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THE DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL-ETHNIC IDENTITY
AMONG INTERNATIONAL ADOPTEES:
THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED PARENTAL CULTURAL COMPETENCE

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master in Social Work.

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2010

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The Development of Racial-Ethnic Identity
among International Adoptees: The Role of
Perceived Parental Cultural Competence

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between parental cultural competence and the development of ethnic/racial identity among a small group of South Korean adoptees raised by White American parents in the United States. There is a growing body of research supporting the hypothesis that parental attitudes and cultural socialization practices impact significantly outcomes related to the development of racial identity among trans-racially adopted children. The research seeks to identify and measure specific characteristics in the familial environments of these Asian trans-racial adoptees which may affect the outcome of the adoptees' racial and ethnic identity in adulthood.

To accomplish study goals, information about the familial environments of 22 trans-racially adopted adults born in South Korea and adopted into White American households at very young ages was collected using a modified version of the Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale. In addition, information about the racial-ethnic identity of participants was collected using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Information collected through these procedures was used to explore the relationship between family characteristics, and parental cultural socialization practices, and adult racial-ethnic identity adjustment.

Results suggest that parental beliefs and behaviors supportive of involvement in the adoptee's birth culture and race are associated with the positive ratings of cultural identity by this small sample of South Korean adoptees. The size of the sibling group was also found to be associated with parental competency ratings by adult adoptees and should be considered for inclusion in future studies

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this exploratory study is to add to our knowledge about parental attitudes and behaviors that are associated with the development of a positive racial-ethnic identity among internationally adopted children raised in trans-racial households. This study hypothesizes an association between parental cultural competency skills and the outcome of racial identity development among adults adopted at birth from South Korea and raised in the United States by White parents. There is a growing body of research demonstrating that racial identity development is strongly shaped by parenting attitudes, behaviors, and cultural socialization practices, a construct termed “culturally competent parenting” and operationalized by Vonk and Angaran (2001) in their pioneering work in this area.

The overall goals of this research were to identify and measure characteristics of the parenting environment, as perceived by adult South Korean adoptees and to assess the association of these characteristics with the development of positive racial-ethnic identity in this population. The research was motivated by an interest in understanding how to improve our services to South Korean adoptees and family members who may present for social work services.

An increasingly common way to form a family in this country is through adoption. International adoption has been booming since the 1950’s (Basow, Lilley, Bookwala, & McGillicuddy-Delisis, 2008), with 90% of children being adopted from China, Korea, Russia, Guatemala (Lee, Gortevant, Hellerstedt, Gunnar & MIAP Team, 2006). Between 1955 and 2001, an estimated 110,000 children were adopted from South Korea by White

American parents (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002), with a significant surge occurring in the 1980's (Basow, Lilley, Bookwala, & McGillicuddy-Delisis, 2008). These adoptees now make up about 10% of today's Korean-American population (Lee, 2003).

By the year 2001, there were 127,407 public and private adoptions, with 19,237 of those adopted internationally, and the majority of children arriving from China and South Korea (National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 2004). By 2003 the number increased to 21,616 international adoptions by Americans (US Department of State, 2005). International adoption accounts for 85% of all trans-racial adoptions in the United States (US State Department, 2001, as cited in Song & Lee, 2009).

This research explores the relationship between adult adoptees' racial-ethnic identity and self-reports (perceptions) of their parents' cultural competence. While the literature highlights the need for adoptive parents to practice culturally competent parenting, there has not been any research that evaluates the adoptees' perception of their parents' cultural competency practices. The project provided an opportunity to examine constructs from the perspective of the adoptee that have previously been validated in research on parenting strategies that foster the development of racial/ethnic identity in trans-racially adopted children (Vonk & Angaran 2001; Vonk & Angaran, 2003.)

The research follows a strategy suggested by Vonk (2001) for describing and rating three domains of parental skills and attitudes that characterize parental cultural competence: racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. Parental cultural competence is a latent construct that denotes a "unique set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enables parents to meet their children's needs related to racial and cultural socialization" (Vonk &

Massatti, 2008, p. 204). These domains are operationalized in the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (TAPS) developed by Vonk and Angaran (2001).

To support the goals of this research, a computerized search of the adoption and psychological literature was undertaken with the goal of identifying factors likely to contribute to the development of ethnic identity among trans-racial adoptees or adoptees in general. Such factors form the basis for later constructing and testing a model which predicts the role of parental cultural competency in the development of a sound racial/ethnic identity among trans-racially adopted South Koreans.

Research that furthers understanding about the experiences of trans-racially adopted individuals in this country has important implications for social work practice. The number of children adopted internationally suggests the increasing importance and probability that children and adults may seek social work-related services, as many families that are hoping to adopt internationally. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding adoptive parents' influence on the racial-ethnic identity development of their children by examining the adoptees' self-reports. The findings can help guide adoption agency practices and post-adoption counseling services.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The popularity of international adoptions has resulted in a need to broaden our understanding about the effects of growing up adopted and, especially for the social work profession, to examine the implications of growing up in a world that is culturally and racially different than one's birth country. Forming a cohesive identity that encompasses all of who we are is a major task of early childhood and impacts the adult we become and how we relate with the world. It is crucial that our self-identity include many of the social factors that are present in our lives, such as gender, sexual orientation, and race. For individuals who were adopted at young ages, the process of identity development is differs significantly from children who were not adopted or who were "same-race" adopted (Baden & Steward, 2007; Basow, Lilley, Bookwala & McGillicuddy-DeLisis, 2008; Cederblad, Hook, Irhammar & Mercke, 1999; Grotevant, 1997).

For trans-racially adopted children, racial identity development must consider multiple ethnic and racial identities due to the fact that adoptees are part of a family that is a different race/ethnicity. The literature suggests that there is a strong connection between the level of cultural competency of trans-racial adoptive parents and the racial-ethnic identity outcomes of their adopted children (Phinney, 1990; Huh & Reid, 2000; Vonk, 2001; Vonk & Massatti, 2008). Previous research has demonstrated the importance preparing pre-adoptive parents with skills to meet the unique challenges of raising a child of color with positive racial attitudes (Vonk & Angaran, 2003) and has important implications for both public and private adoption agency practices. Cultural and racial socialization for the child

has a positive effect on increasing adoptees' ethnic and racial pride (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008; Fiegelman & Silverman, 1983; McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, & Anderson, 1982).

For both adoptive and non-adoptive families of color, parents with stronger cultural competency are more likely to expose their children to cultural socialization practices, such as seeking out communities that reflect the child's birth culture and race. Parental cultural competence is a latent construct that denotes a "unique set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enables parents to meet their children's needs related to racial and cultural socialization" (Vonk & Massatti, 2008, p. 204). Ethnic identity is a latent construct denoting positive ethnic attitudes and a sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviors or practices.

There is a growing body of research that supports the hypothesis that racial identity development is strongly shaped by parental attitudes and cultural socialization practices, and those studies will be reviewed here. Cultural socialization has also been demonstrated to have a positive effect on self-esteem, academic performance, and overall psychological well-being of trans-racially adopted children (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Findings support a move away from advising parents to take a color-blind approach to parenting and instead emphasizing cultural competency and racial socialization (Vonk & Massatti, 2008). The experts seem to agree that parents raising inter-racially adopted children need to be proactive in addressing cultural and racial issues.

Trans-racial Adoption Controversy

The challenges of fostering positive racial identities among adopted individuals are the basis of arguments against inter-racial adoption. Both critics and supporters of trans-racial adoption question the notion of White parent's, who are members of the dominant

culture in a racialized society, being able to successfully raise children of color (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; Scherman & Harre, 2008; Vonk & Massatti, 2008). These parents are faced with the added challenge of preparing children of color to develop a positive racial identity and to cope with racism (Vonk & Massatti, 2008) with which the White parents may have limited experience. Opponents of trans-racial adoption have argued against raising color-blind children and have feared parenting that promotes the child's assimilation into the dominant culture (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001 in Vonk & Massatti, 2008).

The loudest opposition is from the African American community where there is a belief that Black children should be placed with Black families where they can grow up in an environment that will enhance their Black identity development (Hollingsworth, 1999; NABSW, 1972; Simon & Allstein, 1977). Looking at the opposition through the symbolic interactionism perspective, humans are socialized through direct interaction and communication with others, and thus Black children will more completely develop their identity in relation to their ethnicity and race via adoption into a Black family (Hollingsworth, 1999).

The issue of fostering adopted children's ethnic and racial identity through direct exposure with an adoptive family of the same race and ethnicity was examined by Bausch and Serpe (1997). These two authors conducted a study with Mexican American children to assess opinions about trans-racial adoption. They interviewed Mexican American adults to see if they agreed with statements about negative outcomes for Mexican American children adopted by non-Latinos (Bausch & Serpe, 1997). They found that respondents equally disagreed or agreed with the statements, but collectively had concern about exposure to

cultural events (Bausch & Serpe, 1997). Although the authors were unable to strongly claim support or resistance to interethnic adoption, they argue that there is empirical evidence to support resistance among Mexican Americans to trans-racial adoption (Bausch & Serpe, 1997).

Race Matching. Opponents of trans-racial adoption are often in favor of race-matching, a term used to indicate children being adopted by a family that looks like him or her on the outside (Scherman & Harre, 2008; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Lash Esau, 2000). Also known as same-race adoption, there is limited research into the racial-ethnic identity development and psychological adjustment of these children. Scherman and Harre (2008) conducted a study of Eastern European children who were adopted by New Zealand families, seeking to investigate the interplay between ethnic self-identification and self-concept for these adoptees. Results from Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and the Piers-Harris children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers, 1984) found that the majority of the children identified with both their birth culture and New Zealand culture. Although the study was unable to compare same-race with trans-racial adoptees in New Zealand, and therefore limiting methodology, the authors did highlight the need for more same-race adoption literature and the ways that identity development may differ as compared with trans-racial adoptees in general.

Identity Development

The process of developing an identity that encompasses all aspects of who we are has been researched and theorized thoroughly since Erikson's 1968 book *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, a seminal work describing the process of forming an identity as extending from childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood. Erikson argues that the ultimate

goal is to achieve a stable identity, because failure to do so may result in role confusion and an insecure sense of self.

Trans-racially adopted individuals cannot hide the fact that they were adopted because their physical appearance looks very different from their parents and family, and oftentimes they are perceived by others as immigrants. “The degree of acceptance of deviant looks, attitudes to immigrants and other cultural and racial minorities, and the level of multiculturalism constitute the context where the adopted young person struggles with his own internal identity development,” (Cederblad et al., 1999, p. 1246). For adoptees, their racial identity development will be influenced by the social context in which they live, and their physical appearance.

Westhues and Cohen (1994) found that 14% of trans-racial adoptees in Canada did not identify with their race, and 10% thought of themselves as White. Feigelman and Silverman (1983) found in their study with African-American trans-racial adoptees that 30% of participants identified only with their White parents, 54% identified as both African-American and White, 9% identified as exclusively African-American, and 7% were unsure of their identities. Past research has found that many trans-racially adopted individuals are confused about their race and ethnicity, often rejecting their racial background and feeling concerned with their physical appearance (Huh & Reid, 2000; Mohanty & Newhill, 2006).

Factors that influence racial and ethnic identity development include age at adoption, race, and geography. The older a child is placed for adoption, the stronger their race is a part of their identity (Lee, 2003). Additionally, African American and Hispanic adoptees tended to have stronger pride in their ethnicities than did Asian adoptees (Lee, 2003).

Lastly, living in racially homogenous neighborhoods and communities does not foster racial identity (Lee, 2003, McRoy et al., 1984; Meier, 1999).

Adolescence. The task of searching for and developing an identity is most critical during adolescence, a time typically known for differentiating away from the family unit and establishing one's autonomy as an independent individual. The concept of identity is "a significant developmental task in contemporary Western society" (Grotevant, 1997). Specific for young people who were trans-racially adopted, the process of forming an identity that includes race and ethnicity is especially complicated by the fact that these individuals are being raised in a country and community that is racially different than their own (Basow et al., 2008; Cederblad et al., 1999; Friedlander, 1999, Friedlander, Larney, Skau, Hotaling, Cutting, & Schwam, 2000; Huh & Reid, 2000; Sherman, 2006). Young adopted children discover early on that they look very different from their adoptive parents and families, giving rise to issues such as attachment, a sense of belonging, and identity (Friedlander, 1999). These children are often faced with the task of denying their race and ethnicity as a way to fit in with their surroundings.

The period of adolescence has been extensively reviewed in the literature (French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006; Cederblad et al., 1999). Issues of identity formation become more salient for adolescents as they begin to question who they are and who they want to be. During this period, individuals are attempting to incorporate the identities imposed on them by family and society. At the same time, adolescence is a time of establishing an identity that promotes independence and competence (French et al., 2006). Adolescents often seek peer acceptance and to reduce deviance from the majority culture, a notion with which many trans-racial adoptees struggle (Cederblad et al., 1999). Trans-racial adolescent adoptees

face the same task of developing a cohesive identity; however they must also face the added challenge of incorporating their adoption status and history into their identity (Grotevant, 1997).

Models of racial-ethnic identity development. There are a few models of development that capture the process for various social and ethnic groups, including trans-racial adoptees. The Cultural-Racial Identity Model, developed by Baden and Steward (2000), describes the conflicting challenge of identifying with both White parents' cultural group and one's own birth culture. Since many trans-racial adoptees go through the process of acculturation at young ages and throughout childhood, many adoptees feel ambivalent about their racial background as they "face reconciling their birth roots with their present cultural realities" (Song & Lee, 2009, p. 21).

Grotevant et al. (2000) proposed a three tiered model of adoptive identity development. This model examines the interplay between the adoptees' cognitive and affective experiences, the relationships within the family, and interactions within the community and larger society (Grotevant et al., 2000). All three components affect the racial identity development process for trans-racial adoptees.

Phinney (1992) developed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Model (the MEIM) questionnaire to assess three aspects of ethnic identity: positive ethnic attitudes and sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviors or practices. Researchers interviewed college and high school students from a variety of racial and ethnic group backgrounds. Participants filled out the MEIM, as well as a six item questionnaire assessing other-group orientation, and a self-esteem inventory. Results from this study found that the MEIM is a reliable measure for the ethnically diverse college and high school population.

“The measure provides a means of examining ethnic identity as a general phenomenon that is indicative of young people’s degree of identification with their ethnic group, regardless of the unique characteristics of their group” (Phinney, 1992, p. 169). They also found that, for high school students, there was a statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity for ethnic minority students, but not for White students (Phinney, 1992).

The paradox. Trans-racially adopted children may find themselves facing a paradox in which they are racial/ethnic minorities within the society in which they reside, but may perceive themselves as a member of the dominant culture (Lee, 2003). For young racially different children growing up in a homogenous White community, the goal of avoiding racism, discrimination and peer-teasing may be to become thoroughly acculturated into the majority culture (Basow et al., 2008; McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale, & Anderson, 1984). The process of acculturation occurs at some expense of the child’s birth country and cultural heritage. Many adoptees report that as young children, they preferred to not associate with other children of color, further reinforcing acculturating into the dominant White society (Meier, 1999).

The desire to become acculturated within the dominant culture appears to vary with age, which may correspond with social and emotional stages of development. Younger adopted children seem to identify strongly with their birth cultures; however, race and ethnicity appear to disappear in adolescence and adulthood (Lee, 2003). This finding may reflect the dominating desire for ‘fitting in’ that marks adolescence and early adulthood. Some research has also found that race and ethnicity increase in salience in adulthood for some adoptees (Lee, 2003), suggesting factors such as maturity and family development that may encourage adult adoptees to reassess their country of origin and race/ethnicity.

Cultural Socialization & Identity

There are many factors that contribute to an adoptee's creation of an identity, and parenting is one of them. How parents parent and messages that are conveyed contribute to the child's identity. White parents are met with unique challenges when fostering their child's identity development (Friedlander, 1999; McRoy et al., 2000; Tan & Nakkula, 2004). White parents are part of the dominant culture and therefore will have varying degrees of awareness of their adoptee's racial and ethnic differences.

There is a growing awareness among the adoptive community of the necessity of exposing adopted children to aspects of their birth culture as a way to socialize them and foster a racial identity. Recent research suggests that parents of young trans-racial adoptees nowadays are more aware of the importance of cultural socialization than in the past (Basow et al., 2008; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Lee et al., 2006; Vonk & Massatti, 2008). Trans-racially adopted children begin to be aware of racial differences as young as three, four or five years of age and ethnic identity development occurs between 7 and 8 years of age, as well as an increased awareness of the cultural meanings assigned to racial labels (Huh & Reid, 2000, McRoy et al., 1984). Adoptive parents are more likely to actively culturally socialize their child between the ages of 10 and 12 (Johnston et al., 2007).

Parental influence on the adopted child's racial identity development has been studied by McRoy et al. (1984). The researchers interviewed trans-racial adoptive families; involving both the Black adopted child and their White adoptive parents. A positive relationship was found between how the parent's perceived their child's attitude towards his/her race and the child's racial self-perceptions and racial identity (McRoy et al., 1984).

These findings support the notion that adoptive parents, as well as cultural socialization, strongly impact the adopted child's racial identity development.

Adoptive parenting. Caucasian parents experiences with and attitudes about race will affect how they raise their racially different adopted child, and messages about race they will convey (Huh & Reid, 2000). White parents, living as part of the dominant culture, are faced with an added task of trying to understand how to raise a child of color. White parents' attitudes about race will impact the extent of colorblindness in the home, and efforts to culturally socialize, acknowledge their child's different race, and work to incorporate race into the child's identity (Johnston, Swim, Saltsman, Deater-Deckard & Petrill, 2007; Lee et al., 2006; McRoy et al., 1982; McRoy et al., 1984, Tan & Nakkula, 2004).

Friedlander and colleagues (2000) conducted a study evaluating the correlations between parental cultural socialization practices and adopted children's identities. The findings indicated that the adoptive parents promoted cultural pride in similar ways, but differed in the ways they viewed race and ethnic differences. Some families wanted to emphasize racial and cultural differences, others wanted to take a more Universalist perspective, de-emphasizing differences between groups. The children in the study all gave themselves an ethnic label, but reported identifying more strongly with Euro-American culture (Friedlander et al., 2000). Researchers and parents both agreed that fostering trans-racial adoptees racial-ethnic identity is important, but approaches to multi-cultural parenting and cultural socialization varied.

Tan and Nakkula (2004) conducted a study to assess White parents' attitudes toward their adopted Chinese daughter's ethnic identity. Through semi-structured interviews, the

authors collected profiles from adoptive parents on their beliefs and practices. They found that adoptive parents tended to define their adoptee's identity as a combination of their own ethnicity and their child's ethnic heritage. The findings indicate that race, culture, family and dominant culture are all aspects that adoptive parents incorporate in their perception of their adoptee's identity. Parents indicated that their child was "racially Chinese, but culturally American" (Tan & Nakkula, 2004, p. 72). These results illustrate the influences of the dominant society on how White adoptive parents integrate their daughter's racial background with their own background.

Socialized exposure practices. The perceived importance among adoptive parents to culturally socialize their children was studied by Crolley-Simic & Vonk (2008). The authors sought to increase their understanding of White adoptive parents' racial socialization practices and used self-report, in-depth interviews to report on the White adoptive mother's perceptions. Participants were all White mothers who had adopted children from China, Vietnam or Korea. The study found that all mothers engaged in some way to racially socialize their child, but those actions varied in degree to which the child's birth culture was incorporated into the child's experiences (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008). Actions varied between reading books, having conversations, to residing in diverse neighborhoods and visiting the birth country. The findings of this study describe the "spectrum whereby parents depart from white culture and integrate with other cultures in various degrees" (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008). It seems that racial socialization has a positive effect on adopted children's development experiences and this article can be used as a resource for a variety of cultural activities.

Another aspect of exposure to diverse populations involves providing young trans-racially adopted children with positive role models from their birth country (Friedlander, 1999; McRoy et al., 1984; Thomas & Tessler, 2007). Fostering the development of a racial identity via cultural socialization depends on parents providing adopted children with a network of ethnically diverse individuals. Being involved in culturally diverse social networks is related to parental perceptions of the importance of cultural socialization for their children (McRoy et al., 1984; Thomas & Tessler, 2007). If parents believe that their adopted child's race is an important aspect of their identity, and therefore they seek out cultural experiences, then their child is likely to internalize a positive racial identity, know how to handle experiences with racism, and have higher self-esteem (Hollingsworth, 2008; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Johnston et al., 2007, McRoy et al., 1984).

A study conducted by Johnston et al. (2007) investigated the effects of various factors on mothers of trans-racially adopted Asian children cultural socialization practices. The study focused on the mother's White racial identity and connection to Asian culture as influencing socialization practices and ethnic pride, the impact on their child's psychological adjustment, and preparing the child for discrimination and bias. Researchers found that the White adoptive mothers did try to socialize their adopted children; however, efforts differed depending on the degree to which she felt connected to Asian culture and on her child's age and birth country. Additionally, the mother's White racial identity did not affect their socialization practices (Johnston et al., 2007). As this study suggests, parents are the central agent for culturally socializing their adopted children, but these efforts are influenced by their psychological connection to their child's race and their personal attitudes towards racial differences.

Song and Lee (2009) hypothesized that ethnic identity in adulthood is positively correlated with cumulative cultural experiences throughout life. The authors found that various types of cultural activities have different effects on identity formation for Korean adult adoptees (Song & Lee, 2009). It appears as though depending on the developmental age of the adoptee, certain cultural practices are more strongly related to adoptees incorporating race and ethnicity into how they identify.

Cultural and racial socialization in non-adopted populations. Literature from non-adoptive populations have shed light on cultural and racial socialization practices that families of color implement to foster their child's sense of ethnic pride and to prepare their child for discrimination and racism (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Research with African-American families has found parents either lean towards an egalitarian or a color-blind approach to raising their children. However, the authors argue that an egalitarian worldview may result in children having an unrealistic understanding of intergroup relations. On the other hand, children from a color-blind home are more likely to rely on racial and ethnic stereotypes that are harbored within the larger society (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Literature parallels adoption findings that parent's have a variety of ways to prepare their children of color to thrive in this society, and this preparation has a positive affect on the children's well-being and development (Hughes & Chen, 1999)

Cultural Competency

The growing body of research that predicts better outcomes and more positive racial-ethnic identity development for trans-racially adopted individuals has guided a move away from color-blind parenting to supporting culturally competent parenting (Lee et al., 2006). Parenting that encompasses the adopted child's race and ethnicity has been defined and

studied extensively by Vonk (2001). Racial identity and psychological well-being depends on the combination of cultural competent parenting and active cultural socialization parenting practices (Lee et al., 2006). The theories behind the literature have not only encouraged adoptive parents to be more culturally aware, but also promote international adoption agencies to prepare their prospective adoptive parents for culturally competent parenting.

Non-colorblind parenting. Holding a lower color-blind attitude has been associated with more positive parenting outcomes, such as increased cultural socialization practices, participation in post-adoption support groups, and to conduct more open conversations about racism and discrimination (Lee et al., 2006). The reasoning is because these parents are more likely to believe in and practice enculturation and acknowledging their adopted child's birth culture and race (Lee et al., 2006).

The extent to which parents recognize race and ethnicity in their parenting greatly impacts how their adopted child develops a racial-ethnic identity. Parents who incorporate a more color-blind approach to child-rearing, which includes living in a homogenously White community and avoiding discussions about race with their child, tend to raise children who feel they have nothing in common with other people of color and preferred to not associate with them (McRoy et al., 1984). On the other hand, families that integrated culturally competent parenting and embraced racial and ethnic diversity more often reared children who identified bi-culturally and felt accepted by both racial groups (McRoy et al., 1984).

While McRoy and colleagues (1982) did not find significant differences between trans-racially and same-race adopted African-American children, they did find a relationship between adoptive parents' attitudes and perceptions of their child's race and the child's

racial identity. White adoptive parents of Black children, as compared with Black adoptive parents, were less likely to culturally socialize their child (McRoy et al., 1982).

Consequently, parenting that leaned towards the color-blind approach more often yielded children who described their racial identity as not important and irrelevant (McRoy et al., 1982). The authors found that racial identity development was strongly shaped by parental attitudes and cultural socialization practices.

An instrument called the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (the TAPS) was designed by Vonk and Angaran (2001) as part of a pilot study that trained adoptive parents for cultural competence. The instrument measures parents' perceptions of the importance of the three sub-scales of Vonk's (2001) cultural competence parenting definition: racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. The researchers used a pre-experimental, one-group pre- and post- test design to investigate the effectiveness of an agency training program. The training program had three major goals for prospective adoptive parents: 1) to increase racial awareness, 2) to increase the importance of coping skills to deal with racism and 3) to increase the awareness and use of multi-cultural planning and racial socialization activities. The results of this study found that the training program had a positive effect on the parent's perception of the importance of the three sub-scales (Vonk & Angaran, 2001). The study's small sample size and a modification of the intervention are limitations and challenge generalizability. Nevertheless, this study is further evidence that cultural competent parenting should be a part of the pre-adoption process for international adoption agencies.

Psychological Adjustment & Racial Identity

Although the findings regarding the positive relationship between having a racial identity and psychological outcomes are plenty, the research remains largely mixed. While most research has found a positive correlation between adjustment to adoption and psychological well-being (Basow et al., 2008), in terms of self-esteem, academic performance self-acceptance and externalizing behavioral problems, other studies have found the links between adjustment and racial pride as not statistically significant (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983), and no differences in self-esteem between trans-racial and same-race adoptees (McRoy et al., 1982; Grotevant & McRoy, 1990).

A triangulated effect. Basow et al. (2008) studied Korean-born adoptees and hypothesized that ethnic identity, cultural socialization and adjustment to adoption would predict psychological well-being. Participants completed an online survey. Researchers found that those who had higher levels of ethnic identity scored higher on measures of psychological well-being (Basow et al., 2008). The study supports the suggestion that developing a strong racial/ethnic identity positively affects trans-racial adoptee's psychological adjustment (Basow et al., 2008). Factors of psychological and social adjustment, such as self-acceptance, are based on identification with the individual's ethnic heritage, as well as adjustment to adoption status (Basow et al., 2008).

Ensuring psychological and social well-being among adoptees is important because self-esteem and ethnic identity may act as a protective factor against negative psychological effects of racism and discrimination, and less risk for problem behaviors for adolescents (Mohanty & Newhill, 2006). A study by Cederblad et al. (1999) found that negative racial experiences, such as discrimination and identity ambivalence correlated positively with

behavioral and emotional problems and lower self-esteem (Cederblad, 1999). They argued that healthy psychological and social development is influenced by having positive racial experiences.

Further evidence for the relationship between psychological adjustment and racial identity can be found in a study by Thomas and Tessler (2007). This study looked at the threshold for Chinese-born children to obtain Chinese cultural competency. The authors hypothesized that parental support for cultural socialization, as well as living in an Asian populated community, promoted Chinese cultural competence (Thomas & Tessler, 2007). A longitudinal survey study was conducted and found that having a bicultural identity helped Chinese adopted children feel safe and secure with their own cultural background which in turn supported psychosocial development (Thomas & Tessler, 2007).

Other findings

As mentioned, several researchers have found no relationship between self-esteem of trans-racial adoptees and racial identity (Kirton, 2000). Feigelman and Silverman (1983) conducted studies that suggest an insignificant link between adoptees' racial identity and adjustment. The authors found in their 1981 study that, although parents' encouragement of their adopted child's connection with the birth culture did yield more positive racial identity, there was no significant relationship between having a positive racial identity and optimal social and psychological outcomes (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983). The study highlights the importance of adoptive parent's attitudes towards racial and non-color-blind parenting on fostering adoptees' racial identity development; however, it does not support the notion that having a racial identity positively impacts how the adoptee functions in various domains of life.

In a study conducted by Cederblad et al. (1999), factors that impacted psychological well-being and identity were examined among Swedish trans-racial international adoptees. It was found through parent and child interviews that, compared with non-adopted populations, trans-racial adoptees had as good mental health and similar amounts of behavioral problems. The authors found that the pre-adoption situations, such as an older age at adoption, negatively impacted attachment and increased the occurrence for later behavioral problems and lower self-esteem (Cederblad et al., 1999). Identity confusion was associated with behavior problems; however, the group as a whole was well-adjusted (Cederblad et al., 1999). Although trans-racial adoptees are faced with added challenges that threaten their psychological well-being and racial identity development, their overall mental health seems to be comparable to non-adopted individuals.

In a review of the literature, Grotevant and McRoy (1990) found that less desired post placement psychological outcomes were more related to negative pre-adoptive experiences than to racism and discrimination, or the absence of having a racial identity. The authors found that most non-White trans-racial adoptees are comfortable and confident about their appearance and background, and “do not deny their racial identification. Neither, for the most part, do their adoptive parents” (Grotevant & McRoy, 1990).

Studies for non-adopted populations add to the literature about the relationships between the cultural and racial messages parents send to their children and the effect on the children’s self-esteem and racial-ethnic identity. Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, and West-Bey (2009) conducted research comparing African-American and White early adolescents response to ethnic-racial socialization, preparation for bias, and the extent to which ethnic identity protect against less positive outcomes and antisocial behaviors. They

found that cultural socialization did yield positive outcomes for self-esteem, behavioral and academic outcomes, but that preparing minority youth for discrimination and racism only decreased self-esteem and increased antisocial behavior (Hughes et al., 2009). The authors suggest this may be because discussions between parents and children about racism and discrimination may actually increase hyper-vigilance, vulnerability and awareness of discrimination and unfair inequalities aimed against one's racial and ethnic group. The study highlights the limitations and the inability to determine direction or causality, and that the findings cannot be generalized to other age groups (Hughes et al., 2009). For ethnic minority individuals in general, including trans-racial adoptees, being exposed to and receiving positive messages about one's own ethnic group has a positive effect on forming a racial-ethnic identity.

This study builds on previous research and surveys adoptees' perceptions of their parents' cultural competency. Parental cultural competency has previously been investigated only from the perspective of parents' self-reports. This study will provide an opportunity to validate the constructs that have been supported in the literature on adoptive parents, by examining if adult adoptees recognize the same constructs. Additionally, if the findings are similar to those in the parent literature, then this study will support existing knowledge regarding factors contributing to adult adoptees racial identity development and adjustment. The researcher hypothesizes those adult adoptees' perceptions of their White adoptive parents' cultural competency skills will be positively correlated with the adoptees racial-ethnic identity.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods used to examine the relationship between parental cultural competency and the development of ethnic/racial identity among a small group of South Korean adoptees raised by White American parents in the United States. The research seeks to identify and measure specific characteristics in the familial environments of these Asian inter-racial adoptees which may affect the outcome of the adoptees racial and ethnic identity in adulthood.

The study answers the following questions:

1) What are the general cultural competency attitudes and behaviors of the adoptive parents as perceived by their adult North Korean adoptees? 2) What are the adult racial identity characteristics of the sample of South Korean adoptees? 3) Is there a relationship between the parental competency characteristics and adult adjustment in terms of the racial identity of the South Korean adoptees?

The rationale underlying the study is that the familial environments of trans-racially adopted children vary in their capacity to support the development of ethnic and racial identity and that these capacities interact with personal traits to affect the outcome of racial identity development in South Korean children who have been adopted into White families and raised in the United States.

Design of the Study

A descriptive study was selected to facilitate the goal of examining the relationship between familial cultural competency characteristic and racial identity development in a small group of South Korean adoptees. Study participants volunteered to participate in an

anonymous internet-based survey. While the use of a descriptive, non-randomized design limits the generalizability of findings, the design assures flexibility in assessing a large pool of potentially important familial support variables to identify development outcomes

Sample Selection

Twenty-two subjects participated in an online survey between February and April 2010. The selection procedure was purposive and non-probability. Recruitment consisted largely of locating and contacting online post-adoption support groups through a number of search engines, such as Google, Facebook and Yahoo! Groups. These post-adoption groups were specific for trans-racial Asian adoptees who were participating in online social networking communities. These selection and recruitment strategies were chosen because the study required participants to meet specific characteristics. Online social and support groups provided a way to contact a large number of these unique individuals who met inclusion criteria. A Google search identified internet post-adoption support groups and formal organizations for international adult adoptees. Once these groups and organizations were identified, a contact person for each was emailed, asking for permission to post a flyer about the study in newsletters and through email list serves. Members reached this way could access the web address for the survey from the flyer or email. Therefore, anonymity was achieved because at no point was there contact between the researcher and participants, and no personally identifying data were collected in the survey.

Subject Inclusion Criteria. Twenty-two volunteering participants who met the following study criteria were included in the study: 1) adopted from South Korea, China, Thailand, or Vietnam;

2) adopted into a White family where both parents are of Eastern European descent,

3) adopted prior to the age of 2 years, 4) raised in the United States, 5) currently residing in the US, 6) speak English; 7) are between the ages of 18 and 50 at study entry, and 8) agreed to participate after reading the informed consent.

Subject Exclusion Criteria. Subjects were excluded who: 1) did not agree to participate after reading the informed consent; 2) were born in and adopted from non-Asian countries; 3) were same-race adopted; 4) were adopted after the age of 2 years; 4) were younger than 18 or older than 50 years at study enrollment; 5) grew up outside of the US.

Human Subjects Protection and Informed Consent Procedures

The project, as part of a Master of Social Work degree requirement at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, was presented to the Human Subjects Review Committee and received approval in January of 2010. The Informed Consent form can be found in Appendix A, and the HSR Committee approval letter is in Appendix B. Only volunteering subjects participated. Since the study was anonymous, subjects could not later withdraw from the study.

Anonymity for participants was guaranteed by the following procedures: 1) the web-based data collection site used Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) to encrypt surveys through Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>). SSL is used for transmitting information privately over the Internet. SSL is supported in all modern browsers. All surveys were automatically secured by Verisign. Encryption ensures the protection of sensitive data. 2) Participants could take the online survey from a location of their choosing, and 3) could access the questionnaires without having to identify themselves to the researcher. 4) Data were downloaded onto an excel spreadsheet and retained in a password-protected file on the researcher's personal computer. The password was known only to the researcher. 5) The

survey was taken down from the internet on April 13, 2010 after the encrypted data was downloaded and reviewed.

Since this research is for an MSW thesis, the researcher's advisor had access to the data, but identifying information was not attached to the data. Copies of the data were securely sent to the data analyst, who signed a confidentiality agreement.

Characteristics of the Research Subjects

This investigation involved 22 adults who were adopted from South Korea before the age of 2 years and raised in the United States by parents who were White. The modal respondent was a 28 year old woman born in South Korea and raised in the Northeast area of the United States in a family consisting of white parents and one adoptive sibling. Twenty-one (21) participants were females and one was male. Age at study enrollment ranged from 18 to 36 years. Participants' age at adoption ranged from 3 months to 11 months, with 36.4% being adopted at 6 months. Although participation was open to trans-racial adoptees born in South Korea, China, Thailand or Vietnam, all of the individuals who completed the surveys were born in South Korea.

Information was also collected about the region of the United States where the subject was raised (at 2 points in time: between 2-11, and 11-18), and where they were living at study enrollment. U.S. geographic location was broken down into four quadrants: the northeast (from PA and NJ north to NH and ME), the Midwest (from OH and MI west to ND and KS), the West (NM north to MT and all points west) and finally, the South (TX and OK north to KY, WV, MD, DE and all points southeast). Half of the participants (N=11)

currently reside in and grew up in the Northeast region of the country and spent most of their younger years in the Northeast region (40.9% for both age groupings).

Definition of Terms Used in the Study

Several terms should be defined to ensure a clear and thorough understanding. Culture is broadly defined as “membership in a specific group characterized by shared values, beliefs, thinking, feeling and behavior passed from one generation to the next” (Hollingsworth, 2008, p. 387). Cultural competency is a term that has been operationally defined by Vonk (2001). The term parental cultural competency is a latent construct which is measured by subjective appraisals of the behaviors and attitudes of parents of the participant adoptees. It is a “unique set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enables parents to meet their children’s needs related to racial and cultural socialization” (Vonk & Massatti, 2008, p. 204). Vonk conceptualized this construct as being broken into three sub-domains: racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills. Some behaviors and attitudes may have a positive impact on racial identity adjustment in adulthood.

Identity involves “accepting and being comfortable with oneself, being able to identify and state one’s individual feelings, and distinguishing one’s own values from those of others” (Hollingsworth, 2008, p. 378), and includes a component of differentiating the self from others, but needing a sense of belonging (Hollingsworth, 2008). Racial identity involves how individuals use racial/ethnic self-descriptors and how proud/comfortable they are with their race/ethnicity (Lee, 2003). Being part of a person’s social identity, ethnic identity, as the term is sometimes used, “derives from his or her knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that group” (Phinney, 1992).

Also important for this study is an understanding of cultural socialization, a term used to denote the “process by which people learn the attitudes, values, and behavior of their culture” (Thomas & Tessler, 2007, p. 1192). This includes the family, school, and community that provide opportunities for adopted children to be exposed to or immersed in their culture of birth. Lastly, trans-racial adoption, also called inter-racial adoption, is when children from non-western countries are adopted by American or Eastern European families, and when the child’s race is not the same as the adoptive family. Hughes & Chen (1999) define racial socialization as an important part of parenting that “instills a sense of racial pride, cultural history, and coping strategies to negotiate discrimination (quoted in Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008).

Criteria for Selection of Measures

This study hypothesizes that those adult adoptees who report perceiving their adoptive parents as having stronger cultural competency will also more strongly and positively identify with their race and ethnicity. By contrast, individuals who report being raised by adoptive parents with less cultural competency will be more likely to report race as not being a strong part of their overall identity, and perhaps identifying more strongly with the dominant culture.

The model used to guide this study (Vonk, 2001) predicts that racial identity among adoptees raised in trans-racial families is a function of three variables (domains):

1. Racial Awareness: parent’s awareness of how race, ethnicity and culture operate in their society and life, including the importance of race and ethnicity in their adopted child’s identification with their race

2. Multicultural Planning: involves cultural socialization, parents providing ways for their adopted child to learn about and explore their birth culture
 - a. includes two sub-domains: multicultural planning with contact (MPWC)- children participate in their birth culture that includes people from both birth and adoptive cultures,
 - b. multicultural planning with integration (MPWI)- living in an environment consisting of people from both birth and adoptive cultures
3. Survival Skills: parent's ability to and understanding the importance of preparing their child of color to cope and deal with racism and discrimination (Vonk, 2001).

The study measured adult adoptees' racial-ethnic identity and their perceptions of their adoptive parent's cultural competency. The instruments used to measure these constructs were the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measurement (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992) and a modified version of the Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale (Vonk & Angaran, 2001). In addition to reliability and validity considerations, instruments had to be: 1) suitable for self-administration, 2) amenable to a web-based interface, 3) capable of assessing the subjects' perceptions about their parental attitudes and behaviors, 4) validated on trans-racial samples.

The Trans-racial Adoptive Parenting Scale (TAPS) was selected because it is a valid and reliable measure for examining the cultural competence of adoptive parents. TAPS was modified by the researcher so as to be completed by the adult adoptee instead of the trans-racial adoptive parents. With the author's permission, the scale was adapted to be presented to adult adoptees as a way to examine their self reported perceptions of their parent's cultural competency. While the original TAPS was modified to ask questions from the adoptees' perspectives, the subscale categories remain the same. Response choices were

“Strongly agree,” “Moderately agree,” “Slightly agree,” “Slightly disagree,” “Moderately disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.”

Examples of modified questions:

Original: it is very important to include traditions from my child’s birth culture, such as ethnic holidays, in my family celebrations.

Modified: My parents believed that it was very important to include traditions from my birth culture, like ethnic holidays, in our family celebrations.

Original: It is very important for me to examine my feelings about interracial dating and marriage.

Modified: my parents discussed with me their feelings about interracial marriage and dating.

Original: I believe it is very important to prepare my child to recognize racism

Modified: my parents believed that it was important to prepare me to recognize racism.

The instrument selected to measure racial identity was the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), first published by Phinney in 1992. This instrument has been found to be a reliable measure to examine ethnic identity across multiple ethnicities and groups, and allows for comparisons between ethnic identity and a variety of other factors, including perceived parental cultural competency. As with the TAPS, permission from the author was obtained to use the instrument.

Reliability and Validity of Instruments Used in the Study

Measure of parental cultural competency. The Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (the TAPS) was designed by Vonk & Angaran (2001), initially called The Adoption Questionnaire. A copy of the TAPS may be found in Appendix C. The TAPS develops

information about parental attitudes and actions in three domains: multicultural planning, survival skills and racial awareness.

Vonk, along with Massatti and Gregoire (2004) tested the instrument and found it to have strong over reliability (Crombach's alpha= 0.91), concurrent and discriminate validity. Subscales RA, MP and SS yielded reliability coefficients of more than .60 (Massatti et al., 2004). Vonk was contacted early on and gave permission for the instrument to be modified and presented in this research.

Measure of racial identity. Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measurement (MEIM) was developed by Phinney (1992). A copy of MEIM can be found in Appendix E. The MEIM consists of five domains that are common across groups; however four are focused on here:

1. Self-identification and ethnicity: self-chosen, open-ended labels
2. Ethnic behaviors and practices: being socially involved in activities with members of one's group and participating in cultural traditions.
3. Affirmation and belonging: assess racial pride, positive feelings about one's background, and feelings of attachment to the group, and
4. Ethnic identity achievement: the continuing process of forming an ethnic identity that leads to feeling secure within one's group membership.

The final domain, Other-group orientation, was not analyzed because it describes attitudes towards other groups, and is therefore not a factor of a person's social or ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992).

Examples of an MEIM questions include:

1. "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs"

2. “I am not very clear about the role of ethnicity in my life,”
3. “I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments”.

Response choices range on a four point scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” Evaluation of the MEIM has shown it to be a reliable and valid measure, with overall reliability being .90 for a sample of college students. The reliability coefficients for the Affirmation & Belonging and Ethnic Identity Achievement subscales were .86 and .80 for the same sample of college students (Phinney, 1992). Further investigation into the instrument’s reliability and validity has found it to measure “the core aspects of group identity that determine the strength and security of ethnic identity or the degree to which ethnic identity has been achieved” (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 278).

Questionnaire administration. The specific procedures used to collect information about familial characteristics and racial identity was as follows:

1. The entire research study and all survey materials were approved by the Institutional Review Board committee. Participants were guaranteed to remain anonymous through the encrypted online survey engine, Survey Monkey.
2. Data were collected via Survey Monkey.
3. Potential participants were recruited by electronic posters [Appendix E] and emails [Appendix F] through online post-adoption support groups with the permission of the group or formal agency. The poster or email contained the web address for the survey [www.surveymonkey.com/s/adoptionsurvey], so the survey could be accessed and completed using personal, private computers.

4. After typing in the web address and opening the research study, individuals completed an initial screening guide [Appendix G] to see if they met the criteria to participate.
5. Once they successfully finished the screening guide, participants were asked to read and electronically sign the informed consent letter
6. Electronically signing the informed consent automatically linked participants to the two surveys to complete: the TAPS and the MEIM

Data Analysis Plan. The research described here is a descriptive study that attempts to correlate familial/parental cultural competency characteristics, as described by adult adoptees, with specific areas of racial identity development among South Korean adoptees raised by White families in America.

Two independent domains are identified for study -- parental cultural competency traits and racial identity of adult adoptees. Two levels of analysis were conducted: 1) univariate analysis and descriptions of each of the two domains; 2) bivariate correlations to examine the strength of the relationship between familial “competency” characteristics and adult adoptee racial identity.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study evaluates the following hypothesis: Racial identity characteristics of adult South Korean adoptees, as measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992) will be associated with specific parental cultural competency attitudes and actions as measured by the Transracial Adoption Parenting Scale (TAPS) (Vonk & Angaran (2001). That is, indicators of the presence of a positive racial identity among adult transracially adopted participants will be positively correlated with perceived parental attitudes

and actions supporting recognition of cultural heritage of adoptees as reflected in higher parental/familial TAPs scores.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter describes the familial environments of 22 South Korean adoptees raised in the United States by White parents and examines the relationship between familial/parental support for cultural socialization during childhood and adult racial/ethnic identity of the adoptees. The aim of the research was to identify and measure specific characteristics in the familial environments of trans-racially adopted children from South Korea which may affect the development of the adoptees' sense of their own racial identity.

The findings are presented in two major sections. Section one describes the familial characteristics of the twenty-two adoptees who participated in the study and presents descriptive information (frequencies, for example) about adoptee's perceptions of their parents' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as they related to cultural awareness and the adoptee's racial identity. Section two presents the test of the main hypothesis: a strong racial identity of the adult adoptees will be positively correlated with perceptions of parental attitudes and actions supporting recognition of adoptee's cultural heritage.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 describes the participants. Participants were asked about their family composition, where in the United States they were raised before and after age 12. For geographic location, the participant responses were assigned to categories. These four categories dividing the country were obtained through the U.S. Census Bureau: Northeast, Midwest, West and South.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample, Grouped (N=22)

Characteristic	n	%
Age at study enrollment		
18-24	3	13.5
25-29	13	59.0
30-36	6	22.7
Gender		
Female	21	95.5
Male	1	4.5
Age at adoption		
0 - 5 months	10	45.5
6 – 11 months	12	54.4
Family composition: number of children		
Only child	3	13.6
One of 2 children	8	36.4
One of 3 children	5	22.7
One of 4 children	5	22.7
One of 5-6 children	1	4.5
Family Composition: Adoption Mix		
Only child	3	13.6
Adopted siblings, no biological siblings	11	50.0
Biological siblings, no adopted siblings	3	13.6
Biological and adopted siblings	5	22.7
Region of the country where raised from adoption to age 11		
Northeast	9	40.9
Midwest	6	27.3
West	4	18.2
South	3	13.6
Region of the country where raised from 12-18		
Northeast	9	40.9
Midwest	5	22.7
West	6	27.3
South	2	9.1

Despite attempts to recruit trans-racial Asian adoptees from four countries (South Korea, China, Thailand and Vietnam), the entire sample were born in and adopted from South Korea. Reasons for this may be that South Korea has the longest history of

international adoption programs with the US, with the first adoptions occurring in response to poverty, social upheaval and war (Evan B Donaldson Institute, 2002). It has been only since the mid-1990's that China and Russia have surpassed South Korea as the largest sending country (Evan B Donaldson Institute, 2002). Since this research focused on adult adoptees who were born between the fifties and eighties, the largest sending country at that time was South Korea. The researcher also found fewer support and social groups directed towards trans-racial Chinese adult adoptees, despite the large number of Chinese adoptees in the US (Evan B Donaldson Institute, 2002).

Respondents came from 33 states, with one individual having lived in Saudi Arabia at some point between the ages of 2 and 11. 40.9 percent of respondents (N= 9) grew up in the Northeast region of the United States, and 50% (N=11) currently reside there.

In addition to an overall score for ethnic identity, the MEIM asks participants for a self-identification description label that describes their ethnic group. This is a fill-in-the-blank question and is distinct from someone's ethnicity, which is the "objective group membership as determined by parents' ethnic heritage" (Phinney, 1992, p. 158). The term that the adult adoptee uses to self-identify is an important aspect of racial identity. In this sample, 31.8% of respondents (N= 7) described themselves as Asian, 22.7% used the label Asian-American (N= 5), and 18.2% preferred the term Korean-American (N= 4). The other self-identified labels used were American-Korean, Korean-American adoptee, Korean, Korean adoptee, Black Korean, and Transracial Korean Caucasian American, all used by only one participant. Information about family composition was obtained to examine the interplay between siblings/familial factors and racial identity or parental cultural competency. The family composition of participants ranged between being

an only child to being one of six children. Additionally, some participants had only adoptive siblings, only biological siblings, or both biological and adoptive siblings.

Of the twenty-two participants, only one was male. Overall, 95% of adoptees are female (N=21). Due to the homogeneity of the sample, findings cannot be generalized to other populations. The findings do suggest relationships and correlations between the familial and identity domains on an exploratory basis.

Relational Findings

Overall scores and sub-scores were calculated for both the MEIM and the TAPS. Scores were calculated by obtaining the mean for participant’s responses, as directed by the original measure’s scoring instructions (see Appendix C for TAPS and D for MEIM). Pearson chi-square tests were done to determine any significant correlations between groups. The sub-scores for TAPS are presented in Table 2 and for the MEIM in Table 3.

Table 2:

Means, Standard Deviations and Alpha for Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale

TAPS Subscales	Items	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha
Multicultural Planning	8	22	2.95	1.44	.942
Multicultural planning With contact	7	22	2.34	1.44	.959
Multicultural planning With integration	2	22	2.11	1.48	.710
Racial Awareness	4	22	3.46	1.24	.700
Survival Skills	3	22	2.79	1.49	.888
Negative	12	22	3.74	1.25	.915

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (N=22)

Subscale	# Items	n	Mean	SD
Affirmation & Belonging	5	22	2.99	.769
Ethnic Identity Achievement	7	22	3.02	.567
Ethnic Behaviors	2	22	2.84	.918

Correlations

A Pearson’s correlation between the overall MEIM scores (including only MP, MPWI, MPWC, RA & SS) and TAPS overall scores (excluding OGO, which is not a factor in racial identity), found a significant positive relationship with $r=.452$, $p=.035$, two tailed. This finding tells us that the racial-ethnic identity development process for adult adoptees is affected by their perceptions of their White parent’s cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

Pearson’s correlations were also tested for relationships between TAPS and MEIM sub-domains, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Pearson Chi-Square and 2-tailed Significance of MEIM and TAPS Sub-scales (N=22)

	<u>MEIM Dimensions</u>		
	Affirmation and Belonging	Ethnic Identity Achievement	Ethnic Behaviors
<u>TAPS Dimensions</u>	<u>Chi-Sq (Sig)</u>	<u>Chi-Sq (Sig)</u>	<u>Chi-Sq (Sig)</u>
Multicultural Planning	.548 (.008)	.365 (.095)	.291 (.190)
Multicultural Planning with Contact	.608 (.003)	.427 (.048)	.401 (.064)
Multicultural Planning with Integration	.420 (.052)	.267 (.230)	.259 (.244)
Survival Skills	.452 (.035)	.138 (.541)	.102 (.652)
Racial Awareness	.258 (.245)	.072 (.752)	.059 (.796)

Significant positive relationships were found between a few of the TAPS domains and MEIM's domains. Significant positive correlations were found between TAP multicultural planning (MP) and MEIM affirmation and belonging (A&B), $r = .548$, $p = .008$, two tailed. TAP multicultural planning with contact (MPWC) was found to have a significant positive relationship with MEIM A&B ($r = .608$, $p = .003$, two tailed) and MEIM ethnic identity achievement (EIA) ($r = .427$, $p = .048$, two tailed). Another significant positive relationship was found between TAPS survival skills (SS) and MEIM A&B, $r = .452$, $p = .035$, two tailed.

No significant relationships were found between TAP MP and the other MEIM sub-scales, or between TAP MPWC and MEIM sub-scales ethnic behavior (EB) or other-group

orientation (OGO). TAPS subscales multicultural planning with integration (MPWI) and racial awareness (RA) were not found to be significantly related to any of the MEIM subscales. Lastly, there was no significant relationship found between TAPS survival skills (SS) and the other three MEIM sub-scales.

While many family characteristics were factored in to analysis, the only significant relationship was found between the total number of children in the adoptive family and the TAP score. A significant negative relationship was found: $r = .500$, $p = .008$, two tailed. This finding suggests that the size of the adoptive family affects adoptee's perceptions of their White parent's cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the hypothesis that development of a strong racial-ethnic identity among trans-racial adoptees is strongly influenced by the adoptive parent's efforts to culturally socialize their children. Beliefs and behaviors that support involvement in the adoptee's birth culture and race were associated with the positive ratings of cultural identity by participants. These findings are in line with reports in the trans-racial adoption literature that report an association between pro-cultural socialization by parents adult adjustment on indicators of racial and ethnic identity (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; Huh & Reid, 2000; Massatti et al., 2004; McRoy et al., 1984; Vonk, 2001). The significant correlation obtained between the two measures, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and the Trans-racial Adoptive Parenting Scale, highlight the impact of adoptive parents on their child's racial and ethnic identity development.

Additionally, this study supports the reliability of both the MEIM and the TAPS as instruments for measuring ethnic identity among adopted minority groups and perceived parental cultural competency. Even though both scales were modified and rated by adult adoptees instead of by parents themselves, internal reliability similar to the original instruments was obtained, ($\alpha = .83$ for the MEIM and $.942$ for the TAPS).

. The Domains

Some domains of the TAPS were more strongly related to the MEIM than others.. Among the TAPS domains, multicultural planning (MP), multicultural planning with contact (MPWC), and survival skills (SS) were positively correlated with racial identity, specifically with the MEIM domain affirmation and belonging. Additionally, affirmation

and belonging was the only MEIM domain that found any significant relationship with the TAPS. Discussion about these domains will be presented.

Even though the MEIM was designed to measure various aspects of racial and ethnic identity, the only variable found to be related to perception of parental cultural competency was affirmation and belonging. This domain describes feeling a sense of ethnic pride towards one's own ethnic group, feeling a sense of belonging and attachment to this group, and an overall sense of happiness about this membership (Phinney, 1992). On the other hand, the domain ethnic behaviors and practices were not found to be related to perception of parental cultural competency. The findings from this study suggest that adult adoptees are not more likely to actively engage and participate in cultural traditions or social activities with ethnic group members no matter their perceptions of their parent's cultural competency.

Vonk (2001) conceptualized the multicultural planning construct as a continuum that describes the extent to which trans-racial adoptive parents "build a bridge between their own and their child's race and culture" (p. 253). As is suggested from the results of this study, adult adoptees who perceived their adoptive parents as actively pursuing an engagement with the child's birth culture were more likely to feel a sense of belonging to their race and ethnicity and a sense of ethnic pride.

Multicultural Planning (MP) sub-domains include multicultural planning with contact (MPWC) or with integration (MPWI), which describes different degrees to which the parents are involved in cultural activities and socialization practices. MPWI describes the most immersed form of contact between the adoptive family and the adopted child's race and ethnicity, such as living in diverse neighborhoods and attending diverse schools. This

study did not find a correlation between this domain and any of the ethnic identity domains, which may argue that many of the respondents did not experience much integration with their diverse populations or with a community that reflected their race. The results showed that 59.1% of respondents strongly disagreed (mean scores between 1.00 and 1.50) with statements measuring this domain.

For the most part, perceived parental cultural competency does not seem to affect the degree to which adult adoptees measure on achieving a high score of ethnic identity.

Phinney (1992) describes the domain ethnic identity achievement (EIA) as a developmental process illustrated by exploration and commitment to learning more about one's ethnic background and having "a clear understanding of the role of ethnicity for oneself" (p. 161).

The only exception is MPWC, which has a positive relationship with EIA. This result suggests that respondents who reported their parents as actively seeking individuals and friends in the community who reflect the child's race, such as doctors and mentors, positively scored on having achieved a higher level of ethnic identity achievement. On the other hand, respondents who reported their parents as not seeking out diverse individuals rated lower on ethnic identity achievement, described as ethnic identity diffusion (Phinney, 1992).

Another TAPS domain that did not correlate with any of the MEIM measures is racial awareness (RA). This domain describes a sensitivity to racism and an awareness of one's own and other's race, such as examining own feelings and attitudes about the adopted child's race and an awareness that the child may be treated unkindly or unfairly due to racism (Vonk, 2001). The results from this study found that adult adoptee's perceptions of their adoptive parent's racial awareness were not related to outcomes for racial and ethnic

identity. The lack of correlation may be attributable to the small sample size and should be evaluated with larger samples. .

Survival skills (SS) was found to be positively correlated with affirmation and belonging. This finding offers the notion that adult adoptees who perceived their adoptive parents as having actively prepared them to recognize racism and gave them tools for dealing with discrimination reported feeling more racial pride, attachment, and belonging to their ethnic group.

The fact that TAPS domains MP, MPWC and SS positively and strongly influenced the adoptees' sense of racial and ethnic pride and sense of belonging with their ethnic group argues the case that adoptive parent's active engagement in, and participation with, the adopted child's birth race and culture has a positive impact on the child developing a racial-ethnic identity, especially pride of their racial and ethnic heritage and background. Whereas, adoptive parents who practiced a more color-blind approach to parenting by ignoring the differences between their child and themselves, and ignoring the potential for experiences with racism and bias, raised a child who had less racial pride and felt less a part of belonging to their racial group.

Family Composition & Other Findings

This study also aimed to examine different familial characteristics that may have affected the development of a racial-ethnic identity for a trans-racial adoptee. Results from the statistical test, Pearson's r , showed a significant negative correlation between the total number of children in the family and the respondent's TAPS score.

Adult adoptee who rated strong pro-cultural parenting practices were raised in families with fewer children. More research examining the effect of family composition on

trans-racial adoptive parenting measures need to be conducted, but these exploratory findings suggest that the number of children in the family affects the degree to which the adoptive parent's culturally socialize their adopted child.

Data regarding sibling factors, such as the presence of adoptive or biological siblings, did not yield significant results. The rationale behind obtaining this data was the basis in literature that argues that same-race role models, or the presence of same-race individuals in general, aides the adoptee in learning strategies for dealing with racism and in the development of feeling racial pride, a sense of acceptance and belonging (McRoy et al., 1984). However, possibly due to the wording of the questions as a confounding factor, or the small sample size, these results were not significantly correlated with any of the ethnic identity variables. Additionally, Brodzinsky (1993) reported the lack of a clear pattern or connection between family structure and psychological outcomes for trans-racial adoptees. In a review of the literature, Brodzinsky highlights the inconsistent findings of the impact that the presence the adoptive parent's biological children has on the adoptee's adjustment.

Similarly, the adoptee's place in birth order yielded mixed results, suggesting no clear link between ordinal position of siblings and psychological outcomes (Brodzinsky, 1993). Future research could look more closely at sibling dynamics and specific family-related variables in relation to the adoptee's development of a racial-ethnic identity and their perception of the adoptive parent's cultural competence.

Other variables that were examined in this study that did not yield significant results were the geographic region of the US where the adoptee grew up, where they currently live, and their current age. Several studies have examined the relationship between the diversity of the community in which the adoptee grows up in and their racial identity development

(Grotevant et al., 2000; McRoy et al., 1984; Meier, 1999; Vonk & Massatti, 2008). The benefit of experiencing a multi-cultural community at young ages and throughout childhood demonstrates to the child that the family accepts others who look like the child (McRoy et al., 1984). Since, by definition, the trans-racial adoptee outwardly looks very different, the family will be seen within the community as “different.” “The fit of the adoptive family with its community context will have an impact on the identity development of its children”, (Grotevant et al., 2000). Failure of this study to replicate these findings may suggest the need for a bigger sample size or other methodological factors.

Age differences among respondents did not yield any significant results. The youngest a participant could be was eighteen, indicating the adoptee had to have been born before 1992. Throughout the late eighties and nineties grew a wave of adoption workers and families that began to recognize the impact that a color-blind emphasis had on trans-racial adoptee’s racial identity development and adjustment. Current age was included in analysis because of the apparent developmental process associated with increased interest in one’s cultural heritage and establishment of a racial identity (Meier, 1999). Part of the adolescent stage of development includes assimilation into the dominant and majority groups, resulting in trans-racial adoptees often decreasing differences between them and their White peers at school by denying their Asian heritage (Meier, 1999). It is often once the adoptee leaves home to attend college that they are initiated into a more diverse world, oftentimes sparking new interest and curiosity in their birth heritage. Meier (1999) describes this process of self-discovery as “exciting, but for many adoptees it was also fraught with ambivalence, anger, and fear, as was their relationship to Korea” (p. 41). A broader range of ages may have contributed to existing knowledge debating the role that

current age has on either memories of adoptive parent's cultural socialization efforts or on the extent to which the adoptee has achieved some level of ethnic identity.

Applications to Social Work Practice

In recognition of the popularity of international, trans-racial adoption, and the value of helping adopted children excel and develop into healthy, happy adults, the study is relevant to the field of social work. The study has implications for international adoption agencies, as well as domestic adoption agencies that practice the placement of minority children into White homes. Also, this study contributes to the adoption research that emphasizes the importance of preparing White people for being the adoptive parents of a child-of-color.

Taking the perspectives of the adoptees themselves, this study expanded trans-racial adoptive parent literature by giving voice to the adoptees in examination of racial identity as influenced by adoptive parent's cultural efforts. The field of social work depends on research to help guide practice and inform different forms of practice. By going beyond adoptive parent's self-reports, and focusing attention on this unique population of trans-racial, international adoptees who have entered adulthood, this exploratory research can contribute to adoption practice and raise potential for further discovery.

As this study highlights, social workers and other adoption workers should help to prepare White individuals who are hoping to adopt trans-racially by encouraging participation in cultural activities in ways that will facilitate the adopted child to fully develop a secure and positive ethnic identity. Supporting a move away from color-blind parenting, social workers can keep adoptive parents informed about the benefits of culturally competent parenting for their child.

Multi-cultural activities include placing the child in diverse schools where teachers are racially aware and experienced with children-of-color, provide opportunities for the child to establish relationships with others who reflect their race (such as a mentor), and purchasing books, dolls and toys that reflect the child's race. Adoptive parents should also be encouraged to aide their children in developing skills to deal with racism and discrimination. Examples include educating the children about these realities instead of ignoring them, helping the child develop racial pride, and seeking peer support and guidance to deal with various forms of racism (Vonk, 2001).

Important for social workers and adoptive parents to also recognize is the delicate balance between encouraging the adoptive family or child to participate in cultural activities and realizing when the child may be resistant. Understanding the child's interests and what they can tolerate is important in being sensitive to when he/she may be feeling over stimulated (Huh & Reid, 2000).

Limitations & Future Directions

This exploratory study found support for the hypothesis that adoptive parent's influence their trans-racial adoptee's racial identity development. And, the study's innovative examination of post-hoc descriptions of parenting environments by adult adoptees introduces a new approach to research in this important area. Many factors limit the generalizability of results, but this pilot effort does lend support to the need for future research in this area.

Despite strong recruitment efforts in hopes of obtaining at least fifty respondents, the final sample size was twenty-two adoptees. Since the sample was small, multiple regression analysis was not conducted. Multiple regression analysis would have determined the extent

to which familial cultural competency characteristics explained racial identity when other factors (such as family size, sibling mix, and regional factors) were controlled for in the design. Future research with larger sample sizes could employ multiple regression techniques to examine the extent to which variance (in racial identity scores) are accounted for by parental competency ratings.

Since every participant for this study was born in South Korea, the results cannot be generalized to other top sending countries, such as China. According to the U.S. State Department, China surpassed Korea as the most common sending country in 2000. Additionally, this study did not include other frequent sending countries, such as Russia (the second most common sending country) and Guatemala (number three), (U.S. State Department, 2001). Domestic adoption is another popular avenue to form a family, and there's no argument against the large number of children in the United States who are in need of homes. Trans-racial domestic adoption is a population that should continue to be studied as a way to understand the racial identity development of minority children placed in White homes.

Lastly, this study did not concentrate on gender factors, although only one male responded. Therefore these results cannot be generalized across gender. Research examining the role of gender in racial-ethnic identity development and perceived cultural competency needs to be conducted to further understand influencing individual factors.

This study provided initial analysis of how familial characteristics, such as family size, may affect outcomes on the Trans-racial Adoptive Parenting Scale as perceived retrospectively by adult adoptees. More studies should continue to evaluate the impact of having same-race or different-race siblings (biological or adopted), larger or small family

size, or place in birth order, to understand how a variety of family characteristics play a role in the development of the trans-racial adoptee's ethnic identity.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Abigail Forshay. I am a Master's degree candidate at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. This research project is part of my degree requirements and the results of the study will be published as a master's thesis. The study explores the factors affecting the development of racial identity among Asians raised in White American families.

Who can participate?

To participate in this research you must be between the ages of 18 and 50, speak English, and be living in the United States. You must have been born in South Korea, China, Thailand or Vietnam, and adopted before the age of 2 years. Lastly, you must have been raised in the United States by a parent, or parents, both of whom are White.

What is involved in participating?

Participation is completely voluntary. After reading this letter and agreeing to participate, you will be directed to a two part online survey and asked to answer a few questions about yourself, such as your age, what part of the country you grew up in, and your adoptive family make up. Once you have completed both parts, and click the "Complete and Exit" button, you will be directed to an exit page. The exit page will prompt you with an opportunity to respond to any items that were not answered during the session, and also contain the log out button.

The survey is designed to be completed in one session. It is not possible to stop and return later to complete the survey, so participants should plan on about ½ hour from start to finish.

What happens to the data that is collected?

This research project meets all of the confidentiality and anonymity standards as described in Federal research guidelines and regulations. The data will be collected online using an encrypted survey engine, *Survey Monkey*. No personally identifying information is collected and procedures are in place to insure that responses are treated confidentially. Since the nature of the research study is for an MSW thesis, the researcher's advisor will have access to the data, as will data handlers. Since Survey Monkey is an encrypted website where participants' identities are not revealed, all data is completely anonymous. For publications or presentations, data will be presented as a whole, and will be stored electronically and securely on the password protected and encrypted Survey Monkey website. Once the study concludes, data will be downloaded from the website and the website will be taken off line.

The data will remain in the investigator's possession in a password protected electronic file for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

What risks are there to my participation?

As with any research study, there are potential risks that participants should consider. Risks from participation in this study may include emotional discomfort or feeling stressed. Participants will be asked questions about their personal experiences being adopted, growing up a different race than their family, and on their parent's parenting. Thus, memories may be uncomfortable or emotionally stressful. Participants will be provided a list of referral resources that specialize in offering support services to adoptees, and with a list of online support groups and communities.

While there is no direct benefit from participating in this study, participants may find that the questions asked are interesting to reflect on. And participants will know that they are contributing to the development of knowledge on this important topic.

Participation in this study is voluntary.

As a participant, you may stop at any time during the data collection process and you may refuse to answer any question. If you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study, please contact **Abigail Forshay by email at aforshay@smith.edu**, or contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413)-585-7974, Lilly Hall Northampton, MA 01063.

BY CHECKING "I AGREE" BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Do you agree to the terms stated above?

Check One Box:

I agree ____

I do not want to participate ____

Researcher: Abigail Forshay

aforshay@smith.edu

Please print a copy of this form for your own records

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B

Human Subject Review Committee Approval Letter

January 29, 2010
Abigail Forshay

Dear Abigail,

Your second set of revisions has been reviewed and they are fine. We are happy to give final approval to this very interesting study. I hope you get lots of recruits!

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck on your project.

Sincerely,
Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Elizabeth Irvin, Research Advisor

Appendix C

Modified Transracial Adoptive Parenting Scale (Forshay, 2010; Vonk & Angaran, 2001)

Scoring Instructions for the Trans-racial Adoptive Parenting Scale (Vonk & Angaran, 2001)

Instructions: This is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure your perceptions about your parent’s parenting practices that may be unique to raising a child who is from a different birth-race or culture than you. Each of the statements reflects attitudes or parenting practice that you believe your parents may or may not have agreed with. There is no right or wrong answers, so please answer as honestly as possible.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	My parents believed it was important to help me establish relationships with children from my birth culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	It was a high priority for my parents to encourage me to seek support and advice from adults of my race about coping with prejudice	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	My parents believed that paying no attention to racial differences between them and me made them a better parent	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	It was a high priority for my parents to seek out service providers in my community, such as doctors or dentists, who were of my race or ethnicity	1	2	3	4	5	6

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
5.	My parents believed that they needed to teach me a variety of coping strategies from which to choose when faced with prejudice or bias	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	It was a high priority for my parents to provide me with opportunities to learn the history of my race	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	My parents thought it was important to provide me with opportunities to learn the language or dialect of my birth culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	My parents believed that race shouldn't be discussed unless I brought it up first.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	My parents believed that helping me feel a sense of belonging within a community of people from my birth culture made them a better parent	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	My parents believed it was important to help me establish relationships with adults from my birth culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	My parents believed that young children don't notice racial differences unless adults point them out	1	2	3	4	5	6

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
12.	My parents believed that it was important to educate me about the realities of prejudice, bias, and discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.	My parents knew that prejudice and discrimination exist, but they believed that there are more important things to teach me about	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	My parents believed that it is very important to include traditions from my birth culture, such as ethnic holidays, in our family celebrations	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	My parents believed their awareness about their own feelings and attitudes about race was crucial	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	My parents explained to me their reasons for adopting cross-racially	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	It was very important to my parents to provide opportunities for me to visit my community or country of birth	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.	My parents believed that coping with prejudice or racism is much the same as coping with other problems	1	2	3	4	5	6

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
19.	It was a high priority for my parents to help me feel pride in my racial heritage	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.	My parents believed that they could prevent problems related to racial differences by providing love to me	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	My parents did not believe that racial and cultural differences created significant additional parental responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.	My parents discussed with me their feelings about interracial dating and marriage	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.	I grew up with books, toys, and dolls that reflect my race	1	2	3	4	5	6
24.	My parents relied primarily on their own prior experience when helping me cope with race related teasing and prejudice	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.	It was crucial to my parents that they place me in multicultural schools	1	2	3	4	5	6
26.	My parents believed that it mattered little what others think about my race as long as they loved me	1	2	3	4	5	6

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
27.	My parents believed that it was important to prepare me to recognize racism	1	2	3	4	5	6
28.	My parents believed that it was important to provide me with opportunities to appreciate the fine arts, such as music and dance, of my birth culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
29.	Seeking support and advice from adults or parents of my race about dealing with prejudice was a high priority to my parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
30.	My parents believed that we will make too much of racism if we develop sensitivity to it	1	2	3	4	5	6
31.	My parents believed it was important to live in an integrated neighborhood with neighbors who reflected my race	1	2	3	4	5	6
32.	It was very important to my parents to develop friendships with families and individuals of my race	1	2	3	4	5	6
33.	My parents believed it was best to simply ignore insensitive remarks from strangers about me	1	2	3	4	5	6

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
34.	My parents understand that others might view my family as “different”	1	2	3	4	5	6
35.	My parents believed that discussions of racial differences with me might do more harm than good	1	2	3	4	5	6
36.	It was a high priority for my parents to providing me with opportunities to learn values and traditions of my birth culture	1	2	3	4	5	6

Scoring: Add scores of items in each dimension and divide by number of items.

Multicultural Planning (MP):	6, 7, 14, 17, 19, 23, 28, 36
Multicultural Planning with Contact (MPWC):	1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 29, 32
Multicultural Planning with Inclusion (MPWI):	25, 31
Racial Awareness:	15, 16, 22, 34
Survival Skills:	5, 12, 27
Negatively scored RA and SS items (NEG):	3, 8, 11, 13, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 30, 33, 35

Terms / Definitions:

Multicultural Planning (MP)

Refers to the creation of avenues for the child to learn about and participate in his or her culture of birth.

Multicultural Planning with Contact (MPWC)

Refers to participation in child's birth culture that includes contact with children and adults of the relevant culture.

Multicultural Planning with Integration (MPWI)

Refers to providing a living environment for the child that includes people both of the birth and adoptive cultures.

Racial Awareness (RA)

Refers to parents' awareness of how race, ethnicity, culture, language, and related power status affects their own and their children's lives.

Survival Skills (SS)

Refers to the recognition of the need and the ability of parents to prepare their children to successfully cope with prejudice or discrimination.

Negatively scored RA and SS items (NEG)

Please note that I expect these items to become a part of other factors following confirmatory factor analysis. At the moment, I think of this as measuring negative attitudes about RA and SS

Appendix D

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

Participants were asked to answer questions from Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (1992). A few questions that were not relevant to trans-racial adoptees were omitted, such as questions number 21, 22 and 23.

APPENDIX A The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure*

In this country, people come from a lot of different 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 Mexican-American, Hispanic, Black, Asian-American, American Indian, Anglo-American, and White. Every person is born into an ethnic group, or sometimes two groups, but people differ on how important their *ethnicity* is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behavior is affected by it. 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 _____

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

- | | 4: Strongly agree | 3: Somewhat agree | 2: Somewhat disagree | 1: Strongly disagree |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my own 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 like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own. | | | | _____ |
| 5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership. | | | | _____ |
| 6. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. | | | | _____ |
| 7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together. | | | | _____ |
| 8. I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life. | | | | _____ |
| 9. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own. | | | | _____ |
| 10. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group. | | | | _____ |
| 11. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. | | | | _____ |
| 12. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups. | | | | _____ |
| 13. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group. | | | | _____ |

14. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments. _____
15. I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups. _____
16. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. _____
17. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups. _____
18. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. _____
19. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own. _____
20. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. _____
- Write in the number that gives the best answer to each question.
21. My ethnicity is _____
- (1) Asian, Asian American, or Oriental
- (2) Black or African American
- (3) Hispanic or Latino
- (4) White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic
- (5) American Indian
- (6) Mixed; parents are from two different groups
- (7) Other (write in): _____
22. My father's ethnicity is (use numbers above) _____
23. My mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above) _____

a. In administering the measure, the title is not included, and the response options are repeated at the top of each page.

APPENDIX B Scoring for the MEIM

Ethnic identity: The total score is derived by reversing negative items (indicated by "R"), summing across items, and obtaining the mean (Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8R, 10R, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, and 20). Subscales are as follows: Affirmation and Belonging (Items 6, 11, 14, 18, and 20); Ethnic Identity Achievement (Items 1, 3, 5, 8R, 10R, 12, and 13); and Ethnic Behaviors (Items 2 and 16). Ethnic self-identification (open-ended response), ethnicity (Item 21), and parents' ethnicity (Items 22 and 23) are not scored but are used as background information.

Other-group orientation: Scored as above (Items 4, 7R, 9, 15R, 17, and 19).

Scoring for the MEIM:

Ethnic identity:

The total score is derived by reversing negative items (indicated by "R"), summing across items, and obtaining the mean (items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8R, 10R, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, and 20).

Subscales are as follows:

- Affirmation and Belonging (items 6, 11, 14, 18, and 20);
- Ethnic Identity Achievement (items 1, 3, 5, 8R, 10R, 12, and 13); and
- Ethnic Behaviors (items 2 and 16).
- Ethnic self-identification (open-ended response),

Background Items (not scored):

- Ethnicity (item 21), and parents' ethnicity (items 22 and 23)
- Other-group orientation: scored as above (items 4, 7R, 9, 15R, 17, and 19).

Were you born in Asia and adopted by a White American Family as a young child?

You can participate in a research study!

Study Requirements

- Asian-Americans age 18 to 50
- Born in South Korea, China, Thailand, or Vietnam and adopted before your 2nd birthday by a White American family
- Grew up in the continental United States
- Your adoptive parent(s) are/were White

If this describes you, you may be eligible to participate in an online research study.

The study will examine factors that affect the development of racial/ethnic identity among international adoptees.

Involvement is completely anonymous and confidential, completed online, and requires about 30 minutes of your time!

If interested, please go to the website

www.surveymonkey.com/s/adoptionsurvey to enroll!

*This is a Smith College School for Social Work thesis project

Appendix F
Recruitment Emails

Sent to online post-adoption support groups and formal agencies that specialize in international adoption and trans-racial counseling.

TO: _____

FROM: a4shay@yahoo.com

Subject: Research opportunity

Hello!

My name is Abigail Forshay and I am Masters in Social Work student at Smith College in Massachusetts. As part of the program, I will be conducting a thesis research project. My research topic is racial and ethnic identity formation for internationally adopted individuals. Specifically, I am curious to see how adult adoptees' perceive their adoptive parents level of cultural competency and if there is a relationship with how the adoptee identifies with their race.

I am wondering if your organization could be of assistance to me in finding adult Asian-American adoptees to participate in this study. Would it be possible for me to post a flyer for my study in your newsletter or somewhere on your website, or possibly on a list serve?

To participate in the study, I am looking for individuals between the ages of 19 and 30, who were adopted from South Korea, China, Thailand, or Vietnam prior to the age of 2, and who were raised by White American parents and families. Participation involves an online survey that will take at most thirty minutes of the person's time. All participation is completely anonymous.

Please let me know if I can try finding participants through your organization. Also, please email me back with any questions. I greatly appreciate your time.

Thank you,

Abigail Forshay (a4shay@yahoo.com)

Appendix G

Screening Questions, Online Version

Potential participants answered these questions to ensure eligibility to be included in the study. This is a “screen shot” of the actual online questionnaire.

[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Adoption Research Study Survey - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=WSEy3LhCwaXg9aBgnFQjeagk%2bUquGR%2bCLV8zmmTgkM%3d

Adoption Research Study [Exit this survey](#)

1. Welcome!

You've landed on Abigail Forshay's adoption research study! Please answer the following questions to see if you are eligible to participate.

* 1. Were you born in and adopted from one of these countries: South Korea, China, Thailand, or Vietnam?

Yes

No

* 2. Are you between the ages of 18 and 50?

Yes

No

* 3. Were you adopted sometime before your second birthday?

Yes

No

* 4. Were you adopted into a white family?

Yes

No

* 5. Were you raised in the United States?

Yes

No

* 6. Do you currently reside in the United States?

Yes

No

* 7. Do you speak English?

Yes

No

Draft 6.13.10 - Micro... Create a Survey - Su... [SURVEY PREVIEW ...]

10:17 PM