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# Cultural Competence for Transracial Adoptive Parents

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*This article provides a clear conceptual definition of cultural competence for transracial-cultural adoptive (TRA) parents based on an extensive review of the literature and feedback from both experts and parents. Following the differentiation of cultural competence as defined in the social work literature and cultural competence as applied to TRA parents, a three-part definition of cultural competence for TRA parents is presented. The article expands on each of three constructs: racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. In addition, it describes the process of beginning to operationalize the constructs. Finally, implications for social work practice, education, and research are suggested.*

**Key words:** *cultural competence; multicultural planning; racial awareness; survival skills; transracial adoption*

This article explores and defines the concept of cultural competence as it applies to parents who adopt across race or ethnicity. Typically, transracial adoptive (TRA) parents are European Americans who form their families with children who are members of a different racial or ethnic group by birth. This method of family formation has been debated vigorously, especially concerning the domestic adoption of African American or biracial children (Hollingsworth, 1998), and less often concerning international adoption of Asian or Latino children (Tizard, 1991). Although controversial, transracial or transcultural adoption accounts for an estimated 14 percent of all adoptions that take place in the United States (Smith, 1994). Of these, the majority are children who are adopted from countries outside of the United

States, including Latin American, Eastern European, and Asian countries. According to U.S. Department of State data, the number of children adopted from other countries has grown substantially over the past 20-plus years, from about 5,000 in 1975 to more than 13,500 in 1997 (U.S. Department of State, 1998). In recent years the majority of the children have come from the People's Republic of China and Russia.

Supporters and critics of the practice strongly recommend that (TRA) parents need to acquire the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable them to help their children develop positive racial identities and survival skills for life in a racist society (Andujo, 1988; McRoy, 1994; Rushton & Minnis, 1997). Although strong suggestions for training TRA parents

abound in the literature, there is no agreement or guide as to exactly which attitudes, skills, and knowledge are needed by this group of parents to enhance their cultural competence.

A clearer understanding of the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that TRA parents need is essential for social work practice, education, and knowledge building. This article represents a beginning effort to fill the need for a conceptual definition of cultural competence for TRA parents based primarily on an extensive review of the literature, as well as feedback from a panel of experts and a group of TRA parents. I present a three-part definition of cultural competence for TRA parents, expand on each of the three constructs, and discuss operationalization of the constructs.

### **Defining Cultural Competence in Social Work**

Cultural competence has been the subject of much attention in social work over more than a decade (for example, Greene, Watkins, McNutt, & Lopez, 1998; McPhatter, 1997). These authors stressed the importance of cultural competence for practice in an increasingly pluralistic society in which most helping professionals have been trained in a monocultural tradition. In addition, they point to the inadequacy of continuing to practice as if racial and cultural differences are insignificant. Reviewing the evolution of the concept of cultural competence in the field of social work, Greene et al. suggested a three-part framework: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. On the basis of their extensive review of social work literature, Greene et al. then elaborated numerous diversity principles related to each of the three areas of culturally competent practice. *Knowledge* "refers to the information needed to develop an accurate understanding of the client's life experiences and life patterns" (p. 48). One principle, for example, involves understanding the history of oppression for an individual or group. The *attitude* component is related to the social worker's self-awareness of assumptions, values, and biases that are a part of his or her own culture and worldview and understanding of the worldview of the client who is a member of a different culture. This includes principles such

as understanding ethnocentric thinking and learning to appreciate differences. *Skills* concerns the development of practice skills that are tailored to meet the needs of a client from a different culture, including cross-cultural communication skills.

McPhatter (1997) has defined cultural competence as it applies to social work practice in the field of child welfare. Her conceptualization also is based on growth in three areas: (1) enlightened consciousness, (2) grounded knowledge base, and (3) cumulative skill proficiency. Although some of her specific guidelines are tailored to child welfare practice, there are many similarities with the conceptual framework summarized earlier. Both underscore the importance of acquiring particular attitudes, knowledge, and skills. It is not enough to be aware of how race and culture affect self-functioning; individuals also must be open to learning about the effect of race and culture on others, to learning about racism and mechanisms of oppression, and to acquiring the cross-cultural skills that enable effective intervention.

There are other similarities in McPhatter's (1997) and Greene et al.'s (1998) definitions. Both stress the notion that cultural competence involves a developmental process that requires a long-term commitment. Cultural competence is not a specific end product that happens after a two-hour workshop. It is an active process of learning and practicing over time. McPhatter summed up the definition with the following: "Cultural competence denotes the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and/or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client-system functioning within the appropriate cultural context" (p. 261).

### **Components of Cultural Competence in Parenting**

To develop a framework of cultural competence for parents, it is important first to note the similarities and differences between the parent-child relationship and the client-worker relationship. Although both types of relationship seek to promote growth, the social worker is concerned with healthy client-system functioning; the parent, with his or her child's healthy

and optimal development. Likewise, the social worker seeks knowledge and skills with which to intervene appropriately, whereas the parent seeks knowledge and skills with which to nurture, guide, and support. In light of such differences, it stands to reason that the definition of cultural competence for each type of relationship differs as well. Using McPhatter's (1997) definition as a guide then, parents working toward cultural competence need to transform a particular set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills into the ability to meet their children's unique racial and cultural needs. Like social workers who have, for the most part, been a part of a monocultural tradition, European American parents of children of a different race or culture must engage in a long-term developmental process toward cultural competence.

Although the work of McPhatter (1997) and Greene et al. (1998) is helpful in defining cultural competence for practitioners, the components necessary for transracial adoptive parenting must be determined elsewhere. Fortunately, much has been learned from the experiences of adoptees themselves.

### Transracial Adoption Outcomes

Various aspects of psychosocial adjustment of adoptees from other countries into families of North America and Europe have been studied (for example, Bagley, 1993). In addition, the outcome of transracial adoption of African American children into European American homes has been examined (for example, McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, & Anderson, 1984). Reviews of this literature are available (Kim, 1995; Rushton & Minnis, 1997; Tizard, 1991) with strikingly similar conclusions on the part of the authors.

Tizard (1991) began by reviewing studies that attest to the rapid and successful adjustment of the majority of intercountry adoptees into their new families. She then gave an overview of the studies that assess later development in terms of variables such as behavioral problems, educational achievement, quality of relationships, and self-esteem. Although describing some differences in findings, she concluded that "in 75–80% of intercountry adoptions the children and adolescents function well, with no

more behavioral and educational problems at home and at school than other children, and that they have close and mutually satisfying relationships with their parents" (Tizard, p. 755). Kim (1995) reviewed studies that shed light specifically on the adjustment of Korean adoptees. He agreed with the 75 percent to 80 percent success rate. He also suggested that the intercountry adoptee's problems, if and when they arise, most likely are related to preadoptive experiences such as neglect, malnutrition, or separation trauma. Finally, Rushton and Minnis (1997) provided an extensive review of studies that examined the outcome of transracial adoption for black people in the United States and in Britain. The studies they reviewed explored various outcomes, including adoption disruption, educational attainment, peer relationships, self-esteem, and behavioral problems. Although advising caution because of a variety of methodological problems in the studies reviewed, Rushton and Minnis, like the preceding reviewers, noted successful adjustment in the range of 70 percent to 90 percent. In addition, they noted that several of the studies showed a positive relationship between age of placement and adoption difficulties.

Particularly relevant to the current discussion of parental cultural competence, it is significant that all three of the previous reviews point to difficulties among some intercountry or transracial adoptees in establishing racial or cultural identity. As defined by McRoy (1994) *racial identity* refers to "one's self-perception and sense of belonging to a particular group . . . includ[ing] not only how one describes and defines oneself, but also how one distinguishes oneself from members of other ethnic groups" (p. 66). *Cultural identity* is related to, but separate from racial identity; it is "determined by the particular society to which the individual belongs [and includes] behaviors, beliefs, rituals, and values" (Steward & Baden, 1995, p. 9). Although the distinction between racial and cultural identity is sometimes unclear in the adoption outcome studies, the evidence points to difficulty for transracial adoptees in these areas. For example, Rushton and Minnis (1997) cited studies that found transracial adoptees who "would prefer to be white" and who did

not "like to spend time with [persons of their own race]" (p. 153). Tizard (1991) cited studies that indicated that some transracial adoptees are uncomfortable with their appearance, are ashamed of their origins, or attempt to stay distant from immigrants of the same racial or ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, after reviewing pertinent studies, Kim (1995) asked "whether the so-called good adjustment has been accomplished at the cost of [the adoptees] unique ethnocultural heritage and identity" (p. 152). Although all three reviewers suggested that there is room for more rigorous study in this area, at this time it appears that intercountry or transracial adoptees must struggle to integrate an identity that includes acceptance of their own physical appearance, their birth heritage, and the heritage of their upbringing.

Related to difficulties in establishing positive racial and cultural identity, the effect of racism on intercountry adoptees is largely unexplored, as is the ability of white parents to teach their children of color survival skills to cope with racism. Reports from adult Korean adoptees, however, provide at least some evidence of racist or stereotypical remarks being aimed at the adoptee and the adoptive family (Huh, 1997). In addition, Vroegh (1992) reported that transracial adoptees in her study, based in Chicago, were more likely to experience racial teasing than inracial adoptees. Furthermore, there is evidence that transracial adoptive parents have advised their children to ignore racial incidents (Andujo, 1988; Vroegh) rather than to use more active coping skills.

Findings such as these have led to discussions about the special needs of transracial adoptive parents. For the most part, the discussions are focused on the need for parents to increase their awareness, skills, and knowledge in three areas: (1) racial awareness, (2) survival skills, and (3) multicultural family planning. The expectation is that improvements in parents' abilities in these areas will translate into better outcomes for their children. Although this expectation is logical, it is important to note that empirical evidence of this relationship has not been firmly established. Huh (1997) provided some support, noting that Korean adoptees are more likely to identify as Korean

American when parents are actively involved in Korean culture.

### Conceptual Definitions of the Three Components

Each of the three areas can be defined conceptually using related literature.

**Racial Awareness.** Racial awareness on the part of transracial adoptive parents is an area that is discussed often in transracial adoption literature (for example, Kallgren & Caudill, 1993; Smith, 1994; Zuniga, 1991). Borrowing from the area of social work for definition, *multicultural* or *racial awareness* refers to a person's awareness of how the variables of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and related power status operate in one's own and other's lives (Greene et al., 1998). In addition, it includes an understanding of the dynamics of racism, oppression, and other forms of discrimination (McPhatter, 1997).

Self-awareness is a starting point for TRA parents. Several training program curriculums ask participants to examine their own lives in relation to the roles that race, ethnicity, and culture have played in shaping their attitudes and values (for example, Steinberg & Hall, 1998). As members of the dominant culture, European Americans often are able to protect themselves from experiencing the anxiety of being with others who are different from themselves. Indeed, ethnic stratification assigns various groups to a position in a hierarchy according to distance from European American appearance and culture (Devore & Schlesinger, 1996). As the distance and discomfort become greater, there is less likelihood of positive, meaningful contact between members of the groups. For many European Americans, including TRA parents, lack of experience outside of the dominant culture makes consciousness of their own racial identity and culture difficult.

In addition, lack of contact with members of different races or cultures contributes to ethnocentrism. Although European American culture may be pervasive, it does not define "normal" behavior, values, or attitudes. Valerie Lee, herself an Asian American adoptive mother, cautioned European American adoptive parents of Asian children to avoid treating Chinese culture

with disrespect because of "our own feelings of cultural superiority" (Lee, 1998, p. 45) that come from the sense that white culture is the "universal norm." Parents also may need to increase their awareness of what have been called "white benefits" (Kivel, 1998). White benefits are advantages based on race that are invisible to those who have them. For example, most European Americans generally expect protection rather than harassment from police; count on seeing people who are similar to them portrayed in the media and literature; and do not often worry that they will be unfairly judged on the basis of their race. It may be difficult to understand the disadvantages that children of color face without an understanding of the flip side.

Awareness of the motivation to adopt a child of another race is also important (Zuniga, 1991). Steinberg and Hall (1998) pointed out that child-centered motivations to adopt do not include social causes such as fighting racism or making up for past inequities. Instead, child-centered motivations are focused on the match between a child's needs and the parents' ability and desire to meet them.

Awareness of the roles that race, ethnicity, and culture play in the lives of others, particularly for those of their children's race and culture of birth is the second piece of racial awareness for TRA parents. This is an area that is discussed frequently in academic literature (for example, Andujo, 1988; Zuniga, 1991). Several authors pointed out the need for transracial adoptive parents to have the ability to see that their child's race is different from their own (Kallgren & Caudill, 1993; McRoy et al., 1984; Zuniga). Seemingly simplistic, it is nonetheless important to recognize the child's racial identity rather than to deny it or to act as if race does not matter. To develop understanding of and respect for their child's race, TRA parents must have knowledge of the history and culture of the people, both in the country of origin and in the United States (Andujo, 1988; Jones & Else, 1979). In addition, several authors pointed out the need for TRA parents to be aware that their children's needs related to race create extra parental responsibilities (McRoy et al.; Smith, 1994; Zuniga). These responsibilities in-

clude helping their children develop pride in their racial identities as well as coping skills to deal with racism.

Finally, racial awareness for TRA parents involves becoming sensitized to racism and discrimination. Several authors spoke to the need for TRA parents to examine their own attitudes and beliefs about their child's race and culture (Curtis, 1996; Jones & Else, 1979; Romney, 1995). Romney suggested that parents may be encouraged by love for their children to examine stereotypes or prejudices that they may hold. Curtis underscored the need for self-examination on the part of parents, stating that such training should be mandatory. Others in the field of adoption (that is, Steinberg & Hall, 1998) stressed the importance of TRA parents imagining their children as adolescents and adults to consider feelings about issues such as interracial dating and marriage. These authors underscored the need for TRA parents to be aware of their own blind spots to help their children develop pride in their racial identities.

It is also thought to be important that parents become aware of how racism might affect their children and families (Jones & Else, 1979; Romney, 1995; Smith, 1994). Smith pointed out that parents should be aware that transracial adoption creates families that are visibly different from most others. The families are forever interracial and, as such, are not immune to having prejudice or racism directed toward them or toward their children. Parents must learn to recognize both positive and negative stereotypes, as well as other types of covert and overt racism that are a part of life for people of color in the United States. It can not be assumed that "white benefits" will be extended to a child of color who lives with European American parents. Furthermore, these parents may be faced with situations that are quite new to them, such as attempts by their children to alter their appearance to conform more closely with European American standards of beauty or to look more like their parents or siblings (Alstein et al., 1994).

In sum, TRA parents who are sensitive to and aware of race, ethnicity, and culture are thought to be more able to help their children cope successfully with related issues. Racial

awareness also may help parents understand the importance of recognizing their child's race and of fostering their child's identification with his or her race. Racial awareness is important in its own right, but also because without it, parents may not understand the value of multicultural planning and survival skills.

**Multicultural Planning.** Multicultural planning refers to the creation of avenues for the transracially adopted child to learn about and participate in his or her culture of birth. Whereas socialization in the culture of one's racial group is generally congruent with the racial make-up of the family, this is not the case in families formed through transracial adoption. Furthermore, if the family is involved in other groups, such as neighborhoods, schools, and churches that are exclusively or primarily made up of European Americans, the child has no access to others of his or her birth culture. This appears to make it difficult for some adoptees to identify with and develop pride in their race, ethnicity, or culture of birth (Andujo, 1988; Johnson, Shireman, & Watson, 1987). Recent work in the area of understanding identity in biracial and mixed parentage individuals (for example, Herring, 1995; Tizard & Phoenix, 1995) and in transracial adoptees (Steward & Baden, 1995) suggested that such people may develop a unique racial and cultural identity that is based on some combination of the races and cultures of family members and the culture of their own races.

Although experience in the parent's culture is a constant, the parent of the transracially adopted child must cultivate avenues for exposure to and involvement in the child's birth culture. A variety of ideas have been suggested in the literature (for example, Jones & Else, 1979; Zuniga, 1991), ranging from those that are cognitive, such as reading about aspects of the child's culture of birth, to those that are more experiential, such as spending time with families from the child's culture of birth.

Andujo (1988) suggested that the more formal links to the child's birth culture, such as reading about customs or visiting the occasional ethnic festival, are inadequate by themselves, thus necessitating direct involvement in the milieu of the birth culture. Furthermore,

Steinberg and Hall (1998) pointed out that TRA parents cannot themselves teach their children about a culture to which they themselves do not belong; they must instead help their children find role models within their birth cultures. In addition, Huh (1997) suggested that parents who become interested and actively pursue involvement in their child's birth culture are more likely to have children who also are involved and comfortable. So, although it is clear that a wide variety of links are possible, the more hands-on approaches are often advocated. More study is certainly warranted in this area.

**Survival Skills.** Survival skills refer to the recognition of the need and the ability of parents to prepare their children of color to cope successfully with racism. This skill is as important for transracial adoptees as for children with same-race parents, but may be more difficult to learn from European American parents who have had little experience of racism directed toward them. Minimizing or ignoring racial incidents is insufficient for children who may find themselves at the receiving end of racially based prejudice or discrimination. They need help to develop strong self-images despite racism.

Many authors point out the parents' responsibility to help their children learn a variety of coping strategies to deal with racism (Andujo, 1988; Romney, 1995; Smith, 1994). Although it is not possible to protect children from racism, it is possible to help them actively cope with it. General strategies mentioned in the literature include learning how to talk about race and racism openly and honestly within the family, staying in touch with other families who are faced with similar issues, practicing responses to insensitive comments from others, and demonstrating a lack of tolerance for any racially or ethnically biased comments. More specific strategies are outlined in training curriculums and other materials for transracial adoptive parents (for example, Cunningham & Bower, 1998; Steinberg & Hall, 1998). Although strategies may vary by personality and situation, it is important that children of color learn to externalize rather than to internalize racism. Parents should be able to validate children's feelings of anger and hurt, convey the message that racism

is unfair, and avoid placing blame on the child. In addition, parents can help by asking their children if assistance is desired to handle a situation.

### **Operational Definition of Cultural Competence**

To begin the process of moving from a conceptual to an operational definition, I identified specific recommendations for TRA parents from professional literature, gleaning 176 recommendations from 25 articles. Each was then placed within the three broad constructs defined earlier: racial awareness, survival skills, and multicultural family planning. Each recommendation started with the root phrase "As a [prospective] transracial adoptive parent, I think that it is very important to . . .," and ended with the recommendation. Eight experts in the areas of transracial adoption and in-cultural competence were asked to provide feedback about the relevance of each recommendation to the assigned construct, problems with wording, and ambiguity. The majority of the experts have published professional literature in the areas of transracial adoption or cultural competence in human services. The remainder were adoption practitioners who provide training for parents and staff members in the area of transracial-cultural adoption. As a result of this feedback, 71 of the recommendations that were ambiguous, poorly worded, redundant, or lacking in clear relevance to the assigned construct were discarded. The remaining 105 items were formatted as a survey using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

For the next step, TRA parents were solicited from two Internet listserv groups to complete the survey of recommendations and provide feedback. A total of 205 adoptive or prospective adoptive parents completed the survey. Examination of item means and variability guided further reduction of items, with the goal of eliminating items with extreme means and low variance. Of those who returned surveys, 10 percent were randomly selected and interviewed by phone to gather more information about wording, interpretation of items, and personal reactions to completing the survey.

From this feedback, the wording of several items was refined. In addition, the root phrase was dropped in favor of "I" statements based on the parents' perceptions that the more active "I" form is a more accurate representation of parental cultural competence. The three original constructs remained, with a total of 39 recommendations. (More information regarding the development of an instrument based on these recommendations is available from the author.)

### **Racial Awareness**

There are 12 recommendations concerning racial awareness for TRA parents. They are related to self- and other awareness, as well as sensitivity to racism:

1. I understand how my own cultural background influences the way I think, act, and speak.
2. I am able to recognize my own racial prejudice.
3. I am aware of stereotypes and preconceived notions that I may hold toward other racial and ethnic minority groups.
4. I have examined my feelings and attitudes about the birth culture and race of my children.
5. I make ongoing efforts to change my own prejudiced attitudes.
6. I have thoroughly examined my motivation for adopting a child of a different race or culture than myself.
7. I am knowledgeable of and continue to develop respect for the history and culture of my children's racial heritage.
8. I understand the unique needs of my child related to his or her racial or cultural status.
9. I know that transracial-cultural adoptive parenting involves extra responsibilities over and above those of inracial parenting.
10. I have examined my feelings about interracial dating and marriage.
11. I know that others may view my family as "different."
12. I know that my children may be treated unkindly or unfairly because of racism.

## Multicultural Planning

Many suggestions have been made to TRA parents to build a bridge between their own and their child's race and culture. The following 14 recommendations vary in terms of how direct a link they provide to the child's birth culture.

1. I include regular contact with people of other races and cultures in my life.
2. I place my children in multicultural schools.
3. I place my children with teachers who are racially aware and skilled with children of my child's race.
4. I understand how my choices about where to live affect my child.
5. I have developed friendships with families and individuals of color who are good role models for my children.
6. I purchase books, toys, and dolls that are like my child.
7. I include traditions from my child's birth culture in my family celebrations.
8. I provide my children with opportunities to establish relationships with adults from their birth culture.
9. I provide my children with the opportunity to learn the language of their birth culture.
10. I provide my children with the opportunity to appreciate the music of their birth culture.
11. I have visited the country or community of my child's birth.
12. I have demonstrated the ability for sustained contact with members of my child's racial or ethnic group.
13. I seek services and personal contacts in the community that will support my child's ethnicity.
14. I live in a community that provides my child with same-race adult and peer role models on an ongoing basis.

## Survival Skills

Perhaps because of the need to tailor a response to a specific situation, recommendations for survival skills seem to lack specificity in the professional literature. Literature aimed toward adoptive parents rather than professionals con-

tains suggestions that are somewhat more concrete. The following 13 items vary in specificity.

1. I educate my children about the realities of racism and discrimination.
2. I help my children cope with racism through open and honest discussion in our home about race and oppression.
3. I am aware of the attitudes of friends and family members toward my child's racial and cultural differences.
4. I am aware of a variety of strategies that can be used to help my child cope with acts of prejudice or racism.
5. I know how to handle unique situations, such as my child's attempts to alter his or her physical appearance to look more like family members or friends.
6. I help my children recognize racism.
7. I help my children develop pride in themselves.
8. I tolerate no biased remarks about any group of people.
9. I seek peer support to counter frustration resulting from overt and covert acts of racism toward my children, my family, or me.
10. I seek support and guidance from others who have a personal understanding of racism, particularly those from my child's race or birth culture.
11. I have acquired practical information about how to deal with insensitive questions from strangers.
12. I help my children understand that being discriminated against does not reflect personal shortcomings.
13. I am able to validate my children's feelings, including anger and hurt related to racism or discrimination.

## Conclusion and Implications

A three-part definition of cultural competence for TRA parents has been presented, including the constructs of racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. In addition, "I" statements representing specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to each construct have been identified. Although more work is needed to establish the validity of the definition, the current work advances the starting point for



establishing an operational definition. The clarity of this definition is needed for social work practice, education, and research.

This understanding of cultural competence may help social workers who practice with TRA families in several ways. The social worker may help raise awareness and educate by allowing potential adoptive parents to examine and discuss the "I" statements. It would be expected that parents would vary not only in their levels of awareness of the three parts of cultural competence, but also in their willingness to take on the "extra" responsibilities involved in transracial family formation. The "I" statements help bring abstract concepts to a more tangible level of awareness. Such awareness may help those who are less suitable to the task to self-select out of the transracial adoptive process. In addition, training needs might be highlighted during the assessment phase for those who continue in the adoptive process.

Training for potential adoptive parents also might be guided by the three constructs of cultural competence. The definition provides a template of areas that need to be covered in training for TRA parents. The breadth of the definition makes it clear that a one-time preadoptive training session is most likely inadequate to the task. In addition, parents may be more motivated to learn about a particular area in response to needs that become evident as their child develops. For example, a parent may be very interested in survival skills when her child enters school and experiences racially based teasing. So, although preadoptive training might provide an initial introduction to cultural competence, it also sets the stage for equally important postadoptive training.

Social work educators might use this definition of cultural competence for TRA parents to prepare adequately students who will work in foster care and adoption. Families continue to be formed through transracial adoption. Future practitioners in the field of social work need to examine their own beliefs and biases about this family form and become knowledgeable about the unique needs of these families.

In addition, clarity in this area could benefit evaluation and research with TRA families. At the very least, the training for TRA parents

needs to be systematically evaluated. In addition, research questions such as the following need to be addressed: Does parent training in cultural competence affect the adoptee's racial identity and adjustment? Are there particular parts of cultural competence that are more or less important for the adoptee's racial identity and adjustment? Are there particular parts of cultural competence that are more or less important at particular developmental stages of the child? Further work toward establishing the validity of the three constructs, along with a reliable way to measure them, would enhance this important area of research. ■

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