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Predictors of Race, Adoption, and Sexual Orientation Related Socialization of Adoptive Parents of Young Children

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Using a sample of 125 lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parent couples with young children ($M =$ 6.32 years), this study examined predictors of direct socialization (preparation for adoptism, racism, and heterosexism) and indirect socialization (modeling interactions by responding to outsiders' inquiries about their child's adoptive status, racial background, or family structure). In terms of direct socialization, parents of older children tended to engage in more socialization around adoptism and heterosexism, and parents of daughters tended to engage in more socialization around racism and heterosexism. Greater perceived child interest in adoption was related to more direct socialization around adoptism. Parents of color reported more direct socialization around racism. Having a child of color was related to more direct socialization around heterosexism. Regarding indirect socialization, sexual minority parents reported more socialization around adoption and race. Greater perceived child interest in adoption was related to more indirect adoption socialization. Being more "out" was related to more indirect socialization around parent sexual orientation.

Keywords: adoption, gay, heterosexism, lesbian, racism, socialization

Families are becoming increasingly diverse in the United States, such that it is now very difficult to talk about the "typical" family (Cahn, 2013). One way that families are becoming more diverse is that an increased number of same-sex couples are pursuing parenthood (Gates, 2013). And, among same-sex couples who pursue parenthood, an increasing number are pursuing adoption. In the last 10 years, the number of same-sex couples who have adopted children has doubled; same-sex couples are four times as likely as heterosexual couples to adopt (Gates, 2013). Lesbian/gay (LG) adoptive families challenge dominant notions about families in that (a) they are two-mother or two-father headed, (b) their children are not biologically related to them, and (c) their children are often a different race than them. White, LG couples have been found to be more open to adopting a child of color than White, heterosexual couples (Goldberg, 2009). They are also more likely to complete transracial adoptions (Farr & Patterson, 2009), and often perceive themselves as having unique strengths (e.g., experience with discrimination) that will aid them in empathizing with and socializing a child of color (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010).

LG-parent families with adopted children of color are diverse in multiple ways, and their children are vulnerable to multiple forms of stigma, in part due to the visible ways in which their families differ from dominant family norms (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010). First, children are vulnerable to stigmatization based on their parents' sexual orientation. That is, because of societal heterosexism (i.e., the assumption that heterosexuality is "right" and "normal;" Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005), they are vulnerable to teasing (e.g., about their parents' sexuality), insensitive questions (e.g., "Why don't you have a dad?"), or ostracism, within the peer context and in society (Goldberg, 2010). Children of LG parents who are adopted face adoptism, or stigmata surrounding adoption, such as the notion that adoptive families are not as "real" or valid as biological families (Jacobson, 2009). In turn, they encounter inappropriate assumptions and remarks about their background (e.g., about why they were placed for adoption, and the risks they were exposed to preadoption) and insensitive questions (e.g., "Why did your real parents give you up?").

The phenotypic differences between children and parents in transracial adoptions make the child's adoptive status more apparent in public, and families field more comments and questions regarding adoption (Vashchenko, D'Aleo, & Pinderhughes, 2012). Parents who (a) adopt inracially (i.e., a child that shares their race); or (b) adopt a biracial child (i.e., a child who resembles them, and who could possibly be related to them) may avoid such questions or engage in different strategies for handling them (e.g., they may be less likely to disclose their child's adoptive status; Jacobson, 2009). In addition to facing more inquiries about their adoptive status because they are racially different from their parents, transracially adopted children of color encounter bias or stigma on the basis of their specific racial/cultural background and appearance (Samuels, 2009).

Although LG adoptive families deviate from the traditional heteronormative biological nuclear family ideal in multiple ways, little work has explored how LG parents socialize their children about the societal biases they might encounter regarding their family structure, adoptive status, or race. In fact, little work has examined how heterosexual adoptive parents socialize their chil-

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dren with regard to adoption or race—although research on racial socialization among White transracial adoptive parents is emerging. Further, little has been written about how LG or adoptive parents engage with public inquiries about their families (e.g., about how they were formed, the child's race, whether the parent is the child's "real" parent, etc.). Modeling how to handle such inquiries (e.g., by correcting outsiders' assumptions) represents a form of indirect socialization—one that is important but largely unexplored. The little work that exists (Goldberg, 2012; Jacobson, 2009; Suter, Reyes, & Ballard, 2011) suggests that parents view these encounters in diverse ways: Some prefer to avoid them to maintain privacy, but others see them as opportunities to educate.

This study examines parents' socialization processes regarding heterosexism, adoptism, and racism; their practices with regard to responding to outsiders' inquiries about their child's adoption, race, or family structure, in front of their child (a form of indirect socialization via modeling); and predictors of such processes. The sample consists of LG and heterosexual adoptive parents, most of whom have kindergarten-age children (75% are 4.80–6.50 years of age). Kindergarten-age children tend to lack a sophisticated grasp of how families are formed; their understanding of the distinction between biological and adoptive family relationships may be limited to whose tummy they grew in. Yet discussions about adoption, race, and family diversity are important at this stage, as children can usually recognize differences between themselves and other children, and their families and other families (Brodzinsky, 2011). Further, the longer parents wait to discuss aspects of their child's family and identity, the more difficult it can become over time (Docan-Morgan, 2011). Understanding predictors of adoptive parents' socialization processes during the early school years has implications for research and clinical work with these families.

Given that so little has been written about socialization processes in LG or adoptive parent families, we draw from research within the racial socialization literature on preparation for bias, (although racial socialization also includes promoting racial awareness and pride; Hughes et al., 2006; Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, Gunnar, & the Minnesota International Adaption Project Team, 2006). We approach our study using an ecological, intersectional lens, whereby we acknowledge that (a) LG adoptive parents are exposed to multiple dimensions of stigma, which interact in complex ways; (b) exposure to heterosexism, adoptism, and racism occurs in overlapping contexts (e.g., neighborhoods, schools); and (c) parents' strategies for socializing their children about stigmata depends in part upon their own social locations and identities (e.g., sexual orientation, race; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Richardson & Goldberg, 2010). An ecological understanding of child development suggests the importance of considering interactions between the family and other ecological contexts (Vashchenko et al., 2012). Thus, we consider not only the way parents socialize their children through *direct* communication around issues of bias, but also by more *indirect* methods such as modeling openness and education of others in front of the child.

Direct Socialization: Preparation for Racism

Racial socialization occurs more easily and naturally in families in which parents share the same race. White adoptive parents who adopt children of color encounter a variety of barriers to engaging in racial socialization, in that not sharing their child's race inevitably renders them less equipped to meaningfully discuss (shared) racial experiences, and to prepare their children for such experiences. They may feel uncertain about how to approach discussions of race and racism, and may worry about focusing on racism "too much" or "too soon" (Harrigan, 2009; Robinson-Wood, 2011). Yet such socialization is important; children who are adopted transracially are exposed to general racism (e.g., racist stereotypes) and inquiries targeted at their status as a child of color with White parents (e.g., "What are you?;" "Is that your mother?;" Samuels, 2009, p. 83).

Some research has examined predictors of racial socialization by White adoptive parents. Children's age has been identified as a predictor of racial socialization: Parents of older children engage in more preparation for bias (Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007). Qualitative research on White adoptive mothers with children of color found that mothers reported not discussing race or racism with their children because they "felt that the timing wasn't right," highlighting the potential role of developmental considerations (Robinson-Wood, 2011). Indeed, children are increasingly likely to encounter racism as they get older (Hughes et al., 2006).

The research on parents of color is also instructive in formulating predictions about what parents are most likely to engage in racial socialization. Regarding child characteristics, there are mixed findings on the role of children's gender in parents' racial socialization. Some studies find no effect of child gender on racial socialization (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997), whereas others find that boys are more likely to receive preparation for bias, likely reflecting parents' ideas about the different racial realities that boys and girls will face (Hughes et al., 2006). Regarding parent characteristics, more educated and affluent racial minorities perceive more discrimination and engage in more racial socialization and preparation for bias specifically (Caughy et al., 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1997). Perceived discrimination also predicts racial socialization: When parents of color or their children experience racism, parents are more likely to engage in preparation for bias (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

Other factors may be relevant to consider in predicting preparation for racial bias. Among adoptive samples in which not all parents are White, parents of color may engage in more racial socialization, given their own familiarity with racism (Hughes et al., 2006). Sexual orientation may also be related to preparation for racial bias. Sexual minorities are more open to adopting children of color (Goldberg, 2009), in part because they believe their own experiences with sexuality-related stigma renders them more prepared to empathize with other minority groups, and to confront, and prepare their children for, stigma (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010). Thus, their own experiences as (sexual) minorities may sensitize them to other forms of marginalization.

Direct Socialization: Preparation for Adoptism

Societal adoption stigmata (e.g., adoption is a second-best way to build a family; adopted children are "damaged") are familiar to adoptive families (Jacobson, 2009). Yet, qualitative work suggests that parents' discussions with their children about adoption tend to center upon their personal origins, as opposed to preparing them

for adoptism (Harrigan, 2010). Research hints at several factors that may be relevant in predicting parents' preparation for bias. First, adopted children of color likely encounter more confrontations about their adoptive background (Jacobson, 2009); thus, parents may be more likely to engage in preparation for adoptism with children of color. Qualitative work also highlights the interactive nature of adoption conversations, whereby children's responses to parent-initiated conversations, and their own initiation of conversations, inform the frequency and complexity of subsequent discussions (Harrigan, 2010). Thus, the level of interest that parents perceive in their children may shape their adoption socialization. As children develop, they may be more interested in and able to understand adoption issues. Research with adoptive parents of 4- to 7-year-olds found that older child age was positively related to parent-initiated adoption discussions (Freeark, Rosenblum, Hus, & Root, 2008). Children may also encounter more adoption bias as they grow older, increasing parents' preparation for adoptism.

In addition, child and parent gender may shape parents' adoption-related socialization. Clinical and research accounts suggest that girls are more curious about and willing to engage in adoption-related conversations than boys (Freeark et al., 2005), which may shape parents' socialization practices. Similarly, mothers in heterosexual couples are more likely than fathers to initiate conversations with their children about adoption, regardless of child characteristics (e.g., gender; Freeark et al., 2005; Wrobel et al., 2003). Parents' sexual orientation may also affect adoption socialization. Insomuch as families with same-sex parents may be more visibly different, LG parents may encounter more discussion of the adoptive status of their child than heterosexual parents, and thus be more concerned about their children encountering adoption biases as a result, leading to greater preparation for such biases (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010).

Finally, aspects of the adoptive–birth family relationship may be related to adoption socialization. To the extent that adoptive parents have direct contact with their children's birth parents, they may be prompted to engage more fully with their child about their adoptive status, as such contact serves as an irrefutable reminder of the reality of their adoptive family (Siegel, 2003). And, parents who are more comfortable with and open about their family's formation may be more likely to both have contact with birth parents, and discuss adoption with their children.

Direct Socialization: Preparation for Heterosexism

Heterosexism—which includes the belief that heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships are normal and preferable to heterosexuality and same-sex relationships—is pervasive in society, and affects contemporary LG parent families, even amid advancements in marriage equality legislation (Goldberg, 2010; Oswald et al., 2005). Little work has explored when, why, and how LG parents discuss heterosexism with their children, or prepare them for it. One study of six lesbian-mother families with children aged 7–16 found that although parents minimized children's exposure to heterosexism, "[most] parents discuss[ed] having talked with their children about the kinds of homophobia and discrimination they may face in the future," with the goal of helping them to anticipate and process such situations (Litovich & Langhout, 2004, p. 422). In one family where the parents had adopted a child of color, they

"talk[ed] about prejudice in general" and felt that their child was "aware that people are racist and homophobic," showing how some parents sought to prepare their children for multiple forms of potential bias (p. 423).

Of interest is whether, as suggested by the research on racial socialization, LG parents who perceive sexual orientation-based discrimination as a problem for their families are more likely to engage in preparation for heterosexism (Goldberg, 2010). Qualitative research with LG parents suggests that when they perceive or anticipate more heterosexist prejudice, they are more likely to initiate discussions about it (Litovich & Langhout, 2004; Richardson & Goldberg, 2010).

Just as contact with birth parents might indicate or cultivate an overall openness to talking about adoption—including "difficult" aspects of adoption, such as stereotypes about adoption—it is possible that LG parents' overall openness about their sexual orientation might facilitate greater willingness to talk about, and prepare their children for, heterosexism. That is, LG parents who are more "out" might be more likely to engage in preparation for heterosexism.

Indirect Socialization: Modeling Openness and Engaging in Dialogue in Public Settings

While much of the research on socialization around bias has focused on direct socialization of children (i.e., speaking with them directly about bias), one component of a child's socialization around confronting bias is more indirect, whereby parents model openness and education of others around nonnormative identities. Adoptive families may encounter assumptions of biological relatedness between parents and children (i.e., if children are of the same race as their parents); or, questions about the child's background, adoptive status, and/or other parent, when children are not the same race as their parents. They may also face insensitive questions or comments about the child's adoption ("It's so kind of you to adopt her!" "Why did her mother give her up?"). In such instances, parents must decide whether to acknowledge their family's adoptive status and educate outsiders about their family (Goldberg, 2012). Qualitative work shows that at least some adoptive parents are attuned to the ways in which their responses serve as models to their children about how to respond to queries about their adoption (Suter et al., 2011). Parents who adopt transracially and LG parents may be more likely to engage in public dialogue about their families, as these families are more visibly adoptive and may expect inquiries about their families (Goldberg, 2012).

Regarding race, White parents who adopt children of color are more likely to confront questions about their children's racial background. Although research on transracial adoptive parents' public encounters with race-related inquiries is slim, existing work suggests that many adoptive parents are surprised by how freely strangers comment on, and make guesses about, their child's race and ethnic origins (Jacobson, 2009; Suter et al., 2011). LG parents may be more likely to engage in public dialogue about their child's race, because they may be more likely to expect inquiries regarding their family formation and within-family differences. They may also perceive themselves as having a responsibility to correct race-based ignorance, as they sometimes view themselves as social activists with little tolerance for injustice (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010).

Regarding family structure, LG parents may encounter presumptions of heterosexuality, especially when they navigate public settings with their child but without their partner (e.g., shopping, playground visits, and school drop offs). In turn, LG parents face frequent decision-making points whereby they can either come out (e.g., state that their child's other parent is also a man; that mommy is not "taking a break") or stay silent about their family structure (Goldberg, 2012). Even when they navigate the world as a family, this does not by itself eradicate such decision-making; same-sex partners may be "read" as siblings or friends (Goldberg, 2012). Parents may be more likely to correct presumptions of heterosexuality and educate others about their families if they are very "out" and thus more comfortable with such discussions (Goldberg, 2012).

The current exploratory study examines predictors of two dimensions of child socialization—direct socialization and indirect socialization—regarding three aspects of diversity and potential stigma: adoptive status, racial background (among children of color), and family structure (parent sexual orientation, among children with two mothers/two fathers). In predicting direct and indirect socialization regarding adoption/adoptism, we examine, using the full sample ($n = 235$ persons in 125 couples), the role of parent variables (gender, sexual orientation, race, education), child variables (gender, race, age), and adoption variables (child interest in talking about adoption, perceived marginalization of adoption at school, face-to-face contact with birth family in the past year). In predicting direct and indirect socialization about race/racism, we examine, among parents of children of color ($n = 152$ persons in 79 couples), the role of parent variables (gender, sexual orientation, race, education), child variables (gender, age), and race variables (perceived racial/cultural sensitivity at school). In predicting direct and indirect socialization about sexual orientation/heterosexism, we examine, among LG parents ($n = 149$ persons in 78 couples), the role of parent variables (gender, race, education), child variables (gender, race, age), and sexual orientation variables (perceived marginalization of LG parent families at school, parent outness).

Method

Participants

Data were taken from a longitudinal study of adoptive families, conducted by the first author. All 125 couples had adopted their first child about 5 years earlier. We used data from members of 42 female same-sex couples, 36 male same-sex couples, and 47 heterosexual couples to examine predictors of parents' socialization processes. Descriptive data from couples broken down by sexual orientation and gender are in Table 1. Multilevel linear modeling (MLM, in which parents were nested within couples) showed that parents' mean annual personal income differed by gender (but not by sexual orientation or Gender $\times$ Sexual Orientation), $t(131) = -2.95$, $p = .004$, with men reporting higher incomes ($M = \$98,226$, $SD = \$73,302$) than women ($M = \$54,386$, $SD = \$41,415$). The sample is more affluent than national census-derived estimates for same-sex and heterosexual adoptive families, which indicate that the average household incomes for same-sex couples and heterosexual married couples with adopted children are \$102,474 and \$81,900 (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007). The sample as a whole is well-educated, $M = 4.30$ ($SD = 1.08$, where $4 = $ bachelor's degree and $5 = $ master's degree). MLM showed no differences in education by parent gender, sexual orientation, or their interaction.

The parents were mostly White (89%), but their children were mostly of color (i.e., non-White, including biracial children; 63%). Fifty-three percent of couples adopted boys; 47% adopted girls. Chi-square tests showed that the distribution of parent race did not

Table 1
Descriptives for Predictor and Outcome Variables

	Total sample (M, SD or %)	Lesbian (M, SD, or %)	Gay (M, SD, or %)	Hetero women (M, SD, or %)	Hetero men (M, SD, or %)
Outcomes					
Direct soc, adoption	2.85 (1.18)	3.00 (1.24)	2.87 (1.23)	2.68 (1.04)	2.75 (1.13)
Indirect soc, adoption	3.54 (1.20)	3.70 (1.12)	3.63 (1.11)	3.33 (.93)	3.23 (1.16)
Direct soc, sexual orientation	3.19 (1.13)	3.14 (1.10)	3.18 (1.01)	—	—
Indirect soc, sexual orientation	3.65 (1.08)	3.62 (1.13)	3.70 (1.02)	—	—
Direct soc, race	2.84 (1.16)	3.04 (1.21)	2.91 (1.31)	2.55 (.90)	2.60 (.99)
Indirect soc, race	3.20 (1.20)	3.35 (1.13)	3.54 (1.34)	2.85 (1.34)	2.74 (1.03)
Predictors					
Parent race (of color)	11%	12%	13%	7%	10%
Parent education	4.30 (1.08)	4.33 (1.03)	4.37 (1.12)	4.38 (1.01)	4.08 (1.14)
Child age in years	6.32 (2.55)	6.40 (2.94)	6.55 (2.92)	6.19 (2.10)	6.00 (1.99)
Child gender (female)	47%	52%	40%	53%	47%
Child race (of color)	63%	71%	51%	66%	65%
Child interest in adoption	2.37 (.86)	2.51 (.91)	2.19 (.74)	2.26 (.91)	2.51 (.84)
School exclusion, adoption	9%	14%	7%	4%	3%
School exclusion, sexual orientation	16%	20%	13%	—	—
Cultural sensitivity, school	3.34 (.52)	3.33 (.48)	3.46 (.46)	3.26 (.61)	3.23 (.55)
Birth family face-to-face contact	31%	24%	49%	26%	22%
Openness about sexual orientation	4.90 (.46)	4.82 (.59)	5.00 (.25)	—	—

Note. Differing %s between heterosexual wives and husbands on child age, child gender, and child race reflect the pattern of missing data (i.e., in seven couples, only wives had data on these variables, and in one couple, only the husband had data on these variables). Hetero = heterosexual; Soc = socialization.

differ by parent gender, sexual orientation, or their interaction; child, race and gender did not differ by family type.

Children's average age was 6.32 years ($SD = 2.55$); ANOVA showed that child age did not differ by family type. Fifty-two percent of children attended public school, and 49% of children attended private schools. Chi-square tests showed that school type did not differ by family type.

Recruitment and Procedures

Participants were recruited during the preadoptive period (while couples were waiting for a child). Inclusion criteria were (a) couples must be adopting their first child and (b) both partners must be becoming parents for the first time. Adoption agencies throughout the United States were asked to provide study information to clients who had not yet adopted; this information was typically in the form of a brochure describing a study of the transition to adoptive parenthood. We invited both same-sex and heterosexual couples to participate. U.S. census data were used to identify states with a high percentage of same-sex couples (Gates & Ost, 2004); effort was made to contact agencies in those states. We recruited both heterosexual and same-sex couples through these agencies, in an effort to match couples roughly on geographic status and financial status. Over 30 agencies provided information to clients, who were asked to contact the researchers for details.

Participants in the study completed interviews and questionnaires before the adoptive placement and 3 months post-placement. Five years post-placement, parents were contacted and asked to participate in a follow-up, in which both partners were asked to separately fill out another set of questionnaires. Data come from this 5-year post-placement follow-up.

Measures

Outcome variables. There were six outcome variables employed in this study.

Direct socialization, adoption (preparation for adoptism). Three items measured parental socialization surrounding adoption/adoptism. Parents were asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely/infrequently,* 3 = *some of the time/sometimes*, 4 = *most of the time/frequently,* 5 = *all of the time/often*), how often they engaged in the following socialization practices: (a) I talk to my child about adoptism (e.g., the belief that families formed by adoption are less connected than birth families, the belief that adoptive parents are not "real" parents); (b) I teach my child how to respond to and cope with adoptism; and (c) I teach my child how to respond to questions about their adoption/adoptive status. The items were summed and averaged to form a measure of parental preparation for adoption-related bias/adoptism. Cronbach's alpha was .80 for the sample.

Direct socialization, race (preparation for racism). Parents who adopted children of color responded to three items assessing direct socialization surrounding race/racism, using the same response scale as above: (a) I talk to my child about racism; (b) I teach my child how to respond and cope with racism; and (c) I teach my child how to respond and cope with questions about their racial background. Cronbach's alpha was .87 for the sample.

Direct socialization, sexual orientation (preparation for heterosexism). Parents in same-sex couples responded to three items assessing direct socialization about sexual orientation/het-erosexism, using the same response scale: (a) I talk to my children about heterosexism/homophobia in ways they can understand (e.g., I tell them that in many states lesbian and gay couples cannot get married); (b) I teach my child how to respond to and cope with homophobia; and (c) I teach my child how to respond to and cope with questions about their family structure (i.e., the fact that they have two dads or two moms; the fact that they do not have a mom or a dad). Cronbach's alpha for the sample was .82.

Indirect socialization, adoption (public education/modeling). Parents responded to two items assessing indirect socialization surrounding adoption/adoptism, using the same response scale: (a) I educate strangers about my child's adoption/adoptive status (when it comes up) in front of my child; and (b) I correct strangers' incorrect beliefs or assumptions about adoption in front of my child. Items were correlated at $r = .84$ for the sample.

Indirect socialization, race (public education/modeling). Parents who adopted children of color responded to two items assessing indirect socialization surrounding race/racism, using the same response scale: (a) I educate strangers about my child's racial background (when it comes up) in front of my child; and (b) I correct strangers' incorrect beliefs or assumptions about my child's racial background in front of my child. Items were correlated at $r = .75$ for the sample.

Indirect socialization, sexual orientation (public education/modeling). Parents in same-sex couples responded to two items assessing indirect socialization surrounding sexual orientation/heterosexism, using the same response scale: (a) I "come out" to strangers in front of my child; and (b) I correct strangers' presumptions of heterosexuality (i.e., when strangers presume I am a heterosexually married parent) in front of my child. Items were correlated at .82.

Predictors: Parent variables.

Sexual orientation. Sexual orientation refers to whether participants were in same-sex or heterosexual relationships, where 1 = *same-sex parent* and 0 = *heterosexual parent*.

Gender. Parent gender was measured with a dummy variable: 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*.

Race. Parent race was coded 1, 0, where 1 = *of color* (including multiracial/biracial) and 0 = *White/Caucasian*. Eighty-nine percent of the parent sample was White; 11% was of color.

Education. Parents indicated where their level of education fell on a 6-point scale, where 1 = *less than high school education*, 2 = *high school diploma*, 3 = *associate's degree or some college*, 4 = *bachelor's degree*, 5 = *master's degree*, and 6 = *Ph.D./M.D./JD*.

Predictors: Child variables.

Age. Parents indicated the age of their child, in years, at the time of the interview.

Gender. Child gender was measured with a dummy variable: 1 = *female* and 0 = *male*.

Race. Child race was coded 1, 0, where 1 = *of color* (including multiracial/biracial) and 0 = *White/Caucasian*. Sixty-three percent of the child sample was of color; 37% was White.

Predictors: Adoption variables.

Child interest in adoption. We used a one-item measure to assess parents' reports of their child's interest in their adoption. Parents were asked: "How much interest does your child show in adoption or the fact that s/he was adopted?" and responded using the following scale: 1 = *none*, 2 = *a little*, 3 = *some,* and 4 = *a lot*. Thus, higher scores indicate more interest.

Face-to-face contact with birth family. We used a one-item measure to assess parents' contact with birth family. Parents indicated whether they had had face-to-face contact with their child's birth family over the past year ($1 = yes$, $0 = no$); 31% reported that they had.

School exclusion based on adoptive status. We used a one-item measure to assess parents' perceived exclusion from their child's school based on their adoptive status. Parents were asked to indicate yes (1) or no (0) to the following question: "Have you felt excluded by school policies or curricula on the basis of your adoptive family status? (e.g., have you felt that positive representations of adopted people/families are absent from school curricula; have you felt that school policies or procedures fail to acknowledge adoptive families?)" Positive scores indicate the perception of exclusion. Nine percent of the sample answered affirmatively.

Predictors: Race variables: School racial/cultural sensitivity. We used the racial/cultural sensitivity subscale (four items) from the School Receptivity Questionnaire (Sanders, 2008). Using a 4-point scale ($1 = $ *strongly disagree* to $4 = $ *strongly agree*), parents responded to these items: "My teacher makes culturally sensitive statements," "My child's teacher is well-trained to deal with parents and students from different ethnic and racial backgrounds," "My child's teacher is familiar with the surrounding neighborhoods," and "My child's teacher considers my child's cultural background when planning for his/her educational program." Sanders reported construct validity evidence and acceptable internal consistency for the subscale ($\alpha = .80$). In our study, the alpha for the subscale was .80.

Predictors: Sexual orientation variables.

Openness about sexual orientation. We used an 8-item measure to assess openness about sexual orientation. Parents in same-sex relationships indicated how "out" they were in eight domains (neighbors, coworkers, supervisors, child's teachers, parents at child's school, own family, partner's family, and friends) using a 5 point scale: $1 = $ *closeted/out to no one*; $2 = $ *mostly closeted/out to a few people*; $3 = $ *somewhat out/out to some people*; $4 = $ *mostly out/out to most people*; $5 = $ *completely out/out to everyone*. Participants' average score across these eight domains represents the measure of outness used in the analyses. Cronbach's alpha was .78.

School exclusion based on sexual orientation. We used a one-item measure to assess parents' perceived exclusion from their child's school based on their sexual orientation. Participants in same-sex relationships indicated yes (1) or no (0) to the question, "Have you felt excluded from school policies or curricula on the basis of your sexual orientation? (e.g., have you felt that positive representations of LGBT people/families are absent from school curricula; have you felt that school policies or procedures fail to acknowledge LGBT parent families?)" Positive scores indicate the perception of exclusion. Sixteen percent of the sample reported affirmatively.

Analytic Strategy

There were 235 persons nested in 125 couples in the sample. Because we examined partners nested in couples, it was necessary to use a method that would account for the within-couple dependency in the outcome scores. Multilevel modeling (MLM) permits examination of the effects of individual and dyad level variables,

accounts for the shared variance, and provides accurate standard errors for testing the regression coefficients relating predictor variables to outcome scores (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2002). MLM adjusts the error variance for the interdependence of partner outcomes within the same dyad, which results in more accurate standard errors and associated hypothesis tests. The multilevel models tested were two-level random intercept models such that partners (Level 1) were nested in couples (Level 2; Smith, Sayer, & Goldberg, 2013). To deal with intracouple differences, the Level-1 model was a within-couples model that used information from both members of the couple to define one parameter—an intercept, or average score—for each couple. This intercept is a random variable that is treated as an outcome variable at Level 2. Predictors that differed *within* couples (e.g., gender, education) were entered at Level 1. Predictors that varied *between* couples (e.g., sexual orientation, child age) were entered at Level 2. Each variable was entered alone and in combination with other variables to test for collinearity. Effect sizes are not provided, as reliable estimates of effect sizes cannot be calculated for MLM analysis of cross-sectional dyadic data, because the variance estimates on which the calculations of effect sizes are based are unreliable and often biased due to the limited number of observations (two) in each group (Maas & Hox, 2005; Raudenbush, 2008). Findings are reported as significant at $p < .05$. For the main multivariate models, additional findings at $p < .10$ are reported (as trends) due to the exploratory nature of the study. Data were missing for 15 persons in the 125 couples: four lesbians, three gay men, seven heterosexual men, and one heterosexual woman.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the $N = 235$ participants (in 125 couples) can be found in Table 1. Looking at mean levels of socialization across the total sample, parents reported higher levels of indirect socialization than direct socialization; indirect socialization around sexual orientation was higher than indirect socialization around adoption and race (Ms = 3.65, 3.54, 3.20, respectively, where $3 = $ *sometimes* and $4 = $ *frequently*), and direct socialization around sexual orientation-related stigma was higher than preparation for both adoption- and race-related stigma (Ms = 3.19, 2.85, and 2.84, respectively, where $2 = $ *rarely* and $3 = $ *sometimes*). Chi-square tests were used to examine whether dichotomous predictors differed by group (lesbian-, gay-, heterosexual-parent families) for child characteristics (gender; race) or by parent gender and sexual orientation for variables that varied by parent (school exclusion; contact with birth family).[1] ANOVA was used to test differences by family type (lesbian-, gay-, heterosexual-parent families) in child age. As both parents reported on all other continuous variables, MLM was used to examine whether they differed by parent sexual orientation, parent gender, and their interaction. Members of same-sex couples saw

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[1] Note that chi-square tests do not deal with the nested nature of the data for perceived school exclusion and contact with birth family, but MLM is unable to provide reliable estimate for binary data in the case of dyadic data (Raudenbush, 2008; Smith, Sayer & Goldberg, 2013).

their children's schools as more racially/culturally sensitive than members of heterosexual couples, at the level of a trend, $t(183) = 1.87$, $p = .063$. Within same-sex couples, outness differed by gender, such that women were less out, $t(77) = -2.17$, $p = .033$. Child race differed by group, $\chi^2(2, 229) = 6.79$, $p = .035$, such that 71% of lesbian couples, 65% of heterosexual couples, and 52% of gay couples had adopted children of color. Lesbians were more likely to adopt children of color than gay men, $\chi^2(1, 145) = 6.30$, $p = .017$. Birth family contact differed by family type, $\chi^2(2, 229) = 6.80$, $p = .035$: 24% of lesbian parents, 49% of gay parents, and 24% of heterosexual parents had seen the birth parents in the past year. Gay men were more likely to have seen them than lesbian parents, $\chi^2(1, 145) = 9.85$, $p = .003$, and heterosexual parents, $\chi^2(1, 152) = 10.11$, $p = .002$.

Correlations Among Outcomes

In Table 2, we report intercorrelations among the outcome variables (for both individuals and couples). Indirect forms of socialization tended to be highly intercorrelated, and direct forms of socialization tended to be highly intercorrelated. This was particularly true of adoption- and race-related outcomes. Thus, if parents engaged in one form of preparation for bias, they were likely to engage in others. If parents were open in public about one aspect of their family, they tended to be open about others. MLM showed all outcomes to be associated at $p < .05$.

Multilevel Modeling: Direct Socialization

Preparation for adoptism. Aspects of the parent, child, and adoptive context were examined in predicting preparation for adoptism (see Table 3). For parent variables, we assessed gender, sexual orientation, race, and education. For child variables, we considered age, gender, and race. For adoption variables, we considered child interest in talking about adoption, parents' perception of exclusion related to adoption at the child's school, and direct birth-family contact.

Parents with older children reported engaging in more preparation for adoptism, $\beta = .12$, $SE = .03$, $t(123) = 3.54$, $p = .001$. Although not statistically significant, parents of girls reported more preparation for adoptism, at the level of a trend, $\beta = .28$, $SE = .16$, $t(124) = 1.70$, $p = .091$. Parents who saw their children as more interested in adoption engaged in more preparation, $\beta = .30$, $SE = .10$, $t(195) = 3.02$, $p = .003$.

In follow-up analyses, we examined the interactions between parent gender and sexual orientation, and between child age and child interest in adoption. They were not significant.

Preparation for racism. In predicting preparation for racism, we selected parents with children of color ($n = 79$ couples); this included parents of biracial and multiracial children. Regarding predictors, for parent variables, we considered gender, sexual orientation, race, and education. For child variables, we considered age and gender. One race-specific predictor was included: perceived school racial/cultural sensitivity. Parents of color, $\beta = .55$, $SE = .25$, $t(114) = 2.18$, $p = .032$, and parents of girls, $\beta = .63$, $SE = .20$, $t(73) = 3.12$, $p = .003$, engaged in more preparation for bias. While not significant, parents of older children engaged in more preparation for bias, at the level of a trend, $\beta = .12$, $SE = .07$, $t(73) = 1.69$, $p = .095$. And, while not significant, parents who viewed the school as less racially/culturally sensitive engaged in more preparation for bias, at the level of a trend, $\beta = -.32$, $SE = .16$, $t(117) = -1.71$, $p = .085$.

Several follow-up analyses were conducted. We examined the effect of partner race on racial socialization to see whether being partnered with a person of color made it more likely that White parents would engage in racial socialization. This was in the expected direction, but not significant ($p < .15$). A Gender × Sexual Orientation interaction was tested; it was nonsignificant.

Preparation for heterosexism. Only parents in same-sex couples were included in these analyses ($n = 78$ couples). In predicting preparation for heterosexism, we included the same parent variables (gender, race, education) and child variables (age, gender, race) as in prior models. For sexual orientation variables,

Table 2
Intercorrelations Among Outcome Variables

	Direct adoption	Indirect adoption	Direct sex or	Indirect sex or	Direct race	Indirect race
Direct adoption	—	**.22***	**.48****	.29*	**.68****	.31**
Indirect adoption	*.34****	—	.14	*.31***	.09	*.58***
Direct sex or	**.50*****	.28**	—	***.36*****	**.57****	.29ᵗ
Indirect sex or	.20*	*.41****	**.37*****	—	.23ᵗ	*.11*
Direct race	**.57*****	.16*	**.62*****	.30***	—	***.31*****
Indirect race	.33***	*.64****	.34***	*.40****	**.30*****	—

Note. The upper right triangle shows correlations among couples' scores (means for each couple), while the lower left quadrant shows correlations between individuals which do *not* account for the dependence in the data of having two respondents per couple. This provides a range within which to understand the degree of association (as reliable standardized estimates cannot be obtained using MLM). MLM models showed significant relationships among all of the outcomes at $p < .05$. Bold indicates associations among measures of direct socialization, italic indicates those among measures of indirect socialization, and bold italic indicates associations between direct and indirect socialization for a particular area (i.e., adoption, sexual orientation, race). Correlations with race outcomes (direct and indirect socialization) are for only those participants with children of color. Correlations with sexual orientation outcomes (direct and indirect socialization) are for only those participants in same-sex relationships. Sex or = Sexual orientation.
ᵗ $p < .10$.   * $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Multilevel Models Predicting Direct and Indirect Socialization

Predictor	Direct soc, adoption (β, SE) n = 125	Indirect soc, adoption (β, SE) n = 125	Direct soc, sexual orientation (β, SE) n = 78	Indirect soc, sexual orientation (β, SE) n = 78	Direct soc, race (β, SE) n = 79	Indirect soc, race (β, SE) n = 79
Intercept	1.35 (.48)**	1.94 (.47)***	.67 (.87)	.33 (1.02)	1.95 (.86)*	2.26 (.99)*
Sexual orientation (same-sex)	.22 (.17)	.36 (.16)*			.31 (.21)	.55 (.21)*
Parent gender (female)	−.02 (.16)	.05 (.15)	−.10 (.17)	.009 (.20)	−.004 (.18)	−.01 (.21)
Parent race (of color)	.38 (.26)	−.01 (.25)	.41 (.26)	.32 (.30)	.55 (.25)*	−.25 (.33)
Parent education	−.07 (.07)	.04 (.06)	.05 (.07)	.15 (.08)t	.12 (.09)	.18 (.09)t
Child age in years	.12 (.03)**	.02 (.03)	.16 (.03)***	.05 (.03)	.12 (.07)t	.05 (.07)
Child gender (female)	.28 (.16)t	−.03 (.16)	.41 (.17)*	.04 (.19)	.63 (.20)**	.15 (.20)
Child race (of color)	.22 (.17)	.03 (.16)	.38 (.18)*	−.14 (.20)		
Child interest in adoption	.30 (.10)**	.35 (.09)***				
School exclusion, adoption	.22 (.27)	.09 (.25)				
School exclusion, sexual orientation			.36 (.20)t	.18 (.25)		
Birth family face-to-face contact	.14 (.18)	.31 (.16)t				
Openness about sexual orientation			.16 (.16)	−.62 (.18)**		
School cultural sensitivity					−.32 (.16)t	−.17 (.21)

Note. Soc = socialization.
t $p < .10$.   * $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

we considered parents' level of outness and perceived exclusion related to parent sexual orientation at school. Parents of older children, $\beta = .16$, $SE = .03$, $t(72) = 5.25$, $p < .001$, parents of children of color, $\beta = .38$, $SE = .18$, $t(82) = 2.08$, $p = .041$, and parents of girls, $\beta = .41$, $SE = .17$, $t(72) = 2.35$, $p = .022$, engaged in more preparation for heterosexism. Although not significant, parents who perceived school exclusion were more likely to engage in preparation for heterosexism, at the level of a trend, $\beta = .36$, $SE = .20$, $t(140) = 1.74$, $p = .085$.

Multilevel Modeling: Indirect Socialization

Educating outsiders about adoption. The same variables used to predict direct socialization about adoption were entered in predicting indirect socialization about adoption (i.e., educating outsiders about adoption in front of the child). LG parents reported higher levels of indirect socialization, $\beta = .36$, $SE = .16$, $t(123) = 2.24$, $p = .027$, as did parents who reported more child interest in adoption, $\beta = .35$, $SE = .09$, $t(195) = 3.67$, $p < .001$. While not significant, parents who reported face-to-face contact with birth parents in the past year were also more likely to engage in indirect socialization, at the level of a trend, $\beta = .31$, $SE = .16$, $t(123) = 1.82$, $p = .075$.

We tested the same set of interactions as we did with preparation for adoptism: namely, parent Gender × Sexual Orientation; Child Age × Child Interest in Adoption. Neither were significant.

Educating outsiders about race. The same variables used to predict direct socialization about race were used to predict indirect socialization about race (i.e., educating outsiders about the child's race in front of the child). LG parents reported engaging in more indirect socialization, $\beta = .55$, $SE = .21$, $t(74) = 2.59$, $p = .012$. While not significant, more educated parents reported more indirect socialization, at the level of a trend, $\beta = .18$, $SE = .09$, $t(100) = 1.68$, $p = .096$.

We conducted the same follow-up analyses as for preparation for racism: Namely, we tested the effect of partner race, and Parent Gender × Sexual Orientation. Neither were significant.

Educating outsiders about sexual orientation. The same variables used to predict parents' direct socialization regarding sexual orientation were used to predict indirect socialization about sexual orientation (i.e., the degree to which they educated outsiders about their family structure in front of the child). Although not significant, more educated parents reported more indirect socialization, at the level of a trend, $\beta = .15$, $SE = .08$, $t(122) = 1.68$, $p = .098$. Parents who were more "out" engaged in more indirect socialization, $\beta = .62$, $SE = .18$, $t(128) = 3.28$, $p = .001$.

Discussion

While similarities in the predictors of socialization across the types of discrimination for which parents were preparing children were expected, the extent to which these were specific to type of socialization (direct or indirect) was striking. In general, having an older child and a girl were related to more *direct* socialization across all types of bias, and raising a child as a sexual minority was related to more *indirect* socialization around adoption and race (although two of these were only trends). Higher education was related to more indirect socialization around sexual orientation and race but not adoption (although these were only trends). As prior work has focused on specific types of bias, we expected responses to be more highly correlated within type of bias rather than across type of socialization (direct or indirect); however, parent reports of socialization were more strongly associated by type of socialization than by type of bias. Regardless, there were significant associations among all forms of socialization, suggesting that parents who engage in direct socialization are also likely to engage in indirect socialization, and if they socialize their child around one type of bias, they are more likely to socialize them around other types.

Regarding direct socialization, we found that parents reported more preparation for adoptism when they had older children, girls, and perceived more interest on the part of their children in regards to talking about adoption. Differences regarding age are particularly striking given the constrained range in ages and the young

age of the sample (75% were between 4.80 and 6.50 years). Parents tend to be reluctant to prepare their children for identity-based discrimination because they do not want to worry their children needlessly; in turn, they may not wish to initiate such conversations until their child has the cognitive and emotional ability to understand and learn from them (Litovich & Langhout, 2004). Further, basic understanding of what it means to be adopted is often still developing among kindergarten-aged children (Brodzinsky, 2011); thus, parents might deem it unwise to discuss negative societal ideas about being adopted before first ensuring that they have instilled a sense of pride in their children regarding their adoptive status. During the early school age years, some adoptive families are just beginning to have conversations about having become a family via adoption rather than by birth. In turn, parents are learning how to respond to their children's awareness of their family structure (Freeark et al., 2005). As children become more cognitively and verbally sophisticated, they are better able to communicate interest in adoption, and parents are increasingly able to engage them about adoption, including preparing them for bias (Freeark et al., 2008; Wrobel et al., 2003). Also, as children grow older, they are more likely to encounter stigmatization (Docan-Morgan, 2011). Thus, their parents may be more likely to prepare them for bias because they come home with real-life examples to discuss.

Parents who view their children as being more interested in talking about their adoption (e.g., origins information, birth family) may have an easier time easing into conversations that involve lessons about the existence of and potential responses to adoption biases. Of course, parents who do not feel comfortable initiating conversations may choose to rationalize their lack of communication as related to their child's disinterest. Indeed, parents foster children's interest in part by promoting "communicative openness" about adoption in general (Brodzinsky, 2006).

As we saw, children's gender may have implications for parents' adoption socialization. Girls often develop language faster than boys (Keenan & Shaw, 1997); in turn, children's verbal abilities have implications for the nature and depth of parent–child conversations. Further, boys may tend to be less curious or communicative about adoption than girls, who have been found to talk more openly about their adoption in a family context (Brodzinsky, 2011; Freeark et al., 2008). Parents may therefore find it easier to prepare girls for adoptism than boys. Alternatively, parents may feel more protective of their daughters, and thus engage in more preparation for adoptism.

Regarding preparation for racism, we again found that direct socialization (a) was more likely among parents of girls; and (b) may be more likely in parents of older children, although this was only a trend. Again, older children and girls may be, or be viewed as, more cognitively and emotionally capable of handling, and willing to engage in, difficult conversations about the stigma that might be inflicted upon them because of the nature of their families. Or, again, parents may feel more protective of their daughters, and thus compelled to prepare them for racial bias.

We found that parents of color were more likely to engage in preparation for racism than White parents, which is unsurprising, because the former group (a) is likely to have experienced racism, and (b) may have themselves been socialized as children regarding racism; indeed, prior work found that parents who report more childhood socialization around racism engaged in more socialization around racism with their children (Hughes & Chen, 1997). We found that parents who viewed schools as less racially sensitive were more likely to report preparation for racism at the level of a trend, consistent with prior work showing a link between parents' perceptions of racial stigma toward their children and preparation for racial bias (Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

We found that, among LG parents, preparation for heterosexism was more likely among parents with children who were (a) older; (b) girls; and (c) of color; and, at marginal significance, parents who perceived schools as exclusionary with regard to sexual orientation. The findings on child age and gender suggest the possible role of real or perceived ability to handle discussions regarding stigma. LG parents of children of color may be sensitized to the fact that their children may confront stigma on multiple counts, and be motivated to prepare them for the type of stigma that they personally are most familiar with (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010). This finding is notable alongside our finding that parent sexual orientation did not predict other types of preparation for bias (i.e., adoption or race). The tendency—at the level of a trend—for parents who perceived exclusion in their school communities to engage in more preparation for heterosexism mirrors prior work on racial socialization, showing that parents who have experienced or anticipate discrimination are more likely to prepare their children for racism (Hughes et al., 2006).

Regarding indirect socialization, we found that this type of socialization was more likely among parents in same-sex relationships and parents who viewed their children as interested in adoption, and more likely, although not statistically significant, among parents who reported contact with birth parents. These three variables have something in common, in that they all serve as proxies or indicators of openness. Parents who perceive their children as interested in adoption have likely been engaged in more dialogue with them in general about adoption. Same-sex couples who pursue adoption are more visible to outsiders *as* adoptive parents (i.e., it is a more common route to parenthood within this group than within heterosexual couples), which likely prepares them for more frequent conversations about adoption, making it easier to be open about the nature of their families when these issues arise (plus, they do not have the same pressures as heterosexual couples to conform to heteronormative models of family building; Goldberg, 2012).

That parents who had in-person visits with birth parents were more likely (at the level of a trend) to be open about and educate others about their adoptive families in public is notable, as it suggests that contact may make it harder to ignore negative assumptions about adoption, or more necessary to confront such assumptions and engage in adoption activism. Having direct contact with birth parents may serve to remind parents of their adoptive status, and increase comfort with talking about their family form; such contact may then increase transparency in multiple domains. But because this finding was not significant (i.e., only a trend), caution in interpretation is warranted.

In terms of indirect socialization regarding race, public dialogue about their child's racial background was more likely in parents in same-sex relationships, and more likely among parents with more education, at the level of a trend. Again, LG parents have more

experience with, and may be more prepared for, strangers' queries about their families (Goldberg, 2012). Their visibility as couples who clearly build their families in alternative ways may prompt them to be more open to talking about their families' formation. Regarding education, perhaps more educated parents live in or navigate more progressive communities, and thus feel safer and more at ease than parents with fewer resources when considering public disclosures about their multicultural families and their children's racial background (Goldberg, 2012)—but given the nonsignificant nature of the association, research is needed to establish its strength.

Regarding indirect socialization about heterosexism, we found that parents who were more "out" were more likely to publicly acknowledge, and educate others about, their family structure; and there was a trend showing that more educated parents were also more likely to engage in these behaviors. The finding regarding openness is unsurprising; it suggests a general valuing of acknowledging and engaging in issues around sexual orientation, as well as being likely to invite opportunities for discussion of related issues in front of their child. The opposite is also true: Parents who are less out prior to becoming parents often struggle with the added visibility that being a gay, adoptive parent brings, and may balk at outsiders' questions about their families (Goldberg, 2012). And, again, more educated parents may be more game to engage in such discussions because they reside in areas where they do not feel threatened by outsiders' questions.

Limitations

As an exploratory study in an understudied area of research, this investigation has several limitations and suggests many areas for future work. First, our outcome measures of socialization are new measures, with few items each, and unproven validity (despite high internal consistency). They would benefit from extensive testing for reliability and validity, particularly among LG and adoptive parents; in-depth, evaluation of their psychometric properties could inform their future use and possible modification. Future work should also examine (a) whether our conceptualization of and distinction between indirect and direct socialization is meaningful and valid in other samples; and (b) whether the forms of indirect and direct socialization assessed are related in meaningful ways to other domains of interest (e.g., is parents' preparation for racial bias related to children's competence for addressing racist remarks?). Regarding direct socialization, we examined the extent to which parents said they had engaged in conversations (e.g., regarding adoption) with children; we did not examine the content of the conversations, which may vary significantly across parents reporting similar levels. Qualitative work should explore how parents talk about these issues with children, and the perceived success of various discursive strategies. Also, unknown is how much these parents talk to their children in general regarding their adoptive status, racial background (and racial differences within the family), and family structure. Future work should seek to assess frequency and type of conversations in general, in addition to preparation for bias. Further, parents enter into conversations about racism, heterosexism, and adoptism with differing degrees of comfort with and knowledge of these issues. It would useful to assess parents' comfort

with and preparation for addressing such issues with their children.

Also, our measures were based on parents' perceptions. Teacher and child reports of domains such as exclusion and socialization would provide essential alternate perspectives. Our use of single-item measures to asses these domains may have limited reliability and validity. Furthermore, some of these measures assessed dimensions that are complex (e.g., perceived exclusion at school) and perhaps would be better addressed with multi-item scales.

The sample was affluent and well-educated, which shaped the types of communities that they inhabited, the types of schools their children attended, and their exposure to (and ways of addressing) bias. Also, parents were predominantly White. Parents of color were grouped together, as were children of color, and it was not possible to examine many of the complexities around race and ethnicity in the sample. We also did not examine the role of parents' racial beliefs on racial socialization practices; prior work has shown that adoptive parents who endorse more color-blind attitudes engage in less racial socialization (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2012; Robinson-Wood, 2011).

Finally, there is a need for research utilizing larger samples, as this would enable us to conduct within-group analyses and test interactions. Future longitudinal research would also be helpful in exploring causal links between predictors of socialization and socialization behaviors. Our study was cross-sectional, making it impossible to establish whether, for example, child interest in adoption leads to greater direct socialization regarding adoption, or vice versa.

Conclusions and Future Research

This exploratory study provides data that can guide future theoretical and empirical work on complex families, such as families that are characterized by one or more forms of difference and potential stigma. Findings show moderate levels of preparation for bias around adoption, race, and family structure during early school age, raising questions about trajectories and predictors of parent socialization over time. Do parents increase their preparation for bias as children grow older and are exposed to more stigma, in multiple contexts? What parent, child, and contextual factors determine which types of biases are emphasized? What strategies do parents use to prepare children for bias? Also of interest is whether indirect forms of socialization tend to follow different trajectories. As children grow older, children may not want their parents to share details about their adoption, race, and family structure with strangers. Parents may back away from such conversations to afford their children privacy and their own voice in fielding such questions.

In that families are increasingly diverse in U.S. society, many families must prepare to socialize their children for various forms of difference that may be met with bias. This study takes a first step in highlighting which families may be most likely to engage in different forms of socialization regarding their children's minority identities. Future work can build on it to examine (a) how socialization processes unfold over time, and (b) how socialization processes shape child outcomes (e.g., racial identity, comfort with adoptive status, and pride in their family structure).

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