

FAMILY INFLUENCES ON ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
AMONG TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES

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ABSTRACT

Family Influences on Ethnic Identity Development Among Transracial Adoptees

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This study focused on the experiences of transracial adoptees in the United States, in an effort to examine the roles of cultural socialization and family influences on adoptees' ethnic identity development. This study explored these issues through in-depth interviews with 11 adult transracial adoptees. Qualitative data analysis indicated various factors influencing participants' ethnic identity development. Analysis compared levels of parental connection to adoptees' birth culture, according to participants' responses to interview questions. Analysis also compared socialization activities perceived by participants as meaningful to those that participants described as superficial or lacking in meaning. Themes included freedom of choice, opportunities for exposure to birth culture, and family support. Through quantitative analysis, a significant connection was found between parents' level of connection with adoptees' birth culture and the number of cultural socialization strategies they engaged in with their children. There was also a significant link between socialization activities participants viewed as meaningful and the strength of their ethnic identity development.

Keywords: Transracial adoption, ethnic identity, family influences, cultural socialization

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In the United States and other Westernized nations, transracial adoption has become an acceptable and popular means to family expansion. Though transracial adoption generally refers to any adoption that involves adoptive parents who are of a different race and/or ethnicity of the adoptee, the vast majority of transracial adoptions occur when an adoptee of color is adopted by White parents (Krieder & Lofquist, 2014; Langrehr, 2014). This reality has led to a substantial amount of controversy and consideration among interest groups and professionals alike, bringing to light several concerns about transracial adoption that might interfere with transracial adoptees' (TRAs) development and well-being, particularly related to cultural identity. This study examined the relationship between adoptive family influences and adoptees' ethnic identity development.

In view of past history and the way society has at times addressed diverse cultures and ethnicities, some fear that adoptive parents, intentionally or unintentionally, have motives to assimilate TRAs into their own dominant culture, thus devaluing and/or dissolving their culture/ethnicity of origin (Lee, 2003; Simon & Altstein, 2000). Others are concerned about how adequately White adoptive parents can equip and prepare non-White TRAs for discrimination they may face, and, in the least, whether these parents are able to accept and understand the unique experiences TRAs may encounter as racial and/or ethnic minorities (Kim, Reichwald, & Lee, 2013; Mohanty, 2013).

Amidst all of these concerns, the question of TRAs' racial, ethnic or cultural identity is at the forefront. Though definitions of these terms have varied throughout

different times and contexts, both culture and ethnicity refer to ways that behaviors and beliefs are influenced by group associations. In the case of ethnicity, this generally refers to a specific ethnic group, while culture is a broader term that refers to any shared system of ideas and practices (Baden & Steward, 2007; Halsall, 1995; Helms & Talleyrand, 1997). Ethnic identity refers to an individual's identification with an ethnic group, originating from a shared biological ancestry, and how this influences perceptions and behaviors (Baden & Steward, 2007; Phinney, 1990). Strong development of ethnic identity is known to be a protective factor among minorities and to be associated with higher levels of self-esteem and psychological well-being (Phinney, 1992; Yoon, 2001). Because TRAs belong to a different racial or ethnic group than their adoptive parents (which may also be reflected in their surrounding community), ethnic identity development must be more intentional for TRAs and adoptive families alike. Parents often use a variety of strategies or activities to help cultivate TRAs' ethnic identity development, which is known as *cultural socialization* (Kim et al, 2013; Manzi, Ferrari, Rosnati, & Benet-Martinez, 2014). Cultural socialization strategies may be as simple as partaking in foods and celebrations or reading books about TRAs' culture of origin, and may also be more involved, such as families building transracial friendships and traveling to places that are more culturally and ethnically diverse. Cultural socialization itself has been found to support ethnic identity development among TRAs and is positively associated with higher levels of self-esteem and belonging (Mohanty et al., 2007; Mohanty & Newhill, 2011; Park, 2007; Yoon, 2001).

Past research on adoption, and on transracial adoption specifically, reveals the necessity for TRAs to experience belonging within their culture/ethnicity of origin, as

well as within their adoptive family and culture (Baden, 2002; Manzi et al., 2014). This can also be defined as a *bicultural identity*, when individuals identify with more than one ethnic/cultural group. Research has shown that cultural socialization, in conjunction with family perspectives and beliefs about culture, are influential in helping TRAs develop a bicultural identity (Friedlander et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2013; Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006; Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010). Research suggests that when adoptive families express acceptance of TRAs' culture of origin and openness to exploring and discussing cultural issues, this dual identity is more able to form without conflict or confusion (Huh & Reid, 2000; Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007; Kim et al., 2013; Yoon, 2000).

Though cultural socialization itself has been widely accepted as an important and beneficial practice for families who transracially adopt (Kim et al., 2013; Rojewski, 2005), there is still limited research on the manner and degree to which these strategies might be implemented in order to nurture a bicultural identity among TRAs (Manzi et al., 2014; Mohanty & Newhill, 2008; Vonk et al., 2010). This particular study sought to explore the role of cultural socialization practices and their interplay with family influences among families of TRAs, through the eyes of the adoptees themselves. Using qualitative, detailed interviews and questionnaires, the unique experiences of adult TRA participants were recorded and examined. Using elements of the phenomenological and grounded theory approaches, information gathered from questionnaires and interviews were coded for common themes and ideas and were used to further establish theoretical understanding of TRAs' ethnic identity development, in connection with cultural socialization strategies and family influences.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction to Literature Review

As the number of racial and ethnic minorities continues to rise in the United States and other Westernized nations, issues of race, culture, and ethnicity have also surfaced in the arenas of research and politics. Of particular interest is how non-majority culture individuals interact with their social environment, and how this affects their identity development. This study will focus on one specific group of racial and ethnic minorities, those adopted into families by parents of a different ethnic or racial background, also known as transracial adoptees (TRAs).

According to Erikson's (1963) psychosocial development model, family and society play key roles in children's development and overall sense of identity. When considering the additional facets involved with an adopted child, this becomes even more complex. Any adopted person must integrate multiple identities into a coherent sense of self, negotiating influences and perceptions from multiple sources that might include their birth family, adoptive family, and society as a whole. When looking at individuals who are adopted transracially, this also includes ethnic and racial discrepancies (Lee, 2003; Mohanty, 2013). The immediate family itself poses unique challenges for TRAs, particularly in regard to identity development (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Mohanty, 2013; Scherman, 2010). Because TRAs are often visibly different from their adoptive parents, ethnic identity may not in these cases be developed through a connection to parents' physical traits, as is often still possible for individuals who are adopted by parents of their same racial group (Lee, Yun, Yoo, & Nelson, 2010). Additionally, a stark contrast may exist between culture and social status of TRAs' birth

family and that of their adoptive family (Friedlander, 1999). This has the potential to create confusion, conflict, or issues of loyalty as children develop their own sense of identity within society (Friedlander et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2006; Mohanty, Keokse, & Sales, 2006).

Another barrier for the development of a strong ethnic identity among TRAs is adoptive families' possible lack of accessibility to TRAs' birth culture. According to the most recent United States Census, approximately 46% of TRAs are adopted at the age of 8 or younger (Krieder & Lofquist, 2014). When TRAs are adopted at a young age, it becomes even more difficult to integrate cultural identity, as they may not be developmentally able to carry memory and understanding of their birth culture with them into their new family context (Scherman, 2010). Thirty-seven percent of TRAs were reported as foreign-born, which means that their birth culture may also be less physically-accessible as compared to adoptees who are U.S. born. Thus, in each of these cases, even if adoptive families attempt to expose young TRAs to their birth culture, they may not have the knowledge or opportunity to do so in a way that is accurate or meaningful.

Research suggests that ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1992; Yoon, 2001), as well as a sense of belonging in their adoptive family (Baden, 2002; Manzi, Ferrari, Rosnati, & Benet-Martinez, 2014), both contribute to psychological well-being among TRAs. Thus, adoptive families and TRAs have the critical task of cultivating an identity within adoptees that integrates these two separate but essential components. There is still much to be understood about the process and outcome of this phenomenon, but it appears that adoptive families play an important role in facilitating TRAs' ethnic identity

development and may contribute to the degree adoptees' experience confusion or conflict throughout this formation.

Definition of Terms

Within current literature, there is a lack of consensus over the meaning of terms such as race, ethnicity, culture, and biculturalism (Scherman, 2010). This reflects the fluent and subjective nature of these issues. It is possible for these words to hold many different meanings and associations for each individual and within different societal contexts. Identity components of each of these constructs (e.g., racial identity vs. ethnic identity) have also lacked consistency in the literature (Baden & Steward, 2007). Though these terms have often been used interchangeably in research, it is likely that some TRAs identify more with one term or facet than another (Lee, 2003). This confusion has also made it more difficult to accurately measure and compare this group in research (Lee, 2003).

In this study, *race* refers to an individual's heritage within a group based on geography, as well as physical, genetic traits including skin color and facial features (Baden & Steward, 2007; Hays, 2016). How others in society categorize the individual according to visible, physical traits may or may not be a factor in how the individual identifies his or her race. In contrast, *ethnicity* refers to an individual's sense of belonging and identification to a group of shared biological ancestry, and how socialization within that group influences characteristics and behavior (Baden & Steward, 2007; Helms & Talleyrand, 1997). Finally, *culture* can be defined as "a system of shared ideas and meanings, explicit and implicit, which a people use to interpret the world and that serve to pattern their behavior" (Halsall, 1995, p.1). Culture also includes traditions,

beliefs, and values passed on from generation to generation (Baden and Steward, 2007; Hays, 2016). As indicated above, the terms ethnicity and culture have overlapping definitions, particularly in that both influence behavior through socialization. Because of this, both ethnicity and culture have become key terms when discussing transracial adoption, with the responsibility of socialization primarily falling upon adoptive families in TRAs' early years of life.

The definition of *ethnic identity* refers to an individual's identification with an ethnic group, and how group membership influences perceptions, feelings, and behaviors (Phinney, 1990). This includes an affective component, measuring feelings of belonging, affirmation, and commitment, and a behavioral component, which measures involvement with group traditions, customs, and social interactions (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999). *Bicultural identity* is an extension of ethnic identity, when an individual simultaneously identifies with two different ethnic groups and is able to function within both (Scherman, 2010).

Further, the term *transracial adoption* includes adoption of infants or children by parents of a different race, whether domestic or international (Baden and Steward, 2007). The majority of adoptive parents in these cases are of White European descent, while adoptees are often children of color (Langrehr, 2014). In the United States, the vast majority, 78 percent, of adoptive families are White. Among TRAs, only seven percent are solely White, adopted into non-White families, with the rest being children of color adopted into White homes (Krieder & Lofquist, 2014).

Current trends in transracial adoption encourage family involvement in *cultural socialization*, which can be defined as strategies adoptive parents use to promote the

ethnic identity development of TRAs, typically through cultural and ethnic experiences within the family from TRAs' culture of origin (Manzi et al., 2014). This includes both *ethnic* and *racial socialization*, as defined by Kim, Reichwald, and Lee (2013): *Ethnic* socialization refers to the "acquisition of knowledge, values, and beliefs about one's ethnic heritage through activities, customs, practices, and materials, as well as the development of group pride and belonging," whereas *racial* socialization refers to the "awareness of race and oppression in society and the preparation for racism and discrimination" (p. 72), which may be accomplished through discussions, diverse experiences, and acquiring appropriate behaviors for varying social contexts. In this study, we will examine the quality of cultural socialization practices among TRA families, and how they might contribute to adoptees' bicultural identity development.

Transracial Adoption

The formal act of adoption began in the United States during the 1800s in order to provide families for a growing number of homeless children, as well as the birth rights of inheritance (Hollinger, 1993; Sokoloff, 1993; Zamostny, O'Brien, Baden, & Wiley, 2003). Current trends and practices of adoption began after World War II, in response to political and cultural shifts that led to a decrease of White, healthy babies relinquished for adoption, and an increase of adoption alternatives, including international and special needs adoption (Zamostny et al., 2003). During this era, transracial adoptions became more commonplace through the Indian Adoption Project (removing Native American children from reservations and adopting many of them into White families), and through the adoption of Korean War orphans (Baden & Steward, 2007; Lee, 2003). Motives for choosing to take part in transracial adoption have varied over time, with many families

using it as an alternative when unable to have their own children. In other instances, transracial adoption has served as a humanitarian effort to care for orphans displaced by war and poverty. Regrettably, some of these practices, particularly the Indian Adoption Project, have also reflected imperialistic and prejudiced attitudes common among Americans at that time.

In the case of the Indian Adoption Project, disproportionately high numbers of Native American children were taken from their families and tribes and placed in non-Native American families and communities (Baden & Steward, 2007; Lee, 2003). This mirrored other policies and practices throughout United States history that sought to dispose of Native American culture and assimilate Native Americans into White American culture, through education, training in religion and language, and government policies. From the 1890s through the 1960s, many traditional Indian practices were banned, and boarding schools were created to educate Native American children in the ways of White Americans, often sending the children far from their homes and families (Cross, 2006). White Americans at that time typically believed that adopting Native American children into their own families and communities was in the best interest of the children, even when there were others in their communities or families of origin who could adopt them with less ethnic and cultural disruption placed upon adoptees (Cross, 2006).

As the Civil Rights Movement ushered in social and political changes, transracial adoption, especially domestic cases, became a point of controversy among the public. The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 implemented stipulations on adoptions involving Native American children. This discontinued the Indian Adoption Project and attempted

to help tribes and families preserve their native culture (Cross, 2006). Civil Rights activists also opposed and brought an end to transracial adoption of African American children for a number of years, with groups such as the National Association of Black Social Workers calling these practices a form of race and cultural genocide (Lee, 2003; Simon & Altstein, 2000; Zamostny et al., 2003). Though social service agencies and organizations have since made reforms, transracial adoption remains controversial (Lee, 2003). There remains a suspicion that some adoptive parents choose transracial adoption in order to “rescue” children out of inferior cultures or nations and assimilate them into their own. Though not always as explicit or intentional as this description, critics question whether transracial adoption continues to be used as a form of cultural assimilation, domestically and internationally, and there is no consensus as to what point the child’s well-being outweighs the preservation of the child’s birth culture (Lee, 2003; Zamostny et al., 2003). Even when transracial adoption is used as an effective way to place legitimate orphans into loving and accepting families, it’s unclear how much adoptive families should be expected to adjust their own lifestyle and culture to better nurture the birth culture and identity of TRAs (Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010; Quiroz, 2012).

Today, international adoption has become a more popular method of transracial adoption. The numbers have declined in recent years, nevertheless it is estimated that over 200,000 children were adopted internationally to the U.S. from 2009-2011 (Krieder & Lofquist, 2014), and that 80 to 85 percent of international adoptions are transracial, with the majority of adoptees arriving from Asian countries (Baden, Treweeke, & Ahluwalia, 2012). It is estimated that approximately 15% of foster care adoptions are

transracial as well (Hansen & Simon, 2004; Krieder & Lofquist, 2014; Lee, 2003). In both domestic and international cases, questions still remain as to whether White American families can adequately preserve and nurture the ethnic identities of TRAs and prepare children of color for unique experiences they may face, such as racial discrimination. This outcome varies, depending on the racial and cultural experiences of TRAs within their adoptive family, as well as other social and cultural contexts in which they live. It is also likely that these issues may be more salient for different individuals, depending on the race and ethnicity of TRAs and their predominating culture.

Research has largely indicated positive outcomes for TRAs and their families (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010), suggesting that transracial adoption itself is not necessarily a risk factor for emotional and behavioral problems (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Lee, 2003). Clearly, there are a variety of ways TRAs experience adoption. It seems apparent that biological, developmental, familial, and cultural factors, as well as personal histories, each play a role in how adoptees, particularly TRAs, make sense of their experience. The individual identities of TRAs are formed out as these factors interact with one another, and are either integrated or assimilated.

Fostering an “Integrated Identity”

As alluded to earlier, the literature indicates that ethnic identity and pride contribute to minorities’, and specifically TRAs’, self-esteem and overall psychological well-being (Cederblad & Hook, 1999; Phinney, 1992; Yoon, 2001). It is also recognized that adoptees’ sense of belonging and identification within their adoptive family and culture are important elements of adjustment and well-being (Baden, 2002; Manzi et al.,

2014), which implies that TRAs must find a way to develop a strong ethnic identity without compromising their sense of belonging within their adoptive family and culture. In more recent years, research has focused on ethnic identity development, particularly with regard to the culture of TRAs' birth country, but has failed to address how adoptees negotiate this dual cultural belonging (Manzi et al., 2014).

In a recent study examining Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) among adolescent TRAs, Manzi et al. (2014) focused on two specific components of integration: (a) the level of conflict between cultural identities, and (b) the extent that TRAs are able to blend cultural identities versus keeping them separate and dissociated. Results revealed that BII is a significant predictor of psychological adjustment among TRAs. The bicultural identity of TRAs appeared to have a stronger link to adjustment than either TRAs' ethnic or national identities. This finding reflects the work of LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) which suggests that conflict between cultures may result in identity confusion. Integration of two or more cultural backgrounds and how this influences identity development and well-being is still under investigation, and may be difficult to predict, as perceptions of tension between mainstream and ethnic backgrounds vary widely among individuals (Manzi et al., 2014).

Other examples evidencing the benefits of an integrated identity for adoptees can be found in the literature. Dunbar and Grotevant (2004) describe four adoptive identities that may be acquired by adoptees: unexamined, limited, unsettled, or integrated. Though these constructs do not specifically address culture, they do bring to light how adoptees make sense of the differences between their own identities and backgrounds, as compared with those of their adoptive family.

As Dunbar and Grotevant (2004) explain in their identity model, adoptees with an *unexamined* identity do not feel a need to explore or make meaning of their adoptive experiences and do not have strong feelings, negative or positive, about adoption. Those with a *limited* identity are explained as typically feeling positively about their adoptive experience but tend to downplay any differences between birth and adoptive families, viewing their own adoption as having limited importance. In the case of TRAs, this type of identity might imply a weak or assimilated ethnic identity. The *unsettled* identity in the model describes those who have thought extensively about their adoptive experience but typically have strong negative affect about adoption, often due to perceived conflicts or tension in their own family or personal life surrounding their adoption, or their attempts to make meaning of their different identities. This identity might include a lacked sense of belonging with adoptees' adoptive family.

Finally, the *integrated* identity generally includes adoptees who have thoroughly explored their adoptive experience and have integrated positive and negative elements into one cohesive identity (Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004). These individuals tend to show greater flexibility and openness in their thinking, and tend to have a more positive view of adoption. Positive affect was most strongly connected to adoptees with an integrated identity than any other category. For TRAs, this model emphasizes the importance of adoptees developing a life narrative that integrates every part of their personal history and identity, including elements of race, ethnicity, and culture.

Similar to the model described above, Kirk's (1985) "shared fate" theory addresses how adoptees negotiate differences between their birth family/culture and their adoptive family/culture, emphasizing a balance between the *rejection of differences* and

acknowledgement of differences (Kim et al., 2013; Rojewski, 2005; Shiao & Tuan, 2008). Kirk's theory is based on the idea that adoptive parents tend to acknowledge or reject differences between themselves and their adopted children as a way of coping. When parents too strongly reject differences, it often limits open communication about adoption and about the child's subjective experience. In the case of ethnic or cultural differences, this may be viewed as a form of the "colorblind" mentality, which implies a lack of awareness regarding the unique characteristics and, more importantly, experiences of ethnic and cultural minorities. When parents too strongly acknowledge differences, this may inhibit a child's feeling of belonging with the adoptive family and culture (Kim et al., 2013).

This prior research brings to light questions regarding how adoptive families can engage with TRAs' birth culture and ethnicity in a way that does not hinder their sense of belonging within their adoptive family and culture. It also raises questions concerning the quality of family relationships and other family influences, and how these might affect TRAs' sense of safety and freedom to explore and/or embrace their ethnic identities.

Family Cultural Socialization

In order to foster identification with TRAs' family culture as well as birth culture, recent research has emphasized parental involvement in cultural socialization practices. Cultural socialization includes the process by which cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors are transmitted to the child, how parents address and communicate about ethnic and cultural issues, as well as how the child internalizes these messages and develops skills to function within ethnically and culturally diverse settings (Lee, 2003; Lee et al.,

2006). For TRAs, as previously mentioned, the emphasis is placed on *their* birth culture, and not the *parents'* birth culture, which is understood and carried out differently, depending on the parents' own background and beliefs about race and culture.

These strategies involve any kind of integration of the child's birth culture into individual and family life. Unlike past generations, it appears that many adoptive parents of TRAs are now aware of the importance of addressing race and ethnicity with their children (Kim, Reichwald, & Lee, 2013; Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, Gunnar, 2006; Rojewski, 2005). Family cultural socialization is associated with adoptees' psychological well-being through feelings of less marginality and more positive racial/ethnic identity development (Mohanty & Newhill, 2011; Park, 2007; Samuels, 2010; Yoon, 2001). Research also suggests that cultural socialization is positively related to belongingness in family, leading to higher self-esteem among adoptees (Mohanty et al., 2007). As addressed earlier, feelings of belonging also help alleviate issues of loyalty and conflict between cultures for TRAs.

A variety of socialization strategies have been implemented in order to help adoptees achieve an integrated identity. Some common practices include participation in cultural activities, such as celebrating holidays, reading books, or eating ethnic foods (Mohanty & Newhill, 2008; Vonk et al., 2010). Other research recognizes the importance of social integration with other children and role models from their culture of origin (Langrehr, 2014; Rojewski, 2005; Samuels, 2010). Parents using the term "multicultural" when identifying their families appears to be a factor (Friedlander et al., 2000; Samuels, 2010), as well as open communication between TRAs and parents regarding issues of race and culture (Huh & Reid, 2000; Kim et al., 2013; Yoon, 2000).

Research suggests that families with lower colorblind racial attitudes (i.e., who acknowledge racial differences) are more likely to engage in positive socialization practices (Deberry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996; Lee et al., 2006). Reiterating Kirk's "shared fate" theory (1985), it appears that ignoring difference within race and culture may produce conflict within TRAs, for instance, when they are perceiving and experiencing differences that their families do not acknowledge. Recognizing these differences also may better facilitate open communication about issues of race and culture.

This also implies that parents should possess a level of cultural competence with and positive attitudes toward adoptees' race and ethnicity of origin. In one study involving mothers of Chinese and Korean TRAs, Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, and Pettrill (2007) found that White adoptive mothers' psychological connection to Asian Americans was positively related to participation in cultural socialization. Specifically, when adoptive mothers of Asian TRAs expressed attachment to and more strongly identified with Asian Americans, they also were more likely to engage in cultural socialization practices. It is possible that when parents feel connected to the child's race and birth culture, they are more likely to seek out opportunities to integrate these elements into their families. This could also mean that participation in cultural socialization techniques, possibly both before and after adoption, helps produce feelings of connection and identification with that culture. It seems that cultural socialization practices and family beliefs about race and culture both contribute to how TRAs experience ethnic/cultural differences and negotiate their own identity.

Issues with Current Research

Though it is apparently more common now for transracial adoptive parents to engage in some form of cultural socialization with their children, it is still unclear the quality of these experiences, as well as which kinds of experiences are most effective in helping children establish an integrated identity. Some studies show that there is a discrepancy between parent and child perspectives of socialization (Kim et al., 2013; Shiao & Tuan, 2008; Song & Lee, 2009). For example, in one study comparing self-reports from adoptive parents and adolescents in Korean TRA families, Kim et al. (2013) found that parents reported greater socialization engagement than what was perceived by their children. Also, it appeared that most parents believed they were comfortable speaking about race and ethnicity with their children, yet this was not always reflected in observed family conversations (Kim et al., 2013). This is a concern when addressing these issues, because it may mean that many adoptive parents do not understand the ways that TRAs' experiences with race and culture are different from their own.

Research suggests that many TRA families opt to participate in socialization strategies that are superficial in nature and require the least amount of integration; for example, reading cultural books as opposed to building culturally diverse friendships (Quiroz, 2012; Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010; Westhues & Cohen, 1998). Some experts fear that this type of superficial socialization, which requires little adjustment in lifestyle or identity, only gives TRAs a commercialized, inauthentic version of their culture of origin (Quiroz, 2012). This concern also revisits past controversies about whether or not TRAs are given adequate opportunities to have deep connections with

their culture of origin, and questions if the main goal of adoptive families remains more about assimilation than integration. Also, it is uncertain if this kind of socialization adequately establishes TRAs' ethnic identity or prepares them for living in a diverse, and at times racist, society.

Even so, there is little consensus as to the manner and degree with which to participate in cultural socialization (Mohanty & Newhill, 2008; Rojewski, 2005; Vonk et al., 2010), and how these practices influence the development of an ethnic or bicultural identity among TRAs (Manzi et al., 2014; Scherman, 2010). Furthermore, the question still remains as to if the manner and degree to which bicultural individuals identify with their birth culture versus family culture matters in regard to psychological well-being (Baden & Steward, 2007; Lafromboise, 1993). The process of examining and exploring one's cultural identity, regardless of how it is defined in the end, may in itself lead to less conflict between identities and higher levels of psychological well-being and self-esteem (Baden & Steward, 2007; Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004). Personal autonomy in deciding how to identify oneself may also be a factor (Baden & Steward, 2007). This again highlights the impact of adoptive families' attitudes and beliefs about culture and identity, and may be influenced by how open and accepting TRAs perceive their family and society to be.

This study further examined cultural socialization techniques from the perspective of adult transracial adoptees. Through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis, and the implementation of other psychological measures, such as life satisfaction, ethnic identity, and family relationships, this study sought to better understand the types of socialization methods used among TRAs, and the degree to which

they have fostered or hindered ethnic identity development. as well as the quality of adoptive family relationships.

Specifically, the following research questions were explored:

- What types of cultural socialization methods are used among TRA families and individuals and what impact does this have on development of ethnic identity?
- How do family influences interplay with cultural socialization practices to potentially influence TRAs' adoption experience(s)?
- In what ways are TRA's perceptions of adoptive families' attitudes, beliefs, and level of comfort surrounding their culture of origin associated with the quality and impact of socialization strategies within their families?
- In what ways do cultural socialization techniques involving more adaptation and integration into family life impact development of strong ethnic identities?
- How do adoptive families implement cultural socialization strategies without compromising TRAs' sense of belonging and safety within their adoptive families and culture?

CHAPTER III

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of 11 volunteers whose names were gathered from area adoption agencies and professionals, local advertisements, as well as other local contacts. All subjects were required to be at least 18 years of age, and to have been transracially adopted as a child, specifically as an adoptee of color by White American adoptive parents. Age of participants ranged between 18 and 45, with a mean of 32. Four participants identified as male, while seven identified as female. Age at the time of adoption varied, though the majority of participants (8 of 11) were adopted before the age of 2. The racial, ethnic and cultural background of adoptees also varied. Six participants were Asian American, three were of Middle Eastern descent, and two identified as African American. Only three participants were adopted domestically, while the other eight were adopted directly from countries outside of the United States. Details of the eleven participants in this study are presented in Table 1.

The majority of participants came from adoptive families of higher socioeconomic status and levels of education, which is consistent with past and current trends for adoptive families, particularly those who adopt internationally (Kreider & Lofquist, 2014). All participants grew up in the United States, with 73% being from California. Details of the participants' families are presented in Table 2.

Involvement in this study was fully voluntary and all efforts were made to ensure the confidentiality of all participants. Identifying information was excluded from quantitative measures, as well as audio recordings of the interviews. Institutional Review

Board (IRB) approval was granted from the university prior to initial contact with participants.

Procedure

Participants were electronically sent the Adoption Information Questionnaire and asked to complete this prior to the interviews with the researcher. Questionnaires were either emailed back to the researcher or turned in at the time of the interview. Interviews took place at a mutually agreed upon location, generally in the local vicinity of the participant. Four of the interviews were conducted via online video-calling, when a face-to-face interview was not feasible due to the distant location of the participant.

Upon arrival at the interview, the participants were given a small packet of the quantitative measures described below (BFSR, MEIM, and SWLS). Measures were completed before the interview began. Those who were not interviewed in person sent their quantitative measures to the researcher via email. During the interview segment, participants were asked the

following questions concerning each individual's experiences and perspectives about transracial adoption, cultural socialization, ethnic identity development, and how family influences played a role in these processes:

1. If you had to guess, what do you think your adoptive family thinks/believes/feels about your birth culture and ethnicity?
2. How did cultural experiences involving your birth culture (such as cultural activities, travels, family conversations, etc.) during your years growing up, or the lack thereof, influence your identity when it comes to your current sense of your culture and ethnicity?

3. What attitudes or activities do you think are important for adoptive parents (of transracial adoptees) to embrace about adoptees' birth culture and ethnicity?

Duration of each interview was 22 minutes on average, with a range of 10 to 63 minutes in length. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for coding. Responses were coded in order to identify common themes and ideas.

Qualitative analysis was selected for this study because of its inherently flexible nature, which is particularly useful for topics, such as transracial adoption, that have yet to be extensively explored (Barbour & Barbour, 2003). Following the foundations of phenomenology, researchers investigated and analyzed the lived experiences and perspectives of adult transracial adoptees (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997).

Implementing an inductive approach to content analysis, this study used content from in-depth interviews to arrive at a greater theoretical understanding of cultural socialization practices in connection with family influences among transracial adoptees (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). The format of this study was also informed by Grounded Theory methods, which involved continually comparing data with that which was already gathered, allowing for researchers to take into account the fluent nature of the process being examined, in this case, identity development (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Printed transcripts were coded by a coding team consisting of three psychology graduate students. Two members were U.S.-born, non-adopted White students, and one was a transracially adopted Korean American student and the primary investigator of this study. Possible biases were discussed throughout the coding process. The coding team first analyzed responses individually and developed a list of general themes found in the data. Team members then met and agreed upon set theme categories for each question.

Responses were then coded by these selected themes, and discrepancies were discussed among team members until a consensus could be reached. Team member discrepancies occurred in 13% of the total items sorted, resulting in an .87 inter-coder agreement (Tinsley & Weiss, 1975). Per question inter-coder reliability was as follows: Question 2, .81; Question 3, .93; Question 4, .90. For the first question, participants' responses were evaluated as a whole and each participant fit within mutually exclusive categories. Answers to the final two interview question were broken into responses by paragraph or topic mentioned, as some participants had multiple themes or ideas per question asked. In some instances, this resulted in multiple responses from the same participant. Thus, for Questions 2 and 3, participants may have responses in multiple categories.

Measures

Adoption Information Questionnaire - This questionnaire consisted of a set of short answer and multiple choice questions regarding the participants' and their family's demographics and other identifying information, and was created for the purposes of this study. It was intended to elicit information about the background of participants and their adoptive families, including: geographic location, socioeconomic status, cultural and religious practices, and background information about their adoption. This questionnaire also requested that adoptees list and describe their cultural socialization experiences while growing up. Finally, within the questionnaire, participants were asked to give a brief description of their adoption story, highlighting whatever details they think most important to their own identity development. Participants were not limited in the time spent to complete the questionnaire. Information from this questionnaire was used

primarily for recording participant demographics and personal information, and also as a preparatory activity for the upcoming interview (see Appendix A).

The Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS; Ching Ting Fok, Allen, Henry, & People Awakening Team, 2014) - The BFRS is a self-report scale measuring the quality of family relationship functioning in three areas: cohesion, expressiveness, and conflict (see Appendix B). This 16-item instrument was adapted from the well-established Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1994), in order to be better suited for a variety of ages and cultures. Participants responded to each item using a 3-point anchor scale (Not at all, Somewhat, and A lot), according to their own perception of their adoptive family while growing up. The BFRS has a reported Cronbach's alpha of .88 in the development sample (Ching Ting Fok et al., 2014) and Cronbach's alpha for the current study's sample was .83. Further use of the scale is needed in order to adequately determine its validity among diverse populations and age groups.

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) - The MEIM has been widely used as an instrument in research involving ethnic identity development across different populations and locations worldwide, and contains two factors of ethnic identity: Exploration and Commitment (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to respond to the 14 5-point Likert-scale items (with item responses ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) according to their ethnicity of origin, and not the ethnicity of their adoptive family. Cronbach's alphas range in the population from .71 to .92 for the MEIM, depending on age and demographics; the MEIM has most commonly been used with adolescents (Avery, Tonidandel, Thomas, Johnson, & Mack, 2007). Alpha score for the current study's sample was .91.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) - The SWLS is a brief, 5-item instrument aimed at measuring a global evaluation of one's life, as perceived by the individual, and has been used across various ages, contexts, and applications worldwide (Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991; see Appendix D). Answers range on a seven-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The SWLS measures the individual's satisfaction with life as a whole according to cognitions, and not affect, and has shown convergent validity with other assessments of subjective well-being (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The SWLS converges with several different measures of subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and has also shown to be negatively correlated with psychological measures of distress (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Cronbach's alpha for the SWLS is .78 across numerous samples varying in age and demographics (Vassar, 2008). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .93.

Interview Guide - The interview guide was created for the purposes of this study, and consisted of three open-ended questions that were verbally answered by each participant. Participants were given freedom to answer the question according to their own understanding or interests, though the interviewer also had latitude to ask clarifying questions in order to probe for more specific information or details relating to each question's response (see Appendix E).

CHAPTER IV

Results

Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed for the purposes of this study. Quantitative analyses included the calculation of means and correlations of the measures in relation to each other and in relation to some aspects of the qualitative data that was quantified. Qualitative data were analyzed according to standard Grounded Theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) and Phenomenology (McLeod, 2001) procedures, and themes were assessed to gain a thick description of the lived experience of these participants.

Qualitative Analysis

Determined categories to each question are more specifically described below:

If you had to guess, what do you think your adoptive family thinks/believes/feels about your birth culture and ethnicity?

Question 1 explored adoptive parents' attitudes and beliefs about adoptees' birth culture, as perceived by adoptees. For this question, participants were categorized according to their responses as a whole, so that each participant only fit into one of the three general categories determined by coders. Categories are as follows, listed in order from the lowest to the highest degree of connection to birth culture as perceived by adoptees: *indifference/no connection to birth culture*, *limited/superficial connection to birth culture*, and *personal/invested connection with birth culture*.

Indifference and/or no connection to birth culture. Four different participants had responses that fit within this category. Responses that reflected *indifference*, or *no connection*, often revealed a lack of awareness of cultural and/or racial differences, and

for the most part had a non-existent relationship with adoptees' culture of origin. "[Our ethnic differences are] not something they think about consciously," one participant noted. Similarly, another participant explained, "To be honest, I don't think they do see a difference." Many of these responses reflect parents' colorblind mindset toward race and culture, as perceived by adoptees. Another theme that arose within these responses was the question of why parents chose to adopt a baby of a different racial or cultural background. No participants in this category expressed that parents adopted because of a personal interest or connection to adoptees' culture of origin. On the contrary, participants who mentioned this topic were uncertain as to parents' reasoning for their decision. "I couldn't even fathom why they decided to adopt a child from Vietnam. But I think it's not something that they think about consciously, you know?" one participant said.

Limited and/or superficial connection to birth culture. Four of the remaining seven participants had responses that could be categorized as having parents with limited or superficial connection to their birth culture. Participants in this category described some cultural socialization strategies implemented by adoptive parents, commonly centered around food or clothing. One participant spoke of being introduced to books and traditional clothing, but also explained, "That's not enough. That's, I don't know, so superficial." Another participant shared, "As far as, like, exposing us a lot, to, you know, any cultural things growing up, I think the closest thing would be, umm, like Chinese buffets." Some participants also noted a lack of access and opportunity that was often a factor when they were growing up. "I don't think there was ever a lack of [wanting to integrate my birth culture] but they didn't, they just didn't have the support that they

needed,” one participant said. Another responded, “I think my parents did the best that they could for the circumstances that they had.”

Some participants in this category expressed a desire for things to have been different for them, or a desire to do things differently with their own children, whether adopted or not. One participant explained that parent initiation of cultural integration would have been helpful. “So [my adoptive mother] didn’t mean to...but she kind of, like, dumped that responsibility on me.” Speaking of her own experience now as a parent, one participant explained, “My kids, they have the Korean school on Saturdays that they can go to and learn the language and the cultural thing. So, just, it’s different.”

Personal and/or invested connection to birth culture. The remaining three participants gave responses that indicated a deeper level of adoptive parents’ connection to adoptees’ birth culture. Some parents in this category engaged with children in cultural socialization practices such as trips to adoptees’ location of birth and integration of cultural traditions into family holidays or events. Some participants in this category described their parents as identifying personally to their birth culture. “Oh my mom, like, wants to be Ethiopian,” one participant shared. Similarly, another participant said about his mother, “She has always felt like she was Indian.”

Another theme within this category is some degree of comfortableness with adoptees’ birth culture, and a sense of support and openness. “They’re pretty comfortable with where I come from,” said one participant. Another participant shared about how his mother has her own traditional clothing and often watches documentaries about his country of origin. “And my mom’s always been much, much more into my culture than I have growing up,” he said. One other participant, describing the cultural

camp and ethnic foods her family shared together, explained about her parents, “They’re very open and, like, into the whole Ethiopian culture.”

In sum, responses from Question 1 reveal a wide range of parent connection to adoptees’ birth culture, as reported by participants, as well as a varying range of how participants perceived and responded to their parents’ attitudes and beliefs. In general, participant responses reflecting deeper parental connection seemed more positive than those reflecting limited/superficial connectivity, though participants within the indifference/no connection category more often mirrored a similar indifference to birth culture integration as adoptive parents.

How did cultural experiences involving your birth culture (such as cultural activities, travels, family conversations, etc.) during your years growing up, or the lack thereof, influence your identity when it comes to your current sense of your culture and ethnicity?

Responses to this question described cultural socialization activities adoptees and their families engaged in during adoptees’ growing up years, and how this integration has affected their own cultural identity. The coding team identified three main themes that arose during analysis: *limited identification with birth culture*, *meaningful cultural socialization strategies*, and *a sense of loss or longing*. Answers to this question were broken up into responses according to topic or paragraph for a total of 28 responses from the 11 participants, thus participants may have responses that fit into more than one category. There were also several responses that alluded to other miscellaneous factors relating to family cultural socialization and cultural identity.

Limited identification with birth culture. Thirty-nine percent of responses coded fit within this category, equating to 11 out of 28 total responses coded and including responses from 7 different participants. Limited identification with birth culture was indicated by responses that alluded to being “Americanized,” or forgetting about one’s birth culture. For example, one response within this category said, “I forget that I’m dark-skinned, I’m, I’m like a coconut.” Or another similar response, “I look at myself in the mirror, and then I realize, okay, yeah, I am Asian.”

Some participants attributed this to a lack of opportunity or exposure. “I don’t really identify too much with the Asian, umm, Chinese Cambodian culture, because I wasn’t really exposed to that much as a child,” one participant explained. Another described his lack of connection with other people of his race/birth culture, “Umm, and it’s not like I don’t get along with Asians. It’s just, I don’t meet them often. And so, having that, I guess, just a lack of experience with them.” One participant shared, “I guess maybe the lack [of cultural experiences] there made me definitely identify more with being American.” Other participants within this category described integration that was superficial in nature. One participant explained, “I really feel like my family tried very hard to bring me in some sort of Asian integration. But – but their definition of what Asian culture is was defined by, like, 1950s pop culture. I mean, which is awful.” Another participant, again alluding to a lack of access and opportunity described her cultural experiences, “You know, there weren’t very many choices or anything like that so my experiences culturally were more like, ‘Oh, let’s go to a Korean restaurant.’” There were also participants within this category who had more in-depth cultural experiences, but still did not identify with their birth culture. “Yeah, I still enjoy Korean

culture and learning, but I even started learning Korean, but I still don't think that I would, like, identify [with being Korean],” one participant said.

Another theme within this category was adoptees' own sense of loyalty to their adoptive culture, and at times, rejection of their birth culture. One participant said, “On the outside I'm Indian, but [laughing] otherwise, I'm fully American.” In describing her conflicted feelings, one participant shared, “I think a lack of being around people who look like me and came from where I came from, umm...I tried for a very long time to push that away, and was ashamed of it, really.” Similarly, another participant responded. “I feel like some of my memories of childhood are being like, yay, I'm Korean! ...And then there were other parts of me that just totally rejected it because I grew up with a White family, and it was kind of like, what's the point?”

Meaningful cultural socialization strategies. Of the 11 participants in this study, 3 described cultural experiences that were meaningful or that attributed to how they identify or connect with their culture of origin. One participant identified basic cultural socialization activities, such as books or ethnic foods, that to her appeared to be meaningful: “They definitely tried to with the—the food part...any type of books or reading that they, you know, umm, would keep up with or that they would read to us...And I think that, that definitely stuck with me.” This participant also noted having relationship with another friend and her family while growing up, who was also adopted from Korea.

The other two participants within this category shared of more in-depth and repeated cultural experiences. One participant shared about a Christmas tradition that included Black or Ethiopian characters. “Just like, like, kind of like bring that [Ethiopian]

aspect into our lives and stuff,” the participant explained. This same participant also shared about her parents’ openness, “[My parents] are, like, willing to, like, not just, like, jump into the, like, American culture, but also, like, open up and be like, ‘Hey, you do have another side to you.’” The final participant whose answers fit within this category described how his mother integrated his birth culture by learning more about the culture herself. Speaking of cultural beliefs and traditions, he spoke of his mother, saying, “And she really gets really, really into it, and it’s exciting to see. Like sometimes she’s more into it than I care to talk about it at that time...And she’s always been like that, like always.”

A sense of loss or longing. Three participants had responses that fit within this category, indicating some form of loss or longing when describing their cultural identity. Each of these three participants fell into either the limited/superficial or indifference/no connection categories regarding parent connection to adoptees birth culture that was discussed earlier regarding Question 1.

Participants within this category described how connection with their birth culture was either lost or missing. One participant, who is half-Caucasian, half-Lebanese, responded, “Like in thinking of it, like being half-something would be a pretty big deal if, like, my birth parents were the same as the parents that raised me, you know?” She went on to explain further, “But you know, you see that, and you see the mix, and sometimes I’m like, that would be really cool.” She also shared, “So I feel like there’s something that’s, sort of, not quite defined about me, kind of missing.”

Another participant, born in South Korea and adopted as an infant, described two different losses: the ability to feel fully American, as well as the ability to identify with South Korean culture. She described her loss of American identity in this way:

A huge part of it [getting 7 tattoos] was this overwhelming desire to want to, like, code myself, and look like everybody else [in the US], give myself some street credit so people didn't automatically assume. You know, when I was working as a barista, I could show my, you know, arm tattoos and it's like, well, I'm just like one of you, you know.

In another part of her response, she expressed loss about her birth culture: "But I thought, gosh, I really would like to know more about Korea. Umm, and what it means for South Koreans who grew up in South Korea to be South Korean, you know."

The third participant within this category was adopted at a later age and described a loss of language, and the difficulty of fitting in with other people from her culture of origin. "I always felt like the Asians at school who had just come over more recently than me, plus being raised by a White family, never really accepted me either."

Other factors relating to family cultural socialization and cultural identity. Eight of the 28 responses coded (28.6%), from 6 different participants, identified other factors or experiences that related to cultural experiences and cultural identity. Some of these included: family communication (about all topics), issues of attachment, spiritual influences, and cultural experiences as an adult. The need to feel belonging and develop secure attachment within the individual's adoptive family and community came up in some responses. One participant shared about a school project involving research on ancestry and how important it was for her to identify with her adoptive family as opposed

to her birth relatives. Another participant explained that she had no interest in learning Korean, “unless [my adoptive family] were going to take Korean and embrace the culture too.” Some participants within this category spoke of societal impacts, particularly when living in areas lacking in racial or ethnic diversity, and how opportunities to explore their own birth culture, as well as other cultures, came later in life. One participant shared her process of identity development in this way:

But yeah, I mean, it is the lack of exposure [as a child], I think. But as an adult I pretty much have [explored my birth culture], and I did have a chance to, umm, visit Cambodia when I was, oh, probably five or six years ago now. So I took a month trip over there. So that was a, you know, wonderful experience as far as being able to connect a little more with the birth country and customs.

Responses from Question 3 seemed to demonstrate that the types of cultural socialization activities used by adoptive parents while growing up varied widely, as well as how participants experienced and made meaning of these activities. The high percentage of responses pointing to other factors that influence socialization and culture identity development (28.6%) brings to light the complexity of these issues.

What attitudes or activities do you think are important for adoptive parents (of transracial adoptees) to embrace about adoptees’ birth culture and ethnicity?

Responses to Question 3 related to the different attitudes or activities participants believe parents should embrace when adopting transracially. The coding team identified five main categories of suggestions from participant responses: *integration of birth culture into everyday life and family*, *choice/freedom*, *personal and family dynamics*, *communication/honesty*, and *counseling*. Interview content for this question was divided

into 36 total responses from the 11 participants. Again, participants' responses may fit in multiple categories for this question.

Integration of birth culture into everyday life. This was the largest category of responses. Eight different participants had responses within this category, which included 33% of total responses coded. Specific suggestions for activities varied, including: food, clothing, books, celebrating holidays, language learning, and spending time with other ethnically diverse families. Many participants in this category also noted the importance of integrating these different activities into everyday life, as one participant said, to have “some parts of the culture instilled in their lifestyle as [transracially adopted children] grow up.” This participant added, “Because I think that way, the kid can be more comfortable and then feel proud of where they come from.” Similarly, one participant shared, “implement it in [the adoptive family's] daily life, whether it's from reading or food or just talking about stuff...I think it's definitely a part of who [transracial adoptees] are, and [adoptive parents] need to be okay with it and accept it,” Openness and acceptance were both common themes in this category.

Another participant explained her perspective about celebrating ethnic traditions as a family:

Because that will show through [the parents'] actions that it is important, you know. And umm, since it is a part of them, you know, your—the adoptee – uh, if an adoptive parent is really embracing the whole child, then they would also embrace that piece, I think.

It seemed many participant responses in this category emphasized the importance of parents' own level of comfort and interest with adoptees' birth culture. “I mean, I

think [the parents], like, definitely need to have some kind of interest in [the adoptee's birth culture]. Umm, and, like, with that, like, some willingness to, like, umm, bring that culture, like, home with the child," explained one participant. Another participant shared about parents taking initiative and not "exoticizing" cultural experiences. "I want [going to a restaurant to eat ethnic-specific food] to be no different than us going to McDonald's, because really, philosophically, it is all the same," she said.

Choice/Freedom. Seven participants also mentioned the importance of giving adoptees choice and freedom when integrating their culture. Many participants mentioned parents' openness and willingness to give adoptees opportunities to experience their birth culture. One participant explained it as "doing things, like, to embrace the culture, or just even to, like, be exposed to the culture, but in a non-threatening way." It seemed that most participants believed opportunities should be given but should not be forced. One participant, in speaking of these experiences had this advice for parents of transracial adoptees: "Let [the adoptee] just explore, but don't force it on them either, because they're as White as you are in a lot of ways." Another participant shared of a family he knows who emulates this approach. He described their perspective of their own adopted daughter, "Of course, she's free to learn whatever she feels like. We'll support her 100%."

The theme of support was also common among responses in this category. One participant shared about his experience choosing to attend a university that was more diverse, and how his own parents showed support:

I told my mom, I was like, "Mom, there's no African Americans in this, like, whole, like, classroom." And she, she thought that was kind of

strange, and she realized, like, “Would you want more diversity, and more African Americans to be here?” And I said, “I, I guess, yeah.” I said yes, and she said that’s fine. And that she’d rather have me have more diversity to explore more, and like, find more African Americans.

Personal and family dynamics. Seven participants had responses relating to personal or family dynamics as well. This category included a wide range of factors, most of which seemed to center around parent-child relationships and attachment needs.

One participant shared in-depth about an experience she had when she first arrived in the United States at the age of two. She explained that she had wanted to sleep with her mom at night, which was the custom in Korea where she was from, but that the social worker who was working with her family scolded her and insisted she adjust to sleeping alone. She described the significance of this experience, “I think that for me was, like, the root of, like, rejection for me.” Sensitivity to individual needs, particularly during the initial transition into the family, was also mentioned by other participants. “You have to, like, adapt to [the child’s] needs a little bit more. Umm, and, and not just adapt, like, generically to, like, adopting a kid,” one participant explained. Another participant shared of a family she knows who adopted a 12-year old from Ethiopia. The family visited his country and learned how to make his favorite meal. “They don’t want him [the transracial adoptee] to come to America and, like, all of a sudden have to become a new person. They want him to, like, celebrate his past,” she said.

Similarly, the theme of feeling loved was also common within this category. One participant explained how this involves the whole family: “Like, you need to immerse the child within your whole family...to know that they’re loved and they’re cared after.”

Another participant shared how this may also involve parents working out their own personal issues, especially grieving any experiences, such as infertility, leading up to the adoption.

Communication/honesty. Three participants had responses concerning communication and honesty within family relationships. One participant noted how this is reflected in parents remaining honest about differences and acknowledging their significance: “Support [the adoptees] as people and as little people, but still, like, celebrate and acknowledge where they come from.” Another participant explained how this relates to all aspects of the adoption: “I feel like, in the beginning, umm, it would be good to tell the truth about being adopted.” The third participant in this category had similar thoughts about parents’ transparency about the adoption in general, and how questions adoptees have may change with age.

Counseling. Two participants within this category mentioned the importance of counseling, whether individual or with the whole family. One participant explained that this need should not be a reflection on parents’ competence: “If [the adoptee] end[s] up in a crunch and they need counseling, like, don’t feel guilty, just – just help them.”

Analysis of Question 4 indicated that the vast majority of participants (72.7%) believe that some form of birth culture integration is important. It seems that most participants endorsed cultural socialization activities, as long as adoptees are also given the freedom to choose the degree and manner to which they engage with and identify with that culture. Responses from this question also pointed to many personal and familial factors that may play a role in ethnic identity development.

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive analyses for each of the three measures are shown in Table 3.

According to the mean on the SWLS ($M = 27.91$), participants overall reported feeling satisfied with their current state of life. A score of 20 is indicated as the neutral point of the scale, and various population means within Westernized nations tend to range between scores of 23-28 (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The mean for the BFRS ($M = 39.09$) also appeared to indicate that participants have an above average positive quality of relationships within their adoptive families. Participants' overall ethnic identity as measured by the MEIM ($M = 2.44$) seems to indicate low identification with their birth ethnicity when comparing scores to previous studies involving diverse populations.

According to Roberts et al., mean averages for various populations were as follows: Chinese Americans ($M = 3.04$), Indian Americans ($M = 3.27$), European Americans ($M = 2.71$), and those of mixed-ancestry ($M = 2.94$). European Americans tend to have lower MEIM scores and may also be more likely to have unexamined ethnic identities (Syed & Azmitia, 2008). Participants in this study appeared more likely to have a sense of affirmation, belonging, or commitment to their birth ethnicity ($M = 2.61$) than to have actively sought out ways to develop their ethnic identity ($M = 2.20$). This is consistent with prior research, indicating higher levels of commitment to individuals' ethnic identity than levels of exploration across all ethnic groups (Syed & Azmitia, 2008).

As shown in Table 4, none of the quantitative measures was significantly correlated with one another, and their corresponding correlation coefficients were quite low. Results did indicate a small, although non-significant, correlation between the quality of family relationships while growing up and participants' current level of life

satisfaction. This suggests that with this group of participants, ethnic identity was not associated with either family relationships or satisfaction with life. These results do not reflect prior research, linking ethnic identity to overall psychological well-being for ethnic minorities as well as TRAs (Basow, Lilley, Bookwala, & McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 2008; Cederblad & Hook, 1999; Yoon, 2001). Though a sense of belonging in one's adoptive family also appears to be an indicator of psychological well-being for adoptees in particular (Baden, 2002; ; Manzi, Ferrari, Rosnati, & Benet-Martinez, 2014), there is little research available on how the quality of adoptive family relationships in general may impact TRAs' psychological well-being and ethnic identity development into adulthood as measured by the BFRS.

Participants listed a variety of cultural socialization activities they took part in during their growing-up years. On average, participants had experienced 2.5 of the activities listed. The most common of these included: reading books about their birth culture, having family conversations or discussions about their birth culture and/or ethnicity, and eating foods relating to their ethnicity of origin (see Figure 1). This is consistent with interview content from participants that indicated a wide range and degree of cultural socialization strategies utilized.

This study further explored the relationships between some of the quantitative measures and qualitative findings. These results are discussed below.

Ethnic identity and integration of birth culture - The ethnic identity of participants who reported a meaningful integration of their birth culture ($n = 3$), according to categorized responses from Question 2, versus those who did not ($n = 8$) were compared. Due to the small sample size and the use of categorical variables, a non-parametric,

Mann-Whitney test was conducted, comparing the mean ranks of MEIM scores between both groups. The mean ranks for those who indicated a meaningful integration of their birth culture vs. those who did not were 9.17 and 4.81, respectively. Though not significant ($z = -1.94, p = .052$), a Spearman's correlation of $r_s(9) = .62$ indicated a strong association (Cohen, 1992) between ethnic identity and meaningful integration of adoptees' birth culture. This demonstrates that, in this study, meaningful integration of birth culture was positively related to ethnic identity development. It is unclear whether this meaningful integration encouraged participants' ethnic identity, or whether participants who have developed a stronger ethnic identity perceive these experiences as more meaningful when looking back.

Meaningful integration of birth culture and cultural socialization activities - A Mann-Whitney test was also conducted to explore the degree to which involvement in cultural socialization activities related to participants' perception of birth culture integration as having meaning. The number of different cultural socialization activities experienced while growing up, as indicated in the Adoption Information Questionnaire, was totaled for each participant. This test compared the mean ranks for cultural activities each participant experienced within each group: those who were categorized as having meaningful integration of their birth culture in Question 2 ($n = 3$), and those who were not ($n = 8$). The mean ranks for those who indicated a meaningful integration of their birth culture vs. those who did not were 9.00 and 4.88, respectively. A follow-up Spearman's correlation for effect size was conducted, $r_s(9) = .59$. These findings indicate there was a strong (Cohen, 1992), though not significant ($z = -1.88, p = .060$), correlation between meaningful integration of birth culture and the number of different cultural

socialization activities participants experienced while growing up. This suggests that, for these participants, meaningful integration occurred more often in families who engaged in a greater variety of cultural socialization activities, although the causal direction cannot be ascertained.

Parents' connection to adoptees' birth culture and cultural socialization activities -

In Question 1, participant responses were categorized into varying levels of perceived parental connection to adoptees' birth culture. Parental level of connection to adoptee's birth culture (invested/limited level of connection, $n = 7$, vs. no connection, $n = 4$), as perceived by the adoptee, and the number of cultural socialization activities they engaged in during their youth was explored. Again, a Mann-Whitney non-parametric test was conducted, demonstrating a large effect size of $r_s(9) = .59$ (Cohen, 1992) and a significant correlation ($z = -2.12, p = .034$). The mean ranks for those who indicated their parents held an invested/limited connection to adoptees' birth culture vs. those who indicated their parents held no connection were 7.57 and 3.25, respectively. Thus, parent connection to adoptees' birth culture, as perceived by adoptees, was positively and significantly related to the number of cultural socialization activities adoptees experienced while growing up.

Parents' connection to adoptees' birth culture and adoptees' ethnic identity - A final analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between parents' level of connection to adoptees birth culture (invested/limited level of connection, $n = 7$, vs. no connection, $n = 4$) and participants' ethnic identity. A Mann-Whitney non-parametric test revealed no significance, $z = -.19, p = .850$; mean ranks for those who indicated their parents held an invested/limited connection to adoptees' birth culture vs. those who

indicated their parents held no connection were 6.14 and 5.75, respectively. This means that for this group of participants, parental connection to adoptees' birth culture was not related to the strength of adoptees' own ethnic identity. This is consistent with qualitative data that alluded to varying personal, familial, and societal factors identified by participants when describing their ethnic identity development.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Summary of Findings

This study sought to examine the ways in which family influences impact Transracial Adoptees' (TRA) ethnic identity development, particularly in regard to how these individuals experience cultural socialization while growing up. Outcomes of this study clearly confirmed the complex and fluent nature of ethnic and cultural identity processes. Participants had varying views of parental attitudes and beliefs about their birth culture, varying responses to past cultural experiences, and varying levels of identification with their own birth culture, though as whole, ethnic identity scores appeared low in comparison to those in other studies looking at non-White participants. Additionally, in this study, no significant correlations were found in relation to quality of family relationships, ethnic identity measures, and psychological well-being, although the sample size was small and would need to be replicated in a larger sample. Though inconsistent with past studies that have shown a positive connection between ethnic identity development and psychological well-being (Mohanty & Newhill, 2011; Yoon, 2001), this finding does echo questions posed in past research about whether the degree to which TRAs identify with their birth ethnicity versus their adoptive family affects their psychological well-being (Baden & Steward, 2007), and whether the evidence of an integrated, bicultural identity is more important than that of a strong ethnic identity for TRAs (Manzi, Ferrari, Rosnati, & Benet-Martinez, 2014).

According to the quantitative data analysis, it appears that parents who were described as having at least some connection to adoptees' birth culture engaged in a

greater number of cultural socialization practices with their children. The results of this analysis indicate several possibilities. It may be that cultural socialization experiences helped parents develop stronger connection with their children's birth culture. Also participants who engaged in socialization activities also may have perceived stronger parental connection, whether it existed or not. Alternatively, this may also indicate that parents who had a connection to their children's birth culture were more likely to initiate these activities. This is consistent with past research that has associated lower colorblind attitudes about race and higher levels of psychological connection to adoptees' birth culture with the likelihood of engaging in enculturation parenting behaviors (Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007; Langrehr, 2014; Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006).

In regard to cultural socialization practices, the data again indicate varying levels of cultural engagement, as well as varying participant perceptions about socialization activities. Some cultural experiences seen as superficial by some participants were viewed as meaningful by others. Some responses emphasized the need for parents to initiate cultural socialization, others emphasized the importance of adoptees deciding their own level of cultural engagement, while still others emphasized both. This highlights the individual and unique processes by which adoptees themselves may make meaning of cultural socialization experiences. Similarly, past research has pointed to discrepancies in how parents and children view their family's engagement in cultural socialization (Kim, Reichwald, & Lee., 2013; Shiao & Tuan, 2008). Quantitative analysis showed that participants who described cultural socialization activities while growing up as meaningful also demonstrated a stronger ethnic identity, and had

experienced a higher number of different cultural socialization activities in their childhood. Though causation cannot be assumed, it appears that some adoptees may perceive cultural integration as meaningful when looking back as adults and will grow to identify more strongly with their culture of origin. It also may be that exposing transracially adopted children to a variety of different cultural activities provides more opportunity for meaning and connection to be made.

Regardless, qualitative interview content revealed a clear connection between adoptive parents' attitudes and beliefs about adoptees' birth culture and adoptees' own attitudes and ethnic identity development, as well as a connection between cultural socialization and ethnic identity development. In their responses, many participants linked family integration of cultural experiences with aiding adoptees in accepting their own cultural and/or racial differences, as well as cultivating a sense of belonging within their family. Many participants identified cultural integration as a way of showing acceptance for that part of adoptees' heritage and story. Though this study did not quantitatively confirm a link between perceived parents' cultural socialization practices and ethnic identity development, research has emphasized the importance of active parental involvement, support, and open communication about cultural and ethnic issues within homes, which can lead to higher levels of self-esteem and well-being, as well as stronger ethnic identities (Huh & Reid, 2000; Mohanty, Keoske, & Sales, 2006; Yoon, 2000).

In the qualitative data, participants identified several factors within families as important, including communication and honesty, feeling loved, flexibility within family systems, and a sense of choice and autonomy when it came to ethnic and cultural issues.

For many participants, a sense of choice included parents providing TRAs with opportunities to engage with their birth culture. Participants also expressed the importance of adoptive parents' acceptance for TRAs' varying level of readiness and interest in these opportunities. Some participants suggested that cultural socialization opportunities be re-occurring and presented in ways that parents themselves are comfortable with. Participants' emphasis of choice in how to integrate and identify with adoptees' birth culture reflects limited past research (Baden & Steward, 2007) and could be better understood with further exploration.

This also brings to light the individual differences that make each adoptee's experience unique. Part of the complexity in quantifying these processes may be the result of other factors outside of TRAs' adoptive family, including societal influences, childhood experiences, and individual characteristics. Six different participants alluded to other factors influencing their ethnic identity development that were unrelated to childhood cultural socialization experiences, including attachment issues, individual characteristics, and societal influences. Similar studies have also noted the wide range of factors that play a role in TRAs' identity development (Bozek, 2009; Lieberman, 2001; Thomas & Tessler, 2007).

Developmental considerations surfaced as another theme within interview content. Participants often noted a difference in their own responses to cultural integration, depending on age. Often, participants were more rejecting of their birth culture at an early age and became more interested as they grew older. This is consistent with research in adoptees' identity formation, which signifies adolescence and young adulthood as a critical time for these processes and emphasizes the need for families and

clinicians to take developmental considerations into account when working with TRAs (Alvarado, Rho, & Lambert, 2014; Syed & Azmitia, 2008).

In sum, this study has found evidence that adoptive parents' attitudes and beliefs about adoptees' birth culture may impact how adoptees experience cultural socialization activities, though this may or may not translate into stronger identification with adoptees' birth ethnicity. Findings have emphasized the importance of giving TRAs opportunities to engage with and explore their birth culture, as long as the family is flexible and open throughout the process.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that should be taken into account. Due to the small sample size, it is possible that saturation was not reached for each of the questions analyzed. With a greater number of participants, other themes may have arisen from the data. The small sample size also limited this study's statistical power for the quantitative analyses; increasing this number may have produced more meaningful findings from the quantitative results.

Another limitation when working with this population is the variance of context and experiences within each participant's adoption story. It can be difficult to make generalizations without taking into account that transracial adoptees vary in age, culture of origin, culture of adoptive family, age at the time of adoption, and pre-adoption experiences. Potential participants also vary in level of exposure to topics of race, ethnicity, and experience of discrimination, which could influence factors such as their stage of cultural and ethnic identity development. Thus, the depth and level of awareness

at the time of interview may vary for each participant regarding cultural topics and factors.

It should also be noted that the mean age of participants in this study was 32, thus their childhood experiences with race, ethnicity, and culture are framed within the context present in the United States at that time (1980s-1990s). With such a small sample size, cohort effects could not be observed, but because cultural socialization has become a more common practice among current adopting parents of TRAs (Kim et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2006), it is possible that a sample including younger-aged participants might bear different results. Also, in this study, most participants reported that they grew up in areas lacking in ethnic and cultural diversity. Research indicates that diverse relationships and communities may be a particularly influential form of socialization on TRAs' experiences and identity development (Langrehr, 2014; Samuels, 2010). The fact that there was limited examination of TRAs from more diverse communities within this study must also be taken into account. How this might affect TRAs' socialization experiences and perceptions remains unknown.

Clinical Implications

When considering these findings, many possible implications may be considered. It appears salient that clinicians begin with adequate psychoeducation for adoptive families of TRAs. Educating parents about developmental considerations, cultural awareness and socialization practices, and issues of attachment may help parents become more comfortable with integrating their child's birth culture and better understand the unique needs of TRAs. Simply emphasizing awareness for Caucasian American parents may help prepare them for more open communication and involvement concerning

TRAs' birth culture (de Haymes & Simon, 2003). Agencies and professionals also may support adoptive parents by providing local resources for exposing children to diverse activities and relationships, as a lack of access often was mentioned in the qualitative data.

According to this study, encouraging parents to take interest in their children's birth culture and to engage with their children in cultural socialization activities on a regular basis may nurture TRAs' sense of acceptance within their families, as well as within themselves. Parents should understand that adoptees' responses to these activities may vary, and that resistance may be especially common among young children. It is important that parents maintain flexibility and openness to children's evolving needs and interests surrounding their ethnic identity. Clinicians and parents alike should also note that many other, less explored variables exist that may also influence TRAs' ethnic identity development. The goal may not be for TRAs to strongly identify with their birth culture, but more that they have the space and opportunity to examine all aspects of their own identity and make choices accordingly.

Future Directions for Research

In regard to future directions for research, using the measures and methods from this study with a greater sample size may provide more substantial statistical data and qualitative content for analysis. Further qualitative studies involving TRAs and their families may also help shed light on the unique and dynamic experiences of adoptees and their identity processes. To bring more clarity regarding developmental considerations, it is suggested that more longitudinal studies be utilized in the future. Although only briefly touched on in this study, bicultural identity processes among TRAs may be

explored further in future research, including how family influences and cultural socialization practices add to or diminish felt conflict between identities. It would also be helpful for researchers to develop a valid bicultural identity measure specifically for TRAs that would measure adoptees' sense of belonging in family as well as connection and identification with their own ethnicity (Baden & Steward, 2000; Scherman, 2010).

This study touched on several other less explored factors for future research that may influence TRAs' ethnic identity development. Some of these include: impacts of race, age, gender, age of adoption, geographic location of adoptive family, pre-adoption experiences, and impacts of societal and community influences. How do each of these factors affect adoptees' experiences and perceptions, within their own families as well as society as a whole? Another area for further examination would be family flexibility, choice, and openness, as highlighted in this study, in relation to TRAs' ethnic and bicultural identity development. Do these familial qualities allow more opportunity for TRAs to explore and formulate their own ethnic identity, and also, do they lead to greater levels of family belonging and psychological well-being?

Conclusion

Though much remains unknown and unexplored concerning TRAs' ethnic and bicultural identity development, it is clear that families play an important role in these processes. It also seems that the types of cultural socialization activities implemented may not matter as much as parents' own level of interest, initiative, and openness with these activities. It appears that parents' acceptance and support for TRAs' varying needs and interests surrounding their birth ethnicity may help provide adoptees freedom to explore and choose how their ethnic identity is formed out and expressed. Finally, this

study's findings would indicate that though cultural socialization practices provide opportunity for TRAs to better explore their ethnic identity, there are many other factors that contribute to how much adoptees identify with and are involved with their birth culture as adults.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Participant number	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Age adopted
1	Male	28	Indian	5 months
2	Female	45	Korean	1.5 years
3	Female	29	Korean	3 months
4	Female	33	Korean	2.5 years
5	Male	41	Vietnamese	1 year
6	Male	18	African American	From birth
7	Female	19	African American	10 months
8	Female	32	Korean	5 months
9	Female	39	Mixed – Half Lebanese	3 months
10	Female	37	Cambodian	6 years
11	Male	38	Indian	10 years

APPENDIX B

Table 2

Characteristics of Adoptive Family

Participant number	Socioeconomic Status	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Number of Siblings	Religious Affiliation
1	75,000+	Post-graduate		0	Catholic
2	75,000+	Finished college	Post-graduate	3	None
3	50,000-75,000	Some College	< HS	4	Christian
4	75,000+	College Grad.	College Grad.	2	Christian
5	50,000-75,000	Some College	HS Diploma	2	None
6	75,000+	Post-graduate	Post-graduate	1	None
7	75,000+	Post-graduate	Post-graduate	3	Christian
8	50,000-75,000	HS Diploma	HS Diploma	0	Christian
9	75,000+	College Grad.	HS Diploma	1	Christian
10	75,000+		Post-graduate	15	Christian
11	35,000-50,000	College Grad.	College Grad.	5	Christian

APPENDIX C

Table 3
Summary of Quantitative Measures

Measure	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
BFRS	11	39.09	4.83	31	47
MEIM	11	2.44	0.61	1.42	3.42
Identity Search	11	2.2	0.67	1	2.8
Affirmation/Belonging	11	2.61	0.74	1.29	3.86
SWLS	11	27.91	6.73	15	35

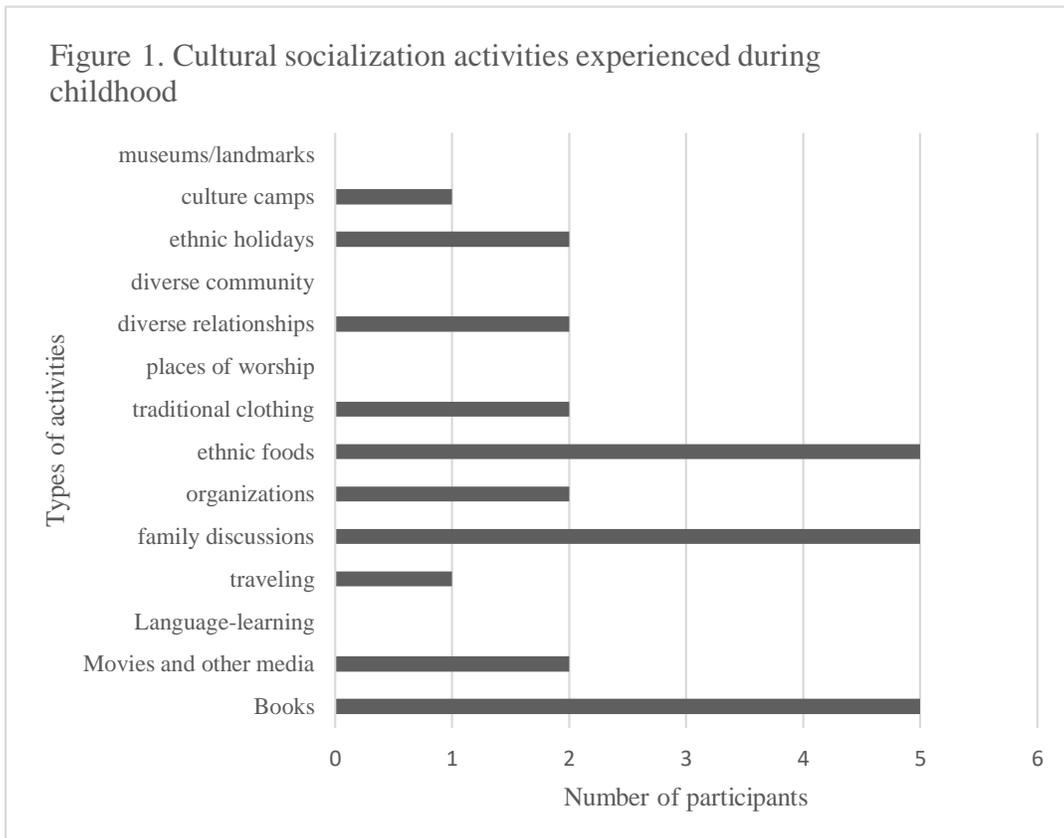
APPENDIX D

Table 4: *Correlation Coefficient Matrix for Quantitative Measures*

Measure	BFRS	MEIM	SWLS
BFRS			
MEIM	.09		
SWLS	.24	-.11	

Note. No correlation achieved significance at $\alpha = .05$. BFRS = Brief Family Relationship Scale; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure; SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Survey.

APPENDIX E



APPENDIX F

Adoption Information Questionnaire

Participant code: _____

Pre-adoption information:

Date of birth: Click or tap here to enter text. Location of birth: Click or tap here to enter text.

Ethnicity of birth – (e.g. Hispanic, Chinese, Middle-Eastern, etc., and may include more than one): Click or tap here to enter text.

Age when adopted: Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide information you know about your birth family (ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.):

Post-adoption information:

Ethnicity of adoptive family: Click or tap here to enter text.

Adoptive family annual income (check one):

- Less than \$15,000
- \$15,000-\$34,999
- \$35,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000 or more

Educational level of primary caregivers (parents or whoever raised you):

Relationship to you: Click or tap here to enter text.
to enter text.

Relationship to you: Click or tap here

- Did not complete high school
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Some college
- College graduate
- Post-graduate degree

- Did not complete high school
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Some college
- College graduate
- Post-graduate degree

List family members in immediate family – list relationships, not names (e.g. mother, sister, etc.) *Note if any others are adopted as well:

Geographic location(s) while growing up: Click or tap here to enter text.

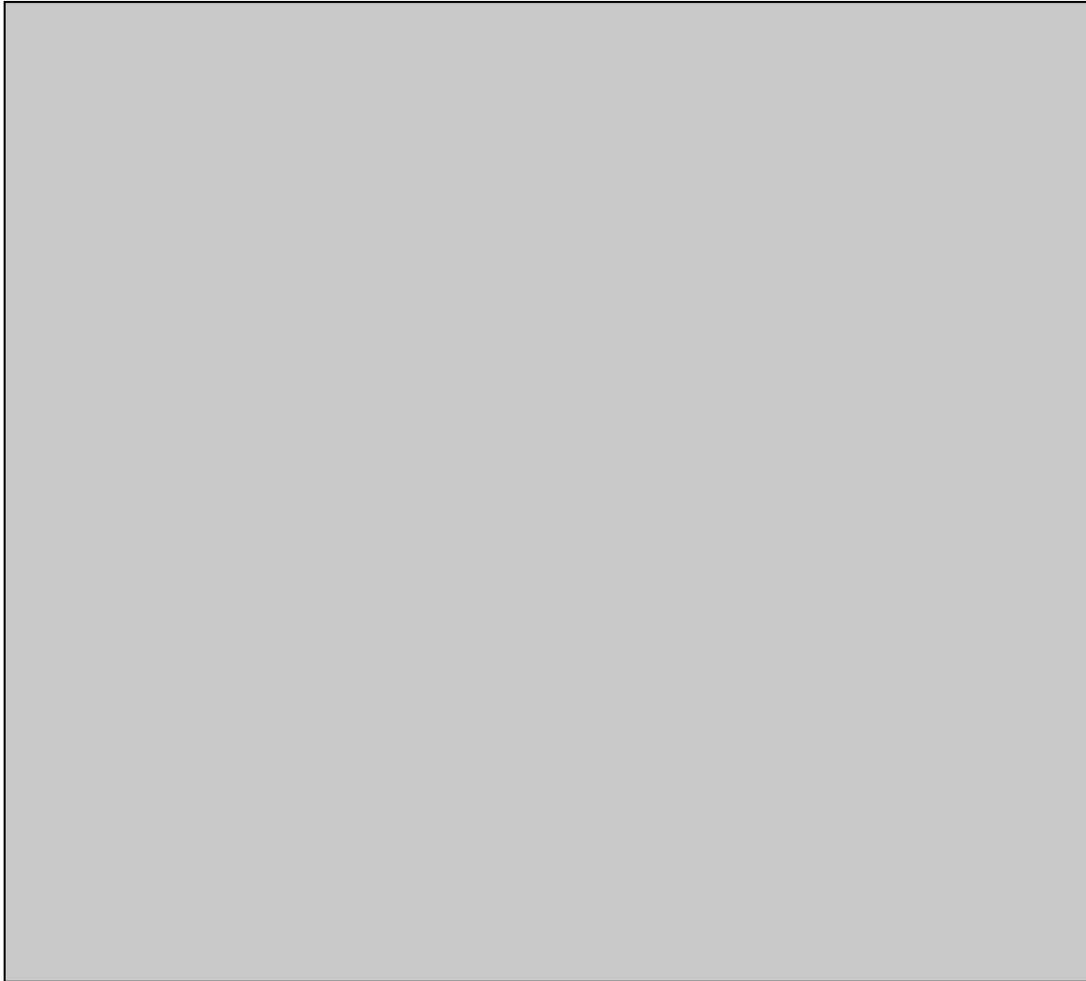
Family's religious affiliation(s): Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you participate in any activities while growing up that **helped you learn about your birth culture or ethnicity**? Check all that apply, and write in others you think of.

- Books
- Ethnic-specific foods
- Ethnic holidays
- Movies, videos, or music
- Traditional clothing
- Culture camps
- language-learning
- visiting places of worship
- museums/landmarks
- traveling to birthplace
- relationships with people from that ethnic group
- family conversations/discussions
- moving to a more ethnically diverse community
- organizations or social groups that include mostly members of birth culture/ethnicity

Other activities you participated in that are not listed:

Please use one to two paragraphs to write down a brief description of your own adoption story, highlighting whatever information is most important to **you** and **who you are today**.



Thank you so much for your participation in this project! You will receive further information about the upcoming interview portion shortly.

APPENDIX G

Brief Family Relationship Scale

Please rate the following questions on a scale of 1 to 3, *according to what your family relationships were like while growing up.*

1 = not at all

2 = somewhat

3 = a lot

1. In our family we really helped and supported each other. _____
2. In our family we spent a lot of time doing things together. _____
3. In our family we worked hard at what we did in our home. _____
4. In our family there was a feeling of togetherness. _____
5. My family members really supported each other. _____
6. I am proud to be a part of our family. _____
7. In our family we really got along well with each other. _____
8. In our family we could talk openly in our home. _____
9. In our family we sometimes told each other about our personal problems. _____
10. In our family we began discussions easily. _____
11. In our family we argued a lot. _____
12. In our family we were really mad at each other a lot. _____
13. In our family we lost our tempers a lot. _____
14. In our family we often put down each other. _____
15. My family members sometimes were violent. _____
16. In our family we raised our voice when we were mad. _____

APPENDIX H

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

In this country, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian American, Chinese, Filipino, American Indian, Mexican American, Caucasian or White, Italian American, and many others. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be (**please use **ethnicity of origin** and not of your adoptive family for this survey*): _____

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

(4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs. _____
- 2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group. _____
- 3- I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me. _____
- 4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership. _____
- 5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. _____
- 6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. _____
- 7- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me. _____
- 8- In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group. _____
- 9- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group. _____
- 10- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. _____
- 11- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. _____
- 12- I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. _____
- 13- My ethnicity is (use numbers below): _____
 - (1) Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese, and others
 - (2) Black or African American
 - (3) Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others
 - (4) White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic
 - (5) American Indian/Native American
 - (6) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups
 - (7) Other (write in): _____

14- My adoptive father's ethnicity is (use numbers above or write in):

15- My adoptive mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above or write in):

APPENDIX I

Satisfaction With Life Survey

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 – Strongly agree
- 6 – Agree
- 5 – Slightly agree
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 – Slightly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 1 – Disagree

- ____ In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.
- ____ The conditions of my life are excellent.
- ____ I am satisfied with my life.
- ____ So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- ____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

APPENDIX J
Interview Guide

Participant code: _____

Date _____

Interview Questions:

1. If you had to guess, what do you think your adoptive family thinks/believes/feels about your birth culture and ethnicity?
2. How did cultural experiences involving your birth culture (such as cultural activities, travels, family conversations, etc.) during your years growing up, or the lack thereof, influence your identity when it comes to your current sense of your culture and ethnicity?
3. What attitudes or activities do you think are important for adoptive parents (of transracial adoptees) to embrace about adoptees' birth culture and ethnicity?

