

Lily's Literature Analysis

Skin Color in Transracial and Inracial Adoptive Placements: Implications for Special Needs Adoptions - Lily

Ruth G. McRoy and Helen Grape's article *Skin Color in Transracial and Inracial Adoptive Placements: Implications for Special Needs Adoptions*, recognized racial identity formation, race socialization, and experiences to be important underlying dynamics of transracial and in racial adoption, but that skin color was a very important issue that was barely talked about in adoption literature. Their focus on skin color addressed the historical evolution of skin color dynamics in America. Skin color is an issue central within the transracial adoptee community because adoptees have a different skin tone than their adoptive families. In terms of negotiating identities, adoptees must also negotiate their status within their respective families. The preferential treatment of "mulattoe" slaves re-affirmed the belief that more "Caucasoid" features such as lighter skin, straighter hair, pointer nose, and thinner lips were superior to black phenotypes and considered "good". Black features such as dark skin and kinky hair were equated with being "bad" and of a lower status. Despite the preferential treatment of light skinned blacks, the "one drop rule" deemed any person with one drop of black blood to be pure African by law. I will ask my multiracial adoptee how his skin tone has affected his experiences with various communities. Groups such as the Blue Vein Society of Nashville continued to give elite status to mulattoes after the Civil War.

The Civil rights movements of the sixties and seventies challenged the standards of beauty and claimed "black is beautiful" with the black pride movement. Although the views on skin color had progressed, darker skinned blacks still faced negativity from outside and within the black community. "Skin tone was found to be a more consequential predictor of occupation and income than a parent's socioeconomic status" (676). Race took precedent over class when determining status in the United States. There was a double beauty standard held up against blacks, because blacks who straightened their hair were seen as hating their blackness, meanwhile, whites who got collagen injections in their lips and fake tans were not seen as trying to be black.

Children are very influenced by the complexities of skin color and its' use as a racial demarcation before they are consciously aware. Race is deeply embedded in American culture and institutions. Children pick up on the language used by their parents and peers, such as, "bad" hair and good "hair", and are introduced early on to fairytales portraying the good fairy princess as being pure and wearing white, while the villain is portrayed as dark and evil wearing dark clothes. I am curious to learn how the early experiences might

shape my monoracial and multiracial adoptee's identity. According to a study done in the 1940s middle school aged children associated light skin tones with intelligence and dark skin tones with meanness and physical toughness (679). Children are programmed early on about the negative connotations skin color has for blacks in America. Later on in life, as blacks entered the working field, they discovered that having lighter skin worked to their advantage in being successful in the work place.

Skin color has implications in Inracial and Transracial adoptive placements, because many African American couples wished to adopt light-skinned mixed race children, regardless of their own skin tone. White families looking to adopt minority children preferred a biracial child, because of the ease of explaining a more ambiguous looking Childs' origin to their other family members, friends, and neighbors. Foster parents who expressed skin color preferences were granted children of their preference by case workers. In an effort to safe guard the children from being rejected by their c foster home, skin color preference was justified. The desire for minority children with more "Caucasoid" features is embedded into black values as well as white. I will ask my multiracial adoptee if his multiracial status affected his ability to be adopted.