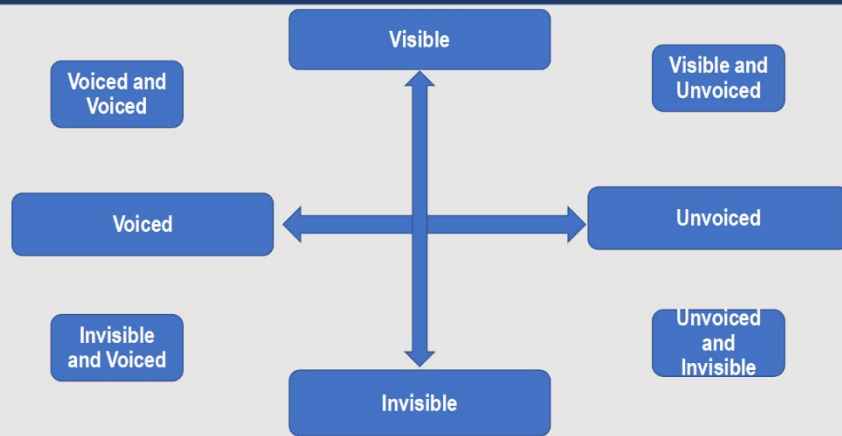
(Cokley et al., 2017)

In Planning and Matching



Cultural Alignment Matching and Model

CONSIDER VOICED/UNVOICED AND VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE IDENTITIES IN MATCHING See Burnham, 2012



Message from Lived Expertise



Mapping Training Against Matching Standards

- That the welfare of the child is paramount (race trauma, identity theories, lived expertise narratives)
- Child centredness and the child's wishes and feelings (impact across age-groups)
- Duty to ensure every child has every possible opportunity for matching (unconscious bias)
- Care and sensitivity to finding the right adopter able to make adjustments to meet the child's identity and cultural needs (cultural alignment model)
- Utilise full information providing the child's holistic developmental needs (recording)
- Collaboration with birth families, ensure all information needed is available and recorded (lived expertise narrative)
- Use documents that accurately represent the adopters' identity and child's holistic needs and identity (lived expertise narrative)
- Consideration of transracial adoption should begin in early permanency planning (cultural alignment model)

Thank you for your attention

This presentation was delivered by the University of Sussex
on behalf of Adoption England.

Contact Dr Tam Cane, Senior Lecturer in Social Work & Social Care:
Tam.Cane@sussex.ac.uk



The page features several decorative blue fish-like shapes scattered across the white background. These shapes are stylized and vary in orientation and position, appearing to swim in different directions. They are located in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right areas of the page, framing the central text.

3. Microaggressions in Transracial Adoption

Microaggressions in Transracial Adoption



Micro-aggressions are the foil of micro-affirmations and include subtle verbal and nonverbal environmental cues that communicate to an individual or group— usually to people of colour or of a lower socioeconomic status—that they are unwelcome, invisible, or incapable.

(Franklin, 2004; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2004)

Subtle Micro-aggression

Your child is so exotic-looking!

What country is your child

You're so articulate for someone like you.

- Can be difficult to define and recognise and therefore hard to speak about and challenge.
- Objectify them and reinforce the notion that their appearance is abnormal or outside the norm.
- Assuming that transracial adoptees must be from a foreign country
- Assuming lack of intelligence

Acts

Touching the child's hair without permission or making inappropriate comments about its texture.

- These can be verbal and non-verbal. They are things that are said and done.
- This is racial insensitivity, links to stereotypes and suggests hair inferiority.

Excluding the child from cultural activities or traditions because of their race.

- It invalidates experiences of racism and deny the realities of systemic discrimination, undermining their sense of self-worth and perpetuating feelings of isolation and marginalization.

Exclusion

You're not really part of this family, you know. You'll never truly belong here.

- They seek to exclude (whether consciously or not).
- 'Othering' people and letting them know they are not part of the 'in-group'
- Failing to provide the adoptee with educational materials, resources, or opportunities that reflect their racial or ethnic identity.
- Explanation: By neglecting to include diverse perspectives and experiences in the adoptee's education, they may feel overlooked or marginalized, reinforcing feelings of inferiority or invisibility based on their race or ethnicity.

Excluding the child from cultural activities or traditions because of their race.

Micro-assaults

You're not really part of this family, you know. You'll never truly belong here.

- **Verbal and non-verbal Attack:**
- Suggesting they are not genuine
- Attempting to exclude and marginalise the adoptee based on their racial or ethnic background.
- Disrespect and dismissal towards the adoptee's cultural background or heritage

Rolling eyes and sighing disdainfully when a child talks about their heritage or religion

Micro-invalidations

Negative comments insulting birth family. I'm glad we could rescue you from that environment.

You're better off not knowing your real parents

You're not really like us." or "You act so different."

- When comments are made, or actions taken that dismiss the experience of historically disadvantaged group members.
- Negative comments insulting birth family
- Unwanted and detached or ignored in the family
- Not pronouncing an adoptive child's name properly

Some Harmful and Invalidating Responses

They did not mean it like that

Just ignore and "just get over it"

They are a good person so it probably doesn't mean anything

You're overreacting. everyone experiences teasing sometimes

Some Example of Impact Of Microaggressions

Hurt, pain and re-traumatisation around racism and oppression

Pain can accumulate resulting in poor mental health lack of belonging

Erodes any trust & credibility so the adoptive parent is seen uncaring

Missing learning opportunities

Reinforces and perpetuates racism

Adopters and Responsibility for Microresistance and Microaffirmation

Microresistance

Incremental daily efforts to challenge white privilege and to help minoritised children cope with microaggressions.

Individual and collaborative efforts that empower children to cope with, respond to, and challenge microaggressions.

Dismantling systems of oppression
(Irey, 2013; Souza, Ganote, & Cheung, 2017)

Microaffirmations

Acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening.

(Scully & Rowe, 2009).

Responding to Microaggressions

- Avoid colour blindness
- Validate the experience/s
- Provide them emotional support
- Educate children through preparation for bias and racism talks
- Open and supportive communication
- Provide guidance to develop critical thinking skills about a range of situations that can be racism and how to manage them.
- Provide the right tools and space to talk about everyday experience within the adoptive family
- Intentional efforts to learn about and celebrate their child's heritage can foster resilience in the face of adversity.
- Accommodating and accepting the child's worldview, behaviours, and practices
- Foster a sense of trust and security within the parent-child relationship through listening and validating experiences
- Instil confidence in children to speak out against injustice and discrimination.
- Support children to develop a sense of agency and self-advocacy.

Open the Front Door Approach



Open the Front Door and:

- **Observe:** Concrete, factual, and observable (not evaluative)
- **Think:** Thoughts based on observations (yours and/or theirs)
- **Feel:** Emotions – “I feel (emotion).”
- **Desire:** Specific request or inquiries about desired outcome

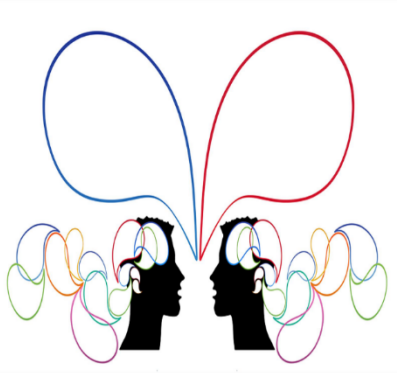
Approach to Manage Microaggressions



Observe:

When you asked my daughter if she was 'really' related to me, I noticed you questioning our family connection.

Approach to Manage Microaggressions



Think:

As her parent, I interpreted that as doubting the legitimacy of our family. It made me feel like I have to prove I'm her real parent.

Approach to Manage Microaggressions



Feel:

I felt hurt and frustrated when you questioned if she was 'really' my daughter.

Approach to Manage Microaggressions



Desire:

In the future, I would appreciate you refraining from questioning my child's relationship to me?

Reflection Pause

- What specific microaggressions have you personally encountered, and how did these experiences make you feel?
- When faced with microaggressions, what strategies or methods did you employ to challenge the aggressor and address their behaviour?
- How might you develop more confidence to engage in a dialogue about microaggressions in transracial adoption to prevent future incidents.

Reflection Pause

- How can you proactively identify and address microaggressions that transracially adopted child may experience, both within the family and in broader society?
- In what ways can you actively practice race intentionality in your parenting approach to support transracially adopted child's positive racial and cultural identity development?

Thank you for your attention

This presentation was delivered by the University of Sussex
on behalf of Adoption England.

Contact Dr Tam Cane, Senior Lecturer in Social Work & Social Care:
Tam.Cane@sussex.ac.uk





4. Race Trauma

Race Trauma

Dr. Tam Cane
Senior Lecturer University of Sussex



Aims of the training

1

Understand Race Trauma

2

Understanding Causes of Race Trauma

3

Consider Approaches to Reduce the Risks of Race Trauma in Adoption



Colleagues affected by race trauma.

I see you.

Please take care.

Definition of Race Trauma

The psychological and emotional distress experienced by individuals as a result of racial discrimination, oppression, or prejudice. It encompasses the cumulative effects of systemic racism, microaggressions, and marginalisation.

These can be directly or indirectly experienced or witnessed. Leading to feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and diminished self-worth among affected individuals (Williams, Metzger, Leins, & DeLapp, 2018).

Definition : Race-based traumatic stress injury (RBTSI)- Carter (2007)

- The threat of or actual “physical and emotional pain that results from racism in the forms of racial harassment (hostility), racial discrimination (avoidance), or discriminatory harassment (aversive hostility)” (p. 88).
- The physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual impact an individual endures after their safety and sense of self has been threatened due to racism (Evans et al., 2016).
- Symptoms of RBTSI have been likened to those experienced by survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to include rage, depression, devaluation of the self, alcohol use, and health
- complications

Cumulative Effects : History and intergenerational

- Passed down from ancestors and families before us
- Slavery, genocide, colonisation, and faith-based war), are more susceptible to race trauma.
- Racist monuments e.g Rhodes must fall (Kehinde Andrews 2018)
- Genetic risks or inherited epigenetic changes from ancestors due to previous incidents of race trauma or racial discrimination
- Previous experiences of other traumas and incidents of racial discrimination
- DNA is modified by social stressors, such as experiencing adverse life events (Mulligan et al., 2012), low socioeconomic status (Yehuda et al., 2015), genocidal war (McGowan et al., 2009), and combat associated post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Foundational stress – consequently, impacts high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer.
- Post traumatic stress disorders

Witnessing Race Brutality – Collective Pain

- E.g, Becares et al. (2023)
- Racism is dynamic and runs across age groups
- Intergenerational
- Causes hypervigilance and fear
- 30%-40% Black and Asian people live in fear



Everyday Racism

- Name based racism and exclusion
- Experiences of obvious (overt racism) or subtle (covert racism)
- Racial profiling
- Adultification
- Hate crime
- Micro-aggressions and stereotyping
- Experiencing racist jokes, insensitive remarks or comments that are racially offensive
- Observing racist symbols that trigger memories of racism and race trauma
- Racial discrimination or oppression intersectionally and across different services e.g health, education, housing or social care (including racial inequalities)
- Tokenism
- Assumptions about abilities
- And other...

Reflective Exercise

- Can you see the invisible wound during your work with children and birth families who suffer from race-based trauma?
- How confident are you to explore with birth parents their experiences of race trauma and to analyse this to better understand how the child maybe affected by their birth family's experience now or in the long-term?
- How do you think birth parents or birth families' own experience of race trauma affects racialised and minoritised children you are working with?

Case Study

Pre-birth Parent experience

- A child going through adoption
- Parents have history of integrational racial trauma
- Was exposed racial conflict pre-birth
- Different types of racism
- Misdiagnosis of mental
- Lack of services

Pre-birth Child experience

- Exposure
- Pre-disposed to race trauma
- Their response
- Adoption system
- Court proceedings there was support around fighting proceedings
- Lack family of family

Factors that Cause Race Trauma in Adoption

- Cultural erasure: This is the erasure or devaluation of the child's cultural heritage and identity. It can lead to feelings of disconnection, alienation, and loss among racialised individuals.
- JS Lee (2020) : *"adoption erased my Korean family, language and culture. It granted my adopters an adoption badge of honour for saving a poor child."*
- Ongoing racism.
- Microaggressions: which are gestures, or behaviours that convey derogatory or discriminatory attitudes can be traumatic for children. They can be experienced from family and in the community. Imagine these as constant mosquito bites that bite away into children. They carry disease resulting in serious cases of malaria, in this case race trauma.
- Systemic Racism: systemic racism starts pre-birth sometimes, and across public services so children's services, mental health service, housing, fostering and also adoption practice. Systemic racial injustices can reinforce feelings of marginalisation and powerlessness among children.
- The lack of minoritised ethnic adopters results in Black and Asian children remaining longer but when there is bias in matching and decision making
- *"Racism in a transracial adoptive family lead to fear and isolation. That fear then leads to children clinging onto Whiteness. They then comply with the safe White narrative because its all they have known. In the end, it is much more painful to overcome the brainwashing and barriers-even for those raised with racial support."*
- Witnessing Racial Violence and Hate Crimes: Exposure to acts of racial violence and racially motivated harassment in the family, community or on social media can result in fear, hypervigilance, and increased vulnerability in children.
- The cumulative impact of historical and intergenerational injustices, genocide, and forced displacement echoes through generations, perpetuating intergenerational trauma within racialised communities.

0-4 Years

- **Deprivation**

Lack of exposure to toys, books, food, and role models that reflect her racial, ethnic, religious and cultural identity.

- **Signs**

Fear – crying/distress around those of a different race.

Avoids looking at own face/body

5-8 Years

- **Deprivation**

- Others question her race, skin and hair.
- Questions about differences in her race are not answered.

- **Signs**

- Feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment
- Unprepared to answer questions about identity
- Unable to challenge microaggressions
- Somatic symptoms and anxiety

9-12 Years

- **Deprivation**

- Awareness of societal attitudes, stereotypes and racism
- Skills to healthily process and challenge racism
- Connectedness

- **Signs**

- Pressured to conform to stereotypes
- Destructive behaviours and depression
- Shame about racial and ethnic features
- Unable to challenge microaggressions

13 Years +

- **Deprivation**

- Lack of understanding of birth culture/family history
- Skills to healthily process and challenge racism
- Connectedness

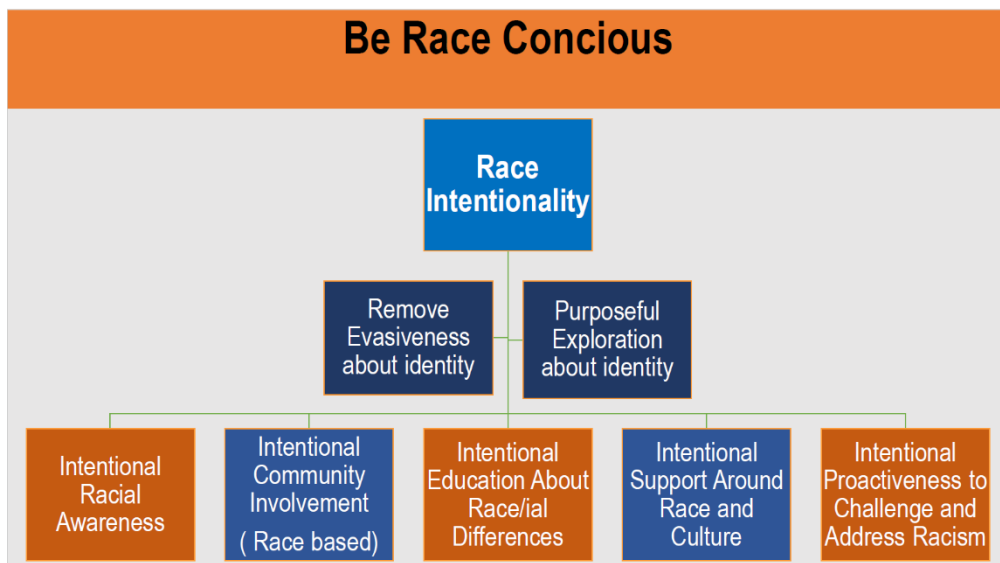
- **Signs**

- Struggles to process anger, hurt and confusion
- Suicide ideation
- Wrestles with questions of belonging and identity
- Explores birth culture and history

Reflective Questions

- How will you effectively shield children from witnessing hate crime.
- What will you confidently explain racial brutality to children in a way that protects them from the pain and trauma that comes with seeing hate towards people who look like your child.”
- Do you know what is in their history or DNA to support them with their vulnerability to race trauma?

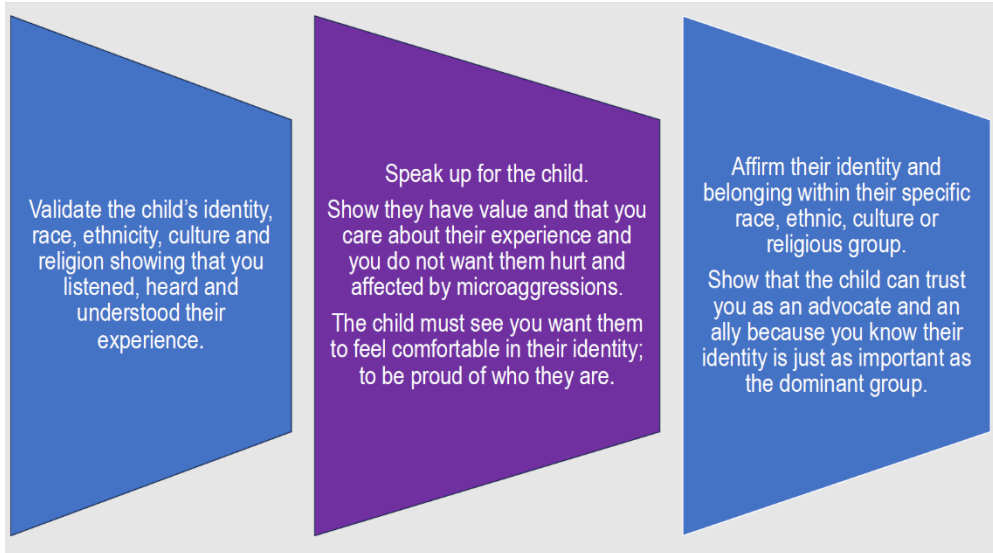
Be Race Concious






Intentional Support

- Providing toys, books, food and role models that reflect the appropriate racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural identity
- and responses to questions about race, skin, hair, etc.
- Challenges societal attitudes, stereotypes and racism
- Provide cultural connections
- Provide healthy ways to process and challenge racism
- Answering questions positively about differences in race





Thank you for your attention

Contact Dr Tam Cane, Senior Lecturer in Social Work & Social Care:
Tam.Cane@sussex.ac.uk



