

Transracial adoption: Navigating race, ethnicity and culture in the parenting of children

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TOUGH SUBJECTS TRIGGER WARNING



EXPECTATION: Do's

- ❖ **Gain an understanding of the research on ethnic and racial identity socialization in multiracial families;** 40% of adopted children are of a different race, culture, or ethnicity than both of their adoptive parents (or their sole parent if there is only one parent in the household).
- ❖ **Discuss parenting of children in multiracial families;** Multiracial families can face particular stresses given societies definition of race and family. This presentation will focus on the research and practical strategies in parenting a child of a different ethnic or racial identity than the adoptive parent(s).
- ❖ **Explore aspects particular to adoption in multiracial families and strategies for negotiating topics of race, ethnicity and culture.** Issues covered include cultural identity not only the child but of the parent and if these should be integrated, how to discuss race, and also strategies to foster ecological competence.



EXPECTATION: DON'T

- ❖ Check box experience
- ❖ Solve matters related to race
- ❖ Right or wrong answers
- ❖ Make you comfortable
- ❖ Answer all questions
- ❖ Diversity exploration



AGENDA

- ❖ What's on your mind?
- ❖ Review of statistics on transracial adoption & background history
- ❖ Definitions of race/ethnicity & why these issues matter.
- ❖ Stages of racial identity development in children
- ❖ Parenting a child in a multiracial family
- ❖ Strategies to negotiate issues of race, ethnicity and culture



LET'S SHARE!

Questions/concerns/joys of raising an adoptive child in a multiracial family.

Use the chat function for input



STATISTICS & HISTORY



RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE

U.S.

White alone	77.7%
Black or African American	13.2 %
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.2%
Asian alone	5.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	.2%
Two or More Races	2.4%



THE RACE & ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF ADOPTED CHILDREN & THEIR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

- ❖ 37% of adopted children are non-Hispanic White
- ❖ 73% of adoptive parents are non-Hispanic White.
- ❖ 40% of [adopted children are of a different race,](#) culture, or ethnicity than both of their adoptive parents (or their sole parent if there is only one parent in the household).
- ❖ 63% percent of children adopted from foster care have White parents, as do 71 % of children adopted within the United States, and 92% of children adopted internationally.
- ❖ A substantial portion of adopted children have Black parents, including 27% of children adopted from foster care and 19% of those adopted privately within the United States

- ❖ Children adopted internationally are most likely to be in transracial placements, 84%
- ❖ Among internationally adopted children, more than twice as many were born in China as in any other individual country. 33% of internationally adopted children lived in China prior to their adoption
- ❖ The second-most common country of origin is Russia, with 13%.
- ❖ 11% of the internationally adopted children originate from Guatemala, and another 11% originate from South Korea.
- ❖ Other countries from which internationally adopted children originate include India, Kazakhstan, Colombia, Ukraine, Philippines, and Ethiopia.



PARENTS OF COLOR & TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

- ❖ Research indicates that Black, Hispanic, and Asian parents rarely adopt across race (Fisher, 2003).
- ❖ Asians and Hispanics who did adopt were more likely to adopt children of the same racial or ethnic group.
- ❖ Based on an analysis of 2000 Census data, Raleigh (2012) finds that Black adoptive parents are among the least likely to adopt across race, with only 5 percent of Black adoptive parents adopting transracially.

HISTORY OF TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

- ❖ The adoption of South Korean children by White US families began in the mid 50's after the Korean war.
- ❖ The number of transracial adoptions began to grow substantially during the late 1960s.
- ❖ An increase in the number of children entering the foster care system coincided with an increased recognition of the deficiencies of that system.
- ❖ The social consciousness movements of the 1960s made some Whites more open to the possibility of racial integration.
- ❖ Shortage of White adoptive infants for adoption due to contraception, abortion and/or single mothers keeping their babies.
- ❖ Increase in adoptions from foreign countries and African-American babies.

HISTORY (continued)

- ❖ 1972, The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) argues that Black children belong physically and psychologically in the Black community.
- ❖ The US Supreme Court has never directly addressed the question of whether it is constitutional to use race as a factor in adoption. *Palmore v Sidoti*

MULTIETHNIC PLACEMENT ACT (MEPA), 1994 & 1996

- ❖ An effort to address the increasing number of children in foster care
- ❖ To prohibit the delay or denial of a child's foster or adoptive placement solely on the basis of race, color, or national origin
- ❖ To prohibit discrimination in approving individuals as foster and adoptive parents on the basis of race, color, or national origin
- ❖ To require that state agencies make diligent efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents who represent the racial and ethnic backgrounds of children in foster care in the particular state.
- ❖ Only applies to government agencies or agencies that contract with the government, does not apply to private agencies that don't receive federal funding.

- ❖ 2000 U.S. Census created a new family category differentiating between adopted children and stepchildren. From these data, demographers estimate that one in four adoptive households is transracial
- ❖ Increase in international adoption at the turn of the millennium (Ishizawa et al., 2006). 1994 to 2004, the number of children adopted from overseas more than doubled from about 9,000 per year to a high of almost 23,000 per year in 2004
- ❖ 84 percent of international adoptions are transracial. On the domestic front, white parents are also pursuing the transracial adoption of U.S.-born children, making transracial adoption a growing and highly visible family form (Dorow, 2006; Smith, Jacobson, and Juarez, 2012)



DEFINITIONS & WHY IT MATTERS

- Race
- Ethnic & cultural identity
- Racism
- Prejudice
- Stereotype threat
- Parental socialization to race and ethnic identity



Race: Phenotypic differences that arise from genetic or biological dispositions, such as skin color and hair texture

Ethnicity: Perceived group membership based on nationality, ancestry, or both

Culture: A much broader construct including “individual differences within families, their values, beliefs, and practices” and “family roles; communication patterns; affective styles; and values regarding personal control, individualism, collectivism, spirituality, and religiosity”.

Racial, ethnic, and cultural socialization are means by which children of color learn about their race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage and about living with racial bias. Why not White children?

Most ethnic minority parents engage in some form of racial, ethnic, or cultural socialization.



WHAT ABOUT RACISM?

Racism is a *system* that encompasses economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that *institutionalize* and *perpetuate* an unequal distribution of privileges, resources and power between White people and people of Color. This system is historic, normalized, taken for granted, deeply embedded, and works to the benefit of Whites and to the disadvantage of People of Color (Hilliard, 1992).



WHY DOES RACE MATTER IN TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION?

- ❖ Because transracially adopted children are often adopted into households with high socioeconomic status (Kreider and Lofquist, 2014; Vandivere, Malm, and Radel, 2009), research at the national level finds that they have comparable, if not better, academic outcomes compared to their nonadopted counterparts
- ❖ Research also indicates that transracially adopted persons face complex issues regarding racial identity development as they negotiate the paradox of being racial minorities in both their communities and families (Lee, 2003).
- ❖ Children whose parents emphasize their racial group's culture or heritage show higher self esteem, more knowledge about their racial group, and more favorable in-group attitudes (Marshall; Stevenson, 1995)

Samuels (2009:80) argues that “being raised by White people” creates unique challenges for Black and Biracial transracial adoptees’ racial development since the adoptive parent does not resemble the child. Likewise, Tuan and Shiao (2011:41) argue that transracial Korean adoptees must grapple with “choosing ethnicity” while “negotiating race” in their families



TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION: Discussion & Disagreement

- ❖ Issues around the responsibility of parents to prepare their children for survival in a complex world.
- ❖ Exploring transracial adoption inevitably brings to the forefront this country's potent and disturbing legacy of segregation and racial discrimination.
- ❖ Includes anti-miscegenation laws specifically designed to prevent the formation of interracial families, through marriage and adoption.



CHALLENGES

- ❖ Dealing with being “different” and especially with having a different skin color.
- ❖ Managing social viewpoints(both positive and negative) regarding transracial adoption and multiracial families.
- ❖ Dealing with discordant parent-child experiences with race and racism
- ❖ Difficulty developing a positive racial identity.
- ❖ Learning how to cope with racial and ethnic discrimination.



IDENTITY FORMATION ISSUES

- ❖ Juggling race with claiming a white cultural identity. 2. Learning to be black. 3. Biological links to black kinship and 4. Broadly defined bicultural kinship
- ❖ Transracial adoption children are able to gain a healthy racial & cultural affiliation but they may take more time to do so than same race families. Reclaiming one's birth culture at some point after childhood, reculturation, may also be an integral part of forming a healthy cultural identity.

OTHER SALIENT ISSUES

- ❖ Research on transracial adoption has concluded that Black children who are adopted by White families can grow up to be emotionally healthy , happy and productive citizens.
- ❖ Marginalization of White adoptive mothers.
- ❖ Hair holds immense symbolic importance for kinship because it's care is highly visible, unlike other racialized parts of the body.
- ❖ Hair serves as a metaphor and method for “weaving” a black child into a white family
- ❖ When in public, White parents with Black children are often the target of surveillance.

WHITE MOTHERS & BLACK DAUGHTERS

- ❖ Speaking up and resisting racism often stigmatizes Black girls as those loud Black girls. They are seen as aggressive, intimidating, scary, and ugly. Many Black girls learn to be silent in order to distance themselves from the stigma.
- ❖ Learn to replace or repress her anger with feelings that are deemed to be more acceptable, less confrontational, more productive.
- ❖ When White mothers ignore or deflect anger, their Black daughters are prevented from feeling things as they are, from being able to articulate the truth about their experiences of racism and from being able to use their anger to name, analyze and respond to the racism they encounter.

HAIR

When children's hair is unkempt or unruly, it can be an indication that the child is not being taken care of. Hair serves as an embodiment of race, kinship and care. Within the context of contemporary American child welfare, the stakes of the relationship between care and physical appearance can be very high: poverty is often mistaken for neglect in child-protective decisions, meaning that children who appear uncared for are more likely to be removed from the black community.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT



[Understanding Racial Developmental Stages](#)



[Stages of Children's Racial Identity Development](#)



A Look at Race Relations through a Child's Eyes



RACE-BLIND OR RACE-MATCHING CONTINUUM

- ❖ Race-Blind: All you need is love, little training in race-awareness, stress equality and benefit the child by bringing him/her as completely as possible into a community & family that does not resemble the child's birth.
- ❖ Race-Matching: Children should be placed in homes of like racial and cultural backgrounds. White parents are ill-equipped to teach children of African ancestry how to navigate discrimination, create coping strategies for racism, and promote a healthy racial identity.

Racism Scale

Where do you fall on the racism scale?



IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH: WHAT ARE PARENTS TO DO?

- ❖ Let's begin with what we tend to do about racial socialization in our family
- ❖ What do you do in your family?



PARENTS' RACIAL SOCIALIZATION BEHAVIORS



❖ White Parents



❖ African-American Parents



❖ Latino

❖ Asian



WHITE PARENTS

Research indicating that White parents relied primarily on the school and inaction to overcome barriers of an ethnically homogeneous social context, socioeconomic status differences, and a lack of understanding of other cultures

(2001)

J.V. Hamm



AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS

Most studies confirm that African American parents routinely use discussion, create positive contact situations, modeling, and explicit statements in socializing their children to race and potential discrimination.

HISPANIC/LATINO PARENTS

In one study African American parents reported more frequent Preparation for Bias than did Dominican parents, who, in turn, reported more frequent messages of this sort than did Puerto Rican parents. Ethnic identity was a stronger predictor of Cultural Socialization among P.R. and Dominican parents than among their African American counterparts. In all groups more Cultural Socialization and Preparation for Bias with children 10-17 than children 6-9 years old.

ASIAN PARENTS

- ❖ Research indicating that some Asian students do not see themselves differently from White students until they reached college and had not experienced a strong need to acculturate or pay particular attention to their ethnic background
- ❖ They reported being perceived as an ethnic minority student as the most difficult aspect of their college lives.
- ❖ Racial self-segregation in college is quite common, leading to recognition of differences and an increased awareness of and appreciation for their own ethnicity (Henfield et. al. 2014)
- ❖ Between mid-March and early August 2020, there were more than 2,500 hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, [according to Stop AAPI Hate](#), a national coalition launched in March 2020 to report on anti-Asian American discrimination during the pandemic. These incidents include verbal harassment, avoidance, physical assaults, and potential civil rights violations in the workplace. Some even reported being barred from establishments and using transportation.

TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION: CHINESE & KOREAN

- ❖ Longer history of adopting Korean rather than Chinese children in the United States. White parents of Korean children may have more access to helpful information concerning Korean adoption.
- ❖ However, parents adopting Korean children may feel complacent about issues of transracial/ international adoption.
- ❖ Large-scale networks of Chinese adoptive families (e.g., Families with Children from China) provide families resources and information about socializing Chinese adoptees.
- ❖ The percentage of U.S. residents claiming Chinese descent is more than twice that of U.S. residents claiming Korean descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001), perhaps making public aspects of Chinese culture more visible and available (e.g., in the form of restaurants, stores, and cultural festivals).
- ❖ Easier access to information and cultural artifacts and events may help parents of Chinese children engage in more frequent or more diverse forms of racial, ethnic, and cultural socialization than parents of Korean children.

WHERE WE LIVE

- ❖ Transracially adopted children with white parents are more similar in terms of their residential patterns to white children in monoracial families compared to other multiracial families.
- ❖ Although some transracial adoptive families may embrace the title of being multiracial, these children tend to grow up in racially segregated environs.
- ❖ Fewer opportunities for them to make connections with role models whose racial and ethnic backgrounds match those of their children.
- ❖ Given the vast literature on the importance of same-race role models for developing positive racial and ethnic identities, findings suggest that transracially adopted children may be at a disadvantage in this realm

CONNECTION WITH BIRTH CULTURE OF THE CHILD

Feeling connected to out-group members has been shown to be associated with less prejudice against that group (Swim & Mallett, 2007) and a greater tendency to take that group's perspective on intergroup-related issues (Mallett, Huntsinger, Sinclair, & Swim, 2007). This perspective taking may heighten awareness of the prevalence of discrimination. Therefore, mothers who feel connected to Asian Americans may be more likely to engage in cultural socialization/pluralism and preparation for bias.

SOCIALIZATION TO CULTURE/RACE/ETHNICITY

- ❖ Research suggests that concerns that White parents may not socialize their adopted children with respect to culture, race, or ethnicity may be overstated.
- ❖ Other recent studies demonstrating that adoptive mothers engage in racial, ethnic, and cultural socialization practices and perceive the importance of recognizing their children's cultural heritage.
- ❖ Furthermore, although other research on the adjustment of transracial/transnational adoptees has been mixed there have been indications that Chinese and Korean adoptees show good psychological adjustment.

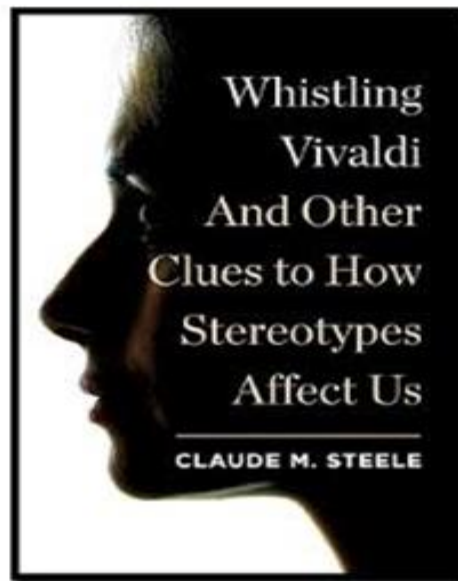
HOW TO NAVIGATE RACE, ETHNICITY & CULTURE IN MY PARENTING?



ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION & PREPARATION FOR BIAS

- ❖ It may be difficult for White American parents to prepare their children for experiences of racial discrimination when they have not had these experiences themselves (Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007).
- ❖ However, recent studies have found that placing equal emphasis on both ethnic socialization and preparation for bias may be most beneficial for fostering resiliency in the face of discrimination than either approach alone (Dunbar, Leerkes, Coard, Supple, & Calkins, 2017).

Sterotype Threat



WHITE FRAGILITY: WHAT IS IT AND DO I HAVE IT?

“I believe that white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color. I define a white progressive as any white person who thinks he or she is not racist, or is less racist, or in the “choir,” or already “gets it.” White progressives can be the most difficult for people of color because, to the degree that we think we have arrived, we will put our energy into making sure that others see us as having arrived. None of our energy will go into what we need to be doing for the rest of our lives: engaging in ongoing self-awareness, continuing education, relationship building, and actual anti racist practice. White progressives do indeed uphold and perpetrate racism, but our defensiveness and certitude make it virtually impossible to explain to us how we do so.” — Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*



“I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season.”



ETHNIC IDENTITY VERSUS PREPARING FOR DISCRIMINATION

- ❖ Importance of adoptive parents talking openly about race with their transracially adopted children.
- ❖ Finding is that while ethnic socialization is clearly beneficial for the development of stronger ethnic identity and sense of ethnic pride (Hughes et al., 2006), it may not be sufficient to promote mental health resiliency in the face of discrimination.
- ❖ Parents may need to use more direct approaches that explicitly teach children how to respond to racial discrimination (i.e., preparation for bias)

[Anti-racism handout: Robin D'Angelo](#)

[White fragility and feedback](#)

[Embracerace.org](#)

[Eddie Moore's 21 day challenge](#)



RESOURCES & READING

[Teach your children about racism & protest: NY Times 6/7/2020](#)

[Resources and Reading list](#)



Thank You!
Feel free to contact me.
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