ABSTRACT

FLEMING, LATORIA. The Evolution of Cultural Competence in Transracial Adoptive Parents. (Under the direction of Dr. Stanley Baker.)

As the number of minority children listed with adoptive services continues to increase, the instances of transracial adoptions become more frequent. Numerous researchers have found that cultural competence and parenting behaviors of transracial adoptive parents are important in helping with this process. Cultural competence can be viewed as a process that comes as a result of life experience and encounters that make an individual aware of the many cultural groups around them. For this study, a cross-sectional research design was chosen to measure the changes in cultural competence over the first five years of adoption. Sixty participants from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds were administered the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale. Data were collected from participants across 27 states. Of the 60 participants, 30.5% had been adoptive parents for less than 1 year, 27.78% had been adoptive parents for 1-2 years, 27.78% had been adoptive parents for 3-5 years, and 13.89% had been adoptive parents for five years or more. The "number of years as an adoptive parent" variable was identified for each participant through a

demographic questionnaire prior to administration of the
scale. The frequency of responses to the cultural competence
variables was then recorded to help determine the presence of
a relationship to the "number of years as an adoptive parent"
variable. Results of the study indicated that the progression
of stages from "1 to 2 years" to "5 or more years" showed
significant differences in cultural competence. The area of
cultural competence that appeared to have the most significant
difference was that of Multicultural Planning suggesting that
as transracial adoptive parents progress through the stages,
they continuously become more racially aware, and thus more
sensitive in this area.

The Evolution of Cultural Competence in
Transracial Adoptive Parents

by
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Ernestine Yellarday Sledge, who passed away at the beginning of this journey. I have never stopped living by your words of encouragement and faith, and I know you have been with me every step of the way. I love you.

BIOGRAPHY

Latoria Savon Fleming was born July 15, 1977 to Sandra Sledge Fleming and John Glenn Fleming in Halifax County, NC. The daughter of two very hard working parents, Latoria learned the value of education and a good work ethic at an early age. After graduating from Northwest Halifax High School at the age of 16, she attended Virginia Union University in Richmond, VA where she received a Bachelors of Science degree in Psychology/Human Exceptionalities with a concentration in Special Education. This experience sparked her initial love of education. During her time at VUU, she also became a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Upon completing this degree, Latoria went on to earn a Masters of Education degree in Guidance and Counseling from Virginia State University in Petersburg, VA. Soon after, Latoria returned home to NC to further pursue her educational endeavors through obtaining a doctoral degree in Counselor Education at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Though a native North Carolinian, Latoria has spent the majority of her career in both the North Carolina and Virginia Educational Systems. Today, she continues to hold full

certification in both North Carolina and Virginia for school counseling.

Latoria has served as an educator and clinician on a number of levels. She had the pleasure of beginning her counseling career in the Halifax County Public School System where she served as school counselor for nearly a five year period. She is currently a high school counselor in the Fairfax County School System in Alexandria, VA. Prior to this experience, she served as behavioral therapist with the VA Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation in Petersburg, VA.

Some other notable points in her career include her time as an academic advisor, both as a graduate assistant at NC State University and as a full time advisor at St. Augustine's College in Raleigh NC, instructor of Developmental Psychology at Vance Granville Community College in Henderson, NC, and special education teacher with the Richmond City Public School System in Richmond, VA. Her career to date has provided her with experience in classroom instruction, faculty and staff training, standardized test administration, academic and career advising, collegiate judicial affairs, and children and family counseling.

Latoria is a member of the American Counseling Association, American School Counseling Association, National Academic Advising Association, and an official delegate for the National CollegeBoard Scholarship Services Assembly.

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LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction

Transracial Adoption has become more frequent in recent years. Many adoptions have taken place across racial lines involving parents and children of all ethnicities (Hall 2002). Although this has become another conventional solution to the problem of children in foster care, there are still issues concerning the proper development of cultural and racial identity for these individuals. The first known transracial adoptions took place in 1945 following the Indian Adoption Project in which 395 Native American children where placed with white families in a number of eastern and mid-eastern US states (Unger 1977).

According to The Adoption History Project (n.d.) adoption statistics during this period seem to infer that white families were more likely to accept children of other nationalities before they would take in a Black child. Those parents who did adopt Black children were considered to be rebellious. Due to the occurrences of racial discrimination the United States in early 1960, it became difficult to find families of color for same-race adoptions, so some agencies began placing biracial and African American children in white

homes as an alternative. The first recorded adoption of an African American child by a white family took place in 1948 in Minnesota (Bremner 1974). White parents adopting Black children continued after the Supreme Court ruled in Loving vs. Virginia in 1967 prohibiting racial intermarriage, ultimately preventing "family making between Blacks and Whites" in many states (Bremner 1974).

In 1972, the opposition to transracial adoption took a different route when the National Association of Black Social Workers took a stand against placing African American children with white parents. Their statement referred to transracial adoption as "unnecessary and unnatural" (Bremner 1974). The organization's president even argued that situations of temporary foster care and institutional placements were favored over transracial adoption. This argument still exists today.

In recent years, there have been roughly 9,000 transracial adoptions, making transracial adoption an estimated 15% of all adoptions (Hall 2002). Of this percentage, approximately 1% were white families adopting children of color, 5% were white families adopting children of

other races, and 2% were families of other races adopting white children.

In an effort to determine how these transracially adopted individuals come to develop a healthy self-concept and sense of identity, researchers began investigating the role of the cultural competence of the adoptive parents in aiding healthy development. There are said to be a number of recognized parenting behaviors that have proved to be effective in this process (Vonk 2001). These behaviors include developing friendships with people of the child's birth culture, purchasing books and toys that reflect the child's race, and talking to the child about racial issues such as racism and prejudice. Although studies of these behaviors have assisted in the cultural identity development of transracial adoptees, the successful application of these behaviors still seems to depend on the cultural competence of the adoptive parents (Vonk 2001).

Background of the Study

Transracial adoptive parents have a very significant role in their children's cultural identity development by means of the environment and activities that they provide for them. Crumbley (1999) suggests that a child's identity is

influenced by significant role models and relationships to which the child is consistently exposed. It is important that parents obtain a set of particular attitudes, skills, and abilities to meet their children's racial and cultural needs. Children from minority groups who experience prejudice or discrimination are subject to developing negative racial identity. They should not be expected to develop positive racial identity without support and reinforcement from their families, role models, and the community.

Vonk (2001) states that transracial adoptive parents need to be culturally competent in order to effectively provide these things. She defines cultural competence as the awareness, knowledge, and skills that transracial adoptive parents will need in order to help their children achieve positive racial identity development. Vonk goes on to state that this form of cultural competence contains several dimensions, including racial awareness, survival skills, and multicultural planning.

To measure this construct, Vonk developed the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (TAPS), which is a multi-dimensional 36-item Likert style scale that is meant to assess cultural

competence among transracial adoptive parents. Included with Vonk's scale, is a parenting behavior checklist that will measure the parents' willingness to participate in cultural identity building behaviors. Some of the behaviors specified in Vonk's (2001) scale include purchasing books or toys that reflect the child's birth culture, talking to children about race and prejudice, teaching coping strategies to deal with racially based teasing, and making clear efforts to display intolerance of any racial or ethically biased behaviors or remarks.

According to Curtis (1996), parents should be taught to examine their own attitudes and beliefs about their child's birth culture. Curtis suggests that this training in self-examination be mandatory in transracial adoptions. Steinburg and Hall (1998) recommend training programs that challenge parents to examine their own lives in relation to race, ethnicity, and culture.

Smith (1994) confirms that it is important for children of color growing up with Caucasian parents to be around adults and children of many ethnic groups, and, particularly, to see adult role models who are of the same race or ethnic group as the children. These people can simply be friends of the family

who can teach them about their ethnic heritage, and, as they mature, tell them what to expect when they become an adult in their community.

Theoretical Background

Transracial adoptive parents must be willing and able to provide a link to the child's birth culture. This concept is a major component of parental cultural competence (Vonk 2001). To help understand the process of cultural and racial identity development as a whole, researchers continue to develop models describing the topic. There have been many models developed in the area of cultural identity development over the past decade. Some have even dealt with the development of African Americans and other ethnic groups within a dominant "White" society (Cross, 1991). The common thread among many of these models is the presence of a supportive parental figure, whether biologically related or non-biological. The participation of these figures in the development of cultural identity often takes the role of either being a culturally similar role model or providing the like. One of the most popular of these models is Cross' Model of Nigrescence which covers the progression of the African American individual in to recognizing and identifying with their race.

According to Cross' model, African Americans progress through five stages of development in which personal experiences shape their racial self-identification (Cross, Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, & Cokley, 2001). Cross' stages include the Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment. When studying this model the assumption is usually made that successful completion of these stages is partially dependent upon the accessibility of the African American family and/or community, particularly during the Immersion and Internalization stages. There is an omission of those African American individuals who were raised in non-ethnic families and do not have the benefit of readily accessible African American cultural resources. In order for a White family to fulfill this need as it is presented in Cross' model, they must be culturally competent to some degree.

In 1989, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue developed their Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model (R/CID) which was a combination of all of the previous minority racial identity development models (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989). The R/CID consists of five stages: Conformity, Dissonance, Resistance and Immersion, Introspection, and Integrative Awareness. This

model covers the individual's attitudes regarding themselves, other individuals of the same ethnic background, and individuals from the dominant culture. This can be related to the link with the birth culture that a culturally competent adoptive parent would be better prepared to provide.

Phinney (1990) defined biculturalism as an individual's ability to incorporate ethnic and majority culture into his or her identity to a greater or lesser degree. In this model, biculturalism is measured by the strength or weakness of one's identification with ethnic and majority culture. An individual who is strong in ethnic identity and weak in majority identity would be identified as being culturally separated, and an individual who is weak in ethnic identity and strong in majority identity would be identified as being culturally assimilated.

A seemingly more relevant idea is the Cultural-Racial Identity Model (Baden & Steward, 1995). In contrast to those previously mentioned, this model focuses on the potential cultural and racial identities that can be formed by those individuals who are of minority ancestry but were raised within a non-minority family. The Cultural-Racial Identity Model consists of two axes: the Cultural Identity Axis and the

Racial Identity Axis. Each axis accounts for four possible

cultural and racial combinations that are dependent upon the

degree to which transracial adoptees identify with their own

racial and cultural groups and with those of the adoptive

parents.

Cultural Competence

Researchers have studied the idea of the cultural

competence of adoptive parents playing a part in the cultural

identity development of transracial adoptees in recent years.

Cultural competence can be viewed as a process that comes as a

result of life experience and encounters that make an

individual aware of the many cultural groups around them (Vonk

2001). From this awareness, the individual makes a conscious

decision to become more knowledgeable of these groups and the

differences that exist between them. It would seem that this

competence would progress as individuals have increasing

encounters with other cultures and become more and more aware

of their differences. Transracial adoptive parents may not

have had such a close encounter with another culture prior to

their considering the adoption of a child from a cultural

background that is different from their own. For most, this

cultural experience, being the first of many, will bring about an awareness that will continue to increase over time.

Despite the major importance of this assumption, there is little research available to verify its accuracy. Most adoption agencies will assess adoptive parent cultural competence prior to completing a transracial adoption (Smith 1994). These assessments usually end once the family has been found "fit" for the adoption and no further assessments to record changes in cultural competence over time are offered.

Need for the Study

According to McPhatter (1997), cultural competence should not be viewed as an end product that comes as a result of workshops and classes. It is instead an active process of learning over a longer period of time. She stresses that it is a developmental process that requires a long-term commitment. Although the expectation of growth in racial awareness and multicultural family planning for the transracial adoptive parent seems logical, the empirical evidence of this assumption has not been firmly established (Vonk 2001). It would be very helpful in assessing these changes to provide research that describes the progression of transracial

adoptive parents throughout their parenthood in the same areas that are used to assess those that are applying for adoption.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the progression of cultural competence in transracial adoptive parents by investigating sample groups of transracial adoptive parents at various stages of the first five years of the adoption process. The study assessed the differences in cultural competence scores, as measured by the Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale, in transracial adoptive of less than 1 year to 2 years, adoptive parents of 3 to 5 years, and adoptive parents of more than 5 years. These data were meant to provide evidence about evolving characteristics and acceptance in the areas of racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills at each of these stages. A cross-tabulation analysis, also known as contingency table analysis, was used to identify relationships between the "number of years as a transracial parent" variable with each of the focus areas of the cultural competence module of the assessment. This was done by recording the frequency of cultural competence responses for the participants in each stage of adoption.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

It was hypothesized that there would be a significant increase in the cultural competence scores of the transracial adoptive parents assessed at each stage from awaiting adoption to adoptive parents of 3 to 5 plus years. Some research questions to follow include:

- Is there a difference in cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption?

- What area of cultural competence undergoes the most change from one stage to the next?

Importance of the Study

It is hoped that the results of this study will be used to guide transracial adoptive parents as well as adoption agencies in decision making regarding the appropriateness of transracial adoption and the need for continued cultural competence training for experienced transracial adoptive families as well as future transracial adoptive parents. Potential adoptive families who are uncertain about adopting transracially will have validation of their ability to provide effective parenting with interventions in cultural competence. Also, practitioners will be able to better direct experienced

transracial adoptive parents by knowing the areas of cultural competence that undergo the most and least growth over time without systematic proactive interventions.

As more people make the decision to transracially adopt, it should be understood that those adoptive children will be more susceptible to experiencing an unhealthy identity development process than their non-adopted or same-race adopted peers. It is particularly important that the adoptive parents are aware of this challenge and that they know how to respond accordingly.

A number of studies point to difficulties among some transracial adoptees in developing cultural identity. Research has reported findings that some transracial adoptees are not comfortable with their race and had no interest in maintaining relationships with persons of their own race (Tizard 1991). Based on this research, it could be gathered that transracial adoptees must struggle to develop and maintain an identity that includes the acceptance of their own, birth culture and physical appearance, as well as the culture of their adoptive parents.

Adding to the adoptees' struggle to develop positive racial and cultural identity is the effect of racism on

transracial adoptees. Transracial adoptive parents must
establish the ability to teach their adopted children the
survival skills necessary to cope with racism. According to
Vroegh (2000), many transracial adoptive parents teach their
children to simply ignore racial remarks and comments from
others rather than teaching them more active coping skills.
Findings such as these have led to discussions about the
possible interventions for transracial adoptive parents.
Definitions

Within this paper are a number of terms used to describe
the research concerns and topics that are being covered. The
first of these is the term *transracial adoption*. Transracial
adoption is defined as the process in which adoptees are
placed in an adoptive family of an ethnic background that is
different from their own ethnicity (Vonk, 2001). Therefore
transraical adoptive parents, in this context, would refer to
those individuals who make the decision to adopt outside of
their own race and/or culture.

Another important definition is of the term *cultural
competence*. Researcher M. Elizabeth Vonk (2001) describes
cultural competence as the particular awareness, knowledge,
and skills that transracial adoptive parents will need in

order to help their children achieve positive racial identity development. Vonk's Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (TAPS) measures cultural competence by assessing the areas of racial awareness which refers to parents' awareness of how ethnicity, race, language, and culture affect their own and their children's lives; multicultural planning which refers to the creation and acceptance of avenues for the child to learn about and participate in his or her own birth culture; and survival skills which refers to the recognition of the need to prepare children to successfully cope with racial prejudice and/or discrimination.

The term *healthy racial identity development* is also used to describe the goal of development sought by transracial adoptees in the study. This term refers to the process in which adoptees become able to identify racially with their birth culture and that of the adoptive parents. He/She will become increasingly more comfortable with the customs and behaviors of both cultures, thus establishing a bicultural identity (Phinney, 2003).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Although there has been a limited amount of research found on the topic of cultural competence as a developmental process for transracial adoptive parents, there have been a number of researchers who explored the cultural identity development of transracial adoptees and the role that parental cultural competence plays in this development.

Theoretical Background

Two major theories will be critiqued in this paper. These theories are Cross' Model of Nigrescence (1991, 2001), and the Cultural and Racial Identity Development Theory of Transracial Adoptees (Baden and Steward, 1995). These two theories were chosen because they were both written from a different perspective of minority identity development, but both speak to the influence of other individuals in the child's environment as an important aspect of this development.

The two theories explore the influence of having same-race role models on the cultural identity development of African American children who are adopted into White families. In Cross' model, African Americans progressed through five

stages of development in which personal experiences shape their racial self-identification (Cross, Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, & Cokley, 2001). Cross' stages places great importance on the presence of cultural influences on development, particularly during the Immersion and Internalization stages. This supports the suggestion that of those African American individuals who were raised in non-ethnic families may require the presence of an additional cultural role model in order to have the benefit of readily accessible African American cultural resources.

Baden and Steward's Cultural Identity Development Model for Transracial Adoptees focuses on the potential cultural and racial identities that can be formed by those individuals who are of minority ancestry, but were raised within a non-minority family. The theory involves four possible cultural and racial combinations that are dependent upon the degree to which transracial adoptees identify with their own racial and cultural groups and with those of the adoptive parents, making same-race role modeling necessary for development. The integration of information taken from these two theories will give a more complete explanation of how same-race role modeling influences transracial adoptees.

Cross' Theory of Nigrescence

Researcher William Cross' Model of Psychological Nigrescence has been a key point of interest in Multicultural and Racial Identity. The model was developed as a five stage model of identity development for African Americans. The model attempts to capture the stages that African Americans go through when experiencing changes in their racial self-identification (Cross, Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, & Cokley, 2001).

Summary of theory. Specifically, this model involves five separate stages which are: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment. The first stage of Cross' Model is the Pre-Encounter Stage. A person in the pre-encounter stage hasn't begun the identity development process. This stage is marked by self-hatred which is expressed through issues dealing with: low-salience and pro white/anti-Black attitudes. Individuals with low-salience attitudes consider the fact that they are African American to hold little or no significance for them. According to the model, anti-Black attitudes cause these individuals to dislike their own ethnic group, culture, and community. Cross says that several factors influence

individuals at this stage of development such as mis-education, race image anxiety, assimilation issues and integration.

Stage two of the Cross model is the Encounter stage, during this stage the person is thought to have an experience that has a major impact on their current identity. This stage contains two steps, experiencing the encounter and personalizing the encounter. When a person experiences the encounter their reaction may include confusion, alarm, and/or depression. During this time the person is actively involved in internalizing the experience. This stage ends when this internalization is complete.

Third is the Immersion – Emersion stage. Immersion is the first step in which the person begins to submerge into their new identity. Persons at this step begin to become engrossed in African American culture. This stage is characterized by a feeling of being out of control, which results from experiencing a loss of self while simultaneously gaining a new sense of self. Next is the emersion step of this stage. Emersion is characterized by a need to regain control and is promoted by interactions with the dominant culture.

The fourth stage of the model is Internalization. According to Cross, this stage is marked by a shift from confidence in ones personal standards of Blackness and uncontrolled anger toward White people to controlled anger toward oppressive and racist institutions.

The last stage is Internalization-Commitment. After developing a Black identity, individuals in this stage continue to be activists against oppression and racism. These people demonstrate a commitment to the advancement of not only the Black community, but society as a whole. This stage can only be reached by individuals that have successfully completed the other stages of the Cross model.

Cross suggested in his theory of nigrescence or Black self-actualization that Black people move from a stage of racial consciousness characterized by self-abasement and denial of their blackness to a stage characterized by self-esteem and acceptance of their blackness. The Cross theory can also be used to view how oppressed people in general react in an environment where they perceive a negative reaction from the majority group (Vandiver, 2001). The theory may be effective in multicultural counseling by allowing a client to evaluate where they might place themselves in their

development. As a precaution, Cross' acknowledges that very few people are truly at the internalization stage of this theory. This theory suggests and implies that it is possible to develop or increase one's level of racial consciousness. Therefore, it is an individual's job to be aware of their own racial attitudes, and to develop the cross-cultural awareness skills necessary for life-long success.

Cross' Theory of Psychological Nigrescence has played a major role in the conceptualization of African Americans' racial identity for the last three decades. Cross' original theory has been used as the basis for a number of theoretical explorations as well as empirical studies in the field of Multicultural Counseling. In 1991, Cross revised the nigrescence theory. In this revision, he introduced the proposal of multiple identity clusters at each stage. He addressed in greater detail the fact that African Americans have multiple identities and that race is just one of the many issues that contribute to personal identity. The revised theory provided the basis for the development of the Cross Racial Identity Scale or CRIS (Cross et al., 2001), which has provided support for the existence of multiple nigrescence identities.

Cross' theory was originally developed primarily for

African Americans to understand the black experience in

the United States. Black identity development can be described

as shifts in worldview or consciousness in sequential stages.

We understand racial identity to mean a sense of self in the

context of one's racial group membership, which includes all

aspects of that group's culture. Cross described racial group

membership as being developmental. As with other

developmental processes, one's racial identity changes over

time to become more congruent with one's experiences, personal

beliefs, and other dimensions of self-identity. He argued not

only that Black Americans make up a distinct cultural group,

but also that their cultural group has experienced a history

of oppression as a racial minority. Therefore, their

individual identities as Blacks and as Americans are affected

both by Black culture and by American racism.

The development of valid and reliable instruments is a

difficult task in the field of psychology because there is no

way to measure construct validly. One of the key variables in

the development of a valid measurement instrument is time. The

process includes writing items, collecting data on all items,

examining the data, revising the items, and collecting data on the revised items is extremely time-consuming. Some racial identity constructs are not yet fully measurable or understood. This presents a challenge for researchers in the field of Black racial identity. However, researchers say that this does not invalidate the properties of the subscales that are currently included on the CRIS.

Cross' theory is one of resocialization, in which a healthy Black person progresses from a completely non-Afrocentric approach to multicultural identity to a more Afrocentric one. During this transformation, the individual moves from a total unawareness of race through embracing black culture exclusively, and ends with the person making a commitment to the betterment of all cultures as well as their own. He suggests that it is not necessarily the specific event or situation that is experienced during the Encounter stage that causes the individual to become off-balance, but it is instead the process of becoming re-socialized or the attainment of a new identity. Cross's theory presents racial identity as a progression that is influenced by those in a particular individual's ethnic group as well as those outside of it.

The traditional theory was essentially a stage theory in which growth was thought to occur in sequence in a stepwise progression, whereas contemporary theories describe racial and ethnic identity as a process that occurs over a lifetime. This is the reason that Cross revised his theory from its original format of four steps to five phases of development. It is now believed to be very possible for a person to become fixated in one stage rather than progressing through each according to maturation. There was also much controversy during Cross' early work around the idea that Black people suffered self-hatred and low self-esteem prior to their "development". Research has more recently shown that the self-esteem and self-concept of African Americans does not change throughout their progression through the stages at all, it is instead their worldview and relation to society that changes. This new information is also a part of Cross' recent revision of his theory that makes this theory more relevant to our current society.

Critique as a theory. Cross' theory of Nigrescence fits into the definition of a theory by including all of the following components. The theory of Nigrescence describes a

number of new constructs that are defined for the purpose of understanding the theory's basis. The most important of these constructs is the definition of the word nigrescence. According to Cross, nigrescence is defined as "the process of becoming Black". Cross also defined the names of each of the stages to represent its behaviors and cognitions within the theory. When studied, the progression through each of the stages as they are proposed by the theory seem to be logical given the known factors in overall human development even when race is not a factor. The rational explanations of these constructs and their relation to each other make this theory logically sound. Many of the ideas proposed within the theory, such as the negative influence of an experience with racism on views of the majority race, can be accepted without being tested. There are also hypothetical constructs, such as the progression from one stage to the next that can be addressed as a testable hypothesis. The theory also offers the hypothesis that African Americans share commonalities within the group, which would make the theory capable of being generalized to the population. Having such extensive empirical validation to such constructs allows researchers to

consider many of the statements of African American Identity

development as law. This empirical

support from experimental and scientific observations also

make Cross' Theory of Nigrescence an empirically sound theory.

　　Relevance of theory to research goals. In order to obtain

a better understanding of the racial identity development of

African American transracial adoptees, it is important to

understand African American racial identity development in

general. An in-depth review of Cross' theory suggest that

healthy racial identity development comes about as a result of

many environmental factors, one of which happens to be the

presence of same-race role models. In Cross' immersion stage,

the individual is believed to go through a period of intense

identification with their birth culture (Vandiver et al.,

2001).

Transracial Adoptee Cultural Identity Theory

　　The Transracial Adoptee Identity Development Theory, in

contrast to Cross' theory, focuses on the potential cultural

and racial identities that can be formed by those individuals

who are of minority ancestry but were raised within a non-

minority family.

Summary of theory. The Cultural-Racial Identity

Development Theory consists of two axes: the Cultural Identity

Axis and the Racial Identity Axis (Baden & Steward, 1995).

Each axis accounts for four possible cultural and racial

combinations that are dependent upon the degree to which

transracial adoptees identify with their own racial and

cultural groups and with those of the adoptive parents.

Baden and Steward (1995) identified four types of

cultural identities on the Cultural Identity Axis. They are

Bicultural Identity, Pro-Self Cultural Identity, Pro-Parent

Cultural Identity, and Culturally Undifferentiated. A

transracial adoptee that identifies more highly with the race

or culture of his or her adoptive parents would be high on the

Parental Culture Dimension and low on the Adoptee Culture

Dimension. This would determine this individual as having a

Pro-Parent Cultural Identity. In contrast, if an adoptee

identifies more with his or her own culture and is less

accepting of the dominant culture, then he or she would place

higher on the Adoptee Culture Dimension given him or her a

Pro-Self Cultural Identity (Baden & Steward, 1995).

The Cultural-Racial Identity Development Theory suggests

that racial differences affect many aspects of self-

identification as well as the lifestyles and friendships in which transracial adoptees surround themselves. For their own study, the researchers defined race as "determined by groups who are distinguished or consider themselves to be distinguished from other people by their physical characteristics and by their social relations with other people" (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 325). The Racial Identity Axis has two dimensions. They are the Adoptee Race Dimension, which is the degree to which transracial adoptees identify with their own race; and the Parental Race Dimension, which is the degree to which transracial adoptees identify with the race of their adoptive parents. The level of racial identification is determined by the degree of self-identification with the individual's own race, self-identification with their adoptive parents' race, and the level of comfort the adoptee feels with those belonging to both their own racial group and that of their adoptive parents.

The Cultural-Racial Identity Development Theory then combines both the Cultural Identity Axis and the Racial Identity Axis into a separate model which pairs the four

possible cultural identities with each of the four possible racial identities, resulting in 16 cells of identity.

According to Baden (2002) adoptees that have a high level of knowledge, awareness, and comfort with a particular culture are believed to have that culture as their primary culture. If they are high on both the culture of their adoptive parents and their own birth culture comparatively, they are considered to be of Bicultural Identity. If an adoptee has a high level of knowledge, comfort, and awareness in a variety of cultures beyond their own and that of their adoptive parents, they are considered to be Culturally Undifferentiated.

Individuals who have Bicultural Identity may relate to the identity that is most adaptive when placed in certain social situations. For example, an African American transracial adoptee who is of Bicultural Identity may find it helpful to identify most closely with the African American culture when around their African American peers, and with the culture of the adoptive parents when at home. These individuals most likely develop this identity by being exposed to both cultures from an early age.

Adoptees that have high competence, awareness, and comfort with their birth culture, but low on these components

with the culture of the adoptive parents are considered to be Culture Specific Type I. These adoptees consider their culture to be different from their adoptive parents. They also tend to have a preference for interaction with their own racial group.

Many African American children who are adopted into White families may be Culture Specific Type I, which means that they would identify most closely with the cultural norms of the African American community. This would reflect the need for African American influences. This influence may take place by the adoptive parents' choice to provide positive same-race role models or by negative race-specific experiences that the child may face.

Adoptees who relate highly with the adoptive parents' culture but do not relate as well to their own birth culture are considered to be Culture Specific Type II (Baden, 2002). Individuals may have competence, awareness, and comfort only with the culture of the adoptive parents and may discount their birth culture. African American adoptees who are Culture Specific Type II may have difficulties in developing a healthy identity because the culture with which they most highly identify is not the culture with which they are

perceived to identify by others. African American children with this identity type are often stereotyped by peers as "acting White". This may negatively affect self-esteem and lead to other issues in their psychological development.

Adoptees who do not relate closely with either their birth culture or that of their adoptive parents are considered to be Culturally Undifferentiated. These individuals may feel comfortable around a number of cultures rather than just these two cultures alone. An African American child that is adopted into a White family may become culturally undifferentiated as a result of being raised in an integrated community.

Within the Racial Identity Axis, comfort level is focused on as the identifying factor in determining racial identity (Baden, 2002). Those adoptees who have Biracial Identity have a high level of comfort with both their own race and the race of their adoptive parents. Some transracial adoptees have difficulty identifying their race, and may do so mistakenly (Baden & Steward, 1995). Those who accurately identify their race are considered Racially Specific Type I. They have a high comfort level with the racial group to which they belong. Those who do not may identify their race as the race of their adoptive parents although a different racial group membership

may be physically obvious to others. These individuals have a

low level of comfort with their own racial group. Many

opponents to transracial adoption believe that this leads to a

denial of racial differences and ultimately self-hatred.

The final racial identity type is the Racially

Undifferentiated Identity. These adoptees identify themselves

as having membership in multiple racial groups. They usually

identify with all of the races that apply to them and resist

pressures from society to choose between them (Baden, 2002).

Critique as theory. Baden and Steward's Transracial

Adoptee Cultural-Racial Identity Development theory includes

all of the components of the definition of a theory. Baden

and Steward present several constructs that were defined for

the purpose of understanding the premise of the theory. The

first of these terms is transracial adoption, which is defined

by the researchers as a case in which the racial group

membership of the adoptee differs from that of the adoptive

parents. It can be logically deduced that growing up in a

family of a different cultural and racial background from

one's own will have some impact on certain aspects of

childhood development. The fact that there are differences in

the life experiences of transracially adopted children and

same-race adoptees can be accepted without being tested, though there may be questions regarding the significance of these differences and their effects on development. This theory explores a number of hypothetical constructs. One of these constructs being the idea that if a positive same-race role model is not introduced to the child in the most influential phases of development, he or she may themselves choose a role model that is less positive which will negatively effect identity development and possibly life decisions. This can be examined through the observation of transracial adoptees in both instances. The hypothesis that concludes that parents must be culturally competent, which includes the support of same-race role model involvement, has been supported by much research (Vonk, 2001) The inclusion of such a great deal of empirical support and the consistency found in each of the constructs make the Transracial Adoptee Racial Identity theory an empirically and logically sound theory.

Relevance of theory to research goals. Understanding the basis of the Transracial Adoptee Identity Development Theory is very important to the goal of this research. Unlike Cross' theory the Transracial Adoptee Racial Identity Development

theory considers the development of minorities when there are no family members with whom the individual can relate culturally. In the theory, the developers make many references to the cultural competence of the adoptive parents and the behaviors that can help to provide healthy identity development. Among these behaviors is the inclusion of same-race role models such as teachers, doctors, etc. that the parents can provide for the child.

Research on Psychological Adjustment

Several studies were conducted in an effort to determine whether there were differences in the psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees and their same race adopted peers. Silverman and Feigelman (1981) conducted their study on the psychological adjustment of transracially adopted children. Their study's sample consisted of 56 White American adoptive parents of African American children and 97 White American adoptive parents of White American children.

Each participant was asked to make a judgment about their child's overall adjustment and the frequency with which their child experienced emotional and psychological growth problems. The findings revealed a positive association between the child's age at adoption and problems in adjustment. The

researchers reported their findings as indicating that age at adoption had the most significant impact on the child's development, rather than the transracial adoption itself.

In 1997, Vroegh reported the findings of her longitudinal study of transracial adoption outcomes. The sample consisted of 52 African American adoptees. Thirty-four of the adoptees were from transracial families, and the remaining 18 were from same-race families. Each of the participants was interviewed by a team of researchers and asked to complete the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The results indicated that 90% of the sample was adjusting well. Vroegh (1997) concluded that transracial adoptees had developed healthy cultural identities. This conclusion was made evident by 90% of the same-race adoptees and 88% of the transracial adoptees labeling themselves as either African American or of "mixed" race.

McRoy and Zurcher (1983) conducted the first study of transracial adoptees that compared results to a group of same-race adoptees. They were also the first to examine the experiences of African American children from the perspective of the adoptive parents as well as the adoptees. The sample

consisted of 30 White American families and 30 African

American families. Most of the children who had two African

American biological parents were placed in African American

families. Most of the children with only one biological

African American parent were placed with White American

parents.

A team of African American and White researchers

conducted face-to-face interviews with both the adoptive

parents together and with the children alone. Parents and

children also completed the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. The

results indicated that both transracial and same-race adoptive

parents considered their adoption decision to be positive.

However, researchers also noted that the transracial adoptive

parents were less likely than were same-race adoptive parents

to teach their adoptive children the importance of African

American heritage and pride.

Weinburg, Scarr, and Waldman (1992) conducted their

research restudying 101 transracial adoptive families 10 years

after initial research using the same participants. The study

was conducted as a follow-up to a report that was conducted in

1976 to test the hypothesis that minority transracially

adopted children perform on IQ and school achievement

assessments as well as those who were adopted into same-race families. Ninety-three of the original 101 families participated in the study, resulting in a sample of 426 individual participants.

The researchers refer to the data collected at the time of the original study as Time 1 data and the data collected for the follow-up study as Time 2 data. At Time 2, the researchers administered the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised to each participant. The results of the report were given in terms of the IQ and school achievement test results of the transracial adoptive family members and the correlations of the changes in IQ performance over time. Descriptive statistics were used to describe change in the original study IQ scores and the follow-up study IQ scores for each family member.

According to the results, all family members declined in IQ from Time 1 to Time 2. This decline was expected considering that individuals have been documented to have declining scores when retested on a revised version of the original measure. Despite this decline, the family member rankings of Time 2 test scores remained identical to those of

Time 1. It was concluded that there were no differences between the transracial adoptees and non-transracially adopted children in IQ score change from Time 1 to Time 2 although the correlations decreased.

Research on Racial Group Identification

Other researchers set out to gather more information on what factors cause many transracially adopted children come to identify with one racial group more than another. In 1986, Shireman and Johnson published their findings of a longitudinal study of African American children who were adopted into single-parent, transracial, and African American homes. The children were studied at 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20 years of age. The Clark Doll test was administered to adoptees at age 4 and at age 8. This test is a measure in which children associate various qualities to either a White or an African American doll.

Their findings indicated that at age 4, children in transracial homes displayed a greater preference for the African American doll than did those children in homes with African American parents. However, at age 8, preference for the African American doll among transracially adopted children remained constant, while that of the children in African

American homes increased significantly. Shireman and Johnson concluded that while the racial identity development of transracial adoptees remains a concern, most were adjusting well.

Simon and Alstein (1992) followed a group of families that adopted African American children over a period of 20 years. Their research began in 1972 with a sample of 204 transracial adoptive families. Of the 366 adoptees, 120 were African American. Their findings indicated that African American children identified with their race and birth culture as accurately as White American children. They also found that the adoptive parents tended to believe that race was not a major issue for their children. They did not address the possible modification of this belief at various stages of adoptive parenthood.

A large majority (77%) of the White adoptive parents lived in predominately White neighborhoods, while 63% of the adoptees reported that most of their friends were White. Simon and Alstein (1992) concluded that their study consistently indicated that African American children who were raised by White parents fared no worse than did other African American children.

Baden (2002) who is co-developer of the Transracial Adoptee Cultural-Racial Identity Development Theory used a correlational field design to measure the psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees in support of the theory. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) were used to explore the variation in the Cultural-Racial Identities that the participants reported. The sample consisted of 51 transracial adoptees that were recruited through special interest adoption groups. They participated in the study through the completion of the BSI and the MEIM-R as well as the Cultural-Racial Identity Questionnaire (CRIQ), which was developed for the study.

The transracial adoptees reported a wide range of cultural-racial identities. This suggests that the instruments used allowed for the representation of the variation in these identities to be detected and reported in the data. Thus, the Cultural-Racial Identity dimensions can be used to assess the identity development of transracial adoptees. The findings also showed no differences in the psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees and other adoptees.

Adoptive Parent Interventions

Researchers have also started looking at interventions for transracial adoptive parents that will assist them in exploring their cultural competence in an effort to cultivate healthy cultural identity development in their children. Smith (1994) suggests that prospective adoptive parents consider their current lifestyle prior to committing to a transracial adoption. Important factors include whether the family lives in an integrated neighborhood, so that the child will be able to attend an integrated school, and if not, would they consider moving to a new neighborhood. Prospective parents would also consider whether they already have friends of different races and ethnic groups, if they attend multicultural festivals, if they enjoy different kinds of ethnic foods, and how much of a leap it would be to start doing some of these things (Smith 1994).

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)(n.d.) offers a variety of training sessions including a Transracial Training Curriculum. The curriculum can be used by agencies or parent groups to provide step-by-step training on important issues related to transracial or transcultural adoption or foster care. NACAC designed this program to help

parents understand the implications related to raising children of a different background. It is intended to allow parents to decide what type of placement is right for their family. The curriculum includes topics such as Motivation, Values, Family, Home, Community, Cultural Identity, and Racism. NACAC offers transracial training in three ways: through the NACAC Annual Conference where full-day sessions are devoted to transracial adoption topics, on-site workshops at the NACAC headquarters and abroad, and through training the trainer sessions where agencies and adoption counselors can be trained in implementing the curriculum with their clients.

NACAC has also published several resources for transracial adoptive parents, including the *Parenting Resource Manual* (1998) which was designed for parents who are currently raising a child of another race, culture, or ethnicity. The manual features articles and other resources that address a variety of issues and concerns that are faced by transracial families. The Council has also published a Self Awareness Tool (NACAC, n.d.) that will help prospective transracial adoptive parents determine for themselves if transracial adoption is the right choice for their family.

Importance of Present Study

In each of these studies, there are findings that provide information regarding the importance of cultural competence on identity development as well as adoptive parent attitudes as they relate to the insignificance of race in the lives of their children. None of these findings, however, address whether or not those results change as adoptive parents progress through the stages of parenthood. The purpose of the present study is to provide evidence of these changes and at what stage of the adoption process they occur.

Chapter 3

Method

A cross-sectional research design was chosen for this study to provide measurable outcomes for the concept of cultural competence as it relates to transracial adoptive parents. The study utilized a web-based questionnaire to collect demographic information of the participants. The questionnaire linked participants to an online version of the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale where cultural competence variables were measured.

The use of Internet assisted applications allowed for the participation of individuals over a large geographic region at their own convenience. It is believed that the response rate was increased by the ease of participation through an Internet link, as opposed to tradition paper and pencil questionnaires that require postage and mailing.

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional design to collect data from participants at different time periods from awaiting adoption to experienced adoptive parent of 3 to 5 plus years on the variables of racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills, as defined by Vonk's (2001) scale.

In this study, all participants were administered the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale through an online link from adoption forum posts. The "number of years as an adoptive parent" variable was identified for each participant through an online questionnaire prior to administration of the scale. The frequency of responses to the cultural competence variables was then recorded to help determine the presence of a relationship to the "number of years as an adoptive parent" variable.

Research Hypotheses and Questions

The null hypothesis that was statistically evaluated suggested no significant increase in the cultural competence scores of the transracial adoptive parents assessed at each stage from awaiting adoption to adoptive parents of 3 to 5 plus years. The previously stated research questions remained constant. They were:

- Is there a difference in cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption?

- At what stages are these differences in cultural competence most significant?

Scope of the Study

The focus of this study remained within the parameter of evaluating the changes in those areas of cultural competence than are measured by the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale, particularly over the first five years of adoption. These specific areas are racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. Perhaps inferences can be made regarding other topics of interest, such as the experiences that brought about changes in cultural competence, though they were not specifically evaluated within this study.

Participants

Participants were transracial adoptive parents that were active members of an online transracial adoption forum at an adoption website. One parent per family was recruited for this study voluntarily through a post in the forum. After supplying a valid email address, the participants were sent an email link to an online questionnaire where they submitted demographic information and their responses to the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale items. See appendix B for a copy of the demographics questionnaire and appendix C for a copy of the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale.

Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

   Data were collected from participants across 27 states.
Of the 60 participants, 30.5% had been adoptive parents for
less than 1 year, 27.78% had been adoptive parents for 1–2
years, 27.78% had been adoptive parents for 3–5 years, and
13.89% had been adoptive parents for five years or more. One
hundred percent of those adoptive parents that participated in
this particular study identified their racial background as
White or Caucasian. However, the racial background of the
adoptive children varied. The largest racial group identified
for adoptive children was that of Black or African descent
with 70.3%. Hispanic and Latino children were represented at
10.8%, while Native American and American Indian children came
in at 2.7%, as did Asian and Pacific Islanders. Another 13.5%
of the parents identified their children as Other. Table 1
lists some demographic information of participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

n	%	n	%
Years as an adoptive Parent		**Race of Adopted Children**	
Less than 1 year	30.5%	African American	70.3%
1 to 2 years	27.78%	Latin American	10.8%
3 to 5 years	27.78%	Asian/Native American	2.7%
More than 5 years	13.89%	**Education of Adoptive Parents**	
Race of Adoptive Parent		Graduate School	36.1%
White	100%	4 Year College	22.2%
		High School	41.6%

When asked if participants had received any type of training or assessment regarding transracial adoption, 54.29% said yes. Most indicated that there were mandatory multicultural education classes provided through their adoption agencies. A few participants mentioned web seminars that they attended on their own prior to completing the adoption process.

In terms of family dynamics, 94.4% of those surveyed described their household as heterosexual, while 77.78% reported as married and living with spouse. Another 13.89% reported as never being married and 5.5% as unmarried and living with a partner. Educational background was also considered as a factor. The majority of participants at 36.11% answered as having completed graduate school, and 22.2% as having completed a four year college. The remaining percentage of participants identified themselves as having completed high school.

There was no information withheld by the researcher, and all participants were informed of the use and confidentiality of their responses prior to participation in the study. Participants were also asked to provide written consent for the use of their responses for the purpose of research via email.

Instrumentation

This study used the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale to measure the cultural competence of the participants at each stage of early transracial adoption.

Transracial parenting measure. The scale, created by Vonk (2001), is a multi-dimensional Likert-type *scale*

consisting of 36 items. The scale is supposed to measure

cultural competence among *transracial* adoptive (TRA) parents

in the areas of Multicultural Planning (MP) which refers to

the creation of avenues for the child to learn about and

participate in his or her culture of birth; Multicultural

Planning with Contact (MPWC) which refers to participation in

child's birth culture that includes contact with children and

adults of the relevant culture; Multicultural Planning with

Integration (MPWI) which refers to providing a living

environment for the child that includes people both of the

birth and adoptive cultures; Racial Awareness (RA) which

refers to parents' awareness of how race, ethnicity, culture,

language, and related power status affects their own and their

children's lives; Survival Skills (SS) which refers to the

recognition of the need of adoptive parents to prepare their

children to successfully cope with prejudice or

discrimination; and Negatively Scored Racial Awareness and

Survival Skills Items (NEG)(Vonk 2001).

Vonk had originally conceptualized MP as one construct.

However, the factor analysis that was conducted indicated that

there may be "levels" of MP, having to do with the amount of contact the family has with people of the child's birth culture (E. Vonk, personal communication, February 10, 2006).

The Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale was developed and refined through Vonk's theory of cultural competence and feedback from transracial adoption experts. A cross-sectional design was used to validate the scale using a national sample of 1,411 transracial adoptive parents. Each parent completed the original 53-item scale and three other instruments, which were used to examine criterion and construct validity. After a preliminary factor analysis of the 53-item scale, the authors found 36 of the items valid in their assessment of the six factors. The 36-item scale had a reliability of 0.91 (Cronbach's alpha). Concurrent and discriminant validity were supported as well. It was concluded that the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale holds is a sound instrument with which to measure cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents.

Demographic data measure. Demographic information of the participants was collected through the implementation of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather information relevant to the description of adoptive

parents who have adopted children outside of their own race and/or culture. Request for demographic information include such factors as race, cultural influences, economic status, family dynamics, parenting behaviors, and beliefs that could have an impact on cultural competence.

Procedure

Data collection. Responses were collected from participants over the course of four weeks. A series of questions regarding the demographic information of the participants was published to a survey hosting website prior to any contact with the perspective participants. A hyperlink to the 36-item Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale was also created at the end of the questionnaire for ease of transition into the assessment. Once consent was received from the participants, they were each sent a link to the questionnaire and online scale.

Data analysis. The data were analyzed via independent Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). In such analysis the independent variables were the three Adoptive Stages: less than one to 2 years, 3 to 5 years, and more than 5 years. The Transracial Adoptive parenting Scale (TAPS) provided the three

dependent variables (Racial Awareness, Multicultural Planning, and Survival Skills subscales).

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the progression

of cultural competence in transracial adoptive parents by

investigating sample groups of transracial adoptive parents at

various stages of the first five years of the adoption

process. This chapter addresses two concerns: whether there

is a difference in cultural competence among transracial

adoptive parents at different stages of adoption, and which

area of cultural competence undergoes the most change from one

stage to the next.

To determine the differences in cultural competence

scores, the Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale was

administered to groups of transracial adoptive parents at

varying stages of the adoption process. The scale consists of

36 items, each directly related to one of the areas of

cultural competence. As stated earlier, these areas are

racial awareness, which refers to parents' awareness of how

ethnicity, race, language, and culture affect their own and

their children's lives; multicultural planning, which refers

to the creation and acceptance of avenues for the child to learn about and participate in his or her own birth culture; and survival skills which refers to the recognition of the need to prepare children to successfully cope with racial prejudice and/or discrimination. There was also a demographic survey given to participants to determine varying characteristics of the population sample.

Research Questions and Associated Hypotheses

As previously stated, the null hypothesis that was statistically evaluated is that there is no significant increase in the cultural competence scores of the transracial adoptive parents assessed at each stage from awaiting adoption to adoptive parents of 3 to 5 plus years. The research questions are:

- Are there differences in cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption?

- At what stages are these differences in cultural competence most significant?

Analysis of Data

The first research question that was evaluated inquired as to whether there is a difference in cultural competence

among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption. In order to measure cultural competence, the Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale was administered to each participant. For the purpose of this study, the four previously mentioned groups of adoptive parents according to duration of parenting, were categorized into three stages of adoption; those of less and one year to two years, those of 3 to 5 years, and those of 5 plus years. The scale was then scored on the three areas being tested (Racial Awareness, Multicultural Planning, and Survival Skills). The average scale scores were then computed for the two stages of adoptive parenting, and analyzed via independent Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). In this analysis the independent variables were the two adoptive stages and the dependent variables were the three areas of Cultural Competence that were measured.

Results by Cultural Competence Area

  Multicultural planning. Multicultural Planning (MP) refers to the creation of avenues for the child to learn about and participate in his or her culture of birth. According to Vonk (2001), this area of cultural competence is measured by assessing the adoptive parent's willingness to participation in the child's birth culture, which includes contact with children and adults of the relevant culture. This area is also concerned with the extent to which the parent provides a

living environment for the child that includes people both of
the birth and adoptive cultures.

Table 2

Mean Scores for Multicultural Planning

Adoption Stage	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Less than 1 to 2 years	68.3	3.81	20
3 to 5 years	72.5	5.43	20
More than 5 years	75.75	6.33	20

Table 2 lists the mean scores in the cultural competence
area of multicultural planning of adoptive parents at less
than 1 to 2 years, 3 to 5 years, and more than 5 years.
Participants could receive raw scores for this subscale within
a range of 13 to 78 points using the 6 point scale. Notice
that the mean score for the adoption stage of more than 5
years is higher than that of the adoption stage of 3 to 5

years. Means for both stages are higher than that of the
stage less than 1 to 2 years.

As predicted, this suggests that in this particular area,
cultural competence changes with progression through the
adoption stages. As for the significance of this change, in
the area of multicultural planning, the test of variance in
cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents at
different stages of adoption was statistically significant, F
(2,57)=9.95, p =0.001, reaching the specified .05 significance
level.

Racial Awareness. Racial Awareness (RA) refers to parents'
awareness of how race, ethnicity, culture, language, and
related power status affects their own and their children's
lives (Vonk 2001). This area includes an adoptive parent's
sensitivity to issues such as racism and prejudices that they
and their children may face.

Table 3

Mean Scores for Racial Awareness

Adoption Stage	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Less than 1 to 2 years	52.45	6.28	20
3 to 5 years	55.90	5.43	20
More than 5 years	58.30	6.37	20

Table 3 lists the mean scores in the cultural competence area of racial awareness of adoptive parents at the adoption stages of less than 1 to 2 years of, 3 to 5 years, and more than 5 years. Participants could receive raw scores for this subscale within a range of 11 to 66 points using the 6 point scale. Once again, the mean score for the adoption stage of more than 5 years is higher than that of the adoption stage of 3 to 5 years. Additionally, for both stages have means that are higher than that of the stage less than 1 to 2 years.

These results suggest that racial awareness also changes with progression through the adoption stages. Again, in the area of racial awareness, the test of variance in cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption was statistically significant, *F* (2/57)=4.73, *p* =0.012, reaching the specified .05 significance level.

Survival Skills. The cultural competence area of Survival Skills (SS) refers to the recognition of the need of adoptive parents to prepare their children to successfully cope with prejudice or discrimination (Vonk 2001). This area relates to the parent's sense of the importance of teaching their children about racism and how to effectively handle it.

Table 4

Mean Scores for Survival Skills

Adoption Stage	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Less than 1 to 2 years	57.85	8.17	20
3 to 5 years	52.1	10.75	20
More than 5 years	60.05	7.97	20

In our final test, as shown in Table 4, the mean scores in the cultural competence area of survival skills of adoptive parents at the adoption stages of less than 1 to 2 years of, 3 to 5 years, and more than 5 years are compared. Participants could receive raw scores for this subscale within a range of 12 to 72 points using the 6 point scale. Similar to the previous two tests, the mean score for the adoption stage of more than 5 years is higher than that of the adoption stage of 3 to 5 years. However, in this instance, the mean score for adoptive parents of less than 1 to 2 years is higher than that

of adoptive parents of 3 to 5 years. Although a directional change in the progression of survival skills across the stages may not be inferred, the test of variance in cultural competence of survival skills among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption was statistically significant, F (2/57)=4.11, p =0.021, reaching the specified .05 significance level.

Follow-up Test Results

The second research question that was evaluated inquired as to which of the specified stages of adoption are differences in cultural competence most significant. A Tukey follow-up test was used to determine the location of the differences previously noted. These comparisons indicated that there were significant differences from the 1 to 2 years adoption stages to the 5 years or more stage across all three areas of cultural competence, with the most dramatic difference appearing to be in the multicultural planning area. Table 5 shows the results calculated by the Tukey follow up test.

Table 5

Tukey Follow-up Test Comparisons

Comparisons for Multicultural Planning
Q1 (less than 1 yr – 5 or more yrs) = 3.56 (null rejected)
Q2 (less than 1 yr – 3 to 5 yrs) = 1.55 (null retained)
Q3 (3 to 5 yrs – 5 or more yrs) = 2.00 (null retained)
Comparisons for Racial Awareness
Q1 (less than 1 yr – 5 or more yrs) = 4.33 (null rejected)
Q2 (less than 1 yr – 3 to 5 yrs) = 1.77 (null retained)
Q3 (3 to 5 yrs – 5 or more yrs) = 2.55 (null retained)
Comparisons for Survival Skills
Q1 (less than 1 yr – 5 or more yrs) = 3.93 (null rejected)
Q2 (less than 1 yr – 3 to 5 yrs) = 1.08 (null retained)
Q3 (3 to 5 yrs – 5 or more yrs) = 2.84 (null retained)

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the cultural competence of transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption. This is important because past research has shown the cultural competence of the adoptive parents to be a very influential factor in the cultural identity development of transracially adopted children (Baden 2002). In recent years, the number of transracial adoptions within the United States has increased dramatically (Hall 2002).

In an effort to determine the differences cultural competence, the study used a cross-sectional design to collect data from participants at different time periods from awaiting adoption to experienced adoptive parent of 3 to 5 plus years on the variables of racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills, as defined by Vonk's (2001) scale.

The study focused on evaluating null hypothesis stating that there is no significant increase in the cultural competence scores of the transracial adoptive parents assessed at each stage from awaiting adoption to adoptive parents of 3

to 5 plus years. As stated in Chapter 4, the research

questions are:

- Are there differences in cultural competence among

  transracial adoptive parents at different stages of

  adoption?

- At what stages are these differences in cultural

  competence most significant?

Findings

To determine whether there was a change in cultural

competence in the three areas specified, the Transracial

Adoptive Parenting Scale was administered to participants at

the three identified adoption stages. The scale was then

scored on the three areas being tested (Racial Awareness,

Multicultural Planning, and Survival Skills) according to the

Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale scoring guide. Scale

scores were then analyzed within the three areas of cultural

competence separately via independent Analyses of Variance

(ANOVA). In each analysis the independent variables were the

adoptive stages and the dependent variables were the areas of

cultural competence.

Results of the present study show that there are

significant differences in the cultural competence of

transracial adoptive parents, from 1 year of adoption to 5 years or more. Cultural competence was described earlier as a process that comes as a result of life experience and encounters that make an individual aware of the many cultural groups around them (Vonk 2001). Naturally each experience brings about a new racial and cultural awareness, thus creating an increase in cultural competence. Transracial adoptive parents will face new challenges and experiences as they relate to racial differences as their children grow and become more acquainted with the world around them. In other words, as the transracially adoptive family advances through the years, the more racial and cultural encounters they will experience.

Revisiting Baden and Steward's Cultural Identity Development Model (1995), it is explained that the cultural competence of transracial adoptive parents has a significant impact on the healthy cultural identity development of adoptees. To expand upon this idea, it can be deduced from the present study that cultural competence increases significantly throughout the first five years of adoption. Both Baden and Steward's Cultural Identity Development Model and Cross' Model of Nigrescence identify encounter stages, or stages of change

in comfort level with race, that determine progression in identity development. These theories indicate these that these changes or encounters take place within the same time span as the present study indicates the increase in cultural competence, particularly in cases where the child is adopted at birth or in early childhood.

The study also evaluated the significance of these differences from each of the three cultural competence areas to the next, to determine where the most dramatic differences take place. The progression of stages from 1 to 2 years to 5 or more years showed significant differences in cultural competence. The area of cultural competence that appeared to have the most significant difference was that of Multicultural Planning. The differences in multicultural planning can be explained by continued acquisition of multicultural knowledge and acceptance. As transracial adoptive parents progress through the stages, they continuously become more racially aware, and thus more sensitive in this area (Vonk 2001).

In the area of Survival Skills, findings were less dramatic and non-linear. As stated earlier, Survival skills refer to the recognition of the need of adoptive parents to prepare their children to successfully cope with prejudice or

discrimination (Vonk 2001). The differences in this area, especially the seemingly multi-directional differences from one stage to the next, can be explained by the same theory of life experiences altering cultural competence. It is important to note that the encounters that are experienced by the adopted children would also create different culturally sensitive situations, causing differing reaction from protective parents at different times.

Results in this area support the idea that the adoptive parents' sensitivity to the need for preparation for racial issues fluctuates across the stages, neither increasing nor decreasing. For example, childhood experiences such as the first day of school may warrant a more sensitive approach to coping with racial differences than would choosing a daycare, as school aged children have become more racially aware. On the other hand, parents of a middle school student may be more proactive in preparing their child to cope with racial intolerance at such an impressionable age, than would the parent of an older child who has developed his own coping mechanisms through his own life experiences.

Limitations of the Study

As in most research, the present had have limitations
that affected how it can be generalized to the entire
population. The first of these limitations was geographical
differences. Participants for this study consisted mostly of
transracial adoptive parents within the United States who
referred to themselves as belonging to middle class families
and identified their racial background as White or Caucasian.
International adoptive families and families of different
racial and socioeconomic backgrounds may have different views
and experiences that may alter their responses.

Secondly, the participants were recruited from online
forums for transracial adoptive parents seeking support and
information. This most likely means that these individuals
were previously informed and made investigations in the area
of adoptee identity development, and may already be biased
toward the need for cultural competence. This may also have
tempted the participants to respond the in way they thought
they should respond to questions rather than with how they
honestly felt.

Thirdly, the use of only one measurement can be a
limitation of this study as well. Presently, there has not

been another instrument located that focuses specifically on the measurement of the cultural competence of transracial adoptive parents, though there are many that focus on the cultural development of adoptees. Although validity and reliability information are provided for the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale, finding and using a second instrument may help to validate results in future research.

Implications for Practice and Training

This study pointed out that it is not as common as previously believed for adoption agencies to provide counseling and continued education in cultural competence to adoptive parents who are seeking to adopt outside of their race. Many participants noted seeking education for themselves before or after the adoption process.

One major implication that can be derived from this information is the need for multicultural training as a prerequisite to completing transracial adoptions. This study provides evidence that the demand for more training and counseling services in areas of cultural competence is present among potential transracial adoptive parents, but the opportunities in many cases aren't being offered. It is believed that if agencies began to not only offer, but make

mandatory cultural competence training prior to adoptions, the progression of cultural competence would take place much more rapidly.

It is also recommended that agency professionals participate in multicultural planning and racial awareness training. It is very important for this group to be knowledgeable about cultural competence and its impact on cultural identity development of transracial adoptees, so that they are better equipped to provide the needed support. There should be legislature put into place requiring this training and the distribution of resources in cultural competence that available to this population. Another implication for individual transracial adoptive families to consider would be to seek continuous education and/or counseling throughout the development of the child. This is because, just as noted by the results, different stages of life bring about different life experiences. Each new encounter a child experiences can affect negatively racial awareness and even racial tolerance when the proper guidance is not sought. In order to provide this much needed guidance, parents must be culturally competent themselves.

Recommendations for Future Research

Some suggestions for future research may include studying effective counseling strategies and techniques for working with transracial adoptive children and their families, and evaluating the relevance of related racial and cultural identity development theories in more detail. The findings of this research are important for understanding the challenges of identity development for transracially adopted children and how these challenges can be magnified by a lack of multicultural education and planning on the part of adoptive parents.

Particularly, there should also be more research in this area as it relates to populations that were not represented by the present sample of participants. As stated earlier, this study was limited to participants who identified themselves as middle-class Caucasian Americans. The study also focused only on domestic adoptions. A larger scale study to include participants of varied ethnicity, nationality, and socio-economic status, as well as those who adopted internationally would have more easily generalized results.

Continued investigation into how cultural competence is reached will assist adoption agencies and other public service

providers in enhancing social and counseling services that may

be available to the parents and for the children as they grow

up.

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Appendices

Informed Consent Form

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: The Evolution of Cultural Competence in Transracial Adoptive Parents

Principal Investigator: Latoria S.Fleming   Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Stanley Baker

You are invited to participate in a study of the changes in the cultural competence of transracial adoptive parents over the first five years of adoption**.** Cultural competence can be viewed as a process that comes as a result of life experience and encounters that make individuals aware of the many cultural groups around them. We hope to learn whether there is a difference in cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents at different stages of adoption, and in what areas of cultural competence do most changes take place from one stage to the next.

If you decide to participate, you will be forwarded through a hyperlink at the bottom of this page to a demographic information questionnaire followed by a 36-item parenting scale. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and scale.

Request for demographic information does include such factors as economic status, parenting behaviors, and beliefs that could have an impact on cultural competence.
Both the questionnaire and parenting scale are anonymous. Disclosure of all demographic information requested is optional.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Any information deemed necessary for disclosure will be shared only with the Counselor Education Department at North Carolina State University at Raleigh in Raleigh, NC.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Latoria Fleming, at email address: lsflemin@unity.ncsu.edu. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. David Kaber, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-3086) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148).

Please print a copy of this form for your records.
_____

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. By clicking the link below marked "I choose to participate in this study" you are indicating that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Demographics Questionnaire

1. State in which you currently live:

2. How long have you been an adoptive parent?

   ☐ Less than 1 year   ☐ 1-2 Years

   ☐ 3-5 years   ☐ 5 years or more

3. Have you received any type of training or assessment in regard to transracial adoption?

   If Yes, please explain:

4. What is your role in the family?

   ☐ Adoptive Mother

   ☐ Adoptive Father

6. What is your current marital/partner status?

   ☐ Never married   ☐ Married, living with spouse

   ☐ Married but separated   ☐ Living with partner, unmarried

   ☐ Single - divorced   ☐ Single - Widowed

7. What would most closely describe your household's sexual orientation?

   ☐ Heterosexual   ☐ Gay/Lesbian

8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

   ☐ Grade school   ☐ High school or GED

   ☐ Vocational school   ☐ Junior/community college

   ☐ Four-year college   ☐ Graduate school

9. What is the highest level of education that you or your spouse has completed?

☐ Grade School   ☐ High school or GED

☐ Vocational school   ☐ Junior/community college

☐ Four-year college   ☐ Graduate school

10. Please indicate the racial or ethnic background of you, your spouse or partner, and your adoptive child.
    (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native American or American Indian	White or Caucasian	Other
You	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your spouse or partner	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your adoptive child	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. To what extent are the following groups represented
    in your neighborhood?

	None	A few	Many
The largest group Asian or Pacific Islander	☐	☐	☐
Black or African American	☐	☐	☐
Hispanic or Latino	☐	☐	☐
Native American or American Indian	☐	☐	☐
White or Caucasian	☐	☐	☐
Biracial or multiracial	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐

Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale

	How Strongly do you agree with the following statements	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I want to help my child establish relationships with children from his or her birth culture.						
2.	It is a high priority for me to encourage my child to seek support and advice from adults of his or her race about coping with prejudice.						
3.	Paying no attention to racial differences between my child and myself makes me a better parent.						
4.	It is a high priority to seek out service providers in my community, such as doctors or dentists, who are of my child's race or ethnicity.						
5.	I need to teach my child a variety of coping strategies from which to choose when faced with prejudice or bias.						
6.	I need to teach my child with opportunities to learn the history of the people of his or her race is a high priority.						
7.	I feel I must provide my child with opportunities to learn the language or dialect of his or her birth culture.						
8.	It is very important to wait for my child to indicate that race is an issue for him or her before initiating discussion on the topic.						
9.	Helping my child feel a sense of belonging within a community of people from his or her birth culture makes me a better parent.						
10.	I want to help my child establish relationships with adults from his or her birth culture.						
11.	I think that young children do not notice racial differences unless adults point them out.						
12.	I think it is very important to educate my child about the realities of prejudice, bias, and discrimination.						
13.	I know that prejudice and discrimination exist, but I believe there are more important things about which to teach my child.						
14.	It is very important to include traditions from my child's birth culture, such as ethnic holidays, in my family celebrations.						
15.	Awareness of my feelings and attitudes about my child's birth culture and race is crucial.						
16.	Examination of my motivation for adopting a child of a different race or culture is very important.						
17.	It is very important to me to provide opportunities for my child to visit his or her community or country of birth.						
18.	I think that coping with prejudice or racism is much the same as coping with other problems.						
19.	Helping my child feel pride in his or her racial heritage is a high priority.						
20.	I believe that I can prevent problems related to racial heritage is a high priority.						
21.	I do not believe that racial and cultural differences create significant additional parental responsibilities.						
22.	It is very important for me to examine my feelings about interracial dating and marriage.						

23.	Books, toys, and dolls that reflect the race of my child are very important for my family.						
24.	It is very important that I rely primarily on my own prior experiences when helping my child cope with related teasing or prejudice.						
25.	It is crucial that I place my child in multicultural schools.						
26.	I believe that it matters little what others think about my child's race as long as I love him or her.						
27.	I believe it is very important that I prepare my child to recognize racism.						
28.	I want to provide my child with opportunities to appreciate the fine arts, such as music and dance, of his or her birth culture.						
29.	Seeking support and advice from adults or parents of my child's race about dealing with prejudice is a high priority.						
30.	I believe that my child and I will make too much of racism if we develop sensitivity to it.						
31.	I want my family to live in an integrated neighborhood with neighbors who reflect the race of my child.						
32.	It is very important for me to develop friendships with families and individuals of my child's heritage.						
33.	I think it is best to simply ignore insensitive remarks from strangers about my child.						
34.	It is important for me to remember that others may view my family as "different".						
35.	I believe that discussions of racial differences with my child may do more harm than good.						
36.	Providing my child with opportunities to learn values and traditions of his or her birth culture is a high priority.						