

Beyond the Golden Rule: Results and Implications of a Qualitative Exploration of Rural Caregivers' Experiences of Cultural Socialization

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Abstract

The relationship between culture and the way individuals experience systems such as education, healthcare, religion, law, and media garnered renewed focus due to high-profile world events. Researchers have documented the impact of race, differing caregiving styles, and other cultural differences on how caregivers culturally socialize their children. This pilot study aims to explore, through phenomenology, caregivers' narratives of their experiences culturally socializing children in the North Carolina Appalachian region in the current socio-political climate. Three themes were illuminated: 1) golden rule, 2) fish meeting water, and 3) social desirability. Implications for practice for caregivers and helping professionals will be discussed.

Keywords

Child Development, Ethnicity, Cultural Socialization, Phenomenology

1. Introduction

Socialization has been defined as the process through which youth learn about a culture and develop a sense of belonging to a cultural group (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). While this definition acknowledges cultural development within groups of shared identities it does not describe the process by which children come to understand cultural differences while valuing the identities that they hold. Sue et al. (2019) describe racial/cultural identity development as a non-linear process of moving from solely valuing one's own culture to a sense of security,

autonomy, and pride in one's own identities. Prior research describes the impact of various factors such as race (Alper et al., 2016), caregiving styles among various cultures (Wang et al., 2015), self-regulation (LeCuyer & Zhang, 2015), and emotional expression (Louie et al., 2015), however, these studies do not address caregivers' narratives of their experiences culturally socializing their children. In today's changing world with high profile cultural events with day-to-day impacts for families such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Huck & Zhang, 2021), immigration (Kerwin, 2017), and an increase in gun violence and school shootings (Carter et al., 2022), this raises the question; how do caregivers practice cultural socialization in the current socio-political climate? This study intends to serve as a pilot to begin answering the question, what are caregivers' experiences of cultural socialization?

2. Literature Review

It is well established in the literature that early childhood experiences influence life-span development. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005) supports that the initial years create the foundations for children's physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and other competencies. Within this period of development, differentiation of self is a fundamental cognitive change which paves the way for various other developmental changes in a social context (Aitken et al., 2019), such as cultural identity development. It is essential to acknowledge this sensitive period of early childhood when considering the role socialization plays in children cross-culturally (Crouter et al., 2007). Because a child's development is co-constructed through interactions with the systems around them (Barrouillet, 2015), it is imperative to consider the variables of cultural and racial identity development—namely, how socialization practices help children develop a sense of cultural identity while acknowledging difference.

Various developmental theorists have highlighted the importance of development in a social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Matusov & Hayes, 2000; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), thereby paving the way for our understanding of cultural development. For example, Vygotsky and Cole (1978) believed that cognitive development varies across cultures and stems from social interactions rather than independent explorations. Specifically, Vygotsky supported the idea that cultural development occurs first between people otherwise known as interpsychological, and then inside the child, otherwise termed as intrapsychological (Matusov & Hayes, 2000). Thus, caregivers support their children's cultural development by allowing the child the opportunity of working and interacting with culturally advanced individuals in different cultural activities (Matusov & Hayes, 2000).

Uri Bronfenbrenner's (1986) bioecological theory also supports this paradigm of cultural development. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) theory posits the importance of environmental contexts beyond the most immediate setting of a child (Grace

et al., 2017). Factors such as school, family, peers, neighborhoods, health services, and other similar immediate face-to-face settings all interact with the family system to shape the child's behavior and perception (Elliott & Davis, 2018). This model also considers contextual influences and settings that may not directly involve the child but still affects them, such as caregivers' workplace, legal services, mass media, world events, globalization, and others. All of these systems interact within a broader social and cultural context that shape the child's development. Parents or caregivers can help shape this development through modeling, preparation for events that have yet to occur, and reflection and intentional discussion about events that have passed. Through cultural socialization, caregivers provide guidance to the child helping them understand the world around them and promote positive development. As such, early childhood experiences play a crucial role in physical and emotional development, setting the foundation for which children begin to build their worldview, sense of competence, trust in others and the external world, and ability to form social connections and fulfilling relationships (Erikson, 1993).

Though development occurs in and between many systems, current research shows that ideas about racial constructs from early childhood through adolescence depend primarily on the family and family interactions. Research supports that caregivers who actively engage with their children are successful in passing on cultural experiences (Van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015). Furthermore, the caregiver's role in facilitating cultural growth is often dependent on their own experiences exploring cultural values and societal expectations (Van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015). Caregivers' experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination was found to moderate the cultural socialization process, as caregivers were more likely to translate these experiences into socialization behaviors, in an effort to increase positive consequences for children's adjustment (Derlan et al., 2018). While there is no evidence directly linking environment to one's experience of discrimination, it is more likely that people of Color and individuals from socially and culturally marginalized backgrounds may experience discrimination leading to an increase in salience for caregivers, potentially impacting socialization behaviors.

The Appalachian region, spanning several states such as Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina is rich in cultural influences such as German, Irish, Scottish, African, and that of Indigenous populations; however, the North Carolina Appalachian region is rather racially homogeneous with a population that is 89.9% White (WNC Health Network, 2022). Rural Appalachian culture (Coyne et al., 2006) is associated with values such as "fundamentalism, isolationism, familism, and homogeneity" (p. 1). These characteristics are exemplified through tight-knit communities which may in turn reinforce a lack of awareness around diversity. Research in this area is beginning to emerge, and sets the stage for understanding the cultural socialization behaviors of White Appalachian families.

2.1. White Cultural Identity Development

Research on cultural socialization has primarily focused on the socialization practices utilized by caregivers of Black children, along with parents of other ethnically underrepresented youth, with a few studies looking into the socialization practices of White parents. However, the amount of literature pertaining to White cultural socialization is growing. Studies have found that White caregivers often do not think of themselves in terms of their racial identity, and therefore, Whiteness is seen as a default identity (Freeman et al., 2022). Color-blindness, the belief that racial group membership should not be noticed, is a common strategy used by White parents to teach their children about race (Sullivan et al., 2021). It is often used as a pathway to reducing racial bias, by downplaying the importance of race, White caregivers tend to bolster belief in a non-prejudiced self-concept. From a cultural socialization perspective, parent-child conversations absent of racial recognition might perpetuate racial inequality and reduce children's understanding of the societal implications of race (Freeman et al., 2022). Abaied and Perry (2021) noted that "since White parents know their White children will not be targets of racism and have not experienced racism themselves, they may lack the motivation to discuss race with their children" (p. 432). In short, white privilege leads to silence about race.

In addition, research suggests that some White parents intentionally avoid discussions of race to protect their children from the harsh realities of racism and fear that conversations about race will actually "increase children's racial prejudice" (Abaied et al., 2022: p. 865; Vittrup, 2018). Not all White parents subscribe to a color-blind worldview. Although less common, some White parents communicate a color-conscious ideology; an ideology rooted in acknowledging race, racial structures, White identity, and how racism occurs in American society. Even when White parents embrace a color-conscious point of view, they may do so in a way that has little impact on children's developing beliefs (Abaied & Perry, 2021).

2.2. Racial Socialization by Caregivers

Caughy et al. (2011) examined how caregivers approached racial socialization. The participants of this study were grouped into categories such as emphasis on cultural socialization and coping strategies versus silence about race and other categories. Such studies are the first steps in exploring how racial and emotional socialization are intersected and how caregiver strategies all were focused around the same concern of protecting their children (Dunbar et al., 2015). Future research is needed to focus on coping strategies, behavioral outcomes, and other emotional aspects that are able to be generalized to balance social-emotional and cognitive benefits. Priest et al. (2014), echoes the need for continued research after analyzing over 30 years of cultural socialization processes for both historically marginalized and non-marginalized individuals. Although this specific study concentrates on the cultural socialization of African American child-

ren, it highlights the importance of environmental and social influences that impact the messages caregivers give to their children. This is particularly important because children of all racial and ethnic groups receive messages about issues of race. While previous studies have examined moderators of socialization behaviors (Derlan et al., 2018), preservation of cultural heritage (Van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015), and diversity amongst cultures (Priest et al., 2014), what has yet to be explored is the cultural socialization practices among majority White, rural-based caregivers. The current study aims to explore, through a small phenomenological pilot investigation, five caregivers' experiences of cultural socialization in the current socio-political climate.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Overview of Study Design

Research has underscored the significance of early childhood in the development of skills and abilities in various areas such as language, learning, and socialization (Raburu, 2015). Given the unique demographics of the Appalachian region and the intensification of global awareness of race and social injustice, the researchers set out to pilot a study in this area. The goal of this project is to explore the process of how children become culturally socialized and experience cultural development within groups of shared identities. The current pilot study explores the following research question: What are caregivers' experiences of cultural socialization among children ages 2 - 12 in the North Carolina Appalachian region?

Given that ideas about gender and racial constructs from early childhood through adolescence depend primarily on the family and family interactions (Crouter et al., 2007), a phenomenological approach was selected because it allows for the centralization of caregiver voices without filtering their truths through the lens of a predetermined framework (Chandler et al., 2015). Phenomenology is the study of things as they are experienced (Gallagher, 2012). The researchers used phenomenology to guide their exploration of caregivers' experiences of cultural socialization practices with children.

3.2. Research Team

Our team consisted of three individuals, two of which were faculty members. One identified as a Black woman who works primarily with adolescent and adult populations and the other as a White woman who works primarily with children, adolescents, and families. One student researcher, who identified as a White man, from their shared department, rounded out the team. All members of the team were from the same medium-sized, public, predominantly White institution in the southern Appalachian region. Faculty members had prior experience conducting qualitative research, particularly phenomenology. The team met for training on methodological best practices and thorough discussion about data analysis processes with a special focus on ensuring the data was free from influence and bias.

3.3. Participants

Researchers, who were physically located within the southern Appalachian region of the United States, were committed to exploring cultural dynamics of the surrounding communities and contributing to a breadth of knowledge regarding Appalachian children and families. Therefore, participants were intentionally selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling procedures. After receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board, an invitation for study participation was sent via online national listservs, social media, and word-of-mouth. Participant demographics must have aligned with the inclusion criteria in that they must have been identified as a primary guardian of at least one child between the ages of 2 - 12. At the time of the pilot study ten potential participants responded; including attrition and criteria exclusion, data collection proceeded with five completed demographic survey packets and participant interviews. Pilot studies in qualitative research have been used to identify problems associated with data collection and recruitment, evaluate the process of observation and data analysis, and fine-tune methodology (Janghorban et al., 2014).

Of the five participants all identified as White, including four women and one man. All were from North Carolina, with two reporting that they reside in suburban areas and three in rural areas. Participants were between the ages of 33 and 37. They reported an annual income ranging from \$50,000 through \$149,000 per household. Four of the five participants held master's degrees while one held a bachelor's degree. Participants reported having between 2 and 4 children, averaging 2.6 children each. All interviewees were married, including one interviewee whom reported being in a same sex marriage. Further demographic details are summarized below (See **Table 1**).

3.4. Data Collection and Data Sources

Researchers conducted qualitative interviews with caregivers up to 90 minutes in length. These interviews were conducted via teleconference and audio-recorded. Researchers transcribed, de-identified the tapes, and analyzed the data in Excel using a phenomenological approach. Interview questions are included below (See **Table 2**).

3.5. Data Analysis

First, each member of the research team independently reviewed the transcripts and identified significant statements. Next the team met and discussed each member's review of the data and explored commonalities of the significant statements. During this discussion the team identified and defined codes that would guide future analysis. Next, the team again independently reviewed the transcripts, assigning a code to each significant statement. After the transcripts were coded, the team met and discussed similarities and differences among the group's codes, resolving discrepancies by refining code definitions and creating

Table 1. Reported participant demographics.

	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Religion	Setting	Education	Family Income	Children
P1	37	M	White	Heterosexual	Not Reported	Rural	Bachelors	\$75,000 - \$99,999	4
P2	36	F	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Suburban	Masters	\$50,000 - \$74,999	2
P7	37	F	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Rural	Masters	\$50,000 - \$74,999	2
P8	37	F	White	Heterosexual	Christian	Suburban	Masters	\$100,000 - \$149,999	2
P9	33	F	White	Bisexual	Christian	Rural	Masters	\$100,000 - \$149,999	3

Table 2. Interview questions.

- a. Tell us about your child/ren.
- b. What values are important to you and your family?
- c. How does your child/ren identify?
- d. What role does culture play in your everyday life?
- e. What is your definition of cultural socialization? How would you define this concept for yourself and your family?
- f. What role does culture play in socialization practices in your family?
- g. What is your experience of cultural socialization (growing up & throughout life)? How has it impacted you emotionally?
What resources have you used?
- h. What resources have you used?
- i. What else would you like us to know, that we haven't specifically asked about?
- J. Do you have any other comments about your experiences that you would like to share?

new codes that define concepts that were not captured in the previous version of the code book. Next, each researcher independently re-coded the transcripts with the updated code book, gathering to discuss until consensus was achieved. Afterwards, the team created an illustration of the codes, grouping them based on the relationships between concepts. Once the researchers gathered the groupings, they were then able to identify key themes.

Data must be subjected to various methods of proving authenticity. For example, quantitative data is evaluated for validity, reliability, and objectivity. The alternative criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, are typically used to evaluate trustworthiness of qualitative data. The four criteria for evaluation of qualitative research are discussed below.

The concept of credibility answers the question: Is this data believable from the standpoint of the participants? In other words, does the information provided accurately depict the views of the participants? Is it void of the opinions and views of the researchers? Due to participant accessibility restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers were unable to conduct member checking thus co-researchers addressed this criterion by keeping a detailed log of their research process, thus allowing for thick description. For example, co-researchers independently reviewed and labeled each transcript through several rounds of coding and recoding. This was followed by the research team col-

lectively processing the data through thorough discussion in order to reduce the likelihood of the introduction of individual bias. All members of the research team participated in coding meetings and helped to redefine code definitions. Transferability answers the question: can this data be generalized to other contexts? While the researchers cannot prove transferability, they aimed to provide enough evidence of their process so that the reader can reasonably set the stage for applying their procedures to other research studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, the researchers provided a thick description of study procedures and their experiences during data collection. Dependability answers the question: will themes from the data be found in similar studies? Dependability can be reached following the completion of an audit by an external researcher. Per best practice, an audit was completed by an external researcher following data analysis and related themes of the current study were found in relevant literature. These will be addressed in the discussion section. Confirmability answers the question: if external researchers examine the data will they find that limitations and biases have been explored? This criterion was addressed by use of thick description and bracketing procedures.

4. Results

The data was analyzed by the coding team and three themes were illuminated: 1) golden rule, 2) fish meeting water, and 3) social desirability. Each theme will be described in detail with examples in the participants' own words. A brief discussion relating the current study results will follow.

4.1. Golden Rule

The golden rule precept, often used colloquially, is derived from the Gospel of Matthew, a book of the Christian Bible, which states "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you..." (*New International Version*, 2011: Matt 7: 12). It is noted that Christianity is the dominant religion in the Appalachian region and in the United States. This belief alludes to the moral and ethical consideration of a Christian's sense of duty to others. This theme describes participants' experiences of navigating the cultural socialization process by modeling, through their lens, goodwill, or acceptable behaviors for themselves and with others. Participants often defaulted to fundamental moral principles such as not doing harm, while stressing that this idea applies no matter how one looks. Participant one even identified the golden rule directly. Researchers found that participants seemed to seize opportunities of convenience to drive home general principles related to being a good citizen suggesting "completion of the task." Examples of this included volunteering at the food pantry and treating those there with dignity, "treating them like people", as participant one shared.

Participant two noted "we just ask them [our children] to be nice to everybody." This participant goes on to further say "I was always just brought up to love everybody, that it doesn't matter what they look like, and that everybody

has different strengths.” Participants seemed to believe and send the message to their children that being nice represents an inclusive picture of cultural socialization practices.

4.2. Fish Meeting Water

Fish meeting water describes participants’ experiences of personal reflection about moments of encounter and dissonance in which they explored their emotional response and socialization behaviors. Researchers found that upon reflection, participants reported in response to pivotal moments that their current socialization practices need to go beyond generalized teachings such as “treat everyone with respect” in favor of providing tools and strategies for engaging with a diverse world. One participant described her experience of attending a caregiver-teacher conference because her child commented to a peer that “her skin looked funny.” She was “mortified” because such a comment did not align the values of kindness, hard work, and acceptance that she had been teaching her daughter. Reflectively, the participant seemed to suggest that it was not until this event that she realized that her responsibility to culturally socialize was greater than she had previously perceived.

4.3. Social Desirability

Social desirability is described as participants’ conscious or unconscious tendency to respond in a favorable way during periods of observation rather than acknowledging their true thoughts or feelings. Researchers noted that often participants made qualifying statements, potentially aimed at preserving their ego, sense of self efficacy, or perceived skills as a caregiver.

Participant one stated “But we all have way more similarities than we do differences and to me that’s what I like to look at culturally with my family, you know...” This participant seems to minimize difference, which can be counter-productive in the cultural socialization process and ignores people’s lived experiences. Participant seven stated “I’m afraid to tell you that it’s not every day” referring to the frequency of their socialization practices. This participant implied an anticipated sense of judgment from the researchers and recognized that she was aware of the desirable response yet she reported practices that may not be perceived as acceptable.

5. Discussion

Researchers interviewed five caregivers prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Caregivers lived in rural areas of North Carolina, regionally identified as Appalachia, and were primarily White. Participants described their experiences of culturally socializing their children. Upon data analysis, it became clear that the participants viewed the process of cultural socialization through their own unique experiences, cultural identities, and ways of interacting with the world. It is noted that material explored within this article, including colloquial terms such as

“golden rule”, cultural expressions, and implications of the research may be grounded in the socio-political context of the United States. Themes of the data centered around reflections which researchers of this study coined as golden rule, fish meeting water, and social desirability.

Data from the current study is supported by researchers’ findings (Crouter et al., 2007; Inguglia et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2019). For example, Crouter et al. (2007) suggested that children’s perceptions about gender and racial constructs in early childhood and adolescence are heavily influenced by their caregivers and family interactions. Study participants acknowledged the importance of their role in the cultural socialization process and yet there was more to be done (Crouter et al., 2007). Current study participants relied on incident-based socialization, rather than integration of diversity and discussions about difference into their daily lives. While participants expressed a general sense of comfort with this method, it may limit children’s socialization experiences. Many people’s communities and ecological systems are cultural echo chambers, insulated environments with little social or cultural variation, reinforcing what one already believes. As noted in the golden rule section participants held the reins, maintaining power and control over children’s experiences. Even when participants engaged in these events, they were orchestrated as it was through the lens of their level of comfort and cultural identity development. Researchers noted that participants seemed genuine in their good intentions and efforts to facilitate opportunities for their children to interact with and learn about cultures other than their own. The inherent problem with the golden rule is that it does not acknowledge difference, a factor that contributes insidiously to color-evasion or what has commonly been described as “color-blind ideology”. Color evasion can be understood as explaining “how dynamics unrelated to race support contemporary racial disparities” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). This concept serves to maintain racist systems by turning a “blind-eye” to them.

The theme of fish meeting water captures participants’ engagement in activities that help their family both experience and talk about cultures other than their own. Researchers noted that socialization activities such as exposure to foods from different cultures or attending cultural festivals that exhibit culture for consumption and entertainment, momentarily allows families to safely speculate and selectively acknowledge diverse cultures. These, often performative, types of activities represent exceptional interactions and touchpoints rather than integrated experiences woven into the fabric of their daily lives.

While these conversations inspire hope, it is worth exploring how they may run the risk of engaging in what Bell and Hartmann (2007) have named “diversity happy talk” (p. 906). This term references joyous talk about diversity on the surface level, often absent of a depth of understanding and nuance. For example, celebrating cultural differences—while not harmful—may pull attention away from more difficult conversations around inequality, unseen privilege, and normative presumptions of whiteness (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). This cultural lack of awareness was prevalent in the data, and suggests that the theme of “fish meet-

ing water” not only captures the phenomenon of moments of encounter but it implies a social subtext of surface level engagement with and conceptualization of culture.

The idea of social desirability can also be connected to the two themes discussed above. As mentioned previously, the danger of the golden rule is that it does not acknowledge difference. Additionally, diversity “happy talk” runs the same risk. Whether or not the participants were unaware of these dynamics or were reasonably unwilling to be vulnerable about the role they play in such dynamics, positioning oneself as treating others fairly and celebrating diversity to function to preserve the ego while sidestepping the more difficult conversations that can be had around diversity. Again, these are unlikely to be conscious in the minds of the participants, but are worth discussing both here and as groundwork for future research.

5.1. Limitations and Future Directions

The researchers recognize that study limitations centered around participant homogeneity and number. For example, although a call for study participants was sent out to numerous outlets, the response was limited to a small homogeneous, rural sample. The homogeneity of the sample was significant given the topic of exploration. The researchers had hoped to proceed with a more ethnically diverse sample; however, the data collected allowed for the exploration of different; yet, equally culturally-nuanced viewpoints.

The researchers initially secured more participants for the study; however, due to attrition and participants being excluded for not meeting minimum inclusion criteria, the study proceeded with the five remaining participants. Minimal recruitment numbers may have been lower than projected as a result of the subject matter. The subject matter being explored required that participants be vulnerable. Through sharing their personal and familial experiences, they potentially opened themselves up for judgment. Nevertheless, the integrity of the study remained intact, still meeting the standard set forth by [Sandelowski \(1995\)](#) who suggested that “qualitative sample sizes are large enough to allow the unfolding of a ‘new and richly textured understanding’ of the phenomenon under study, but small enough so that the “deep, case-oriented analysis of qualitative data analysis is not precluded” (p. 183). Lastly, [Morse \(2000\)](#) indicated that a number of variables be taken into consideration when determining sample size, such factors are complexity, accessibility, and quality of data. In the current study the researchers continued with their exploration, determining the data was complex enough to warrant further study due to the length and depth of interviews, the sensitivity of racial discourse, and the emotional volatility surrounding cultural issues in the current socio-political climate.

Given these limitations, the present study represents a first attempt or an initial analysis sample to address these issues. Due to the limited sample size, the researchers decided to treat the study as a pilot with the goal of supporting future research. It is also noted that participants in the current study reacted to

their children's happen-stance experiences, which led to the researchers labeling these anecdotes as fish meeting water. In future studies, it is recommended that researchers explore what it might look like if caregivers moved from reacting to chance encounters to intentionally providing cultural socialization opportunities, or shepherding children through their experiences. In essence, moving from passive spectator to actively engaged participant. Additionally, it is suggested that future research should examine cultural socialization in more diverse communities and with more socially and culturally diverse participants.

5.2. Implications for Research

In the current study, caregivers' experiences seemed to be related to their stage of cultural identity development. Three major themes were illuminated from the participants' words: 1) golden rule, 2) fish meeting water, and 3) social desirability. While this study mirrors well established research, it is believed that given the current and ever-changing social climate, it was imperative to revisit the concept of cultural socialization. Data was collected at the end of 2017, and the manuscript was written in stages and completed in the spring of 2020. Researchers were struck by a renewed focus on civil rights and advocacy due to COVID-19, its disproportionate impacts on Black and Brown communities, and state sanctioned violence against Black people. Researchers noted that this study presented a unique opportunity to revisit caregivers' experiences of cultural socialization after significant world events.

5.3. Implications for Practice

5.3.1. Caregivers

Most participants recognized they were not doing all that they could; however, they were also satisfied with what they had done. In essence, the researchers believe that it is not enough to react to events in children's lives, caregivers should provide opportunities for which personal reflection and growth can flourish. Left alone with no intervention or modeling, children may not fully understand the impact of systems on the way in which they move throughout the world and the consequential impact on others. In the case of participants in the current study, the cultural socialization process for White caregivers may be particularly important, as learning about the presence of privilege may have far-reaching implications for social and cognitive development in the child. In order for caregivers to capitalize on happenstance experiences, it is recommended that the following three questions be considered: 1) Who benefits from the experience? 2) What message might the child receive? 3) How does this message promote cultural consciousness and equity? Caregivers may model for children how to appropriately manage emotions such as confusion, anger, and shame that may result from their experiences. Reflecting and having overt conversations with both caregivers and children may minimize the possibility of misdirected actions furthering implicit bias, discrimination, White saviorism, and ethnocentric monoculturalism.

5.3.2. Helping Professionals

Helping professionals working with children and adolescents who are beginning to explore issues related to race or difference will need to build trust and help children manage their emotions. These emotions may include shame, guilt, sadness, or anger possibly stemming from contact or dissonance within their experience. Before any productive dialogue can begin, the environment must be perceived as safe and inclusive to diverse clientele. Examples of understanding of what clients need in order to feel safe may be gestures and visual cues such as multicultural resources, sponsors/endorsement of diverse organizations, community involvements/events, and caregiver groups with the topic of culture. Helpers should also make a commitment to centralizing voices of Color in their professional development and clinical practice. These suggestions must be combined with continued efforts of sustained advocacy. Otherwise, helping professionals run the risk of engaging in performative advocacy that is void of a trustworthy understanding of safety for clients. It is recommended that practitioners self-reflect and consider the following questions: 1) What in your work reflects your multicultural competence? 2) How is it in compliance with your professional ethical codes and standards? 3) How might your clients know?

6. Conclusion

Overall, the study findings help inform clinical practice, helping professionals, and caregivers of the significant impact that cultural socialization has on the children within their various systems. Children are impacted by their perceptions of culture, whether it be their own or from others such as peers or caregivers. Caregivers might be encouraged to expand beyond their own experience of cultural socialization and reflect on what it may “look” like to engage in a style of caregiving that reflects cultural competency with their children. In the future, researchers will expand on this study’s pilot through exploration with a larger, more diverse population of caregivers.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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