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A comparative study of the metaperceptions of transracially adoptive mothers and adoptees in South Africa

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Abstract

Although metaperceptions and transracial adoption (TRA) have been investigated separately, research has not thoroughly investigated the metaperceptions of families involved in TRA. Moreover, little research into TRA has focussed on a comparison of the adoptive mothers and adoptive young adults' experiences of their TRA or the similarities and differences between the metaperceptions they hold. The study aimed to explore how the metaperceptions of White mothers and Black young adults are constructed in relation to their TRA. The study utilised a qualitative research methodology to achieve these aims. Four focus group discussions were held with 3 to 5 participants in each group. Two groups consisted of White TRA mothers aged 25 to 65 who had transracially adopted Black children; while the other 2 groups consisted of Black transracially adopted young adults aged 18 to 28 years. The data from the study was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The findings highlighted the differing experiences presented in TRA for the mother, young adult and the family. These experiences informed metaperceptions and the identities of mothers and young adults. Social constructions around the family and race relations in South Africa were represented in the metaperceptions of participants. The study was able to produce a social commentary on the social constructions of race relations, the family and other social categorisations in South Africa through unpacking elements of participants' metaperceptions and experiences. The comparison between the two participant groups revealed that their metaperceptions were generally similar, or were supportive of each other's discussions. The results of this research indicate that context specific interventions and support programmes should be developed in the areas identified as challenging for participants, as they may be beneficial to mothers and young adults involved in TRA. Furthermore, the results of the study highlight the current state of race relations in South Africa and the way in which they impact on the general functioning of South Africans.

Keywords: Family; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; Metaperceptions; Race Relations; Racism; South Africa; Transracial Adoption.