

‘ANTI-RACIST FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING AND TRANSITIONING CHILDREN FROM MINORITISED RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS INTO TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE FAMILIES.’ – IS THE AFDiT FRAMEWORK A HELP OR HINDRANCE TO THE PLACEMENT OF BLACK CHILDREN IN CARE?

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At a Nagalro conference in October 2024 on ‘Post-Adoption Contact: Changes and Constants’, Dr Tam Cane gave a presentation about the AFDiT framework, of which she was one of the authors. The following article aims to review the framework and to consider its potential effectiveness in relation to the placement debate for Black children in care.

The framework ‘aims to equip social workers with the tools, knowledge and resources necessary to facilitate positive identity development for racialised and minoritised ethnic children in transracial adoption. It recognises that cultural and racial identity are fundamental aspects of human existence, and any attempt to overlook or suppress them may inadvertently perpetuate harm. The AFDiT framework is focused on the process of placing children for adoption and the intention is that social workers can use it with prospective adopters, actual adopters, foster carers and birth families. The framework recognises the difficulties involved in placing Black children appropriately and that a disproportionate number of Black children are waiting too long for appropriately matched placements.

The framework is put forward as ‘an anti-racist framework for decision-making and transitioning children from minoritised racial and ethnic groups into transracial adoptive families.’ It is a framework that is intended to ensure positive identity outcomes for all minoritised ethnic children moving into transracial adoption. AFDiT says that it is grounded in principles that actively challenge and dismantle systemic racism, promote cultural responsiveness and prioritise the well-being and identity development of minoritised children. Derek Kirton is quoted, indicating that the shift in focus away from ethnic matching has created a sense of uncertainty and confusion among practitioners, making it difficult to navigate the complexities of transracial adoption effectively (Kirton, 2020). The framework seeks to address this concern.

The AFDiT framework identifies how the complex nature of cognitive dissonance can lead to a tendency to overlook or minimise the challenges and disadvantages that transracial adoption may present for children. The framework aims to provide workers with confidence and the right terminology to use when working with adoptive parents and children in transracial adoptive placements. The tool encourages holistic consideration of the long-term implications of racial identity.

The framework includes nine key principles. The most important of these principles is the consideration that ‘Transracial adoption can result in trauma.’ A further principle in the framework is highlighting the importance of social workers, acknowledging and addressing the structural inequities and racism that minoritised children face within the adoption system. There is also a focus on anti-racism which

involves actively opposing discrimination, bias and stereotypes, and strives to eliminate systemic barriers that perpetuate racial inequalities. Cultural responsiveness is a further principle of the framework which recognises the importance of cultural identity and connection and which also emphasises the importance of comprehensive assessments around the child's identity and birth family's ethnic, cultural and religious background. This also includes a readiness to embrace the child's heritage, which should be ongoing and should include the provision of adoption support, although it is not clear how this is going to happen without being just lip service. The process of collaborative partnerships should include early consideration of adoption linking and matching with the child's identity and heritage (and include proper searching for matches). The framework recommends that birth parents can be supported to provide comprehensive information regarding the child's racial and ethnic identity, and to understand potential challenges and benefits of transracial adoption. The framework does not detail what these advantages are.

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