

## Cultural Receptivity among Foster Parents: Implications for Quality Transcultural Parenting

By: [Tanya M. Coakley](#), [Kenneth Gruber](#)

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### **Abstract:**

Foster parents' ability to support a minority youth's cultural needs is critically important to the appropriate development of the youth's cultural identity and avoidance of negative reactions to real or perceived rejection or dismissal of their cultural values or traditions. This study assessed the ability of a set of practice-based measures to identify indicators of positive transcultural parenting. It involved a cross-sectional, nonprobability sample of 78 licensed foster parents who completed standardized foster parent assessments. Discriminant function analysis was used to correctly classify 91% of respondents into two distinct groups of low- and high-scoring foster parents on a cluster of demographic and fostering predictors of openness to effectively parenting culturally different children. Foster parents' race, education level, dedication to fostering, available time to foster, understanding of certain foster parent roles, and knowledge of transcultural parenting activities were the strongest predictors of cultural receptivity, a precursor for competence in transcultural parenting. These findings demonstrate the potential usefulness of a set of psychometrically sound measures for prescreening and enhancing transcultural parenting skill sets among prospective foster parents who would likely support the psychological, social, and cultural development of youths of a different race, ethnicity, or culture from themselves.

**Keyword:** cultural competence | foster parent assessment | racial identity | transcultural parenting | transracial adoption

### **Article:**

Culture is a word used to describe the way of life for groups who share the same race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, spirituality, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics that influence perceptions, attitudes, and behavior (Lynch & Hanson, 1998; McPhatter, 1997; Mitchell, 1999; O'Hagan, 2001). It is a way for families to preserve and bequeath to future generations their contributions and legacies. However, all that is unique and special about culture, such as heritage, kin, customs, friends, foods, music, linguistics, expressions, and religious practices (O'Hagan, 2001) can be jeopardized when youths are placed with foster

families of a different race, ethnicity, or culture (Buehler, Rhodes, Orme, & Cuddeback, 2006; Yancey, 1998). These youths are further at risk for adjustment problems when placements are made into families without addressing the foster parents' potential to support the youths' cultural needs.

Although there has been ongoing controversy centered on the appropriateness of transracial placements and whether transcultural parents can effectively parent youths who do not share their culture (Butler-Sweet, 2011; de Haymes & Simon, 2003; Hollingsworth, 1999; National Association of Black Social Workers, 1972), little research exists on the availability and utility of prescreening transcultural fostering measures (Coakley & Orme, 2006). In the present study, we assessed the ability of a set of practice-based measures to identify indicators of positive transcultural parenting for the use in the selection and training of foster parents.

Assessing foster parents' ability to support a minority youth's cultural needs is critically important to the appropriate development of the youth's cultural identity and avoidance of negative reactions to real or perceived rejection or dismissal of her or his cultural values or traditions. For instance, minority youths—particularly African Americans—are at risk for poor racial identity development, which entails internalizing self-deprecating values and adopting others' beliefs while rejecting their own race (Butler-Sweet, 2011; Hollingsworth, 1999; Phinney, 1989; Zuniga, 1991).

In addition, researchers have explored the types of problems that minority youths who live in transcultural families experience and have concluded that the major reasons for psychosocial and relational problems are due to, or compounded by, racial or cultural differences (Anderson & Linares, 2012; Daniel, 2011). These problems range from minute annoyances to major crises, including being bothered by strangers' stares or questions regarding how they are related to different-race foster parents (de Haymes & Simon, 2003; Samuels, 2009), feeling out of place in predominantly white schools and communities (Brown, St. Arnault, George, & Sintzel, 2009; Samuels, 2009), and not being prepared to deal with acts of racism directed toward them (Samuels, 2009). Other research has indicated that transracial homes with low cultural socialization are associated with a higher incidence of youths' externalizing behaviors (for example, aggression, disobedience, and truancy) (Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Pettrill, 2007).

The occurrences of problems with transcultural placements often can be linked to parents' lack of exposure; lack of similarity to the youth's racial, ethnic, and cultural experience; and inadequate preparation or training to address potential problems (Brown et al., 2009; Daniel, 2011; Massatti, Vonk, & Gregoire, 2004). By contrast, it has been shown that when families incorporate appropriate strategies into their lifestyle to support youths' cultural identity development, the youths have positive psychosocial outcomes (Coard, Wallace, & Stevenson, 2004; Hughes et al., 2006; McRoy, 1994).

Cultural parenting strategies involve foster parents acquiring culturally specific knowledge, behaviors, and skills (Coakley & Orme, 2006). For example, foster parents can be supportive by including literature, art, and other positive images in their home that reflect the youth's culture.

Furthermore, parenting strategies that target cultural development provide a range of protective functions for minority youths that have been shown to be associated with more favorable psychosocial outcomes, such as fewer internalizing and externalizing behaviors, lower levels of depression, higher self-esteem with peers, better anger management (particularly for boys), fewer physical fights, better cognitive outcomes (Hughes et al., 2006; White et al., 2008), and less stress from experiencing discrimination (Leslie, Smith, Hrapczynski, & Riley, 2013). Minority youths who assume the cultural values of white foster families instead of their own often feel disenfranchised once they discover that they are not given the same respect and privileges that are afforded to their foster family members (Coakley & Orme, 2006). Without the protection that their cultural values can afford them, these youths may be more vulnerable to the negative impact of racism (Coard et al., 2004).

Recent work by researchers who have examined the experiences of successful transcultural families suggests that the ability of foster or adoptive parents to be receptive to the unique needs of culturally different youths placed in their homes is an essential part of transcultural parenting (Brown et al., 2009; Daniel, 2011). This work has identified ideal transcultural foster parents to be those who demonstrate cultural receptiveness and effective transcultural parenting through positive interactions with their youths. Examples of these include understanding, respecting, and learning from the youth; compromising on disagreements; considering the youth's feelings; and teaching rather than demanding behavior change in the youth (Brown et al., 2009; Daniel, 2011).

Cultural receptivity has been found to be a precursor to transcultural competence, and it helps to explain foster parents' openness to participating in activities that promote youths' cultural identity development (Coakley & Orme, 2006). Most significantly, it involves openness to foster children's relationships with adults and peers who share their cultures, and identification of resources that the youth in care can access to get their cultural needs met. Assessment of foster parents' cultural receptivity is regarded as important to implement before placing youths in the homes of transcultural parents (Brown et al., 2009; Coakley & Orme, 2006). Ensuring that those who are interested in transcultural parenting have acceptable levels of cultural receptivity is essential because they are likely to assume the position of a same-race parent who would be responsible for shaping the youths' cultural identity development.

Researchers (Orme et al., 2006) tested a compendium of foster parent measures thought to be related to quality transcultural fostering. The compendium represented measures developed to improve the selection and training of foster parents. The measures, which included the Available Time Scale (ATS), Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale (PDFS), Foster Parent Role Performance Scale (FPRPS), and the Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale (CRFS), were determined to be psychometrically sound, with good alpha reliability (alphas > .80). In addition, the use of scores from these new measures toward their intended interpretation and use was validated through evidence based on test content, internal structure of the tests, and relations to other variables. The results show that they possessed content, construct (that is, criterion), and convergent validity (Orme et al., 2006). Furthermore, the ATS, PDFS, and FPRPS were correlated with the CRFS (Orme et al., 2006). Aside from that study, however, we know little about specific variables or combinations of variables that predict whether foster parents will be

more or less open-minded about transcultural fostering (see Brown et al., 2009) or competent in transcultural parenting. Without a better understanding of factors that could contribute to competent transcultural parenting, the recruitment, selection, and training of foster parents may not successfully work to pair youths with foster parents who will appreciate diversity and stimulate the youths' cultural identity development.

To help achieve the assessment and promotion of successful matching of foster parents with youths of different cultures, identification of prospective foster applicants who will accept and nurture the total child is crucial. In this article, we mainly refer to the racial and ethnic aspects of culture because minorities from these groups have historically been socially devalued and degraded (Yancey, 1998). In addition, minority youths in foster care are at risk for identity disturbances when foster parents do not adhere to the role culture plays in youths' development (Buehler et al., 2006; Yancey, 1998). The present study investigated the potential of specific personal characteristics and qualities of foster parents to predict their potential for effectively parenting youths of cultures different from their own. We posed one research question: "What are the indicators of positive transcultural parenting that can be used in the selection and training of foster parents?"

## **Method**

### **Design and Sample**

This cross-sectional study was conducted from May 31, 2006, to May 31, 2007. The institutional review board of a university in the southeastern United States approved the study. Foster mothers and fathers were recruited through North Carolina foster parent associations and North Carolina County department of social services. Potential participants were informed about the study through postings on state and local foster parent associations' Web sites and flyers given directly to foster parents by the National Foster Parent Association's staff. In addition, recruitment was done by county directors of North Carolina departments of social services who distributed study flyers to their foster parents. Any licensed foster parent was eligible to participate in the study.

Foster parents who contacted the project office and indicated interest in participating in the study were sent a packet of study questionnaires, a background information form, an informed consent form, the project manager's contact information, and a prepaid envelope to return the completed forms. A total of 98 study packets were mailed to prospective participants. To encourage completion of the study questionnaires, prospective participants who had not returned their questionnaires after two weeks from being sent the study packet received reminder phone calls once a week for up to three weeks to return their completed study materials. A total of 80 study packets were returned to the project office, yielding an 81.6% response rate. However, our attempts to follow up with two foster parents who returned the study packets with a significant amount of missing information were unsuccessful. Therefore, data were not analyzed for either of those cases. The final sample consisted of 78 foster parents. Respondents were mailed a \$50 Walmart gift card for completing the surveys.

### **Measures**

### **Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (TAPS)**

TAPS is a 36-item scale designed to measure cultural competence among transracial adoptive parents who are raising a child from a different birth-race or culture. Each item is rated on a six-point Likert-type scale in which 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = moderately agree, and 6 = strongly agree. The potential range of scores is 36 to 216. Higher TAPS scores indicate higher levels of transracial parenting competence ( $\alpha = .91$ ) (Massatti et al., 2004). A sample item is: "I understand how my own cultural background influences the way I think, act, and speak." Although TAPS was developed for adoptive parents, we determined the scale's items were applicable to foster parents. Study participants were instructed to complete this instrument in relation to their fostering experience.

### **PDFS**

The PDFS is an 18-item scale designed to measure foster parents' dedication to fostering. Each item is rated on a four-point scale in which 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree (Orme et al., 2006). Scale scores range between 18 and 72. Higher scores indicate greater professional commitment, moral and ethical consciousness, receptivity, and responsiveness to foster children ( $\alpha = .80$ ). A sample item is: "I would delay my personal plans to assist a foster child who needs my help."

### **ATS**

The ATS is a 20-item scale designed to measure the time a person anticipates that he or she will have available to complete tasks that are typical of foster parent responsibilities (Cherry, Orme, & Rhodes, 2009). Each item is rated on a five-point scale in which 1 = never, 2 = once in a while, 3 = sometimes, 4 = quite often, and 5 = very often. Higher scores indicate more time available for fostering (potential range is from 20 to 100) ( $\alpha = .87$ ). A sample item is: "Help a child save personal keepsakes."

### **FPRPS**

The FPRPS is a 40-item scale that measures the perceived responsibility for different aspects of the foster parent role. Each item is rated on a five-point scale in which 1 = no responsibility, 2 = some responsibility, 3 = about half responsibility, 4 = about mostly responsible, and 5 = complete responsibility. There are two subscales: (1) Perceived Degree of Responsibility for Parenting and (2) Perceived Degree of Responsibility for Working with the Foster Care Agency with a potential range from 40 to 200 (Le Prohn, 1993, 1994; Pecora, Le Prohn, & Nasuti, 1999; Rhodes, Orme, & McSurdy, 2003). Higher scores indicate greater perceived responsibility for parenting (23 items) ( $\alpha = .88$ ) and working with the foster care agency (17 items) ( $\alpha = .87$ ). A sample item is: "Helping to build a child's self-confidence."

### **CRFS**

The CRFS is a 25-item scale that measures respondents' openness toward activities that support youths' cultural development. Each item is rated on a five-point scale in which 1 = none, 2 = little, 3 = some, 4 = a lot, and 5 = whatever it takes. There are four subscales: (1) Understanding

of Different Cultures, (2) Willingness to Become Aware of Children's Need for Cultural Identity, (3) Efforts to Learn about Available Resources to Support Children's Identity, and (4) Appreciation of Other Cultures. Scale scores range between 25 and 125. Higher scores indicate higher levels of cultural receptivity ( $\alpha = .97$ ) (Coakley & Orme, 2006). A sample item is: "Finding places where a foster child can go to get his or her cultural needs met."

Scores on the CRFS were used to characterize foster parent respondents on a continuum of receptivity toward transcultural parenting. It has been suggested that social workers consider an applicant with a percentile rank greater than 75 as having special strengths in cultural receptivity, and an applicant with a percentile rank below 25 as needing further development of cultural receptivity and additional support with transcultural fostering (Orme et al., 2006). In this study, CRFS scores were divided into quartiles, and comparative analyses across groups representing each of the four groups were conducted. For virtually all of the comparisons, the groups representing the second, third, and fourth quartiles (26% and above) were not different, but the three groups did differ significantly ( $p < .05$ ) from the lowest (25% and below) quartile group. Consequently, the 25% percentile was used as the cut-off to form low and high CRFS groups.

For purposes of examining the predictive value of the measures for discriminating receptivity toward transcultural parenting, we used discriminant function analysis (DFA). DFA provides a means of using a set of variables to determine their ability to statistically differentiate one or more groups from each other (Silva & Stam, 1995). Similar to multiple regression, the more variability the combination of variables can explain, the better the prediction (discrimination). Scores on the TAPS, PDFS, ATS, and FPRPS along with selected demographic variables were used as discriminant variables in the analysis.

## Results

### Demographic and Background Characteristics

A total of 78 foster parents from North Carolina participated in the study. The sample was composed of African American and multicultural (22.1%) and white (77.9%) foster parents. The majority of the participants were female (66.7%), married/partnered (79.5%), employed (71.8%), and between 41 and 50 years old (39.7%). Mainly, participants identified their religion as Baptist (43%), Methodist (11.5%), or other (38%). The vast majority had more than a high school education (80.8%). The majority did not have a preference for fostering a child with a particular race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religion (73.1%). The sociodemographic characteristics of the low- and high-scoring CRFS groups are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Foster Parent Characteristics: Low–High CRFS Comparisons ( $N = 78$ )

|  | Low CRFS Scores | High CRFS Scores |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
|  | ( $n = 19$ )    | ( $n = 59$ )     |

| <b>Variable</b>                                      | <b><i>n</i></b> | <b>%</b> | <b><i>n</i></b> | <b>%</b> |
|--|-----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| Race   |                 |          |                 |          |
| African American/multicultural                       | 2               | 10.5     | 15              | 25.9     |
| White  | 17              | 89.5     | 43              | 74.1     |
| Gender   |                 |          |                 |          |
| Male   | 10              | 52.6     | 16              | 27.1     |
| Female   | 9               | 47.4     | 43              | 72.9     |
| Religion   |                 |          |                 |          |
| Baptist  | 7               | 36.8     | 27              | 45.8     |
| Catholic   | 1               | 5.3      | 3               | 5.1      |
| Methodist  | 2               | 10.5     | 7               | 11.9     |
| Other  | 9               | 47.4     | 21              | 35.6     |
| Marital status                                       |                 |          |                 |          |
| Single   | 0               | 0        | 7               | 11.9     |
| Married/partnered                                    | 16              | 84.2     | 46              | 78.0     |
| Divorced   | 2               | 10.5     | 4               | 6.8      |
| Widowed  | 1               | 5.3      | 2               | 3.4      |
| Education  |                 |          |                 |          |
| High school and below                                | 6               | 31.6     | 9               | 15.3     |
| More than a high school education                    | 13              | 68.4     | 50              | 84.7     |
| Employment   |                 |          |                 |          |
| Not employed   | 5               | 26.3     | 17              | 28.8     |
| Employed   | 14              | 73.7     | 42              | 71.2     |
| Age  |                 |          |                 |          |
| Younger (21–40 years old)                            | 6               | 31.6     | 24              | 40.7     |
| Older (41 years old and above)                       | 13              | 68.4     | 35              | 59.3     |
| Preference to foster a child of a particular culture |                 |          |                 |          |

|               |    |      |    |      |
|---------------|----|------|----|------|
| No preference | 11 | 57.9 | 46 | 78.0 |
| Preference    | 8  | 42.1 | 13 | 22.0 |

Note: CRFS = Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale.

### Discriminant Function Analysis Results

To determine if foster parents with low CRFS scores could be differentiated from those with high scores based on their characteristics and the foster parenting scales administered in this study, a DFA was conducted using SPSS 19.0. Preliminary analyses (*t*-test group comparisons) were used to select the variables included in the analysis. Scores for the foster parenting scales found to differ significantly ( $p < .05$ ) between high and low CRFS groups were used. Total scores on the FPRPS were not significantly different between the two CRFS groups. But, because of their conceptual relevance, two items, (1) “Helping to build child's self-confidence” and (2) “Helping to build child's physical and social skills,” were included. Preliminary analyses indicated that these items contributed to producing the best discriminating equations based on explained variance (canonical correlation) and classification summary results. In addition, to control for possible group differences, race and education were included as control variables. A summary of the means, standard deviations, and *p* values representing comparisons of the scale scores and individual item scores for the high and low CRFS groups included in the DFA is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of Scale Scores and Individual Item Scores Included in the DFA

| CRFS Group   | Low      |           | High     |           | <i>p</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
|  | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |          |
| TAPS total   | 139.2    | 17.72     | 156.3    | 16.30     | .000     |
| PDFS total   | 54.6     | 3.88      | 60.3     | 5.37      | .000     |
| ATS total  | 67.2     | 14.17     | 78.5     | 13.83     | .003     |
| Helping to build child's self-confidence   | 4.1      | 0.81      | 4.3      | 0.54      | NS       |
| Helping foster child develop physical skills and social skills that need improvement | 4.1      | 0.66      | 4.2      | 0.71      | NS       |

Notes: DFA = discriminant function analysis; CRFS = Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale; TAPS = Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale; PDFS = Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale; ATS = Available Time Scale; NS = not significant.

Based on testing, the variables included in Table 3 provided the best discrimination between high and low CRFS groups. The analysis produced a significant discriminant function (Wilks's lambda)  $\Lambda = .532$ , [ $\chi^2(8, N = 76) = 44.12, p < .001$ ]. The effect size as measured by the canonical correlation was .684. The standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients for the resulting equation are presented in Table 3. All coefficients were significant at  $p < .05$ . Standardized discriminant function coefficients are like beta weights in multiple regression and



are interpreted as a measure of the relative importance of each of the original predictors. Higher coefficient values are indicators of likely greater explanatory importance.

**Table 3:** Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

| <b>Canonical Variables in Analysis</b>   | <b>Coefficient</b> |
|--|--------------------|
| PDFS total   | .640               |
| Education level (high school or less, greater than high school)                      | .631               |
| Preference   | -.459              |
| TAPS total   | .406               |
| Helping to build child's self-confidence   | .397               |
| Helping foster child develop physical skills and social skills that need improvement | -.377              |
| ATS total  | .375               |
| Race (African American, white)   | -.369              |

Notes: PDFS = Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale; TAPS = Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale; ATS = Available Time Scale.

The following summarizes each of the tested measures from the overall set from the most discriminating to the least discriminating in regard to low and high levels of cultural receptivity in fostering. Those foster parents who had higher PDFS scores had more education (having greater than a high school diploma), did not have a preference for fostering (that is, were open to fostering) a child from a particular cultural background, had higher total scores on the TAPS, had greater interest in building the youth's self-confidence (from the FPRPS), had less interest in helping youths with their physical and social skills (this variable is also from the FPRPS), had more available time to foster, and self-identified as African American, and were more inclined to engage in parenting activities for a child of a different race, ethnicity, or culture than others.

Group classification of respondents based on the discriminant equation produced an overall good prediction of initial group membership (91.0%). Virtually all (96.6%) of the high CRFS group was “correctly classified” (see Table 4). For the low CRFS group, classification was good, resulting in nearly three-fourths (73.7%) of cases being correctly assigned. To determine if the scale scores could be used to improve classification of respondents who present characteristics reflecting a positive transcultural profile, we examined the scores for the individual scales and found that for the low CRFS group that was classified as high by the analysis the distinguishing variable was PDFS scores (relating to foster parent dedication). For this group, mean PDFS scores for the correctly classified and “misclassified” cases were 53.2 and 58.4, respectively. The misclassified low CRFS group (those that looked a lot like the high CRFS group) had significantly ( $p = .006$ ) higher levels of dedication to fostering than low CRFS group respondents as classified by the DFA.

**Table 4:** Classification Results for CRFS Group Membership

| <b>Original Group Membership</b> |  | <b>Predicted Group Membership</b> |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
|                                  |  |                                   |

|           |      | <b>Low</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-----------|------|------------|-------------|--------------|
|           | Low  | 14 (73.7)  | 5 (26.3)    | 19           |
| Count (%) |      |            |             |              |
|           | High | 2 (3.4)    | 57 (96.6)   | 59           |

Notes: CRFS = Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale. “Correct” classification occurs when a case's predicted group membership corresponds with its original group membership; low–low and high–high pairings represent correct classification matches; 91.0% of original grouped cases correctly classified.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to assess the ability of a set of practice-based measures—TAPS, PDFS, ATS, and two items from the FPRPS—to represent indicators of positive transcultural parenting for use in the selection and training of foster parents. The prediction value of these measures was tested using the CRFS as the indicator measure of transcultural readiness. The findings revealed that the combination of the measures was able to clearly distinguish respondents with high cultural competence in transracial parenting, strong dedication to foster parenting, high commitment to providing the time needed for fostering, and role to positively support youths as predictive of openness to activities that support a child's cultural development. Conversely, respondents with lower scores on these measures were less likely to report openness toward activities that support a child's cultural development.

These findings were consistent with those of previous studies that examined bivariate associations between this relatively new construct, cultural receptivity, and quality fostering factors (Cherry et al., 2009; Orme et al., 2006). The results also show that personal dedication to fostering is likely the best predictor of cultural receptivity, even when scores on the other measures are less consistent with being supportive of a child's cultural development. The following presents a review of the explanatory value that each measure contributed to the significant DFA prediction.

### **Factors Relating to Cultural Receptivity**

#### **Personal Dedication**

The PDFS total scores had the most significant association with cultural receptivity. It might be that foster parents who value diversity and recognize the disparate outcomes for minority youths possess a high level of commitment to be supportive through both good times and challenging times. In their study that compared PDFS scores with other foster parenting factors, Orme et al. (2006) concluded that those with greater levels of dedication to fostering are committed to providing a stable home for youths who are likely to have unique needs or challenges. They also make it a priority to engage in activities that promote youths' development and success (Orme et al., 2006). Because these qualities would also support minority youths' development, it would be important to target foster parents with high levels of dedication to fostering and explore the possibility of transcultural parenting with them.

#### **Preference for Fostering Racially or Culturally Different Children**

Foster parents were more receptive to cultural parenting when they did not have a preference for fostering a child from a particular cultural background. Not having a preference or being open to fostering transculturally might be attributed to reasons concerning their knowledge about culturally different people, confidence or perceived competence in transcultural fostering, preparedness, or access to available resources and supports to raise culturally different youths, which are factors that need to be explored by foster placement agencies. Prior research suggests that lack of preparation, agency training, and support, and other factors could lead to transcultural parenting challenges (Daniel, 2011). Therefore, it is plausible that foster parents may alter their initial opinion about not wanting to foster transculturally, depending on whether they think they will receive training and other supports to help them with parenting. In cases like these, foster parent agency social workers can use assessment tools like the ones examined in this study to elicit a more thorough discussion about applicants' strengths, perceptions, and fears regarding transcultural fostering, and make decisions about needed training and supports, or whether they are appropriate candidates to raise youths who do not share their culture.

### **Transracial Adoption Parenting**

Higher TAPS scores were associated with higher CRFS scores. Researchers emphasize the importance of being receptive toward and competent in transcultural parenting tasks to support youths' cultural development (Brown et al., 2009; Coakley & Orme, 2006; Daniel, 2011; Massatti et al., 2004; Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010). Youths in foster care have to be socialized and given time to acculturate into a new culture, and this readjustment can cause extreme stress when they must set aside their language, customs, and family traditions and learn new ones to fit into their new surroundings. To this end, it is critical to assess foster parents' capacity to adjust aspects of their values, beliefs, and behaviors to reflect an intercultural lifestyle that is inclusive, sensitive, respectful, and appreciative of the differences between them and the youth.

### **Helping to Build Children's Self-Confidence**

Scores on this item from the FPRPS indicated that the more foster parents were interested in building the youth's self-confidence, the more they were receptive to parenting a child of a different race, ethnicity, or culture. These findings are similar to previous research that showed that when parents' socialization messages emphasized culture and cultural pride, youths had higher self-esteem (Johnston et al., 2007; Marshall, 1995) and higher peer self-esteem (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). Minority youths' experience in a predominantly white society magnifies their differences, which can affect how they feel about themselves. Butler-Sweet (2011) asserted that racial socialization allows black parents to protect their youths from negative racial messages while promoting positive racial messages. Without protective functions such as this, youths are susceptible to internalizing feelings of self-hate and hopelessness (Butler-Sweet, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to assess transcultural foster parents on their ability to instill a youth's self-confidence, because they are not from a stigmatized race, ethnicity, or culture that can inherently inform those vital socialization processes (Samuels, 2009).

### **Helping Children Develop Physical and Social Skills**

The association of low scores on this FPRPS item with high scores on the CRFS suggests an interesting dilemma for some foster parents of youths of different races, ethnicities, and cultures. These foster parents may want to help develop those skills in youths but may not possess the cultural knowledge or experience to effectively do so. Youths who are transculturally placed must go through a new socialization process, different from what they have already begun with their birth families; moreover, they must go through this process with foster parents who “have not experienced life from a minority perspective” (Massatti et al., 2004, p. 43). This suggests that to help youths acquire the skills they need to thrive in their dual cultural worlds, the foster parents need to know about how physical and social skills are taught and acquired in the youths' birth culture. Integrative socialization practices, such as living in integrated neighborhoods, have been shown to be effective in promoting positive racial identity development and survival skills (Vonk et al., 2010). Socialization can also teach youths to cope with incidents of prejudice and discrimination (Butler-Sweet, 2011; Coard et al., 2004; Leslie et al., 2013).

### **Available Time to Foster**

The results showed that higher ATS scores were associated with higher CRFS scores. Parenting culturally different youths involves additional time to identify helpful resources and information, take part in connecting youths to their cultural communities, establish meaningful relationships with people who share the youths' culture, and dedicate time for conversations and experiences that can help youths acclimate to their new culture and environment. These findings are consistent with Cherry et al.'s (2009) findings that indicated that competency in understanding youths' cultural needs might contribute to foster parents' perception of having more time for fostering tasks. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the extent of time foster parents have available to foster that will allow them to fully engage in needed transcultural fostering tasks.

### **Race and Education**

The findings also showed that foster parents who were African American were more culturally receptive than white Americans. An explanation might be that white Americans have more concerns or fears about transitioning to have an intercultural lifestyle than African Americans. White foster parents' decisions about fostering transculturally might be influenced by their lack of knowledge about the youth's culture. They might also be influenced by the amount of support they will have from their family, community, and society (de Haymes & Simon, 2003). For instance, foster parents might feel that they may not be able to raise a culturally different child based on their available resources or the climate of their predominantly white community, which will have a negative impact on the youth. These examples might not be as great an issue for African American foster parents.

We caution that these findings do not mean that those with lower scores are not capable of providing quality transcultural foster care. Using measures to test transcultural parenting potential is only part of the prescreening process; communication between the prospective transcultural foster parents and foster care professionals about their strengths and needs is also essential (Orme et al., 2006). Ultimately, social workers and other foster care professionals need

to use their professional judgment to accurately interpret and synthesize information gathered about the foster parents before transcultural fostering decisions are made (Orme et al., 2006).

A similar argument can be made for foster parents who had a high school diploma or less who were found to be less receptive to supporting the cultural needs of youths. Correspondingly, there are some state foster parent licensing policies and laws in the United States (that is, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia) that require applicants to have a high school degree or its equivalent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], Administration for Children and Families, 2012). Arguably, such requirements imply that more education is accompanied by additional qualities that are considered conducive to youths' psychosocial development and overall well-being (Beltran & Epstein, 2012). There is, however, a contrary view that such eligibility requirements are unnecessary and do not have a basis for ensuring qualified foster parents (Beltran & Epstein, 2012). These findings regarding race and education call for the assessment of openness and dedication to participating in the aforementioned transcultural parenting activities to support youths, which can elicit discussions about foster parents' concerns or fears about the needed adjustments in their way of life and the training and support that they will require.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations of this study that require caution in generalizing the results. First, a relatively small, nonprobability sample from North Carolina was used, which may not be representative of most foster parents in the state or nationally. Another limitation involved the use of a scale that was designed for transracial adoptive parents (that is, TAPS) with our sample of foster parents. We felt that the items had relevancy to foster parents who might adopt in the future, given that over one-fourth of youths adopted from foster care represent transracial or ethnic adoptions (HHS, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2011). However, there is no evidence showing that TAPS is a valid tool for foster parents. Similarly, using two items from the FPRPS was not the best approach even though it fit our analysis. Future studies should either include additional items for reliability purposes or examine the FPRPS more closely in terms of its psychometric properties as a scale to measure transcultural foster parents' social skills and self-confidence.

We recommend enhancing a future similar study by assessing characteristics such as length of time foster parenting; parenting experience of youths of different races, ethnicities, or cultures; and contextual factors such as where the foster parents lived, type of transcultural youths available for fostering living in their community, and concentrations of families with similar races, ethnicities, or cultures of the youth they have or might foster. In addition, we feel that future research should address the ramifications of other identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, spirituality, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics, and the intersections of two or more characteristics.

Finally, the study examined predictive relationships among measures of parenting and not actual parenting behaviors. Future studies should use a prospective design to examine a random sample of new foster parents who complete the measures and go on to parent racially, ethnically, and

culturally different youths. This would allow conclusions to be drawn about differences between high and low scores among foster parents and their subsequent transcultural parenting behaviors.

## **Conclusion**

Incorporating psychometrically sound prescreening assessments can help identify with greater precision (Cabrera-Nguyen, 2010) a set of positive characteristics and qualities that a foster parent should possess, and further lead to effective transcultural parenting. Some foster parents can raise children of color well with minimal supports and prepare them to become successful adults with strong cultural identity, whereas others need intensive training and support to prepare them for transcultural parenting, and others could benefit from moderate assistance. Therefore, assessing predictors of high and low levels of cultural receptivity is critical to determine the level of supports needed for prospective transcultural parents and to determine whether they are qualified to parent culturally different youths.

In summary, the findings suggest that there are important characteristics and qualities that foster parents should possess that are interrelated and embedded in cultural receptivity, which is essential for effective transcultural parenting. This is in line with a similar study that suggested that cultural variables are intertwined with other important parenting qualities (Hughes et al., 2006). In addition, the results indicated that there are two distinct groups of foster parents, with higher or lower levels of cultural receptivity. We suggest that the set of assessment inventories investigated in this study can be useful in selecting and training those interested in fostering a child of a different race, ethnicity, or culture.

A final point is that we need to be cautious about the use of the measures as being relevant for all transcultural foster parent–youth pairings. Culture is a complex factor that may often be viewed in terms of race or ethnicity, but it extends to many other boundaries that often are not apparent or perhaps recognized as relevant. Increasingly, the challenge is to promote the development of cultural acceptance without requiring either the foster family or the youth to become any less connected to their respective cultural identities. For the foster family this means being open to supporting the cultural needs of the youth, and for the youth this means being assured that his or her cultural identity need not be forsaken if the foster family represents a different culture.

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