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Transracial Adoptees' Thoughts on Culturally Competent Parenting

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Running head: CULTURALLY COMPETENT PARENTING

Transracial Adoptees' Thoughts on Culturally Competent Parenting

by

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DISSERTATION

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**TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES' THOUGHTS ON
CULTURALLY COMPETENT PARENTING**

presented on July 6, 2017

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Abstract

Transracial adoption, the adoption of a child of a different race than those of the adoptive parents, occurs in approximately 40% of all adoptions. While transracial adoption alone is not sufficient to cause mental health concerns, it does pose a series of unique challenges that can impact self-esteem, racial identity, and sense of belonging in adoptees. Much of the research on adoption focuses on adoptive parents, collecting quantitative data from adoptees, and mental health professionals' views of adoptees' experiences. This study elicited feedback from adult transracial adoptees on Vonk's 2001 model of culturally competent parenting. Data were interpreted using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze semi-structured interviews of adult adoptees who identify as Black, Biracial, or African-American and had been adopted by White parents. This dissertation contains a problem statement, conceptual framework describing Vonk's three-part model, methodology, methods, and a description of the analysis conducted using IPA. The study found that while Vonk's model is a good starting point, there are other aspects to the complex experience of being a transracial adoptee that must also be addressed.

Keywords: adoption, transracial adoption, parenting, cultural competence

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Transracial Adoptees' Thoughts on Culturally Competent Parenting

Over 250,000 adoptions have occurred within the United States since 1999 (U.S. Department of State, 2013). While numbers surrounding transracial adoption change each year, on average, 40% of adoptions today are transracial, with 11% of all adoptions being that of a White parent adopting an African American child. This data includes both domestic and international adoption. Currently, 32% of all children in foster care are Black, with the percentage increasing up to 50% certain states (Guttmacher Institute, 2013). Despite more recent trends toward kinship placements of infants and children, many children of color are still left awaiting permanency. And although transracial adoptive families may face additional social and developmental challenges, White parents raising Black children remain an aspect of contemporary permanency planning.

Problem Statement

Transracial adoption of infants and children began in the 1940s, and continues through the present day. Notably, however, the voices of transracial adoptees have seldom been heard in the psychological literature; in particular, we know very little about how they look back on the parenting practices in their adoptive homes. In contrast, social workers, adoptive parents, and psychologists are often called upon for interviews and research; lawmakers have created laws and established placement policies almost entirely without the input of transracial adoptees. In recent years, adoptees have taken to blogs, memoirs, or social media to express their thoughts; however, they remain significantly underrepresented in the academic literature on transracial adoption. Even when research focuses on how adoptees are adjusting, often the measure of adjustment is parental report; few of the published studies ask the adoptees themselves.

It is well supported in the research literature that, while transracial adoption in and of itself is not enough to create damage or pathology, it does present a unique set of challenges.

Research findings on the impact of transracial adoption suggest conflicting evidence. Some studies show that Black adoptees struggle in transracial adoption; others appear to find that transracial adoptees are just as well adjusted as White counterparts. Given that various studies measure struggle and adjustment differently, it becomes difficult to draw a single conclusion about the impact of transracial adoption. And while research to date is certainly inconclusive, the documented challenges for transracial adoptees are sufficient for requiring further inquiry.

Greater parental knowledge and sensitivity about race and culture appears to be associated with better outcomes for families. The way parents respond to the unique challenges of transracial adoption can help or hinder the development of their children. Importantly, adoptive parents are not always given a great deal of information on how to raise a child of another race; only 50% of adoption agencies required parents attend education sessions on transracial adoption based on a 2003 study by Vonk and Angaran. In recent years, research on adoption has highlighted the importance of sensitivity to “culturally competent parenting” (e.g., Coakley & Buehler, 2008). However, there are few theoretical models that might offer a comprehensive framework underpinning such training. One thoughtful example is Vonk’s (2001) three-part model for culturally competent parenting. Although parent trainings using this model have been successful (e.g., Vonk & Angaran, 2001), adoptees have not had the opportunity to review and publically comment on it—or on culturally competent parenting more generally.

Definitions of Key Terminology

Transracial Adoption: This term refers to an adoption where the race of the child differs the adoptive parents or parent. For the purposes of this study, *transracial adoptee* is referring to someone who identifies as African American/Black/Biracial/Part of the African diaspora, and *parent* is referring to a White/Caucasian parent. It is important to note that transracial adoption happens between parents and children of all races, however for linguistic simplicity, I am using

transracial adoptee and parent in the ways described above.

Intersecting Identities: This term refers to the overlap of various identities an individual may hold, including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender identity, disability status, religion, or immigration. These identities impact discrimination, opportunities, and access to rights.

Adoption Triad: This term is used to explain the three groups of people that are part of an adoption: birth/first/biological parents (three terms often used), adoptees, and adoptive parents.

Background and Context of White Parents Adopting Black Children

Transracial adoption is defined as a child adopted by parents who are of a different race (Smith, Jacobson, & Juárez, 2011). The first documented case of transracial adoption occurred in 1944, when the Johnstons, a White family from Washington, accepted the foster placement of a Black infant named Pam (Smith et al., 2011). The Johnstons would later adopt Pam against the advice of their social worker in what is thought to be one of the first instances of transracial adoption. In the 1950s, a campaign promoted the adoption of African American children, and many prospective White parents applied. Unfortunately, White families who adopted Black children during this time often faced harassment or ridicule (Smith et al., 2011).

Transracial adoption was further complicated by a 1972 statement by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), which called transracial adoption “a form of race and cultural genocide” (Lee, 2003, p. 712) and stated that, “Black children in White homes are cut off from the healthy development of themselves as Black people” (p. 712). Despite this strong statement against White parents raising Black children, over 12,000 transracial adoptions were recorded from 1960-1976 (Silverman, 1993). This perspective was influential, however; in 1976, a little over 1,000 transracial adoptions were recorded, and the numbers continued to

decrease for the next decade (Silverman, 1993). By 1988 the NABSW revised its statement on transracial adoptions, concluding, “children should not have their adoptions delayed when adoptive parents of other ethnic or cultural groups are available” (Silverman, 1993).

Subsequently, in 1994, the Multiethnic Placement Act was passed by Congress, and it became illegal to discriminate in foster care or adoption placements (Alexander & Curtis, 1996).

Current Adoption Trends

Domestically, Americans adopt between 51,000 and 57,000 children per year, while internationally, adoptions hover around 7,000 adoptions per year mark (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [U.S. DHHS], 2014). Together, approximately 40% of all of these adoptions are transracial, according to the U.S. DHHS (2007). That means that approximately 23,200–25,600 transracial adoptions occur in any given year. To break down the data further, as of 2007, 84% of international adoptions, 28% of foster care adoptions, and 21% of private adoptions were transracial (U.S. DHHS, 2014).

There are several clear reasons for the recent increase in transracial adoption since it has become sanctioned and legal. There are more White families seeking to adopt healthy White babies than there are those babies available for adoption. One out of five White women either cannot conceive a biological child, or chooses not to (Smith et al., 2011). While countries allowing international adoption are constantly changing, many of the countries currently open to international adoption at the time of this dissertation are non-White countries as well.

Additionally, in 2011, Black women had the highest rate of unplanned pregnancies, more than double that of non-Hispanic White women (Finer & Zolna, 2016). Although Black or African American people were reported as 13.2 % of the population in 2014 (United States Census Bureau, 2014), as of 2015, 24% of children in foster care were Black (U.S. DHHS, 2015). This translates to large numbers of Black children needing a permanent home. In 2014, close to

10,000 Black children were adopted out of the foster care system (U.S. DHHS, 2015). Due to a convergence of interrelated factors that research and society must address, Black children are in need of families, and White parents are often available and willing to form these families.

Statement of Purpose

The current study aims to solicit input from transracial adoptees regarding M. Elizabeth Vonk's (2001) three-part model of parental cultural competence for transracial adoptees.

Transracial adoptees are in a unique position to provide valuable input on the strengths and limitations of this model. Their perspectives may allow for a fuller understanding of what parents of transracial adoptees must do to best support their children, and enhance strategies for parent training and education.

Rationale and Significance

Transracial adoptees face a unique set of circumstances as individuals of color raised in White families. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) looked at a number of studies on transracial adoption and summarized these data with three main conclusions:

1. Transracial adoption alone is not sufficient to produce psychological or social maladjustment in children.
2. There are unique challenges that accompany transracial adoption, and the way that parents handle such challenges can benefit or harm adoptees' development.
3. Independent of race, children who are in foster care have a number of risk factors that may lead to trouble post-adoption. Those children should be placed with families prepared to handle such challenges and provide opportunities for these children to reach their potential (DAI, 2008). One of the DAI's findings most salient to the investigation is that "studies that included qualitative methods find that many transracial adoptees report a struggle to fit in with peers, the

community in general, and sometimes their own families” (p. 23). Despite this observation, much of the qualitative information about the struggles of transracial adoption comes in the form of memoirs or anthologies by adoptees, and through theses and dissertations; their voices are seldom found in published academic research.

In one of a very few qualitative studies to date, Videal de Haymes and Simon (2003) discuss the unique situations faced by transracial adoptive families. They noted primary concerns identified by family members, supports that parents find helpful, and training components that should be developed. Interestingly, the researchers initially met with resistance from parents who were concerned that their words would be used to oppose transracial adoption. Adoptees and their parents pointed out that increased visibility is a unique aspect of transracial adoption. For example, one child said, “Sometimes it’s hard. It’s harder being noticed” (Videal de Haymes & Simon, 2003, p. 258). Child responses differed from parent responses and indicated that they had experienced racism in White schools or neighborhoods, and had concerns about fitting into their predominantly White communities. They also spoke of a general peer requirement to “choose” a racial identity, but did not tend to feel this pressure from parents. Other children’s responses showed distance from the Black community and included negative perceptions towards African Americans. Additionally, some of the children interviewed sometimes felt unsupported by parents who tried to minimize racial incidents, or to avoid discussions of race.

Since transracial adoptees have different experiences than same-race adoptees, it is helpful to hear from them to understand their experiences. More qualitative research that includes the voices of adult transracial adoptees provides information on their lived experiences of childhood would help adoptees, biological parents, adoptive parents, and those who work with various parts of the adoption triad. Transracial adoptees are also in a unique position to comment on Vonk’s (2001) current culturally competent parenting model, offering an essential perspective

for training and supporting White parents raising Black children.

Parenting Transracial Adoptees

When Black children are raised by Black parents, many aspects like handling racism, understanding history, and developing a positive sense of self, are inherently woven into family and community life. That is not the case for Black children being raised by White parents. Black transracial adoptees are surrounded by White “notions of beauty and privilege” as well as “knowledge, beliefs, experiences, interests, and histories associated with White people in the United States” (Smith et al., 2011, p. 9). Thus, White parents raising Black children must be deliberate in their ventures to “fend off the negative consequences of race while simultaneously developing a positive sense of self and history” (p. 10), as well as needing to deliberately help their children “develop a strong sense of Black self-actualization, community, and belonging” (p. 9). Transracial adoptees face unique challenges and the ways that parents handle these challenges can help or hinder their child’s development.

One method, called *culturally competent parenting*, is an approach designed to meet the specific and unique racial and cultural needs of transracial adoptees (Vonk, 2001). While acknowledging that there is no singular adoptee experience, culturally competent parenting prescribes a model containing some specific and intentional interventions that have been proven beneficial to both adoptees and their families. This model has three components: (a) racial awareness, (b) multicultural planning, and (c) survival skills (Vonk, 2001).

Racial awareness. Racial awareness is a person’s understanding of how “the variables of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and related power status operate in one’s own and other’s lives” (Vonk, 2001, p. 249). This is the aspect of culturally competent parenting most often discussed in the literature. It refers to an understanding of the history of systematic discrimination and oppression towards various groups, including the culture and/or country from

which a child is adopted. Additionally, understanding the history and culture of minority groups with which the child may identify are also part of developing racial awareness (Vonk, 2001).

In the racial awareness component, the starting point is for parents to look at their own race, culture, and ethnicity and the role it has played, as well as how it has impacted their values (Vonk, 2001). This is something that White members of society can avoid if they so choose, since they are members of the dominant culture. Being member of a dominant culture allows people to sidestep both the discussion, and the discomfort that often accompanies it, because they are less likely to be in situations that challenge their belief systems. However, if parents are going to be raising children who are not part of the dominant race, ethnicity, or culture, within this model such self-reflection is essential. Research supports the development of greater self-awareness in transracial adoption: parents who understand, accept and address their children's racial differences have children with fewer symptoms, and overall better mental health than parents who deny the differences of their adoptee (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994).

Another aspect of racial awareness is helping parents understand their own motivations for adopting a child of another race. Vonk (2001) suggests that parents should be adopting transracially because they believe they can meet the needs of a child who is Black, and not for other, perhaps more self-serving reasons. Such reflection is necessary because without due consideration, parents may unintentionally treat a child's birth culture with disdain out of unexplored feelings of cultural superiority (Vonk, 2001). In a similar vein, parents should be prepared to examine their attitudes and beliefs about their child's own race or culture, recognizing both positive and negative stereotypes. For example, the stereotype that young Black men are good at basketball is often seen as a positive stereotype, but it is still harmful. To support healthy development of identity, parents must understand and respect their child's race,

and the history and culture of that child's people both in the United States, and in their country of origin.

Racial awareness also requires awareness of the privilege that comes with being White and the distinct challenges facing children of color. Developmental benefits accrue to children whose parents are more aware of forms of racism and discrimination and understand how it will impact their child and family. For example, Black students are more likely to be disciplined in school, and more harshly, for the same offense when compared to White students (Gilliam, 2005). Black children are also perceived as older, and less innocent, than their White counterparts of the same age (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & Di Tomasso, 2014). Additionally, the experiences that a Caucasian father has with the police may be very different than those of his African-American teenage son (Vonk, 2001). Historically, the way that the two groups have been treated by police officers differs greatly. And, as has recently been demonstrated in numerous instances across the country, one group can often depend on the police for protection, and the other has had disproportionately high experiences of harassment and unfair treatment. Adoptive White parents must be cognizant of such disparities and understand their ramifications, for the safety and well-being—both physical and emotional—of their Black children.

Multicultural planning. The second component of cultural competence is multicultural planning. This refers to the ways in which a transracial adoptee can learn about his or her culture of birth (Vonk, 2001). This can include sharing relevant children's books, celebrating holidays, exposing children to same-race role models, living in diverse neighborhoods, attending culture camps, visiting a child's country of origin, or many other possible options (Vonk, 2001). Often "socialization in the culture of one's racial group is generally congruent with the racial make-up of the family" (Vonk, 2001, p. 251). This is not the case for transracial adoptees. A child who

lives in a primarily White area, attends a school where they are one of few ethnic or racial minorities, and attends a house of worship with little diversity, may have virtually no access to individuals from their birth culture or who share the same racial identity as the child (Vonk, 2001). This set of more restrictive experiences can be hugely detrimental to both racial socialization and development of self-identity.

The research literature suggests that it is particularly essential to have same race role models for transracial adoptees, especially if they live in heavily White areas (McGinnis, Livingston, Ryan & Howards, 2009). These observations are underscored by Feigelman's (2000) study showing that only 25% of transracial adoptees raised in racially mixed areas expressed discomfort with their appearance, while 51% of transracial adoptees living in predominantly White areas expressed discomfort.

Racial socialization (a component of multicultural planning) is further associated with increased child self-esteem and ethnic pride (Huh & Reid, 2000; Yoon, 2001). In several related studies, ethnic pride was found to be related to subjective well-being of transracial adoptees and served as a protective force against behavioral problems in children of color (e.g., Yoon, 2001). Notably, Yoon's 2001 study further found that there was a significant positive correlation between parent support of such racial socialization and perceived parental warmth, communication, and the adoptee's wellbeing. Racial socialization is associated with feelings of connectedness between parent and child, and decreases the experience of marginality in adoptive families (Mohanty, Keokse, & Sales, 2007). Finally, adoptees that identified their parents as supportive of racial socialization reported more positive feelings about themselves than adoptees that did not identify their parents as supportive in this way (Mohanty et al., 2007).

Racial planning requires an active role from adoptive parents. As one adoptive mother put it, "there is a list of what families can do, but tasks have to move into the family life so

exposure to the child's culture is more than a book on the coffee table" (Mason, 2007, p. 1). This is not to say that transracial adoptees must solely identify either with their culture of origin or the culture of their adoptive family. To suggest so is to pigeonhole the racial identity of a child, when studies have shown that racial identity can hold components of both identities (Steward & Baden, 1995). But the benefits of intentional practice can be lasting. For example, in one study, transracially adopted adults whose parents engaged in multicultural planning and supported cultural socialization perceived their parents as warmer and more affectionate (Mohanty et al., 2007). Similarly, the adoptees who received cultural socialization had greater feelings of belonging than those adoptees whose parents did not engage in cultural socialization (Mohanty et al., 2007).

Additionally, many transracial adoptees have spoken out about the need for multicultural planning, both in research literature and via social media and other platforms (Videal de Haymes & Simon, 2003). For example, in one qualitative study, Videal de Haymes and Simon spoke to 20 families who had adopted a child of another race. Fourteen of those children were African American. Numerous children indicated that they were subjected to name calling and racism in their predominantly White schools. Others raised concerns about their mostly White neighborhoods. One child stated "I would advise a family who wanted to adopt transracially to find out what the neighborhood is like.... make sure that people will not treat the kids as outcasts, but like normal children, which is what we are" (p. 260). Another child said, "If we lived in a different neighborhood, I'd feel more comfortable. People wouldn't ask so many questions or call me names. I feel a little more comfortable around people who are my color because I know they won't call me names" (p. 261). This study shows the astute observations of transracial adoptees ages 8 to 14, and highlights the importance of ongoing and thoughtful multicultural planning.

Survival skills. The final component of culturally competent parenting is survival skills. Survival skills prepare children of color to cope with racism and discrimination (Vonk, 2001). The Evan B Donaldson Institute's 2008 report calls survival skills "a key life skill for transracially adopted children" (p. 26). This process must be more deliberate for White parents raising Black children than for Black parents raising children who share their race (Butler-Sweet, 2011). If parents are racially aware, they will notice both the overt and subtle racism that their child faces. Like non-adopted Black children, Black adoptees report being subjected to both overt racism and subtle racial micro-aggressions (Smith et al., 2011). While children may be protected to some degree by White privilege when with their White family, these benefits may disappear as soon as the parents are no longer present.

In order to provide their Black children with survival skills, White parents have to openly talk about race and racism and cannot minimize their child's experience. There are specific survival skills that parents can teach their transracial adoptees. For example, parents can help their child externalizing racism by reminding them that racism is a result of someone else's own ignorance or hatred and does not indicate that anything is wrong with the child (Vonk, 2001). Additionally, parents can offer assistance to children who have experienced discrimination or racism, going to bat for the child until they have the emotional and developmental capacity to do so on their own (Vonk, 2001). Furthermore, parents must validate the experiences of the child when they face discrimination or racism instead of minimizing it. (Vonk, 2001) Finally, parents can help children practice responses to insensitive comments that others may make about their race, or the fact that children are clearly a different race from their parents. It is also important for parents to advocate effectively for their families when they hear racist comments, especially if these comments are made within earshot of the child.

Other Models of Parenting Transracial Adoptees

There are a number of parenting books written by professionals or adoptive parents that focus on parenting transracial adoptees. These books, while helpful, do not tend to have grounding in a theoretical background and instead offer helpful advice to White parents on talking to children about race, making connections within Black communities, or doing Black hair (e.g., Garlinghouse, 2012; Mullen, 2014). Comparable information developed by social workers, adoptees, or adoption agencies appears to be slightly more comprehensive. The most thorough guide I discovered is one that was created by the Iowa Foster & Adoptive Parents Association (n.d.). This comprehensive 48-page booklet is rich with information from various sources, including parents of color, transracial adoptees, and adoptive parents. The contents of the booklet include information on racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills, though they are not deemed that specifically. It also includes many resources, including, for example, how to find multicultural toys, specific resources for adopting children of specific races, and a list of medical and skin conditions unique to children of different races and ethnicities.

Racial Identity Development of Transracial Adoptees

While much thought has been given to how Black individuals form their racial identity, (e.g., Cross' Nigrescence Model, 1971; Janet Helms' Racial Identity Model, 1995; Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model, Sue & Sue, 2003), these were not created to encompass the unique experiences of transracial adoptees. However one model, initially created by Susan Harris O'Conner—a transracial adoptee herself—speaks to the racial development of transracial adoptees (Ung, Harris O'Connor, & Pillidge, 2012).

Harris O'Conner's model does not pathologize the inner turmoil that is common among transracial adoptees, but integrates “discussion of race, ethnicity, culture, power, and oppression

with the discussion of racial identity development” by using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model as a basis for her theory (Ung et al., 2012, p. 77). The ecological model allows for understanding of the impact of “power, oppression, and societal values on the development of the adopted person’s racial identity” (p. 77). Additionally, the model deemphasizes congruence, which frees adoptees from feeling like they have to choose between their birth and adoptive families. This model works to empower adoptees to create their own definition of their racial identity while also understanding what labels are imposed upon them, as well as making sense of “what they think, feel, and see” (p. 82). According to Harris O’Connor, there are five dimensions that make up someone’s racial identity: (a) genetic racial identity; (b) imposed racial identity; (c) cognitive racial identity; (d) visual racial identity; and, (e) feeling racial identity—along with several adoption-specific factors.

Genetic racial identity. Genetic racial identity consists of the biological traits associated with race such as skin color and hair texture (Ung et al., 2012). It is the genetic makeup of the individual. Unfortunately for adoptees, the genetic racial identity of a person is not always available information, which can “strip the transracially adopted person of a sense of legitimacy and authority about who they are as a racial being” (Ung et al., 2012, p. 78).

Imposed racial identity. Imposed racial identity is “the label given to an individual based on the perception of their race” (Ung et al., 2012, p. 79). This is not chosen by the adoptee, but instead is imposed upon them by others who perceive the adoptee’s race. Most often, imposed racial identity is not entirely accurate, or necessarily shared by the adoptee.

Cognitive racial identity. Cognitive racial identity is a conscious label describing what adoptees know about their racial identity. Cognitive racial identity is “comprised of what a person internalizes of their imposed identity integrated with what they know or do not know about their genetic racial identity” (Ung et al., 2012, p. 79).

Visual racial identity. Visual racial identity is simply the color that adoptees assign to their skin. Notably, visual racial identity is not always congruent with race.

Feeling elements of racial identity. Feeling elements of racial identity focus on the interplay between self and culture. Specifically, it references “one’s subjective experiences and perceptions of the values, beliefs, ritual, and language, which are embedded in racial and ethnic traditions that contribute to an internalized sense of self” (Ung et al., 2012, p. 80). Feeling elements of racial identity do not need to correspond to any other racial identity, including genetic identity.

Adoption-specific factors. Adoption-specific factors influence racial identity via Bronfenbrenner’s four systemic pathways: individual, family, community, and societal (Ung et al., 2012). Individuals are further influenced by organic factors like gender and personality and adoption-specific factors, like age at adoption and number of placements. Family factors include the racial and ethnic values that families internalize as well as how open families are to being shaped by the ethnicity, race, and culture of their adopted child. Community factors consist of the messages sent from peer groups and the neighborhood regarding adoption and race. The relationship between the adoptee and these systems is both reciprocal and interdependent, as the person “and his or her adoption environment shape one another, and the development of one’s racial identity” (Ung et al., 2012, p. 77). Societal factors include elements like adoption policy, media, race, and power.

Harris O’Connor’s (2012) excellent identity model is limited as it only focuses on one dimension: racial identity development. The general development of transracial adoptees—and how racial identity interacts with the broad range of individual experience in childhood has been the focus of very limited, inquiry, mostly conducted via quantitative research methods.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality “is an analytic tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how those intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege” (Association for Women’s Rights in Development, 2004, p. 1). The phrase is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw, a critical race theory scholar and one of the founders of the movement. Essentially, human beings live “multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operations of structures of power” (p. 2). Membership in multiple communities may lead to moments of privilege and oppression in tandem, depending on each identity. The point of intersectional analysis is to look at these multiple identities and understand the ways in which they impact a person’s experiences of discrimination and oppression. According to intersectional analysis, different identities should be recognized for “producing substantively distinct experiences” (p. 2) versus additive ones. Focusing on intersectional analysis will allow for a more thorough understanding of how converging identities impact transracial adoptees and how these converging identities impact “opportunities and access to rights, and to see how policies, programs, services, and laws” impacting one part of their lives are “inextricably linked to others” (p. 2). A way of understanding intersectionality is to ask questions about how people “actually live their lives” (p. 5), which is in line with the goals of qualitative research.

Intersectionality is essential to the understanding of the transracial adoptee’s experience because many hold intersecting identities that are not taken into account in the research and literature. Being African-American, adopted, and female is a vastly different experience than being African-American, adopted, and male, for example. In order to best serve transracial adoptees, this research addressed intersectionality in discussion with adoptees.

Quantitative Studies

To date, most relevant quantitative studies of transracial families focus on adjustment of adoptees, or some measurable form of adoptee self-esteem or identity.

Adjustment. A 1974 exploration by Grow and Shapiro found that 77% of the children in the 125 transracial families they studied “had adjusted successfully following their adoption by White families” (Alexander & Curtis, 1996, p. 225). Similarly, a 1987 study by Johnson, Shireman, and Watson similarly found that 73% of transracial adoptees had adjusted well, as compared to 80% of same-race adoptees. Silverman and Feigelman (1981) also compared White families who adopted Black children with White families who adopted White children. The Black children in this group were not as well-adjusted and were more likely to come from hostile environments prior to adoption than the White children. They were also more likely to be placed at an older age than White children. Thus, the researchers concluded that age at adoption, may have had a greater impact than race on adjustment. Notably, this study was based entirely on parental rating of child adjustment. It is thus unclear if the adoptees felt they had adjusted well. In general, findings from existing research suggest that a high percentage of transracial adoptees make successful adjustments, though perhaps they struggle more than their White counterparts, and especially if they are without safe and stable care for longer periods of time.

Adoptee self-esteem. McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, and Anderson (1982) found that after studying 60 transracial and monoracial adoptees, there was no difference in the range of self-esteem of those adopted by Black parents versus those adopted by White parents. Some Black children adopted by Black parents had high self-esteem, others had low self-esteem. The same went for Black children raised by White parents. However, children adopted by White parents who were living in racially diverse neighborhoods and attending diverse schools felt more positively about themselves than those who were raised by White parents who did not

attend to racial issues or make efforts to expose their children to Black role models. The children whose parents did not pay attention to race were more likely to have children who devalued or did not acknowledge a Black identity (McRoy et al., 1982).

Additionally, researchers posited that the quality of parenting could mitigate the challenges that transracial adoptees face. This supposition has been tested without a definitive finding. For example, one meta-analysis showed that in-race and transracial adoptees did not differ in self-esteem across 18 studies. However, the authors cautioned that only four of the studies more stringent design criteria; they concluded that they, therefore, could not draw firm conclusions (Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2007).

Indeed, two other related studies found that transracial adoptees raised in White communities had much poorer self-esteem; these children were twice as likely to struggle with their racial appearance when compared to transracial adoptees living in more diverse areas (Feigelman, 2000; Juffer, 2006). Thus it is plausible to conclude that self-esteem in adopted Black children may be affected by variables at all of Bronfenbrenner's ecological levels. Some ways in which this may manifest, for example, are school-family interaction after a racial incident or slur at school, diversity within the community, or overall attitudes and enforcement of laws about individuals of color in the child's town or state.

Adoptee identity. Shireman and Johnson's 1986 study compared African American children adopted by single parents, Caucasian families, and African American families at 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20 years of age. They used the Clark Doll Test, where children are presented with a Caucasian looking doll and an African American looking doll and asked questions associated with preferences (e.g., which doll they wanted to play with, which doll was nice, which was bad, etc.), exploring responses as markers of positive racial identity. Notably, this study found that African American children in Caucasian families had a more positive racial identity at age four

than those adopted by African American families. All subsequent tests showed that the children appeared to have the same level of positive racial identity. Later data looked at parent-reported problems, direct observation and projective testing, and standardized testing. The results stayed the same: the children all appeared to have excellent overall adjustment.

However, other research exploring the connection between racial identity and developmental challenge suggests that negative or confused racial identity in adoptees is associated with psychological and behavioral problems (Cederblad, Hook, Irhammar, & Mercke, 1999). Researchers conclude that parents must work to instill positive racial identities in their children for the benefit of the child. The study does not clarify reasons why these children had a more positive racial identity. It is possible that these parents who adopted a child of another race worked particularly hard to instill a positive racial identity in their child during the early years or there may be another explanation.

In a related mixed methods study (McRoy et al., 1982), researchers looked at the difference between Black children adopted by Black families and Black children adopted by White families. Results suggest that transracially adopted children who were raised in families that accepted their child's Black identity and lived in diverse areas were more likely to raise children who felt positively about their Black identity. Notably, White parents in this study who dismissed race had children who devalued or did not acknowledge a Black identity, regardless of where they lived. Black children who were not raised in diverse areas and had no contact with other Black people held mostly negative stereotypes about other Black people. The children and families that lived in diverse areas and that had regular contact with people of color had more positive racial feelings (McRoy et al., 1982). Thus, it appears that the interaction across Bronfenbrenner's levels is complex; perhaps not surprisingly, transracially adopted children with supportive parents raised in diverse communities may have the best developmental outcomes.

Parenting factors. Informed and intentional parenting styles promote self-esteem and positive racial identity; further, specific parental attention to cultural competence may also favorably affect the parent/child relationship. For example, a 2007 study by Mohanty et al. found that Asian American adoptees who received parental support for cultural socialization perceived their parents as warmer and more affectionate. These adoptees also felt a greater sense of belonging than those who did not receive parental support for cultural socialization. This seems to indicate that it would also benefit parents to be culturally competent, as children whose parents display the above traits view their parents as warmer, more affectionate, and feel a greater sense of belonging.

Qualitative/Voiced Experience

In one of the few qualitative longitudinal studies to date, Simon and Altstein (2000) conducted a number of interviews with adoptive families and their children of different races, at four separate times over a twenty-year period. The study began in 1971–1972 with researchers interviewing 204 parents of transracial adoptees and 366 adoptees. Seven years later, in 1979, 133 parents of the adoptees were interviewed again. In the fall of 1983 and winter of 1984, 88 families (including both adoptees and their parents this time) were again interviewed. In 1991, 76 families agreed to be interviewed one last time, four of which had high school-aged children who were not interviewed. Though longitudinal in design, this study did not specify the ages of the involved children over time; clearly many were young adults by the final round of data collection.

During the 1983–84 phase, adoptees and biological children were asked to complete a self-esteem scale. On this measure, Black adoptees did not differ significantly from non-Black adoptees, nor did they differ from White children raised in their biological families or White adoptees (Simon & Altstein, 2000). However, when asked about their perceptions of their

relationship with their parents, the transracial adoptees had a more distant relationship with their parents during adolescence than did their White siblings (Simon & Altstein, 2000). When asked about the hardship of being a different race than their parents, 24% cited the teen years as being the hardest time, 22% felt that it was hardest to look different than their parents during elementary school, and 8% said they struggled in both childhood and adolescence. They also reported trouble with people of their own race; 29% stating that they experienced people of their own race acting negatively or very negatively towards them during adolescence. One third of the adoptees felt that being transracially adopted had a positive impact on their self-image, another third felt it had no impact, and the last third wasn't sure what effect adoption had on their self-image. Seven percent of the adoptees said they would have preferred to have been adopted by a family of their race; 67% said they did not feel it was necessary to be raised in a family of their own race.

Of particular relevance to my dissertation project, when asked to give advice to parents raising a child of a different race, 91% of adoptee advised that parents needed to be sensitive towards racial issues; 9% advised that White parents not raise a child of another race. Some adoptees felt cheated by being raised by White people. For example, one adoptee said, "I feel that I missed out on Black culture. Make sure that they have the influence of Blacks in their lives ... It's a must—otherwise you are cheating them out of something valuable" (Simon & Altstein, 2000, p. 77). These themes of racial sensitivity and awareness are consistent with results from comparable qualitative studies.

There are also several relevant qualitative explorations of the benefits of racial socialization within Black families raising biological children. One such study, for example, concludes that, "racial socialization within the family unit is the most significant cushion against the negative impact that racism has on Black identity" (Butler-Sweet, 2011, p. 749).

Additionally, hearing positive racial messages from Black parents is positively associated with both self-esteem and sense of positive Black identity (Butler-Sweet, 2011).

Although the experience of adoptees in other racial and ethnic groups may be different than that of African-American children, it's notable that qualitative research of Asian adoptees showed that these adoptees appeared to have more mixed experiences regarding parental responses, experiences of discrimination, and questions of identity than their Black adopted peers. Many participants were the only Asian people in the communities where they were raised, and faced racial bias as a result. Participants spoke of experiences of discrimination including the assumption that they spoke Asian languages, being mistaken for wait staff while out to dinner with family members, or females being asked if they were their father's much younger girlfriends (Freundlich & Liberthal, 2000). Regarding identity, some of the adoptees surveyed struggled to figure out where they fit in, and felt alone, confused, or embarrassed. Yet other respondents reported that they had never given their identity much thought. Researchers further found that the adult adoptees were more likely to identify as Asian American as adults than they had as teenagers, which is not uncommon in racial identity development for individuals of color. (Freundlich & Liberthal, 2000).

Summary and Research Questions

Transracial adoption is a reality of life in the United States today. It is clear that transracial adoptees can be successful, as measured in a number of ways (i.e., self-esteem, racial identity, adoptee personal experience), but culturally aware parenting of transracial adoptees is vital to a positive developmental trajectory. Vonk's model, exploring racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills, offers a comprehensive frame for understanding the complex challenges faced by parents raising transracial adoptees. This framework appears to take into account the most salient elements of parenting described in the research literature. This

dissertation sought to hear how this model has come into play in the lives of adoptees, and to make sure that it is as comprehensive as possible. The study addresses three overarching questions:

1. How were various aspects of Vonk's culturally competent parenting model addressed in the adoptee's household?
2. Is viewing parenting via the three branches of Vonk's model sufficient for parenting adoptees successfully, or does more need to be taken into account?
3. Does this model attend sufficiently to the intersecting identities of transracial adoptees?

Method

In this section, I describe the use of Interpretive Phenomenological Awareness (IPA), a form of qualitative research, to gather and interpret the information collected from Black/African American/Biracial transracial adoptees. Qualitative Research focuses on “exploring, describing and interpreting the personal and social experiences of participants” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 2). The purpose of this study was to solicit feedback from transracial adoptees regarding Vonk's guidelines for culturally competent parenting of transracial adoptees.

For this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews as described in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA: Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA looks to “explore how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency... is meanings particular experiences [and] events hold” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). The semi structured interview gave the respondents an opportunity to influence the direction of the interview and may have provided information that I hadn't anticipated (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Since transracial adoptees' voices are generally missing from the adoption literature, semi structured interviewing is a good fit to allow adoptees to act as “the experiential expert on their

subject and therefore should be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their story” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 59). Given that adoptees are an underrepresented group, it is vital to understand how they have made sense of their experiences of transracial adoption; my inquiry will be organized through the comprehensive lens of Vonk’s model of culturally competent parenting.

Participants

The sample was comprised of four participants who identify as Black, Biracial, or African-American transracial adoptees, who were raised by White parents, and are now over the age of 18. All participants were placed with their families prior to age two. To orient them to the focus of the inquiry, I sent participants my summary of Vonk’s (2001) culturally competent parenting model prior to the start of the interview for three out of the four interviews (see Appendix F). The fourth interviewee did not get the model ahead of time due to researcher error. To minimize harm, I selected participants who had demonstrated a willingness to reflect on transracial adoption: all had spoken publicly about their experience via blogs, social media posts, books, interviews, etc.

Measures

Data collected for this study included demographic/background information and responses to a basic set of 13 additional questions about the participant’s experience growing up that intertwined with the various aspects of the model.

Demographics. Participants shared basic demographic data, including, for example age, gender, and occupation. See Appendix D for the complete list of demographic information.

Interview questions. I asked all participants to comment on the following basic questions:

1. Are there any aspects of racial awareness that you feel should be highlighted or focused on more?
2. What aspects of racial awareness are currently missing from this model?
3. Was racial awareness addressed in your household? If so, how?
4. Are there aspects of multicultural planning that you feel should be highlighted or focused on more?
5. What aspects of multicultural planning are currently missing from this model?
6. Was multicultural planning addressed in your household? If so, how?
7. Are there any aspects of survival skills that you feel should be highlighted or focused on more?
8. What aspects of survival skills are currently missing from this model?
9. Were survival skills addressed in your household? If so, how?
10. What are other ways that this model could be improved?
11. Do you think these aspects of culturally competent parenting impacted you? If so, how?
12. How do you think this model could better address intersectionality?
13. Is there anything else you feel adoptive parents should know or do when adopting a child of another race?

Procedures

I began recruiting participants by reaching out to a number of adoptees whose writings I had read on social media through my dissertation research. I found websites, books, films, and articles that featured, or were created by, transracial adoptees. Six adoptees and one adoption group were contacted to participate, and out of those, one participant was recruited. The other three participants contacted this writer after seeing a request for participants on Facebook. Possible subjects were contacted via email and provided with study information on a rolling

basis until a sufficient number of interviews were scheduled. (For recruitment materials see Appendix A). After receiving informed consent (Appendix B), all participants were assigned a unique participant ID to protect confidentiality. The consent forms are kept in a locked file box to further protect confidentiality and will be shredded after three years.

When participants reached out or responded, they were provided a description of this project in the form of a recruitment letter, a summary of Vonk's (2001) model, and consent document that included my contact information and that of the IRB chair. Interested participants returned the consent document via email and we spoke via email or text to set up a time for a phone interview at their convenience.

Interviews were conducted via phone for between 40-60 minutes. I obtained demographic information during that time and conducted a semi-structured interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then deleted. I also emailed participants once data had been analyzed to allow them to provide feedback, viewing themes and their quotes associated and making comments on the themes I'd derived. Participants were informed at the start of the interview that they could withdraw at any time up until they provided feedback to me. They were informed they could voice questions, comments, or concerns throughout the interview.

I began our conversation by reminding participants I would be audiotaping. I reiterated that they could stop the interview at any time without penalty and that I could provide them with counseling information. I informed participants about Vonk's model of culturally competent parenting and its three components in writing via email ahead of time in three out of four interviews, and also at the beginning of the interview with all four participants (see Table F). I then collected some basic demographic information. As presented in Appendix D, demographic information included, age, gender, race, occupation, education, religious affiliation, age of adoption, region of the country, parental information, and sibling information. The demographic

form also requested information about the diversity of the neighborhood and school in which the adoptees lived for the majority of their childhood. After this information was collected, I began the semi-structured interview.

Justification for sampling method and size. The purpose of this study was to solicit feedback from transracial adoptees regarding Vonk's (2001) guidelines for culturally competent parenting of transracial adoptees. For this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews, as is one suggested method in IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The semi-structured interview gave the respondent an opportunity to influence the direction of the interview and could produce information that I hadn't anticipated (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Since transracial adoptees' voices are generally missing from the adoption literature, semi-structured interviewing is a good fit to allow adoptees to act as "the experiential expert on their subject and therefore should be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their story" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 59).

The sample was comprised of four participants who identify as Black, Biracial, or African-American transracial adoptees, now over the age of 18 that were raised by White parents. According to Smith and Osborn (2009), IPA should have a small sample size. It is a very detailed and involved method of analysis and since the idea is to "say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of this particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims", a smaller sample size is preferred (Smith & Osborn, 2009, p. 55). Thus, I chose to recruit 4-6 individuals to allow for in-depth examination of the cases and, due to greater difficulty with ascertaining participants than anticipated, ended up with four.

Purposive sampling was used during this study. Purposive sampling allowed me to select a group of transracial adoptees to interview about their thoughts on Vonk's (2001) model of culturally competent parenting and relevant experiences growing up. This was a non-representative sample that meets the criteria outlined above. Within the realm of purposive

sampling I engaged in *criterion sampling* and *homogenous sampling*. *Criterion sampling* occurred when criteria for participation were established. The criteria specified that participants needed to be Black, Biracial, and African American adoptees over the age of 18 who were raised by White/Caucasian parents. Participants could also hold a country specific identity or identify as part of the African Diaspora. They had to have been adopted prior to the age of ten.

Homogenous sampling occurred when participants from a specific group were chosen as participants.

Ethical principles addressed. With every study comes unique ethical consideration. It was my task to make sure that research was done in a manner that “minimizes potential harm to those involved in the study” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 111). The ethical considerations addressed in this study include confidentiality and informed consent.

Participants’ confidentiality was insured by the methods discussed above in the procedures section. Informed consent (Appendix B) was also obtained, and I took care to let participants know that they could leave the study at any time without penalty. It was also made clear that parents had no knowledge of their adult child’s participation in this project, nor was there be any way for them to access the particular information or responses. This assurance of confidentiality is very important for a couple reasons. For example, previous studies conducted in the presence of adoptive parents may not have yielded completely honest information. In addition, society tends to have a discourse of “gratefulness” surrounding adoption, which is often met with frustration from different members of the adoption triad. The intent of this exploration was to get rich and candid reflections from participants that might not fit into those kinds of constraining narratives.

Another concern was to minimize harm to participants. The informed consent document, which is attached in Appendix B, describes the nature of the study as well as any possible risks.

Talking about transracial adoption is a sensitive topic for some adoptees, but there was also an opportunity for adoptees to be heard, which can be empowering. Adoptees could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty, could decline to answer questions, could discuss their concerns with me at any time, and were offered access to counseling resources if they wanted. However, in an additional attempt to minimize harm, I chose to begin by recruiting those who already speak openly and publically about their adoption experience.

Ethical recruiting procedures and documents. Participants were recruited via the methods described above. Recruitment emphasized the importance of confidentiality and that parents had no knowledge of their adult child's participation. Participants were provided an informed consent document that they could discuss with me at any time. The informed consent document contained contact information for various people involved in this study, including Antioch University New England's IRB chairperson and the researcher. The informed consent addressed the risks and benefits and described the ways in which the participants would remain anonymous. Specific identifying information was removed (names of siblings/children, towns or schools mentioned). The adoptees invited to participate had been vocal about their experiences as adoptees previously in some capacity. Thus, they may have had a vested interest in furthering research that benefits transracial adoptees. Additionally, since adoptees' voices are not prominent in literature, they may have wanted their voices heard in this specific venue.

Research design. IPA focuses on how a small number of participants are "making sense of their personal and social world" (Smith & Osborn, 2009, p. 53). The research is a dynamic process and the researcher has an active role. IPA understands that the researcher is trying to get an insider perspective on someone else's inner world, and that this is difficult and complicated by the researcher's conceptions. As a result, IPA is a two-step, or double hermeneutic process. The purposeful sample is interviewed, and in depth analysis is conducted. According to Smith

and Osborn (2009), “the power of an IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within broader context” of the findings, personal experiences, and the claims made in current literature (p. 56).

Trustworthiness. There are a number of issues of trustworthiness to be addressed in this section. These include: credibility, validity, dependability, reliability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility and validity. In qualitative research, credibility and reliability refer to the “correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints” (Mertens, 2009, p. 254). It is very important that I be credible and that I demonstrate a correspondence between what the respondents say and how I portray and thematicize their viewpoints. Member checks were essential because participants had the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the constructions that were developed from my research (Mertens, 2005). In order to have appropriate transferability, I worked to give enough details, or a thick description, that allows the reader to decide this. This will allow other agencies or readers to decide if the participants in this study are similar enough for transferability of the results.

Dependability and reliability. This speaks to how well one can track the way in which data were collected. The detailed process of thematic development in IPA, described in detail in the data analysis section of this dissertation, provides the mechanism for dependability and reliability. I also kept a reflexive journal throughout the process to address my biases, positions of privilege, experiences, and values and how they impact the research. Participants were contacted for member checking after the themes were established. Three of the four participants responded to the request for member checking. None requested any changes were made to the codes. Quotes from interviews were used to illuminate the themes discovered. See Appendix C for thematic table.

Transferability. Transferability refers to “the fit or match between the research context and other contexts as judged by the reader” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). In order to assist readings in this endeavor, I tried to give rich descriptions and include background information and context when appropriate.

Confirmability. Confirmability means that “the data and their interpretation are not figments of the researcher’s imagination” (Mertens, 2005, p. 257). To ensure confirmability, I provided a “chain of evidence” that allows data to be traced to its original source (Mertens, 2005). The coding system I used connects the raw interview data directly to the thematic analysis through my notes.

Data Analysis

After conducting a semi-structured interview, I transcribed the entire interview. All meanings derived from the text were generated through “sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation” (Smith & Osborn, 2009, p. 66). The process for analyzing the data was as follows: I read the initial transcript a number of times, using the left-hand margin to annotate anything I found important or significant. This occurred throughout the entire transcribed interview. After the interview had been read once, I went back and annotated the right-hand margin with emerging themes. What were once initial notes were “transformed into concise phrases which aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text” (p. 69). While these notes may have been more abstract, it was clear how they related to the participant’s initial response. This continued throughout the entire transcript. After that, the emerging themes were written out on a fresh piece of paper and were scoured for connections. Themes were then analyzed for emerging, superordinate and clustered themes. I was constantly looking back at the text to ensure that the themes were connected to the primary source. According to Smith and Osborn, “the researcher is drawing on one’s interpretative resources to make sense of what the

person is saying, but at the same time one is constantly checking one's own sense-making against what the person actually said" (p. 72). After this, a coherent table of themes was created with themes named as clusters. I read through the rest of the interviews in the same fashion, and then looked for similarities across themes, developing new themes and clarifying those that already existed.

Once all the interviews were analyzed, I developed a final table of supraordinate themes. At this point I went back and gave the participants an opportunity to revisit their interviews in written form and asked them to make any new or clarifying comments they may have based on their reading of the data analysis (see Appendix C). In parenthesis prior to each quote is the participant number. Finally, the themes were translated carefully into a narrative account, where they were "explained, illustrated, and nuanced" (Smith & Osborn, 2009, p. 76).

Results

This dissertation explored the voices of four transracial adoptees reflecting on their experiences growing up. While transracial adoptions have taken place for nearly 80 years, the voices of transracial adoptees are often absent from the psychological literature. The purpose of this study was to allow for further inquiry into the experience of transracial adoption, as told by the adoptees themselves. The overarching research questions are as follows:

1. How were various aspects of Vonk's culturally competent parenting model addressed in the adoptee's household?
2. Is viewing parenting via the three branches of Vonk's model sufficient for parenting adoptees successfully, or does more need to be taken into account?
3. Does this model attend to the intersecting identities of transracial adoptees?

In order to better understand these questions, I interviewed transracial adoptees. My sample consisted of four transracial adoptees living within the United States who identified as Black, African-American, or Biracial. They were all raised by White/Caucasian parents. All of the adoptees identified as female. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 49 (M= 32.25 years old). They were adopted between six days and 22 months of age. All of the participants had some college education. All of the participants reported that their schools/areas in which they were raised were not racially diverse.

Participants' interviews yielded five main superordinate themes: (a) Impact of Transracial Adoption on Self-Image, (b) Adoptee's Perceptions of Parent Needs, Shortcomings of Model, (c) Experiencing and Coping with Racism, and (d) Intersecting Identities. Some superordinate themes had sub-themes: Impact of Transracial Adoption on Self-Image had four sub-themes; Adoptee's Perceptions of Parent Needs had three sub-themes; Shortcomings of Model, Experiencing and Coping with Racism, and Intersecting Identities did not have subthemes.

Impact of Transracial Adoption on Self-Image

This superordinate theme focused on the adoptee's self-perceptions of how transracial adoption has influenced their self-image. The information that fit this overarching theme was broken down into the following sub-themes:

Impact of mirrors. *Mirror* is a term often used by transracial adoptees to describe seeing themselves reflected in some capacity—usually by seeing others who look like them. This term was used to describe instances in which transracial adoptees had positive experiences with toys, art, medical supplies, or household objects that reflected their race or culture. This also encompassed events/situations where the transracial adoptee was exposed to people who looked like them or were from their community, both routine and novel. This code was also used to

cover media that transracial adoptees were exposed to that they felt reflected them in some way. It was generally found in responses directly regarding Vonk's model, especially around issues of multicultural planning. For example, one participant said:

Even if you know you're going to adopt a Black baby, go make some Black friends. Especially if you're adopting Black girl, definitely she needs to have a Black woman somewhere in her life, not even a role model but just to see like okay, so like, there are adult Black people that are acting crazy on TV or being flawless on TV, or like you know, it's not just Zoey on *Sesame Street*. Especially Black adults that are married to other Black adults. That is so key.

Lack of mirrors. This theme describes instances in which the participants spoke about experiences of not seeing themselves reflected, or wishing that they had had mirrors. This code was also often used in responses to questions about Vonk's model, specifically how multicultural planning was or was not present in participant's lives. For example, "I used to go to drop him [son] off at school and I'd see girls with wild you know curly hair, lots of mixed race kids, and I'm like god, how crazy, people would be like 'I love your hair, you're so gorgeous, I love it when you wear it like that' and I'm like 'that would have been great I never saw hair like that in my childhood.'"

Seeing self as black. Participants spoke of experiences in which they saw themselves as Black, or needed to see themselves as Black to obtain survival skills. This code was only applied to the two participants who self-identified as Black, as they were the only two who discussed such instances. This code also arose out of answers to questions asked about Vonk's model. One of these participants said:

I think I've heard many Transracial adoptees echo that thought that we don't really feel like we're of a different race and then looking in the mirror sometimes is kind of like OMG, wow I didn't realize I look like this because we don't see it around us.

Assimilation of own identities. Participants spoke of challenges assimilating their own identities, sense of self, and cultural/familial identities. For example, one participant explained:

I've met other [people from country] who, like, it's a rejection from your own people. If I tell someone I'm from [country] they say no you're not, because I don't speak [language], or I'm not as dark as them anymore. If I'm not in the sun I don't get the same color I was when I was first adopted. But I've always been told I was White washed from the way that I speak to dress to music I listen to, there's always a push back from my own African American community, I wasn't Black enough for the Black people but I wasn't White enough for the White people, which is part of the identity issues. Growing up it was definitely a hurtful thing to hear.

Adoptee Perception of Parent Needs

This theme describes a group of sub themes that focused on participants' own understanding/experience of what adoptive parents need. In this theme, adoptees use their lived experiences to offer advice to parents of transracial adoptees, which will be outlined more specifically in the Discussion section. Participants were asked if they had any advice, or any aspects of Vonk's model that they felt needed to be emphasized. Many of the responses here came from those questions.

Parent need for specifics. Adoptees noted that parents often require specific information on what to do to support their transracially adopted children. They felt that not having specifics could be very anxiety provoking for parents. Said one participant: "I think parents have a really hard time if there isn't any details, so that's a fearful place for them to be." Additionally,

adoptees noted that it can be hard for adoptive parents to hear from transracial adoptees themselves:

The one thing that's missing from this group [Facebook group focused on transracial adoption] is like an inability to really listen to the experience of the [transracially adopted] and to use that and to move forward, and there's too much fear of hearing something they don't want to hear or inability to like... It's like Black and White thinking essentially, if I do this then it's good enough and if I don't do this then it's not, if someone else talks about certain aspects being really helpful but they're angry about their upbringing then families have a tendency to kind of shut that out, tune it out, it's really hard for parents to really listen to our experiences.

Furthermore, adoptees discussed specific information they felt adoptive parents need to know (like having a Black friend to consult with or being able to braid hair). This sub-theme also contained appreciation for Vonk's model directly mentioning White privilege, since most transracially adopting parents are White.

Parental need to process. Adoptees interviewed noted that adoptive parents need to have a supportive place to process their own experiences surrounding transracial adoption. Things being processed might include their own response to racism, reactions of friends, family, or strangers to a transracial adoption, and the experiences of being involved in a culture outside their own. These themes were generally found in responses to questions about racial awareness and participant experiences with this domain of Vonk's model. One participant described:

Parents need to find a place to reflect about their experiences as they are going into cultures that are different than their own somewhere other than with their kids. It makes it hard for the adoptee to be really honest about how we felt when we were at such and such festival or reading a certain book, that a lot of parents will either become really emotional

at seeing the depths of racism or whatever it is and so then it makes the adoptee feel really in a tight spot that we don't know how to feel our feelings but we want to protect our parents from them having to feel too much at the same time, it's that fragility piece again so yeah just them having somewhere else to process.

Parents' needs around racism. This sub-domain describes responses to Vonk's section on the parent needs specific to handling racism. It grew from discussion surrounding Survival Skills and how they were present within the adoptees' own lives. This includes their own awareness and how it impacts them, as well as steps taken by adoptive parents to protect and defend children. One participant stated:

He [her father] said that he was afraid to move any further south in the survival skills that you're talking about, because he just didn't want anything bad to happen to me which I didn't understand as a child, but I do now.

Those steps also included cutting off family members, keeping children out of racist situations if possible, handling racism before the child is old enough to respond themselves, and being careful about where their child is raised. As one participant explained about her own mother: "If she knew it was a situation that it was going to be ugly, she would just keep me inside, not hide me but she would literally just shield me with her body, her words, anything if she had to."

Experiences of parental awareness. This subtheme depicts ways in which parents displayed an awareness of aspects that might benefit/impact their transracially adopted child. This subtheme was often used for responses specific to Vonk's model and adoptee's personal experiences with the aspects of the model in their own lives. These experiences ranged from making sure they lived in a diverse neighborhood, to being aware of and avoiding racist imagery, to attending events that allowed a child to be in an environment with racial mirrors, to having open discussions about race, to discussing the realities of living in a predominantly White area.

For example, one participant recalled:

I remember as a kid, as a high schooler I really liked Good Charlotte [a rock band that formed in the 90s] which is embarrassing, um, but their label was made, *m-a-d-e* and I told my dad I wanted a made sweatshirt and he lost his mind cuz he thought it was “maid” and he just said like “no daughter of mine will be allowed to wear a shirt like that, like you’re a Black woman.” He also I always said that my dad was a self righteous Black woman raising me, he didn’t want me to get my ears pierced because it was a form of tagging for the slaves so he didn’t want that happening as a child... he didn’t want anyone judging me and me getting upset, so he was very aware, I will use that word, of things that I wanted to do to make sure that I didn’t put myself in any sort of danger.

Experiences of lack of awareness. This theme describes instances in which the adoptive parents were unaware of issues that impacted their transracially adopted child. Often when discussing issues of multicultural planning and survival skills, participants discussed their own experiences with parental lack of awareness that they had experienced. One common experience was parents avoiding discussion of race, or not acknowledging the ways in which their child’s race impacted them. This was seen both in personal experiences and in pop culture. One participant specifically talked about the television show *This Is Us*, which depicts the transracial adoption of a Black child by White parents, stating:

I started watching this show *This is Us*, and it actually handles transracial adoption pretty well like there was an episode where they’re at the pool and the lady’s like well you need to get him a good barber, like, you need to take him to a Black barber, he’s got razor bumps on the back of his head. um and like, some people don’t look into that.

Other adoptees spoke of having well-intentioned parents who were unaware of what goes on in Black communities or who prevented adoptees from engaging in their adoptive family's culture.

One participant recalled

So... we celebrated Kwanzaa... nobody celebrates Kwanzaa! So that was real awkward when they, when like [town] kids started coming to my first grade and I ran up to the first other Black girl I saw and was like "are you excited for Kwanzaa" and like, she said to me "what the fuck is Kwanzaa..." we're on the monkey bars, we were five! So like... be aware of what actually happens in the Black community.

Furthermore, other adoptees discussed not being able to discuss racism, or hearing racism at home. One participant summarized:

I can talk about it from the point of view of what it was like to not have it... [in her 20s] that was the first time it had occurred to me in this kind of language that that was missing from my life. I could tell you that I was traumatized by it being so ignored.

Parental honesty. One subtheme that emerged as particularly helpful for adoptees was parental honesty. Participants described their parents' honesty about why families lived where there did, how a child came to be adopted, and being honest about why a Black child was adopted by a White family. For example, one participant recalled that:

I do remember having conversations, like I would ask why Black families aren't adopting Black kids, or why didn't Black parents adopt me and they would talk about the history of our country and racism and how that came into play.

This theme arose from the reflection of participants, rather than in response to a specific aspect of Vonk's model.

Shortcomings of Model

This superordinate theme focused on direct critiques or suggestions they had to improve the model itself. Participants were directly asked what the model was missing or could improve upon. They used their lived experiences to provide information that was utilized in this superordinate theme. For example, one participant noted:

The model you're working with doesn't address the whole family unit and experience. It doesn't account for the need to see glaring differences from kid's own family mirrored. And it doesn't address the identity issue of feeling like a outsider in your own racial or cultural community.

Another participant focused on White fragility, stating:

I would add White fragility which is more than just the privilege aspect and understanding your own place as a White person in society but then the piece of not being able to discuss it is kind of what White fragility talks about.

Another participant suggested that assessment occur prior to families being approved to adopt:

I think another piece is I don't know where this would fit in there but measuring the parents' competency around race and race relations prior to adopting. So within the homestudy itself, cuz so many families only start to recognize race when it directly impacts them, which is when they already have a kid who is a different race than them and then so they're basically learning at the expense of their kid versus learning for their own sake and their own development. That would be really healthy if we could have more culturally aware parents prior.

Handling/Experiencing Racism

This superordinate theme focused on adoptee's experiences of racism and mostly grew from the area of Vonk's model specific to survival skills. Every interviewee had faced numerous instances of overt and covert racism. For example, one participant reflected:

I remember having kind of scripted conversations with my mom prior to going out sometimes so like if people would say, she knew people would say where are your real parents or you know, who are your real parents, and she had a conversation with me prior to going to school to help me figure out a pat answer to that and that was really helpful so I could use that in elementary school so I didn't have to be humiliated or embarrassed on the playground and I could just say what I had memorized and that that felt good... and then I could go back home and talk it out um with my parents in the house in safety and privacy.

Similarly, another recalled coping strategies that she saw her mother employ—that she utilized herself. She noted:

My mom would see like low key racism coming from other parents and her reactions were great like, T's mother in the third grade came up and was like "You know child doesn't even realize [name] is Black, she just treats her like all the other kids..." and my mom said "oh well [child] knows that other child is really short, she's always talking about it."

Later on, in describing her own experiences with racism, the participant said "Whenever somebody says "oh you're not like a 'real Black person' I'll just say something equally stupid to them... cuz like what are you talking about."

Intersecting Identities

This superordinate theme focused on adoptee's thoughts on intersecting identities. Participants were asked specifically about how this model does and does not cover the intersecting identities that adoptees hold. Adoptees spoke about the need to recognize the multiple pieces that make up one's self, avoiding taking on identities that would cause further marginalization, and noting the hierarchy of intersecting identities that seemed to be present. For example, one participant stated:

[Being transracially adopted] it's one facet of their sense of self and it's definitely a huge facet that you need to nurture in order for it to become a puzzle piece that can be part of the whole and but uh you want them to be comfortable in their skin and have a solid sense of identity and have support for resources and outlets and people they can turn to to support experiences they have that are different than other members of their family, you have to do that. But it can't be at the expense of all the other hundreds of things that go into creating a solid sense of self.

In a similar vein, another participant reflected that,

I would love to see some sort of equivalent chart or hierarchy of needs with regards to different identities because I always feel conflicted that my parents chose my sisters [need] or brother's [need] or sister's [need] all the stuff that they chose that to be more important than my need to see others who look like me. Or not just me but some of my other siblings too. When it feels disabling in a way not to know who I am in terms of being Black and to have to figure it all out.

One participant spoke of the intersection of race, sexual identity, and gender identity and how intersectional oppression impacted how she identifies:

You really need some major survival skills if you're gonna be a queer person of color in this world and I can't even begin to address how that could be planned for or anything cuz that's just like, I mean I try to navigate that piece the best I can every day but at the same time I'm not visibly queer you know, like I have braids and I'm just kinda like oh yeah you know whatever but like I don't identify as bisexual because I don't feel like adding this extra identity to myself, like there's already so much I have to deal with. I mean.. if you have a trans child of color just.. Jesus.. I don't even know... that's a lot, but like you, I guess you have to be strong as hell to be a parent of a Black kid period because like, there already starting at the bottom of the totem pole and they can get lower if there's any of these other factors.

Discussion

This dissertation explored transracial adoptees' thoughts on culturally competent parenting, examining the themes that emerged from their own experiences and seeking out their critical feedback about Vonk's framework. In this discussion, I begin by talking about the five broad themes that emerged from the interviews. I then explore participants' recommendations for expanding the model, consider the clinical and advocacy implications of these findings, discuss the limits of the project, suggest avenues of future research, and offer some final reflections.

Five Themes

This research led to the development of five themes: (a) Impact of Transracial Adoption on Self-Image, (b) Adoptee's Perceptions of Parent Needs, (c) Shortcomings of Model, (d) Experiencing and Coping with Racism, and (e) Intersecting Identities.

There are a variety of ways in which transracial adoption can impact the self-image of adoptees. It is important to note that research is conflicting on exactly what the impact is. Some research reports that their transracial adoption had a significant impact on an adoptee's

self- image, and others seem to report that the impact was minimal. One 1994 study found that parents who had greater self-awareness and could address their child's racial differences raised children with fewer mental health concerns than those who denied the race of their child (Benson, et al., 1994). Additionally, racial socialization was associated with higher self-esteem and ethnic pride (Huh & Reed, 2000; Yoon, 2001). Furthermore, ethnic pride is thought to be related to the well-being of transracial adoptees and might be a protective force against behavioral problems (Yoon, 2001). Adoptees whose parents were able to support racial socialization with their cultural or racial group of origin reported more positive feelings about themselves than those adoptees whose parents didn't engage in such behavior (Mohanty et al., 2006). Furthermore, when children were raised by parents who didn't acknowledge their race, or who devalued it, they were less likely to acknowledge a Black identity themselves (McRoy et al., 1982). Two other related studies reported lower self-esteem, and noted that non-White adoptees raised by White parents in White areas were twice as likely to struggle with their racial appearance when compared to transracial adoptees living in more diverse areas (Feigelman, 2000; Juffer, 2006). There is no right or wrong way to be an adoptee, and we must be careful not to pathologize adoptees or adoption. At the same time, there is a responsibility to address the ways that transracial adoption may impact adoptees.

As stated above, adoptee perception of how their parents respond can greatly impact the adoptee. In addition to the above research, a 2001 study by Yoon found a significant positive correlation between parent support of such racial socialization and perceived parental warmth, communication, and the adoptee's wellbeing. This racial socialization was also correlated with decreased feelings of marginalization, increased feelings of belonging, and improved perception of connectedness between parent and child (Mohanty et al., 2007). Thus it is important to understand what adoptees see parents requiring in order to best parent transracial adoptees. One

study found that parents were hesitant to discuss concerns surrounding transracial adoption, as they feared their words would be used to oppose it (Videal de Haymes & Simon, 2002). Utilizing the adoptee's perspective of what parents need may be an excellent way to get honest information about how to support adoptees and adoptive parents. If we can improve the support for parents by using this domain, it seems it will lead to improved outcomes for adoptees.

Vonk's model is unique in that it frames parenting transracial adoptees in the context of culturally competent parenting. It explicitly notes that transracial adoption requires additional effort by parents and starts exploring what this might look like. It is vital to look at the shortcomings of this model. Given that it is one of few models geared towards supporting transracial adoptees through culturally competent parenting, it is a worthwhile task to understand the ways in which this model can be improved.

Racism is inevitability for any person of color living within the United States. Black adoptees report being subjected to overt racism and microaggressions (Smith et al., 2011). On an institutional level, Black children are more likely to be disciplined in school or disciplined more harshly than White peers (Gilliam, 2005). Butler-Sweet's (2011) study noted that "racial socialization within the family unit is the most significant cushion against the negative impact that racism has on Black identity" (p. 749). Parents must be ready and aware to combat the institutional aspects of racism, while deliberately building their child's ability to manage microaggressions and racism the best they can (DAI, 2008). In one qualitative study of 20 transracial adoptees ages 8 to 14, many of the adopted children indicated that they were subjected to name calling and racism in their predominantly White schools (Videal de Haymes & Simon, 2003). The adoptees indicated that they had experienced racism in White schools or neighborhoods, and had concerns about fitting into their predominantly White communities.

Intersecting identities of transracial adoptees are infrequently talked about, infrequently

researched with regards to adoption, yet impactful on a daily basis. The compounding nature of oppression and identities is a vital (and missing) piece of this conversation, as multiple participants noted. In one of the few works I have seen that explicitly address transracial adoption and intersecting identities, Susan Harris O'Connor explores this concept in the chapter, "My Mind's Blueprint, Inclusive of an Oppressed Identity Construct Model: Reflections and Introspection of a Transracial Adoptee" in her 2012 book, *The Harris Narratives: An Introspective Study of a Transracial Adoptee*. In this beautiful work, she uses a series of scenarios to better understand the interplay between the different aspects of her identities and how they come together. She noted that some of her identities (which she calls constructs) are solid and privileged, others are vulnerable, some exist as both solid and vulnerable (she calls these bi-existent constructs), and others are roles, positions, or titles she has. She is able to poetically weave her understanding of their interaction through the lens of nine instances where these constructs or identities seemed to respond to an external event, often an act of bias or discrimination.

Research Questions Revisited

On the whole, participants felt that Vonk's model provides a good starting point for transracially adoptive parents. In this framework, there are three branches of culturally competent parenting: (a) Racial Awareness, (b) Multicultural Planning, and (c) Survival Skills. The first branch, racial awareness, describes "a person's awareness of how the variables of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and related power status operate in one's own and others' lives" (Vonk, 2001, p. 249). The second part, multicultural planning, describes the ways in which an adopted child is able to participate in their culture of birth. The final aspect, survival skills, focuses on learning how to cope with the inevitable racism that individuals of color cope with in a society that is built on a system of White supremacy. From both the external research and what

adoptees said, the model appears to be an adequate foundation for parents to consider; however, the adoptee participants have made some further recommendations, discussed below as well.

Question One: How were various aspects of Vonk’s culturally competent parenting model addressed in the adoptee’s household? The ways in which aspects of culturally competent parenting were or were not addressed in the participants’ households are as varied as the participants themselves. For three out of the four participants, they identified at least some aspects of culturally competent parenting in their homes. The fourth participant noted that they had no culturally competent parenting, stating, “I can talk about it from the point of view of what it was like to not have it,” but that after college “that was the first time it had occurred to me in this kind of language that that was missing from my life. I could tell you that I was traumatized by it being so ignored.”

With regards to racial awareness, it seems that this is the realm least addressed. A few participants believed that their parents were either unaware or didn’t care. One adoptee stated with regards to issues of colorism in the Black community, “I don’t know if my mom wasn’t... I think she’s aware but she just didn’t care about it and she never bothered to explain that to me.” One participant’s father seemed to be highly aware of the racist origins of things:

I always said that my dad was a self-righteous Black woman raising me, he didn’t want me to get my ears pierced because it was a form of tagging for the slaves so he didn’t want that happening as a child...he was very.. very self-conscious about.. not self-conscious like he was afraid of it but like he didn’t want anyone judging me and me getting upset, so he was very aware, I will use that word, of things that I wanted to do to make sure that I didn’t put myself in any sort of danger.

She further noted that technology may have made racial awareness easier for White adoptive parents:

These days it's easier, cuz my mom didn't have facebook groups to join to learn about hair and um, like.. what's appropriate and not appropriate to dress them in sort of situations, alligators and like monkey shirts and things like that.

Another adoptee who did not have parents who were culturally competent spoke of a generational gap. She said:

I come from a generation where children were adopted and it was private and they thought we were all just blank slates and it didn't matter. There was no understanding of early infancy, psychology, or your prenatal [experience], or anything like that.

Multicultural planning is often a highly visible aspect of culturally competent parenting which lent itself to examples during the interview. The adoptees interviewed noted a wide range of instances of multicultural planning in their homes, including objects, events, and interactions with other people. For objects, multiple adoptees had Black or African-American dolls in their homes. Other examples included Christmas tree ornaments of various races, Band-Aids for different skin tones, artwork from their country/culture of origin. Furthermore, multiple adoptees spoke of experiences with other people of color who served as mirrors. These individuals mentioned included visiting Black or Asian Santa during the holidays, babysitters, fellow parishioners in church, and neighborhood parents.

In terms of media exposure, some TV shows were mentioned (e.g., *Sesame Street*, *This Is Us*, *The Cosby Show*, and *Moesha*). One adoptee was not allowed to watch specific shows, stating:

I do remember as a child I was only allowed to watch..... things like *Cosby Show*, I could watch *Moesha*, I wasn't allowed to watch *Martin* or anything.. um,.. anything like I'm gonna put it in quotes "ghetto" programming, my dad just wanted me to have a very.... I don't know how to put this, that it doesn't sound like I'm like disparaging my own

culture... he wanted me to only see Black people in a good light as opposed to a possibly negative light.

Events were also an area where adoptive parents seemed to engage in multicultural planning, with mixed success. One adoptee noted the lack of mirrors at some events, saying:

We went to multi-racial family events but like that was weird cuz for the most part it was a lot of brown kids that had Black dads and White moms so again that's another case of like, I never saw my future, I never saw a grown Black woman that was married to [a Black man].

Noting her experience later in life, saying:

I didn't see Black love, I didn't see Black people married to Black people until I was like six... and I was in a gospel retelling of the nativity story and this was like from late October to right before Christmas; that was the only time I saw Black people with other Black people.

Another adoptee noted that while festivals were helpful, they evoked reactions from adoptive parents that sometimes didn't leave space for adoptees to process their own experiences. She said:

It makes it hard for the adoptee to be really honest about how we felt when we were at such and such festival or reading a certain book that a lot of parents will either become really emotional at seeing the depths of racism or whatever it is and so then it makes the adoptee feel really in a tight spot that we don't know how to feel our feelings but we want to protect our parents from them having to feel too much at the same time.

Some instances where parents tried to engage in multi-cultural planning elicited mixed feelings from participants. One adoptee noted several instances of feeling discomfort, "I think my parents, God bless them, they were very well meaning but there was a lot of attempts to like

connect me to like ‘my roots’ and like that failed.” She noted that “when [town] kids started coming to my first grade and I ran up to the first other Black girl I saw and was like ‘are you excited for Kwanzaa?’ and like, she said to me ‘What the fuck is Kwanzaa?’” She noted that her parents were unaware of “what actually happens in the Black community.” In a similar vein, attending a Black Baptist church elicited a similar response from this participant, “we would go and it was really awkward cuz people were like catching the Holy Ghost and falling out and my parents are just standing there clapping, on the one and the three.”

Finally, she discussed her feelings surrounding wanting to do Irish dance and instead being sent to African dance, saying:

I wasn’t allowed to do Irish step because I was the only one who would look like me in my class, but what I was allowed to do was take African dance. That was a disaster... to make it worse my mom was like, the moms met after the kids class and had a moms African dance class and my mom enrolled in that so she could be part of my culture but I couldn’t be part of hers so it made it a very distinct there’s your culture but you can’t come into this one despite the fact that I’m in this one, I’m the only Black person everywhere you know... so being the only Black person in the Irish step class isn’t going to make a difference to me.

Three out of the four participants spoke to their experiences with survival skills to handle racism. A few participants noted the shift required for White adoptive parents to be aware of the racism their children would face and to handle it preemptively:

The parent needs to know how to cope with it [racism] themselves, cuz like the kid’s gonna figure it out whether that child is gonna just like brush it off and be like ok that’s fine but you’re pale and I look great, or if they’re gonna throw hands, that’s up to them. like, the parent needs to prepare themselves to cope with racism and discrimination more

so than the kid.... they've never had to experience it [racism]. Whereas day one we're getting it we just don't realize it and we just sort of learn, it's trial by fire. And also if the parent knows how to deal with it themselves when the kid finally realizes this is wild racist and I don't really know how to cope the parent will be like listen, here's what I did when people were doing this to you and you couldn't defend yourself.

One particularly enjoyed a story her mother used to tell which modeled handling ignorance from other parents:

My mom would see like low key racism coming from other parents and her reactions were great like, [name]'s mother in the third grade came up and was like "You know child doesn't even realize [name] is Black, she just treats her like all the other kids." And my mom said "oh well [participant] knows that other child is really short, she's always talking about it."

She noted that these survival skills must extend to other members of the family as well:

So like if the parents have either an adopted White child or a biological child, that child needs to know what to do too, cuz like, my brother wasn't ready for what was coming my way, and like, he got in some fights, and lost, over it as a kid.

Another participant noted the prevention aspect as well, "there was a lot of stuff around school that any of those assignments that family tree or Black history month that my parents would talk to my schoolteachers proactively and preemptively like before the lessons started to say do not single her out don't tokenize that kind of stuff." Her parents also prepared her for classmates, by role-playing, which left her feeling more confident on the playground. Her parents then offered a safe space to process after the event. She said,

I remember having kind of scripted conversations with my mom prior to going out

sometimes so like if people would say, she knew people would say where are your real parents or you know, who are your real parents, and she had a conversation with me prior to going to school to help me figure out a pat answer to that and that was really helpful so I could use that in elementary school so I didn't have to be humiliated or embarrassed on the playground and I could just say what I had memorized and that that felt good... and then I could go back home and talk it out um with my parents in the house in safety and privacy.

One participant spoke of the eventual realization of racism, saying:

I saw the stares and stuff occasionally but it didn't, it never really fazed me, I just thought like "oh Black girl with White parents, like not what you see every day," but I didn't know that it was sometimes it was just that people just did not like me because of the way that I looked.

Additionally, she too spoke of efforts to shield her from racism:

My mom was a CNA at one point, and... it was like a late night trip and my dad was out of town or something so she had to bring me with her... I don't remember completely, she told me I had to stay in the car. And I didn't understand why. And she just said "these people inside are not very nice and they won't be nice to you so I need you to stay in the car because I don't want you to get hurt." They weren't going to like hit me or anything but she just didn't want me around that kind of ugliness.

Another issue that came up as a specific survival skill was interactions with police, which some parents addressed proactively and others did not. One participant stated:

Like I never got the talk about like being wary of police. Or anything like that. I didn't know until I was an adult that there are different kinds of interactions between White

people and positions of power and other White people versus White people in positions of power and Black people.

She strongly recommended parents of transracial adoptees talking about this with their children but recognized the complexities of explaining interactions between police and people of color, saying:

Definitely having the talk with your kids. at like, nine, eight or nine.... So many young Black boys, like *young* Black boys, have been shot by cops thinking that they were older. But also like teaching them to not debase themselves, you know what I mean.... like, if a cop approaches you be respectful but don't let them put their hands on you sort of deal and I guess like, don't take it from other kids at school if someone's being racist like don't just sit there and let them do that so you don't get in trouble.

Another participant spoke about the impact of transracial adoption on her ability to see herself as Black, and how that impacted her development of survival skills. She said:

A lot of ourselves see ourselves, as less, myself included, I feel like I'm less Black than other Black people in the world, Black people who were raised by other Black people and in that sense, I can, I can learn from my parents or from others how to protect myself from racism but I only can do that when I'm looking in the mirror and seeing myself as a Black person who looks like Sandra Bland or whatever, but when I'm out in the world and when I'm looking at my family I don't see that. I just see my parents are White and my siblings who are White or whatever and so it doesn't come into my mind all of the time.

As is evidenced in the wide range of answers, each aspect of Vonk's model was handled differently in each household. Overall, three out of four participants were able to give concrete examples of their experiences of culturally competent parenting.

Question Two: “Is viewing parenting via the three branches of Vonk’s model sufficient for parenting adoptees successfully, or does more need to be taken into account?”

It appears that while Vonk’s model is a good launching point, it could benefit from expanding its scope by addressing more nuanced elements of transracial adoption.

Adoptees had ideas about preparing for the adoption more carefully. For example, one suggestion made was “measuring the parents’ competency around race and race relations prior to adopting.” She suggested this could take place during the home study, which would allow parents to begin recognizing race and racial awareness prior to having a child placed with them. She noted:

So many families only start to recognize race when it directly impacts them, which is when they already have a kid who is a different race than them and then so they’re basically learning at the expense of their kid versus learning for their own sake and their own development. That would be really healthy if we could have more culturally aware parents prior.

Adoptees stressed the need for reflection ahead of time, as they noted that children benefit from natural mirrors, as opposed to artificial ones. The idea that racial mirrors prove beneficial to transracial adoptees is supported in multiple studies (Feigelman, 2000; McGinnis et al., 2009; McRoy et al., 1982; Videal de Haymes & Simon, 2003). These studies found that adoptees who had racial mirrors expressed less discomfort with their appearance, felt more positively about themselves, and acknowledged a Black identity.

As one participant said, “Have a Black friend. I know this is harsh but if you don’t have a single Black person you can think of in your life that you are close to, don’t adopt a Black child. You have no business doing that.” One participant noted:

And then how beneficial is it to a child to say “you’re gonna go hang out with some Black people. Here’s your Black role model.” or do you work it into your life in a natural way? You know. I think it makes more sense to consciously live in an area where your child is not going to be the only Black kid that they see.

She continued:

So making conscious efforts to involve them in the milieu of the birth culture... explore how to do that without making you know hyperaware conscious choices every day... like if you adopt a child who is Black you should make it your business from the get go that they’re in a neighborhood where it’s not forced.

She further suggested the need for peers who are also grappling with identity issues, as a way to address the whole child. She said, “How do you really normalize things for kids? You provide them with a safe space populated with peers to befriend who grapple with similar issues. That is one way to address the whole child.”

Two adoptees noted that parents should prepare for handling racism ahead of time and develop support systems who can help them process their experiences, so that their children don’t end up having to hold these feelings for them. One stated, “Parents need to find a place to reflect about their experiences as they are going into cultures that are different than their own somewhere other than with their kids.” The other noted, “This is a lot about how to raise your child and what is good for your child, and they didn’t have anything about like the parent’s sanity and what it’s going to do to them.”

Another set of suggestions addressed the challenges of White privilege and White fragility. For example, one participant appreciated the need for parents to recognize their own White privilege, but noted that adoptive parents must move beyond an understanding of privilege, to understand White fragility. She defined this as “more than just the privilege aspect

and understanding your own place as a White person in society but then the piece of not being able to discuss it is kind of what White fragility talks about.” This participant saw issues of White fragility in action, especially in Facebook groups. She noted that in Facebook groups there seems to be “an inability to really listen to the experience of the transracially adopted adults and to use that and to move forward, and there’s too much fear of hearing something they [White adoptive parents] don’t want to hear.” She reported several instances of adoptive parents being dismissive because “if someone else talks about certain aspects being really helpful but they’re angry about their upbringing then families have a tendency to kind of shut that out, tune it out, it’s really hard for parents to really listen to our experiences.” Vonk’s model might be strengthened by addressing more of the parents’ experiences, too. Indeed, White privilege and White fragility might also be salient areas of exploration in family therapy.

Multiple adoptees discussed the importance of addressing not only their own cultural identities but also the culture the child is adopted into. One adoptee added, “Like I literally went to Ireland because I wanted to feel like I was part of my family.” Another adoptee stated “It’s not just the culture of your family versus the culture of your origins, cuz that kind of.. that kind of sets you up for it’s a weird dualism that doesn’t seem to have a place in the larger milieu.” She continued:

There’s nothing in here about balance between assimilation and acceptance into the culture of the family and I don’t know that everybody wants to spend their lives with their parents going “you’re Chinese we have to celebrate Chinese New Year and hang out with Chinese people.”

It is also important for parents to understand the added complexities faced by children developing an adoptive transracial identity. Several adoptees spoke of feeling like outsiders both in their birth culture and their adopted one. One adoptee said:

I would say as far as being raised in the nineties go, that my parents did as good a job as most families perhaps and that I still have a lot of difficulty seeing myself as Black or going to visit my birth parents in the South, it's uncomfortable... I think that there perhaps, it could be added that transracial adoption is inherently um, unnatural you know, and that even the most culturally competent parents can't totally alleviate confusion for their child.

Another stated:

I've always been told I was White washed from the way that I speak to dress to music I listen to, there's always a push back from my own African American community, I wasn't Black enough for the Black people but I wasn't White enough for the White people, which is part of the identity issues. Growing up it was definitely a hurtful thing to hear.

Another adoptee stated:

It's not that simple... that how do you help a transracial adoptee who has lets say has been in a very stable loving home environment um which, in which case a positive attachment has been built.... and so here's a Black kid for example who loves their White parents, then it gets really complex to ummm, see your own self as a Black person, even if those other steps are taken.

Adoptees may respond to their transracial adoption in a number of ways. They may identify mainly with the culture of their adopted family, they may identify mainly with the culture of their racial group, or they may fall somewhere in between (Baden & Steward, 2007). They may identify and feel comfortable with the racial identity of their parents, the racial identity of their own racial group, or fall somewhere between (Baden, 2002). These two aspects, comfort with culture and comfort with race, can come together in any number of combinations in

adoptees' lives (Baden & Steward, 2007). Parents should support and validate their children as they navigate this, while recognizing that the adoptee themselves should retain some autonomy over how involved they wish to be in their adoptive culture and birth culture (Baden, 2002).

Finally, participants discussed the possible impact of development on the application of the model. For example, one adoptee noted that the model might benefit from modifications that address the developmental understandings of race and identity, stating, "My gut here is that that would be rejected at some point in development and it seems to be a very adult point of view and it doesn't really address what is developmentally appropriate for a five year old versus a 15 year old and then how appropriate is it to insist to a five year old that you're Chinese and we're not." Development of racial identity is not often discussed in White communities; it seems possible that White parents may not know what is developmentally appropriate information on race and identity formation. Additional resources on developmental stages and identity formation could be helpful for adoptive parents in conjunction with the other above recommendations.

Question Three: Does this model attend sufficiently to the intersecting identities of transracial adoptees? Adoptees said that addressing intersecting identities was important, but not something covered adequately in this model; they made many helpful suggestions. For example, one adoptee spoke about her family choosing a town that was near a children's hospital to accommodate her siblings' medical needs, but that was not racially diverse. While it felt to her like learning how to be a person of color was just as important as appropriate medical care—that was not the message communicated. She spoke about curiosity about an intersectional hierarchy, noting feelings of conflict over which identities were prioritized. It was communicated to this participant that some needs ranked above others, and in this case medical needs usurped racial mirroring needs. Perhaps potential adoptive parents can reflect on the different intersecting needs

their child may have when they are engaging in racial awareness (which as this same participant pointed out, should be happening prior to adopting a child).

Another adoptee noted the reluctance to add further marginalized identities to herself and stated:

You really need some major survival skills if you're gonna be a queer person of color in this world and I can't even begin to address how that could be planned for or anything cuz that's just like, I mean I try to navigate that piece the best I can every day but at the same time I'm not visibly queer you know, like I have braids and I'm just kinda like oh yeah you know whatever but like I don't identify as bisexual because I don't feel like adding this extra identity to myself, like there's already so much I have to deal with.

She also noted that certain groups are at particularly high risk, "if you have a trans child of color just.. Jesus.. I don't even know... that's a lot." This seems to be one area in which mirrors would be particularly important. Black children need to see themselves reflected in society, but LGBTQ+ children of color are even less likely to see themselves reflected in mainstream culture. This is a particularly vulnerable intersecting identity in which it might be important for parents to be aware of local resources to support LGBTQ+ adoptees of color, while also utilizing the Internet to find other mirrors. There is an abundance of LGBTQ+ people of color online in spaces like YouTube and Facebook and parents must deliberately seek out those who are similar to their child as other intersecting identities arise. So, if a parent finds out their adoptive child is transgender, for example, they then have an obligation to seek out mirrors and understand the lived experiences of those individuals in order to better help their child.

A third participant spoke of growing up in a time when adoption wasn't acknowledged, and the need to address what she called "the interconnected nature of the entire child." She said:

There's some kind of core sense that was ignored in my generation about being adopted... I think that this probably shouldn't be explored as a separate issue I think it's part of a larger identity and self, a sense of self issue obviously has to be addressed separately but I don't I don't think it should be limited to, I don't think it should be studied in a vacuum.

Adoption professionals should be clear with parents about how to begin a conversation about adoption when the child is young, and how to continue it as children grow and ask new questions.

Summary of Recommendations

1. **Be preemptive.** It is highly recommended that parents start engaging in this work prior to adopting, and that agencies measure the parents' culture competency prior to adopting.
2. **Address white fragility.** Adoptive parents must move beyond an understanding of privilege, to understand White fragility. When adoptive parents get caught up in their own fragility or fear, they struggle to listen to lived experiences of transracially adopted adults.
3. **Parents need specifics.** One thing noted by multiple participants was that adoptive parents benefit from specific, explicit instructions, such as those provided both here by adoptees and in Vonk's model.
4. **Understand the complexities of adoption.** It also seemed important for parents to understand the complexities of developing an identity. Several adoptees spoke of feeling like outsiders both in their birth culture and their adopted one. They spoke to the complexities of identity formation.
5. **Address the culture the child is adopted into.** Multiple adoptees discussed the importance of addressing the culture the child is adopted into as well. Since some

adoptees will end up identifying more with the culture of their adoptive family, it is vital to recognize and welcome the child into this culture as well as providing opportunities to engage with their culture of birth.

6. Consider developmental appropriateness. One adoptee noted that the model might want to address the developmental understandings of race and identity. Development of racial identity is not often explicitly discussed in White communities, and it seems possible that White parents may not know what is developmentally appropriate information on race and identity formation. Resources and trainings could focus on this.

7. Understand intersectionality. Recognize that adoptee holds different identities, and that these identities impact the oppression and discrimination they face. Adoptive parents should help the adoptee recognize their different identities and better understand how these identities (both visible and unseen) impact life on a daily basis.

Limitations

The Researcher's Race and Background

This dissertation was conceived and executed by me, an Irish/Eastern-European New York Jew raised by her biological parents. Despite my best efforts, my Whiteness and lack of adoptee lived experience has an impact on the analysis of data in ways I both do and do not realize. While the reflexive journal may have helped me examine my thought process for bias, it is inevitable that my perception remains that of a White woman raised by two biological parents. Efforts were made to engage in member checking; however, it is possible that my status as “researcher” impacted participants’ comfort levels in correcting or contributing to my analysis. Member checking did not result in changes to the themes.

Recruitment

Another limitation is that my race and not being adopted may also have impacted my ability to recruit. A request for dissemination was denied by at least one group due to their concerns about analysis being conducted through a White lens. As a result, I had four participants, but recruitment took much longer than expected.

Method of Data Collection

While I had initially hoped to use secure online video chatting software, I was unable to do so. The audio quality was poor and the program proved too unwieldy to use. As a result, interviews were conducted by phone. While this method proved sufficient, I have to wonder if face-to-face or video interviews would have been a better method of data collection given the nature of this topic. Alternatively, phone may have been preferred, as the participants did not have an established relationship with me and thus it may have been less stressful for them to talk by phone.

Future Research

The realm of adoption is an incredibly rich area of exploration and future research could prove to be immensely helpful for adoptees, their biological and adoptive families, teachers, and professionals who work with adoptees and their families. By focusing on adoptive parents and professionals in the transracial adoption research, we have been missing out on understanding the experiences of the other two parts of the adoption triad, birth/first/biological parents, and adoptees themselves.

Ideally, future research will continue to center on the lived experiences of transracial adoptees; however, it would be interesting to see the results of inquiries that were conducted by transracial adoptees themselves. There are not a large number of transracial adoptees represented

in the research community; this might be one a particularly rich area for participatory action research. Those transracial adoptees that are conducting research are vital voices completing important work. Additionally, to facilitate recruitment and participation rates, it might be helpful for this research to be conducted by non-White researchers. Furthermore, all the participants had at least discussed their adoption on some form of social media. They have given their adoption experiences considerable thought; therefore, it might be useful to speak to adoptees who are more private to make sure that the am even greater variety of adoptees' voices are reflected in the literature.

My research focused on individuals who identified as Black, African-American, held a country specific identity, or identified as part of the African Disapora. Among the four participants, race was reported as Black twice, African-American once, and Multiracial once. All of my participants were adopted prior to the age of two. Future research would do well to expand this limited sample, include transracial adoptees of other races, ethnicities, genders, and those adopted at different ages as their unique experiences and voices should be represented in research as well. Furthermore, future research might focus on the particular intersecting identities of foster children, looking at the particular challenges faced by foster parents with transracially placed foster children. Finally, given the frequent discussion in adoption communities about searching for biological/first/birth parents and reunification, future research could focus on the experiences of transracial adoptees that reunified with their biological/birth/first parents once becoming adults, adding to the body of literature.

Clinical Implications

My hope is that this research will be useful to professionals who work with different members of the adoption community. Professionals can and should use Vonk's model as a starting point when discussing the importance of culturally competent parenting with potential

adoptive parents or adoptive parents. However, it would benefit adoptees and families if the recommendations provided by adoptees themselves in this study and in other places were used to supplement clinical work.

It seems important that adoption agencies (both private and state) make sure that families are well educated prior to the placement of children, and for a large part of that education to come from transracial adoptees themselves. There also needs to be support for families across the lifespan, as this requires more than just simple education. Often transracial adoptees are expected to volunteer their time; however, having adoptees in a paid consultant role would be beneficial to the agency, and provide compensation for the adoptee's emotional labor. My hope is that the nuanced and loving reflections of the adoptees who shared their time and wisdom for this dissertation is appreciated and allows others to feel less defensive and encourage them to engage in their own process of self-understanding.

Reflections

The idea of using my dissertation to support adoptee voices is one that emerged early on in my graduate school career. I had read one particular article about an adoptee being disinvited to speak to a media outlet and deemed "controversial" essentially for presenting hard truths about transracial adoption. As I started to research the ways to support adoptive families, what I found were a bevy of books written by adoptive parents or professionals. By contrast, the works that contained adoptee voices were mostly in compilations or memoirs. They were not generally being promoted on social media among adoptive parents as were the books written by adoptive parents. Coming across the resources that contained adoptee voices was vital and helped fuel this project. I was particularly influenced by Susan Harris O'Connor's work on identity models, as she is a transracial adoptee herself. My hope was to use my own status of privilege (White,

college graduate, graduate student, non-adoptee) to elevate the thoughts of adoptees, because what they say is vitally important.

This project took shape over the past few years, alongside my deepening my knowledge and understanding of the roles that power and privilege play in every aspect of our world. As I present this work, I have mixed feelings about my own role in this. I have deep gratitude for the transracial adoptees I spoke with, and for the multitudes of adoptees who work hard to help people understand what transracial adoption truly is, and what it requires, even when they are being deemed “controversial” or “angry” or “ungrateful.” The commitment of adult adoptees to better things for those who come after them is a gift.

Through writing the dissertation, I have also second-guessed myself, for feeling like it was appropriate to take on such a task. As a White, non-adoptee, who has no children, is it appropriate for me to focus my research on transracial adoption? Yes and no. It would be unfair to expect all research to come from adoptees creating it themselves. As a result, I tried to do as much as I could to make sure that adoptee voices were at the forefront of this project. If I attempt to publish this research in journals pertaining to adoption, or present at conferences, I imagine this project will be met with criticism from some groups, and I accept that and intend to listen. My hope is to continue to prioritize listening to and promoting the lived experiences of transracial adoptees.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to solicit adoptee input on a model of culturally competent parenting designed for transracially adoptive parents. My hope was to elevate adoptee voices and better understand the ways that culturally competent parenting could best become a part of the lives of transracial adoptees. While the interviews focused on four individuals, various aspects of their experiences may resonate with other adoptees. It is vital that adoptee voices serve as the

backbone for understanding adoptee experiences, to help adoptees themselves, their birth and adoptive families, and clinicians who work with various members of the adoption triad.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Dear

My name is Molly Conley and I am a doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology Department at Antioch University New England. I am writing to tell you about my dissertation project, which I hope will interest you. I want to hear about transracial adoptees' life experiences. I would ask you about a model of culturally competent parenting. Through my research, I want to learn what adoptees think of the model, how it did/did not exist in their lives, and how to improve it. After I analyze data, I will contact participants again. You will be able to comment on my data analysis to make sure my interpretation is correct.

You may participate if you are over the age of 18, placed with your adoptive family before the age of 10, identify as Black, African-American, as part of the African diaspora, or biracial and were adopted by Caucasian parents.

Participation is voluntary and you may leave the study at any time. If you want to participate, please review the attached information and contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx. You do not have to respond if you are not interested in the study. If you want to pass along information to people who may also be interested in learning about this research study, I would appreciate it. You do not have to share this information.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Molly Conley

Appendix B

Informed Consent Document

Dear Participant,

Today, I am asking you to participate in a research study. This form will give you information on the study.

The purpose of this research is threefold. First, to better understand how a current method of culturally competent parenting reflects what has been experienced by adoptees. Second, to understand how to improve the model. Third, to see how the model can address the overlapping identities of adoptees.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed via a secure, free to you, online video messaging software called Go To Meeting. While the interview will be taped, responses will be kept anonymous and you will not be asked to provide your name. The interview will begin with demographic (age, gender, etc) information. You will then be asked to have a conversation with me about your experiences as a transracial adoptee. We will video chat for approximately one hour. The final dissertation will have quotes in it to best represent your experience, but you will be notified of which quotes are used, and all identifying information will be removed.

We believe participating in this study will present minimal risks to you. It is possible that answering these questions may raise your awareness of issues relating to race, identity, or adoption. If you are uncomfortable about this possibility, you may choose not to participate.

You may also decline to answer any question during the study.

Information from this study may help researchers better understand how the current model of culturally competent parenting should be changed or updated based on the lived experiences of transracial adoptees.

All responses will be kept anonymous. All participants will be given a random identification number. Interviews will be recorded and no one will have access to these interviews other than myself and my dissertation advisor. Recordings will be kept in a locked digital file and destroyed after the research has been completed. All participation in this study is voluntary and participants can end participation at any time with no consequences.

The main researcher conducting this study is Molly Conley at Antioch University New England. If you have any questions you may contact her at. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____ Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least 5 years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix C

Identifier	List of Themes and Text to Support Themes
Impact of adoption on self-image	<p>Experience of mirrors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My mom would go through and deliberately seek out Cabbage Patch dolls that were Black, or another race, versus just White, which was really hard to find, but I remember a lot of time being spent just trying to find that. And then getting the product whatever it was, and that was great and that was all around our house and on our Christmas tree the ornaments were always like angels and things of like all different races (Participant 1) • We would travel far to sit on a Black Santa’s lap or an Asian Santa’s lap instead of a White guy. (Participant 1) • It’s appropriate for White parents to....one aspect of being aware of their own privilege is to know that they can’t be everything to their kids who are of a different race, and one big piece of that.... parents maybe have an obligation to find other folks that represent the race of their kids to take them to an event, or to just hang out with one on one rather than saying “we’re gonna... make a big trip and go to one festival where we’re just going to walk around as a family together” and that’s not essentially integration, that’s just like.. we’re able to visually see others which is great too but the selflessness of saying “I cannot adequately parent this aspect of my child and so I need to find someone who can...” that that would be more helpful. (Participant 1) • I remember reading a letter that my mom wrote to the band aid people, wanting Band-Aids that.. she was asking at that time for clear Band-Aids um, rather than just peach skinned or whatever, and I remember just.... being involved in that and seeing her go through those steps and that was really helpful versus just if.... it was just all the sudden seeing Band-Aids that were my skin color it was nice to like go through that with her and for her to be like with us in that. (Participant 1) • Even if you know you’re going to adopt a Black baby, go make some Black friends. Especially if you’re adopting Black girl, definitely she needs to have a Black woman somewhere in her life, not even a role model but just to see

	<p>like..... there are adult Black people that are acting crazy on TV or being flawless on TV, or like you know, it's not just Hooey on Sesame Street. Especially Black adults that are married to other Black adults. That is so key. (Participant 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a Black friend. I know this is harsh but if you don't have a single Black person you can think of in your life that you are close to, don't adopt a Black child. You have no business doing that. (Participant 2) • Insisting that you learn and know about your birth culture can come off as odd for someone that I don't know if my parents insisted on speaking [language] to me as a child I think as an adult I wish that happened but I think as a kid I would have been like "why are we doing this? This is not... speak English. Why are we doing this?" but ...in the long run it is helpful for the children. (Participant31) • I do remember as a child I was only allowed to watch..... things like Cosby Show, I could watch Moisha, I wasn't allowed to watch Martin or anything.. um,.. anything like I'm gonna put it in quotes "ghetto" programming, my dad just wanted me to have a very....., idk how to put this, that it doesn't sound like I'm like disparaging my own culture..... he wanted me to only see Black people in a good light as opposed to a possibly negative light. (Participant 3) • I have some pieces of [country} artwork on my bedroom wall now at 27 years old, that I got as a younger kid. um I actually also still have pictures of my birth family um on my bedroom wall too, just cuz we've, we've always had them.. (Participant 3) • Putting a Black kid in a Black community and providing him with Black role models... fails to address the fact that he likely still feels like an alien to his own family AND to the Black community in many ways. How do you really normalize things for kids? You provide them with a safe space populated with peers to befriend who grapple with similar issues. That is one way to address the whole child. (Participant 4) • If you adopt a child who is Black you should make it your business from the get go that they're in a neighborhood where it's not forced. (Participant 4) • And then how beneficial is it to a child to say "you're gonna
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	<p>go hang out with some Black people. Here’s your Black role model.” Or do you work it into your life in a natural way? You know. I think it makes more sense to consciously live in an area where your child is not going to be the only Black kid that they see. (Participant 4)</p>
<p>Impact of adoption on self-image</p>	<p>Experiences Lack of Mirrors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think I’ve heard many TRAs echo that thought that we don’t really feel like we’re of a different race and then looking in the mirror sometimes is kind of like OMG wow I didn’t realize I look like this or like, because we don’t see it around us. (Participant 1) • I always feel conflicted that my parents chose ... all the stuff that they chose that to be more important than my need to see others who look like me. When it feels disabling in a way not to know who I am in terms of being Black and to have to figure it all out.... I don’t know, it feels like race... and culture are as important to me as my siblings needs to get the right medicine and medical care but apparently it’s not, so I don’t know. I’m curious about that. (Participant 1) • We went to multi-racial family events but like that was weird cuz for the most part it was a lot of brown kids that had Black dads and White moms so again that’s another case of like, I never saw my future, I never saw a grown Black woman that was married to [a Black man]. (Participant 2) • So growing up the only Black person that I saw consistently and was like even remotely involved with was my moms friends husband who is like kind of aloof, wasn’t really involved with the kids at all, and he was married to a White woman..... So I, I didn’t see Black love, I didn’t see Black people married to Black people until I was like 6. That was the only time I saw Black people with other Black people, you need to have people of your child’s race that are going to be naturally involved in their lives. Not sort of like what’s that word? Contrived, where they’re just like “we’re gonna go to this event and you’re gonna see Black people but like they’re not coming to our house for dinner later kind of deal”. (Participant 2) • I was a Black kid with White parents in a White town where I didn’t see a lot of people who looked like me and that was hard. it was hard growing up and not knowing. (Participant

	<p>3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the festival thing and the reading is good, but actually going out and immersing yourself in the culture is pretty huge, I know for a fact that I spoke [language] when I was adopted and my parents didn't know [language] so I didn't, I never kept it, I lost a part of my heritage and my background, it's not an easy language to learn because it's a mixture of a few and I think that makes me sad, that my parents didn't go the distance to do that. But they did make sure I had a Black babysitter and like, they, I had Black baby dolls, and like they went above and beyond to make sure that I had Black and White baby dolls. (Participant 3) • The immersion in the culture is huge a huge.. it would be huge.. it would have been beneficial to me.. I don't feel like I'm lacking anything because I didn't have that but I know that like I think I would have felt more enriched now as an adult. (Participant 3) • I used to go to drop him off at school and I'd see girls with wild curly hair, lots of mixed race kids, and I'm like god, how crazy, people would be like "I love your hair , you're so gorgeous, I love it when you wear it like that" and I'm like "that would have been great I never saw hair like that in my childhood". (Participant 4) • I'm not knocking this model because I think it's correct that kids need to see themselves. I grew up in an era where nobody like me was on television, nobody who looked like me was on magazine there weren't dolls that looked like me. (Participant 4) • They definitely need to see themselves mirrored just like any child and they need to have their experience validated. It took me a lot longer to develop a solid sense of self than other kids but the way it's [the model] written... is that it is awfully limited. (Participant 4)
<p>Impact of adoption on self-image</p>	<p>Seeing self as Black</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If my parents are trying to speak with him [brother] about like.. police, and policing and police bias and how to be safe if you're approached by a police man then he'd just continually say, "I'm White, I'm not Black,.. this doesn't apply to me" and he knows that he is Black but he wants to be like his family. (Participant 1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of ourselves see ourselves, as less, myself included, I feel like I'm less Black than other Black people in the world, Black people who were raised by other Black people and in that sense.... I can learn from my parents or from others how to protect myself from racism but I only can do that when I'm looking in the mirror and seeing myself as a Black person who looks like Sandra Bland or whatever, but when I'm out in the world and when I'm looking at my family I don't see that. I just see my parents are White and my siblings who are White or whatever and so it doesn't come into my mind all of the time. (Participant 1) • I was completely oblivious to it (racism) my whole life until I got to high school and realized like "oh shit I'm a Black person!" that's when I really understood. (Participant 2) • It's not that simple.. how do you help a transracial adoptee who has let's say has been in a very stable loving home environment... in which case a positive attachment has been built.... and so here's a Black kid for example who loves their White parents, then it gets really complex to ummm, see your own self as a Black person, even if those other steps are taken. (Participant 1)
<p>Impact of adoption on self-image</p>	<p>Assimilation of own identities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would say as far as being raised in the 90s go, that my parents did as good a job as most families and that I still have a lot of difficulty seeing myself as Black or going to visit my birth parents in the south, it's uncomfortable... I think that perhaps.... it could be added that transracial adoption is inherently... unnatural you know, and that even the most culturally competent parents can't totally alleviate confusion for their child. (Participant 1) • I think about if I had lived with my birth family in the south with people who were Black, like, maybe I would have learned sign language and wouldn't have gotten these expensive hearing aid devices, but I would have understood my own racial identity more.... and that would have felt great. (Participant 1) • Parents, it's multicultural so make sure that your child is involved in their own culture, not their birth culture, their culture that they're growing up in. So like my specific example is that as a kid, all my cousins took Irish step

	<p>dance and it's all I wanted to do because I wanted to be like them. We already lived like far, most of my family lived in [town] and they all got to see each other all the time and like, I already felt kind of disconnected, but I wanted to do Irish step so I could be like them. I wasn't allowed to do Irish step because I was the only one who would look like me in my class, but what I was allowed to do was take African dance.... That was a disaster.... to make it worse.... the moms met after the kids class and had an African dance class and my mom enrolled in that so she could be part of my culture but I couldn't be part of hers... so it made it a very distinct. There's your culture, but you cant come into this one, despite the fact that I'm in this one, I'm the only Black person everywhere you know (laughs) so being the only Black person in the Irish step class isn't going to make a difference to me. (Participant 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I remember I went to Ireland for study abroad and I was excited that I finally got to take Irish step, cuz like I'm grown and I'm in Ireland and what are you gonna do? Like I literally went to Ireland because I wanted to feel like I was part of my family. And like in order to do that.... I go over there and I'm like "I am going to be the Irish one in this family!" I'm gonna be the one that has all the information I learned the language, I dated an Irish guy like I was so gung ho to be Irish because I was like "I want to be more Irish than all of you and still get tan." (Participant 2) • I went through... a really long bout of depression when I was in my junior high days and into high school because I didn't know who I was and it wasn't anything that they did it's just like... every middle schooler goes through that identity crisis of who are they and what are they gonna be and where am I gonna be in life, but I had this extra crisis added of "I don't even look like my parents" (Participant 3) • I've met other [people from country] who, like, it's a rejection from your own people. If I tell someone I'm [from country] they say "no you're not", because I don't speak [language], or I'm not as dark as them anymore... if I'm not in the sun I don't get the same color I was when I was first adopted. But I've always been told I was "White washed" from the way that I speak, to dress, to music I listen to, there's always a push back from my own African American
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	<p>community, I wasn't Black enough for the Black people but I wasn't White enough of the White people, which is part of the identity issues. Growing up it was definitely a hurtful thing to hear. (Participant 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had a religious identity until I became an adult and realized, like, ok no this is wrong, and like this is so tied to culture and so like I converted to Catholicism so I could feel like I was more part of my family, like my extended family. (Participant 2) • I think there's a lot of other ways to normalize the experience of being different than your family and learning about your heritage than just sticking to that heritage, I think you need to be exposed to a kind of world culture, you know. It's not just the culture of your family versus the culture of your origins, cuz that kind of.. that kind of sets you up for it's a weird dualism that doesn't seem to have a place in the larger mileu. (Participant 4)
<p>Adoptee's perceptions of parents needs</p>	<p>Parent need for specifics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They really need specifics because if they don't get them then they are kind of stuck not doing anything is what I have found. (Participant 1) • I think parents have a really hard time if there isn't any details, so that's a fearful place for them to be. (Participant 1) • the one thing that's missing from this group [facebook group focused on transracial adoption] is like an inability to really listen to the experience of the TRA adults and to use that and to move forward, and there's too much fear of hearing something they don't want to hear or inability to like.. it's like Black and White thinking essentially, if I do this then it's good enough and if I don't do this then it's not. If someone else talks about certain aspects being really helpful but they're angry about their upbringing then families have a tendency to kind of shut that out, tune it out, it's really hard for parents to really listen to our experiences. (Participant 1) • This is key for the White moms everywhere, or White parents, but especially White moms with Black daughters, learn to braid hair. Just do it. (Participant 2) • I just appreciate the White privilege piece since the majority

	<p>of TRA are by White parents.... and that that piece, I think, is foundational to the kids having a good sense of self in their racial identity, that that piece has to come first. (Participant 2)</p>
	<p>Parental Need to Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents need to find a place to reflect about their experiences as they are going into cultures that are different than their own somewhere other than with their kids. It makes it hard for the adoptee to be really honest about how we felt when we were at such and such festival or reading a certain book that a lot of parents will either become really emotional at seeing the depths of racism or whatever it is and so then it makes the adoptee feel really in a tight spot that we don't know how to feel our feelings, but we want to protect our parents from them having to feel too much at the same time, it's that fragility piece again so yeah just them having somewhere else to process. (Participant 1) • I think the only thing that's missing is how to prepare about this.... I know in the back of their head someone is going to question their relationship and why they got a child outside of their own race, but it doesn't really it doesn't give anything.. it doesn't mention that just for the parents. this is a lot about how to raise your child and what is good for your child, and they didn't have anything about like the parents sanity and what it's gong to do to them. (Participant 3)
<p>Adoptee's perceptions of parents needs</p>	<p>Parents needs around racism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So the parent needs to know how to cope with it [racism] themselves.... the kid's gonna figure it out, whether that child is gonna just like brush it off and be like "ok that's fine but you're pale and I look great", or if they're gonna throw hands, that's up to them..... the parent needs to prepare themselves to cope with racism and discrimination more so than the kid.... they've never had to experience it. Whereas day one we're getting it we just don't realize it and we just sort of learn, it's trial by fire.... and also if the parent knows how to deal with it themselves when the kid finally realizes "this is wild racist and I don't really know how to cope", the parent will be like "listen, here's what I did when people were doing this to you and you couldn't defend yourself". (Participant 2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My mom’s got some racist ass cousins who I... I will not be around them. And thankfully the family’s not friends with them. So that’s another thing, your family needs to be prepared to cut off parts of your family. (Participant 2) • He said that he was afraid to move any further south in the survival skills that you’re talking about, because he just didn’t want anything bad to happen to me, which I didn’t understand as a child, but I do now. (Participant 3) • My mom was a CNA at one point, and... it was like a late night trip and my dad was out of town or something so she had to bring me with her... I don’t remember completely, she told me I had to stay in the car. And I didn’t understand why. And she just said “these people inside are not very nice and they won’t be nice to you so I need you to stay in the car because I don’t want you to get hurt.” They weren’t going to like hit me or anything but she just didn’t want me around that kind of ugliness. (Participant 3) • If she knew it was a situation that it was going to be ugly, she would just keep me inside, not hide me but she would literally just shield me with her body, her words, anything if she had to. (Participant 3)
<p>Adoptee’s perceptions of parents needs</p>	<p>Experiences of Parental Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our dinner table conversation was usually something about race. It wasn’t necessarily our race, but it was kind of always a conversation about different countries and what’s happening in different countries around the world so that it was not directly related to each of our races but it was an awareness of the world around us that was helpful. (Participant 1) • Just like anytime there were certain festivals or Black history month or those sorts of events, which doesn’t necessarily equate to racial awareness but it was a step of trying to. I felt like it was, my parents’ way of acknowledging our own identities being different and acknowledging how White our area was and so therefore that’s acknowledging our perhaps feeling isolated. So traveling whatever distance to make sure we were able to be in areas where we were the majority for once in a while... it was helpful. (Participant 1)

- They also made it really clear why we were living in the place that we were living, which was a predominantly White area but they have so many kids and all the kids have special needs... and they had these doctors and a team that was great for some of my siblings and their needs so it was also spoken about why they were choosing to live in this place and that was helpful, still frustrating to feel like one person is more important or one person's needs are more important than the others but like that's kind of a separate thing and overall it was just kinda helpful to have that acknowledged. (Participant 1)
- I remember as a kid, as a high schooler I really liked Good Charlotte, which is embarrassing, um, but their label was made, M-A-D-E and I told my dad I wanted a made sweatshirt and he lost his mind cuz he thought it was maid and he just said "no daughter of mine will be allowed to wear a shirt like that, like you're a Black woman, you can't have that" um, I always said that my dad was a self righteous Black woman raising me, he didn't want me to get my ears pierced because it was a form of tagging for the slaves so he didn't want that happening as a child... he didn't want anyone judging me and me getting upset, so he was very aware of things that I wanted to do to make sure that I didn't put myself in any sort of danger.. (Participant 3)
- These days it's easier, because my mom didn't have Facebook groups to join to learn about hair and um, like.. what's appropriate and not appropriate, to dress them in sort of situations, alligators and like monkey shirts and things like that. (Participant 3)
- They tried their best with the limited resources they had here.. to make sure that I.. I got a diverse cultural background growing up, even if it wasn't just my culture.. like my best friends growing up I had Pakistani and Indian friends growing up so like my parents tried their hardest to make sure that like I wasn't just around White people. (Participant 3)

<p>Adoptee's perceptions of parents needs</p>	<p>Experiences of lack of awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so like my parents we celebrated Kwanzaa... nobody celebrates Kwanzaa! So that was real awkward when they, when like [town] kids started coming to my first grade and I ran up to the first other Black girl I saw and was like "are you excited for Kwanzaa" and like, she said to me "what the fuck is Kwanzaa?" We're on the monkey bars, we were five! (laughs) so like.. be aware of what actually happens in the Black community. (Participant 2) • I'm medium brown skinned so I never knew about colorism in the Black community and all the other little Black girls had their hair relaxed and I always wanted it because I wanted long flowing hair like everyone else had but my mom wouldn't do that which like, makes sense, why would you put chemicals in a baby's hair but I had a lot of issues as a kid just thinking "I don't look like the other girls at all". I don't know if my mom wasn't... I think she's aware but she just didn't care about it and she never bothered to explain that to me. (Participant 2) • We also went to a Black Baptist church once a month, just to be with my people and that was always super uncomfortable, cuz my parents are former Catholics, they don't believe in God, or at least the church we went to wasn't really like god centric, I think my parents were sort of agnostic, but like, we would go and it was really awkward cuz people were like catching the Holy Ghost and falling out and my parents are just standing there clapping, on the one and the three, and just not.... it was weird. (Participant 2) • I think my parents, god bless them, they were very well meaning but there were a lot of attempts to connect me to like "my roots" and that failed. So instead of them being aware that we're White people and we're gonna experience the world differently than our daughter, it was oh she's Black so she's going to experience the world differently than we have and we don't understand it so we're just going to hope that nothing bad happens and if we see someone acting sideways we'll say something to them but there was never any.... like I never got the talk about like being wary of police. Or anything like that. I didn't know until I was an adult that there are different kinds of interactions between
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	<p>White people and positions of power and other White people versus White people in positions of power and Black people. (Participant 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel like many parents aren't really able to recognize code switching as a survival skill, but rather an almost something they're proud of sometimes. (Participant 1) • I started watching this show This is Us, and it actually handles transracial adoption pretty well like there was an episode where they're at the pool and the lady's like "well you need to get him a good barber, like, you need to take him to a Black barber, he's got razor bumps on the back of his head". Some people don't look into that. (Participant 3) • I would stay after school because there were kids on the playground and there was a group of older boys, in 6th grade, and they used to taunt me.... they said kid things but It was very mean and they.. threw pieces of bark at me, it was bullying... and I had no one to talk about it to. so that's where this shame comes from, because it was clear that outside of my house.... I walked through the world behind the lens of a person who was not White. I was considered to be Black in my experiences outside the house and inside of the house it was never spoke of. Ever. (Participant 4) • My dad... he was a first generation American and he grew up in the Midwest... and he was from an ethnic group that was marginalized at the time too. He would say things like... he didn't teach overt racism.... but he had plenty to say about certain neighborhoods and he would use kind of Greek derogatory terms about Blacks and you could hear the disdain. and I couldn't say anything you know. (Participant 4) • I can talk about it from the point of view of what it was like to not have it... [in her 20s] that was the first time it had occurred to me in this kind of language that that was missing from my life. I could tell you that I was traumatized by it being so ignored. (Participant 4) • I come from a generation where children were adopted and it was private and they thought we were all just blank slates and it didn't matter. There was no understanding of early infancy, psychology, or your prenatal, or anything like that. None of that was done. So I didn't get any of this education. (Participant 4)
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<p>Adoptee’s perceptions of parents needs</p>	<p>Parental honesty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do remember having conversations, like I would ask why Black families aren’t adopting Black kids, or why didn’t Black parents adopt me and they would talk about the history of our country and racism and how that came into play. (Participant 1) • I guess you have to be strong as hell to be a parent of a Black kid period because like, they’re already starting at the bottom of the totem pole and they can get lower if there’s any of these other factors. (Participant 2) • Adoption was never a dirty word, it was always, started off when I was a child.. young.. you’re adopted... not like push it in your face but it was something I would be comfortable with saying, it doesn’t, so that I wouldn’t be offended or bothered when people asked in public because it was early 90s and people still like... “Hey is she yours?” so we started with simple just, you’re adopted...(Participant 3) • My parents were super open about it um they didn’t hide anything from me, why they got me, why, how I came to be, um, yeah, so they were just completely open, if I had a question... I’ve seen my adoption papers, um I’ve read through as much of the French as I can understand, and the English translation. (Participant 3)
<p>Shortcomings of model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would add White fragility, which is more than just the privilege aspect and understanding your own place as a White person in society but then the piece of not being able to discuss it is kind of what White fragility talks about. (Participant 1) • The model you're working with doesn't address the whole family unit and experience. It doesn't account for the need to see glaring differences from kid's own family mirrored. And it doesn't address the identity issue of feeling like an outsider in your own racial or cultural community. (Participant 4) • It looks to me like a model that’s very thoughtful and helpful and addresses a lot of issues that young adults probably have with identity issues and sense of self... probably exacerbated by looking so different from your family.... there’s nothing in here about balance between

	<p>assimilation and acceptance into the culture of the family and I don't know that everybody wants to spend their live with their parents going "you're Chinese we have to celebrate Chinese New Year and hang out with Chinese people" .. I don't know how alienating that is at different developmental periods? I can't speak for everyone's individual experience but I could say that I think.. I I my gut here is that that would be rejected at some point in development and it seems to be a very adult point of view and it doesn't really address what is developmentally appropriate for a 5 year old versus a 15 year old and then how appropriate is it to insist to a 5 year old that you're Chinese and we're not. (Participant 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think another piece is I don't know where this would fit in there but um measuring the parents' competency around race and race relations prior to adopting. So within the home study itself, cuz so many families only start to recognize race when it directly impacts them, which is when they already have a kid who is a different race than them and then so they're basically learning at the expense of their kid versus learning for their own sake and their own development. That would be really healthy if we could have more culturally aware parents prior. (Participant 1)
<p>Handling/experiencing racism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I remember having kind of scripted conversations with my mom prior to going out sometimes so like if people would say, she knew people would say "Where are your real parents?" or you know, "Who are your real parents?" She had a conversation with me prior to going to school to help me figure out a pat answer to that and that was really helpful so I could use that in elementary school so I didn't have to be humiliated or embarrassed on the playground and I could just say what I had memorized and that that felt good... and then I could go back home and talk it out um with my parents in the house in safety and privacy. (Participant 1) • I think I wore an afro to school in High School and I wore my afro and I came home and there was stuff in my afro and I didn't know it was in there, like pencils and stuff, so my parents went to the principal and talked to them about that. There was a lot of stuff around school that any of those assignments that family tree or Black history month that my

	<p>parents would talk to my schoolteachers proactively and preemptively like before the lessons started to say “do not single her out. Don’t tokenize.” That kind of stuff. (Participant 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My mom would see like low key racism coming from other parents and her reactions were great like, T’s mother in the third grade came up and was like “You know child doesn’t even realize [name] is Black, she just treats her like all the other kids... and my mom said “oh well [child] knows that [other child] is really short, she’s always talking about it.” (Participant 2) • Whenever somebody says “oh you’re not like a ‘real Black person’ I’ll just say something equally stupid to them... cuz like what are you talking about. (Participant 2) • The other key thing for all of this that’s missing is make sure the siblings know. So like if the parents have either an adopted White child or a biological child, that child needs to know what to do too, cuz like, my brother wasn’t ready for what was coming my way, and like, he got in some fights, and lost, over it as a kid. (Participant 2) • As he got older, he, in order to cope with it, people would say wild things around him because hey you’re a White guy I don’t have to be not racist around you because you’re not gonna say anything, we’re on the same team, and, it got to a point where he started saying like racist things before anyone else could and then defending it with its ok I have a Black sister. Which is crazy, but like, that was his defense mechanism because he was just so tired of hearing people say really awful things about his family. (Participant 2) • The only thing missing is like letting them know that there are ugly people out there to begin with. This is all sort of reactive, anticipating the things that could happen, this is all after the fact, oh you’re ok, that’s not about you, there’s something wrong with them. (Participant 3) • The only thing missing is um letting them know that it’s gonna happen and sometimes there’s nothing you can do about it like, you can tell them that, handling situations where racism may occur, but like there’s just some times where you’re going to meet those jerks and like you’re, you only have to handle them for 30 seconds and then you have to go about your day, and like, you can’t change them and
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	<p>you can't save them, here are some people that you just can't save, as much as you scream and shout and try to educate them it's not gonna happen and that's like the only other thing that I would add. (Participant 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw the stares and stuff occasionally but it didn't, it never really fazed me, I just thought like oh Black girl with White parents, like not what you see every day. but I didn't know that it was sometimes it was just that people just did not like me because of the way that I looked. (Participant 3) • It wasn't addressed at home and I can't say for sure that it was addressed period even from more aware families in my generation. It, it's part of the family culture to teach, if you come from a Black family they will teach you about racism and what to expect and how it goes in the world and it's filtered down from generation to generation. (Participant 4) • I find my experiences with racism have been far scarier than experiences with sexism.... Racism you don't know where it's gonna come from or when or from who. there's no rules.... maybe if you were somewhere in the south or somewhere where it's more open and they're like flying confederate flags or something. (Participant 4) • I don't know that people who have never experienced racism are entirely equipped to teach children about racism. I think that is when you need a community and they should already be part of that community. It's not like, oh it's time to teach my kid about racism, let's go find the boys and girls club that has all Black people in it! It should be part of.. they should have somebody to talk to, they should be in a multicultural environment, you, of course, the parent, should of course be well versed and well-read and they should talk to the right people... You can't... you can't do it by yourself. you can tell them about it you can teach them about it just like you can teach White kids at school but it's it's different. (Participant 4) • Definitely having the talk with your kids. At like, 9, 8 or 9.... So many young Black boys, like <i>young</i> Black boys, have been shot by cops thinking that they were older. But also like teaching them to not debase themselves, you know what I mean.... like, if a cop approaches you be respectful but don't let them put their hands on you sort of deal and I guess like, don't take it from other kids at school if
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	<p>someone’s being racist like don’t just sit there and let them do that so you don’t get in trouble. (Participant 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a time where I went to go get my Driver’s License... they questioned my mothers parentage, like they were “who is this woman to you?” They need some sort of documentation that she’s my mother.. and that, I think that’s the first time that anyone had just like didn’t take our word for it, so that like, that was a heartbreaking moment, my mom cried in the car, I was visibly upset, we went back and my mom dug through the files and got the adoption papers and started smacking people with them and yelling at them, eventually it happened, but that was the first time that it had ever happened. (Participant 3)
<p>Intersecting Identities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would love to see some sort of equivalent chart or hierarchy of needs with regards to different identities because I always feel conflicted that my parents chose my sisters [need] or brother’s [need] or sister’s [need] all the stuff that they chose that to be more important than my need to see others who look like me. Or not just me but some of my other siblings too. When it feels disabling in a way not to know who I am in terms of being Black and to have to figure it all out. (Participant 1) • It feels like race topics about race and culture are as important to me as my siblings needs to get the right medicine and medical care but apparently it’s not, so I don’t know. I’m curious about that. (Participant 1) • You really need some major survival skills if you’re gonna be a queer person of color in this world and I can’t even begin to address how that could be planned for or anything cuz that’s just like, I mean I try to navigate that piece the best I can every day but at the same time I’m not visibly queer you know, like I have braids and I’m just kinda like oh yeah you now whatever but like I don’t identify as bisexual because I don’t feel like adding this extra identity to myself, like there’s already so much I have to deal with. (Participant 2) • There’s some kind of core sense that was ignored in my generation about being adopted. There’s so much more nature than nurture and I think that this probably shouldn’t be explored as a separate issue I think it’s part of a larger identity and self....I don’t think it should be studied in a

	<p>vacuum. (Participant 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [being transracially adopted] it's one facet of their sense of self and it's definitely a huge facet that you need to nurture in order for it to become a puzzle piece that can be part of the whole and but uh you want them to be comfortable in their skin and have a solid sense of identity and have support for resources and outlets and people they can turn to support experiences they have that are different than other members of their family, you have to do that. But it can't be at the expense of all the other hundreds of things that go into creating a solid sense of self. (Participant 4)• Being Black doesn't dictate how I live or my lifestyle other than making choices to make sure that my child doesn't live in a world where he doesn't see that all the time, that's the kind of thing, I think it plays a different role in identity for everybody and I don't think you can force that, I think it has to be acknowledged but I don't know this is a really really long ongoing conversation that has to be had I can't answer that but it's a big deal, I think it's a mistake to isolate this one factor. (Participant 4)• I mean... if you have a trans child of color just.. jesus.. I don't even know... that's a lot, but like you, I guess you have to be strong as hell to be a parent of a Black kid period because like, there already starting at the bottom of the totem pole and they can get lower if there's any of these other factors. (Participant 2)
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Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

Age:

Gender:

Race:

Occupation:

Education:

Religious Affiliation:

Age of adoption:

of siblings:

of transracially adopted siblings:

Overall Racial Diversity of Neighborhood/School

Very Diverse Somewhat Diverse Somewhat Homogenous Very Homogenous

Appendix E

Interview Questions

1. Are there any aspects of racial awareness that you feel should be highlighted or focused on more?
2. What aspects of racial awareness are currently missing from this model?
3. Was racial awareness addressed in your household? If so, how?
4. Are there aspects of multicultural planning that you feel should be highlighted or focused on more?
5. What aspects of multicultural planning are currently missing from this model?
6. Was multicultural planning addressed in your household? If so, how?
7. Are there any aspects of survival skills that you feel should be highlighted or focused on more?
8. What aspects of survival skills are currently missing from this model?
9. Were survival skills addressed in your household? If so, how?
10. What are other ways that this model could be improved?
11. Do you think these aspects of culturally competent parenting impacted you? If so, how?
12. How do you think this model could better address intersectionality?
13. Is there anything else you feel adoptive parents should know or do when adopting a child of another race?

Appendix F

Handout for participants on Vonk's (2001) model of culturally competent parenting

Vonk's (2001) model of culturally competent parenting is made up of three parts: racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills.

Racial awareness is "a person's awareness of how the variables of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and related power status operate in one's own and others lives" (Vonk, 2001, p. 249). This aspect of the model asks parents to examine how race, ethnicity, and culture have shaped their own attitudes and values (Vonk, 2001). It also includes awareness of White privilege and the parent's own motivation to adopt a child of another race (Vonk, 2001). Additionally, this section asks parents to become aware of "the roles that race, ethnicity, and culture" are involved in the lives of their children and their child's culture of birth (Vonk, 2001). It also includes sensitization to racism and discrimination, as well as an examination of parental attitudes about the child's race and culture (Vonk, 2001).

Multicultural planning refers to the ways in which an adopted child will learn about and participate in their culture of birth (Vonk, 2001). The author suggests that adoptive parents extend beyond reading about the culture or engaging in events or festivals, preferring "direct involvement in the milieu of birth culture" (Vonk, 2001, 251) and helping children find role models within a birth culture.

Survival skills are when a parent works to prepare their child to cope with racism and discrimination. Suggestions include: externalizing racism, validating the child's concern and hurt, expressing that racism is unfair and not the fault of the child, and assisting the child in handling situations where racism or discrimination occur (Vonk, 2001).