A Qualitative Study of Racial and Adoption Microaggressions Experienced by Adoptive Families with Children from China

Elliotte S. Harrington,1 MA, Julia Kimball2, Andrew Kitchen1, MA, Jonathan Mazza3, MA, Zoey Shaw2, Jadah Stephens3, MA, Jodi Waddell4, Ebony White1, MS, NCC, LPC, Xian Zhang2, MA, Amanda L. Baden5, PhD, Ellen Pinderhughes2, PhD

Montclair State University,1 Tufts University,2 Boston University3, Simmons S.W.4

Introduction and Method

- Transracial adoptions are 40% of all US adoptions, and typically involve White parents adopting children of color (transracial and international adoptees, TRA). TRAs and their families encounter frequent microaggressions that invalidate their family.
- Microaggressions are insults, behaviors, and slights that communicate derogatory and hostile attitudes and beliefs, whether or not intentional (Sue et al., 2007).
- Creating this case study microaggression model (Sue et al., 2007), and an adoption microaggression model (Baden, 2010), this poster examined racial and adoption microaggressions in the lives of TRAs and their families.
- This poster also examined parents’ Preparation for Bias (PfB) behaviors (Hughes et al., 2007), designed to help children cope with these experiences of stigma.

Sample: Community sample of 46 families; current sample for poster: 19
- Family Type: Mon & Dad: 47% Two-Moms: 16% Single Mom: 37%
- Parent age range: Urban: 42% Suburban: 42% Rural: 16%
- Race/Ethnicity: 65% White, 15% Asian
- Areas of residence: Urban: 43% Suburban: 42% Rural: 16%

Map

- Semi-structured parent interview covering range of themes
- Interviews qualitatively coded for microaggressions; PFs by teams of 2 coders who were extensively trained and then discussed codes to agreement

Adoption Microagressions

Examples From Interviews

- Having worked in mental health in the United States and as a child therapist, I was somewhat afraid to adopt in the United States.
- The kids did say to her, oh, your parents are probably dead or sick somewhere.
- The birthmother and that the birthmother was no longer a part of her life.

Racial Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- The birthmother was no more a part of her life.
- She knew at that point that she had a daughter. I mean it just, it just so minimizes the person.
- It's weird.

Adoption & Racial Microaggressions Compared

- The kids did say to her, oh, your parents are probably dead or sick somewhere.
- The birthmother and that the birthmother was no longer a part of her life.

Adoption Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- It’s not to make them grateful for the things they have, but it’s more that I don’t want them to be China, Guatemala, of these culturally imposed messages.
- But then I talk about the fact that even though she was adopted, I don’t think for a minute she was a mistake. She was always destined to be my daughter.

Racial Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- It’s like, who cares what color your skin is?
- And um, it’s funny I think it probably has more to do with gender than with race because I do see black men, um not so many, but I see the black men getting advanced faster and in larger numbers than white-skins.

Adoption Microaggression Preparations

Examples From Interviews

- I believe the most qualified person should get the job.
- Little girls don’t get educated in China
- Person of color is mistaken for a service worker.

Racial Microaggression Preparations

Examples From Interviews

- Pathologizing Cultural/Valued/Communication Styles
- Second-Class Citizens
- Environmental Microaggressions
- Denial Of Racism
- Myth Of Meritocracy

Adoption Microaggression Preparations

Examples From Interviews

- Pathologizing Cultural/Valued/Communication Styles
- Second-Class Citizens
- Environmental Microaggressions
- Denial Of Racism
- Myth Of Meritocracy

Racial Microaggression Preparations

Examples From Interviews

- Pathologizing Cultural/Valued/Communication Styles
- Second-Class Citizens
- Environmental Microaggressions
- Denial Of Racism
- Myth Of Meritocracy

Discussion

Microaggressions: Families experienced 326 microaggressions in 212 incidents

- More actual AMAs than RMAs – Is race more taboo than adoption?

Adoption Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- The birthmother was no longer a part of her life.
- She knew at that point that she had a daughter. I mean it just, it just so minimizes the person.
- It's weird.

Racial Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- It’s like, who cares what color your skin is?
- And um, it’s funny I think it probably has more to do with gender than with race because I do see black men, um not so many, but I see the black men getting advanced faster and in larger numbers than white-skins.

Adoption Microaggression Preparations

Examples From Interviews

- I believe the most qualified person should get the job.
- Little girls don’t get educated in China
- Person of color is mistaken for a service worker.

Racial Microaggression Preparations

Examples From Interviews

- Pathologizing Cultural/Valued/Communication Styles
- Second-Class Citizens
- Environmental Microaggressions
- Denial Of Racism
- Myth Of Meritocracy

Adoption Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- The birthmother was no longer a part of her life.
- She knew at that point that she had a daughter. I mean it just, it just so minimizes the person.
- It's weird.

Racial Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- It’s like, who cares what color your skin is?
- And um, it’s funny I think it probably has more to do with gender than with race because I do see black men, um not so many, but I see the black men getting advanced faster and in larger numbers than white-skins.

Adoption Microагgressions

Examples From Interviews

- The birthmother was no longer a part of her life.
- She knew at that point that she had a daughter. I mean it just, it just so minimizes the person.
- It's weird.

Racial Microaggressions

Examples From Interviews

- It’s like, who cares what color your skin is?
- And um, it’s funny I think it probably has more to do with gender than with race because I do see black men, um not so many, but I see the black men getting advanced faster and in larger numbers than white-skins.

Adoption Microaggressions