What are the Key Contemporary Issues Surrounding Transethnic Adoption in England?

by

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Executive Summary

The literature review explores the key contemporary issues surrounding transethnic adoption in England, as part of a political, and media discourse that arose from changes to legislation in the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014). Changes to legislation removed local authorities' statutory duty to consider a child's ethnicity, racial, cultural and linguistic background when making decisions with regards to children in adoption processes. These changes were set in order to change the perceived culture surrounding the adoption of children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. A culture that saw children from those backgrounds waiting too long in the adoption process, due to social workers overemphasising the importance of attaining 'perfect ethnic matches' when considering adopters. Contemporary issues were identified, investigated, and discussed through the analysis of pre-existing literature, with regards to the implications on social work practice.

Methodology

- The ontological position held in this literature review is the interpretative epistemology. Qualitative data was considered to best answer the research question.
- Systematic searches were undertaken to collect data. There was an inclusion and exclusion criteria of post 2010 and peer-reviewed. All articles were then critically appraised for their strengths and limitations, cautions, research bias, funding, validity, reliability, generalisability, appropriate methodology, and an explicit focus and aims.
- The process of coding the came in three tiers. Firstly, the coding was based upon search terms, then during the reading of literature, further codes were identified. Thirdly, similar codes were amalgamated into relevant subject groups based on their connectedness and similarities. This process was recorded in a table to keep a clear track of data and to identify any emerging patterns in themes.
- Findings were generated from the themes for a thematic analysis.

Main Findings

- The issue pertaining to ethnic matching causing delay was exaggerated in both the media and government rhetoric resulting in changes to policy.

- Delays in the process of adoption were primarily procedural, and materialised in the court process.

- Professionals spoke of a caution with regards to speeding up practice, they agreed upon its importance but reflected upon the potential negative impact on safeguards.

- Adults who have been transethnically adopted, and also parents, had experienced varying levels of racism and discrimination. The geographical area was highly influential on the level of discrimination they received.

- Transethnically adopted adults felt reluctant to disclose abuse experienced in childhood, due to feeling like the high regard given to their parents for undertaking the adoption, would protect them from child protection procedures.

- Changes made to adoption policy in England could give rise to identity being an overlooked factor in the process of adoption.

- Parents teaching and facilitating a sense of identity is important, but parents do not have full control of the outcomes. Children's autonomy is expressed by the rejection, or acceptance of culture, and societal influences from their experiences in education, and any sphere outside of their family can be equally, if not more, significant to the child's development of identity.

Recommendations for further research

- Longitudinal studies with transethnically adopted children and young people with regards to experiences and impact of placement.

- Further research is also needed into the experiences of parents raising children in transethnic placements, investigating their views on identity formation, racism, discrimination and resilience.

- Research undertaken with social workers working within the remit of policy changes.

Recommendations for practice

- Social workers to have an awareness of the growing complexity of identity and contemporary family structures in England, considering how this has implications on practice.
- Social workers to give due consideration to all decisions whether they are explicitly in legislation or not. All aspects of a child's history, experience, and future, are relevant and social work practice must continue to reflect this.

Contents

Introduction

Research Aim

The overall aim of this literature review is to investigate, critically examine, analyse and discuss pre-existing literature to identify the key contemporary issues that surround transethnic adoptions in England. The findings will then be formulated into conclusions and recommendations for further research and the implication for current and future social work practice.

This chapter will set out the rationale, context and research bias to the study, followed by the section outlining the methodology used to respond to the research question.

Context

This is an important area of research due to transethnic adoption being part of contemporary political and media discourse (The Guardian, 2015). This discourse is arising from changes in legislation to change the culture of adoption processes relating to the placement of children from black and minority ethnic communities in England (HM Government, 2014). The perception of adoption from Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education in 2012, was that culture and ethnicity were being overemphasised in the matching processes, and that it was becoming an overriding consideration which resulted in longer waiting times for black and minority ethnic children. This was explicitly expressed in his Action Plan for Adoption (Department for Education, 2012). Previous to this in a speech during National Adoption Week that year, the Children's Minister in 2010, Tim Loughton, expressed that ethnicity should not be a barrier to adoption (Department for Education, 2010). This speech foresaw the newly appointed coalition government rhetoric and changes to adoption policy, which eventually solidified itself in reforms made in the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014), and the Draft statutory guidance on adoption (Department for Education, 2014). Seven key points for adoption reforms were made in Draft statutory guidance for adoption; one of them pertaining to transethnic adoption was to as stated by Department for Education

(2014, p.13), "remove the barriers to good placements caused by undue emphasis on finding a 'perfect' ethnic match".

The major change that the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014) made following its royal assent was to repeal section 1 (5) in the Adoption and Children Act (HM Government, 2002). Section 1 (5) gave local authorities in England a statutory duty to consider a child's ethnicity, racial, cultural and linguistic background when making decisions with regards to children in adoption processes.

The perspective of adoption associations and agencies has reflected the government's rhetoric in their response to reforms, often citing that close matches are preferable but timescales hold more weight to prevent further harm to the child, whilst also insisting the importance of cultural heritage and the importance in geographical locations reflecting some part of a child's culture (Adoption UK, 2014; British Association of Adoption and Fostering, 2012). This sets the scene for a highly complex discourse as reforms take hold in England.

The extent to which these changes to policy will have an effect on social work practice needs to be considered, alongside how it shapes the futures of transethnically adopted children. Furthermore, how much the government perspective on adoption reflects true social work practice, and the perspective of parents and children who are transethnically adopted or are parents in families with mixed cultural formations, will also need to be considered.

Research Bias

A family history of adoption and fostering drew me to the subject. I was myself, privately fostered in a close cultural match placement. My siblings were both long-term fostered and adopted transethnically, and also with close cultural matches. From what is known from their family history, they had a mixture of very positive and very negative experiences. Because of this balance, I do not have an emotionally charged, preconceived notion, or strong bias for what is

'right' or 'wrong' in this context, but a developed curiosity and openness to the subject, especially in the setting of social work practice, as this is the career I am embarking on. This is discussed further in the methodology under the bias section.

Rationale

This dissertation sought to answer its question through the undertaking of a review of the current literature surrounding transethnic adoption. A literature review was deemed to be appropriate because analysing many articles on the same topic can work towards new discoveries, and seek out gaps in research, whilst being the best method to answer the exploratory question (Aveyard, 2014).

Before looking into a literature review, I considered the alternative of carrying out empirical research to collect primary data. I decided against this because of the scale of research that can be undertaken at Master degree level. Limitations, time, resources and ethics were aspects that played into my rationale for choosing not to undertake primary research. I felt that the primary research I would undertake would not have a high enough degree of generalisability to reach a good level of validity (Bryman, 2001).

The following chapter will outline the methodology used in this literature review.

Methodology

Research Paradigm

Previous to deciding upon the methodological approach, it was essential to determine the research paradigm which the approach would be based upon. There are three areas that make up a research paradigm: firstly ontology; which refers to the nature of reality; secondly there is epistemology, referring to the theory of knowledge, which is how one can know and understand reality; then thirdly methodology, referring to how one carries out research with the aforementioned areas as its philosophical base (Guba, 1990).

The ontological position of the positivist paradigm is based upon a social reality that is truly objective in nature, a reality that is measurable and also not affected by the unpredictable nature of humans (Denscombe, 2002). Therefore on this basis, the reliability of research from this position is deemed to be at a high level due to its success in the natural sciences sphere (Denscombe, 2002). The epistemology in this position adopts the notion that the behaviour of humans can be predicted by objective cause and effect, which then can be interpreted through observations and experiments (Biggam, 2008). As observed by Denscombe (2002), the positivist paradigm's properties lend themselves to the investigation of natural sciences more so than social research, thus making positivism an inappropriate ontological position for this research area.

The ontological position held in this literature review is the interpretative epistemology. This position encapsulates the view that all social reality and phenomena are subjective (Bryman, 2001), a view that was appropriate and fitting for the subject of this literature review, as its social, moral and ethical perception, legal status, and meaning has changed over time and continues to develop. The interpretative research paradigm is open to individual understandings of people's realities that may be based on societal and individual contexts, and looks to seek out multiple perspectives based on various societal constructs (Biggam, 2008). In order to ascertain an in-depth and rich view of these perspectives, qualitative data was considered to best

answer the research question. Qualitative data is closely related to the interpretative paradigm, facilitating the scope of data collected to include both rich and personalised responses from a wide variety of sources, including primary research articles and discussion papers (Denscombe, 2002). In the context of this literature review, it was vital to bring together the perspectives of both service users and professionals working in the field of adoption in England, to interpret the meaning of the perspectives from the settings in which they are formed (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Operational Definitions

As stated by Aveyard (2014, p.34), "Many terms can have different meanings in different contexts and it is important that you make it clear right from the beginning the exact meaning you are referring to in your work", below are two definitions that arise from the title of this literature review.

Contemporary: referring to a specific period in time from 2010 to 2015 to reflect the period of Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition governments running of England. Policy changes and rhetoric that changed the landscape for adoption in this period form the context of the study.

Transethnic Adoption: A term which is often used interchangeably with 'Transracial Adoption', referring to dual heritage and black and minority ethnic (BME) children being placed with adoptive families and parents who are typically white (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012).

Data Collection

The process of data collection began by identifying key search terms that derived from the research question, taking into account historical use of terms that may no longer be used in current research to maximise the search strategy in finding relevant literature (Aveyard, 2014).

Data was collected through the use of four main databases: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Social Policy and Practice, Social

Sciences and Citation Index, and finally the Social Services Abstract [See Appendix 1].

This data collection was supplemented by grey literature searches that used the Open Grey and Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE). Following the collection of articles from these databases, the snowballing sampling technique was deployed in order to find further relevant research literature. Reference lists of all articles were searched, and also the journal collections that housed the articles (Denscombe, 2003).

There were instances in which search terms returned an unmanageable number of hits. When this happened, adjustments were made to the Boolean logic, such as wildcards and searching in titles instead of abstracts. Another issue that contributed to some unmanageable hits returned was the word 'adoption' being a verb as well as noun in the way it is thought of in this research, thus creating irrelevant literature findings. In those cases, the search terms were again adjusted to lower the rate of hits returned. This process continued until saturation was reached through the consistent repetition of references found in databases and alternate search strategies (Aveyard, 2014).

A limitation in the data collection was found in discussion papers that are funded by specific organisations and sold commercially. These studies come in book form only and are neither accessible through the University of Birmingham library or electronically. Many of the books are mentioned briefly in discussion papers sourced in the literature review, and any data analysed that referred to them was critically appraised to reflect this.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In order to follow the operational definition of contemporary, the inclusion criteria was literature that was published post 2010, and also peer reviewed in order to reach a high standard of validity (The British Academy, 2007). Only research from England was included in the literature in order to achieve a

systematic approach within the scale of the dissertation, and also taking into account the legal status, societal context and government rhetoric that currently sets England apart from other countries. To use research from contexts disparate to England's contemporary adoption sphere would deplete the validity of the literature review. Also, as previously discussed in the Operational Definitions section, 2010 was the year in which government rhetoric was changing with the implication of a new government in England.

There was a limited number of primary research journals that fitted into the inclusion and exclusion criteria but, as stated by Aveyard (2014, p.46), "if an area has not been well researched, and there is little research-based information available, then practice literature, for example, or discussion pieces and expert opinion, can add a wealth of insight into the topic for the reviewer".
The decision to not reach further back in research was also due to the difference of political contexts of which the primary research studies would have taken place. Five primary research papers and three discussion papers fitted into the inclusion criteria for use within the literature review.

Critical Appraisal

All articles that met the criteria for inclusion were summarised and critically appraised [See Appendix 2]. This was part of the process of identifying the type of literature, and where each journal article would stand in the hierarchy of evidence (Aveyard, 2014). Research articles were placed in the top of the hierarchy, then discussion papers, and lastly practice papers. During analysis, articles higher up in the hierarchy would hold more weight in discussions of themes.

The critical appraisal tool for qualitative research developed by the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2013) was used to identify key areas for appraisal, such as strengths and limitations, cautions, research bias, funding, validity, reliability, generalisability, appropriate methodology, and an explicit focus and aims.

Ethics

No ethical approval was needed because no primary data was collected. Therefore, issues such as the relationship between participants and researcher, consent, privacy, deception and harm to participants are not applicable (Bryman, 2001). Only in aforesaid critical appraisal of primary sources do these become a factor in the literature review.

The literature review's ethical foundation is that of the principles set out in the British Association of Social Workers (BASW, 2012) Code of Ethics. BASW (2012, p.7) has stated that:

> "Social work bases its methodology on a systematic body of evidence informed knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including indigenous knowledge specific to its context. It recognises the complexity of interactions between human beings and their environment, and the capacity of people both to be affected by and to alter the multiple influences upon them including psychosocial factors".

Funding

This literature review did not receive funding or sponsorship from an organisation or local authority. This helped reduce the probabilities of research bias entering any process of the review, but also limited the data available to collect from commercially distributed discussion papers.

Bias

Self-reflection was a critical aspect of thought throughout the course of data collection and analysis, because I am not a wholly objective observer of data. The interpretations made are subjective and are potentially influenced by personal and professional experiences of the topic, particularly my position as a social worker in training (Aveyard, 2014). A method used to counteract this was to read all data multiple times, and reflect upon how my value base affects the analysis and collection of data (Thompson, 2009).

Coding

The process of coding the data in preparation for analysis came in three tiers. Firstly, the coding was based upon the search terms used, and then during the reading of literature, further codes were identified. Thirdly, similar codes were amalgamated into relevant subject groups based on their connectedness and similarities (Aveyard, 2014). This process was recorded in a table to keep a clear track of data and to identify any emerging patterns [See Appendix 3].

The following chapter presents findings from the generated themes for a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is open to the mixed data set types collected, as opposed to alternative methods, such as meta-analysis, meta-ethnography and meta-study. As stated by Aveyard (2014, p.142), "none of the approaches can incorporate qualitative, quantitative and discussion papers with each other", and as this piece of research incorporates multiple data set types, thematic analysis was an appropriate method of analysis for the literature review.

Findings

1. Ethnic Matching and Delay

One of the main issues surrounding transethnic adoption in England is the notion of ethnic matching, and in the context of legislative changes, specifically how this has the potential to cause unjust delays in the process of adoption. Through this lens, transethnic adoption is then seen as an option to reduce delay in proceedings. This chapter will explore and analyse contemporary literature on this subject.

Wainwright and Ridley (2012) undertook primary research that evaluated the practice of an adoption agency where the focus was on the placement of children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, alongside the recruitment of potential adopters from those backgrounds. Interviews, focus groups, internet surveys and questionnaires were carried out with adopters and professionals working within the agency, and a local authority. Fourteen adopters were interviewed, six took part in a focus group, and four completed a postal questionnaire. Alongside these, examinations of sixteen adoptive families' records, and the organisations recorded information on ninety-seven children with the seventy-eight families they were placed with. Limitations to this study were present in its internal validity, due to its conclusions appearing to be slightly disconnected from its findings, which potentially highlights a research bias (Bryman, 2001). The conclusion appeared to show a perspective of the organisation that the findings actively opposed.

Professionals that worked within the agency expressed that they do not actively encourage transethnic adoptions, but their practice was not rigid in terms of what they considered an ethnically matched placement. The aim was to look at each case individually and to make holistic considerations, as opposed to achieving a 'perfect ethnic match' (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012). This was reflected in the positive responses from adopters, in cases where they perceived similarities in 'race' between them and the child as outweighing the variance in culture in a successful assessment. There was a variance in

responses in a minority of adoptees' experiences of assessment, for example an adoptee that felt pressure to conform to a child's historic cultural and religious background:

> "When it actually came to matching us with a child, there were few, if any children of Hindu religion or ethnicity and all the Asian/white children that actually came up mostly seemed to come from Muslim families, and we weren't particularly worried about that if we didn't have to bring them up as Muslims … I suppose we felt rather pressurised into a little bit having to compromise on what our ideals and expectations had been". (Adopter, Asian Indian, specialist project, cited in Wainwright and Ridley, 2012, p.54)

The holistic nature of the agency's matching processes included the consideration of factors such as disabilities, health needs, and the history of the child pertaining to abuse and neglect. The history of the birth parents were also taken into consideration (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012). This infers that in a case where there was a 'perfect' match based on ethnicity, then other factors may override that ethnicity factor, because holistically, the match would be seen as inappropriate for the child's needs.

A close ethnic match was seen only as a possible foundation to work upon in the matching process. Where this was not possible, it did not then create a barrier to stall the process, therefore causing delay, but was replaced with alternate foundations and starting points in the process. As stated by Wainwright and Ridley (2012, p.55), one of these was that "…prospective adopters had the ethnic, religious and cultural sensitivity to bring up their adopted child(ren) to appreciate, understand and value his or her own birth ethnicity and religion".

Moreover Barn and Kirton (2012) wrote a discussion paper on the topic of transracial adoption in Britain. It must be noted that a limitation to the article is

that it does not draw from primary research analysis; therefore, the conclusions, findings and analysis are based on professional and expert opinion. There was no reference to a potential research bias, and in this paper transracial adoption is used as a term interchangeable with this literature reviews operational definition of transethnic adoption. The authors are prolific writers in the field of adoption.

Barn and Kirton (2012) observe that there is a lack of evidence that point to delays caused by the attempt of finding 'perfect' ethnic matches in adoption processes. This is in direct contention with media and governmental rhetoric, with the latter consistently cautioning against efforts to attain perfect matches. Adoption agencies holding strong agendas in a proscriptive nature towards ethnic matching has been an exaggerated issue both in media representations of the discourse, and government policy papers (Barn and Kirton, 2012).

Kirton's (2013) discussion paper focused on the adoption reforms in England. His critical appraisal matches that of Barn and Kirton (2012). The main finding from this paper further highlights the view of a highly contentious crisis in the field of adoption, with regards to ethnic matching being overstated in order to help devise 'radical' policy changes. As stated by Kirton (2013, p.97), "It is argued that while there is evidential support for some of the reforms, they are significantly driven by political concerns and reflect a 'manufactured crisis", the main symbol of this being perfect ethnic matching. Kirton (2013) observes that whilst the contemporary spotlight on matching has been inherently intertwined with procedural delay, most delays that arise in the adoption process are of a systematic nature. The process of matching an adopter with a child is generally pragmatic, thus not giving rise to extensive delays.

Ali's (2014a) discussion paper also focuses on the exploration of transethnic adoption in the context of contemporary governmental reforms. The paper explores the reforms, but also in relation to transnational adoption,

multiculturalism and national identity. The author is prolific in the field of adoption. Conclusions from this discussion are based on expert opinion and exploration of contemporary debates. Ali (2014a) argues that due to the large emerging landscape of cultural diversity in Britain, the notion of finding a 'perfect ethnic' match is in itself problematic as the concept is impossible at is sociological root. Therefore, using this concept to drive any aspect of social work practice is an oversimplification of a progressively complex discourse. It is conceivable that this is one of the factors that drive the governmental rhetoric in adoption reforms, but it is, again, problematic to base an argument on social workers prescriptively working towards an impossible concept in such a black and white fashion.

Ali (2014a) further observes that the application of ethnic matching is uneven in practice, and when oversimplified can take a negative form. An example given is a case in which a mixed raced child who lived with a maternal grandmother, who was not religious, was placed with a highly religious family that were black Caribbean. The child's personal wishes were that he wanted to be placed with a white family, but in this case, the white grandmother was not seen as able to cater to needs pertaining to the child's development of racial identity. This is a case in which the use of the term 'due consideration' was being misused, but as observed by Kirton (2013), it can be argued that this form of malpractice occurs in a small minority of cases when placed within a national context, therefore not holding enough weight to constitute evidence supporting 'radical' adoption reforms.

Ali's (2014b) primary research paper explores debates surrounding transracial adoption in England, through the analysis of policy, government rhetoric, media, and qualitative data from parents and professionals. Data was collected through participant observation in nine workshops, conferences and training events for potential adopters, professional practitioners, and existing adopters. Eleven semi-structured interviews took place, with interviewees including: a legal professional, two trainer consultants, two team managers, two social workers,

and three parents who had adopted transethnically. The author acknowledged that the research received no funding. The paper did not include reference to research bias on part of the author. Moreover, limitations of this research is that the findings were preliminary, due to the research not being fully completed, thus creating a scope for a broader range of results upon completion.

A broad range of professionals and parents took part in the study thus far, justifying the selected recruitment strategy. Due to research not being fully realised, a more in-depth methodology was not possible. There was a variety of perspectives taken from the qualitative data collected, which infers there was not a strong bias or agenda present in the data chosen to use in the paper.

One of the main findings was that the notion of delay and speeding up practice is concerning to professionals who feel the need to balance this with sensible decision making. Professionals expressed that they were worried that this may be to the detriment of protective elements embedded in policy and procedures. Some professionals stated that the process should be longer and take as long as needed (Ali, 2014b).

> "It's very difficult if you're working with, you know, you're thinking about this child, this young person and you are making certain assessments and decisions that's going to impact on a child's life, for the rest of his or her life, that's going to change the course of the direction of their lives and how can we possibly put the timescale or speed or say in three months that the child needs to be placed or in six months that the child needs to be placed". (1-3 female social worker, cited in Ali, 2014b, p.74)

Ali's (2014b) findings supported Kirton's (2013) as they also observed that practitioners expressed delays coming from the court proceedings more often than the process of finding matches. It was acknowledged that speeding up the process was possible and needed, but with due caution as to how one achieves

it. The protective elements must stay intact because there was a good reason why they were put in place originally (Ali, 2014b).

A parent saw the speeding up of transethnic adoption processes as a negative direction, as stated by 1-10 female, white adopter of a black child (Ali, 2014b, p.74): "Well, I don't think they should make it easier to adopt, because it's bloody hard, and actually I think if they made it easier, yes, and they just rush people through…it would be a catastrophe, you know".

The professionals interviewed felt that their voices were not being heard, represented, and/or considered in the shaping of policy, or that there was an acknowledgement of the level of difficulty, and life impact their job entailed. Most professionals believed that only people who had negative experiences were being listened to (Ali, 2014b).

Dance and Farmer (2014) undertook primary research to explore adoptive parents' experiences of assessment, preparation and delays, as well as their thoughts with regards to the kinds of children they deemed themselves as having the ability to parent. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with twenty-seven adopters with a mixture of open and pre-coded questions. Alongside this method, an analysis of 149 case files using a pre-coded performer was undertaken. The sample set of twenty-seven was small, and is therefore not generalisable across England. Conclusions matched the findings and the methods and research designs were appropriate to the aims of the study. Ethical considerations were presented explicitly in the paper, and there was no reference to potential research bias.

Age and disability were the dominating factors expressed when parents spoke of the kind of children they considered adopting. The research had no mention of ethnicity or transethnic adoption in its findings. This can infer two things: firstly, that transethnic adoption was not in any of the experiences of the adopters, and therefore did not inform any of their answers; or secondly, that

the researchers had taken into consideration proposed policy changes, and purposefully did not have questions pertaining to transethnic adoption in the open and, more importantly, in the pre-coded questions.

The researches relation to transethnic adoption comes in its discussion and findings of the recruitment process - how the parents' desire to adopt was generated. Most parents expressed that they did not begin the process from explicit marketing and recruitment strategies; they simply felt their lives came to a point where they were naturally ready, and they felt that they had the necessary resources to undertake adoption (Dance and Farmer, 2014). This is not to say that marketing and recruitment strategies did not assist at any stage of the parent's thought processes, as stated by Dance and Farmer (2014, p.104):

> "A few people mentioned that advertisements by agencies in newspapers or other magazine articles had proved a 'spur' to action and one mentioned National adoption week, although in all cases adoption was something they were already thinking about."

This calls into question the thoughts surrounding increasing the pool of adopters from minority ethnic backgrounds and how this can realistically be achieved, its relevance to transethnic adoption being that it could potentially be less of an issue if the pool of adopters matched the numbers of children needing placements. Wainwright and Ridley (2012) argue that minority ethnic groups may, in general, have more barriers to adoption, including constraints in housing set ups, and incomes that are below average.

Ali (2014b) argues that, in order for a person or family to have the space opened in their mind to contemplate adoption, there must be a certain level of economic stability and resources of time; without these, barriers to adoption are created. These aspects cannot be ignored because people who have those resources in abundance are more likely to be favoured for adoption, and

statistically these are more often white parents. As stated by Ali (2014b, p.79), "Adopting a child is expensive, and providing care for children with any kind of emotional and behavioural difficulties requires of the most precious resources, Time".

The complexity of recruitment is overshadowed by the notion that loving, stable homes are all that is needed to adopt a child (Department for Education, 2013). As stated by 1-5, independent social worker (Ali, 2014b, p.77) "A loving home is not the only thing that children need. Lots of people can provide a loving home. Not everybody can be a parent".

An aspect of transethnic adoption that holds great importance is the parent's ability to be sensitive to issues of racial politics that the child may be involved in throughout their childhood. Ali (2014b) observed that parents were often shocked at the level of what they considered ignorance to issues of ethnicity from other prospective adopters when they attended training groups focused on transethnic adoption. Professionals within the agency spoke of the misunderstanding that often comes from assessing these issues, that acknowledging the importance of finding parents sensitive to the wider issues of race in assessments is somehow akin to the refusal of transethnic adoption in a simplistic manner based on a principle, or a dogmatic political stance (Ali, 2014b).

The following chapter will further discuss the literature pertaining to racism, discrimination and resilience.

2. Racism, Discrimination and Resilience

Resilience to racism and discrimination is a subject within transethnic adoption that is vital to explore when considering the needs of the child within the discourse.

Harris (2014) undertook primary research to ascertain the views and experiences of transethnically adopted adults with regards to their childhood and their experiences of post-adoption services. The paper was based upon a thematic analysis of qualitative data from twelve transethnically adopted adults, seven of who were interviewed and five that attended a LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) focus group. The participants included six males and six females, Interviewees aged 19-33 and focus group attendees ages 25-44. Limitations of this study were that the sample set was not generalisable, and as adults talking in retrospect of a previous era, it is difficult to know exactly how representable the issues expressed are of children currently having been adopted. This is due to changes in society in which the likelihood of being raised in a culturally and ethnically diverse area is raised in cities across England.

Most of the interviewees expressed that they experienced varying levels of racism in their childhoods as transethnically adopted children. This occurred in the communities in which they were raised, within the context of family, and also in their schooling (Harris, 2014):

> "…me and my brother were the only Indians in that area, so we had a lot of racism at school, people picking on us at school and stuff…I felt like I owed my parents, you know. I had to be good because I owed them because they rescued me and like, took me home…My brother had a lot of stick when he went to the comprehensive school, like knives and all sorts". (Rashpal, cited in Harris, 2014, p.351)

Harris (2014) argues that the notion of being rescued is vital, because this infers the potential of a wall being created between the child and parent. The child may not want to open up to the parent about her or his experiences for support, for want of not being too 'difficult'. As stated by Harris (2014, p.351), "Services should recognise the prevalence of racism during childhood and provide an opportunity to talk about any experienced, including from adoptive parents", and current reforms that aim to take a more 'colour blind' position could decrease the likelihood of services catering to these experiences in the future.

Emotional, physical and sexual abuse were significant experiences shared by most that took part in the LGB focus group (Harris, 2014). Participants felt that white adopted parents were potentially protected from child protection processes, due to the high social perception of adopters. Abuse was racialized and prevented children from disclosing abuse in and around the time it was happening (Harris, 2014). According to Harris (2014, p.354), "Such disclosures raise the question of how widespread abuse and neglect of black children by white adoptive families may have been in historical placements", and to what extent experiences such as those translate to society today is something that must be taken into account. It can also be argued that the current reforms would work towards the normalisation of transethnic adoptions, removing the high social perception, and creating an even ground in terms of child protection.

The needs of transethnically adopted children and adults are multi-layered. Great care must be taken in the stage of parental assessment to ensure they have the resources to cater to specialised needs, such as cultural immersion (Harris, 2014). It can be debated that without this, the state is carrying out institutional racism (Harris, 2014).

The perspective of adoptive parent's resources for countering racism through developing and facilitating a sense of resilience to racism was explored by Wainwright and Ridley (2012). A white manager of a comparator project (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012, p.56) stated that "if you look at a child, a mixed-

raced child or Asian-white child and you place them in another, broadly speaking, black family, they are going to experience less racism in my view than they would if they were placed elsewhere". This view formed part of the potential ethic matching foundation, as a prospective adopter's personal experience of discrimination could work towards a child's resilience to racism, to a level that may not be possible from a percentage of white parents (Wainwright and Ridley, 2012).

Barn and Kirton (2012) explore the argument that ethnic matching, as a whole, can be seen as an intrinsically racist form of practice, both from the perspective of children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and that of prospective white adopters; the former working from a 'colour-blind' angle that is exclusionary of race being an important factor amongst the discourse. Historical and current research makes this a problematic argument, but the policy surrounding current reforms infer an allegiance to such beliefs. This allegiance appears to be exaggerated in media with stories of white adoptees being turned down purely on the basis of race, when the picture of why a prospective adopter would be turned down is far more complicated.

Caballero et al. (2012) undertook primary research to explore the experiences of children and families outside of the care system who have mixed heritages within them, the issues that surround their identity and how families raise and facilitate this. They further explored how children understand belonging and difference, whilst showing how this relates to policy surrounding transethnic adoption. Although these experiences would not translate fully to children in the care system, the perspective is important in gaining a broader understanding of families with mixed heritages, and seeking out its implications on social work policy and practice. Qualitative data was collected through interviews and case studies with thirty-five mixed raced couples and forty single mothers who have raised children from a mixed heritage backgrounds. Opportunistic sampling strategies were used to collect data, and the funding of the study was clearly presented in the research paper. There was no reference to potential research

bias, but within the introduction and throughout the paper, the authors refer to contemporary same-race policies in England, which do not exist in that overt manner. This implies a particular perspective and position taken regarding the primary data collection, analysis and conclusions.

According to Caballero et al. (2012), racism played a part in parents' relationships and within family spheres. Many parents expressed discrimination from wider family members towards them, discrimination that took shape in multiple forms, from shock and stigma surrounding the interethnic relationship, to more extreme and overt racism towards the partner and in some instances the child. This caused issues within the relationship and was often the root of a breakdown in the relationship. The opposite reaction from family members was also evident in the findings, and formed the majority of experiences shared, where the introduction of a new family member of mixed heritage brought about positive changes in family attitudes towards race and 'difference'.

Racism external to family was more present within the findings, in the form of racism from wider society that was often localised. The location was a defining factor in how much discrimination a child and family would suffer. Control over the inner workings of family would be devalued outside, often creating two disparate lived experiences when in geographical areas where a family structure encompassing mixed heritages was perceived as 'abnormal' (Caballero et al., 2012).

As stated by a lone parent with mixed heritage children (Caballero et al., 2012, p.17):

> "When I lived in London I was normal, I was the average woman with a man with some children […]. When I came to Bristol, I suddenly had 'coloured kids' […] When I was out I would be asked, 'why are they this colour?' and 'Oh, aren't they dark, are they your children?"

Another experience shared by a parent showed the opposite, where she felt that her experience locally was regarded as normal, but was also situated in Bristol, the difference being that they lived in a diverse multicultural area of the city.

The question this highlights for social work practice is whether locality should be taken into consideration when placing children transethnically, when thinking about the needs of the child. This research would suggest that it should be considered, but it is also a problematic view due to the potential of particular locations becoming stigmatised and labelled as not appropriate due to their ethnic population and history of racial prejudice. The potential negative response from media outlets with regards to this is almost predictable, although families in the study did make these kinds of considerations themselves when considering where a child was educated, and if the family had an opportunity to move (Caballero et al., 2012). However, as discussed above, how much social work has the capacity to take on board, or be influenced by these kinds of private family discourses and considerations is questionable, due to the fact that these discussions are played out in the public and has the pressures of media attention alongside governmental policy.

A key finding in the study by Caballero et al. (2012) was that there was a very broad diversity in how parents negotiated racism and discrimination in their lives, with the importance of locality and the complexity it introduced to lived experiences. Therefore, a black and white picture cannot be assumed, especially with regards to white parents being able to deal with racism (Caballero et al., 2012).

As stated by Caballero et al. (2012), "…both birth and adoptive - of mixed racial and ethnic children may need particular forms of support around raising children to have a sense of identity and belonging - but equally others may not". When situated within social work practice in the adoption context, the aim is to consider the children that may need particular forms of support, and to pre-empt

this with ethical and considerate forms of preventative practice. This is done in order to facilitate the circumstances leading to a child having the optimum life chances, with the welfare of the child being paramount.

The next chapter will further explore identity in relation to transethnic adoptions in England.

3. Identity

Arguably, the main issue surrounding transethnic adoption is the identity and culture of the child. How much weight should be put on the child's identity and cultural needs in decision making? Can a transethnic adoption facilitate a healthy sense of identity and culture within a child? Was the shift in government rhetoric, which explicitly began in the Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay (Department for Education, 2012), finally concluding upon the changes made in the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014) appropriate, or detrimental to the welfare of children being adopted? This final chapter explores the literature in relation to identity and culture in the context of governmental policy changes and rhetoric.

According to Harris (2014, p.348), "Significantly, section 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 removes race, culture, religion and language from the list of considerations to which adoption agencies must give due consideration when making a placement". The issue this may give rise to is identity becoming an overlooked factor in all adoption processes.

Harris's (2014) respondents expressed that they grew up with a large sense of difference between themselves and the families they were raised within. This gave rise to often negative experiences of self-worth and also their perception of their biological family, which post adoption services supported them with.
As stated by Sarah, age 31 (Harris, 2014, p.350)

> "You know, I started to feel not ashamed of who I was because, for many years when I was growing up, I felt ashamed that my father was black. I felt ashamed that my mother's family were from Ireland…but I started to like myself a bit more…I can understand more about me, where I came from, and that my dad wasn't the ogre he was painted to be, that he was actually quite a decent bloke".

Harris (2014) observed that the lack of physical resemblance between child and family in transethnic adoptions was a major contributing factor in identity issues; this was emphasised further if the community in which the child was placed reflected this. The post-adoption service supported adults in the process of tracing their biological parents with a focus of strengthening their self-identity through having the physical experience of seeing a family member who resembles them.

In contrast, Wainwright and Ridley (2012) argue that an overemphasis on physical resemblance can be negative and undermine a child's specific needs. It can potentially draw up the issue of invisibility which can mask a child's struggle with identity, when they 'fit' amongst a community and family with similar ethnicities and physical resemblances. Wainwright and Ridley (2012) also articulate the opposite notion by noting that these factors can also form a sense of security in an emotional and psychosocial manner.

Wainwright and Ridley (2012, p.57) state: "The importance of physical resemblance is highlighted when adopted embark on a search for their birth family since they are reported often to comment in the similarities of mannerisms and features they share with birth relatives".

The lack of language and cultural experiences has been expressed by adults who were transethnically adopted as having a detrimental effect on their sense of self when they were children. This lack of knowledge and immersion into culture as a child then attributed to difficulties with post-adoption reunions. The implications of transethnic adoption and its long term impact is one which cannot be ignored or understated (Harris, 2014). Whereas Caballero et al. (2012), in their conclusion, highlight the growing 'normalcy' of mixed families, and when speaking of transethnic placements note they are merely reflective of growing patterns in contemporary family structures in the general population, a limitation to this argument is using the term general population when talking about ethnic minorities. This is problematic because the definition of minority

makes it an oxymoron when placed with general population. This may be the case for very small pockets of England but is not generalisable for the whole of the country.

As stated by Harris (2014, p.353), "Five out of 12 transracial adoptees spoke about experiencing emotional distress, ranging from panic attacks about their racial identity…". Also noted were thoughts of suicide, something which must be taken in the context of these adoptees being sampled from adults using a post-adoption support service. It raises the question of how prominent such thoughts may be among adoptees whose voices may not have been heard.

Parents in the study by Caballero et al. (2012), spoke of the importance of handing down cultural knowledge to children through everyday practices, such as community integration, food, art, and hair. Amongst this was the notion of also keeping an open mind to specific identity formation and belonging within the child, undertaking an open individualised approach to their parenting styles. This helps facilitate the growth and development of an identity which can encompass, and also surpass, specific cultural and ethnic backgrounds, in principle, choosing identity.

As stated by Will, a white British Father married to a mixed white British and Lebanese Woman (Caballero., et al 2012, p.12):

> "I actually discourage trying to make [Molly] feel that she belongs to anywhere other than an individual who can speak her own mind and can latch onto things which she identifies and she likes. We live in a kind of multi-internetted world where you ought to be able to pick your own culture, frankly".

Caballero et al. (2012) describe this perspective as parents encouraging a child's natural autonomy, creating cosmopolitan 'citizens of the world'. Another perspective that parents expressed is the 'mixed collective' in which parents

thought of the child's cultural heritages as a major aspect of their identity, with each aspect creating an explicit mix of identities, forming a new mixed identity, therefore encouraging their children not to think too much about each side of themselves.

Caballero et al. (2012) observed that the third perspective is the 'single collective', in which a single aspect of a child's identity is stressed as the most important and vital to all aspects of identity formation. This often comes in the form of religion, as stated by Maryam, a white British woman married to a Pakistani Muslim man (Caballero et al, 2012, p.13): "you are mixed white and Pakistani… [but] you know your religion is Islam, you are a Muslim…it doesn't matter what colour your skin is; at the end of the day anybody could be a Muslim". Caballero et al. (2012) also noted that parents did not always fit perfectly into any of the aforementioned perspectives; they often employed mixtures of each one. The approaches that parents chose to take were influenced by factors such as friends, community, resources, support organisations and schools, alongside the cultural demographic of the geographical area. This is reflective of Ali's (2014a) thoughts of the emerging complexity of family forms in England, making the potential homogenisation of ethnic and cultural groups in society problematic. According to Caballero et al. (2012, p.13), "…such diversity presents a strong challenge to prevailing perspectives within social work policy and practice on what it means to be mixing or of mixed race and ethnicity".

The formation of a child's identity is not something that can be exclusively facilitated and created by parents', no matter what perspective they attempt to use in raising a child. There are many influences, examples of just some of these being peer influences in school and in local areas, the media, hobbies, passions, social factors, health of themselves and family, age, disability and gender, all part of self-identity formation alongside parental influence. The autonomy of children rejecting or accepting aspects of identity presented to them cannot be ignored (Caballero et al., 2012). This brings the argument back

to sensible decision making, professionals having the time and resources to give due consideration to decisions (Ali, 2014b). The following chapter will present the conclusion to the research whilst highlighting recommendations for social work practice and further research.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The focus of this literature review was to explore contemporary research that focused on the key contemporary issues that surround transethnic adoption in England. The areas were broken into three chapters: Ethnic Matching and Delay; Racism, Discrimination and Resilience; and identity.

The literature in chapter one, Ethnic Matching and Delay, highlighted that the issue pertaining to ethnic matching causing delay was exaggerated in both the media and government rhetoric, resulting in changes to policy, with adoption agencies being more open in their matching practices, and not pertaining to a rigidity forced upon them by government rhetoric and media coverage. Delays in the process of adoption were primarily procedural, and materialised in the court process. Professionals spoke of a caution with regards to speeding up practice. They agreed upon its importance but reflected upon the potential negative impact on safeguards.

Literature in chapter two, Racism, Discrimination and Resilience, highlighted that adults who have been transethnically adopted, and also parents, had experienced varying levels of racism and discrimination. The geographical area in which participants in the research were situated was highly influential on them being discriminated against. Less culturally diverse areas led to more racism than more culturally diverse areas. Transethnically adopted adults spoke of their reluctance to disclose abuse experienced in childhood due to feeling like the high regard given to their parents for undertaking the adoption would protect them from child protection procedures. It can then be argued that the normalisation of transethnic adoption which would be a by-product of contemporary reforms would help to alleviate this to help safeguard children who have been placed.

Literature in chapter three, Identity, highlighted that the changes made to adoption policy in England could give rise to identity being an overlooked factor in the process of adoption. The differences between children and adopters in

transethnic adoption were instrumental in forming issues of self-identity and negative self-worth, especially differences in physical resemblance. When physical resemblance occurred, it could potentially result in a sense of security, psychosocially and emotionally. Conversely it was noted that any over-emphasis on the importance of physical resemblance could mask more complex issues of identity.

There are multiple approaches and perspectives in which parents form a sense of identity in the children they raise. This does hold an importance in parents teaching and facilitating a sense of identity, but it must also be noted that parents do not have full control of this. Children also have an autonomy that is expressed in the rejection or acceptance of culture, and societal influences from their experiences in education and any sphere outside of their family can be equally, if not more, significant to the child's development of identity.

Strengths, Limitations and Researcher Reflections

It is important to acknowledge that this is the first literature review that I have undertaken in my academic career. All skills and techniques specific to the writing of a literature review were developed whilst in the process of developing and writing the study. Because of this, great care was taken in reflecting upon and seeking critique for all aspects of work. If this piece of work was to be undertaken again, I would apply for funding to seek out literature that was only available commercially and I would also critically analyse how literature from, for example, adoption organisations such as the British Association for Adoption and Fostering add to the academic landscape of research.

Further Research

A limitation in the literature review came in the lack of primary research that directly and explicitly covers issues in transethnic adoption. This is commented on by Harris (2014, p.348): "There is a dearth of literature concerning the experiences of domestically transracially adopted children and adults in the UK". This was especially the case when looking within the limited scope of

contemporary literature that would take into account the changing socio-political landscape of adoption in both policy and media portrayal.

Their needs to be further research undertaken with young adults who have been transethnically adopted, and longitudinal studies to address how children placed in and around the current reforms feel about their experiences. To what extent are they happy with their placements? What changes would they make if they could? How do they define their own personal identity, and also what impact does a placement with a close cultural match have on them?

Further research is also needed into the experiences of parents raising children in transethnic placements, investigating their views on identity formation, racism, discrimination and resilience.

Further research from the perspective of professionals is also needed to explore their views on working within the remit of policy changes, how they interpret policy in practice, and to investigate to what degree professionals who have worked under alternate shifts in policy have changed or adapted their practice for the current reforms. Research into how professionals navigate around their moral and personal values in this area of practice is also of interest.

All of the above areas of research are needed across a variety of locations in England, multicultural locations and those that are not. Comparisons need to be made across studies and conclusions made to the extent to which geographical location is an important factor in transethnic adoptions.

Social Work Practice

The findings presented in this literature review illustrate the importance of social work practice having an awareness of the growing complexity of identity and contemporary family forms and structures in England. Critical reflection is vital to refrain from making assumptions which can homogenise groups of people based on personal values and experiences. The rising cultural diversity in

England means that all decisions made in this social context must be internally questioned and critiqued.

Whether or not the term 'due consideration' is explicit in adoption policy or not, social workers must give due consideration to all decisions and aspects of children when making decisions. To give due consideration is to essentially stop and think. There is no area of social work that discounts a social workers responsibility to stop and think. Social workers working within adoption must recognise that the welfare checklist present in the Children Act (HM Government, 1989) continues to be in force, highlighting the implications of any amendment in circumstance for a child and the regard given to characteristics which are relevant. The needs of adopted children are complex and multi-layered. All aspects of a child's history, experiences and future are relevant, and social work practice must continue to reflect this.

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Appendix 1 Systematic Search Strategy

Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

Search Terms | Boolean Logic	Inclusion | Exclusion Criteria	Hits Returned
all (adoption) AND all (transethnic)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	1
all (adoption) AND all (recruitment)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	7
all (adoption) AND all (transracial)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	10
all (Adoption) AND all (BME)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	2
all (adoption) AND all (BAME)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	0
all(adoption) AND all (ethni*) AND all (britain)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	7
all(adoption) AND all (ethni*) AND all(england)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	33
all (adoption) AND (policy) AND (ethni*)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	11
all (adoption) AND (cultur*)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	114
all (adoption) AND (race)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	23
all (adoption) AND (identity)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	44
all (adoption) AND(matching)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	5
all (adoption) AND (issues)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	142

All (adoption) AND (barriers)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	137
all (Cultur*) AND (Placement)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	80

Social Policy and Practice

Search Terms | Boolean Logic	Inclusion | Exclusion Criteria	Hits Returned
all (adoption) AND all (transethnic)	Post 2010	0
All (adoption) AND all (recruitment)	Post 2010	56
All (adoption) AND all (transracial)	Post 2010	29
All (adoption) AND all (BME)	Post 2010	1
All (adoption) AND all (BAME)	Post 2010	0
All (adoption) AND all (ethni*) AND all (britain)	Post 2010	10
All (adoption) AND all (ethni*) AND all (England)	Post 2010	32
All (adoption) AND all (policy) AND all (ethni*)	Post 2010	33
All (adoption) AND all (cultur*)	Post 2010	98
All (adoption) AND all (race)	Post 2010	48
All (adoption) AND all (identity)	Post 2010	98
All (adoption) AND all	Post 2010	44

(matching)		
All (adoption) AND all (issues)	Post 2010	204
All (adoption) AND all (barriers)	Post 2010	65
All (culture*) AND all (placement)	Post 2010	66

Social Sciences and Citation Index

Search Terms | Boolean Logic	Inclusion Exclusion Criteria	Hits Returned
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC: (transethnic)	Post 2010	0
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC: (recruitment)	Post 2010	87
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC: (transracial)	Post 2010	63
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC: (BME)	Post 2010	0
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC:(BAME)	Post 2010	0
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC (ethni*) AND TOPIC: (britain)	Post 2010	1
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC: (ethni*) AND TOPIC:(England)	Post 2010	4
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC:(policy) AND Topic: (ethni*)	Post 2010	58
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC (cultur*)	Post 2010	1337
TITLE:(adoption) AND TITLE:(culture*)	Post 2010	54
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC:(race)	Post 2010	208
TITLE: (adoption) AND TITLE: (race)	Post 2010	23
TOPIC:(adoption) AND	Post 2010	391

TOPIC:(identity)		
TITLE: (adoption) AND TITLE:(identity)	Post 2010	20
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC:(matching)	Post 2010	330
TITLE: (Adoption) AND TITLE: (matching)	Post 2010	5
TOPIC:(adoption) AND TOPIC: (issues)	Post 2010	1857
TITLE: (adoption) AND TITLE: (issues)	Post 2010	13
TOPIC: (adoption) AND TOPIC (barriers)	Post 2010	1300
TITLE: (adoption) AND TITLE: (barriers)	Post 2010	67
TOPIC: (culture*) AND TOPIC: (placement)	Post 2010	294
TITLE: (culture*) AND TITLE: (placement)	Post 2010	9

Social Services Abstract

Search Terms | Boolean Logic	Inclusion | Exclusion Criteria	Hits Returned
all (adoption) AND all (transethnic)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	1
all (adoption) AND all (recruitment)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	5
all (adoption) AND all (transracial)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	22
all (Adoption) AND all (BME)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	1
all (adoption) AND all (BAME)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	0
all(adoption) AND all (ethni*)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	30
all(adoption) AND all (ethni*) AND all (britain)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	5
all(adoption) AND all (ethni*) AND all (england)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	7
all (adoption) AND (policy) AND (ethni*)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	11
all (adoption) AND (cultur*)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	55
all (adoption) AND (race)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	13
all (adoption) AND (identity)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	40
all (adoption) AND (matching)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	7
all (adoption) AND (issues)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	65

All (adoption) AND (barriers)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	43
all (Cultur*) AND (Placement)	Post 2010 | Peer Reviewed	41

Appendix 2 Article Summary and Critical Appraisal

Author(s)	John Wainwright (Senior Lecturer), Julie Ridley (Senior Research Fellow) in Social Work | University of Central Lancashire, UK
Citation	Wainwright, J. and Ridley, J. (2012) Matching, ethnicity and identity: Reflections on practice and realities of ethnic matching in adoption. **Adoption & Fostering**, 36 (3&4): 50-61
Type	Research Paper
Discovery	Systematic Search | Peer Reviewed.
Purpose and Aim	To evaluate the practice of an adoption organisation that focusses on the placement of children from BME backgrounds and the recruitment of potential adopters from those backgrounds. To discuss the findings and conclusions of a commissioned service evaluation alongside current research literature.
Methods	Qualitative data | Interviews, Focus Groups, Internet Surveys, Questionnaires, Documentary observation and analysis. Stakeholders | 14 adopters Interviewed, 6 were involved in a focus group, 4 completed a postal questionnaire. Examination of 16 adoptive families' records. Examination of 78 BME adopters with 96 children placed. Professionals within the adoption project took part in focus groups or were interviewed. 30 social workers from local authorities across England completed online survey.
Main Findings	The organisation did not have a narrow focus on 'perfect' matching of ethnicity and culture. Their approach was flexible and pragmatic, matching was based on the child's needs and ensuring the adopter had an understanding, whilst having the resources to cater to these. Its practice was effective in its aims and outcomes, matching in a holistic manner as opposed to one only being focused on ethnic characteristics. Physical resemblance played a part in the matching process. Resilience

	to racism and discrimination was also part of the rationale in in a child's placement needs.
Additional Findings	Previous research on outcomes for adopted BAME children can be seen as problematic. Transethnic placements were seen as successful alongside findings showing that children's ethnic identities were not promoted and the transethnically adopted children identified themselves at 'white'. Studies as such formed the indication that there was no relation to ethnic identity and self-esteem. Research also suggests that ethnic matching works towards positive and stable adoption placements, nurturing identity and creating a resilience in discrimination and racism.
Critical Appraisal	
Aims Research design	The aims of research that was discussed were clearly stated in the abstract and Introduction. The primary research qualitative methodology was appropriate in order to highlight the subjective nature of the topic and was correct to achieve the aims. Small scale study.
Recruitment / Funding	No explicit recruitment strategy in methodology. Wide range of participants chosen across England to. No reference to the funding of research made.
Bias	There was no reference to possible research bias from the authors.
Ethics Reliability	Ethical considerations were adhered to in relation to not interviewing children.
Data Analysis / Validity	The author's conclusions appeared to be slightly disconnected from the findings, which potentially highlights an unknown research bias. The conclusion appeared to place a point of view onto the organisation that the findings actively opposed. The research remains valid because the data was still expressed in the findings.

Appendix 3 Themes | Coding

Recruitm-ent	Racism, discriminati-on and resilience.	Identity	Culture	Physical resembla-nce	Matching
	Harris (2014)	Harris (2014)	Harris (2014)	Harris (2014)	Harris (2014)
Wainwright and Ridley (2012)	Wainwright and Ridley (2012)	Wainwright and Ridley (2012)	Wainwright and Ridley (2012)	Wainwright and Ridley (2012)	Wainwright and Ridley (2012)
Barns and Kirton (2012)	Barns and Kirton (2012)	Barns and Kirton (2012)			Barns and Kirton (2012)
Dance and Farmer (2014)					
	Ali (2014)	Ali (2014)	Ali (2014)		Ali (2014)
Ali (2014a)		Ali (2014a)			Ali (2014a)
Caballero et al (2012)	Caballero *et al* (2012)	Caballero *et al* (2012)	Caballero *et al* (2012)	Caballero et al (2012)	
					Kirton (2013)

Delay	Abuse	Adoption Support
	Harris (2014)	Harris (2014)
Wainwright and Ridley (2012)		
Barns and Kirton (2012)		
Dance and Farmer (2014)		Dance and Kirton (2014)
Ali (2014)		
Ali (2014a)		
Kirton (2013)		Kirton (2013)

Groupings | Chapters

Recruitment	Identity	Racism, discrimination and resilience
Matching	Culture	Abuse
Delay	Physical Resemblance	Adoption support