

Cultural and Racial Socialization in Spanish Transracial Adoptive Families

Socialización cultural y racial en las familias españolas adoptivas transraciales

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Abstract: The article analyzes the particular contexts in which families that adopted children from other countries and racial groups negotiate the challenges posed by the “transracial adoption paradox”: the contradictions in daily social interaction that stem from the dual social position of the children vis-à-vis their host/adopting society. While enjoying the privileges associated with living in families belonging to the racial and ethnic hegemonic group, these children are, at the same time, potentially vulnerable to the kind of discrimination and social stigmatization endured by racial minorities. The data have been extracted from the “Adoptive families and their lifestyles” survey (2012) and are based on a questionnaire answered by 230 Spanish interracial families who adopted children abroad. The results show how adoptive parents tend to put in practice socialization patterns close to assimilation/acculturation into the mainstream culture, while reproducing at the same time the ideology of colorblind racism.

Key words: transracial adoptions, colorblind racism, cultural and racial socialization, racial hierarchy, transracial family.

Resumen: El artículo aborda el estudio del *proceso de socialización cultural y racial* con el que las familias que adoptan a sus hijas e hijos en el extranjero afrontan la *paradoja transracial*. Esta describe los contextos de interacción cotidianos en los que su prole deberá negociar las contradicciones inherentes que devienen de disfrutar los privilegios asociados a vivir en un hogar que participa del tipo racial y étnico hegemónico, al tiempo que se es objeto de discriminación racial y estigmatización social, pues sus diferencias fenotípicas hacen que sea identificada como una minoría. Los datos proceden de la encuesta “Las familias adoptivas y sus estilos de vida” (2012), cumplimentada por 230 familias españolas que adoptaron en el extranjero. Los resultados describen cómo las madres y padres adoptivos transraciales despliegan patrones de socialización próximos a la asimilación cultural o

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aculturación en la cultura mayoritaria, reproduciendo la ideología del *racismo daltónico*.

Palabras clave: adopciones transraciales, racismo daltónico, socialización cultural y racial, jerarquía racial, familia transracial.

Introduction

Social limits in racial hierarchy: contributions from sociology of adoptions¹

The phenomenon of interracial or transracial adoption², seen as “the practice of placing a child in a family of a race³ or ethnic group that differs from the child’s biological family” (Park, 2012: 480), challenges the norm of family racial homogeneity and raises questions regarding the role of the institution in the socialization process of its children. Through this process, people internalize social norms, develop the skills and competencies necessary for social interaction, assume the culture of their environment and develop their identity. Generally, in childhood, socialization occurs between parents and children who share the same race and/or ethnic group. In this context, it is the families themselves and the community who participate not only as agents of socialization but also as a reference group and refuge.

1 The research presented has been carried out within the framework of the project “The (baby) boom of international adoptions in Spain. Sociological research on adoptive families and their lifestyles” (2012) (R + D + I-2008-2011), funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain.

2 In the study of *adoptions*, the qualifiers “international” and “transnational” are often applied interchangeably: the former prevails in demographic approaches, while the latter is used when seeking to emphasize the racial, ethnic, or cultural dimensions of the phenomenon. In turn, the terms “transracial” or “interracial” *adoptive family* refer to families in which the parents establish kinship ties with children of different racial and/or ethnic origin.

3 The recognition by the scientific community that the construct “race” has no scientific validity to explain exogroup differences, together with the extension in democratic societies of the values of individualism, freedom and equality, has led to the emergence of, following Balibar (1991: 37), a “racism without races” that would sustain racial prejudices in cultural differences and not, as did traditional racism, in biological ones. However, phenotypic differences – *stigmas of race* – continue to be used socially to distinguish and classify into an economic position (*class racism*), culture and nationality (*cultural racism*) and religion (*religious racism*). In this article we focus our interest on “colorblind racism,” which is widely applied in the study of interracial adoptive families.

However, the process of socialization among transracial adoptive families appears with three distinct elements: between parents and offspring phenotypic differences are appreciated that will act as *stigmas of the race*; the daughters and sons live contradictory experiences, since, in the society of destination, they are ascribed to racial and / or ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, in the family, even among themselves, they are perceived and treated as if they were members of the majority culture due to their adoption into a white family (*transracial paradox*); and the “breakup model” that adoptive practice has imposed on the family and community of origin (Yngvesson, 2000: 171) restricts the access of children adopted abroad to the resources that usually participate in the socialization process.

Research addressing *the process of cultural and racial socialization in transracial adoptive families is an emerging area of sociological study, offering critical insight into how families address various aspects of the so-called transracial*⁴ paradox faced by children of racial and ethnic minorities who are adopted by white parents (Lee, 2003: 711). This process in transracial adoptive families involves the development, throughout the life of girls and boys, of *bicultural competences*. That is, following Thomas and Tessler (2007: 1192), they will be socialized in both the dominant culture (country of destination) and the one of birth (country of origin). The dual learning of cultural values, beliefs and behaviors will allow them to develop both bicultural competencies and skills to cope with possible episodes of racism and discrimination in contexts of social interaction (Lee, 2003: 717-718).

4 In Spain, racial issues do not generate the social interest that they do occupy in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom or Mexico, since it is an issue towards which Spanish society has internalized the social *undesirability* of any manifestation of racism or xenophobia. However, its absence in public debate does not imply that race, as a socially constructed category, like gender and social class, does not sustain social orders. Following Bonilla-Silva (1999; Bonilla-Silva *et al.*, 2004), race is assigned externally, connected to power relations and hierarchies, and stratifies the population by granting (unconscious) privileges to those who are attached to the hegemonic cultural and racial group and, consequently, discriminates against the Other. The social undesirability of the term *race* motivates that it is usually replaced by that of *culture* or *ethnicity* (self-affirmation of the distinctive character linked to the creation of a sense of community). In Spain, “interracial adoption” is not mentioned as such either in specific legislation, nor in the administrative processes that develop it, nor in informative documents of an informative nature (San Román, 2013: 226), being replaced by the term culture.

Additionally, the study of transracial adoptive families has aroused interest among scholars of the social limits in the racial hierarchy, mainly in the United States. Ishizawa *et al.* (2006), based on the analysis of the 2000 United States Census, suggest that the perception of future parents about the meaning of race conditions the choice of the country of origin of their children, while contributing to the historical racial stratification that places the white population over the black population. The dominance of the Asian adoption flow until the end of the first decade of 2000 has triggered a new focus on the sociology of ethnicity and identity.

Shiao *et al.* (2004: 8), when analyzing the reasons why the North American population prefers to adopt in Asian countries, they reveal that, socially, a higher social status is granted to those who come from Asia because they are perceived as “different, but not very different”. Kubo (2010) and Sweeney (2013) point out that social pressure to maintain racial stratification leads parents to choose their children’s country of origin based on stereotypes attributed to ethnic and racial minorities.

In this line of research, Xing and Nakkula (2004) discover that parents made the decision to adopt in China, because the racial hierarchy gave them a positive image. The choice of the country becomes a strategy with which to minimize possible problems of adaptation and integration through a greater phenotypic similarity.

The purpose of this study is to explore the process of cultural and racial socialization of Spanish transracial adoptive families in a context defined as a “transracial paradox”. In Spain, the phenomenon of international adoptions broke out in the 1990s, twenty years after the one experienced in other European countries. However, its rapid increase made the country, in 2004, the second in the world in international adoptions, registering 5,541 adoptions abroad. Since then, the number of such adoptions has drawn a downward trend both in Spain and globally.

The social noticeability of the phenomenon of international adoptions converges in time with the *migratory boom* (Arango, 2010): between 1997 and 2008, Spain is the country of the European Union that received more immigrants. The confluence of both phenomena has given way to a line of research interested in addressing the racial experiences shared by the adopted and immigrant populations. In Spain, research indicates that racist and xenophobic attitudes based on phenotypic differences persist and that these can lead to labeling people as “immigrants”, despite having been born in the country or having Spanish nationality (Cea D’Ancona and Valles, 2014). On the other hand, the studies of San Román (2013)

and San Román and Marre (2013) confirm that Spanish families and adoptees themselves experience racial events and discrimination similar to the immigrant population.

Two questions have guided the research: what strategies do they develop to make their adopted children aware of the culture of the country of birth? and what strategies do they teach their children to face possible situations of discrimination, racism, or xenophobia? For its development, we assume the two premises that link emerging studies on cultural socialization (Lee, 2003) and sociology of ethnicity (Shiao *et al.*, 2004: 5): racial and ethnic identities are ongoing processes whose meaning and content change throughout life; and families, as agents of primary socialization, play a crucial role in managing racial, ethnic, and cultural difference.

The Transracial Paradox and the Process of Cultural and Racial Socialization in Transracial Adoptive Families

The theoretical model of cultural and racial socialization in transracial families identifies three analytical dimensions (Vonk, 2001; Massatti *et al.*, 2004): *cultural competence and racial awareness*, or knowledge of how race and ethnicity operate in people's lives; *multicultural planning*, or strategies for teaching transracially children to know and participate in their culture of birth; and *coping skills*, or parental competence to prepare their children to confront everyday stereotypes, prejudices, and racisms. Families who are aware of discrimination in society and of the advantages and harms that racism confers on those who participate in, or are excluded, from the dominant race and culture, confront the transracial paradox with a deliberate work to teach their children both their cultural heritage of birth (*enculturation*) and coping tools (*racialization*)⁵ (Lee, 2003; Lee *et al.*, 2006).

However, those who do not give them relevance develop models of socialization based on cultural assimilation and reproducing *colorblind racism*, a contemporary racial ideology that is characterized by covering up racist discourse and practices, denying the racial inequalities present in society and allowing the white population to⁶ maintain its position of privilege without appearing racist (Bonilla, 1999; Bonilla *et al.*, 2004).

5 In this context, the terms *enculturation* and *racialization* refer to the two models of parenting (forms of socialization within the family) that Lee (2003) and Lee *et al.* (2006) have identified as relevant in transracial adoptive families.

6 Whiteness acts as an unmarked social category.

Parents who participate in processes of enculturation and racialization, will contribute to *the racial literacy* of their children, through reflection at home on racial issues and discriminatory practices, privileging social relations with the cultural and racial group of reference and forming them through aesthetic practices in the home and the consumption of art, material objects, music, toys and symbols identifying their community of origin (Twine, 2004); while those who deploy a model of cultural assimilation and *colorblind racism* minimize racist incidents, equating them with other identifiable differences, and believe that their children will be considered on their merits without weighing that race is a predictor of opportunities (Richardson, 2011).

In Europe, the research of Hübinette and Tigervall (2009) with Korean adoptees in Sweden, De Grave (2015) with Ethiopian adoptees in Belgium and those of Marre (2009; 2007), San Román (2013) and San Román and Marre (2013) in Spain, have highlighted different aspects of the *transracial paradox* and *colorblind* racism prevailing in transracial adoptive families. However, there is a lack of research that sheds light on the process of cultural and racial socialization in Spanish transracial adoptive families.

Research methodology

The study that presents part of the data obtained in the survey “Adoptive families and their lifestyles” (Rodríguez-Jaume and González-Río, 2014). Section VII of the questionnaire specifically inquired about the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of Spanish adoptive families in relation to various issues associated with the transracial family. The lack of a register of adoptive families (sample frame), together with the fact that the phenomenon of adoptions is an online phenomenon, motivated the questionnaire to be registered, specifically, in the surveys called *Computer Assisted Web Interviewing* (CAWI).

In the months that the survey was activated (July-September 2012), 835 adoptive parents accessed the website where it was hosted. After filtering the data, a non-probabilistic sample was obtained by self-selection of 230 parents who in 2012 had a daughter or son adopted abroad. Chart 1⁷ summarizes their sociodemographic characteristics as well as those of their children.

7 The table and tables are found in the Annex, at the end of this article.

The process of cultural and racial socialization was explored based on the factors that the specialized literature has related to cultural socialization practices:

- Origin of adopted daughters and sons grouped by continents. Lee *et al.* (2006) and Vonk *et al.* (2010) reveal that parents who adopted in Europe are less likely to engage in cultural practices than those who did so in Asia and Latin America.
- Family structure according to type of filiation (adoptive or mixed). Vonk and Massatti (2008) have shown that families without biological children (adoptive filiation) who adopted interracially are more committed to the process of cultural socialization. However, research conducted in Spain showed that Spanish adoptive families who have biological children (mixed filiation) perceive with greater intensity the social stigma of their family model (Rodríguez and Jareño, 2015).
- Years of living with adopted children. Samuels (2009) identified that more experienced parents showed a lower colorblind ideology, probably because as their offspring grew, they faced a greater number of racist episodes.⁸

Following the operational definition that Vonk (2001) offers of cultural competence of transracial adoptive parents, and the factor analysis that Massatti *et al.* (2004) subsequently carried out to test their *Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale* (TAPS), two questions were included in the questionnaire aimed at exploring the multicultural planning promoted by adoptive families. The first question investigates the *practices of cultural socialization* with which adoptive mothers and fathers expose their sons and daughters to contexts of socialization close to their ethnic-racial communities of origin and other diverse populations. To this end, the questionnaire included the following:

Please, from the questions listed below, indicate whether you have made them (or performs) or not (performs):

1. You moved to a neighborhood with similar racial or ethnic characteristics to your adopted child.
2. Changed residence to be near a school with similar racial or ethnic characteristics as your adopted child.
3. Your regular leisure time includes activities and plans related to the culture of your adopted child's country of origin.

8 Finally, this variable was excluded from the analysis, since 88.3% of the sample indicated that the period of cohabitation with their children at the time of the study was nine months.

4. Your annual vacation includes plans related to the culture of your adopted child's country of origin.
5. Try to select your friends considering the cultural and/or ethnic characteristics of your adopted child.
6. Try to select and prepare typical food from the country of origin of your adopted child.
7. Read books about your adopted child's culture.
8. You have started or are deepening in the language of your child's home country.

Each of the eight items was presented with dichotomous response alternatives (1=yes and 2=no). The internal consistency between the items (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.910.

A second question delved into the planning and assiduity of cultural activities. It sought to determine whether the process of cultural and racial socialization exposes adopted children to multiracial and multicultural experiences. The question included in the questionnaire was formulated as follows:

Please could you indicate how often in your home...?:

1. Read books by African authors.
2. Cook typical dishes from your child's country of origin.
3. Listen to music from Latin artists.
4. Have Asian art.
5. Watch TV that includes programming from your child's home country.
6. Celebrate the holidays of your child's home country.
7. Invite non-Spanish adults to your home.
8. Invite non-Spanish children to your home.

Each of the items was presented with three response alternatives (1=usually; 2=sometimes; 3=never). The internal consistency level of the eight items (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.777 with a mean score of 2.22 (SD=0.35).

Finally, to measure the coping strategies that mothers and fathers teach their children at home to overcome episodes of racial or ethnic discrimination, the questionnaire included the following question:

When your adopted child has experienced an episode of racism, discrimination or xenophobia (personally, in the news, in the movies,...), how often have you or your family environment...?

1. Has taken the opportunity to talk to you about race and racism.

2. Has practiced possible responses to insensitive, racist, discriminatory, or xenophobic comments.
3. Demonstrates zero tolerance for insensitive, racist, discriminatory, or xenophobic comments.
4. Teaches you to demonstrate your concerns and fears regarding situations where insensitive, racist, discriminatory, or xenophobic comments occur.
5. Ask for advice from other parents who may have experienced the same situation.

Each of the items was presented with five response alternatives (1=never to 5=always). The internal consistency level of the five items (Cronbach's alpha) was 1.

Due to space limitations, the charts displayed only offer an alternative response. To promote comparability, the percentages are calculated on the total of the respondent population that responded in each of the categories of the variable shown and not on the sample as a whole. In any case, the sample base on which the indicators have been determined is specified. The findings presented should be interpreted taking into consideration several methodological limitations of the study. The first refers to the non-probabilistic nature of the sample that prevents the results from being generalized to all families in Spain that opted for adoption abroad. Secondly, the small number of cases registered in some response categories does not allow us to identify causal associations and, consequently, to specify possible explanatory models of the process of cultural and racial socialization under study.

Results and discussion

Cultural socialization practices

A first focus of analytical attention was directed to determine whether the ongoing process of cultural and racial socialization of children adopted abroad by Spanish families involved them in the culture and community of origin. This aspect is especially relevant, given that research has highlighted that cultural socialization practices that involve immersion in the community of origin of children adopted abroad provide them with reference models (Vonk, 2001; Vonk *et al.*, 2010), of a support network (Thomas and Tessler, 2007), mitigates perceived stigma (Samuels, 2009), increases pride in belonging to a racial group or ethnic minority, and develops a positive ethnic identity that favors the management

of racist episodes and discrimination (Vonk, 2001; Lee, 2003; Song and Lee, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2010).

Chart 1⁹ addresses this first issue by collecting the percentage values of each of the different practices of cultural socialization, which commits the sons and daughters of Spanish adoptive families to the culture and community of origin. In it, the options “changed your residence to a neighborhood with racial or ethnic characteristics similar to those of your adopted child”, and “changed residence to be close to a school with racial or ethnic characteristics similar to those of your adopted child” have been omitted, since none of them was selected by the sample.

The absence of these two response options is, *per se*, significant, as it shows that the extra-family institutions and social contexts that adoptive mothers and fathers choose as agents of secondary socialization of their children do not contemplate contact with their communities of origin, nor referents that compensate for the absence of resources and racial experiences of adoptive parents. Reinforcing this first finding, the data reveal that the way in which Spanish adoptive parents preferentially transmit to their children the cultural values, beliefs and customs of their country of origin occurs through cultural practices that prioritize the formal (cognitive) bond over the experiential one that directly involves the child. The only practice mostly selected was reading books about the culture of the country of origin (78.6%). This practice, in turn, is relevant among those who have adopted in Africa (86%) and Asia (82.5%), and only reaches 50% of those who did so in Europe. Even the increasingly popular “return visits” occupy a discreet presence among family cultural and racial socialization activities.

In general, and except for language learning, Spanish families who adopted on the European continent are the least involved in cultural socialization practices. These results are consistent with those reported in the comparative studies of Lee (2003) and Lee *et al.* (2006), in which it is appreciated that the parents who adopted in Russia and in Eastern European countries were those who showed lower values in the practices of enculturation and racialization, and, consequently, the least likely to participate in cultural activities linked to the country of origin of their daughters and sons.

In the Spanish case, this pattern has also been identified by Marre (2007) and San Román and Marre (2013), who have explained that the lower commitment of Spanish families who adopted in Europe is due to the fact

9 Table 1 can be found in the Annex at the end of this article.

that they feel that the adoption has occurred in “the same culture” (Marre, 2007: 82).

The data show that families that are configured interracially adopting in South America, Africa, or Asia value, more than those that maintain racial homogeneity, the importance of providing their offspring with opportunities, contexts and cultural activities that promote their ethnic, cultural and racial awareness. This fact, together with the fact that exposure and contact with the communities of origin occurs more among Spanish families with mixed adoptive filiation, suggests that those who are more exposed in contexts of social interaction to the management of “difference” maintain a greater predisposition to promote cultural activities linked to the countries of origin of their children.

Multicultural planning

The second area of analytical interest focused on describing the ways in which adoptive parents teach their adopted children to know, bond and participate in their culture of birth (Vonk, 2001: 251). These can be numerous and vary according to the degree of contact with the real environment of the culture of origin (Massatti *et al.*, 2004: 44). Lower participation would mean facilitating access to cultural products specific to the country of origin; while routes that favor greater contact may include activities that promote the link with the population that shares the culture of birth of the child.

Twine (2004: 893) identified two strategies of “resistance” against racism: the promotion of social relations with adults and children in the community of origin, and aesthetic and consumption practices in the home. Regarding the latter, the ethnographer describes how a minority of the transracial biological parents interviewed carefully selected pieces of art, material objects, music, toys and symbols with which they decorated their homes and reproduced an anti-racist symbolic and aesthetic culture, which promoted identification with the peoples of Africa and the struggles of the black community.

Chart 2 shows the answers given on the frequency with which Spanish adoptive families carried out cultural activities and consumed products, whether they were from the place where their children were born or from other places.

The results obtained emphasize the scarce presence that, in the strategy of cultural and racial socialization, reaches the development of

activities and acquisition of cultural products, with an average score in the frequency of realization of the set of activities included in Chart 2 ($M = 2.22$), close to the answer option of “never” is carried out (3). Even the preparation of typical food from the country of origin, identified as the second socialization practice, is not carried out on a daily basis.

When the habitual practice of the activities is recognized, they appear linked to the country of origin of their offspring. Thus, the reading of books by African authors is only done by families who adopted in this continent (2.8%); Latin music is a majority activity among adoptive families in Latin America (36%), and Asian art is present, fundamentally, in the homes they adopted in Asia (35.7%). This data suggests that families who adopted in China are the most likely to bond with their children’s ethnic and cultural heritage, through the consumption of Asian art.

It is likely, based on the findings of Traver’s (2007: 206-207) ethnographic research, that the objects consumed are limited to a narrow variety of art and that their function is to integrate Chinese cultural themes and festivities into family life. Cultural activities are mainly carried out among adoptive families with mixed affiliations. These, as previous studies have shown, perceive to a greater extent the social stigma that falls on adoptive families (Rodríguez and Jareño, 2015), which can predispose them to manage racial discrimination, increasing their multicultural planning.

The meager multicultural planning may respond to the fact that parents do not perceive the need to deploy cultural socialization practices, or, as Park (2012: 492-493) has suggested, that parents adjust their socialization efforts to the explicit demand of their children when they reach adolescence. If so, this type of socialization would be ascribed to the strategy of “child choice” that Lee (2003: 719) identified, along with cultural assimilation, enculturation, and racial inculcation, as models with which adoptive families face the transracial paradox. This thesis is difficult to compare with the available data, since the median age of the adopted children of the families surveyed is 7 years.

The reduced importance that adoptive families give to the planning of cultural activities contrasts with the value that, in the field of desires, they give to bicultural identity. Thus, the questionnaire applied sought their opinion on whether their sons and daughters “should learn our culture and customs, but it is good that they also learn the culture and customs of their country of origin.” The answer was affirmative for 83.5% of the sample, a

percentage well above that expressed by the Spanish population in the study of “Attitudes towards immigration”, where 36.9% stated that “although they learn our culture and customs, it is good for immigrants to maintain their culture and customs” (Center for Sociological Research, 2012).

Strategies for coping with everyday racism

The third focus of attention focused on investigating the coping strategies that adoptive families deploy in the process of cultural and racial socialization, in order to instruct and develop skills among their sons and daughters that allow them to manage both everyday racisms and the contradictory experiences to which the transracial paradox exposes them. Chart 3 shows the percentage values achieved in each of the strategies on which they were questioned.

In this last section, we focus on those that research identifies as strategies that contribute to actively confronting racial experiences, namely (Vonk, 2001: 251-252): teaching to externalize racism, validating children’s feelings of anger and pain, transmitting the message that racism is unfair, avoiding blaming the child, or lending their help in cases that their children require them to handle a situation. That is, we investigate what Twine (2004: 884), in the context of interracial biological parents, called *conceptual tools* taught at home to respond to racism.

The data show the reduced prominence of coping strategies in the process of cultural and racial socialization of Spanish transracial adoptive families, given that their practice ranges from 9.3%, who “ask for advice from other parents who have been able to go through the same situation”, and 22.6%, referring to “demonstrate zero tolerance towards insensitive comments, racist, discriminatory or xenophobic”. Likewise, the percentage weight assumed by the different coping strategies about which they were asked, reveals the dissent among Spanish adoptive families between the plane of desires and that of realities, because although “demonstrating zero tolerance towards insensitive, racist, discriminatory or xenophobic comments” and “teaching them to demonstrate their concerns and fears” in the face of them are the two most used coping strategies (22.6% and 20.4%), respectively, the active involvement of mothers and fathers in the racial literacy of their children, “practicing possible responses” with which to face these situations, reaches a low value (15.1%).

These findings suggest that Spanish adoptive families, far from looking at their daily lives through a “critical racial lens” (Twine, 2004),

would do so through a “colorblind lens” (Richardson, 2011) that prevents them from appreciating the effects of the advantages and harms of racism in society and, consequently, acting to counteract it. In this sense, and according to Lee (2003), the colorblind orientation adopted by the socialization strategy deployed by transracial Spanish adoptive families would be ascribed to a strategy of cultural assimilation.

Following the thesis of Lee *et al.* (2006), the low level of involvement of adoptive parents surveyed may reflect an unconscious attitude towards racial discrimination in society, leading them to silence issues of racial identities (Willing and Fronek, 2014: 1141). However, paradoxically, the families participating in the study recognized the prevailing racism in Spanish society. The questionnaire included a scale of perception of racism in Spain ranging from (1) “not racist at all” to (4) “very racist”. The mean value obtained was 2.86.

The differences observed in coping strategies according to origin may be related to respondents’ perception of racism in Spain. Thus, the data in Chart 3 place coping practices in a continuum where families with children from Latin America, followed by those who adopted in Africa, are the ones that most intensely develop coping skills in their children; while those who did it in Europe are presented as the least committed to these practices. This pattern is reproduced in the perception that the families surveyed have of racism in Spanish society: 80% and 79.1% of adoptive families in Latin America and Africa, respectively, consider that Spanish society is “quite” or “very” racist; meanwhile, this perception is 71.9% and 69.8% in families who adopted in Europe and Asia, respectively.

Unlike the results of the study by Vonk and Massatti (2008), coping strategies are practiced more among families with adoptive affiliation. Additional research is needed to address this possible relationship with the process of cultural and racial socialization, as well as the relevance of the age of their children in the management of this dimension by adoptive mothers and fathers.

Conclusions

This article brings us closer to the process of cultural and racial socialization in transracial adoptive families, an aspect scarcely addressed in Spain. Additionally, the findings obtained provide empirical evidence that transcends the scope of the sociology of adoptive families, since they allow

us to approach the study of contemporary racism (*colorblind racism*) and racial borders and hierarchies in Spanish society.

With regard to cultural socialization practices, the results observed correspond to those obtained in previous research that revealed that the most common cultural socialization practices among transracial adoptive parents, far from involving direct, practical and prolonged contact with the cultural environment of the community of origin of their children, they reproduce a formal and punctual link with the culture of birth.

The low relevance that cultural socialization practices acquire among Spanish adoptive families can be interpreted as an indicator of the roots of colorblind ideology in society. It prevents appreciation of the advantages and harms that racism confers on those who participate in, or are excluded, from the dominant race and culture.

The low *level of colour blind racism* identified in the families surveyed, together with the fact that adoptive mothers and fathers were not and will not be subject to social stigmatization and racial discrimination, since they do not share their “foreign” appearance with their children, and that, in general, they have a high educational status, which gives them greater confidence in their ability to transfer to their children their own professional success and economic privileges (Ishizawa *et al.*, 2006: 1216-1217; Samuels, 2009: 87), can lead them to relativize the role played by race and culture in the lives of their children, as well as to reduce their strategies of racial socialization to testimonial practices.

On the other hand, cultural planning in Spanish transracial adoptive families in their daily lives is very low (with an average value of 0.78 out of 3). This appears closely linked to the country of origin of their offspring, and, again, sharing activities that require interactions with non-Spanish people occupies a marginal place. In this context, cultural planning, far from developing a model of bicultural socialization, as in which the immigrant population is involved (Thomas and Tessler, 2007), would reproduce one of the central characteristics of the adoption market and that Quiroz (2012: 528) has called “cultural tourism” —access to products, events, and other commercialized forms of “culture” —.

Even “return visits” would not be associated so much with a practice of cultural socialization, but, as Howell and Marre (2006: 310) have pointed out, with the aim of diminishing the “ghost” of the unknown of the childish “backpack” that their children bring from their countries of origin.

As a corollary of the above, the families surveyed give little prominence to coping strategies in the process of cultural socialization.

Although they say they do not tolerate racist, discriminatory, or xenophobic comments, their active involvement is limited. Not adopting measures that prepare their offspring to face racist situations, the central strategy of racial socialization, is the model of parenting that succeeds, and reproduces, colorblind ideology (Richardson, 2011: 82). The “colorblind lens” of adoptive families prevents them from appreciating the racial discrimination to which people with phenotypic differences are subjected and they only see the need for this learning when their children, upon entering the school environment, live situations of unquestionable discrimination (Massatti *et al.*, 2004).

The results presented show an ambivalent management of beliefs and behaviors. On the one hand, 83% of parents recognize as desirable that their children develop a bicultural identity, but their multicultural planning is meager and prioritizes the formal bond over the experiential. On the other hand, 23% declare to express their intolerance towards racist situations, but those who actively practice responses are 15% of the sample. This ambivalence may be reflected in the low cultural and racial competence of adoptive mothers and fathers.

In this context, the administrations and bodies that collaborate in the management of intercountry adoption should include cultural and racial competence in the selection and training processes of Spanish families who wish to create a family with a child adopted abroad, since, otherwise, they will “navigate” alone in a society that discriminates by race, ethnicity and culture (Samuels, 2009; Song and Lee, 2009; Sweeney, 2013).

From this analytical context, the data suggest that the degree of involvement of Spanish adoptive families in the process of cultural and racial socialization would be related to the dominant racial hierarchy. This would draw an imaginary line that places, on one side, the groups that have been racially and ethnically socially constructed with a positive image, either because they share phenotypic similarities (adoption in Europe), or because as —Dorow (2006) has pointed out—, the minority discourse model prevails that reconstructs the stereotype that presents adopted people in Asia as an intelligent population. Hardworking and more assimilable than other minorities.

This positive image acts as a protective factor, reducing the options for dealing with situations of racial and ethnic discrimination, mitigating the perception of the racist character of the Spanish population and, consequently, dissuading parents from the need to transmit this learning. On the other side of the line that imaginatively traces the

social limits of the racial hierarchy in Spanish society, the minorities that enjoy less social prestige and that in this research would appear represented by girls and boys from Latin America and Africa would be located. In this case, both the obvious phenotypic differences (adoption in Africa), and the negative social prejudices with which the Latin American population is linked (gang association, links with drugs and school dropout), can expose families to a greater extent to situations of racial discrimination, to the perception that their environment is racist and, consequently, to manifest a greater commitment to the process of cultural socialization.

Finally, this evidence suggests that the dominance in Spain of international adoption flows from Asia and Europe is due, among other causes, to the social pressure to which adoptive families are subjected to maintain hegemonic racial stratification, and that would lead mothers and fathers to choose the country of origin based on the stereotypes attributed to racial and ethnic minorities. This thesis, supported by the North American context (Kubo, 2010; Sweeney, 2013), proposes a future line of research for the case of international adoptions in Spain.

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Annex

Table 1
**Demographic characteristics of the sample of
 Spanish transracial adoptive families (2012)**

Characteristics	N	%
Respondents' sex		
Woman	192	83,5
Man	38	16,5
Respondents's age (median= 44,9)		
30-39	42	18,3
40-49	149	64,8
50-59	37	16,1
60-69	2	0,9
Respondents' marital status		
Single	23	10,0
Married	192	83,5
Widow/widower	1	0,4
Separated	9	3,9
Cohabitation	3	1,3
With a partner not living together	2	0,9
Respondents' schooling		
Primary	23	9,9
Medium	40	17,4
Higher	167	72,7
Family structure according to filiation ¹		
Adoptive	176	76,5
Mixed	54	23,5
Adopted child's sex		
Woman	184	59,7
Man	124	40,3
Years of coexistence (median=5,3) ²		
0-4	137	59,6
4-9	66	28,7
10-14	21	9,1
15-19	2	1,7
Country of origin / region of the world ³		
Europe	39	13,5
Africa	60	20,8
South America	34	11,8
Asia	156	54

Source: Based on data from the survey "Adoptive families and their lifestyles" (Rodríguez-Jaume, 2012).

Notes: 1. Adoptive filiation: only adopted children. Mixed filiation includes: biological and adopted children (22.6%) and stepchildren and adopted children (0.9%). 2. Years of cohabitation, it has been calculated taking as reference the first adopted child. 3. Adoptions in Europe came in 38% from Russia (15), 28.2% from Kazakhstan (11) and 26% from Ukraine (10); those in Africa occurred in 73 per cent in Ethiopia (44); while those in Asia focused 85% on China (132).

Chart 1
Cultural socialization practices (%)*

	LEISURE	VACATION	FRIENDS	FOOD	BOOKS	LANGUAGE	n
ORIGIN							
Europe	18,8	3,1	3,1	28,1	50,0	18,8	32
Africa	39,5	11,6	7,0	39,2	86,0	11,6	43
South America	20,0	16,0	8,0	56,0	76,0	20,0	25
Asia	27,2	10,3	4,8	39,7	82,5	31,0	126
TOTAL	27,6	10,3	5,3	38,6	78,6	25,3	226
FAMILY TYPE							
Adoptive							
Mixed	29,5	9,4	4,5	36,9	78,4	23,9	176
	18,5	13,2	7,4	40,7	74,1	24,1	54
TOTAL	27,0	10,0	5,2	37,8	77,4	23,9	230

Source: Based on data from the survey "Adoptive families and their lifestyles" (Rodríguez-Jaume, 2012). *The percentage values reflect the affirmative answers (1=yes) offered to each of the cultural socialization practices.

Chart 2
 Multicultural planning (%)*

ORIGIN	African books	Cooking	Latin music	Asian art	TV	Parties	Invite adults	Invite children	n
Europe	0	3,1	15,6	18,8	9,4	9,4	12,5	18,8	32
Africa	2,8	0	16,3	0	7,0	23,3	4,7	11,6	43
South America	0	28,0	36,0	0	4,0	4,0	16,0	20,0	25
Asia	0,8	8,7	16,7	35,7	10,3	22,4	8,7	15,1	126
TOTAL	0,9	8,4	18,6	22,6	8,8	18,6	9,3	15,5	226
FAMILY TYPE									
Adoptive									
Mixed	1,1	6,8	16,5	22,9	6,8	19,3	9,1	15,3	176
	0	13,0	24,1	22,2	14,8	14,8	11,1	14,8	54
TOTAL	0,9	8,3	18,3	22,2	8,7	18,3	9,6	15,2	230

Source: Based on data from the survey "Adoptive families and their lifestyles" (Rodríguez-Jaume, 2012). *Percentages in the answer option "usually" (1). The average score achieved, on a scale where 1="usually", 2="sometimes" and 3="never", was 2.22 (SD=0.35).

Chart 3

Facing strategies (%)*

	Speak	Answers	No tolerance	Express	Council	n
ORIGIN						
Europe	12,4	9,3	9,4	12,4	3,1	32
Africa	20,9	20,9	27,9	28,0	18,6	43
South América	28,0	32,0	40,0	40,0	16,0	25
Asia	12,7	11,1	20,6	15,8	6,4	126
TOTAL	16,0	15,1	22,6	20,4	9,3	226
FAMILY TYPE						
Adoptive						
Mixed	19,4	17,6	24,5	22,2	9,6	176
	3,8	5,6	14,8	13,0	7,5	54
TOTAL	15,6	14,8	22,2	20	9,1	230

Source: Based on data from the survey "Adoptive families and their lifestyles" (Rodríguez-Jaume, 2012). *Percentage values reflect the aggregation of frequency responses "many times" (4) and always" (5).

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