

Racist Experiences, Openness to Discussing Racism, and Attitudes Toward Ethnic Heritage Activities: Adoptee–Parent Discrepancies

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This study used hierarchical linear modeling to examine discrepancies among 95 dyads of Asian adolescent transnational adoptees and their parents ($N = 190$). Results revealed that parents underestimated the degree to which adoptees experienced racism and overestimated their positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities and openness to discussing racism. Adoptees with a high percentage of friends of color reported fewer racist experiences; however, parents with a high percentage of friends of color perceived adoptees to experience higher instances of racism. In addition, parents with low colorblind attitudes overestimated adoptees' positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities and openness to discussing racism; whereas, at both high and low levels of colorblind attitudes, parents underestimated adoptees' racist experiences. Implications that center on the perspectives of Asian adolescent transnational adoptees as well as practical suggestions for clinicians and adoption professionals are discussed.

What is the public significance of this article?

Based on a study that compared the reports of 95 Asian transnational adoptees and their parents, results indicated that parents overestimated adoptees' openness to discussing racism and their positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities; however, results also revealed that parents underestimated the level of racism experienced by adoptees. Although parents' level of racial awareness made a difference in their views toward adoptees' encouraging behaviors, all parents, regardless of their racial awareness, underestimated the racism experienced by adoptees. Results speak to the need to explore Asian transnational adoptees' views of their parents' willingness to discuss issues of racism and the nature of the racial messages that they receive.

Keywords: transnational adoption, adoptees, colorblind attitudes, racism, socialization

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Since the mid-1950s, Asian countries have remained the primary source of transnational adoptions for White American families (Selman, 2015; U.S. Department of State, 2010). Unlike domestic transracial adoptions where early disputes are centered on the impact of racial difference for Black children (Brooks & Barth, 1999), debates concerning Asian transnational adoptees (ATAs) have not been as concerned with race (Lee & Miller, 2009). For example, White families were initially advised to raise ATAs “as if they were White,” based on the assumption that emphasizing racial differences would negatively affect their development (Lee, 2003). Similarly, early

research on transnational adoption was largely concerned with behavioral and adjustment outcomes and failed to adequately address the sociocultural implications of within-family racial difference on the developmental experiences of ATAs (Lee, 2003). For the current study purpose, we will use the terms *adoptee* and *transnational adoptee* interchangeably when referring to ATAs who have been adopted by White American parents (i.e., adoptive parents).

Over the past 15 years, however, studies have made attempts to address the sociocultural implications of transnational adoption in the lives of ATAs by focusing on parents' efforts to familiarize adoptees with different aspects of their ethnic heritage (Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006; Lee & Quintana, 2005). This body of research has been characterized as largely parent-driven (Kim, Reichwald, & Lee, 2013), as most studies have relied on the perspectives of parents with young children. Findings suggest that parents of ATAs tend to overlook the topic of racial difference (Zhang & Lee, 2011) and rarely talk to adoptees about racism (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007; Langrehr, 2014). Knowledge gained from this research has

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mostly applied to adoptees' early developmental experiences without addressing their understanding of race and ethnicity in adolescence. Unlike young children who have a rudimentary understanding of race, adolescents of color are often exposed to the realities of race as they learn how to navigate the demands of a racialized world (Hughes, Watford, & Del Toro, 2016). For example, ATAs must learn to negotiate their self-concept as Asian Americans in relation to their understanding of White individuals, given that most are raised in predominantly White areas and have minimal contact with Asian Americans or other people of color (Langrehr, Yoon, Hacker, & Caudill, 2015; Meier, 1999). As a result, ATAs are often highly aware of their out-group status as people of color (Day, Godon-Decoteau, & Suyemoto, 2015; Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010) and may hold perspectives about race, culture, and ethnicity that are not always consistent with that of their parents (Kim et al., 2013) who face a different social reality based on their racial majority status.

Studies suggest that White Americans are less inclined to consider themselves as having a racial identity or belonging to a racial group, which can make it difficult to recognize the implications of race and privilege in their lives (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, & Embrick, 2006). For example, it is not uncommon for White individuals to endorse the belief that race does not matter (Carr, 1997), as this allows them to deny or minimize the significance of racism in contemporary society (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). By supporting the ideals of colorblindness, White individuals can situate themselves to live and function in predominantly White communities, which minimizes their exposure to the undesirable realities of racial injustice. Based on their adoptive status, many ATAs have gained admittance into these communities where they are treated by others (and sometimes themselves) as members of the majority (Lee, 2003); yet, unlike their parents, they still face the demands of navigating their out-group status within the context of a highly racialized society.

In an effort to help bridge some of these experiences between ATAs and their parents, a goal of the current study was to specifically examine discrepancies in their reports about adoptees' experiences with racism, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. Based on the tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we expected to find significant discrepancies in adoptee-parent reports, given that ATAs face different sociocultural experiences due to their racial out-group status. Although it is not uncommon for parents and children to hold different perspectives, studies suggest there is a greater likelihood for relational conflict (Kim, Zarit, Birditt, & Fingerhant, 2014) and adjustment difficulties (Ohannessian, 2012) when family members hold significantly different views about sensitive issues, such as racism. In addition, it is particularly important to explore parents' ability to recognize the racial nature of ATAs' experiences, given that racial prejudice can have a negative impact on youth of color (García Coll et al., 1996; Qin, Kim, Su, Hu, & Lee, 2017) and has been specifically linked with increased behavioral difficulties (Hjern, Lindblad, & Vinnerljung, 2002; Lee, 2010) and higher psychological distress among international adoptees (Lee, Lee, Hu, & Kim, 2015). Overall, the study results are intended to provide a more critical understanding of the experiences of ATAs and other transnational adoptees as people of color.

ATA Racial–Ethnic Experiences

Ethnic Heritage Exposure

Unlike early transnational adoption practices, findings from contemporary research suggest that parents are now making concerted efforts to expose young ATAs to affirming aspects of their ethnic heritage. Specifically, studies have examined parents' efforts to celebrate ethnic holidays (Johnston et al., 2007), travel to adoptees' country of birth, read culturally relevant books (Freidlander et al., 2000), and take language classes (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011). Although such activities have been linked to positive identity outcomes (Lee & Quintana, 2005), the importance of these activities for adolescent ATAs remains less apparent, given that these findings are largely based on parents' perceptions of adoptees early on in their development. As they reach their teens, studies suggest that ATAs become less interested in exploring their ethnic background (Meier, 1999) and more concerned about fitting in with their White peers. For example, some ATAs have reported that they purposefully avoided ethnically based events, feeling as though their involvement would highlight their racial differences (Langrehr et al., 2015). With the exception of traveling to Korea, adult Korean adoptees have identified other ways of meaningfully connecting with their heritage, such as living in racially diverse areas, interacting with other people of color, and learning about their birth family (McGinnis, Smith, Ryan, & Howard, 2009).

Racialized Experiences

Although issues of race have not been largely represented in the discourse concerning transnational adoption, existing research suggests that ATAs are not exempt from racial stress and prejudice (Kim et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2015; Qin et al., 2017). As they age and develop more cognitive maturity, studies suggest that ATAs often face a variety of racial stressors. For example, adolescent ATAs report feeling uncomfortable with being racially different (Day et al., 2015; McGinnis et al., 2009) and greater incidents of racism compared with younger adoptees (Lee & Quintana, 2005). However, research also suggests that transnationally adoptive parents make minimal effort to address adoptees' lived experiences with racism and place more emphasis on fostering adoptees' ethnic heritage (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011). In particular, parents have been depicted as eager and enthusiastic in discussing their efforts to familiarize ATAs with their ethnic background; whereas, they have also been found to avoid the topic of racism (Kim et al., 2013), describe preferences for colorblind parenting (Zhang & Lee, 2011), and normalize racism as a universal experience (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011).

Overall, these findings pose questions about transnationally adoptive parents' ability to recognize and address the significance of racism in the lives of ATAs (Quiroz, 2012). Studies on monoracial families of color suggest that encouraging adolescents to talk about their experiences with racism can help parents foster an overall sense of trust and connection (Tatum, 2004). However, research on transnationally adoptive families has rarely touched on the importance of helping ATAs cope with racism. Instead, adult Korean adoptees have described their parents as ill-equipped to talk about issues of racism (Shiao & Tuan, 2008) and as dismissing the painful nature of their racist encounters (Meier, 1999) to the

degree that some lost confidence in their parents' ability to protect and support them (Langrehr et al., 2015). At the same time, some Korean adoptees have reported that they were comfortable reaching out to their parents who they felt acknowledged their racist experiences and validated their feelings of marginalization (Shiao & Tuan, 2008). To help gain insight about why some parents are more likely than others to recognize and attend to adoptees' racialized needs, we address some of the influences involved with the racial identity process for White Americans that are distinguishable from that of ATAs.

Colorblind Attitudes and Connection to White Identity

Although colorblind attitudes are prevalent across society and have been linked with socialization practices among monoracial families (Barr & Neville, 2008), the implications of colorblind attitudes are particularly relevant to the racial identity processes of White Americans and transnationally adoptive parents. Also known as contemporary racism (Carr, 1997), the pervasiveness of colorblind attitudes has helped maintain the dominance of White racial identities that continue to shape notions of normality, acceptance, and American culture as a whole (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For example, White individuals often consider living in all-White neighborhoods, attending predominantly White schools, and having few interracial friends as being natural, unproblematic, and unrelated with race (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2006). By distancing themselves from race, White individuals reinforce symbolic boundaries that favor White in-group status and simultaneously devalue racial out-groups. Often endorsed by the well-intended, colorblind mentalities enable White Americans to view themselves as open and socially progressive despite being uncomfortable with racial difference (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2006).

Several studies on transnationally adoptive parents have addressed their tendency to endorse colorblind racial attitudes and minimize the significance of race in the lives of ATAs (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011). For example, parents with colorblind mentalities have been found to express more ambivalence toward adoptees' ethnic background and prefer socialization messages that endorse fairness and racial equality without also acknowledging the realities of racial injustice (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011; Zhang & Lee, 2011). In contrast, low colorblind attitudes have been linked with beneficial outcomes such as greater endorsement of racial-ethnic socialization among internationally adoptive families (Langrehr, 2014; Lee et al., 2006).

Contact and Friends of Color

In general, White Americans often live and function in racially homogenous spaces and maintain relatively distant relationships with people of color (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2006). This is particularly evident for transnationally adoptive families who tend to reside in predominantly White communities (Langrehr, 2014; Meier, 1999; Shiao & Tuan, 2008) and engage in few interracial relationships (Zhang & Lee, 2011) outside of their interactions with other transnationally adoptive families (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011; Freidlander et al., 2000). According to contact theory (Allport, 1954), rarely engaging in meaningful interracial contact could ultimately thwart parents' opportunities to gain a genuine understanding of adoptees' experiences with racism. For decades,

studies have investigated the value of intergroup contact in reducing prejudicial attitudes across a variety of groups. Although the benefits of general contact have been mixed, contemporary research has found evidence to support its effectiveness when the conditions of optimal contact are met (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). Comparable with close personal friendships, the optimal conditions of contact (i.e., equal social status, shared goals, incentive to cooperate, and authority support) have been especially effective in promoting greater awareness and understanding of other groups (Brewer & Miller, 1984). In the only study that has addressed the value of racial contact for transnationally adoptive families, results revealed that parents who lived in racially diverse areas engaged in more interracial friendships and endorsed stronger messages of racial bias preparation and ethnic pride (Langrehr, 2014).

Unlike their parents, living in predominantly White environments can have different implications for ATAs, given that they have fewer opportunities to interact with members of their racial group. For example, having minimal contact with Asian Americans and other people of color could unintentionally compromise adoptees' psychosocial development, sense of belongingness, and ability to mitigate stresses associated with their non-White identity (Tatum, 2004). Establishing same-race connections is considered adaptive for adolescents of color (García Coll et al., 1996), particularly when their relationships are based on shared experiences with marginalization. At the same time, peers can also be perpetrators of racial prejudice (Hughes et al., 2016), especially for Asian youth who are often targets of peer-initiated racism (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008). Indeed, many ATAs have identified their peers as the main perpetrators of racism growing up (Meier, 1999; Shiao & Tuan, 2008); yet, others have described several early racial encounters that involved adults and strangers (Langrehr et al., 2015).

Study Purpose

The purpose of the current study was to examine the dyadic reports of adolescent ATAs and their parents about adoptees' racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. Based on the tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which highlights the unique implications of racial out-group status, we focused on adoptees' experiences as people of color within the context of their White families and specifically examined adoptee-parent discrepancies. Based on previous research that suggested that transnationally adoptive parents tend to minimize discussions of racism (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011; Kim et al., 2013) and prefer the affirming nature of ethnic heritage exposure (Johnston et al., 2007; Zhang & Lee, 2011), we hypothesized that parents would underestimate adoptees' racist experiences and overestimate their openness to discussing racism and positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities.

To provide some context for these differences, we tested the degree to which parents' colorblind racial attitudes, adoptee age, and living in racially diverse neighborhoods were associated with these discrepancies. We expected that stronger colorblind attitudes, older adoptee age, and living in neighborhoods with a low percentage of people of color would relate to discrepancies where parents underestimated adoptees' racist experiences and overesti-

mated their openness to discussing racism and positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. Finally, based on the optimal conditions of contact theory (Davies et al., 2011; Langrehr, 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and evidence that points to the benefits of establishing same-race connections for youth of color (García Coll et al., 1996; Tatum, 2004), we examined the relationships between maintaining close friendships with people of color and the three outcome variables for ATAs and their parents. We hypothesized that adoptees with a high proportion of friends of color would report fewer racist experiences, greater openness to discussing racism, and positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. For parents, we expected that percentage of friends of color would relate differently to the three outcome variables, but did not provide directional hypotheses due to the exploratory nature of the study.

Method

Participants

For the current investigation, data were taken from a larger study that examined socialization processes among transnationally adoptive families. Participants were recruited from two adoptive family organizations located in different areas of the Midwest. All recruitment and data collection procedures were approved by the authors' respective university institutional review board. Data collection took place during organization-sponsored events where parents and adoptees took part in various social-cultural activities throughout the day. The current study goal was to recruit dyads that consisted of one ATA (age ≥ 10) and one White, adoptive parent who were both present at the event. Parents were given a description of the study purpose, procedures, and consent process. Specifically, parents were asked to provide verbal consent indicating that they and their children were willing to participate in the study. Once parents verbally consented, adoptees were given a similar study description and were asked to provide verbal assent. If multiple adoptees from the same family participated, parents were asked to base their reports on the oldest child. Although 100 adoptee-parent dyads agreed to participate, five cases involving adoptees from non-Asian countries were excluded from the final sample of 95 adoptee-parent dyads ($N = 190$).

Adoptees (girls = 70%, boys = 30%) ranged in age from 10 to 17 years ($M = 14.19$, $SD = 2.25$) and represented the following ethnic groups: Chinese ($n = 71$), South Korean ($n = 16$), Taiwanese ($n = 6$), and Vietnamese ($n = 2$). Average age at the time of adoption was 13.40 months ($SD = 2.41$) and ranged from 6 months to 2.75 years. Parents' ages ranged from 40 to 69 years ($M = 49.92$, $SD = 5.71$), and 59% were women and 41% were men. In addition, all parents identified as White and 95% identified as heterosexual. The majority of parents were partnered or married (74%), and 42% indicated having other transnationally adopted children. Parents were highly educated (62% held advanced degrees), and 56% reported household annual incomes of over \$100,000.

Procedure

At each event, several announcements were made throughout the day to inform adoptees and parents of the opportunity to

participate in the study. Each adoptee-parent dyad who agreed to participate were given one questionnaire packet for adoptees and one questionnaire packet for parents. Adoptees' questionnaire packets included measures that asked about their racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, as well as a data form that asked about their racial friendships and interpersonal behaviors such as assertiveness and willingness to self-disclose. Parents' questionnaire packets included measures that asked about the aforementioned experiences of their oldest adopted child and a measure of colorblind attitudes. In addition, parents' questionnaire packets included a data form that asked them to provide demographic information about themselves and their family (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and household income) and the racial demographics of their close personal friends and neighborhood. All survey items and demographic questions included in adoptees' questionnaire packets were modified to accommodate a fourth-grade reading level. The principal investigator and research assistants were present at the events to answer questions and help participants (primarily adoptees) complete the questionnaires. Upon submitting both questionnaires, each adoptee-parent dyad received one \$5.00 gift card for participating in the study.

Measures—Completed by Adoptees and Parents

Experiences with racism. At the time of the current study, there were no published measures available to accommodate the multi-informant approach to examining adoptees' experiences with racism. Given that the goal was to assess the racist experiences of ATAs that would also be observable by parents, we adapted items from a previous study (Lee, 2010) on internationally adoptive parents and their perceptions of discrimination. The original measure was created to specifically assess the frequency by which different parties (e.g., strangers, family members, and peers) made intrusive or inappropriate racial and adoption comments toward participants' children or family. Using this same format, four items were created that asked adoptees to indicate how often they experienced racism from friends, peers, strangers, and other family members (i.e., *How often do your friends tease or say mean things about your race or ethnicity? How often do other kids tease or say mean things about your race or ethnicity? How often do strangers tease or say mean things to you about your race or ethnicity? How often do other family members tease or say mean things to you about your race or ethnicity?*). Four additional items were created (similar to the statements presented to adoptees) that asked parents to indicate how often their adopted child experienced racism from friends, peers, strangers, and other family members (e.g., *How often do your child's friends tease or say mean things to them about their race or ethnicity?*). Both adoptees and parents responded to each statement using a scale from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*all of the time*), with higher ratings indicating more experiences with racism. Scores were calculated by summing the four adoptee-rated items and the four parent-rated items to create two total scores of racist experiences that could range from 4 to 24.

As recommended by Kenny, Kashy, and Cook (2006), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal axis factoring and oblimin rotation to ensure that the constructs of interest emerge consistently across individual and combined samples. Using Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) standard criteria for

determining the number of factors to retain (i.e., eigenvalues >1 , factors explaining at least 5% of variance, interpretable factors, loadings of ≥ 0.32 , scree test, and discarding cross-loaded items >0.32), EFA results revealed that racist experiences emerged as a single factor and explained 48.63%–54.34% of the variance in individual and full sample scores. Across all three samples, factor loadings ranged from 0.43 to 0.86. Given that items used to assess adoptees' racist experiences (as reported by both adoptees and their parents) were adapted from a previous measure, we also used parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) to further ensure that the appropriate number of factors was retained for individual and full samples. Using 1,000 random correlation matrices, results of the parallel analyses revealed that the first eigenvalue for racist experiences was the only actual eigenvalue to be consistently higher (2.38–2.56) than the average replicated eigenvalues (1.16–1.23), suggesting that a one-factor solution was the most appropriate for adoptees, parents, and the full sample (see Table S1 in the online supplemental materials for a summary of EFA and parallel analysis results). All EFA and parallel analyses were conducted using SPSS.

To demonstrate concurrent validity, parents' scores were correlated with their colorblind attitudes. Similar to the original study (Lee, 2010), findings indicated that racial awareness was positively associated with parents' reports of racist experiences, $r = .41, p < .001$. Lee (2010) also found that perceived discrimination scores were higher, $F(1, 1277) = 47.63, p < .001$, among adoptive parents who had spoken to adoptees about racism ($M = 18.68, SD = 5.19$), compared with parents who had not ($M = 16.39, SD = 4.28$). In the current study, internal reliability estimates were deemed acceptable ($\alpha = .70-.74$).

Openness to discussing racism. The format of Lee's (2010) perceived discrimination measure was also used to assess adoptees' openness to discussing racism as reported by adoptees and their parents. Specifically, two sets of four items were created (one for adoptees and one for their parents) that asked how often adoptees spoke with parents, friends, other family members, and teachers about their racist experiences (i.e., *How often do you [does your child] talk to your [their] parents about these experiences? How often do you [your child] talk to your [their] friends about these experiences? How often do you [your child] talk to other family members about these experiences? How often do you [your child] talk to your [their] teachers about these experiences?*). Both adoptees and parents were asked to rate each item using a scale that ranged from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*all of the time*), with higher scores indicating more openness. The sum of each set of items was calculated to create two total scores of openness to discussing racism that could range from 4 to 24.

Results of the EFA and parallel analyses suggested that a one-factor solution provided the best overall fit for openness to discussing racism and explained 39.38%–48.47% of the variance in the individual and full sample scores. Across all three samples, factor loadings ranged from 0.38 to 0.88. Results of the parallel analyses indicated that only one actual eigenvalue was consistently higher (2.10–2.45) than the average replicated eigenvalues (1.20–1.23), suggesting that a one-factor solution was the most stable solution for openness to discussing racism. Scores on openness to discussing racism were correlated with two conceptually similar behaviors of adolescent assertiveness and willingness to self-disclose (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008). Specifically, adoptees who reported being more open to discussing racism also rated

themselves higher on assertiveness, $r = .29, p < .001$, and willingness to self-disclose, $r = .26, p < .001$. Similarly, parents who felt that adoptees were open to discussing racism also rated adoptees higher on assertiveness, $r = .32, p < .001$, and self-disclosure, $r = .35, p < .001$. Estimates of internal consistency were deemed acceptable and ranged from $\alpha = .72$ to $\alpha = .75$ for the current study.

Attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. To assess adoptees' attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, two sets of four items were created to assess the degree to which adoptees enjoyed or felt positively about participating in ethnic heritage events as reported by both adoptees and their parents. (e.g., *I enjoy [My child enjoys] attending these types of events; I enjoy [My child enjoys] spending time with other kids at these events; I look [My child looks] forward to attending these events; I enjoy [My child enjoys] the activities at these events*). Items were rated using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much*), with higher ratings denoting more enjoyment or positive attitudes. The sum of each set of items was used to create two total scores of attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities that could range from 4 to 24.

Results of EFA and parallel analyses both indicated that a one-factor solution provided the best overall fit for the individual and full sample scores. Specifically, a one-factor solution explained 46.84%–64.55% of the variance, and item loadings ranged from 0.47 to 0.86. When comparing actual eigenvalues with the replicated mean values, one actual eigenvalue (2.26–2.40) was consistently higher than the average replicated value (1.16–1.23) for individual and full sample scores, providing further evidence for a one-factor structure of attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. To establish evidence for concurrent validity, positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities were higher, $F(1, 94) = 20.16, p < .001$, among adoptees ($n = 29$) who reported that they were given a choice to attend ethnic heritage events ($M = 15.88, SD = 2.07$) compared with adoptees ($n = 66$) who were not given a choice ($M = 13.57, SD = 2.27$). In addition, adoptee age was correlated with attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities and revealed that older adoptees reported less positive attitudes, $r = -0.30, p < .002$, which was consistent with findings that suggest that adoptees often lose interest in ethnic heritage activities as they age (Lee & Quintana, 2005; Meier, 1999). Internal consistency estimates for the current study were deemed acceptable and ranged from $\alpha = .78$ to $\alpha = .83$.

Percentage of Friends of Color

The percentage or proportion of adoptees' and parents' close friends of color was assessed using the network approach (Smith, 2002), which was originally created to help minimize the likelihood for overreporting interracial contact. Unlike direct approaches that elicit socially desirable responding (Davies et al., 2011), the network approach asks respondents to first identify their close personal friendships and then indicate the characteristics of each (e.g., race, gender, and age). For the current study, adoptees and parents were asked to do the following: (a) provide a list of their close personal friends and (b) identify the racial-ethnic background of each friend listed (i.e., White, Black, Asian, Latino/a/x, Native American, Multiracial, and Other). Percentage of friends of color was determined by tallying the number of non-White friends identified and dividing by the total number of close

friends reported. Compared with approaches that directly ask respondents to report their cross-racial friendships (mean $r = .247$), meta-analytic results (Davies et al., 2011) have found that the network approach helps reduce the likelihood of overreporting (mean $r = .158$).

Measures—Completed by Parents Only

Colorblind attitudes. Colorblind attitudes were assessed using a modified version of the Blatant Racial Issues subscale of the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville et al., 2000). To remain psychometrically consistent with previous studies that have measured colorblind attitudes among transnationally adoptive parents (Langrehr, 2014), we omitted one item that was related to the importance of talking to political leaders about racism, as this item was deemed less relevant to parenting issues (Lee et al., 2006). Participants rated five items (two reverse-scored) using a scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*), with higher scores indicating stronger colorblind attitudes (e.g., *Racial problems are rare in isolated situations*). The mean score was calculated to reflect the overall score of colorblind attitudes. The current study produced an adequate internal consistency estimate ($\alpha = .84$), which was comparable with previous studies on internationally adoptive parents (Langrehr, 2014; Lee et al., 2006) that have used this modified version of the Blatant Racial Issues subscale ($\alpha = .81$ and $.77$, respectively).

Demographics. After providing the racial-ethnic background of their close personal friends, parents were asked to delineate the racial composition of their neighborhood, which was considered the immediate geographic area in which their family currently lived. Participants were presented with seven racial categories (i.e., White, Black, Asian, Latino/a/x, Native American, Multiracial, and Other) and were instructed to list percentages next to the categories to reflect the proportional presence of each racial group in their neighborhood. Participants were informed that when combined, all of the percentages listed should equal 100% (e.g., White = 80%, Black = 10%, Asian = 10%). Similar to the network approach of calculating percentage of friends of color (Smith, 2002), the percentages that indicated non-White racial groups (e.g., Black = 10%, Asian = 10%) were combined to provide a final estimate of neighborhood percentage of people of color (e.g., 20%). In addition, parents were also asked to provide basic demographic information about themselves and their family (e.g., gender, age, marital status, and annual income). If participants indicated having multiple ATAs, demographic information was recorded for the oldest child.

Data Screening, Preparation, and Analysis

To accommodate dyadic data, we used hierarchical linear modeling 7 (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2000) and tested a multilevel model to predict the level of the outcome and direction of difference for distinguishable partners (Kenny et al., 2006). Dyads are considered distinguishable when individual dyad members can be delineated from one another by some meaningful factor that is the same across all dyads (Kenny et al., 2006). For this study, individual dyad members were distinguishable by race (i.e., Asian and White) and person role (i.e., child or parent) such that each dyad consisted of one Asian adolescent adoptee and one

White parent. Dyadic data analysis assumes that variables of interest operate at a minimum of two levels, which allows researchers to simultaneously investigate relationships within and between hierarchical levels of groups, such as dyads. Notably, dyadic data analysis does not violate assumptions of independence required by analysis of variance and multiple regression, which treat the individual as the unit of analysis (Maguire, 1999). Instead, treating the dyad as the unit of analysis assumes nonindependence, such that scores from individual dyad members are considered more similar than scores from individuals who are not members of the same dyad (Kenny et al., 2006). Therefore, we used a two-level model that accounted for within-dyad differences at Level 1 (i.e., individual reports) that were nested at the dyad level (Level 2).

Before model building, data were screened to ensure that the necessary assumptions were met. Overall, missing data were low (0.3%) and the distributions for the Level-1 and Level-2 predictors were deemed acceptable. Standardized residuals for each calculated regression fell within suitable ranges (-3 to 3), which indicated the absence of outliers. To allow for meaningful zero points and accurate interpretation, different approaches were used to center the Level-1 and Level-2 continuous variables. To capture the differential effects of friends of color for adoptees and parents on each outcome, friends of color (Level-1 variable) was centered using the dyad (group) mean. The Level-2 variables of colorblind attitudes, neighborhood percentage of people of color, and adoptee age were centered using the grand mean, as these scores were measured once for each dyad and were different across dyads. The distinguishing variable *person* was coded as $-.50 = \text{adoptee}$ or $.50 = \text{parent}$ to indicate the role of each individual.

We began by fitting a baseline model (Model 1) by regressing the outcome scores (i.e., racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities) from each dyad member on the indicator variable (i.e., *person*). Baseline results provided an estimate of the intercept (β_{0j}), which captured the mean level of the outcome (i.e., racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities) and the slope (β_{1j}), which reflected the discrepancy value, or the mean difference in adoptee-parent reports. Negative discrepancy values indicated that parents underestimated adoptees' experiences with racism, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, whereas positive discrepancy values suggested that parents overestimated their reports. Baseline results also included variance estimates of the mean and discrepancy slope. Significant variance components justified further exploration at Level 2 to assess the context in which discrepancies took place.

Model 2 was tested to assess the link between discrepancies and the Level-2 variables (i.e., colorblind attitudes, adoptee age, and neighborhood percentage of people of color). Post hoc tests were conducted to assess the direction and magnitude of adoptee-parent discrepancies on each outcome (i.e., racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities) at high and low values (± 1 SD from the mean) for each Level-2 variable. Model 3 tested the differential effects of the percentage of friends of color on racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities by including percentage of friends of color (Level-1 variable), along with an interaction term between the indicator variable and percentage of friends of color ($\text{Person} \times \text{Friends of Color}$). Post

hoc tests were conducted to assess the direction and magnitude of percentage of friends of color on each outcome for adoptees and parents. Specifically, simple slopes were plotted at low and high percentage of friends of color (± 1 *SD* from the mean) for racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities.

Results

Descriptive Data

To confirm nonindependence among distinguishable partner dyads (Kenny et al., 2006), Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between adoptee-parent scores on all three outcome variables (Table 1). Results confirmed dependence, as evidenced by positive and significant relationships between adoptees' and parents' scores on racist experiences, $r = .38$, $p = .001$, and openness to discussing racism, $r = .20$, $p = .014$, and a negative and significant relationship between scores on attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, $r = -0.36$, $p < .001$. Given that data were collected from two different agencies, group mean differences were also examined via multivariate analysis of variance. Results revealed nonsignificant effects across all three outcomes. Similarly, differences were assessed based on parent education, marital status, and transnational adopted sibling status; however, results revealed nonsignificant results in racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and ethnic heritage activities.

Model Testing

Model 1—baseline models. Baseline models were conducted to test the first hypothesis that adoptee-parent reports would be significantly discrepant and that parents would underestimate adoptees' racist experiences and overestimate their openness to discussing racism and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. The random variance components were statistically significant from zero for all three outcomes (Table 2), which reflected significant variability in the mean of adoptee-parent dyads and discrepancies. The negative value, $\tau_{11} = -1.94$ (.32), $p < .001$, indicated that parents significantly underestimated adoptees' racist experiences, whereas the positive discrepancy values revealed that parents significantly overestimated adoptees' openness to discuss-

ing racism, $\tau_{11} = 1.97$ (.39), $p < .001$, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, $\tau_{11} = 1.67$ (.24), $p < .001$.

Model 2. Model 2 tested whether the discrepancies identified in Model 1 were significantly related to parents' colorblind attitudes, adoptee age, and neighborhood percentage of people of color. Results revealed that colorblind attitudes were significantly related to discrepant reports in racist experiences ($\beta = -1.14$, $p = .032$) and ethnic heritage activities ($\beta = 1.42$, $p = .03$), indicating that discrepancies were significant across levels of colorblind attitudes. Compared with the baseline, Model 2 significantly improved model fit for all three outcomes—racist experiences: $\Delta\chi^2 = 29.06$ (6), $p < .001$; openness to discussing racism: $\Delta\chi^2 = 18.89$ (6), $p < .001$; and ethnic heritage activities: $\Delta\chi^2 = 30.82$ (6), $p < .001$.

Simple slope tests revealed that when colorblind attitudes were high, parents significantly overestimated adoptees' openness to discussing racism, $t = 8.34$, $p < .001$, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, $t = 7.63$, $p < .001$; however, at low values of colorblind attitudes, discrepancies in openness to discussing racism, $t = 1.94$, $p = .055$, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, $t = 1.90$, $p = .061$, were not significant (Figure 1a). Results revealed that parents significantly underestimated adoptees' racist experiences at both low, $t = -2.43$, $p = .017$, and high levels of colorblind attitudes, $t = -6.35$, $p < .001$. In addition, neighborhood percentage of people of color did not relate to discrepancies in all three outcomes, whereas adoptee age was significantly associated with discrepant reports on racist experiences ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = .011$). Post hoc tests confirmed that for all three outcomes, adoptee-parent ratings were similar regardless of neighborhood percentage of people of color. Results also revealed that parents significantly underestimated older adoptees' racist experiences, $t = -6.02$, $p < .001$, whereas adoptee-parent ratings were relatively similar in dyads with younger adoptees, $t = 0.20$, $p = .84$.

Model 3. Model 3 tested whether the Level-1 variable *percentage of friends of color* had differential effects on the three outcome variables for adoptees and parents. The interaction effect of Person \times Friends of Color was statistically significant for racist experiences ($\beta = 1.18$, $p = .032$) and openness to discussing racism ($\beta = -1.55$, $p < .001$) but not attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities ($\beta = -0.15$, $p = .10$), indicating that the links between percentage of friends of color and the outcome variables

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Between Adoptee and Parent Individual Scores and Combined Sample Scores With Level-2 Variables

Individual scores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
1. % friends of color—A								2.62	1.30	
2. Racist experiences—A	-.10							14.37	2.80	.74
3. Openness to discussing racism—A	.13	-.15						10.37	2.35	.73
4. Ethnic heritage activities—A	.16	-.12	.26**					11.01	1.81	.76
5. % friends of color—P	.41***	-.09	-.30**	-.03				3.63	1.54	
6. Racist experiences—P	.05	.38***	-.28**	-.09	.35***			12.50	2.93	.70
7. Openness to discussing racism—P	.10	-.30**	.20*	-.32***	.15	.02		11.97	2.44	.72
8. Ethnic heritage activities—P	-.22*	-.11	-.23*	-.36***	.01	.08	.37***	12.68	1.78	.81

Note. A = adoptee; P = parent. Adoptee $n = 95$; parent $n = 95$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Baseline Models for Dyadic Means and Discrepancies in Racist Experiences, Openness to Discussing Racism, and Attitudes Toward Ethnic Heritage Activities

Parameter	Racist experiences β (SE)	Openness to discussing racism β (SE)	Ethnic heritage activities β (SE)
Fixed effects			
τ_{00} (intercept/ M)	13.45*** (.25)	11.68*** (.18)	11.85*** (.13)
τ_{11} (slope/discrepancy) ^a	-1.94*** (.32)	1.97*** (.39)	1.67*** (.24)
Random effects			
Variance (M)	3.15*** (.93)	1.46*** (.12)	.41* (.06)
Variance (discrepancy)	5.06*** (.67)	7.88*** (.28)	2.81*** (.17)
-2 log likelihood	972.15	1,011.23	800.80

^a Negative coefficients indicate that parents underestimated adoptees' racist experiences.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

of racist experiences and openness to discussing racism were different for adoptees and parents (Table 3). Compared with the baseline, Model 3 provided a significantly better fit for all three outcomes—racist experiences: $\Delta\chi^2 = 36.07$ (2), $p < .001$; open-

ness to discussing racism: $\Delta\chi^2 = 30.04$ (2), $p < .001$; and ethnic heritage activities: $\Delta\chi^2 = 16$ (2), $p < .001$.

To assess the direction and significance of these relationships for both adoptees and parents, simple slopes were calculated at low and high percentages of friends of color for each outcome. As shown in Figure 1b, the magnitude of the relationship between percentage of friends of color and racist experiences was negative and statistically significant for adoptees, $t = -6.18$, $p < .001$, but was nonsignificant and in the opposite direction for parents, $t = 1.03$, $p = .091$. Although the relationship between percentage of friends of color and openness to discussing racism was positive for both adoptees and parents, the slope was significantly different from zero for adoptees ($t = 3.15$, $p < .001$) but not for parents ($t = 0.65$, $p = .514$). Finally, percentage of friends of color had a similar positive effect on attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities; however, the slope of the regression significantly differed from zero for adoptees ($t = 2.05$, $p = .043$) but not for parents ($t = 1.92$, $p = .057$).

Discussion

In an effort to help broaden the sociocultural discourse about transnational adoption involving ATAs, this study examined adoptee–parent reports about adoptees' racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. Results revealed that parents underestimated adoptees' racist experiences and overestimated their openness to discussing racism and positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. Consistent with previous studies that have found that parents tend to overemphasize their level of engagement in ethnic heritage activities and avoid the topic of racial difference (Kim et al., 2013; Zhang & Lee, 2011), parents in the current study overestimated adoptees' positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities and underestimated their racialized experiences. Implications drawn from previous research suggest that transnationally adoptive parents may be more comfortable with approaching issues of difference by affirming adoptees' ethnic background instead of attending to adoptees' experiences with racism (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011; Zhang & Lee, 2011). Although parents underestimated adoptees' experiences with racism, they felt that ATAs were more open to discussing racism compared with adoptee reports. Even with the negative precursor of experiencing racism, it is possible

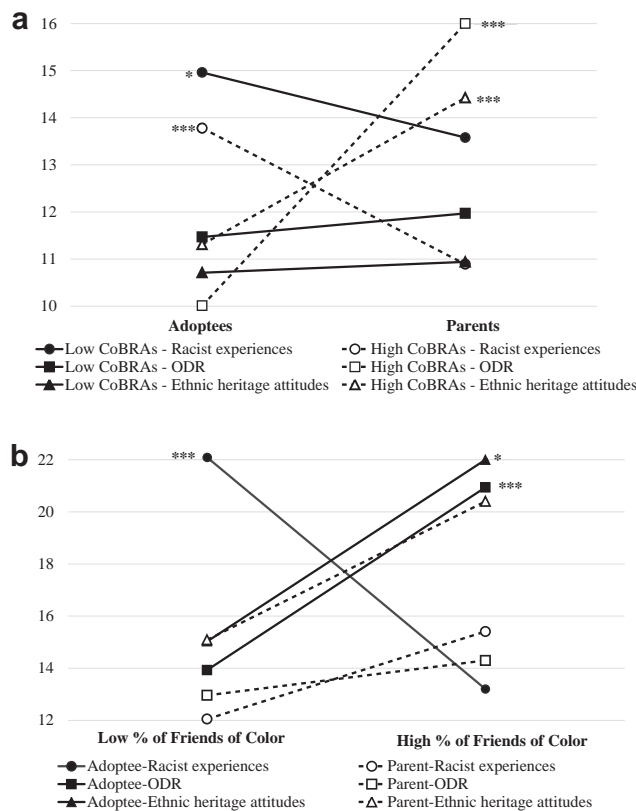


Figure 1. (a) Discrepancies in adoptees' racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities at low and high levels of parent colorblind racial attitudes. (b) The differential effects of percentage of friends of color on racist experiences, openness to discussing racism, and ethnic heritage attitudes for adoptees and parents. ODR = openness to discussing racism; CoBRAs = colorblind racial attitudes. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Factors Associated With Dyadic Means and Discrepancies in Racist Experiences, Openness to Discussing Racism, and Attitudes Toward Ethnic Heritage Activities

Parameter	Racist experiences <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)		Openness to discussing racism <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)		Ethnic heritage activities <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	
Fixed effects						
τ_{00} (intercept/ <i>M</i>)	12.99*** (.86)		12.30*** (.74)		12.11*** (.65)	
τ_{11} (slope/discrepancy) ^a	−3.41*** (.62)		1.45*** (1.05)		2.36*** (1.17)	
% of friends of color	.58*** (.17)		.92*** (.25)		.25 (.15)	
Person × % of Friends of Color	1.18* (.50)		−1.55** (.50)		−.15 (.33)	
	Dyadic <i>M</i> β (<i>SE</i>)	Discrepancy β (<i>SE</i>)	Dyadic <i>M</i> β (<i>SE</i>)	Discrepancy β (<i>SE</i>)	Dyadic <i>M</i> β (<i>SE</i>)	Discrepancy β (<i>SE</i>)
Colorblind attitudes	−1.46** (.45)	−1.14* (.27)	1.10*** (.27)	−.05 (.83)	1.10*** (.27)	1.42* (.50)
Age	.07 (.09)	−.28* (.05)	−.07 (.05)	−.16 (.16)	−.07 (.05)	−.10 (.09)
Neighborhood % of people of color	.40* (.18)	−.02 (.01)	−.02 (.01)	−.03 (.32)	−.02 (.01)	−.03 (.20)
Random effects						
Variance (<i>M</i>)	2.44*** (.15)		1.76** (.13)		.28 (.06)	
Variance (discrepancy)	4.63*** (.22)		7.19*** (.27)		2.60*** (.16)	
−2 log likelihood	929.34		980.83		775.19	
Compared with baseline $\Delta\chi^2(df)^b$	42.81*** (2)		30.4*** (2)		25.61*** (2)	

^a Negative coefficients indicate that parents underestimated adoptees' racist experiences. ^b Results of Model 3 compared with the baseline model.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

that parents viewed adoptees' openness to discussing racism as desirable behavior that reflected adoptees' inclinations for developing closeness or trust and were therefore inclined to overestimate these responses.

In terms of exploring the context of adoptee–parent discrepancies, the most notable results involved parents' colorblind attitudes. As expected, parents with strong colorblindness overestimated adoptees' openness to discussing racism and positive attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities, whereas adoptee–parent reports were comparable when parents endorsed low colorblind attitudes. Surprisingly, parents significantly underestimated adoptees' racist experiences regardless of their level of colorblindness. Although previous studies have emphasized the positive implications of low colorblind attitudes in shaping transnationally adoptive parents' cultural socialization behaviors (Langrehr, 2014; Lee et al., 2006), current study results underscored the negative implications of high colorblindness in the lives of ATAs. Despite clearly experiencing racism, adoptees may have been apprehensive about discussing racial injustice if they suspected that their parents would minimize their experiences. For example, previous studies suggest that adoptees are often highly aware of their parents' attitudes and discomfort toward issues of race (Meier, 1999; Shiao & Tuan, 2008), such that some have refrained from disclosing their racist experiences with their parents (Langrehr et al., 2015). Although findings indicated that parents with low colorblindness also underestimated adoptees' racist experiences, it is possible that other mediating variables, such as racial bias preparation, may have explained this relationship. For example, studies on monoracial families of color have found that parents with realistic views of race tend to socialize their children to be conscious of racism (Hughes et al., 2006; Tatum, 2004). It is possible that adoptees whose parents engaged in racial bias preparation were more likely to recognize and report racist interactions.

Finally, parents underestimated the possibility that older ATAs would report more racist encounters, whereas discrepancies were not apparent for dyads involving younger adoptees. Although the evidence linking adoptee age with parents' reports of racism has been mixed (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Johnston et al., 2007; Lee, 2010), these findings have not included the perspectives of adolescent adoptees. Consistent with research that suggests that youth of color tend to report more instances of racism as they develop more awareness of racial hierarchies (Hughes et al., 2006), adolescent ATAs may have faced different forms of racism that their parents failed to recognize or were less inclined to report.

In addition, the hypothesis that percentage of friends of color would relate to the three outcome variables differently for ATAs and their parents was partially supported. The most notable difference was found in the relationship between percentage of friends of color and adoptees' experiences with racism. Specifically, adoptees with a higher percentage of friends of color reported fewer racist experiences. For ATAs, it is possible that maintaining a racially diverse social network helped insulate them from negative racial incidents commonly experienced by youth of color in predominantly White settings (Hughes et al., 2016; Tatum, 2004). In particular, spending time with similar youth may have helped adoptees develop a sense of collective identity, which studies have found can help youth of color mitigate the stresses of racism (García Coll et al., 1996; Tatum, 2004). In contrast, parents with a higher percentage of friends of color perceived ATAs as experiencing more instances of racism. Based on the optimal conditions of contact theory (Davies et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), it is possible that parents were more likely to recognize adoptees' experiences with racism. By meaningfully engaging in several interracial relationships, parents may have had more opportunities to challenge their racial attitudes and recognize the pervasiveness of racism faced by people of color (Langrehr, 2014). These

results help underscore the different implications that racial contact and, more specifically, maintaining racially diverse social networks can have in the lives of families where individual members differ in racial background.

In addition, results revealed that having a higher percentage of friends of color was positively related to adoptees' openness to discussing racism and attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities for both adoptees and their parents; however, the magnitude of these relationships was only significant for adoptees. Specifically, ATAs with a higher proportion of friends of color were more open to discussing racism and expressed favorable attitudes toward ethnic heritage activities. It should be noted that the discrepant effect of percentage of friends of color on ethnic heritage attitudes should be interpreted with caution, as this relationship was marginally significant for ATAs ($p = .043$). In addition, maintaining a high percentage of friendships of color was positively related to openness to discussing racism for adoptees; however, this same association was not found for parents. It is possible that ATAs with racially diverse peers were more likely to talk about racism, as they were more comfortable or familiar with engaging in racial discourse. For example, studies have found that same-race friendships are particularly helpful for youth of color who are socialized in predominantly White settings (Hughes et al., 2016), as they rely on each other to affirm their racial identities and make sense of their racist experiences (Tatum, 2004).

Limitations

Despite the benefits of using a multi-informant approach, study results should be interpreted within the context of sampling limitations and measurement restrictions. First, 95 dyads were just under the recommended minimum sample size ($N = 100$) for dyadic analysis, which may have reduced the power necessary to detect significant effects (Kenny et al., 2006). Furthermore, individual parameter estimates should be interpreted with caution, considering that group size was restricted (two per group), which can encumber the precision of estimates for each dyad. In addition, results can only provide insight about the dyads who took part in the study and do not account for the perspectives or influence of other family members. In most cases, parents identified as partnered or married, indicating that their families consisted of multiple dyads whose views may have varied based on their role and other personal characteristics. Instead of relying on the perspectives of two individuals, examining the reports of multiple dyads that include coparents and siblings would be helpful to account for the larger family dynamics of cultural socialization (Hughes et al., 2016). Furthermore, the items used to assess the three outcome variables were created for the purpose of the current study and only allowed for a narrow assessment of each construct. For example, items used to assess adoptees' experiences with racism reflected more overt racist encounters and did not reflect other forms of racial prejudice that Asian adolescents may commonly experience, such as implicit racism, peer exclusion, or racial othering.

Directions for Future Research and Clinical Implications

In light of these findings, the study results provide some important directions for future research and clinical practice involving the cultural socialization of ATAs. First, the discrepancies between the experiences of ATAs and the perceptions of their parents suggest a need for more research that explores the lived experiences of adolescent ATAs as people of color. Given the racial discrepancies between the experiences of adoptees and the reports of their parents, it seems important to gain more information about the nature of racism for ATAs and how they make sense of and cope with these experiences. In addition, it would be helpful to investigate adoptees' perceptions of their parents' willingness to engage in racial discourse and the differences in racial messages that they receive. In terms of clinical implications, study results underscore the need for more adoptee-focused services aimed to support adolescent ATAs in discussing their experiences with racism in light of the messages that they receive in the home, from peers, and in the community. In addition, results speak to the need for more postadoption services that extend beyond early childhood to help address and bridge racial misunderstandings between ATAs and their parents, to work toward creating a shared and supportive understanding of adoptees' experiences. Furthermore, adoption professionals who work directly with transnationally adoptive parents should be clear in delineating the affirming nature of ethnic heritage activities from the less desirable realities of addressing adoptees' experiences with racism. Given that this would require adoption professionals to become versed in critical discussions about race and colorblindness, clinical training programs are encouraged to integrate more curriculum on multiracial and adoptive family units to help trainees prepare to work with families where parents and children differ in racial background.

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