

# Ethnic Socialization, Perceived Discrimination, and Psychological Adjustment Among Transracially Adopted and Nonadopted Ethnic Minority Adults

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Little is known on how transracial adoptees (TRA) navigate issues of race and ethnicity. Using Shared Fate Theory as a framework, this study was interested in the moderating role of adoption status among a group of ethnic minority adults in explaining the relationship between ethnic socialization, perceived discrimination, and mental health outcomes. Nonadopted (NA;  $n = 83$ ) and TRA ( $n = 87$ ) ethnic minorities responded to measures on ethnic socialization, perceived discrimination, and psychological outcomes administered online. TRA and NA ethnic minorities reported similar levels of ethnic socialization, perceived discrimination, and psychological outcomes (depression and self-esteem). Perceived discrimination was significantly associated with depression for both TRA and NA ethnic minorities. Ordinal Least Squares (OLS) regressions that were run for a moderated moderational analysis suggest that the protective role of ethnic socialization depended on adoption status. Among the different forms of ethnic socialization, cultural socialization and preparation for bias significantly buffered against the effects of perceived discrimination, but the effects were more pronounced for TRA than for NA ethnic minorities. Because NA and TRA ethnic minorities were similarly affected by discrimination, it suggests that being a TRA does not confer any additional risk when experiencing discrimination. Additionally, the study found that ethnic socialization may continue to serve a protective role against the effects of discrimination into adulthood for TRA, but less so for NA ethnic minorities. These results have policy implications regarding the role of parental ethnicity in adoption decisions as well as the importance of educating adopted parents about ethnic socialization for ethnic minority children.

**M**any people from the United States are choosing to adopt internationally as a result of a growing awareness of orphaned children from other countries, strict domestic adoption rules, long domestic adoption wait times, and personal interest in children from other cultures (Malm & Welti, 2010; Mather, 2007; Zhang & Lee, 2011). Although international adoptions have declined slightly from their peak in 2004, they are still higher than they were in the late 1990s (Selman, 2009). The United States accounts for the majority of international adoptions (Selman, 2009). Transracial adoptions account for 40% of all adoptions in the United States, and 85% of transracial adoptions are international adoptions by White parents (Adoption Institute, 2011; Simon & Altstein, 2000; U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services, 2014a). Despite the large number of transracial adoptions by people in the United States, little is known about how families of transracial adoptees (TRA) negotiate issues of race and ethnicity. Given the unique circumstances of being uprooted from their original culture and placed in predominantly White families, TRA ethnic minorities may feel a sense of exclusion within their adoptive families, struggle with forming a strong sense of ethnic identity, and may feel unprepared to manage experiences of racial discrimination (Feigelman, 2000; Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010; Samuels, 2009; van den Dries, Juffer, van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Alink, 2012). Some even argue that transracial adoptions result in “cultural genocide,” which entails a loss of cultural values from the adoptees’ culture of origin (Lee & Quintana, 2005). For these reasons, advocacy groups and scholars have historically opposed adoption of children of color by White parents (Hollingsworth, 1998; National Association of Black Social Workers, 1972), believing that the interests of ethnic minority children are best served when they are placed with ethnically similar families (Andujo, 1988; Jennings, 2006; Park & Green, 2000).

To address concerns about the ability of White parents to prepare ethnic minority children for coping with experiences of discrimination, we were interested in applying Shared Fate Theory

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This article was published Online First April 14, 2016.

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to understand the protective role of ethnic socialization practices against perceived discrimination among ethnic minority non-adopted (NA) and TRA ethnic minority adults. TRA are likely to experience racial discrimination in their lifetime, and yet, we do not know how TRA experience ethnic socialization relative to NA ethnic minorities and whether ethnic socialization confers the same benefits against the negative effects of discrimination as it does for NA ethnic minorities.

### Shared Fate Theory

According to Shared Fate Theory, adoptive parents who acknowledge cultural and ethnic differences can promote healthy psychological adjustment for their adopted children (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Brodzinsky, 1990; Kirk, 1964). In transracial adoption, this could involve parents acknowledging not only adoptive status, but also recognizing differences in physical appearance and culture. Benson, Sharma, and Roehlkepartain (1994) found that for both transracial and same-race adoptees, the acknowledgment of their differences by their family members was associated with less mental health symptoms. While the controversy regarding White parents being able to raise ethnic minority children is still ongoing, Benson and colleagues (1994) reinforce the important role that parental cultural/ethnic socialization plays in adoptees' well-being post adoption. This acknowledgment may be particularly important for helping TRA, more so than NA ethnic minorities, in coping with discrimination. While NA ethnic minorities may receive ethnic socialization from different sources in their environment (e.g., peers, extended family members), adoptive parents may have the primary responsibility of providing ethnic socialization to their children. When ethnic minorities receive fewer ethnic socialization from other sources, such as peers and extended family members, parents take greater responsibility in ethnically socializing their children. For example, Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2004) found evidence that Mexican-origin adolescents experienced greater levels of parental ethnic socialization when they had fewer family members born in the United States and fewer ethnically similar peers. While NA ethnic minorities may benefit from both covert and overt ethnic socialization from families and peers, TRA may only be the recipients of overt forms of socialization and are more likely than ethnic minority adolescents to grow up in environments where they have fewer same race peers. As such, socialization about culture, discrimination, and ethnicity may be more important for TRA than NA ethnic minorities.

### Ethnic-Racial Socialization

Ethnic racial socialization describes the process of socially immersing children into the practices and norms of one's ethnic or racial group. According to Hughes and Chen (1997), ethnic minority families engage in ethnic cultural socialization in order to facilitate ethnic identity development, an important protective factor against perceived racial discrimination (e.g., Shelton et al., 2005; Torres & Ong, 2010). Ethnic-racial socialization is comprised of three components: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes et al., 2006). Cultural socialization involves teaching children about

their cultural history, heritage, and encouraging ethnic pride. Preparation for bias involves increasing the child's awareness about potential racial discrimination he or she may experience. Promotion of mistrust involves teaching children to be cautious about the motives of people from other races. Each component of ethnic socialization can have a differential influence on ethnic identity (Lee, 2003; Song & Lee, 2009), underscoring the importance of examining each component separately.

The experience of ethnic socialization is very different for ethnic minority TRA raised by White parents than for NA ethnic minority children raised by ethnic minority parents. Because they are raised by nonminority parents, the ethnic socialization of TRA has been coined "reculturation" (Baden, Treweeke, & Ahluwalia, 2012). Parents of TRA have varying ideas about their role as ethnic socializers. Some parents may intend to embrace multiculturalism within their family, but instead feel racially divided from their children; others may ignore racial differences in an attempt to socialize the child into the adoptive culture rather than the culture of origin (Bergquist, Campbell, & Unrau, 2003). Yet, other parents are successively able to help their children explore their original heritage (Steinberg & Hall, 2000). Many parents of TRA want to learn how to manage others people's reactions to visible differences within the family, how to cope with issues of racial discrimination, and how to foster ethnic identity (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

The amount of ethnic socialization received by TRA is determined both by parental attitudes toward ethnicity and societal perceptions of ethnicity. Parents who value cultural socialization (Berbery & O'Brien, 2011), who are racially aware (Lee, 2003), and feel psychologically connected to their adopted children's country of origin (Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007) are more likely to engage in cultural socialization than parents who do not share these perspectives. Although the majority of studies focused on parental influence (Thomas & Kessler, 2007), contextual variables may also affect the extent to which White parents engage in the ethnic socialization. For instance, adoptive parents who live in countries where racism is prevalent engage in more ethnic socializing behaviors than adoptive parents who do not (Riley-Behringer, Groza, Tieman, & Juffer, 2014).

Not all adoptive parents engage in ethnic socialization, but studies suggest that TRA and international adoptees benefit from ethnic socialization practices. Among TRA, ethnic socialization is associated with greater levels of self-esteem, greater levels of subjective well-being, greater levels of collective self-esteem, stronger parent-child relationships, lower externalizing symptoms, and more advanced perspective taking abilities (Johnston et al., 2007; Lee & Quintana, 2005; Mohanty, Keokse, & Sales, 2007; Yoon, 2004). Given the psychological benefits of ethnic socialization to TRA, it is important to explore its role in protecting against adverse events, such as discrimination.

### Ethnic Socialization and Perceived Discrimination

Perceived racial discrimination is associated with negative psychological outcomes (Kaduvettoor-Davidson & Inman, 2013; Park, Schwartz, Lee, Kim, & Rodriguez, 2013; Seaten, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2010). The negative effects of perceived dis-

crimination are pervasive across ethnicities and throughout the life span (Kaduvetoor-Davidson & Inman, 2013). A recent meta-analysis by Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, and Garcia (2014) supports that perceived discrimination has robust negative effects on psychological well-being for ethnic minorities.

TRAs experience more discrimination than White adoptees as a function of their minority status. Reinoso, Juffer, and Tieman (2013) found that African, Asian, and South American children who were adopted into Spain reported more perceived discrimination than European adoptees. Although the study was conducted in Spain, it suggests that TRAs living in the United States are likely to encounter more discrimination relative to White adoptees.

The extent to which some people believe White parents are able to prepare their children to cope with discrimination is controversial. It is likely that ethnic minority individuals raised by ethnic minority parents perceive more discrimination compared with ethnic minority TRAs, whose parents, due to their nonethnic minority status, are less likely to have experience with discrimination and are less likely to transmit perceptions of discrimination to their adopted children (Barnes et al., 2004). Although some believe that ethnic minority parents are better able to prepare their children for discrimination, White parents can also be sensitive and responsive to racial discrimination directed at TRA. For example, Lee (2010) found that White adoptive parents of Asian and Latin American children who reported higher levels of perceived discrimination also engaged in more preparation for bias with their children than parents who perceived less discrimination. Although this study examined parental perceptions of discrimination rather than the perceived discrimination experiences of the TRA, the results suggest that White parents can be sensitive to issues of discrimination directed at their ethnic minority children and prepare their children for future discrimination experiences that they may endure as a result of their minority status.

When children and adolescents experience ethnic socialization within their families, they are more likely to respond to perceived discrimination with higher self-esteem (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007; Romero, Edwards, Fryberg, & Orduña, 2014), less depressive symptoms (Romero et al., 2014), and stronger academic performances (Wang & Huguley, 2012) compared with children and adolescents who receive less ethnic socialization. The positive effects of ethnic-racial socialization may be a function of positive attitudes toward one's ethnic group (Neblett, Hudson Banks, Cooper, & Smalls-Glover, 2013), feeling included in one's cultural group (Mohanty et al., 2007), and having a decreased sense of marginality from one's ethnic group (Mohanty & Newhill, 2011).

Ethnic socialization may also buffer TRA from the effects of perceived discrimination. For instance, Leslie, Smith, Hrapczynski, and Riley (2013) found that White adoptive parents' ethnic socialization practices protected ethnic minority TRA adolescents from experiencing stress in the face of racial discrimination. Their study had some limitations in that racial socialization was reported by the parents rather than the adolescents. Additionally, their study utilized a measure of distress that was highly correlated with their perceived discrimination measure. Despite the drawbacks, Leslie et al.'s (2013) study suggests that White adoptive parents may play an important role in helping TRA cope with discrimination.

## The Current Study

We were interested in applying Shared Fate Theory to understand the extent to which adult ethnic minority TRA perceive discrimination and experience ethnic socialization relative to other ethnic minority adults. We were also interested in which specific aspects of parental ethnic socialization buffered ethnic minority TRA and NA from the effects of perceived discrimination. Previous studies have examined ethnic socialization from the perspective of the parents rather than from the adoptees' perspective (Johnston et al., 2007; Leslie et al., 2013). There have been few studies examining the effects of ethnic socialization experiences from the perspective of ethnic minority adults. Because parents and children tend to report different levels of ethnic socialization practices within the family, it is important to understand the experiences of ethnic socialization from multiple perspectives (Kim, Reichwald, & Lee, 2013). In order to expand on the study by Leslie et al. (2013), we will retrospectively examine ethnic socialization from the adult adoptee perspective rather than the parent perspective, utilize broader measures of distress and psychological well-being, and utilize a sample of adults rather than adolescents.

We were interested in the following research questions and hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Do NA ethnic minorities experience higher levels of each component of ethnic socialization (cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust) and perceived discrimination than TRA ethnic minorities? We hypothesized that TRA would experience higher levels of ethnic socialization than NA ethnic minorities, but may face similar levels of perceived discrimination.

*Hypothesis 2:* Would ethnic socialization serve as a protective factor against perceived discrimination for both NA and TRA ethnic minority adults? We hypothesized the importance of parental ethnic socialization will be stronger for TRA than for NA ethnic minorities. Specifically, the relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological outcomes will be mitigated among TRA who report greater levels of ethnic socialization, but the effect is weaker for NA ethnic minorities.

*Hypothesis 3:* Which specific aspects of ethnic socialization are most important for buffering against the effects of perceived discrimination? We hypothesized that cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust will mitigate the negative effects of perceived discrimination on symptoms of depression and self-esteem. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of the hypothesized model.

## Method

### Participants

Exactly 170 ethnic minority nonadoptees ( $n = 83$ ) and TRAs ( $n = 87$ ) completed the study. The sample consisted of 64% female and 36% male. Fourteen ethnic minority adoptees who had been adopted by at least 1 ethnic minority parent were also recruited in the study. They were, however, removed from the final analysis. The distribution of participants' ages was as follows: 28% (18–25 years old), 55% (26–35 years old), 13% (36–45

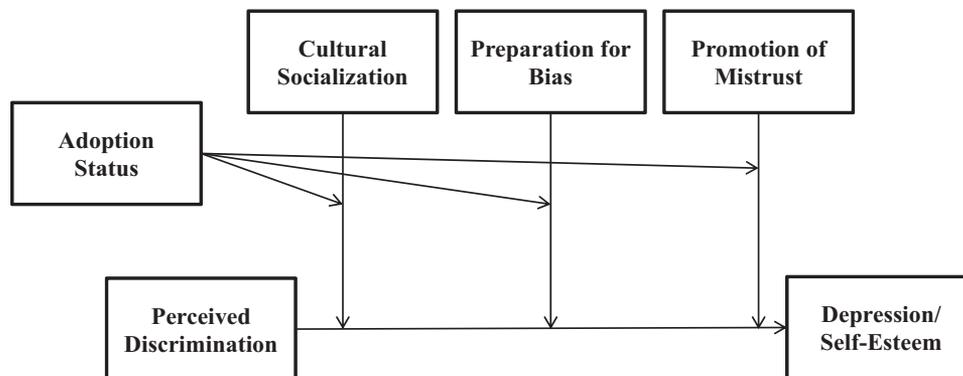


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of the moderated moderational model.

years old), 2% (46–55 years old), and 2% (56–65 years old). See Table 1 for other demographic information.

## Procedures

All ethnic minority TRA were at least 18 years old and were adopted into a family of one White parent or two White parents residing in the United States. Nonadopted ethnic minority individuals were also at least 18 years old and were raised by at least one ethnic minority parent residing in the United States.

Participants were recruited through online advertisements in Facebook public forums and Mechanical Turk, an Internet marketplace that is being increasingly used by researchers to collect survey and experimental data (Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). Participants were compensated one dollar for their participation through Mechanical Turk. Additionally, adoptees were also recruited through advertisements that were distributed to adoptee support groups within the United States and Facebook pages for TRAs. Participants not recruited through Mechanical Turk did not receive compensation for their participation. Among NA ethnic minorities, the source of recruitment was as follows: 6% from Facebook posting, 72.3% from Mechanical Turk, 13.3% from recruitment e-mail, 4.8% from a friend, 1.2% from colleague, 1.2% from other sources. Among TRA, the source of recruitment was as follows: 8% from Facebook postings, 58.6% from Mechanical Turk, 4.6% from recruitment e-mail, 3.4% from adoption organizations, 11.5% from family, 9.2% from a friend, 1.1% from a colleague, 1.1% from Reddit, and 1.1% from other sources.

One common concern about conducting online research is the possibility of deception. However, the researchers from one study found that demographic deception occurred in only 2% of the 497 participants recruited through Mechanical Turk (Shapiro, Chandler, & Mueller, 2013). The current study used several Mechanical Turk and standard quality assurance strategies to increase data validity and reliability (Mason & Suri, 2012). To ensure the accuracy of participants' information regarding ethnic minority status and parental ethnic background, they were asked for this information twice, and those who reported inconsistent information were not included in the study. Researchers also manually inspected response patterns so that those who completed the surveys too quickly, who seemed to mark all of one type of answer consecutively, or who left one or

more surveys blank, were also eliminated from the study (12 people total were eliminated). Despite quality assurance strategies, it is still possible that participants are not who they say they are.

The research measures were randomized in Qualtrics to control for order effects. Participants provided informed consent online. All study procedures were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

## Measures

**Demographics.** Demographic information collected from participants included sex, ethnicity, parent(s) ethnicity, age, age at adoption if applicable, income, education level, number of parents in the household, and geographic location.

## Independent Variable

**Perceived discrimination.** Perceived discrimination was measured using the General Ethnic Discrimination Scale (GEDS; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Roesch, 2006), which is based on the Schedule of Racist Events (SRE) measure that was originally designed for use with African Americans and then modified for use with all ethnic groups. The GEDS is an 18-item measure that assesses the frequency of perceived ethnic discrimination and the consequent stress related to these events. Frequency and stress are endorsed on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 6 = *almost all the time* and 1 = *not all stressful* to 6 = *extremely stressful*. The items inquire about perceived discrimination in different settings and also assess perceived discrimination in the past year as well as over one's entire lifetime. Sample items include, "How often have you been treated unfairly by strangers because of your race/ethnic group?, How stressful was this for you?," and "How often have you been treated unfairly by people who you thought were your friends because of your race/ethnic group? How stressful was this for you?" The GEDS subscale assessing racial discrimination over one's lifetime had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Table 1.** Demographic Information Based on Adoptive Status

Variable	Nonadoptees (n = 83) %	TRAs (n = 87) %	F and $\chi^2$
Sex			$\chi^2 = 1.46$
Male	31.3	40.2	
Female	68.7	59.8	
Age group			F = 2.13
18–25 years	20.5	35.6	
26–35 years	59.0	51.7	
36–45 years	18.1	8.0	
46–55 years	1.2	2.3	
56–65 years	1.2	2.3	
Ethnicity			$\chi^2 = 2.56$
Asian American	38.6	43.7	
African American	30.1	27.6	
Hispanic	21.7	18.4	
American Indian	1.2	3.4	
Pacific Islander	1.2		
Mixed	7.2	6.9	
Education level			$\chi^2 = 18.3^*$
Some high school	—	1.1	
GED	—	2.3	
High school grad	4.8	12.6	
Technical training	3.6	3.4	
Some college	27.7	21.8	
College graduate	32.5	41.4	
Some graduate school	3.6	6.9	
Masters degree	18.1	10.3	
Professional	9.6		
Income			F = .51
None	2.4	4.6	
Student	15.7	13.8	
\$1,000–\$25,000	16.9	3.4	
\$25,001–\$50,000	25.3	43.7	
\$50,001–\$75,000	25.3	17.2	
\$75,001–\$100,000	8.4	9.2	
\$100,000+	6.0	6.9	

Note. Age and income were considered to be ordinal for purposes of this study. "None" and "student" were both considered as no income.

\*  $p < .05$ .

## Moderator Variables

**Ethnic socialization.** Ethnic Socialization was assessed using a Parental Ethnic Socialization Scale (Hughes & Johnson, 2001), but was adapted for the current study to be used as a self-report measure for ethnic minority adults. This 15-item scale measures three dimensions of ethnic socialization: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust. While the original inventory asks parents to rate how frequently they have engaged in ethnic socialization behaviors with their child within the past year, the current measure was modified to assess the frequency with which adults perceived their parents as engaging in these behaviors with them over their lifetime. Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*most of the time*). Sample items include "How often did your parent/s talk to you about important people or events in history of different ethnic groups, other than your own?" and "How often did your parent/s talk to you about others trying to limit you because of

race?" The Ethnic Socialization Scale for this study was found to have good internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was .91. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were: cultural socialization ( $\alpha = .90$ ), preparation for bias ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and promotion of mistrust ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

## Dependent Variables

**Depression.** Depression was assessed using the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II; Brown, Beck, & Steer, 1996), which consists of 21 Likert-type items intended to measure common symptoms of depression such as sadness, loss of pleasure, and feelings of guilt. Items are rated from 0 to 3 with higher scores indicating endorsement of greater severity of depression. The BDI-II for this study was found to have good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

**Self-esteem.** Self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Inventory. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Higher scores signify higher reported levels of global self-esteem. Example items include, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and "At times I think I am no good at all." For this study, the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Inventory was found to have good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .94.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the distribution of the data and intercorrelations between variables. Exploratory data analyses were conducted to ensure that data met all statistical assumptions for data analyses. Screening of missing data indicated that no research variable items had more than 1% missing data. Missing data for the main research variables was replaced using the Single Imputation Expectation Maximization method (Schafer & Graham, 2002). Descriptive statistics were then performed to examine outliers, skewness, and kurtosis. Outliers that were three standard deviations above/below the mean were transformed using winsorization (Wilcox, 2005). In total, 10 observations were Winsorized. For linear regressions, the assumptions of independence, linearity, normality of residuals, and homoscedasticity were met for all research variables.

In order to test our moderated moderational model, we used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). This data analysis technique utilizes bootstrapping to generate estimated confidence intervals from 10,000 samples. Interaction variables were calculated using centered variables.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis and Correlations

Independent samples *t* tests and chi-squares were performed to examine significant differences between NA and TRA ethnic minorities on demographic variables. There were no significant dif-

**Table 2.** Correlations Among Study Variables ( $N = 170$ )

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	1	.21**	.34**	.11	.00	-.01	-.08	.04	-.11	.15*
2. Education	—	1	.35**	-.02	-.04	-.06	.02	-.02	-.27**	.14
3. Income	—	—	1	-.03	.06	.07	-.03	.04	-.33**	.30**
4. Perceived discrimination	—	—	—	1	.34**	.22**	.40**	.40**	.28**	-.13
5. Ethnic socialization	—	—	—	—	1	.92**	.29**	.90**	-.04	.01
6. Cultural socialization	—	—	—	—	—	1	-.01	.69**	-.12	.07
7. Promotion of mistrust	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.31**	.16*	-.15
8. Preparation for bias	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	.01	-.01
9. Depression	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	-.54**
10. Self-esteem	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

ferences between groups on sex, age, ethnicity, and income. However, the ethnic minority NA and TRA significantly differed in terms of educational level,  $t = 3.07$ ,  $p < .05$ . The number of participants who had completed a master's degrees or education beyond a master's degree were overrepresented among NA as compared with TRA. See Table 1.

Analyses of bivariate correlations revealed several significant correlations among the variables. Education was significantly negatively associated with depression. Income was significantly negatively associated with depression and positively associated with self-esteem. Age was significantly positively associated with education, income, and self-esteem. Perceived discrimination was significantly positively associated with ethnic socialization, cultural socialization, promotion of mistrust, preparation for bias, and depression. Ethnic socialization was significantly positively associated with cultural socialization, promotion of mistrust, and preparation for bias. Cultural socialization was significantly positively associated with preparation for bias, but not promotion of mistrust. Promotion of mistrust was significantly positively associated with preparation for bias and depression. Depression was significantly correlated with self-esteem. See Table 2.

### Differences Between TRA and NA on Research Variables

The first research question focused on whether NA and TRA ethnic minorities differed with regards to their psychological adjustment, their experience of ethnic socialization, and levels of perceived discrimination. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was run with education as a covariate. Ethnic minority TRA and NA perceived the same level of perceived discrimination and reported similar levels of depression and self-esteem. With regards to ethnic socialization, NA reported significantly higher levels of preparation for bias than TRA. NA ethnic minorities, however, reported significantly lower levels of cultural socialization relative to TRA. There were no significant differences between NA and TRA on promotion of mistrust. See Table 3. Although NA and TRA ethnic minorities did not differ with regards to total amount of ethnic socialization, they differed in how much cultural socialization and preparation for bias they reported receiving.

### Perceived Discrimination, Ethnic Socialization, and Psychological Outcomes

Separate moderated moderational analyses were conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro in order to address the research questions whether ethnic socialization served as a protective factor against perceived discrimination for both NA and TRA ethnic minority adults and to identify which specific components of ethnic socialization buffers against the effects of perceived discrimination on psychological outcomes. In order to test which specific components of ethnic socialization functioned as a protective factor, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and cultural socialization were entered as moderator variables. In order to test whether the protective properties of each component of ethnic socialization functioned similarly for NA and TRA, adoption status was entered as a second moderator. In total, six OLS regressions were run; three were run for each of the two dependent measures of depression and self-esteem. The independent variables were centered when creating the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Education was entered as a covariate when depression was the outcome variable due to the significant relationship between education and the outcome variable and the significant difference between groups on educational attainment.

**Table 3.** Means and SDs of Research Variables by Adoption Status

Variable	Nonadoptees ( $n = 83$ )		TRAs ( $n = 87$ )		$F$ values	Partial $\eta^2$
	Mean	$SD$	Mean	$SD$		
Perceived discrimination	36.47	12.60	38.71	14.76	1.09	.01
Ethnic socialization	25.06	12.92	25.92	10.10	.14	.00
Cultural socialization	14.49	7.90	17.11	6.28	5.19*	.03
Promotion of mistrust	2.0	1.97	1.57	1.87	9.11**	.05
Preparation for bias	8.57	5.32	7.64	4.39	1.76	.01
Depression	9.77	10.20	9.58	10.48	1.25	.01
Self-esteem	21.54	6.33	21.50	7.26	.15	.00

Note. Education was entered as a covariate.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Depression

**Preparation for bias and depression.** When preparation for bias was entered as the moderator, all two-way interactions were nonsignificant. There was a significant three-way interaction between adoption status, perceived discrimination, and preparation for bias ( $b = .05, t(169) = 2.44, p < .05$ ). The relationship between perceived discrimination and depression depends on levels of ethnic socialization, which also depends on adoption status. An inferential test for the conditional effect of the interaction of perceived discrimination and preparation for bias at each level of adoption status suggests that there was no significant effect of the moderating role of preparation for both NA and TRA ethnic minorities, despite the significant three-way interaction for the overall OLS regression. The inferential test, however, revealed that the relationship between depression and perceived discrimination varies as a function of adoption status and preparation for bias. The interaction was probed by graphing the regression equation for the relationship between perceived discrimination and predicted depression at the mean and 1 *SD* below and above the mean for each moderating variable. According to follow-up tests, the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression was significant for TRA receiving low and moderate levels of preparation for bias and NA receiving high levels of preparation for bias. For TRA, perceived discrimination is significantly positively related to depression for those who receive low and moderate levels of preparation for bias, but not those who experience high levels of preparation for bias. For NA, there was no significant relationship between depression and perceived discrimination for NA receiving low to moderate levels of preparation for bias. There was a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and depression for NA receiving high levels of preparation for bias. Preparation for bias mitigated the relationship between depression and perceived discrimination for TRA, but exacerbated the relationship for NA. See Figure 2.

**Promotion of mistrust and depression.** When promotion of mistrust was entered as the moderator, the two-way interactions and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, suggesting that promotion of mistrust is not a protective factor against perceived discrimination for either NA or TRA ethnic minorities.

**Cultural socialization and depression.** When cultural socialization was entered as a moderator, there were no significant two-way interactions. There was a significant three-way interaction between adoption status, perceived discrimination, and cultural socialization ( $b = .03, t(169) = 2.11, p < .05$ ). The relationship between perceived discrimination and depression depends on one's level of cultural socialization, which also depends on adoption status. An inferential test for the conditional effect of the interaction of perceived discrimination and cultural socialization at each level of adoption status suggests that the interaction between perceived discrimination and cultural socialization was marginally statistically significant for NA ethnic minorities ( $p < .10, CI = [-.002, .040]$ ) and not for TRA. However, the conditional effect of perceived discrimination also depends on each level of cultural socialization received. The interaction was probed by graphing the regression equation for the relationship between perceived discrimination and predicted depression at the mean and 1 *SD* below and above the mean for each moderating variable. According to follow-up tests, the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression was significant for TRA receiving low and moderate levels of cultural socialization and NA receiving moderate and high levels of cultural socialization. The interaction was probed by graphing the relationship between perceived discrimination and predicted depression scores at the mean and 1 *SD* below and above the mean separately for TRA and NA ethnic minorities. Among TRA, those experiencing the highest levels of discrimination seemed to benefit most from cultural socialization. The relationship between discrimination and depression was more pronounced among TRA ethnic minorities receiving low to moderate cultural socialization. The effect was reversed for NA ethnic minorities. The relationship between discrimination and depression was

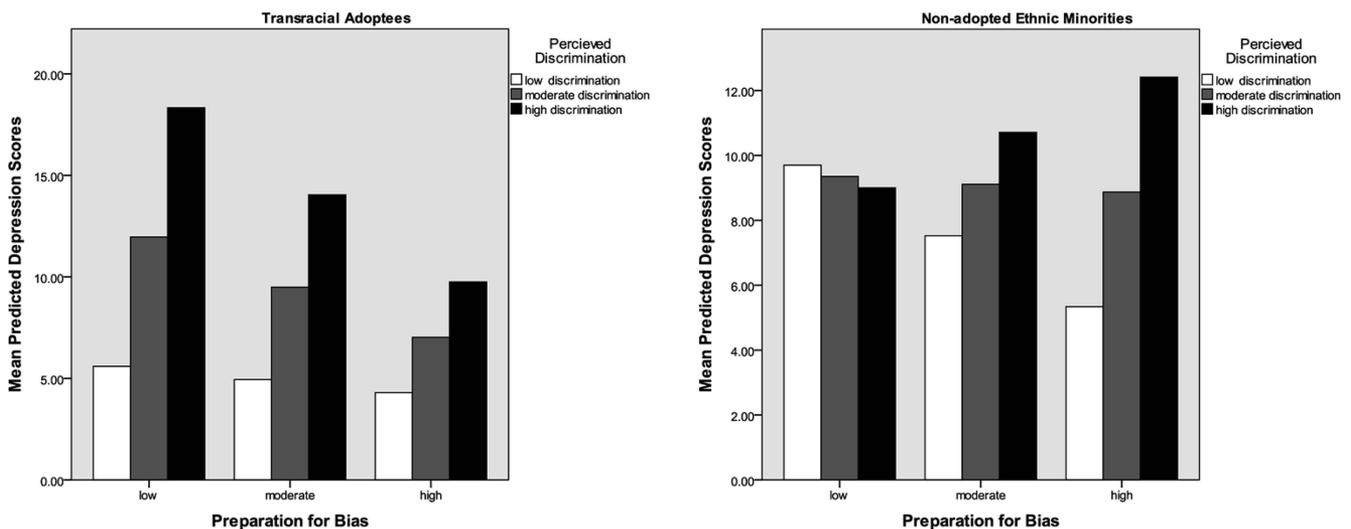


Figure 2. Moderating role of preparation for bias by adoption status and predicted depression scores.

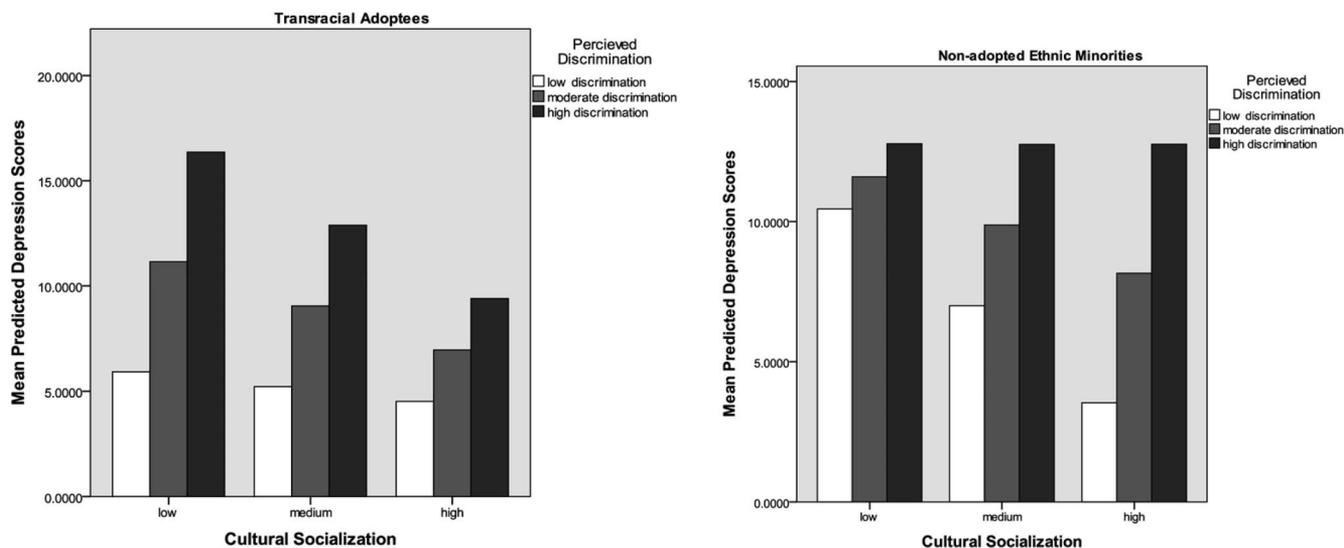


Figure 3. Moderating role of cultural socialization by adoption status and predicted depression scores.

more pronounced among NA ethnic minorities receiving high levels of cultural socialization. Cultural socialization buffered against the effects of perceived discrimination for TRA, but exacerbated the relationship for NA ethnic minorities. See Figure 3.

## Self-Esteem

**Preparation for bias and self-esteem.** When promotion of mistrust was entered as the moderator, the two-way and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, suggesting that preparation for bias is not a protective factor against perceived discrimination for self-esteem for either NA or TRA ethnic minorities.

**Promotion of mistrust and self-esteem.** When promotion of mistrust was entered as the moderator, the two-way interactions and three-way interactions were all nonsignificant, suggesting that promotion of mistrust is not a protective factor against perceived discrimination for self-esteem for either NA or TRA ethnic minorities.

**Cultural socialization and self-esteem.** When cultural socialization was entered as a moderator, there was a marginally significant two-way interaction for perceived discrimination and cultural socialization ( $b = .01$ ,  $t(169) = 1.89$ ,  $p < .10$ ). This finding, however, should be interpreted in light of the significant three-way interaction between adoption status, perceived discrimination, and cultural socialization ( $b = .03$ ,  $t(169) = -2.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem depends on one's level of cultural socialization, which also depends on adoption status. An inferential test for the conditional effect of the interaction of perceived discrimination and cultural socialization at each level of adoption status suggests that the interaction between perceived discrimination and cultural socialization was only significant for TRA ( $p < .05$ ; CI = [.009, .039]) and not for NA ethnic minorities. According to follow-up

tests, the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression was significant for TRA receiving low and moderate levels of cultural socialization and not for NA at any level of cultural socialization. The interaction was probed by graphing the relationship between perceived discrimination and predicted levels of depression at the mean and 1 *SD* below and above the mean separately for TRA and NA ethnic minorities. TRA who experienced both low to moderate levels of cultural socialization and high levels of perceived discrimination reported the lowest levels of self-esteem relative to any other group. Those who reported low levels of perceived discrimination and low levels of cultural socialization reported the highest levels of self-esteem. At moderate levels, the relationship between discrimination and self-esteem was mitigated. At high levels of cultural socialization, there was no relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem. This suggests that cultural socialization may be a protective factor against discrimination for self-esteem for TRA, but not for NA ethnic minorities. See Figure 4.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationships between perceived discrimination, ethnic socialization, and positive and negative mental health outcomes among TRA and NA ethnic minority adults. This study contributes to the growing body of literature examining the experiences of TRA. Many families choose to adopt internationally. Thus, it is important to understand the psychological experiences of ethnic minorities who may be adopted into families that they do not physically resemble. Historically, people have expressed concern that children of color who are adopted into White families may not be properly socialized for managing experiences of discrimination. Shared Fate Theory, however, suggests that adoptive parents who acknowledge cultural and ethnic differences can facilitate healthy psychological outcomes among their children. Thus, ethnic socialization can have a significant protective function for TRA. Although past studies

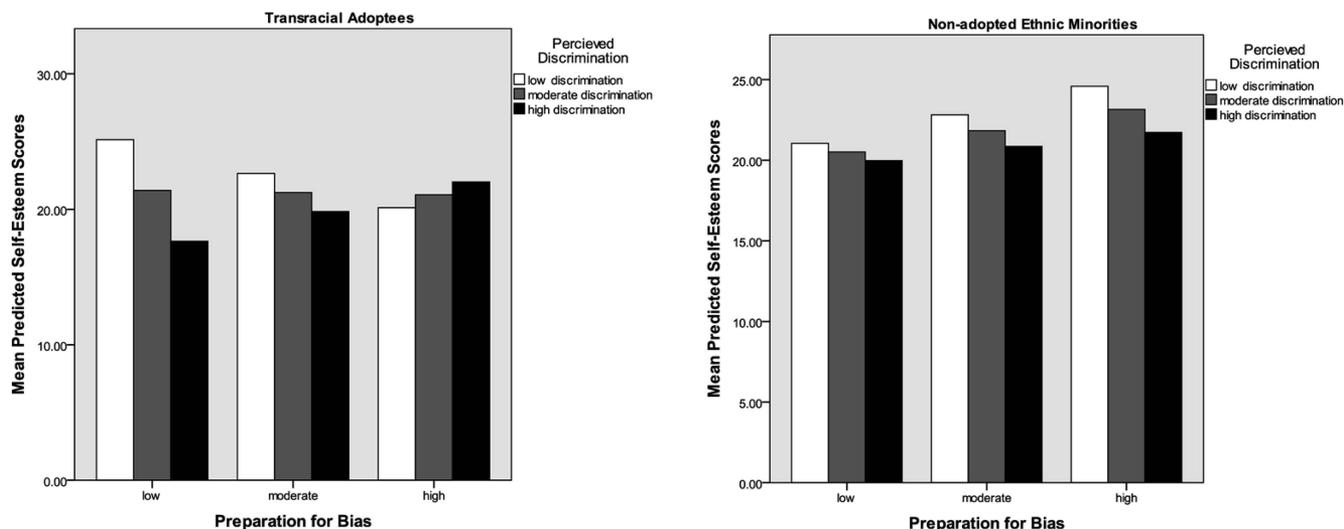


Figure 4. Moderating role of cultural socialization by adoption status and predicted self-esteem scores.

examined this issue from the parent perspective, no studies examined this concern from the perspective of the ethnic minority adoptee or among nonadopted ethnic minority adults. It is important to establish whether ethnic socialization continues to be associated with social adjustment and discrimination among ethnic minorities into adulthood. The results of this study suggested that parental ethnic socialization behaviors may play a more important role in protecting TRA against the negative consequences of perceived discrimination than for NA ethnic minorities.

We found that no significant differences in perceived discrimination between the two groups. Despite being raised by White parents, TRA experience similar levels of perceived discrimination and ethnic socialization as NA ethnic minorities. Being raised by White parents did not insulate ethnic minorities from perceiving racial discrimination. Although NA and TRA ethnic minorities reported similar levels of ethnic socialization, NA and TRA differed in reporting how much preparation for bias and cultural socialization they received. NA ethnic minorities reported higher levels of preparation of bias, while TRA ethnic minorities reported higher levels of cultural socialization. It is possible that TRA ethnic minorities reported higher levels of cultural socialization than NA ethnic minorities because their cultural socialization was more explicit. This is counter to the perception that transracial adoptions by White parents leads to “cultural genocide” (Lee & Quintana, 2005). Although this is based on retrospective report and may not accurately portray people’s actual experience with ethnic socialization, it suggests that the idea that TRA are not receiving cultural socialization may be unfounded. Indeed, White adoptive parents of TRA may feel more responsibility than ethnic minority parents to explicitly impart cultural knowledge. NA ethnic minorities may experience cultural socialization from many sources and in ways that are more implicit, such as speaking the native language or adopting culturally specific norms. NA ethnic minorities, however, experience more preparation for bias than TRAs. Preparation for bias seemed to confer a protective function for TRA, suggesting that adoption agencies who do not already, may need to highlight the importance of including preparation for bias in ad-

dition to cultural socialization for preparing TRA ethnic minorities for future discrimination. It is unknown to what extent adoption agencies currently provide adoptive parents information related to possible discrimination that may confront their children.

We also found that higher levels of perceived discrimination were associated with higher levels of depression for both TRA and NA. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the negative impact of perceived racial discrimination on mental health (Kaduvettoor-Davidson & Inman, 2013; Park et al., 2013; Schmitt et al., 2014; Seaten et al., 2010). Experiences of perceived discrimination can often have negative emotional consequences for both ethnic minority groups regardless of their family structure. Given the possible negative effects of perceived discrimination, agencies that work with adoptive parents may consider strategies for how parents of ethnic minority children can buffer them from discriminatory experiences.

We found parental ethnic socialization may serve an important protective role for adult TRA, but less so for adult NA ethnic minorities. The protective quality of ethnic socialization, however, depends on the type of ethnic socialization. Because most studies found ethnic socialization to be a protective factor against discrimination among children and adolescents (Harris-Britt et al., 2007), the current results suggest that its protective role may be diminished for NA ethnic minorities into adulthood. The cultural socialization practices of White adoptive parents seem to be a protective factor against the effects of perceived discrimination for TRA into adulthood. TRA experiencing high levels of discrimination report lower symptoms of depression when reporting higher levels of cultural socialization. For NA, cultural socialization did not buffer them from the effects of discrimination. Rather, NA ethnic minorities who reported high levels of cultural socialization and low levels of perceived discrimination had the best psychological outcomes. The findings were similar when examining predictors of self-esteem. Among TRA who reported moderate to high levels of cultural socialization, the relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem was mitigated compared with TRA who reported low levels of cultural socialization. Additionally, preparation for bias also conferred a protective advantage for

TRA, but not for NA ethnic minorities. TRA reported less depression in the face of discrimination with increasing levels of preparation for bias. NA ethnic minorities who reported high levels of preparation for bias reported lower levels of depression, but only when reporting low levels of perceived discrimination. Promotion of mistrust was not a significant protective factor for either TRA or NA ethnic minorities. Instead, promotion of mistrust was positively associated with depression for both TRA and NA. This suggests that the possible protective function of ethnic socialization against discrimination is due mostly to preparation for bias and cultural socialization. Although ethnic socialization was not a significant moderator of psychological outcomes and perceived discrimination for NA ethnic minority adults, it may play an integral role to reducing the relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological outcomes among TRA.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present study highlights the significant role of parental ethnic socialization in the postadoption well-being of TRAs. However, the results of this study must be interpreted in light of its limitations. The sample size of the most appropriate control group (ethnic minority adoptees who had been adopted by same-race parents or parents of a different ethnic minority background) was limited, restricting analyses using this group. The groups that were used in analyses differed in two ways, including adoption status and parental ethnicity, making it difficult to decipher if mental health outcomes were due to adoption status or having a parent of a particular ethnic background.

Although this study examined the possible long-term effects of parental ethnic socialization, it did not do so from a longitudinal perspective, but rather from a retrospective perspective. Future studies should examine the long-term benefits of ethnic racial socialization. Retrospective recall may be subject to memory bias. It is possible that NA ethnic minorities experience higher levels of ethnic socialization, but they recall receiving less of it because the parental socialization may be less salient than the socialization received from same race friends. It may also be that they take for granted the amount of socialization they receive because much of the socialization they experience occurs naturally without conscious effort by their families.

This study relies on self-report, which has a number of methodological weaknesses such as the inability to determine cause and effect, vulnerability to memory bias, and problems of response bias. For instance, it is possible that NA ethnic minorities who report greater levels of cultural socialization experience a greater frequency of discriminatory experiences. It is also possible that greater levels of cultural socialization lead to a heightened sensitivity to discrimination. It is difficult to distinguish which factor is causing the other. Self-report, however, is the primary method in which the current research variables have been measured in past studies, and there are currently no other existing methods to measure perceived levels of lifetime discrimination and ethnic socialization.

The population sampled may not be representative of the larger population, as evidenced by the overrepresentation of women within the current sample. The gender discrepancy may affect reported levels of depression and anxiety symptoms, which tend to be higher in women than men (Eaton et al., 2012). It may also affect the type and frequency of ethnic socialization received, as some studies have found gender differences between male and

female children while other studies have not (for review see Hughes et al., 2006). The gender discrepancy, however, would not affect the relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological outcomes, as there is no evidence that the relationship is moderated by gender (Schmitt et al., 2014). Additionally, many psychology studies suffer from the same gender discrepancy as they tend to utilize psychology majors for their participant pool, who are disproportionately female. The workers on Amazon Turk are also disproportionately female (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010), as are participants recruited online (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004). Regardless, the results should be interpreted in light of the underrepresentation of males in the current sample.

The study did not ask participants to report the racial and ethnic make-up of their social environment. The ethnic make-up of the child's social environment may affect the amount of ethnic socialization that participants received. TRA may be more likely to grow up in less ethnically diverse environments, which may explain why ethnic socialization may serve a more important role in buffering against perceived discrimination relative to NA ethnic minorities. Additionally, because of the associated costs of adoption, TRA may have experienced a higher standard of living in childhood relative to NA ethnic minorities. The higher standard living experienced by TRA may not be reflected in current income and educational levels reported by the participants.

Last, this study grouped the experiences of ethnic minorities together rather than examining the unique experiences of each ethnic group. Research does suggest that there are ethnic group differences in how much cultural socialization is practiced in families (Hughes et al., 2006). Additionally, findings for the beneficial role of ethnic socialization are more robust among African Americans than other ethnic groups (Rodriguez, Umaña-Taylor, Smith, & Johnson, 2009). Future studies should consider whether adoptive parents are more likely to culturally socialize children from some cultures more than others and whether the benefits of ethnic socialization vary as a function of the specific child's ethnicity.

### Conclusion

Historically, members of the National Association of Black Social Workers declared that adoption of Black children by White parents would hinder children's Black ethnic identity development and welfare (Hollingsworth, 1998; National Association of Black Social Workers, 1972). On the contrary, our study supports the idea that White parents can indeed prepare their children to cope with discrimination and provide successful cultural immersion. These findings support newer adoption policies, such as The Multiethnic Placement Act, which prevents delays in adoption based on the parents' and child's ethnic background (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014b). These results also reinforce the notion that adoption laws should prioritize placing adopted children in stable homes regardless of the ethnic background of the family rather than prioritize race as a basis for placement (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014b).

**Keywords:** ethnic socialization; transracial adoption; perceived discrimination; ethnic minorities

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