Published in final edited form as:

J Fam Psychol. 2006 December ; 20(4): 571–580.

Cultural Socialization in Families With Internationally Adopted Children

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Abstract

Cultural socialization attitudes, beliefs, and parenting behaviors were examined in families with internationally adopted children. The authors hypothesized that parents with lower color-blind racial attitudes would be more likely to engage in enculturation and racialization parenting behaviors because they hold stronger beliefs in the value and importance of cultural socialization. Using data from the Minnesota International Adoption Project, the results support this mediation model of cultural socialization. Individual variations in cultural socialization also are discussed in terms of child development and shifting adoption attitudes and practices.

Keywords

cultural socialization; international adoption; parenting; racial attitudes; transracial

International adoption is becoming an increasingly popular means to form a family in the United States. Since 1971, over 330,000 children have been adopted from other countries, and there has been a threefold increase in the annual rate of international adoption, from 7,093 children in 1990 to 22,884 children in 2004 (U.S. Department of State, 2005). The increase in international adoption is attributed to war, poverty, and the lack of social welfare in sending countries and, in the United States, to increased infertility rates, perceived difficulties associated with domestic adoption, preference to adopt infants rather than older children, and a disinclination toward foster care adoption (R. M. Lee, 2003). Today, children—mostly infants and toddlers—are adopted annually from over 100 countries, with approximately 90% of children adopted from just 20 countries and the majority from China, Russia, South Korea, and Guatemala.

International adoption also reflects a larger, growing trend toward multiracial and multiethnic families, who face unique challenges in the upbringing of children of different ethnic and racial heritages. Research suggests that same-race and transracially adopted children begin to become aware of racial differences, as well as their adoptive status, as early as 4–5 years of age (Brodzinsky, Singer, & Braff, 1984; Huh & Reid, 2000). As transracial adoptees grow older,

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The IAP Team extends its appreciation and gratitude to the IAP parent advisory board; the Department of Human Services Adoption Unit and its director, Robert DeNardo; the adoption agencies who supported this work; and the families who graciously participated in the research.

they develop a more coherent understanding of what it means to look physically different from their parents (D. C. Lee & Quintana, 2005). At the same time, they may begin to experience feelings of loss of birth culture and family history and the growing awareness of racism and discrimination in their everyday lives (Meier, 1999; Powell & Affi, 2005). This feeling of loss, in turn, has been found to be associated with greater depressive symptoms and lower self-worth among domestically and internationally adopted preadolescents (Smith & Brodzinsky, 2002). Similarly, Cederblad, Höök, Irhammer, and Mercke (1999) reported that uncertainty about one's ethnic identity and perceived discrimination are related to greater psychological distress and lower self-esteem among international adoptees. Adoptive parents, most of whom are White and of European descent, likewise are confronted with decisions about when and how to appropriately acknowledge and address ethnic and racial differences with their children without disrupting family bonds. Parents also must decide whether they want the children's birth culture to be a part of the family's life experiences and, if so, to what extent (Friedlander, 1999). Given these transracial and interethnic challenges in international adoption, it is important to understand the underlying factors associated with how parents address ethnic and racial differences within the family.

Cultural socialization refers to the manner by which parents address ethnic and racial issues within the family, specifically, the ways parents communicate or transmit cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors to the child and the extent to which the child internalizes these messages, adopts the cultural norms and expectations, and acquires the skills to become a competent and functional member of a racially diverse society (R. M. Lee, 2003). In the case of transnational and transracial adoptive families, cultural socialization typically refers to the transmission of the child's and not the parents' birth culture. Consequently, it is not as inherent or natural a process as it is for same-race or same-ethnicity families, and transracial adoptive parents must make a clear and explicit effort at cultural socialization. However, some adoptive parents may not necessarily want their child to adopt the values and beliefs of the birth culture (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001). In one of the only empirical studies on international adoption to demonstrate the direct linkages between cultural socialization and psychological development, Yoon (2001) found that the relationship between cultural socialization parenting practices and the child's well-being was mediated by the strength of the child's ethnic identity in a sample of 241 Korean adolescent adoptees.

Two important determinants of cultural socialization are parents' attitudes about the salience of race and their belief in the value and importance of cultural socialization. McRoy and Zurcher (1983), for example, observed that White adoptive parents of African American children who were color-blind (i.e., did not perceive racial differences and racism as salient issues) were less likely to live in racially integrated neighborhoods and to make an effort at teaching their adopted child about what it means to grow up as Black in the United States. DeBerry, Scarr, and Weinberg (1996) similarly found that White adoptive parents of African American children who were more likely to deny or deemphasize the salience of race also had more ambivalent feelings about cultural socialization. In other words, parents who deny or are unaware of the prevalence and deleterious effects of racism and discrimination in society (i.e., are color-blind) are less likely to believe in the value and importance of cultural socialization and, consequently, are less likely to engage in cultural socialization parenting behaviors. This mediation model of cultural socialization, as illustrated in Figure 1, is implicit in many current writings on transracial adoption, but it remains to be tested empirically in families with internationally adopted children.

Figure 1 further highlights enculturation and racialization as distinct cultural socialization parenting approaches that are particularly relevant to transracial adoptive families (R. M. Lee, 2003; Tessler, Gamache, & Liu, 1999). *Enculturation* refers to both the belief in and practice of promoting ethnicity-specific experiences that encourage the development of a positive ethnic

identity, which has been found to serve as a protective factor against racism and discrimination (R. M. Lee, 2005). By contrast, *racialization* refers to both the belief in and practice of promoting race-specific experiences that help children develop coping skills to protect them from racism and discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989). As with other forms of socialization within the family, these two parenting practices may directly engage the child or occur indirectly through other parental behaviors (Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2004).

The characteristics of the child and family also play a role in the extent to which families engage in cultural socialization. Transracial adoptees are more likely to struggle with racial and ethnic issues than are same-race adoptees (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994). At the same time, adoptive parents with children who are considered racial and ethnic minorities in the United States (e.g., Asian and Latin American adoptees) are more likely to engage in cultural socialization practices than are parents with children who are racially more similar to Whites (e.g., Russian and Eastern European adoptees; Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001). Adoptive parents with younger children also may be more likely to engage in cultural socialization practices, because younger children generally are more receptive to these activities and opportunities and there are greater postadoption resources available to families who adopted more recently (Steinberg & Hall, 2000). By contrast, adoptive parents with older children may find that their children are less interested in cultural socialization experiences and more interested in peer acceptance and belonging (Meier, 1999).

There is limited empirical research on the cultural socialization experiences of families with internationally adopted children. Moreover, no study has examined adoptive parents' racial attitudes and their beliefs about cultural socialization and the extent to which these attitudes and beliefs contribute to cultural socialization practices within the family. Therefore, the goals of this study were to (a) characterize individual variations in cultural socialization attitudes and beliefs by sex, age, and racial/ethnic status of the child and (b) examine the associations of parents' racial awareness and attitudes and beliefs about cultural socialization with cultural socialization behaviors. Using data from the Minnesota International Adoption Project (IAP), we hypothesized that the relationship between parents' racial attitudes and enculturation and racialization parenting behaviors would be mediated by their respective parenting beliefs. That is, parents with lower color-blind racial attitudes would be more likely to engage in enculturation and racialization parenting behaviors because they have a stronger belief in the value and importance of these two approaches to cultural socialization. We measured parenting behaviors in terms of direct and indirect enculturation and racialization.

Method

Study Design and Sample

The IAP is a multidisciplinary research project at the University of Minnesota that includes parent-report surveys on the preadoption and postadoption experiences of internationally adopted children and their families (see <http://education.umn.edu/icd/IAP/> for complete project description). The IAP survey contained eight sections that measured preadoption care history, postplacement history, medical history, physical measurements, current behavior, educational history, cultural and adoption experiences, and family demographic information. For this investigation, we drew upon data from the cultural and adoption experiences section that measured the racial attitudes and enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs and behaviors of adoptive parents.

The initial sample frame was selected from the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) adoption records and included only children whose adoptions were decreed in Minnesota from January 1, 1990, through December 31, 1998; who were adopted by nonrelatives; and who were born outside the United States. During this time period, 3,268

families had adopted internationally a total of 4,134 children. Known mailing addresses were identified for 2,977 families (91% of the initial sampling frame), and each family was mailed two surveys for every child in January 2001. A long form survey was completed by one parent (self-identified as the primary parent or the parent with primary responsibility for the child); the second, short form survey was completed by the other parent (self-identified as the secondary parent).

A total of 1,834 primary parents and 1,466 secondary parents returned surveys for 2,291 internationally adopted children (see Hellerstedt et al., 2004, for a complete sample description). This resulted in a return rate of 62% for all adoptive families that could be located and 56% of all adoptive families registered with DHS.¹ Of the returned surveys, 1,426 families returned a survey for one child, whereas 408 returned surveys for between two and seven internationally adopted children. When surveys were returned for two or more children, the survey for the oldest child was used for analysis, which resulted in a final IAP sample of 668 cases with only primary parent survey data and 1,166 cases with both primary and secondary parent survey data.

We first used the IAP sample of 668 families for whom only primary parent survey data were available to construct and validate new measures of cultural socialization. We performed a split-sample procedure on this sample to randomly generate two independent samples of 332 and 336 primary parents that were comparable across all demographic characteristics (see Table 1). This procedure was conducted to independently construct and validate the measures with exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

We next utilized the IAP sample of 1,166 families for whom both primary parent and secondary parent survey data were available to characterize individual variations in cultural socialization and to test the mediation model of cultural socialization. Because racial and ethnic differences with parents and between peers become more salient after children enter school, we were interested specifically in school-aged children. There were 804 families with children in grades K–12, but only 43 children were over 13 years old. Therefore, we excluded the children over 13 years old, because of the small sample size, which resulted in a final study sample of 761 families with children between the ages of 5 and 13 years old (see Table 1).

Measures

Parents' racial attitude items were taken from the Blatant Racial Issues subscale of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) by Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, and Browne (2000). One item of this 6-item subscale related to the importance of political leaders to talk about racism was omitted because there were survey space constraints and the item appeared to be less relevant to parenting. The five items used in the study were rated on a 6-point rating scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*), with a higher score reflecting a greater denial or unawareness of racism and discrimination in society. Parents' enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs items were developed for the IAP on the basis of a review of the cultural socialization literature and extant measures developed for nonadopted populations (e.g., Hughes & Chen, 1997; Stevenson, 1994). Nine items were written to measure parents' enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs. These items were reviewed multiple times by

¹Regarding the potential for response bias, there was limited demographic information on nonresponders available to compare with responders. Surveys were more likely to be returned for children adopted most recently: 66% for those adopted between 1995 and 1998 had returned surveys compared with 57% for those adopted prior to 1995 ($p \leq .001$). Thus, the IAP was more likely ($p \leq .001$) to receive surveys for children younger than 10 years old (63%) than for those 10 years old or older (56%). Families in which at least one parent had a college degree were more likely to return surveys than were those in which neither parent had a college education (63% vs. 49%, respectively; $p \leq .001$). Surveys were more often ($p \leq .05$) returned from families who adopted from Russia or Eastern Europe (67%) than from South and Central America (61%) or Asia (59%). The return rate was highest from families who adopted from China (75%) and Guatemala (75%). There were no survey response differences by sex of child and family income.

the IAP Team and the IAP adoptive parent advisory board until consensus was achieved. Items were rated on a 6-point rating scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*), with higher scores reflecting a stronger belief in enculturation and racialization.

An exploratory factor analysis with maximum-likelihood estimation and varimax rotation was conducted on the first split sample ($n = 295$ after listwise deletion) to identify the factor structure of the 14 cultural socialization items, including the CoBRAS items. This analysis revealed four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (4.01, 1.47, 1.38, 1.05), but a scree test suggested only three factors with substantial variance. A second exploratory factor analysis was performed to extract three factors that accounted for 49% of the total variance (see Table 2). Eleven items were retained that had factor loadings equal to or greater than .30 and did not load equally on another factor. Factor 1 (color-blind racial attitudes) assessed a denial or unawareness of pervasive racism and discrimination in society. Factor 2 (enculturation parenting beliefs) assessed the value and importance of providing opportunities to learn about the birth culture in the belief that it will serve as a protective factor against racism and discrimination. Factor 3 (racialization parenting beliefs) assessed the value and importance of making children aware of racial issues and having them develop coping skills to deal effectively with racism and discrimination. We next conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the second split sample ($n = 305$ after listwise deletion) to confirm the latent factor structure of the three cultural socialization items. The three-factor measurement model demonstrated an adequate fit with the data (goodness-of-fit index = .92; adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .88; normed fit index = .84; nonnormed fit index = .83; comparative fit index = .88; root-mean-square error of approximation = .09; confidence interval [CI] = 0.07, 0.11; standardized root-mean-square residual = .08). Using this latter split sample, we computed the alpha coefficients and intercorrelations of each factor scale. Color-blind racial attitudes ($\alpha = .72$) correlated $-.34$ and $-.40$ with enculturation beliefs ($\alpha = .76$) and racialization beliefs ($\alpha = .53$), respectively. Enculturation beliefs correlated .43 with racialization beliefs.

Color-blind racial attitudes—A four-item version of the CoBRAS was created on the basis of the preceding factor analysis. The intraclass correlation coefficient between primary and secondary parent scale scores was .35. The combined parent CoBRAS had a mean item score of 1.96 ($SD = 0.78$) with an alpha coefficient of .77.

Enculturation parenting beliefs—A four-item Enculturation Parenting Beliefs Scale was created on the basis of the preceding factor analysis. The intraclass correlation coefficient between primary and secondary parent scale scores was .55. The combined parent Enculturation Parenting Beliefs Scale had a mean item score of 4.46 ($SD = 0.85$) with an alpha coefficient of .80.

Racialization parenting beliefs—A three-item Racialization Parenting Beliefs Scale was created on the basis of the preceding factor analysis. The intraclass correlation coefficient between primary and secondary parent scale scores was .32. The combined parent Racialization Parenting Beliefs Scale had a mean item score of 4.86 ($SD = 0.65$) with an alpha coefficient of .60.

Enculturation behaviors—Two questions from the IAP primary parent survey were used to assess direct and indirect enculturation parenting behaviors. To measure direct enculturation, we computed a sum score from a checklist of seven cultural activities the child had participated in the last year. These activities included whether the child had associated with a group of children from the same country of origin, eaten or prepared a meal from country of origin, attended a culture camp, played with children from country of origin, learned language of country of origin, celebrated ethnic holidays and ceremonies, and participated in any other country of origin cultural activity. To measure indirect enculturation, we used primary parents'

responses (in yes–no format) to a single question about whether they were “active in any groups, listserves, etc. for parents with internationally adopted children.”

Racialization behaviors—Two questions from the IAP primary parent survey were used to assess direct and indirect racialization parenting behaviors. To measure direct racialization, we used reports from primary parents (in yes–no format) on whether they had spoken with their child about racism and discrimination in school. To measure indirect racialization, we used reports from primary parents (in yes–no format) on whether they had spoken with their child’s teacher about his or her adoption history.

Results

Cultural Socialization Attitudes and Beliefs

Using the IAP sample of 761 families with children between the ages of 5 and 13 years old, we conducted multivariate analyses of variance on the three cultural socialization scales by sex, age, and racial/ethnic status of the child to determine whether parenting attitudes and beliefs varied by child demographics (see Table 3).² There was a small group difference on racialization parenting beliefs by age of the child, Wilks’s $\lambda = 3.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Parents with children ages 9–10 years old had slightly higher racialization parenting beliefs ($M = 4.97$) than did parents with children ages 7–8 years old ($M = 4.79$), $F(3, 667) = 3.32$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. There also were small group differences on enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs by racial/ethnic status of the child, Wilks’s $\lambda = 3.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Parents with children from Russia reported lower enculturation parenting beliefs ($M = 4.00$) than did parents with children from China, Colombia, India, and Korea ($M_s = 4.52$ – 4.72), $F(8, 660) = 6.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, and lower racialization parenting beliefs ($M = 5.59$) than did parents with children from Korea ($M = 4.97$), $F(8, 660) = 2.45$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Parents with children from Eastern Europe reported lower enculturation parenting beliefs ($M = 3.86$) than did parents with children from all other countries ($M = 4.42$ – 4.73) except Russia.

Cultural Socialization Parenting Behaviors

In terms of direct enculturation, parents reported that 83% (632 out of 761) of children participated in at least one cultural activity in the last year, with an average of three cultural activities. In terms of indirect enculturation, less than half of adoptive parents (46% or 315 out of 684) reported that they participated in a postadoption support group or the like. In terms of direct racialization, the majority of parents (78% or 447 out of 573) reported that they had spoken with their child about racism and discrimination in school. In terms of indirect racialization, a similar percentage of parents (79% or 538 out of 680) reported that they had spoken with teachers about their child’s adoption history.

We next conducted a one-way analysis of variance and chi-square tests of independence to determine whether parenting behaviors varied by sex, age, and racial/ethnic status of the child (see Table 3). Parents with older children were more likely to have spoken with their child about racism and discrimination in school, $\chi^2(3, N = 615) = 47.95$, $p < .001$, but were less likely to have spoken with teachers about their child’s adoption history, $\chi^2(3, N = 737) = 13.92$, $p < .005$. Older children ages 11–13 years old also participated in slightly fewer cultural activities ($M = 2.59$) than did children ages 7–8 years old ($M = 3.24$), $F(3, 757) = 3.38$, $p < .01$,

²Countries were recoded into one of nine countries or world regions on the basis of sufficient sample sizes. Moreover, children from Asia and Latin America were considered transracial adoptees, and children from Europe were considered same-race adoptees. We recognized that there were a few instances in which parents identified as a member of a racial minority group, but it was not possible from the survey to determine whether ethnic status was similar to or different from that of the children.

$\eta_p^2 = .01$. There also was a significant association between three of the four parenting behaviors and racial/ethnic status of the child. Parents with children from Russia and China were the most likely to have spoken with teachers; parents with children from elsewhere in Asia were the least likely, $\chi^2(8, N = 735) = 35.98, p < .001$. Children from China ($M = 4.66$) participated in more cultural activities than did children from all other countries ($M_s = 1.66\text{--}3.65$), $F(8, 750) = 10.71, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$. By contrast, children from Russia ($M = 1.66$) and Eastern Europe ($M = 1.97$) participated in fewer cultural activities than did children from China, Colombia, Korea, India, and Southeast Asia ($M_s = 3.06\text{--}4.66$). Parents with children from China also were the most likely to be involved in a postadoption support group, whereas parents with children from Russia, Central America, and Korea were the least likely, $\chi^2(8, N = 757) = 57.03, p < .001$.

Mediation Model of Cultural Socialization

For direct enculturation, which was measured as a continuous variable, three simultaneous multiple regression analyses were performed to test for mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). For the remaining three dependent variables, which were measured as dichotomous variables, a combination of simultaneous multiple regression analyses and logistic regression analyses were performed to test for mediation (D. A. Kenny, personal communication, October 3, 2004). Sobel's significance test for indirect effects (ab) was calculated when a mediation effect was detected.

Direct enculturation behavior—The relationship between color-blind racial attitudes and the number of cultural activities in which the child participated in the last year was statistically significant ($B = -0.79, \beta = -.24; R^2 = .06$). But, as hypothesized, enculturation parenting beliefs mediated this relationship. Specifically, the direct effect of parents' color-blind racial attitudes on the number of cultural activities was reduced (from $B = -0.79$ to 0.11 or $\beta = -.24$ to $.03$) when enculturation parenting beliefs ($B = 1.42, \beta = .57$) was entered into the regression equation ($R^2 = .31, \Delta R^2 = .25$). The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect between color-blind racial attitudes and direct enculturation ($ab = -.91, z = -10.52, p < .00001$).

Indirect enculturation behavior—The relationship between color-blind racial attitudes and parents' involvement in a postadoption support group or the like was statistically significant [$B = -0.63; Exp(B) = 0.53, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.41, 0.69, \chi^2(1, N = 684) = 24.95, p < .001$]. But, as hypothesized, enculturation parenting beliefs mediated this relationship. Specifically, the direct effect of color-blind racial attitudes on postadoption support group was reduced (from $B = -0.63$ to -0.07) when enculturation parenting beliefs (with $B = 1.01$) was entered into the logistic regression equation, $\chi^2(1, N = 684) = 77.05, p < .001$. Parents with higher enculturation parenting beliefs were 2.8 times more likely ($95\% \text{ CI} = 2.15, 3.51$) to be involved in a postadoption group, whereas color-blind racial attitudes was not associated [$Exp(B) = 0.93, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.69, 1.26$]. The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect between color-blind racial attitudes and indirect enculturation ($ab = .64, z = -7.01, p < .00001$).

Direct racialization behavior—The relationship between color-blind racial attitudes and whether parents had spoken with their child about racism and discrimination in school was statistically significant [$B = -0.37; Exp(B) = 0.69, 95\% \text{ CI} = 0.50, 0.94, \chi^2(1, N = 573) = 5.38, p < .05$]. But, as hypothesized, racialization parenting beliefs mediated this relationship. Specifically, the direct effect of color-blind racial attitudes on whether parents had spoken with their child about racism and discrimination was reduced (from $B = -0.37$ to 0.13) when racialization parenting beliefs (with $B = 1.17$) was entered into the logistic regression equation, $\chi^2(1, N = 573) = 47.13, p < .001$. Parents with higher racialization parenting beliefs were 3.2 times more likely ($95\% \text{ CI} = 2.26, 4.60$) to speak with their children, whereas color-blind racial

attitudes was not associated [$Exp(B) = 1.13$, 95% CI = 0.78, 1.65]. The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect between color-blind racial attitudes and direct racialization ($ab = -.49$), $z = -5.48$, $p < .00001$.

Indirect racialization behavior—The relationship between color-blind racial attitudes and whether parents had spoken with teachers about their child's adoption history approached but was not statistically significant [$B = -0.26$; $Exp(B) = 0.77$, 95% CI = 0.58, 1.04], $\chi^2(1, N = 680) = 2.95$, $p < .09$. Although not statistically significant, racialization parenting beliefs still mediated this relationship. Specifically, the direct effect of color-blind racial attitudes on whether parents had spoken with teachers was reduced (from $B = -0.26$ to 0.08) when enculturation parenting beliefs (with $B = 0.42$) was entered into the logistic regression equation, $\chi^2(1, N = 680) = 7.16$, $p < .01$. Parents with higher racialization parenting beliefs were 1.5 times more likely (95% CI = 1.12, 2.07) to speak with the teacher, whereas color-blind racial attitudes was not associated [$Exp(B) = 0.93$, 95% CI = 0.67, 1.28]. The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect between color-blind racial attitudes and indirect racialization ($ab = -.18$), $z = -2.60$, $p < .01$.

Discussion

This investigation provides initial insight into the racial attitudes and culture-specific parenting beliefs and behaviors of parents who are racially and ethnically different from their internationally adopted children. We were particularly interested in how parents addressed inherent racial and ethnic differences with their children as measured by their cultural socialization attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Overall, parents had relatively low mean scores on color-blind racial attitudes and relatively high mean scores on enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs. This finding contrasts with earlier research from the 1980s that found White parents who adopted African American children tended to exhibit color-blind racial attitudes and were more ambivalent about enculturation and racialization (DeBerry et al., 1996; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983).

In line with their self-reported parenting beliefs, parents engaged in a variety of cultural socialization behaviors. The majority of parents had their children participate in at least one cultural activity, with an average of three activities in the last year, spoke with their children about racism and discrimination in school, and spoke with teachers about their children's adoption history. These findings are consistent with recent descriptive studies on cultural socialization within families with internationally adopted children (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Tessler et al., 1999) but contrast with retrospective studies on Korean adult adoptees who generally reported that they were not exposed to the birth culture as children and were not taught how to live as ethnic and racial minorities (Freundlich & Lieberthal, 2000; Meier, 1999). It is possible that recent families with younger adopted children are more attuned to the importance of cultural socialization and have more resources and opportunities available to them than do previous generations of adoptive families (R. M. Lee, 2003).

Although most parents reportedly engaged in cultural socialization behaviors that directly benefited their children, they were less likely to have participated in postadoption support groups, electronic mailing lists, and so on. This parent involvement rate is consistent with other research on internationally adoptive families (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001). The higher involvement rate by parents with children from China also corresponds with the seemingly greater availability of such parent-initiated resources for this particular population (e.g., Families With Children From China; Tessler et al., 1999). Still, it may be that support groups are not widely available to all families, particularly those in rural regions. Parents also may have participated in other postadoption services that were not measured in this study or may have used these resources in the past.

There were some consistent group differences by age and racial/ethnic status of the child on parenting beliefs and behaviors, but the majority of the effect sizes were too negligible to interpret. Moreover, it is difficult to discern whether the age group differences reflect actual developmental patterns of cultural socialization because of the cross-sectional study design. The only distinguishable group difference finding was that parents with children from Russia reported relatively lower enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs than did parents with children from Asia and Latin America. Parents with children from Eastern Europe similarly reported relatively lower enculturation parenting beliefs. These results correspond with the finding that children from Russia or Eastern Europe were less likely to participate in cultural activities and support the notion that transracial adoptive parents are more likely to be sensitive to cultural socialization issues than are inracial adoptive parents (R. M. Lee, 2003). This difference also may reflect the greater number of postadoption services generally believed to be available to families with children adopted from Asia and Latin America compared with those available to families with children adopted from Russia or Eastern Europe (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001). Of interest, parents with children from Russia or Eastern Europe were as likely as other parents to engage in racialization parenting behaviors. Some parents may do so because their children may be of Asian or mixed-race descent. Children from Russia or Eastern Europe also are known to be at greater risk for developmental delay because of early childhood deprivation (O'Connor et al., 2000), and parents may seek to address these concerns with teachers.

This is the first study to our knowledge to test a mediation model of cultural socialization that incorporates parental attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Specifically, enculturation and racialization parenting beliefs mediated the relationship between racial attitudes and certain parenting behaviors. Parents with lower color-blind racial attitudes were more likely to have their children participate in cultural activities, to participate themselves in postadoption support groups, to speak with their children about racism and discrimination in school, and to a lesser extent, to speak with teachers about their children's adoption history, because these parents held stronger beliefs in the value and importance of enculturation and racialization. In logistic regression analyses, enculturation and racialization beliefs significantly increased the likelihood of engaging in self-reported parenting behaviors by 1.5 to 3 times (odds ratios), whereas color-blind racial attitude was not associated with parenting behaviors once parenting beliefs were taken into account.

These results clarify earlier transracial adoption research (DeBerry et al., 1996; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983) that suggested racial attitudes explained why some adoptive parents engage in cultural socialization and others do not. It is more likely the case that racial awareness leads parents to examine their beliefs in the value and importance of enculturation and racialization, and this cognitive process, in turn, is related to actual engagement in enculturation and racialization. In other words, racial awareness (or a low color-blind racial attitude) in and of itself is not sufficient to ensure cultural socialization. Instead, parents must give conscious and specific thought to whether they want to engage in cultural socialization with their children. These cultural socialization experiences, in turn, have been found to contribute to ethnic identity and well-being (D. C. Lee & Quintana, 2005; Yoon, 2001).

This investigation overcomes many of the limitations found in previous international adoption studies, but the study findings need to be interpreted in light of several methodological limitations with the IAP survey data. First, the cross-sectional nature of the data makes it difficult to truly discern developmental variations and causal relationships in cultural socialization. It is not possible to know whether parents' current cultural socialization beliefs and behaviors preceded or followed the adoption. Parenting beliefs and behaviors also may change over time, which is reflective of the dynamic and contextual nature of parent-child relationships (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). Second, only adoptive parents were surveyed, and

consequently, the viewpoints of children were not taken into account. Third, it is possible that some parents presented themselves in a socially desirable manner. Along similar lines, the measure of color-blind racial attitudes used in this investigation assessed only awareness of more blatant forms of racism and not more subtle, covert, or implicit forms of racism that very well may affect parenting behavior (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002). Fourth, the internal reliability and construct validity of the measure of racialization parenting beliefs needs to be improved. The outcome measures of enculturation and racialization parenting behaviors likewise need to be revisited, as the checklist and single items used to assess these behaviors do not capture the full range of cultural socialization experiences. In the case of racialization parenting behaviors, we did not assess when, how often, and in what manner parents spoke with the child about racism and discrimination or with the teacher about the child's adoption history. Clearly, more research is necessary to refine measurement of cultural socialization, to account for developmental and demographic variations in cultural socialization among parents and children, and to test the relations between cultural socialization and the mental health of internationally adopted children.

Finally, the study findings help to inform clinical practice and adoption policy. Currently, most adoption agencies do not have standard protocols for pre- and postadoption services focused on cultural socialization. In Minnesota, for instance, international adoption agencies offer primarily support services for adoptees and fewer resources for adoptive parents. Oftentimes, adoptive parents have had to initiate their own support services to address these issues (Steinberg & Hall, 2000). As such, agencies may want to tailor services to address these aspects of cultural socialization when working with adoptive families. Prospective parents might be encouraged to think beyond racial awareness toward self-examination of their cultural belief systems and what it means to engage in culturally competent parenting and to nurture cultural competence in their children. Likewise, adoptive parents whose children are currently struggling with ethnic and racial issues may benefit from learning additional ways to engage in cultural socialization. These collective efforts, in turn, we hope will promote the development of a healthy and positive ethnic identity and will contribute to the well-being and mental health of internationally adopted children.

Acknowledgements

The research was supported in part by National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) R-01 grant (MH59848) and K-05 award (MH66208) to Megan R. Gunnar and a University of Minnesota Grant-in-Aid of Research, Artistry, and Scholarship; an NIMH Research Supplement for Underrepresented Minorities; and an NIMH K-01 award (MH070740) to Richard M. Lee. Richard M. Lee acknowledges the support and mentorship of Harold D. Grotevant and Matthew McGue, who serve as comentors on the K-01 award.

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Figure 1.
Proposed mediation model of cultural socialization. Plus or minus signs refer to the direction of the relationship.

Table 1

Characteristics of Respondents With Surveys From the Primary Parent Only (N = 668) and From the Primary and Secondary Parents (N = 761)

	N = 668		
Characteristic	Split Sample 1 (n = 332)	Split Sample 2 (n = 336)	N = 761
Parent			
Mother, father	277, 46	287, 47	671, 71 ^a
Mean (SD) age in years			
Primary parent	45.00 (5.61)	45.53 (5.52)	45.06 (4.78)
Secondary parent			46.01 (5.09)
Marital status			
Married or living with partner	240	235	751
Single or widowed	70	68	4
Divorced or separated	21	33	6
Race			
White	317	333	744
Person of color	9	3	11 ^b
Education			
High school or GED	13	16	61, 64 ^c
Some college or associate degree	77	76	174, 164
Bachelor degree	121	122	290, 277
Graduate degree	121	122	235, 247
Median family income	\$76,000–\$100,000	\$51,000–\$75,000	\$76,000–\$100,000
Child			
Sex (male, female)	208, 124	213, 123	417, 344
Mean (SD) age in years	8.66 (3.85)	8.92 (3.86)	9.18 (2.05)
4 years and under	70	58	0
5–6 years old	62	59	137
7–8 years old	47	61	220
9–10 years old	65	68	242
11–13 years old	56	58	162
14 years and older	32	32	0
Mean age at adoption	20 mo.	20 mo.	14 mo.
Median age at adoption	8 mo.	8 mo.	7 mo.
World region			
Central America	35	26	60
China	48	58	50
Colombia	28	28	85
Eastern Europe	18	26	64
India	32	28	51
Korea	94	98	308
Russia	28	18	47
South America	28	33	75
Southeast Asia	18	20	19

Note. Values are sample sizes unless otherwise indicated. Numbers may not sum to total sample size because of missing data.

^a Mother as primary, father as primary.

^b Nine of 11 couples were interracial with one racial minority partner.

^c Primary parent education is listed first.

Table 2

Exploratory Factor Analysis Factor Loading for Cultural Socialization Measures

Scale items	Factor		
	Color-blind racial attitude	Enculturation belief	Racialization belief
Racism is a major problem in the US ^a	.75	-.25	-.08
Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today	.71	-.05	-.18
Racial problems in the US are rare, isolated situations	.68	-.10	-.18
I plan to seek outside assistance to help my child understand about racism and discrimination ^{a,b}	.50	-.33	.00
It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities ^a	.48	-.27	-.20
I have my child participate in cultural events because it will help him/her deal with ethnic and racial problems later in life	-.24	.80	-.03
Friends of the same ethnicity or race will help my child better manage future racism and discrimination	-.24	.76	.03
I believe a secure ethnic identity will help my child cope with future racism and discrimination	-.21	.51	.21
Our family does not emphasize my child's ethnic and racial background ^a	-.26	.33	.14
I am teaching my child how to respond to and cope with racial taunts and comments	-.05	.18	.56
Racial differences are not talked about in our family ^a	-.12	.05	.53
Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tensions ^a	-.15	.09	.31
I am prepared to discuss racism and discrimination with my child when they arise ^b	-.08	-.11	.22
I will talk about racism and discrimination when my child mentions them ^b	.04	.20	.21

^aReverse coded.^bOmitted.

Table 3
Group Differences on Cultural Socialization Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors by Child Sex, Age, and World Region

Group	Color-blind racial attitude		Enculturation beliefs		Racialization beliefs		Direct enculturation parenting behavior		Indirect enculturation parenting behavior (%)	Direct racialization parenting behavior (%)	Indirect racialization parenting behavior (%)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
a. Male	1.95	0.61	4.42	0.83	4.85	0.64	2.90	2.05	44	75	81
b. Female	1.96	0.65	4.52	0.85	4.88	0.65	3.18	2.15	46	78	76
Pairwise comparisons	ns		ns		ns		ns				
c. 5–6 years old	1.95	0.59	4.55	0.75	4.79	0.61	3.12	2.01	48	56	88
d. 7–8 years old	2.00	0.70	4.52	0.83	4.79	0.71	3.24	2.06	43	73	79
e. 9–10 years old	1.93	0.61	4.51	0.86	4.97	0.59	3.15	2.17	49	88	74
f. 11–13 years old	1.94	0.58	4.28	0.89	4.89	0.65	2.59	2.11	40	86	72
Pairwise comparisons	ns		ns		e > d		ns				
World region											
Asia											
g. China	1.78	0.61	4.72	0.83	4.93	0.52	4.66	1.81	80	76	93
h. India	1.83	0.59	4.65	0.70	4.88	0.60	3.06	1.87	51	80	76
i. Korea	1.97	0.63	4.57	0.82	4.97	0.62	3.27	2.17	36	79	69
j. Southeast Asia	1.99	0.61	4.73	0.70	4.73	0.80	3.63	1.80	63	82	74
Latin America											
k. Central America	1.98	0.60	4.42	0.87	4.75	0.73	2.65	1.71	37	81	86
l. Colombia	1.92	0.58	4.52	0.79	4.83	0.68	3.38	1.88	59	66	86
m. South America	1.94	0.69	4.43	0.81	4.81	0.63	2.69	2.09	53	78	77
Europe											
n. Eastern Europe	2.21	0.72	3.86	0.92	4.75	0.70	1.97	2.03	50	71	87
o. Russia	2.01	0.55	4.00	0.68	4.59	0.62	1.66	1.58	26	75	95
Pairwise comparisons	ns		g, h, i, l > o; g–m > n		i > o		g > h–o; g–j, l > n, o				

Note. Pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .05$.