A path analysis of a cultural and racial socialization model in international transracial adoption: Racial awareness, self-efficacy, and socialization practices

Jaegoo Lee[a,*], M. Elizabeth Vonk[b], Jisu Han[c], Soyeon Jung[d]

[a] School of Social Work, Jackson State University, United States
[b] School of Social Work, University of Georgia, United States
[c] Institute of Educational Policy Research, Sungkyunkwan University, Republic of Korea
[d] Department of Health Education and Behavior, University of Florida, United States

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to test a conceptual model using path analysis to examine direct and indirect relationships among factors contributing to transracial adoptive parents' cultural and racial socialization practices. Participants, responding to an online survey, were White mothers and fathers of children born in China and other Asian and non-Asian countries, and were associated with *Families with Children from China*, a support group. Included in a path analysis were 310 cases. As hypothesized, post-adoption education and support, racial awareness, and socialization self-efficacy were found to be important factors that positively influenced socialization practices. Researchers may be interested in further examination of the cultural and racial socialization model to address the parenting needs of international transracial adoptive parents, and ultimately to support the healthy ethnic and racial identity formation of transracial adoptees.

1. Introduction

The majority of international transracial adoptions into the United States involve the adoption of children of color, mainly Asian born children by White parents (McGinnis, Livingston, Ryan, & Howard, 2009). Parenting of any sort requires many skills; however, transracial adoptive parents are additionally challenged to provide their children with connection to their birth culture, and to prepare them for life in a racially divided society. Such socialization practices are likely to be related to the Asian adoptees' unique status as a non-White child in a White adoptive family and a less diverse community. At times, Asian-born adoptees find themselves as the only people of color in their communities (Kim, Reichwald, & Lee, 2013). A great deal of research has examined what families do toward socialization efforts, categorizing them as cultural socialization practices and racial socialization practices (Bebiroglu & Pinderhughes, 2012; McGinnis et al., 2009).

A number of studies have examined the relationship of parents' engagement in cultural and racial socialization practices and the formation of transracial adoptees' ethnic and racial identities (Ferrari, Hu, Rosnati, & Lee, 2017; Hu, Zhou, & Lee, 2017; Huh & Reid, 2000; Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007; Leslie, Smith, Hrapczynski, & Riley, 2013; McGinnis et al., 2009; Mohanty,

Keokse, & Sales, 2006; Samuels, 2009; Yoon, 2004). Socialization practices initiated or supported by transracial adoptive parents have been positively linked to children's adoption adjustment (Yoon, 2004); self-esteem and sense of belongingness with parents (Mohanty et al., 2006); racial identity development (Huh & Reid, 2000; Mohnanty, 2013; Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001); and modification of adoptees' discrimination stress due to experiences of racism or bias (Leslie et al., 2013). In addition, deficits in parents' racial socialization efforts have been associated with adult transracial adoptees' lack of comfort with racial dynamics (McGinnis et al., 2009) and lack of parental or other assistance in learning to deal with racial inequities (Samuels, 2009).

While seemingly complex, developing knowledge about factors related to transracial adoptive parents' engagement in cultural and racial socialization practices is important for the well-being of adoptees (Vashchenko, D'Aleo, & Pinderhughes, 2011). Such knowledge will help us understand what factors predict greater cultural and racial socialization practices among transracial adoptive parents. A comprehensive literature review (Lee, Vonk, & Crolley-Simic, 2015) revealed a number of factors related to socialization practices, resulting in a conceptual model to predict racial and cultural socialization. The purpose of the current study is to test that conceptual model. Before describing the current study, we provide definitions of cultural and racial socialization

practices as well as a description of the conceptual model.

1.1. Cultural and racial socialization practices

Sometimes used interchangeably, cultural socialization practices and racial socialization practices refer to two separate concepts and need to be defined as such. Cultural socialization practices have been the main focus of previous socialization research, and refer to parenting practices that incorporate aspects of children's birth culture into their families (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010). These cultural practices vary widely in terms of the level of interaction between the transracial adoptive families and people of the child's race and/or birth culture. The most frequently employed cultural practices appear to be those that require very little contact with people from the child's birth culture, such as reading books and occasional visits to ethnic communities (Lee et al., 2015; Huh & Reid, 2000).

Racial socialization practices have received less attention in the literature, compared with cultural socialization practices. Nevertheless, the concept has been defined as parental practices that promote children's racial awareness, racial pride, and knowledge about racism and privilege (Lee et al., 2015). Such practices typically include conversations about race, and education about race relations in the United States (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008). Parents appear to engage in racial socialization practices less frequently than in cultural socialization practices (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011), perhaps due to discomfort with racial issues that may be accounted for by White parents' lack of experience with discrimination and prejudice (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2012).

1.2. A conceptual factor model of cultural and racial socialization practices

The current study employs a recently proposed conceptual model utilizing factors suggested in the literature related to cultural and racial socialization practices among international transracial adoptive parents (Lee et al., 2015). Based on an extensive review of the literature, the model proposed that parents' cultural socialization self-efficacy, racial awareness, gender, income, and education; family's location; children's ethnicity; and presence of biological children in the family directly and/or indirectly affect cultural socialization practices. The model further proposed that parents' racial socialization self-efficacy and racial awareness, as well as, children's ethnicity indirectly and/or indirectly affect racial socialization practices. Finally, the model proposed that post-adoption education and support, family's location, parents' level of education, and children's ethnicity directly affect parents' level of racial awareness.

1.2.1. Socialization self-efficacy and socialization practices

Socialization self-efficacy refers to transracial adoptive parents' motivation to be involved in cultural and racial socialization practices, as well as their beliefs in their ability to do so (Bandura, 1997; Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Vonk, Yun, Park, & Massatti, 2007). Cultural socialization self-efficacy was defined as parents' confidence in their ability to plan activities and provide opportunities that would enhance their children's cultural pride (Lee et al., 2015). Racial socialization self-efficacy was defined as parents' confidence in their ability to teach their child racial awareness and coping strategies for racism and discrimination (Lee et al., 2015). Literature suggests parents' parenting self-efficacy is likely to enhance the degree of engagement in cultural activities (Vonk et al., 2007). Consistent with self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), literature suggests also that parents who belief in their abilities are more likely to engage in practices associated with educating their children about racism, racial dynamics, and racial pride (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Lee et al., 2015; Vonk et al., 2007;). Thus, our model predicts socialization self-efficacy is related to both types of socialization practices.

1.2.2. Racial awareness, socialization self-efficacy, and socialization practices

Racial awareness is defined as transracial adoptive parents' awareness of the role and impact of race in their own and others' lives (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2012; Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, Gunnar, and The Minnesota International Adoption Project Team, 2006; Rojewski, 2005; Vonk, 2001). Research has suggested a relationship between racial awareness and both cultural socialization practices and racial socialization practices. Using eight in-depth interviews with international adoptive mothers, Crolley-Simic & Vonk (2012) found the more a mother integrated the perspectives of persons of color into her racial views, the more she included activities outside her own culture in the socialization of her child. White racial identity development has also predicted racial, but not cultural socialization practices (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011). Thus, the literature suggests that racial awareness may be a predictor of both types of socialization practices and may be critical in the case of racial socialization practices.

Racial awareness may also have a relationship with socialization self-efficacy. Based on self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) and suggested relationships in the literature (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Vonk et al., 2007), we propose that parents' socialization self-efficacy may play a mediation role between racial awareness and socialization practices. Thus, our model suggests racial awareness directly predicts cultural and racial socialization practices, and indirectly predicts the practices through the mediation of self-efficacy.

1.2.3. The effect of post-adoption education and support on socialization practices

Post-adoption education and support has been suggested as directly related to racial awareness and cultural socialization practices (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011; Vonk & Angaran, 2001; Vonk et al., 2007; Vonk & Massatti, 2008; Vonk et al., 2010), and indirectly related to racial socialization practices (Hu et al., 2017; Vonk & Angaran, 2001). Such post-adoption education and support includes informal support from friends, parent support groups, post-adoption education, travel groups, or LISTSERVs on the internet (Vonk et al., 2007; Vonk et al., 2010). Participating in post-adoption support groups, training, and/or education appears to be related to higher engagement in cultural socialization activities among international transracial adoptive families (Vonk et al., 2010). The effect of post-adoption education and support on racial socialization practices appears to be mediated by racial awareness (Vonk & Angaran, 2003; Vonk et al., 2007). For example, Klevan (2012) suggested that attending workshops helps transracial adoptive families increase their understanding of racial issues with their children. Increased understanding may then have an effect on parents' engagement in racial socialization practices. Thus, our model predicts that post-adoption education and support is directly related to racial awareness and cultural socialization practices, and indirectly related to racial socialization practices.

1.2.4. The model

In addition to the variables previously discussed, the path analysis includes two demographic factors based on literature suggesting parents' gender and presence of biological children in the home directly influence engagement in cultural socialization practices (Vonk & Massatti, 2008; Vonk et al., 2010). Mothers more than fathers are involved in cultural socialization practices, and parents who have no biological children are more likely to engage in such practices. Several variables in the original conceptual model and the literature, parents' income and education, family's location, and children's ethnicity showed very little variability in our responses and were not included in the path analysis. As such, we utilized the following variables in the path analysis: post-adoption education and support, parents' racial awareness, parent's cultural and racial socialization self-efficacy, parent's gender, presence of biological children in the family, and cultural