ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: BEYOND HONORARY WHITENESS: IDEOLOGIES OF
                        BELONGING AND KOREAN ADOPTEE IDENTITIES

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Using Asian Critical Race Theory as a framework, this dissertation examines how

Korean adoption contributed to constructions of race – racial meanings and a

racial order – and the effects on Korean adoptees' identity development. This

dissertation asks the following questions: What role has Korean adoption played

in the U.S. racial formation? What role do various levels of social structure (e.g.,

media, interpersonal interactions) play in adoptees' understanding of their

belonging, both as it relates to the U.S. and Korea, and how do adoptees resolve

any competing messages about their social and national citizenship? And, how do

Korean adoptees make-meaning of their adoptee identity? In order to answer

these questions, I draw upon three original data sources: 18 months of participant

observation, an online survey (N=107), and in-depth interviews (N=37) with

Korean adoptee adults.

BEYOND HONORARY WHITENESS:
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by

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Dedication

To my mothers and fathers

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"Yours is from Vietnam, right?" Simon asks Cam and Mitchell.
Then, with an air of superiority: "We were able to adopt one from Korea."
Cam whispering to Mitchell: "Are Koreans really better?"
Mitchell: "I don't know."

Modern Family[1]
Season 6, Episode 17

The U.S. is the leading receiving country of transnationally adopted children,

adopting nearly half a million children since 1948 (Alstein and Simon 1991; U.S.

Department of State n.d.; Weil 1984). Very public transnational adoptions by

celebrities and the inclusion of transnational adoption in primetime television

sitcoms, like the one of the opening excerpt, make this form of family-making

increasingly visible. In most cases, these transnational adoptions are also

transracial, meaning the children are adopted into families of a different race,

typically white, raising questions about the child's racial and ethnic identity.

Although sociologists have conducted some investigations into transnational

transracial adoptees' identity (Randolph and Holtzman 2010; Shiao and Tuan

2008; Tuan and Shiao 2011), I argue that transnational transracial adoption

warrants more detailed analyses as it has important implications for sociological

research on race and identity formation more broadly.

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[1] A five-time Emmy winning series, *Modern Family* is an ABC network mockumentary-style family sitcom that follows the lives of three non-traditional families, including a mixed-race couple, same-gender couple, and housewife-turned-executive household. It is ABC's top comedy and holds primetime television's number 2 comedy spot (Goldberg 2017). *Modern Family* is currently in its 9th season and has been renewed for a 10th (Goldberg 2017).
[2] LatCrit is an intervention designed to highlight Latina/o concerns and voices in legal discourse and social policy with the overarching goal of social justice (see, Valdes 1996).

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In this dissertation, I focus on the transnational transracial adoption that laid the foundation for today's international adoption industry: adoption from Korea. Heralded as the "Cadillac of adoption programs" (Brian 2012), since the early 1950s over 125,000 Korean children have been adopted to the U.S. primarily to white families (Ceniza Choy 2013; Kim 2008; Kim 2010; Tuan 2008). Korean adoptees comprise 25% of transnational adoptions to the U.S., are the largest group of transracial adoptees currently in adulthood, and represent approximately 10% of the present-day Korean American population (Lee 2003; Park Nelson 2009). As such, they are a unique and important population of transnational transracial adoptees that have implications for understanding race, identity processes, and belonging.

Although in the beginning years of Korean adoption social workers encouraged adoptive parents to assimilate their adopted children into U.S. culture and the primarily white adoptive parents' race (Scroggs and Heitfield 2001), questions about the racial and ethnic identity of these adoptees emerged. Racial identity is the culmination of psychological processes encompassing how people experience racial categorization, which is often related to racial socialization, racism, and discrimination. Although often used interchangeably with racial identity, ethnic identity is the culmination of psychological processes encompassing how people incorporate their ethnic background or ethnic culture into their self-concept. The limitations of the exchangeability of the two in regards to adoptees are highlighted in the "transracial adoption paradox" (Lee 2003), where transracial adoptees have minority racial group membership because of birth but often identify with the majority (white) culture due to their adoption into white families.

In the early 2000s, researchers began examining adoptee's adoptive identity to understand how adoptees make sense of their adoptive status (Grotevant et al. 2000). Adoptive identity is conceptualized as a personal identity that is distinct from adoptees' racial and/or ethnic identities (Grotevant and Von Korff 2011). While academics and practitioners largely conducted early research, recently, adoptees themselves are authoring more contemporary work, both academic and non-academic. Importantly, this work by researchers who are adoptees brings attention to the power dynamics, including white privilege, in transnational adoption, topics largely ignored in previous research. Much of this research remains in psychology and social work where it originated, however Korean adoptees are theoretically rich for sociological theories of race and identity.

In this dissertation, I examine the effects of ideologies about race, family, and national belonging on Korean adoptee's racial, ethnic, and adoptee identity formation. In doing so, I ask:

- **What role has Korean adoption played in the U.S. racial formation?**
  - o **What does Korean adoption tell us about the shifting contours of racism throughout time – both across decades in the U.S. and the life course of Korean adoptees?**
- **How do Korean adoptees conceptualize their social and national citizenship?**
  - o **What role do various levels of social structure (e.g., media, interpersonal interactions) play in adoptees' understanding of their belonging, both as it relates to the U.S. and Korea?**

- How do adoptees resolve any competing messages about their social and national citizenship?
- **How do Korean adoptees make-meaning of their adoptee identity?**
  - What are the mechanisms that facilitate a "Korean adoptee" identity formation?
  - What does this identity look like in everyday life?

In what follows, I begin by providing background information about the institutionalization of adoption from Korea. From there, I present my theoretical framework and then review the existing literature on Korean adoptees' racial, ethnic, and adoptive identities. I then give particular attention to adoptee-authored work and how it challenges previous knowledge about adoptee identity formation. Throughout the sections, I illustrate the gaps in existing knowledge and the contributions of this dissertation.

ADOPTION FROM KOREA: SOCIOHISTORIC CONTEXT

As a result of the Korean War and as early as 1953, the U.S. began adopting children from Korea (Oh 2015). During the 1980s, adoption from Korea reached its peak with over 66,000 Korean adoptions. Although adoption from Korea has steadily declined since then, Korean adoptees are the largest number of transnational transracial adoptees within the U.S. (Kim 2010). Equally important is the role that adoption from Korea played in institutionalizing international adoption. Adoption scholar Kim Park Nelson (2009) states:

> Korean transnational adoption was the first sustained intercountry adoption program in history (all previous intercountry adoption programs were temporary,

in response to national disasters or emergencies); the current permanent practice

of transnational adoption, whereby prospective adoptive parents in the United

States or another receiving country can expect to have a choice of countries from

which to adopt children, can be traced to Korean adoption (p. 5).

Although popular understandings of Korean transnational adoption often center

on key individuals and ideas of Christian or humanitarian aid, such tropes mask

the historical and social contexts that enabled these adoptions as well as how

transnational adoption was institutionalized (Ceniza Choy 2013; Oh 2015). A mix

of social and historical factors in both Korea and the U.S. facilitated Korean

transnational adoption. As a result of the Korean War (June 25, 1950 – July 1953)

and the separation of the Korean peninsula into two nations, countless children

were orphaned or homeless, including the offspring of Korean women and U.S.

G.I.s (Kim 2008). Consequently, orphans of the Korean War were the first Korean

adoptees.

Korean orphans were depicted in U.S. media as "Korean waifs," "waifs of war,"

and military "mascots" (Oh 2015; Park Nelson 2009; Pate 2014). Many U.S. G.I.s

returned to the U.S. with "mascots" (i.e. Korean boys), and U.S. soldiers and

chaplains often wrote home asking for supplies for orphanages they had set up

(Ceniza Choy 2013). In this way, Korean orphans were framed as objects in need

of humanitarian aid, and American serviceman were framed in a "paternalistic

role as the main supporters of orphanages and conduits for charitable donations

from concerned Americans at home" (Kim 2008:7). These early depictions of

Korean orphans spurred many families to adopt from Korea, and it was after

Harry and Bertha Holt's very public adoption of eight Korean children in 1955

that the demand for Korean children soared (Kim 2010). The Holts, and then the

Holt adoption agency, were key in relaxing adoption standards of foreign children (Park Nelson 2009).

Although by the late 1950s the population of abandoned mixed-race Korean children declined, the rate of child abandonment in the general population soared, and "by 1965, 70 percent of children being sent overseas were of full Korean parentage" (Kim 2008, p. 18). As Park Nelson (2009) notes, many of these children were economic orphans, children who had family members but whose family was unable to care for them due to extreme poverty. In other cases, children were relinquished to orphanages without their mother's knowledge or consent (Hübinette 2007). Since the 1980s, also known as the second wave of adoption from Korea, the vast majority of children adopted were born to single, unwed mothers (Stoker 2005). These available children were both distinctly classed and gendered phenomena – families in rural impoverished areas did not have the finances to care for another child, there were no state resources for single, unwed mothers, female children were less desirable, and women had limited decision-making authority.

Due to racial bias in social workers' training, the majority of Korean adoptees were adopted by white couples and raised in predominately white communities (Oh 2015). This continued to be true even as Korean adoption increased throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. In more recent years, adoptive parents created adoption support groups and culture camps to teach adoptive children about their birth country and culture (Park Nelson 2016). Though there is some support for the role of culture camps in fostering adoptees' ethnic identity (Huh

and Reid 2000), by and large most Korean adoptees did not have access to these resources when they were growing up.

Whereas the mainstream narrative about Korean adoption emphasizes U.S. military and U.S. couples' benevolence towards Korean orphans, contemporary research examines how Korean adoption operates as an extension of U.S. political and race relations (Jerng 2010; Park Nelson 2016; Pate 2014). As such, I argue that the ideological role of Korean adoption can be conceptualized as a racial project, one that facilitated the creation of the "model minority myth" (Wu 2015). In other words, racial discourse that positions Asians as a desirable minority while vilifying other non-white minorities is evidenced through Asian transnational adoption. I demonstrate how Korean adoption is a racial project in Chapter 2.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to make this claim and examine my other research questions, I ground my research within Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) (Chang 1999; Museus 2013) while drawing upon social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). This framework informs the research questions I developed. In contrast to research that takes for granted Asian Americans' model minority status and focuses primarily on educational or socioeconomic outcomes, by using an AsianCrit lens as the basis for my work, I am able to situate Korean adoptees within the broader racial and socio-historic context of Asian Americans, examine how these racial meanings and racialized expectations developed, and how this group of Asian Americans accept this position or actively challenge it.

AsianCrit provides a backdrop to situate the unique position that Korean adoptees

occupy. Similar to Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw et al. 1995) and the

burgeoning LatCrit[2] and DesiCrit[3], AsianCrit starts with the belief that race is

socially constructed and intricately affects our daily lived experience through

socio-cultural, historic, and institutional conditions that enact and maintain racial

inequality. AsianCrit is not meant to replace Critical Race Theory (CRT).

"Rather, AsianCrit utilizes both CRT and already existing knowledge about Asian

American experiences to offer a refined set of uniquely tailored tenets that can

further advance critical analyses of racism and Asian American lives" (Museus

2013:23). AsianCrit uses the following seven tenets as a conceptual framework

for analysis of racism and Asian Americans:

1. AsianCrit focuses on how Asian Americans are racialized in distinct and

    unique ways. For example, Asian Americans are idealized as a monolithic

    group and perceived as model minorities, perpetual foreigners, and/or

    threatening yellow perils. Asian American men are emasculated while

    Asian American women are hyper-sexualized and submissive.

2. AsianCrit examines the influence of historical and contemporary contexts,

    whether economic, political, social, or transnational, on conditions of

    Asian Americans.

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[2] LatCrit is an intervention designed to highlight Latina/o concerns and voices in legal discourse and social policy with the overarching goal of social justice (see, Valdes 1996).
[3] DesiCrit is an investigation into South Asian persons as racially ambiguous; and the foundation for a theoretical framework to analyze racial ambiguity of individuals and groups including racial symbols, performative notions of race, and local, historical, and political contexts (see, Harpalani 2013).

3. AsianCrit calls for reanalyzing history to expose racism towards Asian Americans and to address the exclusion of Asian Americans from American history by including voices and contributions of Asian Americans in the U.S.

4. In addition to acknowledging how Asian Americans are racialized, AsianCrit examines how Asian Americans can and do engage in actions to effect racialization processes.

5. AsianCrit uses an intersectional approach to analyze how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect with other markers of difference, such as ethnicity, culture, language, citizenship status, and generational position, to affect Asian Americans.

6. AsianCrit centers Asian American voices and work of Asian American intellectuals and asserts that these perspectives inform theory and practice.

7. AsianCrit is committed to social justice and advocates for the end of all forms of oppression.

AsianCrit has been primarily used in legal studies and higher education to incorporate Asian American concerns in social policy and praxis (Chang 1993; Liu 2009; Museus 2013). Although Asian transracial adoptees have not been explicitly analyzed within AsianCrit, the tenets of the theory provide a framework to situate the historical, social, and political contexts of Korean transnational adoption and the investigation of Korean adoptees' racial, ethnic, and adoptee identities. AsianCrit offers a framework for a multi-layered analysis to provide a

more complex understanding of the racialized expectations that Korean adoptees are negotiating, their various social worlds, and the networks and social opportunities that they are (and are not) participating in.

Similarly, social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) acknowledges the importance of context and social interaction on identities and behavior. In particular social identity theory values the effect of society, both historical intergroup relations and various contexts, on the self. Social identity relies on the premise that the self can be an object unto itself and therefore be categorized and classified in relation to other social categories or groups.

"A social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category" (Stets and Burke 2000:225). Accordingly, social identity is both socially and personally recognized and assigned. As such, it "is not simply a label, but is a cognitive and representational meaning system, shared by large segments of the society, and can provide expected characteristics for those who belong to the category, prescriptions for behavior, and a narrative history of group membership" (Deaux and Martin 2003:105). Individuals can hold multiple social identities and depending on the context different behaviors contingent on the same social identity may be enacted (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995). Social identity theory provides a framework to further investigate the affect of contexts on Korean

adoptees' identities and behavior, specifically how certain racial, ethnic, and/or cultural intergroup relations limit or facilitate interaction and boundary crossing.

Together these theories demonstrate the importance of the multiple levels of context (e.g., local, societal, contemporary, historical) impacting experience, identity formation, and behavior. AsianCrit asserts that race is a social construction and Asian Americans are uniquely racialized impacting their daily-lived experience, and social identity theory establishes how contexts and intergroup relations constrain and enable certain interactions and relationships.

An AsianCrit Lens on Korean Adoptee Racial Identity Research

Prior to transnational transracial adoption, adoptions were carefully controlled family-making meant to minimize difference through matching children and adoptive parents by physical features, religion, and temperament (Herman 2008). On one hand, transracial adoptions transgressed the common adoption policy of race-matching. On the other hand, early Korean adoption elided the racial and ethnic differences between Korean adopted children and white adoptive parents (Oh 2015; Pate 2014). Accordingly, early studies on transnational transracial adoption focused on the successful "adjustment" (re: assimilation) of adopted children into their (white) American families (Bagley 1993; Bagley and Young 1979; Benson et al. 1994; Falk 1970; Feigelman and Silverman 1984; Kim 1977).

Research findings were mixed with some studies finding that transracial adoptees rejected their racial background by showing no interest or by exhibiting shame (Benson et al. 1994; Kim 1978; Koh 1988). A study by Benson and colleagues (1994) found 22 percent of the Asian adoptees in their study wished to be "a

different race." Further, Asian adoptees reported lower levels of self-esteem compared to white adoptees. These findings may be a reflection of adoptive parents' views of their children as void of color, race, or nationality and therefore deemphasizing racial differences (Howe 1992; Kim 1978; McRoy et al. 1982). One study found many of the adoptive parents reported that they saw "no color or race or nationality in their adopted foreign children and felt they were just like our own" (Kim 1978, p. 482). Although a sense of security within the adoptive family is vital as a preventive mental health measure for adoptees, equally important is developing a positive ethnic identity and integrating all facets of the adoptee's background "which should include biological, racial, and cultural entities" (Kim 1978, p. 485).

Contemporary research mirrors these findings about adoptive parents' colorblind ideologies. Studies find that although parents engage in colorblind practices with their transracially adopted children, they relied upon racist stereotypes to guide their adoption choices and the (un)desirability of certain adoptable children (Brian 2012; Shiao et al. 2004). For example, white adoptive parents use racially coded language to describe Asian children as a "better fit" into their family than Black children; they also frame Asian children as "baggage free" in comparison to Black children (Kubo 2010). The effects of colorblind beliefs can be seen in Korean adoptees' racial identity. One study found 78 percent of the Korean adoptee adults surveyed "reported they considered themselves to be or wanted to be white as children" (McGinnis et al. 2009:5). About 34 percent reported being uncomfortable or only somewhat comfortable with their racial identity as adults (McGinnis et al. 2009).

One factor related to respondents' racial identity was experiences of discrimination. Fewer experiences of discrimination led to more comfort with their racial identity (McGinnis et al. 2009). This finding echoed previous studies, which reported a significant relationship between experiences of racial discrimination and discomfort with physical appearance and adjustment (Feigelman 2000; Juffer 2006). These findings may point to the lack of adoptive parents' engagement with racial socialization, rendering experiences of racial discrimination acutely harmful as adoptees did not have the tools to cope with these experiences (Lee 2003, 2009). Interestingly, these findings about racial identity and experiences of discrimination among Korean adoptees oppose research findings on other immigrant populations, who generally report increased racial identification in response to discrimination (Golash-Boza 2006; Waters 1994).

Although immigrants, transnational adoptees are typically not included in research on immigrant experiences and often do not think of themselves as immigrants (Lee et al. 2010; Park Nelson 2016). This may be in part because of how popular discourse distinguishes transnational adoption from other forms of immigration or because of adoptees' and adoptive families' limited contact with immigrant communities. Additionally, adoptees' immigration histories are distinct from other immigrant populations in key ways. Adoptees immigrate alone without connections to their birth family and upon arrival are raised into, in the case of children adopted to the U.S., (white) American culture and within (white) American families.

Adoptive parents' colorblind approaches towards the racial socialization of their adopted Korean children raise the question of the effects of colorblind ideologies

about transnationally adoptive family-making on Korean adoptees' identity formation. How do these limited views of family-making and racial difference within the family shape Korean adoptees' identity formation and perspective towards their racial group, heritage culture, and birth family? What happens when difference within the family cannot be ignored? By using an AsianCrit lens, I am able to incorporate the distinct racialization experienced by these Korean adoptees along with the particular socio-historic and contemporary contexts surrounding their adoption to explore these questions (Chapters 2 and 3).

An AsianCrit Lens on Korean Adoptee Ethnic Identity Research

Later research focused on the importance of parents' support of adoptees' Korean ethnic identity development (Huh and Reid 2000; Yoon 2001, 2004). Tuan and Shiao (2011) found that adoptees whose parents emphasized their shared fate were more likely to incorporate their heritage culture in describing themselves (ex. Korean-American) than those whose parents did not. The concept of shared fate stems from Kirk's ([1964]1984) framework for understanding adoptive parents' unique family circumstance and refers to parents who acknowledge their family's difference and share with their adopted children about the uncertainties that lay ahead and cope along with them. Echoing these findings about the significance of parent support was a study that found the importance of parent-led Korean ethnic socialization for adolescent Korean adoptees, who incorporate their Korean ethnic identity into their self-concept (Beaupre et al. 2015).

Parental support is only one component of Korean adoptees' ethnic identity development. Research finds that identity processes continue throughout adulthood for Korean adoptees as many begin their heritage culture exploration in

early adulthood (Tuan and Shiao 2011). Adoptees often report identifying with their adoptive parents' ethnicity as children or downplaying their heritage culture (Park Nelson 2016). Once in adulthood, Korean adoptees report thinking about their heritage culture group membership and learning about their heritage culture group (Shiao and Tuan 2008). Of particular importance to developing Korean identity and pride are homeland tours or birth country visits (Napier 2010) and opportunities for contact with other Asians and Koreans (Tuan and Shiao 2011). Also, key is the shared "forever foreigner" experiences of Korean adoptees and Korean non-adoptees (Tuan and Shiao 2011). The "forever foreigner" concept refers to the racialization of Asian Americans as immutably foreign due to physical features and ethnic group membership (Kim 1999; Tuan 1998).

A key finding regarding Korean adoptees' ethnic identity is their feeling of inbetween-ness of ethnicities and cultures (Palmer 2010). Investigations into the potentially competing expectations from white family members, heritage culture members, or other whites and non-whites as well as how Korean adoptees navigate those expectations would illuminate the identity dilemma Korean adoptees experience and the strategies they deploy to resolve it. Recent research on identity work and proximate social structures analyzes how identity meanings can be reinscribed (Fields 2014; Jacobs and Merolla 2017; Killian and Johnson 2006). Using a symbolic interactionist frame may be especially useful here as Korean adoptees challenge and attempt to redefine identity labels they do not see themselves inhabiting (e.g. immigrant) or of which they want to change the meaning (e.g. adoptee). I examine these identity processes in Chapter 4. By situating Korean adoptees' active strategies around identity development and community building at the nexus of their ethnic *and* adoptee identities, I am able

to examine how this group of Asian Americans engages in actions to affect the racialization process, a key tenet of AsianCrit (see, Chapter 3).

As AsianCrit Lens on Korean Adoptee Adoptive Identity Research

Separate from the social identities of race or ethnicity, researchers conceptualize an adoptive identity. A personal identity, "Adoptive identity is defined as one's sense of 'coming to terms' with being an adopted person and involves exploration and finding coherence in what it means to be adopted" (Beaupre et al. 2015:49). The three components of adoptive identity include cognitive processes involved in constructing one's identity, effects of how difference is approached within the adoptive family, and community-level demographics and acceptance (Grotevant et al. 2000). Central to the first two components is narrative or how the adoptee integrates her adoption status and adoptive identity into her other identities. The importance of narrative is evident through adoptee-authored works (addressed in the next section).

Though personal and social identities are related, they are separate cognitive structures (Howard 2000). By conceptualizing an adoptee's coming to terms with her adoption as an individual process (i.e., personal identity), the possibility of adoptive identity as a social identity is ignored. In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* (2006), Sunny Jo begins to layout a conceptual map for understanding "Korean adoptee" as a social identity with its own culture, socialization processes, and group boundaries. She cites the shared adoption status, enculturation/assimilation processes, lack of birth language, and

experiences of isolation and racial-ethnic-phenotype mismatch as key collective experiences.

Theorizing a "Korean adoptee" identity as a social identity, separate from other social identities such as race or ethnicity, moves adoptive identity into the realm of a shared collective identity with political implications. The examination of Korean adoptee political action provides the opportunity for investigation into the role of identity formation and racialized scripts into collective action scholarship, an under theorized link (Hughey 2015). Korean adoptees become a prime case by which to understand the process individuals go through to 1. Come to a shared collective identity, 2. Mobilize that identity for movement work, and 3. Negotiate often competing racialized expectations of behavior. Expanding adoptive identity to encompass investigations into how adoptive status is used as a basis for collective identity-making brings sociological theories of social movements to bear on transnational adoption. I examine this topic in Chapter 3.

An AsianCrit Lens on Korean Adoptee Authored Research

Whereas early adoption research focused on parents', and in some cases teachers', evaluations of adoptees and was conducted from social work/practitioner points of view (Silverman 1993), the early 2000s saw adoptees authoring their own stories. This time period was important for two reasons: 1. A critical mass of transnational adoptees entered adulthood; and 2. Technology allowed for a wider dissemination of adoptee-authored works. Since then adult adoptees have claimed their own voice, whether through their own academic research (Baden 2002, Docan-Morgan

2014, 2010a, 2010b; Hübinette 2003, 2004; McGinnis 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Park Nelson 2009, 2016; Raleigh 2016), adult adoptee anthologies (Bishoff and Rankin 1997; Christian et al. 2015; Trenka, Oparah, and Shin 2006), blogs (Lost Daughters n.d.), or adoptee-related activism (Barcella 2014; Lam 2016; Stoker 2005). These outlets bring nuance and new approaches to adoption research with previously unexamined foci on adoptees claiming adulthood, dismantling the eternal orphan construct, and telling the adoptee story from the experience and perspectives of the adoptee. Importantly, adoptee-authored works have led to new theoretical and conceptual models for understanding adoptee identity processes (Baden and Steward 2000; Baden, Treweeke, and Ahluwalia 2012), with implications for sociological research on identity formation.

For example, Baden, Treweeke, and Ahluwalia (2012) conceptualize reculturation or transnational transracial adoptees' reclaiming of their heritage culture. While various forms of cultural development and change are addressed through constructs such as acculturation, enculturation, remigration, and reverse acculturation, none accurately captures the process of cultural change transnational transracial adoptees undergo. The authors define reculturation as "a process of identity development and navigation through which adoptees develop their relationship to their birth and adoptive cultures via reculturative activities and experiences leading to one of five possible reculturation outcomes" (390). Reculturative activities include language courses, birth country visits, interacting with members of their own racial group, history and/or culture classes, and eating or cooking food from their birth culture. Importantly, reculturation is initiated by adoptees themselves, not adoptive parents. The education, experience, and immersion components of reculturation result in five common outcomes including identification primarily as an adoptee.

I draw upon Asian American intellectuals' research in order to inform my own research questions, specifically around the creation and maintenance of a "Korean adoptee" identity. In this dissertation, I expand on the concept of reculturation by outlining the pathways to "Korean adoptee" identity, detailing what "Korean adoptee" identity and culture are, and how Korean adoptees are socialized into this identity (Chapter 4). Importantly, I incorporate the role of social networking sites, specifically Facebook Groups, as a key proximate social structure that facilitates Korean adoptees' socialization into a shared "Korean adoptee" identity.

SUMMARY

The overarching focus of this dissertation is how adult Korean adoptees create and make-meaning of their multiple identities and how these identifications can further elucidate existing theorizing about race and identity processes. Given the "transracial adoptee paradox" (Lee 2003), Korean transnational transracial adoptees become a unique case to examine the connection between race and ethnicity in identity formation. Rather than use race and ethnicity interchangeably, divorce ethnicity from its political implications and use it to be synonymous with the catch-all concept of "culture," or situate ethnicity within assimilation logics, herein I attempt to investigate implications of Korean adoption on broader political projects, both race-based and ethnicity-based, sociological understandings of race and ethnicity, and Korean adoptees' racial and ethnic identity development. While there are moments where some of these processes overlap, at other times there are distinct processes that must be examined.

Using a theoretical framework that incorporates the tenets of AsianCrit alongside social identity theory, incorporating multiple methods, and current literature on Korean adoptees, I am able to situate Korean adoptees into the history of Asian immigration and U.S. race relations. Doing so provides a broader context for examining how Korean adoptees contribute to our understandings of Asians in America and how Asian Americans can exert their own agency in affecting racialization and identity processes. I examine this through situating Korean adoptees within ideologies of race, family, and national belonging and attending to the multiple domains that advance those ideologies. Existing literature on Korean adoptees, both scholarly and adoptee-authored, has laid the groundwork for this analysis by introducing the role of heritage culture exploration on adoptee identity and examining the connection between racial and political ideologies and Korean adoption.

METHODS

I employ three methods to examine my research questions and triangulate findings – an online survey, in-depth interviews, and participant observation (IRB approval April 2015). Each of these methods was selected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Korean adoptees' identity development and sense of belonging. The online survey provided an overview of Korean adoptees' racial and ethnic socialization, social contexts, and racial attitudes. Through the in-depth interviews, I was able to probe more in-depth around themes that emerged from the survey data. Participant observation provided an on-the-ground

view of how Korean adoptees' social location influenced their relationships, organizing, and everyday lives.

Online Survey

In the online survey, I use pre-existing scales of racial and ethnic socialization, adoptee identity, and racial attitudes combined with a biracial identity scale I modified to address Korean adoptee experiences and a measure of Korean adoptee identity exploration and enactment (see Appendix A). I selected these measures for two reasons: 1. So that I could analyze the relationship between respondents' childhood socialization and current identification and attitudes; and 2. So that I could potentially make comparisons between my sample and other populations.

To measure respondents' racial and ethnic socialization, I used the Ethnic and Racial Socialization of Transracial Adoptee Scale (Mohanty 2010). In total 20 questions, asked respondents' to reflect on how important a variety of ethnic and racial developmental activities were to their parents. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1(Not at All Important) to 5 (Extremely Important). For example, racial socialization questions asked how important was it to their parents that they provided opportunities to discuss race or racism, provide strategies for responding to experiences of discrimination, or feeling pride in their racial/ethnic heritage. Ethnic socialization questions asked how important it was to their parents that they learned the values and traditions of their Korean birth culture or establish relationships with children from their birth culture.

The identity measures included the marginality subscale of the Belongingness and Ethnic Self-Perception scale (Mohanty, Keoske, and Sales 2008; Mohanty and Newhill 2011). This subscale includes seven questions around adoptee identity that ask about the respondents' sense of belonging and understanding of themselves as an adopted person. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Questions include: I feel I am different from the majority in the culture; and I feel isolated because of my adoptive status.

I also included a question asking respondents' to identify their most salient identity. These questions were modeled after Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) Black-white biracial identity scale. In total eight options were provided along with the opportunity to write in an answer if none of the eight accurately captured how they most thought of themselves. Response options included Asian, Korean, American, sometimes Asian/Korean and sometimes American depending on the context, multiracial/biracial but experience the world as an Asian person, multiracial/biracial exclusively, Korean adoptee, race is meaningless.

The racial attitudes questions were drawn from the General Social Survey's (GSS) 2002 Topical Module: Prejudice as well as the Symbolic Racism Scale (Henry & Sears 2002). The GSS Topical Module includes 12 questions that probe the respondent's attitudes towards racial and ethnic groups within the U.S. with

items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) as well as questions about respondent's comfort with various racial and ethnic groups with items scored on a 9 point scale from 1 (very close) to 9 (very distant). Examples of questions include: Harmony in the United States is best achieved by downplaying or ignoring ethnic differences (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree); In order to have a smoothly functioning society, members of ethnic minorities must better adapt to the ways of mainstream culture (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree); In general, how warm (close) or cool (distant) do you feel towards African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and White or Caucasian Americans (9 point scale from 1 (very warm) to 9 (very cool)).

In order to further assess respondents' racial attitudes, I also included four items from the Symbolic Racism Scale (Henry & Sears 2002) that have been consistently used in the American National Election Survey. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). Questions included: Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same; and Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

I also asked a series of questions about the racial makeup of respondents' social contexts, including their neighborhood when they were growing up, elementary,

middle, and high school, current neighborhood, workplace, and place of worship. I included questions asking about the racial/ethnic background of respondents' five closest friends. Finally, I asked about respondents' participation in Korean heritage culture exploration activities. Respondents were presented with 17 different activities that they could indicate their participation in, including: attending a Korean adoptee conference or gathering, learning Korean language, visiting Korea, participating in a Korean adoptee social group, or conducting a birth family search.

Taken together, I sought to collect a comprehensive profile of respondents' background characteristics and socialization, social contexts, and networks as well as current identities, including racial, ethnic, and adoptee.

In January 2016, I distributed the survey through seven pre-existing Korean adoptee groups across the U.S. as well as through non-adoptee, non-Korean Facebook Groups and individuals' Facebook pages. I analyzed the first 100 responses to construct ideal types of Korean adoptee identity-pathways, serving as a guide for in-depth interviews further examining Korean adoptee identity formation. Survey data was collected through March 2016. One key finding is approximately 32 percent of respondents (n=34) identified as a "Korean adoptee" as separate from other racial, ethnic, or national identities. This suggests that there is a unique and specific identity created through transracial adoption, one that is central to adoptees' self-concept.

Survey Analytic Strategy

Analyses began with the calculation of descriptive statistics (see Appendix C. Table 1).

Survey Descriptives

Of the 107 completed surveys, 65 percent of respondents were women (n=70) and 3 percent (n=3) were queer. Ages ranged from 21-59, with a mean age of 34.24. Over 70 percent of respondents had a Bachelor's degree (33%, n=35) or higher (40.6%; n=43). Only 3% of respondents (n=3) had only attained a high school diploma or its equivalent. Approximately 70 percent of respondents reported individual income of at least $40,000 or higher, with 27% (n=28) reporting income of $40,000-59,999, 18.3% (n=19) with $60,000-79,999, and 24% (n=25) over $80,000. Respondents reported being adopted across the four regions of the U.S. with 30.4% adopted to the Midwest (n=31), 23.5% adopted to both the West (n=24) and Northeast (n=24), and the remaining 23% adopted to the South (n=23).

Slightly over half of survey respondents (52%; n=53) reported no religious affiliation compared to 22.8% in the U.S. overall (Pew Research Center 2015). This raises the question of if adoption discourse focused on Christian humanitarianism and Holt's Christian crusade negatively affected adoptees' perception of religion. For full survey descriptives, see Appendix C Table 1.

In-Depth Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews in order to understand how respondents thought about their adoption background, their experiences growing up, and their identity. Whereas the online survey provided an overview into these experiences, the in-depth interviews provided richer and more detailed responses. The in-depth interviews also illustrated the conflict respondents experienced in regards to their identity development and community memberships, whether with whites, Asians, Koreans specifically, and other non-whites. Through the in-depth interviews I gained a sense of the passive and active processes respondents engaged in when developing their racial and ethnic identity – processes that were not apparent through the online survey.

The in-depth interview guide was divided into five sections (see Appendix B). In Section 1, *childhood,* I probed for retrospective information regarding the adoptee's racial, ethnic, and adoptee contexts and interactions. I explored the racial and ethnic composition of the adoptee's neighborhood(s) and school(s) during adolescence and contact with heritage culture members and other adoptees. Additionally, I explored the steps taken by the adoptee's adoptive family in regards to racial and ethnic socialization. I also explored familial experiences, particularly around the family's adoption narrative. This section addresses literature on the influence of childhood neighborhoods, region, and local demographics on experiences with racial others (Meier 1999; Rockquemore and

Brunsma 2002), the role of the family in racial and ethnic socialization (Lee 2003), as well as how family narratives incorporate adoption (Kim 2008).

Section 2 examined *racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.* I probed for contextual influences on racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. I asked adoptees what meaning their self-identification has for them and their reactions to ascribed racial and ethnic identity. This section addresses literature on "ethnic options" (Harris and Sim 2002; Tuan 1998) as well as how the categories assigned and/or available to them are historically embedded (Omi and Winant 2015).

In Section 3, *exploration and participation,* I explored the scope and meaning of racial, ethnic, and adoptee-specific practices. I asked about racial and ethnic exploration, adoptee-specific community engagement, and participation in other racial and ethnic-based clubs or organizations. I also asked about reactions by family and friends to these types of exploration. This section addresses literature on the potential for an adoptee-specific identity (Grotevant et al. 2000), ethnic exploration of adoptees (Tuan and Shiao 2011), and how groups construct alternative collective identities (Song 2003; Tuan 1998).

Section 4 explored *relationships and membership.* I probed for personal interactions with various racial, ethnic, and adoptee groups. I asked about dating history and extent of acceptance and comfort with different social groups. This

section addresses literature on identity development and relationships (Baden 2002).

The final section, *final thoughts/advice,* prompted adoptees to reflect on challenges and advantages of being an adoptee as well as advice for prospective adoptive parents who are considering transracial adoption. This section addresses literature on the importance of adoptee voices (Trenka et al. 2006).

Sampling Procedure

Interview respondents were a sub-set of the survey respondents. From May – December 2016, I conducted 37 interviews with Korean adoptees across the U.S. Interviews were conducted via Skype (n=18), phone (n=12), or in-person (n=7). Interviewing Korean adoptees adopted to and currently residing in locations across the U.S. allowed me to secure respondents who may have had different experiences and opportunities for exploration based on the racial demographics, race relations, and racial histories of their locations. All interviewees were at least 21 years of age or older to ensure respondents could reflect, with distance, upon their childhood and earlier life events and their salience for their adult lives. Research finds that for many Korean adoptees, racial and ethnic identity exploration occurs in early adulthood (Tuan and Shiao 2011). Recruiting adults increased the likelihood that respondents had reflected upon their racial identity and/or engaged in heritage culture exploration. Limiting respondents to those who

had been adopted to the U.S. was required for understanding experiences of race and racialization within the U.S. context.

Due to the sampling techniques and how interviews were conducted, it is likely that all respondents were aware of my status as a fellow Korean adoptee. Given the restrictive nature of Korean adoptee groups, my shared status facilitated participant recruitment. In several cases, respondents explicitly stated that my shared adoptee status was the reason they participated in the interview.

There are certain limitations to the sampling procedure and retrospective nature of the data. First, by using Korean adoptee networking groups for participant recruitment, it is possible that the sample is not reflective of the Korean adoptee population as a whole, particularly in regards to identity exploration and formation. While it is likely that the respondents in this study had developed some level of consciousness around their adoptive status and the racial difference between themselves and their adoptive parents, it is unclear how common that awareness and any subsequent racial and/or ethnic exploration and identification is among Korean transnational transracial adoptees.

Second, the use of retrospective data calls into question the role of memory loss, social desirability, and reinterpretation of experiences, which may impact the accounts given. However, this retrospective viewpoint can also provide invaluable insight generally not accessible to adoptees in the given moment, especially

during life stages or events characterized by high levels of emotional intensity such as adolescence or first contact with co-ethnics. The removal from past events, actions, and feelings may also provide more comfort for adoptees to disclose uncomfortable or potentially embarrassing information.

Finally, though my shared status as a Korean adoptee certainly assisted in the recruitment process, it also had other implications in regards to the interview process and data analysis. For example, in some instances respondents' assumptions about our shared understanding around our adoption history, transracial adoption in general, or identity meant I had to carefully interrogate these areas so the respondent would divulge details and meaning. In other instances, my position as a newcomer to online adoptee spaces and the adoptee community at large, meant that I did not take for granted the social processes unfolding before me. It also means that I bring my own biases to the research. I remained self-reflexive about my potential biases throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing process in order to mitigate any effects on this research.

Interview Analytic Strategy

First, transcripts were coded line-by-line using a grounded theory approach, where each line was examined inductively for salient frames and themes (Charmaz 2003). Second, the literature in the areas of identity formation for racial, ethnic, social, and adoptive identities were examined to develop a deductively produced framework. The transcripts were then revisited and recoded to identify both the deductively and inductively produced frames and themes.

Counter-examples for the themes were noted as well. Throughout the coding process, analytic memos were written to expand upon the patterns that emerged (Charmaz 2003). This analytic approach is similar to the one used by Shiao and Tuan (2008) in their study on ethnic exploration among Korean adoptee adults.

In-depth Interview Descriptives

Sixty-eight percent of interviewees identified as women (n=25). The mean age was 34.3, with a range of 21 to 56. Thirty-five percent of respondents (n=13) reported being adopted to the Midwest, 27% to the West (n=10), 19% to the South (n=7), and another 19% to the Northeast (n=7). The majority of interviewees (n=34; 92%) characterized their hometown neighborhoods as predominantly white. The majority of respondents (71%; n=26) reported having a Bachelor's degree or higher. Of the 71%, 41% (n=15) have a Master's degree and 8% (n=3) have an advanced graduate degree. The remaining 29% (n=11) respondents reported having at least graduated high school or its equivalent. Of the 32 respondents that provided their personal income, the majority (78%; n=25) reported income of $40,000 or higher. Of the 78%, 31% (n=10) reported income of $40,000-59,999, 19% (n=6) of $60,000-79,999, and the remaining 28% (n=9) above $80,000.

Importantly, respondents had a range of Korean adoptee community experiences. The majority of respondents (78%, n=29) reported entering the Korean adoptee community as adults, with slightly over half becoming involved within the year of or directly preceding our interview. Eleven percent (n=4) described being

involved in the Korean adoptee community at some level prior to adulthood. The remaining 11% (n=4) described themselves as never having been involved in the Korean adoptee community, even now. For full demographic data, see Appendix.

The gender breakdown reflects the overall known population of Korean adoptees in the U.S. Approximately 58% of Korean adoptees adopted to the U.S. were girls (Freundlich and Lieberthal 2000). The gender discrepancy reflects the preference for boys in a patriarchal society. The age range is representative of the decades of adoption from Korea, with the majority of respondents reflecting the peak of Korean adoption in the 1980s. Research estimates Korean adoption during the 1980s at over 66,000 Korean children, representing approximately 60 percent of all Korean adoption to the U.S. (Park Nelson 2016).

Participant Observation

Finally, participant observation at Korean adoptee conferences and formal and informal Korean adoptee events in the U.S. and Korea provided a backstage view of adoptee-specific identity and culture in action. Although the survey and in-depth interviews gave Korean adoptees the opportunity to share their personal experiences, in some instances they may not have been able to identify and/or articulate aspects of an adoptee-specific identity. Participant observation allowed me to see how an adoptee culture manifests. For example, through participant observation I was able to document rituals, traditions, shared interactions, and themes in activities, topics, and structure. Through my participant observation, I

identified preliminary themes in interaction and began mapping the contours of "Korean adoptee" identity and culture.

Participant Observation Descriptives

From June 2015 through December 2016, approximately 18 months, I conducted participant observation at Korean adoptee conferences, monthly meet ups, and informal get-togethers throughout the Northeast U.S. and in S. Korea. The size of the event varied with the smallest informal get-together comprised of only 3 participants including myself and the largest conference having attendance of around 500. On average, informal get-togethers and monthly meet ups had about 15-20 participants and conferences about 125.

During the timeframe of my participant observation, I attended monthly meet ups of a Korean adoptee organization located in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic. Activities were primarily group dinners at local restaurants, both Korean-food specific and other cuisines, and group attendance at sporting events. Informal group activities included viewing films with adoption-related themes, Korean cultural events, and museum attendance for exhibits that were Korean or Asian-specific as well as those that were not. In general, female participants slightly outnumbered male participants. Participants' ages ranged from early-mid 20s to mid-50s with the majority of participants in their late 20s to early 30s. Throughout the duration of my participant observation, there were events that garnered much higher attendance rates (e.g., the December holiday dinner, Chuseok celebration – Chuseok is the equivalent of Korean Thanksgiving and occurs in mid-September or early October depending on the autumn equinox – and 4th of July picnic).

These events often included first time event attendees, which in turn shaped the interactions between participants. For example, at these events, it was common for regularly attending participants to ask the following series of questions to new attendees: where did you grow up, have you been back to Korea, have you conducted a birth family search.

Larger Korean adoptee events included Korean adoptee conferences and gatherings. Korean adoptee conferences were primarily organized by and for adoptive parents and adoptees. Gatherings were primarily organized by and for Korean adoptees. Conferences and gatherings were largely split between first time attendees and repeat attendees. This breakdown of participants is important to note – even though Korean adoption has a long history spanning six decades and some of the Korean adoptee organizations have been in existence for over 20 years, adoptees are continually finding the community for the first time. The breakdown of attendees became an important part of my participant observation, as I was able to capture people at different points in their exposure to the Korean adoptee community and their own identity exploration.

At conferences, breakout sessions focused on topics related to the Korean adoptee experience such as white privilege, how to conduct a birth search, interracial relationships, racial and ethnic identity, and relationships with adoptive family members. At gatherings, the focus was primarily on shared experiences, such as

sightseeing/touristy activities, talent showcases, or group meals, rather than on informational sessions on adoptee-related topics.

Participant Observation Analytic Strategy

I approached participant observation both as an insider and outsider. As an insider, I was welcomed into the activities, treated as any other Korean adoptee, and able to share in the experiences. As an outsider, I actively observed the structure of the events, the topics of conversation, patterns in interaction, as well as demographic breakdown of participants (e.g., age, gender, previous participation in adoptee events).

When possible I would take short field notes on my phone. After events, I would type longer descriptive narratives detailing the type of event, where it took place, the physical layout of the venue, the sequence of events, who was there, and the interactions between participants. After detailing the observations, I would then analyze my notes, including asking questions of my observations and noting any similarities and/or differences between interactions during the current activity and previous activities. I would also note any questions or themes that I should explore further during future observations.

POSITIONALITY

Although research on transnational transracial adoption and Korean adoption specifically has and continues to be conducted by non-adoptees, my research approach and the personal importance of this work are intricately linked to my

shared status as a Korean adoptee. My initial motivation for this project stemmed from my experience of the lack of research about Korean adoptees, the inaccessibility of existing research, and the parent and/or assimilation-centered focus of existing research. Whereas I knew that I would pursue a Korean adoptee-focused research project, I did not know exactly what aspect. As I delved into more contemporary Korean adoption literature, I found research more amenable to Korean adoptees' experiences. However, the continued focus on Korean adoptees' identity as either white like their adoptive parents or Asian like their heritage, seemed limited. I imaged that there were adoptees who found other racial, ethnic, or other social identities more salient based on the connections they made with other racial and ethnic communities, where they were adopted to and by whom, or where they chose to live as adults. I began to see Korean adoption and Korean adoptee identity formation as a lens to explore race and identity-making. Moreover, as I continued research into Korean adoption and as I took classes on sociology of knowledge and Critical Race Theory, among others, I came to see Korean adoption through its role and connection to racial discourse.

Similar to many of my respondents, I had no connections to other Korean adoptees during childhood. Through the course of my graduate research, I found out that there was a Korean culture camp in my hometown, which suggests that there was some sort of substantial Korean adoptee population nearby. However, my parents made no concerted effort to connect me with Korean culture, Korean adoptees, or Korean community. It is unlikely that they knew of such resources

given that their adoption process was directly through a Korean adoption agency, with no U.S.-based adoption agency as intermediary. Like many of my respondents, it was not until adulthood (and this study specifically) that I sought out and became active with the Korean adoptee community and an in-person Korean adoptee group. Also, like many respondents, it took me several months before I ventured to my first in-person meeting of Korean adoptees. Although I had joined an online group a year prior, it was not until this project was beginning to materialize that I became an active member.

The timing of my introduction to the Korean adoptee community is important to note for two reasons: 1. I was able to approach the interactions, customs, and culture of the Korean adoptee community with a fresh perspective. As a newcomer to the community, I did not take for granted the social processes unfolding before me. This meant that I often asked many questions and that every interaction I observed took on heightened meaning; and 2. I had a shared experience with many of my respondents, who had also only recently discovered the Korean adoptee community.

Related to timing, it is important to note the timeframe of my interviews (May – December 2016) and that the U.S. was at the end stages of a highly divisive presidential campaign season and election. During this time, the #BlackLivesMatter movement was often in the media, and race and police brutality was frequently addressed in presidential candidates' speeches. Like

many other citizens, I often used social media as a platform to express frustration

with the presidential campaigns and to re-post articles or calls to action around

race-related issues and #BlackLivesMatter specifically. Because I recruited

participants through Facebook and because the Korean adoptee community in

large part is located in various Korean adoptee Facebook Groups, it is possible

that potential participants were aware of, or assumed, my political leanings. This

could have deterred potential participants who did not believe they shared my

perspective. However, given the range of political opinions expressed in the

interviews, I do not think this was the case. Though, it is still possible that I did

not recruit as many participants as I could have due to perceived differing

political opinions.

Although Korean adoption has historically been conducted by non-adoptees, by

white researchers and interviewing white adoptive parents, since the 2000s

adoptees themselves have authored studies. In fact, during the course of my

research, I saw at least half a dozen calls for participants for Korean adoptee

research for studies in psychology, education, social work, and even theatre.

Topics of those studies included microaggressions, birth family reunion, and

general Korean adoptee experiences. There were calls for inclusion in at least two

documentaries as well. The response from Korean adoptees runs the gamut from

those who refuse to participate and liken participation to being "lab rats" to those

who are eager to participate and have been respondents in multiple studies. For

most of my respondents, our interview was the first time they participated in

adoption research. However, 32% of my respondents (n=12) had previously

participated in an adoption study. I asked respondents why they decided to

participate in my study. The majority stated that they felt an obligation to give

back to the community, to help other adoptees (whether those who might read my

study or me specifically), or to contribute a different perspective (whether positive

or negative depending on the respondent's perception of existing research). Even

for those who would not categorize themselves as members of the Korean adoptee

community, they felt it was important to share their story so that there would be a

multiplicity of experiences and perspectives represented in my work. These

responses demonstrate the communal nature of Korean adoptees but also that the

Korean adoptee experience is not a monolith, as such there is still more work to

do be done to fully and accurately represent this population.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the emotional and psychological

effects I experienced from my interviews and participant observation. I often

found the in-person meet ups to be emotionally draining. Although meet ups were

often shared meals, they would routinely last 3-4 hours or more and include

drinks or dessert at another establishment nearby. Especially as I attended events

in my early stages of participant observation, I found the seemingly endless

questions from other adoptees mentally exhausting. Storytelling is a key

experience within Korean adoptee events, and until you get to know everyone and

they get to know you, the barrage of questions about your personal history,

upbringing, and adoptee community involvement continues.

Within my interviews, respondents would routinely share very personal details about their lives beyond the questions that I asked. Additionally, in answering my questions, respondents often relayed heartbreaking experiences of abuse, neglect, and isolation; there were often tears. As I listened to their stories and even as I shepherded them through the writing process, I felt, and continue to feel, an immense responsibility to accurately represent their words, experiences, and stories.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 – Adopting the Model Minority Myth: Korean Adoption as a Racial Project

In this chapter, I use an AsianCrit lens, specifically its focus on Asian Americans' distinct racialization, history of racism towards Asian Americans, and influence of historical and contemporary contexts on the conditions of Asian Americans, to argue that Korean adoption was part of a racial project that advanced the model minority myth, helping shape what it means to be Asian in America. This focus on Korean adoption as part of the foundation of the model minority myth departs from traditional renderings that concentrate exclusively on Japanese and Chinese Americans. It also addresses the exclusion of Korean adoptees from Asian immigration history. In making this argument, I examine the multiple domains that enacted this racial project, including policy (macro), family socialization (proximate), and interpersonal interactions (micro), and the effect on Korean

adoptees. By doing so, I demonstrate how structural and cultural forces combine to facilitate racial meanings and how the effects of it can be seen through everyday people and in everyday life.

Pertaining to the family socialization and interpersonal interactions domain of this racial project, I find that adoptive parents approached their Korean children's ethnic background as an ethnic option (Waters 1999) similar to how whites employ temporary ethnic symbols to express a connection to their family background (Gans 1979). This approach is evident in parents' strategies for racial and ethnic socialization and how they addressed racism. However, unlike white Americans, Asian Americans cannot freely display and hide their ethnic background. This approach to Korean adoptees' heritage culture and racial group membership left them unprepared to handle experiences of racial teasing, prejudice, and discrimination. Further, they felt they were unable to discuss these experiences with their adoptive parents given their parents' colorblind approach. Parents' approach to race, ethnicity, and racism effected how Korean adoptees thought about themselves as racialized beings, with most respondents identifying as white in childhood and adolescence and some continuing that identification to present day.

Chapter 3 – Reframing Belonging: Korean Adoptees' Collective Action and Cultural Production

Throughout their lives, Korean adoptees experience competing narratives of belonging. On one hand, they are socialized and often treated as honorary whites with little connection to Korea, Korean Americans, or Asian Americans. On the other hand, they experience racialized teasing and racialization as "perpetual foreigners" from peers and strangers (Tuan 1998), and the Korean government includes them as "overseas Koreans" (E. Kim 2007). As key indications of these conflicting messages, I begin by examining a recent high-profile adoptee deportation case, which troubles the idea of belonging for Korean adoptees at home in the U.S. while illustrating adoptees' persistent ties to Korea. Similar to the inception of transnational transracial adoption from Korea as a form of geopolitical disciplinary action that positioned the U.S. as big brother to a fledgling Korean nation-state, contemporary adoptee deportations serve a similar disciplinary function that revokes Asian Americans' honorary white status, repositioning them as unassimilable others.

During the time of this adoptee deportation case, two Korean adoptee documentaries, *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) and *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016)*,* were entering into mainstream media. I analyze these media in relation to the agency adoptees assert in crafting their own narratives of identity, both as individuals and collectively. I also examine how adoptees are able to activate a shared identity around their ethnicity *and* adoptive status to engage in advocacy for adoptee citizenship rights. Even as respondents draw upon racialized scripts to frame the movement for "citizenship for all adoptees," it is their

adoptive status combined with their ethnicity (not race) that becomes politicized.

Taken together, by using AsianCrit as a framework to analyze these findings, I

demonstrate the competing ways these Asian Americans are racialized based on

their unique social location (i.e., ethnicity, adoptive status, *and* immigration

status), which is different from other Asian Americans, the changing nature of

their racialization over the life course, and how they actively attempt to reframe

that racialization.

Chapter 4 – Neither Quite White nor Completely Korean: The Role of

Proximate Social Structures in "Korean Adoptee" Identity Formation

Korean transnational transracial adoptees occupy a unique racial identity in-

between position because of their adoption into white families. Though their

identities as white family members and Korean heritage culture group members

are important to their sense of belonging, these identities are at odds with one

another (Docan-Morgan 2010b; Lee 2003; Lee et al. 2010). In response to this

identity dilemma, some Korean adoptees create a distinct "Korean adoptee"

identity. This identity does not merely denote adoption as a fact of their personal

history but rather merges their white cultural upbringing, racialization as Asian

Americans, and Korean heritage culture exploration. In this chapter, I describe

what the "Korean adoptee" identity is and how it differs from existing literature's

focus on adoptive identity as a personal identity. I demonstrate how proximate

social structures, specifically social networking sites, such as Facebook Groups,

provide a space for Korean adoptees to imbue the label of adoptee with positive

shared meaning, facilitate the creation of "Korean adoptee" as a shared category of group membership, and how this identity is enacted offline.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

In the closing chapter, I synthesize the findings, analyses, and interpretations of the previous chapters and provide recommendations for policy, practice, and future research. In particular, I discuss the implications of this research for AsianCrit and sociology of race and ethnicity, specifically what this research tells us about U.S. ideologies of race, family, and national belonging. I also detail what this research demonstrates about identity-making in regards to social identity and the importance of proximate social structures for reinscribing meaning into identity labels.

CHAPTER 2

Adopting the Model Minority Myth:

Korean Adoption as a Racial Project

> They go through all the classes about ways to assimilate your daughter to the U.S. … My parents were given the advice of, 'Oh, no. You want her to feel like she's American and from the U.S. and understand this culture.' They didn't know what was best to do.
>
> Amber, a 36-year-old Korean adoptee woman

> Anytime you have to identify demographics of a survey or document, I just felt funny filling in Asian Pacific Islander because I really don't think I'm Asian, especially before going to Korea, I really would identify more with Caucasian because the only thing I really had as a part of me was my physical appearance that I guess I didn't know if I was Asian. I didn't know the culture. I didn't know any other Asian individuals who could even … my family taught me some things about the culture, but I didn't know anything, so I would identify more as Caucasian when I was younger growing up in my parents' household. Even in my early 20s: I'm Caucasian.
>
> Hannah, a 30-year-old Korean adoptee woman

As a result of the Korean War and as early as 1953, the U.S. began adopting children from Korea (Park Nelson 2009). Korean adoption was framed not only as humanitarian aid but also Christian duty and U.S. patriotism (E. Kim 2008; Oh 2015; Pate 2014). As such, Korean adoption served particular ideological roles in U.S. society. Yet, Korean adoption has not been acknowledged for its contributions to conceptualizations of what it means to be Asian in America. In fact, until recently Korean adoption was excluded from Asian immigration history (Ceniza Choy 2016). Therefore, in this chapter, I ask: how did Korean adoption contribute to the model minority myth? How does including Korean adoption into Asian immigration history provide a more comprehensive understanding of

mainstream conceptualizations of what it means to be Asian in America. To answer these questions, I draw upon multiple contextual levels – including policy (macro), family socialization (proximate), and interpersonal interactions (micro).

In arguing for Korean adoption's role in facilitating the model minority myth and contributing to how Asian Americans, but also Asians abroad, were construed ideologically, I extend this argument to examine the effects of this project on Korean adoptees' racial identity. Where other work primarily focuses on socioeconomic indicators or intermarriage rates (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Sakamoto et al. 2009; Waters & Jiménez 2005; Xie & Goyette 2004), I provide evidence of another domain of honorary whiteness – the interpersonal level via adoptive parents' family making and child rearing. Doing so not only contributes to understandings of honorary whiteness but it also engages in a long-standing debate in social psychology about the role of structure and culture in identity development.

In order to fully comprehend the role of Korean adoption within U.S. racial and political discourse and the effects on Korean adoptees themselves, Korean adoption must be contextualized not only within the geopolitical relations of the day but also within the national conversation regarding Asians in America, particularly Japanese and Chinese. A 1966 *New York Times* article by sociologist William Peterson, entitled "Success Story, Japanese-American style," outlined the many obstacles Japanese Americans had overcome, their educational

achievement, and low crime rates, touting them as exemplary citizens. In 1981, then President Ronald Reagan reiterated this belief in his proclamation for Asian Pacific Heritage Week stating, "Overcoming great hardships, they [Asian and Pacific Americans] have lived the American dream, and continue as exemplars of hope and inspiration not only to their fellow Americans, but also to the new groups of Asian and Pacific peoples who even now are joining the American family" (Proclamation 4837). In the 1980s a series of newspaper stories and news programs examined these "model minorities," including features from *Newsweek* (1982)*, U.S. News & World Report* (1984)*, Time* (1987)*,* and *60 Minutes* (CBS 1987)*.*

 Though these instances may have popularized the term, the origins of this myth of East Asian success and assimilability began decades earlier, taking shape as early as the 1950s (Wu 2014). Therefore, in order to examine how Korean adoption contributed to the burgeoning model minority myth, I begin with a brief overview of how the U.S. viewed its largest and longest-standing Asian American populations in the early 20th century. Then, I discuss Korean immigration to the U.S. prior to the Korean War before turning to the founding years of U.S. adoption from Korea. It is within this socio-historic background that I make my argument that adoption from Korea was an important element that reinforced the model minority myth. After presenting this framing of Korean adoption, I present my empirical findings, including adoptive parents' approaches to racial and ethnic socialization and how adoptees' thought about their racial and ethnic group

membership. In examining Korean adoptees' socialization and identity, I identify the varying structural and cultural forces shaping their identity. I discuss these findings in relation to how adoptive parents' parenting practices contribute to an ongoing racial project that reinforces a racial hierarchy characterized by comparative racialization, whereby the subordination of racial groups are interrelated (Gotanda 2000; Hong and Ferguson 2011), shaping how Korean adoptees make sense of their racial group membership.

FROM YELLOW PERIL TO MODEL MINORITY: RACIAL LIBERALISM AND THE RACIAL ORDER DURING THE COLD WAR

By the 1940s there were approximately 77,500 people of Chinese descent in the U.S. largely concentrated in California, New York, and the Mississippi Delta (Wu 2014). Chinese Americans were largely perceived as a threatening "yellow peril." Xenophobia against Chinese Americans stemmed from their migration to the U.S. in the mid 19th century as contract labor for California gold mines and then the transcontinental railroad (Hsu 2015). Chinese laborers were used as an effective economic wedge first against working-class whites (Tichenor 2002) then later, after emancipation, against freed slaves in the South (Zhao 2002). In both instances, Chinese migrants were exploited sources of labor that contributed to race and class tensions.

Although Chinese people had been in the U.S. since the late 1840s, laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and California Land restrictions, ensured their marginality (Hsu 2015). Chinese were both criticized for their inability to assimilate while policies ensured that they could not reap the benefits of their labor and social participation within the U.S. However, public opinion about Chinese Americans changed after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. As China allied with the U.S. in World War II, sentiments towards Chinese at home shifted to inclusion and integration.

Prior to the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, Asians in America were regarded as one menacing group. However, World War II made separating Asians in America by their ethnic group a necessity to delineate friend from foe (*Life* 1941; *Time* 1941). On February 19, 1942 President Roosevelt signed into order Executive Order 9066 resulting in the forced removal and incarceration of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese descent, over half of whom were American citizens, to 10 internment camps throughout the interior U.S. Internment camps not only demonstrated the U.S.'s commitment to proactively stopping domestic threats, but they also served as grounds to re-create Japanese Americans into model citizens. The War Relocation Authority (WRA) used internment as an opportunity to inculcate prisoners into white American middle-class values. The WRA, in conjunction with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), promoted resettlement and military service as a way to integrate Japanese Americans into the U.S. polity (Wu 2014). Resettlement sought to end

Japanese ethnic enclaves and establish internees within white middle-class America, and military service served as a way for Japanese Americans to demonstrate their loyalty to the U.S.

Chinese Americans capitalized on the initial Cold War period as a time to demonstrate their loyalty to the U.S. and their difference from Japanese Americans (Wu 2014). Unlike Japanese Americans, whose assumed ties to Japan made them threats to the U.S., Chinese Americans benefited from their assumed ties to China as a valuable component of U.S.-China allyship against the Communist threat. The geopolitical context made it necessary to reconstruct the image of both Chinese and Japanese Americans. As such, the U.S. government and press had reason to craft a specific narrative about each ethnic group, and both Asian American groups had a need to reframe their image from threatening "yellow peril" to "model minority." Japanese and Chinese Americans both individually and through ethnic organizations continued to push for acknowledgement as citizens and secure their citizenship rights (Wu 2014). Chinese and Japanese ethnic organizations drew upon American ideals of family, patriotism, and work ethic to demonstrate their citizenship (Wu 2014). At the same time, they minimized juvenile delinquency, poverty, need for social services, and discrimination within or experienced by their ethnic community (Wu 2014). Taken together, Chinese and Japanese Americans' efforts would contribute to what is now known as the model minority myth. This myth served to secure Chinese and Japanese Americans' inclusion within the U.S. polity by

portraying them as extra-ordinarily equipped to fit into the American ideal.

However, these Asian Americans were simultaneously extra-American and not

American enough; their inclusion was predicated on their racial and ethnic

difference.

By the mid-to-late 1950s, the campaigns for citizenship that both groups of Asian

Americans launched had taken root (Wu 2014). Even as Chinese Americans

emphasized their Chinese-ness and Japanese Americans de-emphasized their

Japanese-ness, mainstream press, academics, and politicians came to the same

conclusions about their "culture." Chinese and Japanese "culture," especially

values around familial piety and educational attainment, was responsible for their

ability to assimilate into U.S. society, marking them as "model minorities." The

implied message was that other non-white groups (re: Black Americans) lacked

the requisite "cultural" values and beliefs to integrate into the U.S. polity. Thus,

the emphasis on Chinese and Japanese "culture" served an ideological role,

bolstering racial discourse about the inferiority of Black Americans and the

superiority of white Americans. In this way, Black Americans, white Americans,

and Asian Americans were racially triangulated in comparison to one another

with whites positioned above both Black Americans and Asian Americans, Asian

Americans valorized culturally above Black Americans, and, although they were

lauded here for their assimilation, Asian Americans still experiencing limited

social citizenship (Kim 1999).

The focus on Japanese and Chinese Americans' inclusion into the fabric of the U.S. served as evidence of racial liberalism's core tenets – assimilation, integration, and state intervention. Their assimilation also exemplified Cold War domestic ideology, particularly the focus on family. In a time period where previously only regionally-specific racial hierarchies included people outside of the Black-white racial order, the Cold War helped usher in a new national racial order that shifted from a Black-white configuration to include these "model minorities" (Wu 2014). This integration of Asian Americans was facilitated by internment, demonstrating the need for state intervention in successful assimilation (Wu 2014).

As the U.S. resolved the Asian question, the end of the Korean War provided a new avenue for understanding Asians in America, this time through Korean War immigration. It is within this nascent model minority perspective of the two most substantial and visible Asian American groups in the U.S., as well as Cold War ideology, that Korean War immigration occurred. Given the U.S.'s failure to secure a clear victory in Korea, the U.S. military felt increasing pressure to reframe the U.S.'s involvement in Korea in a positive light (Oh 2015).

KOREAN ADOPTION IN THE U.S.: A RACIAL PROJECT

Koreans in America: Pre-Korean War

In the 1940s, prior to the Korean War and the beginning of Korean adoption, there were less than 10,000 Koreans in the U.S. and Hawai'i (at the time a U.S.

territory) (Dolan and Christensen 2010). From 1903-1905, approximately 7,200 Korean men immigrated to Hawai'i as laborers on sugar plantations (Patterson 1994). Shortly thereafter, from 1905-1924, approximately 2,000 Koreans immigrated to Hawai'i and California. The majority were "picture brides" to the single male laborers and about 600 were political refugees and students involved in the anti-Japanese independence movement (Min 2011). Whereas the migrant laborers, their wives, and children resided in Hawai'i and California, the political refugees and students were concentrated in New York and neighboring East Coast states (Min 2011). After Korea attained its independence from Japan in 1945, most of the Korean population who were political refugees or students returned to Korea taking on leadership roles in the universities and government (Min 2011). For example, Syngman Rhee, who was active in Korea's independence movement, entered the U.S. in 1904 and obtained his B.A. from George Washington University, M.A. from Harvard, and Ph.D. from Princeton. After Korea attained independence, he returned to Korea. He would become South Korea's first president (1948-1960). The National Origins Act of 1924, however, halted Asian immigration, ending this first wave of Korean immigration to the U.S. and Hawai'i.

The second wave of Korean immigration coincided with the Korean War (1950-1953) and the McCarran and Walter Act of 1952, which abolished the ban on Asian immigration. Although the 1952 Act instituted a strict quota for Asian immigrants, only 100 from each country, from the 1950s through 1964, Korean

immigrants were largely military brides of U.S. servicemen who were stationed in South Korea or Korean children adopted by white American couples (Min 2011). This wave of predominantly female immigrants contrasted the mainly male immigrants of the previous wave. Additionally, unlike the previous wave of Korean immigrants who settled among co-ethnics, these Korean immigrants were largely divorced from the Korean community. In fact, many Korean wives of U.S. servicemen found themselves shunned from the Korean community for their presumed immoral behavior (Yuh 2004).

Adding to the unique composition of this wave of Korean immigration were Korean adoptees. Many Korean adoptees during this time period were the "Amerasian" offspring of U.S. soldiers and Korean women. Detailing the exceptional immigration status of adoptees, Kim Park Nelson (2016) writes:

> Beginning in 1953, Korean children were admitted to the United States under the 1953 Refugee Relief Act. When the act expired in 1957, adoptees slated for travel to the United States had, for the most of that year, no legal way to immigrate, and some first-generation adoptees had to be individually admitted into the United States by special acts of Congress during this period. The Refugee-Escapee Act of 1957 was the first legislation to specifically address the admission of foreign adopted children to the United States as refugees. Grassroots lobbying efforts by American adoptive parents and adoption agencies led to the 1957 law being extended three times between 1957 and 1961. This legislation was enacted specifically to allow Korean adoption to the United States, as Korea was the only country sending significant numbers of children to the United States through adoption during this period (p. 52).

Overall, since the Koreans of this immigration wave were joining their American families – whether by marriage or by adoption – they did not fall under the McCarran and Walter Act's quotas (Oh 2015). In total, approximately 15,000 Koreans immigrated to the U.S. during this time (Min 2011).

Although the number of Korean immigrants during the second wave may seem modest in relation to the overall number of immigrants admitted during that time period, it is notable for how the composition of this wave intersected with prevailing notions of Asian Americans. Unlike the single male Asian laborers that characterized earlier immigrants, the second wave Korean immigrants were predominately women married to white U.S. servicemen and children adopted to white U.S. families. This second wave of Korean immigration happened as the model minority myth of Japanese and Chinese Americans was taking root and further demonstrated its claims of Asian assimilability as these Korean women and children expressly became members of white families. As such, the institutionalization of Korean adoption played a crucial, yet under examined, role in solidifying the East Asian model minority myth trifecta.

Korean Adoptees in America: Post-Korean War and Beyond

In the immediate post-Korean War period, Korean orphans were depicted in the media as 'Korean waifs,' 'waifs of war,' and military 'mascots' (E. Kim 2008; Park Nelson 2009). In fact, many U.S. G.I.s returned to the U.S. with 'mascots' (i.e., Korean boys), and U.S. soldiers and chaplains often wrote home asking for supplies for orphanages they had established (Ceniza Choy 2013). In this way, Korean orphans were framed as objects in need of humanitarian aid. American servicemen were framed in a "paternalistic role as the main supporters of orphanages and conduits for charitable donations from concerned Americans at home" (E. Kim 2008:7). This framing ignored the reality that some servicemen were actual fathers to children of Korean women who did not fulfill their paternal

role due to stigmas of illegitimacy and miscegenation. The humanitarian response after the Korean War has been conceptualized as militarized humanitarianism (Pate 2014). Militarized humanitarianism is "the ways in which humanitarianism has been appropriated and used by the military to service its own purposes" and "the process in which military personnel become seen as humanitarians" (Pate 2014:34). Ensuring the welfare of Korean children became a way for the U.S. military to save face in light of their failure of securing a clear victory during the Korean War (Oh 2015).

Early depictions of Korean orphans spurred many U.S. families to adopt from Korea. However, it was after Harry and Bertha Holt's very public adoption of eight Korean children in 1955 that the demand for Korean children soared (E. Kim 2010). Because American Christian missionaries were among some of the only American civilians in Korea immediately prior to and during the Korean War and because military personnel often made their pleas through their home churches in the U.S., Korean adoption became linked to Christian duty (E. Kim 2008; Oh 2015). In fact, the Holts' framed their adoptions from Korea and facilitating adoption for other couples as a direct mission from God (Oh 2015; Pate 2014).

Adoption from Korea, however, was not only a way to fulfill Christian duty. In addition to Korean adoption as humanitarian aid, militarized humanitarianism, or Christian humanitarianism, adoption of Korean children was seen as a way to

prevent the inculcation of Communism in this population of Koreans (Pate 2014).

As helpless children, they escaped the racialization of a "yellow peril" and were

still able to be saved from the ideological indoctrination of Communism. Through

adoption then, U.S. couples had a platform to fight the spread of communism. As

such, adoption from Korea contributed to a larger political project, framing the

U.S. as big brother to a fledging Korean nation-state.

The Holts, and later the Holt adoption agency, were key in relaxing adoption

standards of foreign children (Park Nelson 2009). Although by the late 1950s the

population of abandoned mixed-race Korean children declined, the rate of child

abandonment in the general population soared (E. Kim 2008), and "by 1965, 70

percent of children being sent overseas were of full Korean parentage" (E. Kim

2008:18). While the initial wave of adopted children was largely war orphans, this

next wave of children was predominately economic orphans. Although their

parents were living, they were unable to care for their child(ren) due to extreme

poverty throughout Korea as the nation struggled to rebuild after the war (E. Kim

2008; Pate 2014; Oh 2015). Korea's reliance on the U.S. military for its social

welfare translated into a lack of Korean government-implemented family services

paving the way for transnational adoption to become incorporated into Korean

society.

Within the context of U.S. race relations, Korean adoption was part of a racial

project, which simultaneously bolstered white American couples' fitness as

parents while marking Asian children as more desirable and assimilable to whiteness than Black children (Oh 2015). In this way, adoptable Korean children were granted a model minority status vis-à-vis adoptable Black children. "Americans thought of Korean children as possessing a certain racial flexibility, a 'benign. . .racial difference' that promised both easy assimilability and manageable exoticism" (Oh 2015:159). This came at a time when immigration policy included race-based restrictions prohibiting Asian immigration (1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, 1924 Immigration Act) or permitted Asian immigration in specific and exceptional ways (1943 Magnuson Bill, War Brides acts of 1945 and 1947). Japanese internment was only a decade prior to the first wave of Korean adoptees (1943 War Relocation Authority Resettlement Project). During this time, anti-Asian propaganda in the American media positioned Japanese Americans as a threatening non-American out-group in contrast to the (white) American in-group (Lee 2003). Interestingly, as potentially adoptable babies, Korean adoptees escaped the racialization of these adult Asian counterparts.

Social work prescribed best practices in the early decades of Korean adoption were that adoptive families assimilate their Korean children into (white) American culture (Scroggs and Heitfield 2001). No special attention was to be given to their Korean ethnic background. This view of Korean children's malleability coincided with the 1950s – 1960s model minority myth about Asian assimilability and then later, multiculturalism, which celebrated difference without interrogating historical and systemic racial differences. By the 1980s

transnational transracial adoption was being heralded as evidence of the U.S.'s
racial progressiveness.

In sum, the origins of Korean adoption were linked to specific political and racial
projects, which functioned to further denigrate other minoritized groups at home
and abroad. Whereas the media portrayals and policy decisions reviewed in this
section operated at an ideological level, in the next section I demonstrate how this
racial project was enacted via interpersonal interaction and proximate social
structures, the closer and more intimate social contexts such as family and peer
groups (Merolla et al. 2012).

**FROM MODEL MINORITY TO HONORARY WHITE: KOREAN
ADOPTEES' RACIAL AND ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION**

Through societal racial discourse including media, public opinion, and policy
decisions, Asians in America were positioned as model minorities. This framing
coupled with the Christian humanitarianism view of Korean transnational
adoption facilitated U.S. couples' adoption of Korean children, but how else did
this framing affect individual families? More precisely, how did parents
reproduce this belief as they raised their Korean children? How did the model
minority myth and adoptive parents' parenting practices shape Korean adoptees'
identity development?

In what follows, I begin by examining Korean adoptees' perceptions of their
parents' attempts at racial and ethnic socialization, giving attention to if and how

they were connected to other Korean adoptees, Korean Americans, and/or Asian

Americans as well as how racism was addressed. Then, I examine the effect of

these parental strategies on how Korean adoptees understood themselves as

racialized beings. Where broader racial discourse publicized the model minority

view of Asian Americans and adoptable Korean children, through parental

socialization Korean adoptees came to understand their position as honorary

whites, especially as adoptive parents employed colorblind ideology in

approaching their children's racial and ethnic group membership.

Rather than focus on structural or cultural forces exclusively, these findings

illustrate how both contribute to identity development. Whereas the model

minority myth focuses on Asian Americans' socioeconomic attainment, honorary

whiteness denotes an experience of acceptance, albeit conditional. These findings

demonstrate how the model minority myth was incorporated into potential

adoptive parents' decision-making in adopting Korean children, which then

granted these Korean children an intimate level of honorary whiteness. Korean

adoptees then internalized their position as honorary whites.

"I don't really want to do this anymore": Korean Ethnicity as an Ethnic Option

Virtually all of my survey respondents (n=99, 92%) and interviewees (n=34;

92%) reported growing up in a predominantly white hometown whether that was

a rural area, suburban community, or city neighborhood (For a detailed

breakdown of racial demographics, see Appendix C Table 2). In many cases,

respondents were the only Asian and only non-white person in their community.

In other instances, respondents recalled one or two Asian families in their area. For most, however, they did not encounter their first Asian peer until college. Their community settings structured the type of relationships Korean adoptees could have, the types of identities they could develop, and the cultural resources at their disposal.

That white couples residing in predominantly white areas would pursue adoption from Korea provides some evidence of the racial exceptionalism view of Korean children. It seems that adoptive parents believed that adopting Korean children would neither require special attention to race or ethnicity nor would the presence of Korean children interrupt their predominantly white environments. Adoptive parents approached their adoptive child's upbringing as they would their biological child. From my respondents' accounts, their families did not move to more racially diverse neighborhoods in order to accommodate their Korean child(ren). Although most respondents generally felt accepted within their predominantly white hometowns, they also described feeling different as the only Asian.

Even though they resided in predominately white neighborhoods, many parents did engage in efforts to connect their child(ren) with fellow adoptees. When I asked interviewees how important they thought it was to their parents that they had connections to other Koreans or Asian Americans, almost all of the interviewees responded with if and how their parents engaged with Korean

adoptees and Korean *adoptee* activities. While it is important for adoptees (and adoptive parents) to be connected to other adoptees and adoptive families in regards to normalizing their family formation, providing a space for adoptees and parents to discuss issues specific to their family composition, and connecting both parents and children with resources, their immediate response of Korean *adoptee* connections highlights the lack of engagement with Korean American communities. Instead of understanding their Korean child as part of a Korean diaspora, parents approached their children as everyday (white) Americans.

Most respondents (n=22, 59%) described some efforts that their parents made to connect them with adoptees, even if those attempts were few and far between.

Figure 1. Perceptions of Importance of Adoptee and Korean Connections
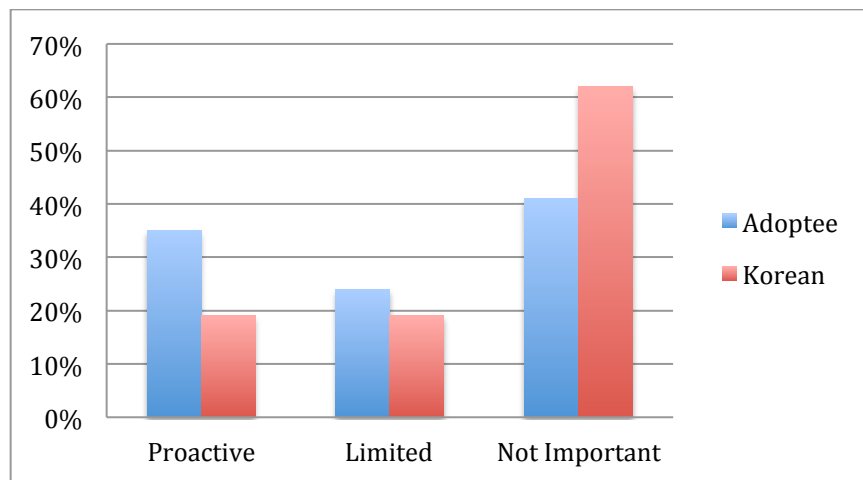
In general, I find that most of the attempts adoptive parents engaged in to involve their child with Koreans (re: Korean adoptees) fall in line with conceptualizations

of symbolic ethnicity. Symbolic ethnicity involves temporary displays of ethnic

symbols such as attire, food, and historical cultural icons (Waters 1999). The

ethnic symbols deployed are "occasional means for maintaining a connection to

ethnic identity. That connection may even be emotional, but it is usually transitory

and rarely long lasting" (Gans 2017).

Even though respondents characterized their immediate communities as

predominantly white, for some respondents, long-standing adoption from Korea

to their communities led to increased resources or nearby cities offered

opportunities for connections to other adoptees. David, a 29-year-old Korean

adoptee man adopted to a city in Minnesota, described his involvement in Korean

adoptee activities growing up. As the state with the largest population of Korean

adoptees per capita in the U.S. (Park Nelson 2016), there are various resources for

adoptive families. He explained:

> In Minnesota it's called Korean Culture Camp, so you start as a
> Kindergartner and it goes all the way through 6th grade, and then when
> you get into 7th grade, you can actually be like a teen helper, like
> assistant. It keeps you involved with the program. It's mostly Korean
> adoptees. It was cool. I did a Korean Immersion Camp through Concordia
> College, and so I did it for 2 weeks one year, and then I did it for a month
> the next year and that was for high school credit and college credit.

David later described that his mother saw these activities as important and

necessary for her two adopted children's development. She was a teacher who

worked with students with emotional and behavioral disorders and "was just at the

forefront of trying to maintain a health environment for her adopted kids."

David's mother was one of the more proactive adoptive parents, and the resources

in Minnesota allowed David to be engaged with both Korean adoptees via Korean Culture Camp and more in-depth Korean culture via Korean Immersion Camp.

James, a 28-year-old Korean adoptee man adopted to a city in Illinois, described the efforts his parents took to involve him in adoptee events that took place in a nearby city:

> It was important to them that we [he and his adopted Korean brother] had that connection, so 'cause they also wanted to let us have friends who were also adopted as well. So, like I said before, we were part of an organization that was founded by parents with adopted children, with children from all across the world, and so most of us were from Korea. We had a couple from Europe, Russia, and South America. And, it was pretty cool. They did a lot of sort of cultural things, particularly for the parents so they could kind of learn about the cultures of the children. Then for us, we kinda got a little bit of it, like the fun stuff that kids would probably be interested in. But, otherwise there was a lot of just generally fun stuff for kids. So it was almost like going to a birthday party once a month. It was pretty cool. I still have some of those connections from whenever I was a kid.

Whereas David's activities seemed to impart more Korean adoptee or Korean cultural exposure, James and his brother participated in general international adoptee activities. Through the parent-led adoptive family organization, James met and made long-lasting friendships with other international adoptees. However, his participation in the international adoption organization did not help cultivate a Korean identity as he was growing up. This may have been in part because of the organization's international focus versus a specific Korean focus but also because, as James notes, the parents were exposed to various cultural elements but the children were engaged in more of "just generally fun stuff for kids."

Most respondents described more intermittent Korean adoptee engagement.

Alyssa, a 32-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a city in Maryland,

described a typical experience.

> We would go to that camp. I think maybe we only went once or twice
> when I was young. I don't remember all that much of it. Then we would
> go to Korean festivals. To be honest with you, there were quite a few
> Korean adoptees in my high school and I was friends with some of them,
> but we didn't really ... We would talk about it, but it wasn't ... It was just
> more of a statement of fact or something like that. We would talk about
> what our Korean names were and what our back-stories were. Maybe we
> were too young to get into really deep questions about things or
> something.

Alyssa had some engagement with Korean adoptee and Korean cultural activities.

She even had Korean adoptee classmates. However, Alyssa's excerpt underscores

a lack of substantial engagement with these activities. Alyssa shares that she

attended a Korean culture camp but it did not seem to be an important part of her

childhood. Korean culture camps are multi-day or week-long cultural immersion

programs catered to Korean adoptees. During the camps, attendees learn about

Korean culture, history, art, language, and food. Respondents most frequently

mentioned participation in Korean culture camps as how their parents exposed

them to other Koreans and/or Asian Americans. In Alyssa's case, even though she

had Korean adoptee friends, they did not have a language to discuss their adoptive

status.

Patrick, a 30-year-old Korean adoptee man adopted to a suburban city in Indiana,

described a similar exposure to fellow Korean adoptees.

I think they thought [connecting him to Korean adoptees] was important because looking back, I knew who all the Korean adoptees were in the area. Between us, we didn't really talk about it probably because we were just still trying to fit in. Yeah, there is one that I went to high school with. I have known her for my whole life, and we went to the picnics together. We hung out sometimes but we didn't sit and as we were playing video games say, "Hey, what's it like being a Korean adoptee to you?" or "Do you feel comfortable with your identity? Do you ever want to meet your birth parents?" We never talked about that. I'd be curious of what other people say especially in Minnesota where there is a lot of Korean adoptees.

Echoing Alyssa's characterization of her Korean adoptee interactions, Patrick describes how his friendship with a fellow Korean adoptee did not delve deeply into their adoption experience. As he points out, "we didn't really talk about it probably because we were just still trying to fit in." Whereas their friendship may have provided an unspoken comfort, verbalizing their shared adoption background may have been too much of an explicit challenge to their ability to fit in. Even though Patrick and his friend attended adoptive family picnics together, it is clear that those events were infrequent. The irregularity of these Korean adoptee activities may have contributed to the symbolic nature of his Korean heritage. Patrick imagines that people who grew up in communities with a more substantial population of Korean adoptees would have a different experience, perhaps even the ability to feel more confident in their Korean identity.

Kendra, a 32-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a city in central Michigan, who did grow up in an area with a larger number of Korean adoptees, described her experience, stating:

I think it was really important for my parents [that she had connection to other adoptees], to a point where once I got a little bit older they kept

pushing it. I was like, "I don't really want to do this anymore, I'm good." I mentioned the Korean adoptee group growing up. We celebrated holidays together. We also had a Christmas party, a Halloween party, an Easter egg hunt. That group had, gosh, at least a dozen kids plus their parents. For a town of 25,000 in central Michigan to have that many kids nearby ... I grew up with, I can think of at least a half dozen people within either way of me that were Korean adopted. Then my parents always sent us to Korean culture camps in the summer. We always had tons of books on cultural-related things at home. We went on a homeland tour when I was 14. My mom tried to cook Korean foods. It was always just really important. We would drive an hour away to go to one of the only Korean restaurants in the area, so it was really important to my parents that we had exposure to other Korean adoptees.

Kendra's parents were extremely proactive in providing or finding opportunities for her to connect with other Korean adoptees and explore her heritage culture. However, similar to other respondents, when I asked her how she thought about herself, she stated, "Instantly, I don't think anything about race or ethnicity… I think about my personality and my goals and my drive more than anything besides race and ethnicity." Despite her parents' proactive approach to Korean adoptee socialization, these activities did little to inscribe a Korean identification. Kendra attributed her identity to her parents stating, "I think I attribute that so much to being adopted and being adopted into the family that I was, and how lucky and fortunate I was to have parents who pushed me to do whatever I wanted to do and be whoever I wanted to be, but also instill in me a fundamental relationship with Korea and that culture and that part of me *to whatever degree I wanted it to be, however I saw that fitting into my life*" (emphasis added).

In her book, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America,* Mary C. Waters (1990) finds that middle-class whites claim European ethnicity devoid of specific

meaning or participation in ethnic organizations and/or communities. This symbolic ethnicity is largely voluntary and though it has a "lack of demonstrable content" it "combines individuality with feelings both of community and conformity through an exercise of personal choice" (Waters 1990:151). Here Kendra describes a similar level of personal choice as she refers to incorporating Korean culture "to whatever degree I wanted." Through symbolic ethnicity, adherents are able to feel unique but also part of a community to the extent that they choose.

Although Kendra's parents made a concerted effort to connect her with other Korean adoptees, at a certain age, she became disinterested. Other respondents mentioned becoming disengaged with attempts at Korean adoptee (and Korean ethnic) involvement because these activities further emphasized their racial and heritage culture difference from their families and friends. Research finds that feelings of belonging to their adoptive families, including racially, ethnically, and nationally, are important to transnational adoptees' sense of well-being (Lee et al. 2010). That their Korean heritage could be something discarded, however, points to the symbolic framing of their heritage culture.

As these excerpts indicate, the most common ethnic engagement adoptive parents offered was Korean culture camp. While Korean culture camp may seem like a proactive step towards teaching an adopted Korean child about her culture, and in many respects it is, this form of connection to Korean culture is also very limited.

As the respondents explained, the majority of participants in Korean culture camp were other adoptees, and in some cases these camps were led by other adoptees. Though the camps give adoptees a space to make connections to other adoptees while learning about their heritage culture, they are divorced from Korean communities and the concomitant racial socialization. In many ways, culture camps operate as a safe and symbolic way for adoptive parents to engage with their child's birth culture (Quiroz 2012). Further, the sporadic nature of these interactions bolsters its symbolic nature. Culture camps are not integrated into the everyday of the family or child. As a result, it was much harder for respondents to continue what they learned or to develop an identity around Korean culture because of this lack of sustained engagement. For my respondents, even maintaining the friendships they made at Korean culture camp were relegated to the summers as they were growing up. The other most common avenues through which parents connect their adoptive child to their heritage culture – homeland tours and Korean food – were likewise intermittent activities that reinforced the symbolic nature of adoptees' Korean culture.

For the other 41% (n=15) of respondents, providing connections to Korean adoptees was not a priority. Angela, a 33-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a city in Washington state described her parents' lack of intentionally providing connections to adoptees, stating:

> I don't think it was very important ... I don't think there were many adoptees at my school or that many people of color, but I did gravitate, I remember having a couple really good friends that are Filipina and my dad, I remember him telling me he really liked that, seeing that. I do still

have a group, mostly white friends too from growing up but I remember he's like, "Oh that's okay." He thought too, I remember when people asked, "Oh are you going to move to a different community when you get your adopted daughter because she's Asian?" My dad was like, "No, why would we do that?" He was like, "I grew up on this lake. I feel like if anybody's going to embrace her it will be this community." I don't think he really thought about the other, the flip side of that. He just thought about the love that I would receive and not really the color of people's skin and how that mattered.

Angela's excerpt underscores a common approach to socialization that adoptive parents took. First, her father took a colorblind approach whereby there were not unique accommodations that his daughter would need. Even as community members highlighted her racial difference, suggesting that a more racially diverse area would be beneficial, he did not consider racial diversity as important to pursue. Instead, he felt that his acceptance within the community (and white privilege) would transfer to his daughter. Second, her father to some extent did acknowledge her non-whiteness in that he liked to see her with Asian friends. However, these friendships were not something that he proactively fostered, instead they were purely by happenstance. It was incumbent upon her to pursue these connections.

Whereas Angela describes the lack of engagement with Korean adoptees as benign neglect, other respondents characterized their adoptive parents' choices as purposeful. Stacey, a 38-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a city in western Massachusetts, explained:

I sort of think that they wanted me to just forget that I was adopted … I think in their own way they didn't want me to feel different. They wanted me to feel like I belonged. I think while they wouldn't really say that, I

think that was probably a big concern to them. They wanted to convince me that, "No, nobody treats you different. If you feel that way, it's all in your head." I think there's just some stuff that they probably were trying to just reinforce in their own head. I think the reality of looking at someone, who you are raising, and they look nothing like you, or look inexplicably different than you, it's got to cross your mind. It just has to.

Within Stacey's excerpt there are several key points related to how adoptive parents approached their adopted Korean children's role within the family and society at large. First, Stacey states that she believes her parents "wanted me to just forget that I was adopted." As such, they did not or could not connect her with other adoptees as that would accentuate her difference – racially and in terms of how she came into the family. Second, just as some adoptees did not pursue adoptee connections or discuss their adoptive background even among adoptee peers because they wanted to "fit in," here we see Stacey's parents wanting her to "feel like I belonged." The implicit meaning is that adoptees should feel that they "belonged" to their white families and white society. However, Stacey's next statement reveals that despite her parents' lack of engagement with adoptees and their desire for her to feel as if she belonged, they did, in fact, understand that she would or might be treated differently. Rather than address her difference, they "wanted to convince me that nobody treats you different. If you feel that way, it's all in *your* head" (emphasis added). Whereas other respondents explained their parents' approach due to colorblindness or assumptions around assimilation, Stacey offers the explanation that her parents were trying to overcome their own insecurities around race and perhaps their lack of preparedness or desire to address racial issues. This connects to broader findings of white parents'

avoidance of discussing race-related issues with their children (Hagerman 2016; Underhill 2017).

While Stacey believes that her parents took intentional steps to ignore her racial difference, other respondents described more unintentional motives. Jessa, the 56-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to the suburbs of southern California, described her parents' approach to her Korean adoptee socialization, sharing:

> Well, they really don't know. They never really went out of their way to seek out other Asians or the Asian culture or other Koreans or other Korean adoptees. I don't know if that was a conscious thing or if that was just merely who they were. I'm going to sound a little weird, but from a family perspective and from just being around people, they really never saw me with other Asians until the world of Facebook came out …

> My dad, the closest thing that my dad has ever seen the Asian side of me is a couple of years ago I actually took him to a Korean restaurant and I introduced him to Korean food. I actually don't speak Korean, but I know enough-ish. You know, I know the five required words, and he was just like, "Huh, did not know." He, I think, thought that odd that I knew so much about Korean food, Korean culture, because I wasn't raised like that. That's all stuff that I learned about and surrounded myself with as an adult and a much older adult.

Here Jessa describes how despite adopting a Korean child, her parents were not involved in or had relationships with Asian people. In later adulthood, Jessa took it upon herself to explore her heritage culture. Her family would not even know about her relationships with other Asian Americans except for Facebook. In fact, it was the Internet and social media that facilitated her Korean adoptee exploration (For analysis on the role of social media for Korean adoptee exploration and community-building, see Chapter 4). Though Jessa does not know if she should characterize her parents' approach to her "Asian side" as intentional

or "just merely who they were," the effect is the same – her Korean-ness was a non-issue. Interestingly, Jessa describes taking her dad to a Korean restaurant as "the closest thing that my dad has ever seen the Asian side of me." In effect, her father felt that if he didn't address the "Asian side," then it was inconsequential.

Taken together, my respondents' experiences with other Korean adoptees and Korean Americans were bound by the social structures they were embedded in – their hometown communities, schools, and families. These predominately white social structures provided limited engagement with similar others, whether Koreans, Asian Americans, or adoptees, illustrating the symbolic nature of their heritage culture. For those whose parents did attempt to provide some connections to other Korean adoptees (though not to other Korean Americans), the engagement was sporadic, focused on superficial cultural elements, and excluded engagement with Korean Americans even when Korean Americans were present. Because this overwhelming focus on adoptee engagement was to the exclusion of Korean American connections, it further highlights how Korean adoptees were conceptualized as being distinct and separate from other Asian Americans, even as they were subsumed under the beliefs of Asian assimilability via the model minority myth. Korean heritage culture was approached as an individual choice divorced from the Korean American community writ large. For other respondents, connections to other Korean adoptees or Korean heritage culture were unimportant. Through their parents' colorblind approach to their racial socialization, the optional character of their Korean heritage was emphasized.

"I actually met a Korean woman one time": Connecting with Korean

Americans

Whereas several respondents noted their parents' attempts at connecting them to

Korean adoptees, respondents reported far less engagement with Korean

Americans or Asian American communities. For the most part, adoptees'

interactions with other Korean adoptees stood in for connections to Korean or

Asian Americans. This was largely reflective of the social contexts of these

adoptive families but also connected again to broader cultural understandings of

the mutability of Asians' race.

In the most explicit effort at Korean ethnic engagement, Julia, a 29-year-old

Korean adoptee woman adopted to a rural area in New York, described the

lengths her parents took to connect her and her non-adopted siblings with her

Korean heritage. She shared:

> It was very important. My parents, we had Korean foreign exchange
> students when I was younger. They had taken me to Korean churches to
> learn Korean. When I was younger they took me for lessons to try to learn
> Korean traditional instruments. The problem was me really that I didn't
> want to drive over an hour to all of this stuff and do the extra homework.
> And my parents were even willing to take Korean lessons themselves. So
> the church had like or the Korean school had a kids and an adult class, and
> my parents were going to the adult class, and like when I said I wanted
> quit, they were like, "Ok! Sure! Sounds good." Cause they were diligently
> trying. Both my mom tried and my dad tried at two different locations and
> churches and stuff. So they were very committed to it, to Korean culture,
> and everything.
>
> And even my older brother, when I was getting to be like high school, he
> took me down to New York City for some AKA [Also Known As Korean

adoptee group] events, and things, and so my brothers really loved having the foreign exchange students as well.

So the whole family and my brother came down to visit here [where she currently lives] and we [she and her husband] took them to Korean barbecue and he was using chopsticks. And I was like, "Oh you remember." And he was like, "Oh! I remember from Korean culture camp!" … It was cool. I didn't realize he remembered all of that from Korean culture camp.

Wendy: So how did your parents even find out about some of these things?

Julia: My adoption agency in [New York state] was, I think, had a big community and established, like they had an adoptive parents' thing. I was looking through my "baby box" with all the documents that related to my adoption, and my parents had homework on cultural sensitivity and they had resources about Korean culture things in the area. I think also, working for New York state and New York state health department, my mom knew about some of the resources for adopted or foster, kids in foster care and stuff, so she was really involved with New York State Citizens Coalition for Children, which focused a lot on adoptees and children's rights and children that are in foster care system and that sort of stuff. So that was one organization my mom was involved in, and then the adoption agency had, I think, a support group cause my mom went and saw Thomas Park Clement[4]. He came to [New York state] and talked about the book that he wrote, and I remember my mom coming home telling me about it and reading the book and everything. So, I mean, she went to some of those things on her own. It wasn't like she took me to that or some things.

In general, Julia's parents were proactive about Korean adoptee and Korean ethnic engagement. This excerpt underscores the effect of context for parent socialization with adoptee and Korean ethnic communities. Although Julia grew up in a predominantly white, rural area, there were community resources available in nearby cities where there was a substantial Korean population. Even though

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[4] Thomas Park Clement, author, inventor, and humanitarian, is a well-known first-wave Korean adoptee. In 1988, he founded a bio-tech company and currently he holds 42 U.S. patents with additional patents pending (NAAAP n.d.). He is the author of *The Unforgotten War* (1998) and *Dust of the Streets: The Journey of a Biracial Orphan of the Korean War* (2012). Among Korean adoptees, he is also known for his contributions to adoptees' birth family searches.

they had to drive over an hour, her parents were committed to providing heritage culture engagement through language courses and traditional music. Although Julia does not state this explicitly, her parents were less committed to building relationships with members of Korean American ethnic communities (as evidenced through the types of events they participated in). In addition to community resources, Julia's excerpt highlights the role of adoption agencies in providing resources for adoptive families. Her agency gave adoptive parents "homework on cultural sensitivity" and "resources about Korean culture things in the area." The level of cultural competency training for adoptive parents varies by adoption agency, and in some cases, these types of activities are optional (Mohanty and Newhill 2006; Nybell and Gray 2004; Vonk and Angaran 2001). Finally, at the end of the excerpt, we see the importance of parents' individual motivation to provide resources to their adopted children. Independent of what her mother participated in with Julia, her mother was involved in a children's rights organization. She also attended events to learn more about Korean adoptees (e.g., Thomas Park Clement book talk).

Julia's parents were among the most individually motivated and that exposed their children to the widest range of activities. Importantly, these activities were not just for Julia but rather the entire family including her two non-adopted brothers. As such, even though some of the activities were more symbolic in nature, their integration into the family made them more substantial than was the case with other respondents.

In the other explicit attempt at Korean ethnic engagement, Alyssa, a 32-year-old

Korean adoptee woman adopted to a city in Maryland, described how her parents

moved to a more racially diverse area. I asked her how important she thought it

was to her parents that she had connections to other Koreans or Asian Americans.

She answered:

> I think very important, but I think it was maybe in a way slightly wasted
> on me. They thought of it as more important than I thought it would be.
> They were living somewhere and it wasn't a good school district, where
> there weren't very many Asian kids. They actually moved to be in a better
> school district, where there would be more Asian people. I completely did
> not take advantage of it. They've always told me that they wished that I
> would find my birth family and stuff like that and that they want that for
> me, but I just don't ... I don't know. I feel like their efforts were wasted or
> something.

> Wendy: What about for your brother [who is also Korean adopted]?

> Alyssa: Yeah, he didn't appreciate those either. I think of myself as a self-
> aware person, but I guess I recently have been looking a little bit more into
> the Korean side of things. This is something maybe I want to integrate into
> my identity ... Even though I feel like I personally wasn't really all that
> interested, I thought maybe my brother would be interested in it. I was
> trying to get him interested in 23andMe or maybe he wanted to join some
> Facebook group or something like that. He just absolutely did not really
> want to. I guess it was wasted on him, too. He was also like a white person
> almost, I guess.

Here Alyssa's parents were conscious of the racial composition of their

neighborhood and moved to a neighborhood with a larger Asian population, an

action that no other respondents reported (though it seems the primary motivation

for moving was education quality). In general, her parents seemed open to her and

her brother exploring their heritage culture and even desiring that they find

biological family. This level of encouragement from their adoptive parents,

particularly around birth family search, is rare. Despite her parents efforts, neither she nor her brother were interested in pursuing such substantial levels of heritage culture or Korean community engagement. Even today, they maintain their disinterest leading Alyssa to describe herself and her brother as "like a white person."

Whereas Julia, Alyssa, and a couple other respondents described the efforts their parents took to connect them with an Asian American community or Korean Americans specifically, the majority of respondents did not feel that this type of engagement was important to their parents. Sarah, the 34-year-old Korean adoptee woman, described the laissez-faire attitude taken by her adoptive parents, stating:

> I actually met a Korean woman one time. My mom, she did actually try to help me in that regards. I think I was 27 or something. She introduced me to a Korean woman and that was a really interesting experience. I wouldn't say it gave me a hugely favorable impression of Korean women. I know they're all different obviously … She was trying to help me learn a little bit [of] Korean [language]. It was the first time I tried Korean food. I do love Korean food so now I've been to some Korean restaurants.

As evidence of her parents' low priority towards heritage culture socialization, Sarah's mother provided ONE opportunity for her as an adult. It is also telling that in describing the interaction Sarah says, "I know *they're* all different obviously" (emphasis added). Here Sarah distances herself from identification as a Korean woman possibly because of her own lack of cultural knowledge and her uneasiness in seeing herself as an authentic Korean woman. Even though this solitary connection to a Korean woman may seem negligible, for Sarah it exposed

her to Korean food, opening up one avenue for her to connect with her heritage culture.

Amber, a 51-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a large city in Texas, described the efforts, or thereof, that her parents took to connect her with Korean culture:

> The closest thing was there was a Korean restaurant that was locally owned by a Korean family. It is a very small establishment. We would go every once in awhile. Of course, I wasn't exposed enough to the food to really like it. We might not have gone over 3 or 4 times ... So no they didn't know to do that. They are very white. They have always had all white friends … No one guided them back then, from the agency to say ... Back then it was assimilate into the American culture, right? They weren't exposed to any other cultures. They are very white bred, very white oriented.

Amber describes her parents' approach to heritage culture socialization as assimilation-focused. Though she mentions that they would sporadically go to a Korean restaurant, it seems that this was not an explicit attempt at a Korean ethnic connection. Similarly, Karen, a 38-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a town in Connecticut, connected her parents' lack of Korean ethnic socialization to the time period in which she was adopted. She explained:

> Born in '78, so part of that, I think it wasn't really until the late '80s that adoptive parents started getting their kids into more immersion type programs. My mother is definitely the generation of wanting to assimilate. She came to the U.S. in the '30s so I think she really wanted to learn the language and be like everybody else. That translated to me, as well. She wanted me to be a pro at English and assimilate to everybody else.

Karen was adopted by a second-generation French Canadian father and first-generation Taiwanese mother. Here she is explaining how her mother's approach to her own assimilation structured how she approached her daughter's

socialization. This shared approach to racial socialization demonstrates the importance of adopting mainstream American norms and values.

Though Karen draws upon ideals of assimilation to explain her parents' approach to her Korean heritage culture, Stacey, the 38-year-old Korean adoptee woman, who was adopted around the same time as Karen, explains her parents' approach in relation to the multicultural ideology popular in the 1980s. She explained:

> I finally just got my dad to stop saying oriental. It's a huge achievement. Their idea of teaching me Asian culture was to dress me up in a kimono or something like that. All of my school pictures will have some sort of different Asian garb, none of which was Korean at all. They did what they could. They did what they knew, but they didn't really do a lot. They didn't get me together with other Korean people or take me to language school or anything like that.

Karen's parents drew upon Asian ethnic symbols of traditional Asian sub-group attire to display her "culture." In doing so, her parents approached her Korean ethnicity as a costume that she could put on and take off. Their attempts tokenized her ethnic heritage while flattening the unique histories, cultures, and people of Asian countries. Karen's parents' actions were similar to the ethnic options approach that characterized adoptive parents' approach to Korean heritage culture engagement.

Finally, Max, a 32-year-old Korean adoptee man adopted to a small town in Virginia, explained Korean ethnic socialization as a matter of his choice, stating:

> I guess I could've pushed it a little more, but it was one of those things where I had my group of friends during summer, during school year, so it was kind of like – Did I want that separate time? Not really. I always had a weird thing, too. I was always fascinated by Chinese people, because I feel

like those were the most out there kind of Asian people around. I was like, "Oh my god. Those Chinese people. Those people are interesting." Now I'm not that same way but it was just kind of like, I just remember looking at them like, "Oh, okay. You look special or whatever."

Similar to how respondents reached an age where adoptee events no longer became a priority, Max describes how he did not want "that separate time" away from his friends that would accentuate his racial and ethnic difference. Even though he characterized his parents as not thinking Korean ethnic connections were important, he also identifies his lack of interest as a reason that his parents did not provide those opportunities to him. That heritage culture engagement was incumbent upon his individual desire illustrates the symbolic or voluntary nature of his Korean ethnicity. He could opt in or out of heritage culture activity. Additionally, his description of his fascination with Chinese people demonstrates the objectification of this Asian ethnic group but also the lack of visibility of other Asian Americans.

Overall, very few respondents reported that their parents provided Korean ethnic engagement. Among the parents who did, they relied heavily on symbolic measures such as food or clothing. Korean adoptees' Korean ethnicity was relegated to a sporadic Korean meal or chance encounter with a Korean person, occurrences that did little to integrate adoptees' heritage culture into their daily lives or prepare them for the racialization they would face. In short, adoptive parents took an ethnic options approach to their children's Korean heritage culture socialization. This approach is likely a result of two factors: white adoptive

parents' general lack of race-based conversations with their adoptive children and application of colorblindness (Hagerman 2016; Underhill 2017); and the broader social script that characterizes Asian Americans as model minorities and Asian adoptees as having a racial flexibility (Dorow 2006; Oh 2015).

When white Americans deploy symbolic ethnicity, it can be invoked when and how they want insomuch as the portrayed ethnic identity is believable to those whom it is presented (Waters 1990). However, while white Americans can decide when and to whom to enact white ethnicity, Korean children cannot decide when to enact their Korean ethnicity. Instead, racialized expectations dictate that they be accountable to their presumed ethnic background (Kibria 2000; Tuan 1998). They are expected to be authentically ethnic, enacting their Korean culture, language, and values, and incur social costs when they are not. These social costs range from the seemingly innocuous (e.g., questions about ethnic background) to more harmful (e.g., racial teasing, racial slurs, racially-motivated physical abuse). Though parents approached their children's Korean heritage culture through an honorary white lens, adoptees learned that their honorary white status did not protect them from racialization as Asian Americans.

"You're an American and that's all that matters": Parental Approaches to Racism

If they were uncomfortable with engaging with Korean American communities or acknowledging distinct needs around transracial adoption, then parents were outright oblivious in regards to the racism their children would experience.

Krystal, the 29-year-old Korean adoptee woman, succinctly summed up how respondents' characterized their parents' approach to racism, stating: "They just saw beyond the ethnicity. They didn't see us as really different to them."

When I asked Alyssa, the 32-year-old Korean adoptee woman, if her parents ever talked to her about racism or discrimination that she might face, she explained:

> They probably did. I don't remember. I remember my mom reading me books about self-esteem and stuff like that, just children's stories that maybe the life lesson was like, "Let's celebrate diversity," or maybe sometimes, "Diversity is difficult for other people to embrace," that kind of thing. Wait, what was the question again?

> Wendy: If your parents ever did talk to you about racism or discrimination that you might face.

> Alyssa: A little bit, but I don't think very much honestly.

Even though by the end of this excerpt Alyssa states that her parents did not talk to her very much about how she might be treated because of her race, her initial answer to the question reveals the colorblind approach her parents took in regards to her racial difference. Her characterization of how her parents addressed her racial difference harkens back to ideas of multiculturalism where diversity is celebrated yet the racial histories and racial inequalities of various non-white groups are ignored. Even though Alyssa's parents were proactive in moving to a school district with a higher percentage of Asian American students presumably so that Alyssa and her brother would have more Asian peers (as well as attend a school with better educational opportunities), it appears that they were not prepared to delve into the ramifications of ethnic difference when "diversity is difficult for other people to embrace." In other words, Alyssa's parents were not

able to provide any strategies for addressing how she and her brother might be perceived and treated as non-whites.

Brianne, a 31-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a city in North Carolina, describes a common approach respondents shared that their parents took. She explained:

> In a very blanket way … There's this incident where I was younger. My mom caught me in front of the mirror pulling my eyes open to be like hers. She was very stressed out about that. She was mad. I think like the way I remember my Mom handling the whole me-not-being-the-same-as-everyone thing, is she would say these blanket statements like, "You're beautiful just like everyone else. Just the way you are." Generally like, "You're equally as beautiful. Your features are yours and they make you unique," that sort of thing. We never directly talked about it until I was in high school maybe … I think like her general thoughts about it especially when I was in high school were just Brianne is very emotional. She has a lot of feelings. She's hurt a lot of times because people want to use the way that she looks against her in a negative way. That's bad.

Brianne's excerpt details her mom's awareness of her daughter's racial difference yet inability to address it. She was "very stressed out" about her daughter's acknowledgement and disdain of her physical features that distinguished her from her (white) parents and (white) peers. Even though her mother attempted to console her and build her self-esteem by telling her she is "beautiful just like everyone else," she did not directly address why her physical features might be seen as less beautiful. Even later, in high school, when Brianne began to experience more racial teasing, her mother did not connect Brianne's experiences to racism writ large. Her mother instead explained away Brianne's experiences by connecting it to Brianne's individual disposition (e.g. "has a lot of feelings," "very emotional").

Respondents frequently shared how their parents described these instances of interpersonal racism as general bullying. Mi Na, a 22-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to small town in Michigan, distilled this approach sharing:

> They just talked about bullying ... My mom would say something like, "I get made fun of all the time because I'm ugly and I have a big nose. People said this and that about me." It feels so different because I've been bullied before for other reasons, and then having incidents with racists, I think racism in and of itself is a completely different thing. It's not like ... Bullying is ... I guess it can be systematic in a sense, but not as huge scale as racism. Racism is everything. It's in everything already. When you look at it, it's already a part of our movies, how we think, what we believe. For a while, you just think, you're the problem here. If everybody doesn't seem to like you, it's always your problem, but then you just realize everybody has less patience for minorities. People are just going to be less patient with minorities … so you can never win. It feels like you can never win.

By characterizing her daughter's experiences as simple bullying, Mi Na's mother de-racialized these incidents. Her mother diminished Mi Na's racialized teasing by offering personal experiences of teasing because of her physical features (e.g., "big nose"). Doing so functioned to depict these experiences as universal bullying that everyone experiences and in effect intimating that her daughter should get over it, that there was not a racist or race-related element to her experience. However, as Mi Na reflects, "I've been bullied before for other reasons, and then having incidents with racists, I think racism in and of itself is a completely different thing." As she goes on to describe, racism is an interconnected system that portrays non-whites as "the problem" influencing interactions, ensuring discriminatory treatment, and creating a situation where "you can never win."

Even though respondents' parents took a colorblind approach to their children's

racial difference, explicit experiences of interpersonal racism rendered that

approach futile. Alex, the 30-year-old Korean adoptee woman, described how her

parents changed their stance once she began experiencing racial teasing. She

stated:

> They said I wasn't going to face anything, because, they said as soon as I
> opened my mouth and sounded white, I was going to be fine.
>
> Wendy: But did you ever find yourself being targeted, racial teasing, or
> anything like that?
>
> Alex: I was told 'chink' and 'gook' a lot in high school, and I'm not sure
> how my classmates learned those terms, because some of those terms were
> pretty outdated, like Korean War era. I'm just like, "So, is this what you're
> being raised like?"
>
> Wendy: Did you ever tell your parents about any experiences like that?
>
> Alex: I told them, and my mom and my dad both took the hard line of,
> "Get used to it. That's going to be something you're going to have to live
> with your entire life." And that was kind of the primer on how to deal with
> racism.

Alex's excerpt begins with her parents buying into the idea that she would be able

to escape racialization as Asian American because of her assimilation into white

American culture. However, as Alex shares, that belief was untenable. Despite

sounding "white," her (white) peers still saw her as a racial other as evident

through their racial slurs of "chink" and "gook" towards her. Even though "those

terms were pretty outdated, like Korean War era," the persistence of these racial

slurs illustrates the durability of racism across decades. In a seemingly complete

turnaround from how her parents initially addressed the possibilities of

interpersonal racism, after sharing these experiences with her parents, they told

her to "get used to it." This approach is not as different from their former stance as it might appear. Instead it is the flip side of the same colorblind coin. Rather than address racism itself, her parents take on a personal responsibility view that Alex should modify her expectations of how she will be treated, bringing it in line with her position in U.S. society.

Jessa, the 56-year-old Korean adoptee woman, shared a similar preparation for racism. She stated:

> Their whole idea of this was you're an American and that's all that matters. But that was the extent of my introduction of how to deal with the name-calling, with ... Well primarily the name-calling and one time I can remember being ... I was in the 6th grade so there's certain things that stick with me right? So in the 6th grade, there was a group of about three other girls and I hung around with them and went to their houses and, you know, just we were friends. One day I got a note that says, "You can't be our friend anymore." I was like like, "What?!" And I'm like, "What? What did I do? What did I do?" It turned out that their grandfather saw me, and he was a POW during World War II and basically said, "You can't have that Jap in the house." So, I was like, "But I'm not Japanese! I'm Korean! And I speak with a perfect American accent, so I've been told!" You know, and that was actually kind of a hard blow. I was discriminated against because of the way I looked with no question, with no seeking knowledge, no nothing. Then I wasn't allowed to be these girls' friend. It was a very hurtful thing. I remember in the 4th grade-ish ... I was probably a little older than that, but I was called a gook. I had no clue [what it meant], but I could tell by the tone of their voice that it was not a very nice thing. An old black woman took me ... Because she saw me crying, because I was crying because I knew that they were being mean to me but I didn't know why the words hurt. So she was the one that sat me down and explained what the words meant and why they were saying them and while I may feel hurt about it, it is no reflection upon me, as an individual.

Even though Jessa's parents assumed her American-ness would protect her from experiences of racism, it is clear from her examples that that was not the case. Actually, it is unclear if her parents meant that her American-ness would insulate

her from racism or if, even if she experienced racism, that it should not matter because she is an American. Complicating this perspective is the fact that her parents did not, in fact, secure her American citizenship. Jessa is not an American by citizenship though she was raised in America, by American parents, and socialized into (white) American culture.

What is clear is that despite her parents' assumptions of her American-ness others did not see her through that lens. Instead, she was characterized as a "Jap" and "gook" and not permitted to socialize interracially because of her status as a racialized Other. She was also evaluated under limiting racialized assumptions around language proficiency and accent as evident when she states "I speak with a perfect American accent, so I've been told!" Here she is pointing out another way that she has been characterized as an exceptional Other.

It is important to note that Jessa's parents did not provide any racial socialization but rather it was "an old black woman" who saw her in distress, consoled her, and gave her one set of tools to make sense of her experience. It is unclear if Jessa told her parents about the reason for the dissolution of her friend circle or being called a "gook." However several respondents explicitly stated that they did not share the interpersonal racism with their parents. Patrick, the 30-year-old Korean adoptee man, explained why this was the case:

> No [his parents didn't bring up racism or discrimination], not so much, nor did I bring it up because when you're a little kid, you don't really want to ... Because it is triggering a little bit of confusion identity-wise. You want to fit in so asking your mom or dad about it and trying to separate

yourself, you don't want to point out that you're different than your mom
or dad, so you don't really want to bring it up. I guess. I didn't … for some
reason, I didn't feel comfortable bringing it up to them.

Patrick's excerpt clearly outlines what was at stake by bringing up his racial

difference. Doing so would have shattered the illusion of racial homogeneity

within the family especially in families where ideas of family were predicated on

that racial similarity. Patrick's reflection on why he did not share these

experiences with his parents mirrors research findings on adoptive parents'

approaches to racial socialization and their effects on adoptees' identity

development and parent-child relationships. Studies show that adoptive parents

overwhelmingly take colorblind, avoidant, or child-led approaches to racial

socialization (Chang, Feldman, and Easley 2017; Kim, Reichwald, and Lee 2013).

These socialization strategies not only leave transracial adoptees without tools to

address experiences of racism but they also intimate that they cannot share these

incidents with their parents.

Though the majority of respondents reported a colorblind approach to racism, a

few respondents described more proactive measures their parents took to racial

socialization. James, the 28-year-old Korean adoptee man, described how his

parents prepared him to handle intrusive questions about his ethnic background,

stating:

> So even before, even before I went to elementary school they kind of told
> me what to expect. It never really kind of occurred to me until I had it
> applied for the first time. So I remember being in kindergarten and
> someone from an older grade who had more of an understanding of race
> actually asked me if I was Chinese or Japanese. I told that kid I didn't
> know because I never knew what that was. And so later that day I asked

my parents, "What's Chinese or Japanese?" They explained it to me, because I'd only ever known what Korean was but I didn't know what Chinese or Japanese was. So they explained to me that those are people from neighboring countries who look very similar. So, I was like, "Ok, that's pretty cool." After that explanation I was able to concisely explain that if ever it happened again. And for the most part, a lot of kids do get that exposure to China or Japan being the most predominantly known countries of Asia, so then I've always took that opportunity whenever they asked me to explain that Korea's also a country from that region, maybe lesser known. That was a pretty good instance of when my parents taught me about that.

James' excerpt highlights the lack of knowledge of the various Asian ethnic groups in the U.S. at that time and the continued predominance of Chinese and Japanese Americans as the only possibilities of Asian group membership. Even though James' parents participated in an adoptive parent group to learn about Korean culture and told James "what to expect," presumably regarding questions directly about his ethnic heritage or adoptive status, there were still limits on what they could anticipate.

Julia, the 29-year-old Korean adoptee, explained how her parents approached discussions about race and racism.

> They did [discuss race and racism] because you know if I came home crying about something, they definitely did. And my parents had bought actually a lot of books related to adoption and Korea and things like that both at the children's book level and older when I got older for me to have. So like one of the first books I remember was like *When you were born in Korea*[5] or something about like related to adoption, and they, you know, my mom even tried to buy me like dolls that were supposed to be like Asian and stuff because I think I must've said something about all the Barbies being blonde or something. So yeah it was, it was important to my parents.

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[5] *When You Were Born in Korea: A Memory Book for Children Adopted from Korea* (Boyd 1993) is a scrapbook-style book that follows a Korean baby from birth to foster care and then adoption into a U.S. family.

Wendy: Did they suggest any ways, when you came home crying, would they suggest any ways for dealing with that?

Julia: I think it was more about like informing the people about that I'm not the stereotype Asian or about like Korean culture. Cause you know of course I got called like Chinese and like chink and stuff like that. So they would try and explain like what that word chink meant. They didn't have a ton of suggestions because they'd never gone through it, but they did try to talk to me about it and kind of how [to] react about it because people would talk to them about me not being their daughter or looking like it. And even just, my parents focused a lot on language because people used to always say, "Oh, are those your *real* parents?" And that was something that I think my brothers really engendered too, because my brother and I went to the same college, and he was a sociology major, and one of the classes they were talking about like adoptive siblings and how they were different or something. And my brother got really upset at the instructor, and he was like, "No, adoptive siblings are not different! They are just our siblings!" A lot of the talk was about the language that we're using and we're using with other people to educate them more. (Emphasis in original)

Julia described how her parents proactively acknowledged her racial difference from them. Her parents made sure to have literature in the home that reflected her experience as an adoptee. Her parents also were proactive in finding opportunities for Korean culture and language classes. However, like other adoptive parents, they took a more reactive approach to addressing her racial difference (Chang et al. 2017); they were open to addressing race-based incidents when they occurred and for addressing Julia's self-identified needs as evident through her example of the Barbie dolls. Similar to James' parents, Julia's focused on educating others. This focus was integrated throughout the family, including how her siblings perceived her relation within the family.

Finally, in the most proactive approach to racism, Natasha, a 41-year-old Korean adoptee woman, described how her parents addressed the topic, stating:

(laughs) Well, they didn't have to talk to me about it. It was a topic of conversation everyday. You know. Our Blackness was a topic of conversation all the time.

Wendy: And what are some of the things that they would say or topics of conversation?

Natasha: Well, I mean, like just discriminations that they felt or had, experiences that they went through.

Wendy: So I know you said your parents talked a lot about how their Blackness was perceived in society and these discriminatory actions that they experienced, so did they ever talk about it in the context of how those experiences might be different for you because you weren't Black?

Natasha: No. I was Black. I mean, obviously I wasn't, but I was to them. My mother, she makes mistakes and says, "Oh, yeah that was when I was pregnant with you. Oh wait, no, I wasn't pregnant with you."

Natasha's excerpt makes clear adoptive parents' assumption about their adopted children. Adopted Korean children are seen as their children with no special attention given to their racial or heritage culture difference. Just as Natasha's parents saw her as Black like them, other respondents' parents saw them as white like them. While on one hand this may point to the rigidity around race and family (that within the family there must be parent-child race matching), on the other hand, it is unlikely that if white parents would have adopted Black children (or Korean-Black children) that they would have believed them to be white like them. In fact, research finds that white adoptive parents' decision to adopt Asian children was in part based on assumptions around the mutability of Asian children's race in comparison to the durability of Black children's race (Dorow 2006). White parents were able to assume that their Korean adopted children would not experience racism, as they themselves did not, not (only) because they

saw their adopted children as theirs but because they saw them as model

minorities.

Parents' approaches to their Korean children's heritage culture socialization were

limited, though they did make more efforts to connect them with other adoptees.

This approach suggests that their parents were not prepared to immerse

themselves or their children into Korean American communities – possibly

because then they would have had to acknowledge their child's racial difference.

Parents' efforts in regards to adoptee activities though did not contradict their

colorblind family-making. By connecting with other (white) adoptive families and

their Korean children, they normalized their family formation and strengthened

the symbolic nature of their Korean ethnicity. How parents discussed racism and

discrimination with their adopted children further demonstrates their colorblind

approach to socialization and model minority view of their Korean children.

For the respondents who reported providing Korean ethnic connections were

important to their adoptive parents, the opportunities did not cultivate a Korean

consciousness. These adoptees did not "feel" more Korean. They were not able to

integrate the heritage culture-specific activities into their sense of self. Instead, the

majority of respondents either thought of themselves as white or identified with

white culture, particularly during childhood and adolescence. Even as they

identified as white, however, adoptees reflected on encounters that led them to

question their honorary white status. In the following sections, I detail adoptees'

white identification and experiences that challenge that identity.

"What else would I be?": Internalizing Honorary Whiteness

When I asked Max, the 32-year-old Korean adoptee man, if he ever identified as

white, he replied, "Oh yeah. The entire time I was growing up, probably until

college. It's one of those things where you're like, "What else would I be?" type

of thing. You don't have to think about it." The majority (65%; n=24) of

interview respondents reported identifying as white during childhood and

adolescence.[6] Tyler, a 34 year-old Korean adoptee man, described his inclusion

into the family as, "Everyone treated me like a family member, and I didn't feel

any different. When I experienced the mild racist things that happen as you get

older and you're growing up, it really made no sense to me. I'm an American, I'm

a proud American." Respondents often described belonging within the family as

an extension of belonging within the nation.

Tyler's reflection on being treated "like a family member," not feeling any

different from his white family, and his identification as "a proud American"

exemplifies his colorblind socialization. Despite his American upbringing and

identification, Tyler learned that others viewed him as non-American. Though this

disparate treatment "made no sense" to him, the idea of Asians in America as

"perpetual foreigners" is not new (Tuan 1998). Though Korean adoptees escaped

racialization as a "yellow peril" and were instead subsumed within the model

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[6] This finding mirrors research on Korean transracial adoptees. In one of the
largest studies of Korean transnational transracial adoptees in adulthood, the
Donaldson Adoption Institute (2009) found that of its 179 respondents, 78 percent
either identified as white or wanted to be white in childhood.

minority myth particularly as helpless children in need of rescue, as these adoptees grew up, they became evaluated as perpetual foreigners. Their model minority status and honorary white family membership did not negate their racialized out-group status.

As the previous sections demonstrate, given their in-home socialization, racial composition of their neighborhood, and general lack of engagement with their heritage culture and Korean communities, white identification would be natural. In relaying why they identified as white, respondents described other salient elements of how they were raised including food, language, and beauty ideals all of which established the primacy of white identification.

Natalie, a 27-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a small city in northwestern Washington, described why she identified as white as a child, explaining, "I also feel like when I was a really small child, I identified with it [white identity] very strongly, because that's what I was told as a kiddo. When I was six or seven, growing up [in a] predominately German house, would always make the German dishes, I ate the German food, and they taught me these very basic German phrases." Natalie is able to draw upon a distinct socialization into a European ethnic group as the source of her white identification. Importantly, she does not relay a German identity or German-American identity but rather a *white* identity, suggesting that even though she had a specific German ethnic socialization via food and language, it still translated to an *American* identity. Her explanation of her white identification illustrates the belief that equates American

identity with white identity. Other respondents relayed more subtle messages about the value of white identity, which influenced how they thought about themselves. Among women respondents, the role of beauty and physical appearance became salient.

Julia, the 29-year-old Korean adoptee woman, explained:

> Yeah, I mean, I notice that in my immediate family everyone had blue eyes but me. And in middle school I went through a phase where I had color contacts that were like turquoise so it could sort of be blue-ish to blend in. I had issues handling eye makeup and like none of my other friends had issues with this, and like why mascara always runs under and eyeliner runs under, and like a lot of those things I didn't really get any connection with until I went to college and met other Asian Americans, other adoptees, and found out there was so much more to being Asian in America than just what I knew.

Even though Julia's parents took a variety of proactive measures to connect her (and the immediate family members) with Korean culture, she still felt different from her family. In this case, she was not trying to fit in with peers per se but specifically within her own family. Julia also speaks to the everyday differences of growing up Asian in a (white) American society. She describes common challenges Asian women experience in regards to wearing makeup. In fact, several women respondents, but none of the men respondents, talked about the increased scrutiny in regards to their physical appearance and wanting to alter their physical appearance whether through temporary or permanent measures. For Julia, and most women respondents, she did not get makeup instruction specific to her physical features until she went to college. Also, importantly, once in college and with other Asian Americans and other adoptees, she "found out there was so

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much more to being Asian American that just what I knew." This realization

underscores the lack of *racial* socialization that most adoptive parents provided

their children. Parents were more comfortable with providing ethnic connections

that relegated Korean culture to a symbolic nature. If you remember, Julia's

parents took very proactive steps to provide connections with her Korean culture

and cultivate a familiarity with and pride for her ethnic background. However,

despite this, Julia internalized white beauty standards.

Amber, the 51-year-old Korean adoptee woman, described how beauty factored

into her identity, stating, "When I was 18, I got the eyelid surgery and everything.

My parents paid for it because I just wanted to look more ... I mean all of my girl

friends were white, blond haired, and blue-eyed and so I just wanted to be able to

know makeup and look more like them." Amber identified as white growing up.

Her appearance, however, betrayed that identification. As such, she underwent

eyelid surgery to transform her monolid into an eyelid with a crease. Whereas

Amber points to her white peer group as a primary reason that she wanted to

change her appearance, Brittney, a 29-year-old Korean adoptee woman, shared a

more common experience. She shared:

> In high school sometimes people would call me a banana or a Twinkie and
> so there was a point where I didn't want to be Asian, but I was Asian. I
> remember my childhood, I had all blonde hair, blue eyed Barbie dolls and
> I remember my face had a lot more rounder features and I didn't want that
> because that's not how my Barbie doll looked.

Here Brittney's peers used a derogatory term to describe her as white on the

inside, yellow (re: Asian) on the outside. In other words, she's not *really* Asian

(only in looks) but also she's not truly white (because of her racialized physical features). Though beliefs of the model minority myth may seem complimentary, the reality, as Brittney points out, is that she is still not a fully accepted part of society. This feeling of not wanting to be Asian began much earlier than the high school taunts. Brittney provides her childhood toys as an early experience that devalued her Asian self. Her high school peers further solidified this belief. Brittney "didn't want to be Asian" but alas she was.

Respondents took measures to attempt to fit in, whether they were denial of their heritage culture, changing their appearance, or taking on other ethnic identities. However, even though they received various messaging from family, peers, and society at large that a (white) American identity was more desirable, they learned that it was not wholly accessible to them. Monica, a 43-year-old Korean adoptee woman adopted to a large town in New York, explained:

> When I was a little girl probably up until about nine or 10, only for a couple years, it wasn't very long, I would tell people I'm Irish. They're like, "Oh, where are you from?" I'm like, "Oh, I'm from Ireland. I'm Irish." I thought I was Irish. Then, I thought I was Italian for a little while. I really was so confused. I had no idea but it didn't last very long because people would look at me and go, "What?"

Even though Monica was trying to identify with her community, which she described as Irish-Italian, she learned that despite whatever level of acceptance she felt from community members or her level of desire to fit in, her identity as Irish or Italian was not accepted by others. Unlike white Americans, who can deploy European ethnic group membership through verbal claims of ethnicity, because of her racialized physical features, Monica's claims to Irish or Italian

ethnicity were untenable. As Monica's refusals of belonging indicate, ethnic

group membership is not only about individual feelings, voluntary association, or

verbal assertions but also about external validation. For non-whites, ethnic group

membership is not about personal choice (Waters 1990).

Similarly, Patrick, a 30-year-old Korean adoptee man, described the effect of

social context on his racial identification. He shared:

> I guess being different in a predominantly white [suburban city in]
> Indiana, predominantly white. Its school system was as well. There were
> some minorities growing up, but I didn't feel like a minority. When that
> was pointed out more and more often as I was growing up, I did feel a bit
> more different. Having white parents was normal, so yeah, it wasn't until
> later, social aspects in life made me feel different.

Patrick describes a familiar experience respondents shared. For most adoptees,

"having white parents was normal" meaning that the families in his community

were white and that he did not know any other family formation. In his

predominantly white hometown, although there were "some minorities growing

up" he was not part of the minority community. As such, he "didn't feel like a

minority." For him, and many other adoptees, "minority" meant Black and since

he was not part of the Black community or racialized as Black, he therefore was

not a minority. This conceptualization of minority--non-minority dichotomy with

Korean adoptees thinking of themselves as members of the non-minority category

points to adoptees' honorary white status. Though for the most part he "didn't feel

like a minority," others pointed out that he was, in fact, a minority or at the very

least, not white. These experiences of racialization challenged his acceptance into

the white community. Still, it was not until young adulthood that he began to understand himself more fully as non-white.

While the majority of respondents reported identifying as white at some point in their lives, very few continued this identification into present day (n=4, 11%). For those who did, their explanations for why they identify as white, and not Asian, Korean, or Korean American, underscore their lack of meaningful engagement with Korean and/or Asian American communities and the internalization of anti-Asian sentiment. By relying on Asian stereotypes, they understand Asians as an undesirable out-group against which they define themselves in contrast. Jessa, a 56-year-old Korean adoptee woman who was adopted to a small, rural town in southwest Missouri, explained:

> What I envision myself as is white, because that's what I was surrounded with. My brothers are white, my mom is white, my dad is white, my culture is white and I would say even more specifically my culture is … mid-western country. Small town values, small town thinking. And so when I think of myself, I have a hard time thinking of   myself as Asian, because when you think Asian, you think chopsticks, you think Geisha   girl, you think Kung Fu, you think of all the stereotypes running around out there about an Asian person and I don't see myself like that. When I look in the mirror, I see an Asian face but my mind is not Asian.

Jessa draws on her family's race and the regional context she grew up in to explain why she thinks of herself as culturally white (though she does acknowledge that her ethnicity is Asian). She demonstrates how these predominately white social settings and the white racial frame shaped her understanding of Asian identity – stereotypes around ethnic symbols (e.g.,

chopsticks) and gendered roles (e.g., Geisha girl, Kung Fu). Jessa's "mind is not

Asian" but rather is embedded in white racial framing. The white racial frame

normalizes white dominance through racialized stereotypes, racialized

understandings, and racialized interpretations that demean non-whites and

valorize whites (Feagin 2006, 2010). Although this framing provides whites with

a meaning system to justify the advantages they reap through systemic racism,

both whites and non-whites are exposed to this framing and can adopt it to guide

their everyday interactions and to evaluate themselves and others (Feagin 2010).

Through the white racial frame, racist practices and beliefs are transmitted and

upheld. It is the white racial frame that portrays Asian American women as

hypersexualized Geisha girls (Le Espiritu 2003). If this is all one thinks about

when reflecting on what it means to be an Asian woman, then it is no surprise that

Jessa doesn't see herself in that manner. Whiteness, then, offers a range of

identities to become, a way to challenge the limited view of Asian identity that the

white racial frame has taught her.

Alyssa, a 32-year-old Korean adoptee woman who grew up in a large diverse city

in Maryland, who also currently identifies as white, alludes to this limited view of

Asianness. She explained:

> I'm never like, "Hey, I'm Irish," or something like that, but I think I do
> identify as something kind of agnostic and vaguely American. If I had to
> say what it was, I'd probably say that it was white, or white identity,
> mostly because if you wanted to get down to it, my habits and my career
> focus and stuff like that are pretty much positions that are held by white
> males … Maybe it's just a happenstance thing. It's not happenstance
> because obviously I was adopted to an American family and not to a

French family or something like that. I guess my parents are white and I happen to identify as white, but I don't know if it's necessarily because I identify with my parents ... For a long time, during my whole identity-seeking phases of my life, I was independent from my parents. I wasn't looking to them for cues to tell me who I was. I was looking outside of that.

Alyssa begins by identifying this "agnostic and vaguely American" identity as in fact whiteness. Then, she cites personal characteristics and socialization inside and outside of the home to explain her white identification. Alyssa works as a visual designer for a major consumer tech brand, a career she describes as typical to white men. As she explains, her white identification is not only due habits and career but also to being adopted into an (white) American family and broader societal cues. Again, we see the pervasiveness of a white racial frame in the limitations of Asian identity as understood by these Korean adoptee women. Alyssa's statement of "I *happen* to identity as white" (emphasis added) illustrates the voluntary nature of racial identity. She happens to identify in this way but she could easily decide to identify in some other way. Racial identity is then a choice to made without regard to the social costs associated with racial or group membership.

Bradley, 34-year-old Korean adoptee man adopted to a city in northern California, also continues his (white) American identity in present day. He explained:

I feel completely American. I really do. No part of me feels Korean at all. That's the interesting thing about these social groups. It makes me think about identity a little bit more. I'm not some passive individual who's not thoughtful or doesn't think about this kind of stuff. I've thought about it a lot, it just doesn't ...

I think there's so many issues tied up with it that it's a lot to dive into, and I'm very comfortable with who I am. I've met my birth mother and we have a good relationship. In our relationship she doesn't want anything from me, and I don't want anything from her. We can both just exist, and then come together, and enjoy getting to know one another. There doesn't seem to be any set of expectations, which is really special because I know that sometimes these relationships can be really complicated.

I feel so lucky. Because I'm lucky, because I've had a great family, and I feel very fortunate, and I'm even in touch with my birth mother. She's happy and I'm happy. Because of all this, I don't want to question what could have been, or what is, or who am I. There's no sense ... I feel like who I am is who I am.

Whereas many respondents report not feeling culturally Korean, here it seems that Bradley is relaying that he doesn't identify with his Asian heritage either. This disidentification is particularly intriguing because he is reunited with his birth mother and maintains contact with her. He has also visited her twice in Korea and travels to Korea somewhat regularly with his job. However, he feels "completely American." It also appears as though he has given careful thought to how he identifies, perhaps even comparing his identification to other Korean adoptees' (as his reference to Korean adoptee social groups points to). Despite, or perhaps because of, his introspection, he has decided that "I don't want to question what could have been, or what is, or who I am." This raises the question of why? For example, does he not want to delve into his Korean-American identity or his Korean identity for fear that doing so would jeopardize his American identity? Would taking on a hyphenated American identity (e.g., Korean-American) signal ungratefulness? Does he think racial and/or ethnic identity is a zero sum game?

Overall, though most interview respondents did not currently identify as white, there were measures in place to facilitate a white identity. At the level of public discourse, Korean adoptees were promoted as easily assimilable, docile, and more desirable than other non-white adoptable children. At the policy level, Korean adoptees were distinguished from other immigrants or refugees and given the exceptional immigration status as U.S. family members (Park Nelson 2016). Adoption agencies and social workers often instructed adoptive parents to assimilate their child without regard for their child's heritage culture (Scroggs and Heitfield 2001). Special classes were offered to teach parents how to assimilate their Korean child. Even for parents who made attempts at maintaining some level of Korean cultural connection for their child, those efforts only bolstered the symbolic nature of that identity. Following the ideals of multiculturalism, adoptive parents celebrated their children's ethnicity yet did not substantially incorporate it into the family.

"I knew deep inside that I was a minority and I was Korean": Honorary White is not White

Although Korean adoptees entered the U.S. at a time where the model minority myth was flourishing and when they themselves were being constructed as honorary whites through policy, discourse, and their adoptive parents' parenting choices, small cracks in this façade shown through as some of the excerpts in the previous section demonstrate. As I spoke with my interviewees, they shared more explicit examples of the tenuousness of their model minority status.

Mary, a 54-year-old Korean adoptee who was adopted by a single military mother to the greater Washington D.C. area, explained:

> I was so busy trying to be an American, as I got older it was ... I really didn't think about being adopted or being Korean. Even my friends, my American friends, they accepted me for who I was. We never talked about me being adopted. My mom was, in some ways, kind of like a racist, but she didn't see us [she and her adopted Korean sister] as minorities, she saw us as American, but it bothered me though when she was a racist toward other ethnic countries or blacks, or whatever. That bothered me, because I knew deep inside that I was a minority and I was Korean, but I think she forgot, just like I sometimes forgot that I was Korean.

Although respondents mentioned "forgetting" that they were Korean or being surprised by the Korean face that they saw in the mirror, Mary's excerpt points out one of the reminders she had about her racial difference. In this instance, her mother's racist attitudes towards "other ethnic countries or blacks" made Mary question her own place within her family. Even though she connects how she would forget that she was Korean to how her mother would forget she was Korean, the underlying thread is that for Korean children to be "theirs," and even for Korean children to feel part of the family, their racial difference had to remain an unspoken truth.

Though most respondents stated that their parents did not explicitly address race or racism with them, respondents still learned about race and their place in the racial order either by other cues provided by their parents, as in Mary's case, or from peers. Sarah, the 34-year-old Korean adoptee woman, explained:

> In fact, I think I was so out of touch with my ethnicity, and I know my friends never told me this or anything, I just somehow gathered that if you weren't white, you were black. I went through this time period that I thought I was black.

I saw a black person that came in to, we used to own this go-kart and concession stand thing. This black family came in and I remember being super nice to them because I thought I was going to be nice to the black people because they were like me. That lasted a couple years.

Oh! It was because of this kid. I was in a daycare and this kid actually, he was one of the older brothers of my friend and he looked at me and said to one of the other kids, "Hey, have you ever seen a black person before?" And then pointed to me. That's why I got the idea I was black.

Wendy: Did you ever talk to anybody about being black or thinking that you were black?

Sarah: No. Race is something I really didn't want to touch at all. I didn't talk about it at all with my parents. Actually, I never did until recently.

Sarah's reflection on thinking "that if you weren't white, you were black" points to a racial order of white--non-white. Even though she was raised without explicit (Asian) racial socialization, the implicit message she received from people outside of the family was that she was not white and therefore, in this case, Black. This line of thinking points to the lack of engagement she and her peers had with non-white groups. But, it also underscores how taboo race was as a topic of conversation was within her family. It seems as though there may have been some feelings of shame around her racial background. As such, like other respondents, Sarah learned that navigating race and her place within the racial order was an individual journey.

The unspoken rules of race within the family corresponded with explicit actions shaping the family. Brittney, a 29-year-old Korean adoptee woman raised in a city in Washington state and whose family adopted another Korean child, explained:

> I think I was in college when I asked them why they chose to adopt
> Korean kids versus white kids or black kids. My parents pretty much said
> that at the time it was just easier, logistically, to adopt Korean kids. They
> had a social worker and she was black and my mom specifically
> remembered her asking about the whole racial issue and my mom felt like
> it would be much harder to raise black children just because of how they
> were raised and things like that. That's why she decided to adopt Asians
> because she thought that it would be easier.

Brittney was adopted in the peak decade of Korean adoption, the 1980s. By then,

the "Cadillac" of international adoptions was running smoothly like an assembly

line (McKee 2016). As such, it is likely that international adoption from Korea

was logistically a smoother process. However, her mother's further explanation

describes how racial logics guided her adoption choice (for more on racialized

logics in adoption from Asia, see Dorow 2006). Her mother "thought it would be

easier" to raise Asian children in comparison to Black children, an assumption

based in stereotypes about both Black and Asian families. This also raises the

question of how her social worker, a Black woman, approached "the racial issue"

in regards to white families adopting Asian children. A decade before Brittney

was adopted, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) issued

"A Position Statement on Trans-Racial Adoption" (1972). In it they argued

against white parents adopting Black children speaking to the superficiality of

white parents' approaches towards socialization of Black children. Notably, the

statement also includes this condemnation:

> We fully recognize the phenomenon of transracial adoption as an expedient for
> white folk, not as an altruistic humane concern for black children. The supply of
> white children for adoption has all but vanished and adoption agencies, having
> always catered to middle class whites developed an answer to their desire for
> parenthood by motivating them to consider black children. This has brought
> about a re-definition of some black children. Those born of black-white alliances
> are no longer black as decreed by immutable law and social custom for centuries.
> They are now black-white, inter-racial, bi-racial, emphasizing the whiteness as

the adoptable quality; a further subtle, but vicious design to further diminish black and accentuate white.

Here NABSW accurately points out how children's racial status had been altered in order to make them adoptable. In particular, the statement points to how "those born of black-white alliances are no longer black as decreed by immutable law and social custom for centuries." Instead they are interracial, "emphasizing the whiteness as the adoptable quality; a further subtle, but vicious design to further diminish black and accentuate white." Similarly, Korean children were not subsumed under the ideas of "yellow peril," instead they were depicted as "orphans in need of rescue" whose race was mutable. However, in the early years of Korean adoption when Black-Korean and white-Korean children were eligible for adoption, white-Korean children were seen as acceptable for white families (again drawing on their whiteness) while Black-Korean children were acceptable only for black families (accentuating their Blackness) (Oh 2015).

Further pointing to the malleability in how Korean children's race was characterized is Teresa's reflection. In this extreme example, she explains how outside influences structured adoptive parents' parenting decisions, stating:

> For me it's all [how her parents approached race] tied into this church. The church had what they called a race doctrine. They had a whole lot of other doctrines, which were just insane and crazy, but the race doctrine specified that there were only three races. There was the white race, the yellow race, and the black race. I don't know where the brown race, or the brown people, or Hispanics or Latin Americans fell into this, but they were not acknowledged. They had set up that there were three races, and they did not allow dancing, dating, or marriage interracial. That became a huge problem for me.

My parents ended up having to contact the head of the church, and they wrote a letter, I think, asking, "What are we going to do about our daughter who's adopted, and she's Asian," and blah, blah, blah. Nothing was ever done. For my entire teen years I had really no social interaction, as far as dating …

… and we have had many discussions where I've had to tell them my big problem with this is not that this happened, because I'm over it now, but the fact that you felt you needed to ask permission of someone outside of the family in order to make a very important parenting decision …

… I guess the crux of your question was how did my parents acknowledge that I was Asian. It's just not something that was ever really talked about. I don't think they felt ... I think, knowing my parents, I'm assuming that they did not talk about it because they didn't think of me as an adopted child …

Teresa's quote illustrates the other structures influencing adoptive parents' approach to racial socialization. While previous sections point to the policy level practices, social work practices, and socialization within the family, here Teresa points to another proximate social structure – the church – that deeply shaped her parents' approach to race. Even though very few respondents explicitly referenced the role of church in their parents' decision to adopt or in facilitating their adoption, religious directives were incorporated in the founding of Korean adoption (if you remember it was Harry and Bertha Holt who popularized Korean adoption in the 1950s and they were explicit about the connections between Christianity and their decision to adopt).

But there is also slippage within her quote between her parents not thinking of her as an adopted child (or as not one of the family) but of their awareness of her racial difference. This quote points out the underlying belief of racial

homogeneity between parents and children. This may have led to a dilemma for her parents, and adoptive parents more broadly – they were influenced by the belief of racial homogeneity within the family while being unable to ignore their children's racial difference. Here her parents, though not thinking of her as an adopted child, did in fact take action in regards to her non-whiteness. While they tried to preserve their white racial superiority, they had to negotiate their non-white daughter's role in the white supremacist organization they joined. This is one of the clearest examples of the paradox adoptive parents had to reconcile: while the model minority myth facilitated Asian adoption and shaped how these children were raised, adoptive parents had to acknowledge the limitations of their children's honorary whiteness. Teresa's parents were caught in a precarious position whereby they had not considered any potential changes they should make in regards to their white supremacist beliefs, practices, or relationships.

Respondents described specific people in their social worlds, ranging from family members, friends, and neighbors, who drove home racialized expectations of them as non-white. In the following excerpt Alex, a 30 year-old Korean adoptee woman, describes a conversation between herself and a teacher:

> For the longest time I thought I was white. It was really in middle school, I had a teacher who was a person of color who sat me down and was like, "You are not white." . . . I thought it was highly inappropriate [for her to say that]. I was sitting there going, "This is not your place. If I think I'm white, I think I'm white." When the whole thing with Rachel Dolezal[7]

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[7] In June 2015, Rachel Dolezal came under public scrutiny when her parents revealed that she was a white woman passing as Black. Dolezal was previously the President of the Spokane, WA chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Dolezal later stated that she was born to white parents but maintained that she identified as Black. Critics and family members have compared her behavior and

came out, I was just sitting there going, "I kind of understand how she did that deception. That was almost how I was raised," and had my parents been able to actually get my hair to keep any shade of red, or get any curl in it, I'm just like, "I could have been her." I know she did it knowingly, but I was like, "But what does it mean for those of us who that's all we've known because our parents were trying so hard to make us look like a one race family?"

Alex highlights a common theme among my respondents – that their adoptive parents socialized them into whiteness and, in some cases, made concerted effort to present an image of a "one race family." Even without their parents making such explicit attempts at altering their marked physical features, many women respondents discussed the importance of fitting in to white standards of beauty. Women respondents shared how they wore colored contacts, dyed their hair, and, in an extreme case, underwent eyelid surgery, all attempts to whiten their appearance and fit in with their predominantly white peers. For family members and adoptees themselves, portraying a white identity, both in mind and appearance, was important to being a part of the family and by extension their new country.

Other examples were less extreme, yet still explicit. Take for instance the following quotes from Thomas, Destiny, and Jessa in regards to dating.

I dated nobody in high school, had no dates. It's kind of odd, but in a way I almost feel like I knew that I wasn't that attractive to white people, for some reason. Anyway, I don't know, I could be projecting there. My first girlfriend was Japanese and my second girlfriend was Filipino.

modification of her physical appearance – darkening of her skin tone and appropriation of Black hairstyles – to blackface. Since 2015, Dolezal has remained a subject of public controversy. Most recently, in spring 2017 she released a memoir about her racial identity.

<div align="right">Thomas, the 46-year-old Korean adoptee man</div>

I feel like they didn't care one way or the other [about her race], but, until I hit that dating age. Sometimes my mom would try to set me up with random Asian guys she would meet. And I would not be interested in them at all. I'm like, I don't even know these people so just stop trying.

Wendy: Where would she be meeting these guys?

Destiny: Like when she'd go get her nails done. I'm like, oh my gosh.
<div align="right">Destiny, 21-year-old Korean adoptee woman</div>

An example of kind of an odd identity crisis, so I remember when I was in 7th grade, 8th grade? I'm going to go with 8th grade, I think it was in the 8th grade and I went to the school dance by myself. All through school though there was this young ... This boy who I realized liked me, but in my head was weird because what white person wants to like an Asian person? I'm different, you know, you should be going with the white girls ... I can remember him writing notes to me and carrying my books for me and, you know, just, he liked me!

So, he went to the dance by himself as well and we wound up having our picture taken together, pictures that I had to hide from my mother ... When it was time for my folks to come and pick me up, he kissed me! It was dark and my mom couldn't see him, but I hid the pictures from my mother and she found the pictures of us together and she looked at me and said, "You should be dating your own kind."

Well I was a ... At that point in time I did not realize that I actually had a smartass mouth and the remark that came out of my mouth was, "But mom, there are no Koreans around here." She looked at me and said, "You know what I mean." I looked at her and I said, "No, I don't, what do you mean my own kind?"

So, herein lies the interesting conundrum of your identity, am I white or am I Asian?
<div align="right">Jessa, the 56-year-old Korean adoptee woman</div>

These excerpts illustrate common themes about race, attractiveness, and desire within my interviewees' responses. As Thomas and Jessa's quotes demonstrate, respondents often assumed that they were less desirable because of their non-whiteness. As Jessa reflects, "what white person wants to like an Asian person?"

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Both Destiny's and Jessa's mothers' actions convey a similar message, though Jessa's mother verbalizes it stating, "You should be dating your own kind." This admonishment demonstrates the competing logics that many Korean adoptees were raised under – they were simultaneously raised as one of the (white) family while being reminded that they were not the same. These adoptive parents' disdain for interracial relationships demonstrates their racial allegiances.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates how racial meanings constructed through structural domains converged with interpersonal interactions and shaped Korean adoptees understanding of themselves. I began by providing the broader socio-historic and geopolitical contexts surrounding Korean adoption. Though Korean adoption began as the model minority myth was taking shape, historically Korean adoption has not been included in the origins of the model minority myth (or as a part of Asian immigration) (Ceniza Choy 2016). This chapter serves as a corrective to this omission and does so by following AsianCrit's (Chang 1999; Museus 2013) directive for reanalyzing history to address the exclusion of Asian Americans from, not only American history, but also Asian American history. As such, this chapter has implications for how we understand the model minority myth's construction and effects throughout society.

Whereas the first part of this chapter argues that the policy decisions, media framing, and military intervention surrounding Korea were part of geopolitical and racial projects, the rest of the chapter analyzes Korean adoptees' racial

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identity and in doing so enters into the social psychological debate about the role of structural versus cultural forces on identity. Herein I demonstrated how both structure – family-formation, neighborhoods, social networks – and culture – racialized expectations, racial meanings – shaped Korean adoptees' understanding of themselves. By focusing on one area over another, the intricacies of identity development are not accurately captured. Korean adoptees often thought of themselves as white during childhood and adolescence, with a small number continuing that identification into present-day. Whereas adoptive parents' choices in adoption from Korea is in line with the model minority myth's positioning of Asians as assimilable and exceptional, Korean adoptees' identification with a white identity was an outcome of and contributed to a racial hierarchy that positions East Asians as honorary whites (Bonilla-Silva 2004).

In addition to the implications for social psychological approaches to self-concept research, this chapter also has implications for how researchers conceptualize honorary whiteness. Honorary whiteness is not only about objective indicators of socioeconomic status or intermarriage rates that attempt to show Asian American's parity with whites or assimilation with whites (Sakamoto et al. 2009; Xie & Goyette 2004), rather herein I demonstrate the psychological practices that contribute to this population of Asian Americans' identification with and evaluation of themselves as white. Research on honorary whites primarily focuses on external categorization. Here I analyze how these honorary whites think about themselves and the process towards that identification.

One key element of this process was adoptive parents' approach towards their

Korean children's ethnic background as an ethnic option (Waters 1990) similar to

how whites employ temporary ethnic symbols to express a connection to their

family background (Gans 1979). In this case, this symbolic ethnicity is passive

(i.e., sporadic and temporary displays of ethnic symbols) rather than active (i.e.,

integration in ethnic communities, everyday deployment of material and non-

material ethnic symbols). However, unlike white Americans, Korean adoptees,

and Asian Americans more broadly, cannot freely display and hide their ethnic

background. This approach to Korean adoptees' ethnicity left them unprepared to

handle experiences of interpersonal racism. Transnational transracial adoption has

frequently been heralded as evidence of the U.S.'s racial progress. However, as

this chapter demonstrates, beneath the veneer of "progress" lie complicated racial

realities played out within the realm of family relations and identity development.

CHAPTER 3

Reframing Belonging: Korean Adoptees' Collective Action and Cultural Production

> Adoptees are a "human bridge between our countries."
> Mr. Roberto Powers, U.S. Consulate General in Korea,
> speaking to a crowd of Korean adoptees
> (observation, August 2, 2016)

> "I was told to be American," he told me.
> "And I tried to fit in. I learned every piece of slang.
> I studied everything I could about American history.
> I was told to stop crying about my mom, my sister, Korea.
> I was told to be happy because I was an American."
> Adam Crapser, quoted in the *New York Times* (Jones 2015)

In the sweltering August heat, approximately 500 Korean adoptees plus family members, more than half of whom were from the U.S., traveled to Seoul, South Korea for the 2016 fifth International Korean Adoptee Associations' (IKAA) Gathering. At the opening ceremonies, South Korean President, Park Guen-Hye[8], welcomed the attendees. In a pre-recorded video message, she referred to Korean adoptees as "overseas Koreans," a perspective popularized by the Korean government in recent years as a way to tap into the resources of the Korean diaspora for Korean economics, government, and business (E. Kim, 2007; S. Kim 2000).

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[8] In December 2016, the South Korean National Assembly voted to impeach President Park due to a corruption scandal. In March of 2017, South Korea's Constitutional Court upheld the decision, and President Park was removed from office (Fifield 2017).

Conceptualizations of Korean adoptees as "overseas Koreans" are just one area of their changing racialization over the life course. In the previous chapter, I detailed how Korean adoptees were framed in the U.S. as orphans in need of rescue, model minorities, and honorary whites. Yet they also experienced racialization as perpetual foreigners. In this chapter, I examine the competing messages Korean adoptees' receive regarding their social and national citizenship within the U.S. and Korea and ask: How do Korean adoptees come to make sense of these competing messages? Do Korean adoptees actively challenge these portrayals, and if so, how? And how do how do these messages convey a particular racial and social order? In answering these questions, I demonstrate how racialized groups can challenge the racialization process.

In what follows, I begin by providing background information on narratives of belonging. Narratives of belonging are the stories we learn and the stories we tell about who we are and whose we are. If and when these narratives are disrupted or replaced by refusals of belonging or narratives of exclusion, then our understanding of ourselves are challenged. After reviewing Korean adoptees' most commonly shared narratives of belonging, I turn to their narratives of exclusion. Here I begin by focusing on a recent high-profile adoptee deportation case, which troubles the idea of belonging for Korean adoptees at home in the U.S. and illustrates adoptees' persistent ties to Korea. During the time of the adoptee deportation case, two Korean adoptee documentaries, *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) and *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016)*,* were reaching

mainstream audiences. In comparing the deportation case and the documentaries, I demonstrate the competing messaging around Korean adoptees' belonging. I also analyze these media in relation to the agency adoptees assert in crafting their own narratives of identity, both as individuals and part of a Korean adoptee collective, as a response to racialization that denies them their social and national citizenship.

"KOREA DID NOT EXIST AND I DID NOT EXIST": NARRATIVES OF BELONGING AND TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACE

Who we are, our connections to others, and our place in the world are organized through the stories, or narratives, we learn, create, and expect (McAdams 1993). In general, identity narratives are about "rootedness" and the portrayal of being exclusively and one (continuous) thing over another (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000). Our narrative identity is comprised of the stories we tell about ourselves that help us make sense of who we are in the world. As such, identity narratives are culturally situated, based on ideas about the moral order and reflecting what is an acceptable story of the self (McAdams 2006). This is why in the U.S. people of color often have a shared experience of being asked "Where are you *really* from?" as the cultural expectation around citizenship is linked to ideas of phenotypic whiteness (Shah 1999). This is also why adoptees report being asked about their "real" parents as expectations around family are based in biological kinship (Docan-Morgan 2010; Raible 2008). Both lines of questioning underscore

normative expectations around narratives of belonging as it relates to U.S. social citizenship and family and the reactions when those norms are violated.

For adoptees and non-adoptees, family stories play an important role. Through these origin stories, children learn their place within the family, the meaning of their role within the family, and the emotional significance of their inclusion (Kiser, Baumgardner, and Dorado 2010). This initial family story becomes a foundation as children begin to craft their own stories about themselves, including who they think they are now and who they think they can become (Habermas and Bluck 2000; Habermas and de Silveira 2008).

Conventional adoption narratives illuminate normative expectations around family through both what is said and unsaid. In these narratives, the adopted child's origin story begins with their entry into the adoptive family and their adoptive parents' motivations for adopting, whether desires for a child or inability to conceive, while minimizing the adopted child's birth parents (Harrigan 2010; Kranstuber and Kellas 2011). What Korean adoptees learn about Korea is mainly through the adoption story their parents told them.

As one Korean adoptee woman shared, "Korea did not exist and I did not exist" (observation, November 7, 2015). While her proclamation is extreme, it underscores how adoptees' exposure to Korea, or lack thereof, shaped their understanding of themselves. Two themes emerged from the adoption stories that

my interview respondents relayed: the role of love from both their birth parents, mainly focusing on the birth mother, and their adopted parents; and the idea of abandonment and rescue. Together these approaches to the adoption story relegated Korea to the past thwarting the possibility of identifying as a member of a Korean diaspora. Korea and birth family were mere props in a story that did not begin until the adoptee joined their adoptive family. This approach to incorporating adoptees' birth family and birth culture joined other common misconceptions about adoption, such as unworthiness of birth parents, adoptees as unwanted or unloved children, and the backwardness of Korea. These beliefs, however misguided, crafted narratives of non-belonging in adoptees' birth families and countries of birth while simultaneously establishing what it meant to belong in their adoptive families and America. Through these adoptive family centered narratives, the expectations around biological kinship and nuclear family structure for family making are made clear. Although adoptive families transgress these norms, through the adoption narratives, adoptive families attempt to create a narrative mirroring them.

But, what happens when you cannot present a narrative that adheres to cultural values and expectations? How does this lack of adherence then lead to, what Yngvesson and Mahoney (2000) term, refusals of belonging, or experiences that cause feelings of non-belonging? Whereas conventional adoption narratives attempt to situate adoptive families within the normative expectations of family and belonging, transnationally transracially adoptive families often experience

additional challenges to constructing narratives of belonging that adhere to conventional expectations not only around family but also citizenship. Further, Korean adoptees often experience explicit narratives of exclusion, messaging that emphasizes they do not hold certain group memberships.

The transracial adoptee paradox refers to transracial adoptees' feelings of being in-between their heritage culture and adoptive family's culture (Lee 2003), however transnational transracial adoptees also experience a paradox as it relates to narratives of national and social citizenship. Although Korean adoptees in the U.S. often experience refusals of belonging in regards to both U.S and Korean citizenship, family, and/or culture, they simultaneously are included within a Korean transnational social space through narratives of belonging as "overseas Koreans," such as that of President Park in her address to Korean adoptees. How then do Korean adoptees come to make sense of these competing messages? Do Korean adoptees actively challenge these portrayals, and if so, how?

In what follows, I begin by identifying two sets of public narratives about Korean adoptees that occurred during my data collection. First, I focus on the highly publicized deportation of Adam Crapser, a Korean adoptee, and then I turn to two Korean adoptee-created documentaries, *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) and *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) that were entering mainstream media around the same time as Adam's case. Whereas the adoptee deportation functioned as a prominent refusal of belonging, Korean adoptee cultural

production provide an alternate conceptualization of Korean adoptee narratives of belonging. These media events provide evidence of how adoptees are reframing their identity narratives around adoption and their identity as Korean and adoptees, while also helping other Korean adoptees do the same.

FINDINGS

Forever Family?: Korean Adoptee Adam Crapser's Deportation

During the time of my data collection, a high-profile adoptee deportation case entered mainstream news. Adam Crapser, a 41-year-old Korean adoptee man, was served deportation paperwork in early 2015 and later detained in a Seattle deportation center until his hearing before an immigration judge (Jeong Perry 2017). He was awaiting potential deportation because his adoptive parents never took the necessary steps to naturalize him.

This case became a frequent topic of conversation among Korean adoptees both at face-to-face events and in Korean adoptee Facebook Groups. In fact, at the first adoptee event of my participant observation, a 2015 holiday party, Adam's case was discussed. Mary Hiatt, a Korean adoptee woman and Me & Korea Board Member, who was a special invited guest to the event, shared information about Adam's case and the concurrent push for the Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2015. Over a family-style meal at a local restaurant during the end of the year holidays, she stated, "It is our duty to support it [Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2015 S.2275] and call our senator, congressmen to get this bill pushed through. This could be any of us."

Mary's words highlight the shared history among Korean adoptees, who have the longest history and are the largest population of transnational adoptees within the contemporary U.S., but also the responsibility Korean adoptees have to advocate for themselves and one another. Although Korean adoption is not new, their shared status as Korean adoptees as a basis for activism is. Research on collective action often examines how social movements activate collective identity in order to propel people to action (Snow and McAdam 2000; Snow and Oliver 1995). Here Mary is emphasizing her audience's shared transnational adoptive status to engage people to identify with and act on behalf of vulnerable transnational adoptees.

More than simply drawing upon shared adoptive status, however, Mary's call and others like it, connect social movement organization to broader racial scripts and identity processes (Hughey 2015). Scripts that adoptees learned from their adoption narratives – adoptees are American and have no other national or ethnic ties, adoptees are family members like any other, adoptees are exceptionally American – become a basis for the movement's goal of "citizenship for all adoptees." For example, one common theme among the adoption stories respondents shared was adoption as an opportunity for a "better life."

Destiny, a 21-year-old Korean adoptee woman, shared her adoption story, stating, "She [her adoptive mother] basically said my (biological) parents love me enough

to give me a better life in America." Several respondents mentioned the idea of a "better life in America" as the crux of their adoption story. Max, a 32-year-old Korean adoptee man, shared:

> I guess when I was growing up, it was more of a very basic, very vague, kind of, "Your mother couldn't take care of you, so she put you up for adoption. And then, thought you'd have a better life in the United States." That was pretty much it.

Max's story draws upon the idealized myth of the "better life in the United States." Although the message adoptive parents were likely trying to convey was one of the birth parents doing what was in the best interest of their child, it also sent an underlying message of inferiority on behalf of Korea, Korean people, and birth parents. The U.S. is then framed as morally superior in that it can do the job that others cannot. This framing contributes to broader political and racial projects that subjugate Asian nations and Asian bodies to Western imperialism.

Even as adoptees benefit from this "better life," adoptee deportations violate these assumptions around belonging and in doing so challenge adoptees' identity narratives. These frames then merge with adoptees' identity exploration. Advocacy around the Adoptee Citizenship Act provides an opportunity for Korean adoptees to not only express their identity as adoptees but also to continue to engage in identity work.

Although there are no official numbers, at least three dozen international adoptees have faced deportation charges or been deported, some after serving in the U.S.

military (Jones 2015). In total, The Adoptee Rights Campaign[9] (n.d.) estimates

that there are 35,000 international adoptees without citizenship, most adoptees

from Korea as Korea had the longest standing adoption history prior to the

enactment of the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, which retroactively granted U.S.

citizenship to international adoptees under the age of 18 at that time and

automatically granted citizenship to all future international adoptees to the U.S.

Adam's case and similar others raise questions of why parents did not secure

citizenship for their adopted children and what happens to adoptees who are

deported to countries they do not know, where they do not speak the language or

understand the culture. Most relevant to this chapter, adoptee deportations

challenge adoption narratives that divorce transnational adoptees from their birth

countries and birth families and emphasize social and cultural citizenship within

the adoptive country.

Adoption agencies often created fictitious birth family stories in order to make

adoptees more appealing for adoption. Children who had no birth family or no

traceable connections to their past made them more desirable (Pate 2014). This

idea of adoptees' clean break from their past was apparent in their adoption

stories. Jessa, a 56-year-old Korean adoptee woman, shared her adoption story,

stating:

> They [adoptive parents] pretty much said that I was in an orphanage when
> I was at the age of one and that I was found on a doorstep, not necessarily

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[9] The Adoptee Rights Campaign (ARC) is an organization dedicated to adoptee and
human rights. It is comprised of intercountry adoptees and their allies. ARC was created
through the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) in
response to the Adoptee Citizenship Act.

> ... Not a particular doorstep, just a doorstep at the age of one and then I was adopted by them at the age of ... When I was two years old. That's pretty much all I know about the adoption story.

For Jessa's parents, there seemed to be little explanation of her adoption. This may be reflective of the time period during which Jessa was adopted. During this time, the common approach was to de-emphasize adoptees' past and instead focus solely on their life post-adoption. However, for some adoptees, this approach continued. For example, Amber, 36-year-old Korean adoptee woman, shared a similar bare-bones adoption story, stating: "They didn't know much. They were told, or I was told, that I was left at an orphanage, and they didn't know my real birth date. There was a lot of questions that they didn't know [the answers to]." Amber's story illustrates the multiple unknowns that many adoptees are faced with – unknown family history, unknown birth dates, unknown hometown, and unknown medical history, among others. These unknowns impede adoptees' ability to create the sense of "rootedness" needed in crafting an identity. Amber's belonging within her adoptive family, and by extension the U.S., is predicated on the erasure of her Korean group membership. Yet, even though her adoption narrative expunges her Korean heritage, externally she remains ascribed to non-white group membership.

Although adoption stories are often mired in the unknown, Stacey's, a 38-year-old Korean adoptee woman, adoption story provides one example of how these unknowns are reconciled, in this case through ideas of religious rescue. She shared:

> They said that my birth family couldn't take care of me. They didn't have

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enough money to take care of me, so they left me at the police station and they didn't leave their information or whatever. My parents were pretty religious so they made this whole story about how God made it able for them to adopt because it was particularly hard for them. They're Jehovah's Witnesses, so they couldn't adopt. No one would let them because of the blood transfusion thing. They don't let their people do blood transfusions. There was this one place that would let them. Then they said, "We could probably let you adopt, but we would probably have a boy that's around two. It'll take years and years if you wanted a girl." They said magically, all of a sudden, there's a girl available, it was perfect. They made it a big thing that they chose me, God chose me, or whatever. It's sweet. It's a sweet way to put it, you know?

Through the adoption story, Stacey's parents paint a picture of God-ordained rescue. In her parents' narrative, Stacey is destined to be in their family. That they were able to adopt as Jehovah's Witnesses and able to adopt a girl was evidence of God's providence over their decision. However, the role of God and religion in Stacey's birth mother's life is unclear. Whereas Christian Americanism often guided couple's decision to adopt as a way to fulfill their Christian duty (Oh 2015), here we see the extension of this belief as God worked their adoption for the good of Stacey's parents' preference and desires.

Adoptee deportations illuminate the paradox of adoption narratives – adoptees are told they are family members like any others and completely separate from their birth country yet eligible for deportation. This paradox is made even clearer when one considers the fact that these deportable adoptees not only do not have U.S. citizenship (even though they were told they are part of American families) but they also often do not have full Korean citizenship (Oh 2015). Through adoptee deportations the limits of honorary whiteness are also made clear. Though

adoptees many experience some benefits of whiteness via their adoption into white families, they do not retain the protections of whiteness. Adoptee deportations, then, become the logical legal outcome of questions Korean adoptees experienced growing up such as "Where are you *really* from?" and "What about your *real* parents?"

In response to this explicit transgression of adoptee narratives of belonging, adoptees and their allies organized around advocacy for Adam specifically and adoptee citizenship rights more broadly. Kevin Vollmers of Land of Gazillion Adoptees, an adoptee-centered multimedia company, and Gazillion Strong, an advocacy group, began advocating around adoptee citizenship in February 2015, shortly after Adam's deportation paperwork was served. In the spring of 2015, 18MillionRising, an Asian and Pacific Islander activism network, launched a campaign to #KeepAdamHome, which included a petition against Adam's deportation.

Even though adoptee citizenship has been an ongoing issue, the publicity around Adam's case helped galvanize support for a legislative fix. Adam's case illustrates the citizenship loophole in the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 (CCA). Because Adam was already over 18 years of age when the CCA was passed, he did not gain automatic U.S. citizenship from his adoption into an American family. The CCA was a result of the efforts of adoptive parents who believed their transnationally adopted children should automatically receive U.S. citizenship

upon adoption. Prior to the CCA, it was incumbent upon adoptive parents to 1. Know that their adopted children were not automatically citizens even though they were adopted by U.S. couples; and 2. Know how to apply for citizenship for their child. There was no formal process informing adoptive parents about the citizenship process for their children and as a result, many parents did not secure citizenship for their child. Some failed to do so out of ignorance, others out of laziness, and still others out of willful neglect (observation, June 14, 2016).

In 2013 an amendment to the CCA, which would have closed the loophole and granted retroactive citizenship to adoptees not covered by the CCA, was introduced and later included in a broader immigration bill, which did not pass (U.S. Congress 2013). As was the case then and continues to be the case now as adoptees and allies fight for adoptee citizenship rights, adoptees with criminal records are stumbling blocks to Congress and House support (Gossett 2017). Elected officials do not want to be seen as providing citizenship to criminal immigrants. As adults, adoptees are no longer seen as vulnerable foreign children. They are seen as immigrant adults who are taking advantage of the system In fact, elected officials do not want to be seen as providing a pathway to citizenship for immigrants at all. Adoptee Rights Campaign advocates have been specifically directed not to frame the Adoptee Citizenship Act as an immigration bill but rather as a family bill (observation, June 14, 2016). This framing is an attempt to circumvent the bill being subsumed under popular narratives that criminalize immigrants.

I asked my interview respondents if they had heard of the Adoptee Citizenship

Act or Adam Crapser's case specifically. The majority of respondents (n=29;

88%) had heard about Adam's case and/or the Adoptee Citizenship Act. Roughly

half (n=17; 52%) were involved in some type of advocacy around the Act

including signing online petitions, contacting their elected officials through letter

drives or personally, spreading awareness to non-adoptee friends and family,

participating in Days of Action on Capitol Hill, or serving as spokespersons for

the Act at other events.[10] For example, James, a 28-year-old Korean adoptee man,

described his participation:

> Yes. So I do a lot of helping [my local Korean adoptee organization], in
> doing a letter drive to our Congress people, and getting the awareness out
> in the greater adoption community. And we also keep an open channel of
> community with AAAW, which is the Asian Adult Adoptees of
> Washington Organization, Seattle. I had actually visited Seattle this past
> weekend and I stayed with their president, so I asked, what's the status of

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[10] In addition to on-line support and fundraising for Adam's case specifically and the
Adoptee Rights Campaign more broadly, the National Korean American Service and
Education Consortium (NAKASEC) organized three days of action on Capitol Hill
throughout 2016. On June 14, October 4, and December 1 of 2016, Korean adoptees,
other international adoptees, and their allies met with Congressmen and Representatives
to urge their support of the ACA. Although there is often debate on Korean adoptees'
acceptance within the "Korean" Korean American community, NAKASEC's
involvement in advocacy for the ACA demonstrates how Korean adoptees are being
included within the Korean American community. In addition to NAKASEC's support
for the ACA, within the organization they also developed a position to solely focus on
Korean adoptee needs. Further demonstrating Korean adoptees' inclusion within the
Korean diaspora was a meeting between Adoptee Rights Campaign leadership and
Korean government officials.

Complementing the days on Capitol Hill, Korean adoptees organized call-in days of
action where concerned citizens called their state's representatives asking for their
support of the ACA. Additionally, throughout fall 2016, the Adoptee Rights Campaign
held a postcard drive culminating in over 6,000 postcards to elected officials from U.S.
constituents in support of the ACA. The Adoptee Rights Campaign and NAKASEC hand
delivered many of the postcards during the Day of Action at Capitol Hill.

Adam, how is he doing? She actually visited him recently at the detention center and I told her we got a lot of stuff going on out here and we actually have a rally on the Hill coming up pretty soon, next week. Even though I'm not taking a lead on any of these projects, I am helping out where I can. And, I really hope that we can get it resolved as soon as possible.

James' quote alludes to the network among Korean adoptee organizations whereby information and resources are shared. Korean adoptee organizations and individual members also host visiting Korean adoptees as the AAAW President did for James. Importantly, Korean adoptee organizations view their programming and outreach for all Korean adoptees regardless of their membership or involvement in Korean adoptee groups. For example, even though Adam was not involved in the local Seattle Korean adoptee group, or any adoptee group, AAAW proactively reached out to him to assist in any way they could.

Adoptee Citizenship Rights advocacy also intersected with adoptees' own identity processes. For example, when I asked Alex, a 30-year-old Korean adoptee woman, how important being an adoptee is to how she thinks about herself, she answered by talking about her involvement in advocacy for the Act, stating:

> I did go up to Philadelphia and spoke about the Adoptee Citizenship Act, during their Asian American film festival ... Doing the advocacy for the Adoptee Citizenship Act, because knowing how some of the people that I've met, and have either done the Days of Action with or just have gotten to know online, I'm trying to learn their stories, doing presentations for other areas ... Knowing that how some of them were abused mentally and emotionally, in similar ways that my little brother and I were, and probably thinking how close me and my little brother possibly were to maybe being in the same boat if my parents had realized that, "Oh hey, we could have actually had just one more thing to hold over their heads" [by not getting them naturalized][11] ... Now I'm feeling like it's part of my duty to help these other adoptees that, through no fault of their own, don't have

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[11] Given Alex's age, she would have been covered under the Child Citizenship Act.

citizenship. So, that's one thing that I'm trying to do to actively accept [who I am as an adoptee].

Identity formation is an ongoing process of becoming. In relation to Korean adoptees' identity development, the movement around adoptee citizenship rights provides an activity for them to attach to as they are exploring their identity as Korean adoptees. Through her Adoptee Citizenship Rights advocacy, Alex is able to contribute to a personally important cause while building her understanding of herself as an adoptee. Alex shared that she got involved in advocacy for the Adoptee Citizenship Rights through a local Korean adoptee organization. In addition to adoptee organizations' advocacy for the Adoptee Citizenship Rights, annual adoptee conferences, such as the Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network's annual conference and IKAA, also raised awareness of adoptees without citizenship. For example, IKAA's 2017 Annual Convention in San Francisco, California had a session, entitled "Adopted, Without Citizenship," which featured transnational adoptees without citizenship as well as members of the Adoptee Rights Campaign.

Similarly, Julia, the 29-year-old Korean adoptee woman, viewed her advocacy as intricately linked to her identity as a Korean adoptee. She shared:

> I feel like when I talk to people about my experiences in a way I'm sort of advocating about adoption and trying to educate them as well as about the experience. Because some people want to say, "Oh, you're so lucky you were saved" and stuff. And that's one perspective but I also want to show them the other side of the coin that not everything is so black or white, even just the Adoptee Citizenship Act, and people not knowing that people had to make their kids citizens and they could be deported. I think my role in letting people know that I'm adopted is also advocating about the adoptee experience, at least the Korean adoptee experience and educating people about it.

Julia notes the misconceptions and lack of information surrounding international adoption. As she states, she views her adoptive status as a way to provide a more nuanced view of adoption rather than the "black or white" portrayal. Through sharing her experiences as an adoptee, Julia reframes conventional narratives of adoption that situate adoptees in a subordinate position where they were "saved" by their adoptive parents and therefore must feel eternal gratitude for their good fortune. In doing so, Julia repositions adoptees from objects in need of rescue to subjects who assert their own selfhood.

Unfortunately, despite Korean adoptee and broader Asian American organizing, on October 24, 2016, after being held in a detention center for six months, immigration judge John C. O'Dell ruled that Adam Crapser be deported to Korea (Jeong Perry 2016). Korean adoptees in Korea were waiting for Adam when he arrived and assisted with his transition to Korea. Adam is currently in Korea with hopes that his wife and children will be able to visit him soon. The Adoptee Rights Campaign with the assistance of the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium continue to strategize for the best way to move forward on the Adoptee Citizenship Act.

Seeing is Believing: Korean Adoptee Cultural Production – Twinsters and AKA SEOUL

While Adam Crapser's deportation case was unfolding in the news, Korean adoptees were entering the small screen. Both documentaries created by and featuring Korean adoptees, *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) and *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) present an image of Korean adoptees formerly missing

from mainstream media: Korean adoptee adults on their own terms.[12] Whereas

previous media portrayals were primarily of Korean adoptees as children whether

as orphans in need of rescue or young people as they were learning to fit in with

their adoptive families (Park 2009; Tuan and Shiao 2011), in these documentaries

Korean adoptees are able to leverage new technology to actively reclaim and

reframe their adoptee narratives. These documentaries stand in sharp contrast to

the narratives of exclusion illustrated through Adam Crapser's deportation case.

Through these mainstream Korean adoptee cultural productions, audiences and

Korean adoptees specifically, are offered a narrative that normalizes Korean

adoptee experiences while providing a glimpse of a Korean adoptee transnational

social space. In fact, during my participant observation and interviews,

respondents discussed the role *Twinsters* had in their learning about an organized

Korean adoptee community.

Twinsters (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) is an independently-made documentary

that follows the initial reunification of twin Korean adoptees, who were adopted

to separate families in different countries. It was released on Netflix after

successful debuts at SXSW, winning special jury recognition for editing, and the

Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, winning the grand jury prize for best

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[12] This is not to discount previous Korean adoptee documentaries. For example, Deann Borshay Liem's films, *First Person Plural* (2000) and *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee* (2010), which were both aired on PBS, are foundational to the Korean adoptee community. Borshay Liem is currently in the post-production phases of her next Korean adoptee documentary, *Geographies of Kinship - The Korean Adoption Story* (forthcoming).

documentary. It was also viewed at the 2015 International Korean Adoptees Association network's Gathering in Honolulu.

Facilitated by social media (YouTube and then Facebook), Samantha Futerman, a U.S. Korean adoptee, and Anaïs Bordier, a French Korean adoptee, find one another. The documentary tracks their initial communication via Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, text, and Skype to their face-to-face meeting in London, where Anaïs lives, and then to California, where Samantha lives and also where California State University's Twin Studies Center is located. The twins' reunification provides the opportunity to examine the age-old question of nature versus nurture, particularly with the explicit connection to the Twin Studies Center where Sam and Anaïs take part in a series of mental, physical, and personality assessments. The documentary closes with the twins' return to Korea, Anaïs for the first time, for the 2013 International Korean Adoptees Association network's (IKAA) Gathering and to visit their adoption agencies and foster mothers.

Throughout *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) the audience learns more about the twins' upbringing and how they came to understand their adoptive status. Similar to my respondents, Samantha and Anaïs, though adopted to separate countries, were raised in homogenous communities where they were the only Asians. Whereas Samantha was not treated differently because of her racial difference, Anaïs was teased and felt very alienated. These different experiences

shaped their views on adoption. Samantha felt as though adoption was a positive

component of her life, where Anaïs felt that it was something terrible that had

happened to her. Reflecting on her view of herself, Anaïs shared:

> Before I used to say that I wasn't born on the 19th of November. I was
> born on the 5th of March when I arrived in France. For me there was no
> life before, to me, because I was nothing without my parents. [cries] Yeah.
> Yeah. Yeah, now I see, I see that I existed before as well. It felt like, you
> know, you're adopted. And so I started living with my parents. For me
> being born, not born at the airport, but when your parents stop wanting
> you, and I just realized here coming to Korea I realized that people loved
> me like the whole time before.

Within this quote, Anaïs describes how her adoption story contributed to a

narrative of belonging that, unbeknownst to her adoptive parents, instilled the

belief that she was unwanted by her birth parents. These feelings of being

unwanted and unloved led her to completely discard her early years from her

existence. Ultimately this narrative shaped how she viewed herself. Anaïs felt

unloved, unwanted, and unanchored to her life in France. Through meeting her

twin sister and embarking on their shared journey of discovery, Anaïs learns an

alternate way of understanding her story and her place in the world.

In addition to the role connecting with her twin played in this new vision of

herself was their attendance at IKAA. Another Korean adoptee creative in

California, Dan Matthews, told Samantha about IKAA, and then she suggested

that they attend. Founded in 2004 in Europe and the U.S., the International

Korean Adoptee Association network (IKAA) serves as a centralized hub for the

Korean adoptee diaspora. Beginning in 2004, every three years IKAA hosts a

multi-day international gathering of Korean adoptees in Seoul, S. Korea. The

gathering itself is often referred to as IKAA by attendees. In the years in between

the Korea gatherings, gatherings are held in Europe and the U.S. though the Korea

gatherings typically attract a larger attendance as it provides first time attendees

and first time travelers to Korea a more structured way to visit their homeland.

The gatherings include a flexible schedule, so participants can attend as many of

the pre-planned activities, or not, as they wish. In fact, most of the activities are

more social in nature, such as scavenger hunts, tourist attractions, happy hours

and karaoke, and family-oriented activities. There is one day of panel sessions and

a half-day of research presentations. The panel sessions include topics such as

identity and race, LGBTQ experiences, birth family search, and, at the 2016

gathering, adoptees and citizenship. One of the key sessions is the breakout

sessions by age cohort, where participants are able to meet adoptees around the

same age and discuss issues relevant to their age group. Importantly, in 2007,

IKAA hosted the inaugural international symposium on Korean adoption studies.

Here the world's foremost Korean adoption scholars present their research on

Korean adoptees and Korean adoption. The symposium continues to be held every

three years at the Seoul gatherings.

Even though the intricacies of IKAA may not have been apparent in the

documentary, the effect of the experience on Anaïs is clear. She describes her

experience at IKAA stating, "You feel like you're a part of something… You

know you're going to have a lot of fun for a whole week with people that

understand you completely. And you know that you're in Korea and that your birth country cares about you as well. It's really moving." Through her attendance at IKAA, Anaïs reframes her conception of Korea, from one of neglect to acceptance, and in doing so, reframes her conception of herself as a Korean person. Anaïs and Sam's attendance at IKAA also illustrates the global community of Korean adoptees, as adoptees from the U.S. and across Europe come together each year to commune with and learn from one another. The portrayal of IKAA and Anaïs reflection of experiencing a community "with people that understand you completely" resonated with Korean adoptee viewers, as about half of the first time attendees I spoke with at the 2016 IKAA mentioned *Twinsters* as the impetus for their attendance.

During *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015), the audience watches as Anaïs reaches a sense of resolution around her adoptive status. Whereas Anaïs' adoption experience seems more fraught with feelings of non-belonging, Sam appears as though her adoptive status has been a non-issue. Towards the end of the documentary, Sam offers this reflection on her reunification with her twin sister:

> It's comforting to know that life unfolds in a way that it's supposed to, I guess. I have my sister now and I'm happy. It's not looking back to what happened, it's moving on…I have my parents. I have my foster mom. I have Anaïs' mom. I have Sue [guide from her homeland tour]. I have my sister. I have my brothers [two brothers biological to her adoptive parents]. I have like five different types of moms, and that's okay. And I love each and every one of them. And, I love my birth mom, too. I don't know her. Still love her… Family's what you make of it. There's no definition.

Whereas Anaïs seemed constrained within conventional ideas of family and devastated by the idea that she was unwanted by her birth family, Sam offers a broader and more inclusive view of family. In recounting her family she includes biological and non-biological relationships, chosen relationships, and multiple mothers. Further whereas Anaïs seemed trapped within her past, Sam sees her past as merely a starting point.

Twinsters (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) offers two extreme types of responses to adoption. On one end, there is Anaïs, who almost appears haunted by her past. While she was open to meeting Sam, she was much more hesitant, almost resistant, to returning to Korea and meeting other adoptees. Through the course of the documentary, viewers see how significant connecting with her twin sister is to Anaïs. Anaïs even alludes to the idea that meeting Sam is enough. Viewers watch as Anaïs transforms from being troubled by her past to moving towards acceptance. On the other end, there is Sam, who seemed to approach the knowledge of a twin sister and the possibility of reuniting as one exciting adventure. Unlike Anaïs, who seems to be filling a void, Sam experiences their reunification as adding to an already rich life. Sam is not defined by her adoption.

Whereas *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) focuses primarily on the reunification of Samantha Futerman and Anaïs Bordier, *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) concentrates on the return of five Korean adoptees from the U.S. and Sweden to South Korea for the 2016 IKAA. This seven-part docu-series was co-

created by and released through NBC Asian America and viewed at the San Diego and Boston Asian Film Festivals. In contrast to *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) with its release through Netflix, *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) primarily targets an Asian American audience. The inclusion of adoptees within the broader Asian American narrative contrasts Asian adoptees' historic exclusion from Asian American history and Asian American communities (Ceniza Choy 2016).

AKA SEOUL (Maxwell 2016) is the follow up to *AKA Dan* (Maxwell 2014), which follows U.S. Korean adoptee Dan Matthews as he meets his twin brother (not adopted) and biological family in Korea. In *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) both of Dan's mothers, his adoptive mother and birth mother, meet for the first time. Through the vignettes of the five Korean adoptees, Dan, Min, Siri, Peter, and Chelsea, *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) highlights universal experiences of adversity and personal discovery. Although the first five segments each focus on one adoptee, common themes among the five adoptees and Korean adoptees, more broadly, are highlighted – non-traditional family relationships, especially when connecting with birth family (Part One), being raised in predominately white hometowns (Part Two), navigating multiple identities and their intersections, in particular marginalized racial, gender, and/or sexual identities (Part Three), effects of intrusive questions (Part Four), and the ongoing search for "home," including home as a physical space or place and home as a feeling of being accepted for who you are (Part Five). In the series, each adoptee also

conducts a birth search, and Part Six shows the challenges in searching, the variety of feelings around searching, and specific challenges when searching in regards to sexuality and gender. The series ends with each adoptee reflecting on the experience of being in Korea and attending IKAA (Part Seven).

Interwoven throughout the docu-series are the challenges in identity development as Koreans and as adoptees, specifically the rigidity around the scripts for identity (e.g., how to be a good daughter, how to be a Christian, how to be a woman/man, how to be Korean/Asian), and how adoptees individually and collectively reframe these narratives. As such, *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) emphasizes the identity work of each of the five highlighted adoptees while also providing a script of belonging for adoptee audiences to follow. *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016) simultaneously creates and showcases a Korean adoptee community that traverses national borders.

Korean adoptee cultural production highlights the shared historic, social, economic, and cultural context of the Korean adoptee community itself, creates a communal identity, and facilitates a sense of "place" for a group that often feels in-between places, spaces, and identities. Through this user-generated media, Korean adoptees create and display an unfolding shared adoptee identity. However, whereas mainstream Korean adoptee documentaries serve a community-building role among adoptees themselves, they may also perpetuate

traditional scripts about adoption as rescue and what constitutes a "real" family, especially with their emphasis on the birth family search.

CONCLUSION

Korean adoptees often must reconcile competing narratives of identity and belonging. This begins with the family stories about their entrance into their adoptive families. These early narratives of belonging are based on adoptees' displacement from their birth family, birth country, and heritage culture. The adoption stories adoptees were told by their parents contribute to the identity narratives they were able to construct about themselves and their place in their adoptive families, the U.S., and Korea. As cultural texts (Habermas and Bluck 2000; McAdams 2006), their adoption stories illustrate whose story matters (adoptive parents), what is acceptable as a story of the self (primacy of family), and cultural values (including the power structure in regards to geopolitics, religion, race, and class).

Through family stories, adoptees are socialized into "family values." These values include beliefs, behaviors, and group boundaries. Under the guise of "family values," racial and gender hierarchies (among other forms of stratification) are embedded. For example, logics around family roles and authority are mapped onto racial ideologies that characterize whites as paternalistic to infantilized racial minorities (Collins 1998). Because adoption narratives were often dismissive of Korea and adoptees' birth families, they discouraged adoptees from seeing

themselves as part of a Korean diaspora. Such adoption stories further reify political projects that demand racialized minority groups relinquish their ethnic heritage culture for social citizenship.

Although they laid a foundation for adoptees' identity narratives, family stories later merged with other narratives, particularly those that emphasized their non-belonging. Adam Crapser's deportation proceedings were one extreme case of non-belonging, but it is connected to more subtle, everyday experiences of exclusion. Adoptees' racialization as perpetual foreigners reminds them that their inclusion into the U.S. social fabric is tenuous. In fact, I argue that adoptee deportations serve a disciplinary function, reminding these racialized immigrants of their place within a distinct racial hierarchy. As adults, these transnational transracial adoptees are no longer under the cover of their white adoptive families but rather subsumed under tropes about immigrants that mark them as criminal and unassimilable "Others." Adoptee deportations, then, can be viewed as part of the historical arc of a broader geopolitical project that positions the U.S. as a benevolent big brother to the economically and culturally deficient.

Adoptees' collective reframing of their belonging through advocacy around the Adoptee Citizenship Act and Korean adoptee created media sought to establish new ways of thinking about Korean adoptees' social citizenship and solidify their national citizenship. Korean adoptees' reframing of identity narratives illustrates two important identity processes. First, in regards to collective action, Korean

adoptees' advocacy for the Adoptee Citizenship Act demonstrates how racialized

scripts are incorporated into activism. Adoptees drew upon scripts from childhood

narratives of belonging to shape the message of their movement. Additionally,

these racialized scripts also contributed to the collective identity that was

activated and engaged for vulnerable transnational adoptees. Adoptee Citizenship

Act advocacy provided an opportunity for adoptees to explore and enact their

adoptee identity.

Second, adoptees' cultural production illustrates the role of socio-historic contexts

in racial meanings and group formation while also expanding our understanding

of transnational social space. Transnational social spaces "refer to sustained ties

of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-

states" (Faist 2000:189). These binding ties can be formal (ex. policies, laws,

organizations) or informal (ex. beliefs, values, collective identity), and the social

spaces can differ in the origins, scope, and resources. President Park is invoking a

Korean transnational space when she references "overseas Koreans." Her promise

that the Korean government would support adoptees in visiting Korea and

learning Korean language and culture formalizes these ties (observation, August

2, 2016).

Contemporary transnational social spaces are facilitated by push reasons from the

home country, discrimination and/or lack of full citizenship rights and inclusion in

their new country, and technology (Faist 2000). Korean adoptees' entry into a

Korean transnational social space is made possible by Korea's established

adoption industry and lack of family social services, adoptees' feelings of

marginality within the countries to which they are adopted, and the rise of social

media and the increasing availability of the Internet. The transnational social

space that Korean adoptees create through documentaries, such as *Twinsters*

(Futerman and Miyamoto 2015) and *AKA SEOUL* (Maxwell 2016), and through

IKAA gatherings provides evidence of how globally dispersed groups create

transnational communities, ones that intersect with and diverge from government-

headed initiatives.

Whereas specific socio-historic contexts facilitated Korean adoption,

contemporary contexts made Korean adoptee cultural production possible.

Together the past and present combine to offer a unique opportunity for Korean

adoptee identity development. The Korean adoptee identity as created through the

use of mass media is linked to the ease and availability of technology and the

Internet. The rise of the Internet also merged with a critical mass of adult

adoptees, here primarily the 1980s cohort of Korean adoption. Similar to other

Asian Americans, Korean adoptees are capitalizing on the Internet to create

alternate programming where they are centered (Considine 2011; Gao 2012). In

presenting themselves as the subjects of their own stories. Korean adoptee cultural

production contrasts typical media representations that portray adoptees

negatively or in stigmatizing frames (Kline, Karel, and Chatterjee 2006). This

raises the question of how else might Korean adoptees be leveraging the Internet

and social networking sites for identity formation, a question I explore in the next

chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Neither Quite White nor Completely Korean: The Role of Proximate Social Structures in "Korean Adoptee" Identity Development

There's this idea of thesis and then antithesis, and then there's the synthesis of the two. I feel like that has really described how I see it now. Which is, you have your base, which is where you grew up, things like that, so that's America and that white society I grew up in. Then there's the antithesis, which is what I figured out later, which is that I'm Korean, so you learn and get comfortable with that. Then I think I'm finally at the point where I'm appreciating the synthesis of that, which is, I'm not really Korean, and I can't go back to that. That's not really a thing for me as it's going to be for other Koreans, because I was pulled out of that society. Even as much as I want to be a part of that again, you know, I could certainly live there and I have lived there, but you know, **I'm Korean plus something else.** I feel like I'm at that point of building on those two cornerstones, if you will. (emphasis added)

Thomas, 46-year-old Korean adoptee man

It [Korean adoptee identity] means you're kind of in an in-between place in society. I think it really bonds Korean adoptees together that's different from being Korean or being a white person living in America. It's kind of a unique experience in that regard. I know so many [adoptees] that really try to seek their heritage out but I don't think there could be anyone that would ever just feel fully Korean. That's impossible.

Sarah, 34-year-old Korean adoptee woman

Transnational transracial adoptees straddle multiple identity dichotomies: white- - non-white, citizen-foreigner, adoptee-orphan. However, "[b]ecause a strong sense of ethnicity, citizenship, and familial bonds are central to self-perception, questioning these areas can have a profound effect on one's sense of inclusion or belonging and one's general identity formation" (Revel-Hough and Hollingsworth 2014:930). In fact, two key themes in research on Korean transnational transracial adoptees are adoptees' difficulties in identity development (Brian 2012; Lee 2003; Sarubbi 2012) and desire for heritage culture exploration (Kim, Reichwald, and Lee 2013; Lee et al. 2010; Walton 2012).

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Traditionally, studies examined Korean adoptees' "adjustment" or assimilation into their adoptive families and mainstream American society. Accordingly, research focused primarily on behavioral issues of transracial adoptees as reported by adoptive parents compared to those of parents of in-racial adoptees (Feigelman and Silverman 1983; Kim 1976; Simon and Altstein 1977). As adoption from Korea continued through the 1970s and 1980s, research then began to devote attention to transracial adoptees' racial and ethnic identity development (Cole 1992; Huh 1985; McRoy et al. 1982). Even though feelings of belonging within their white adoptive family and ethnic group of birth are important to their sense of well being (Docan-Morgan 2010), research finds that these adoptees are unable to fully inhabit a white or Korean identity due to their transnational transracial adoption (Freundlich and Lieberthal 2000; Kim, Suyemoto, and Turner 2010; Lee et al. 2010).

Research on Korean adoptees' identity development follows assumptions about immigrant incorporation (e.g., assimilation, integration), yet research has not explicitly applied an acculturation lens to transnational adoptees. With their exceptional immigration history, Korean transnational transracial adoptees are a unique case to examine the acculturation process. Although research largely assumes their identity must be located within a white-Asian binary, it remains unclear if Korean adoptees might identify in other ways.

Therefore, in this chapter, I ask how do Korean adoptees respond to the identity constraints they face in regards to their transnational transracial adoption? Are there other ways Korean adoptees identify racially and ethnically? In answering

these questions, this chapter adds to literature on social identity by demonstrating how groups of people transform identity labels into salient shared identities while also challenging transracial adoption literature that positions Asian transracial adoptees' identity as bound between either white or Asian. Importantly, I also demonstrate how does Korean adoptees' identity development contributes to broader literature on immigration and acculturation.

In previous chapters, I demonstrated how Korean adoptees' Korean heritage culture and Asian racial group membership are elided in favor of honorary whiteness, particularly through adoptive parent-led socialization. I also illuminated how, at the same time, Korean adoptees' position as racialized others is emphasized (e.g. racial teasing) and their Asian American group membership challenged (e.g. inauthentic due to lack of cultural knowledge). Herein, I examine how Korean adoptees reimagine their adoptee identity, creating a shared identity around their experiences as transnational transracial adoptees, and the online groups they create and participate in that allow them to transform, perform, and share that identity. In doing so, I emphasize two important processes: 1. Individual-led ethnic reclamation; and 2. Group-shared meaning through proximate social structures of Korean adoptee Facebook Groups. Through this analysis, I demonstrate the importance of social networking sites as proximate social structures and their role in identity development. I close by highlighting how some Korean adoptees enact their "Korean adoptee" identity outside of online spaces.

BACKGROUND

Transracial Adoptee Paradox

Through their transnational transracial adoption, Korean adoptees are socialized into white culture and (white) American identity (Park Nelson 2016). From their sense of belonging within their family, Korean adoptees gain a sense of belonging in their new home country (Brian 2012). The feeling of belonging within one's family is important to adoptees' identity formation (Docan-Morgan 2010). However, despite being raised in white families, reared into white culture, and understanding themselves as Americans, Korean adoptees' physical features announce them as white racial outsiders, challenging their place in the family and nation. Korean adoptees are unable to divorce themselves from their racial past as it is an ever-present part of how others perceive them.

As racial and ethnic minorities, Korean adoptees are expected to be knowledgeable about and participate in a rich Korean ethnic culture, have a dense network of Korean co-ethnics, and have Korean pride (Kim et al. 2010; Lee et al. 2010). Although a sense of belonging within one's heritage culture group also plays an important role in identity formation, transnational transracial adoptees often report difficulty in connecting with Korean American communities due to their adoption into white families and socialization into white culture (Park Nelson 2016). Both belonging to one's (adoptive) family and one's heritage culture group are important identities. However, for transnational transracial adoptees, these two identities are at odds. As Korean adoptees learn, they cannot be both white and non-white.

Lee (2003) characterizes the incongruous position transracial adoptees occupy as the transracial adoptee paradox, whereby transracial "adoptees are racial/ethnic minorities in society, but they are perceived and treated by others, and sometimes themselves, as if they are members of the majority culture due to adoption into a White family" (Lee 2003:711). In other words they must navigate their racial insider-outsider positions with both whites and heritage culture members. However, as Goss, Hughey, and Byrd (2017) demonstrate this navigation is not without cost. They find that transracial adoptees are caught between expectations of racial authenticity as people of color and enacting whiteness as white family members. The former often draws upon racialized stereotypes of non-white racial groups and the latter denies transracial adoptees' lived experiences of racial difference as non-whites.

Because research primarily focuses on Korean adoptees' "adjustment" or acculturation into their white families and white culture, far less attention has been given to ways transnational transracial adoptees might otherwise identify. As transnational transracial adoptees with a unique immigration background, Korean adoptees become a theoretically rich population to study acculturation outcomes.

Biculturalism

Traditional models of acculturation assumed that two cultures could not be maintained. Instead to be high on the heritage culture meant being low on the new, mainstream culture and vice versa. As such, acculturation was thought of as

a linear process and used synonymously with assimilation (Gordon 1964).

However, Berry (1990, 1997) developed a model of four acculturation strategies:

1. Assimilation – heritage culture is not maintained and the receiving country's

culture is adopted; 2. Integration – heritage culture is maintained, daily contact

with members of receiving country's culture, and proficiency with receiving

country's culture is attained; 3. Separation – heritage culture is maintained,

contact with members of the receiving country are avoided, and receiving

country's culture is not adopted; and 4. Marginalization – neither heritage culture

is maintained nor receiving country's culture adopted. These four strategies

demonstrated that acculturation was not simply about assimilation but rather

various outcomes depending on one's desire and ability to maintain one's heritage

culture and have contact with members of the mainstream culture, and, most

importantly, social contexts. Researchers identified elements of the social context

that facilitate the acculturation process, such as national immigration policies and

approaches to multiculturalism, parental socialization, and ethnic enclaves (Mistry

and Wu 2010).

Within Berry's model (1990, 1997), the integration strategy is a form of

biculturalism. Biculturalism refers to a cultural dualism whereby individuals

understand and express cultural norms, beliefs, and/or languages of the two

cultures and/or identify with both cultures (ex. I am Korean-American) (Nguyen

and Benet-Martínez 2007). This can more explicitly refer to ethnic identity related

to the heritage culture and national identity related to the receiving country's

culture. Ethnic identity is the part of the self-concept that includes ethnic group membership, or the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors among an ethnic group, and commitment to and identification with that particular group; ethnic identity is an interactive process that is connected to social context (Phinney 1990). National identity is the sense of belonging to a nation and what it means to be a member of that nation (Tajfel 1981). Similar to ethnic identity, national identity includes shared values, beliefs, and behaviors. It includes a "we" feeling of who members of a nation are and how they should behave. Although "bicultural individuals are in the unique position of potentially holding two such cultural social identities and navigating two potentially different cultural frameworks" (Stroink and Lalonde 2009:49), this may lead to difficulties in identity development or negative behavioral and psychological outcomes when the two cultural identities are valued differently in a given context or when the individual holds simultaneous membership in two different in-groups (Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997).

There are two types of biculturalism – alternation and fusion (LaFromboise et al. 1993). Alternation refers to an identity fluidity depending on the social context. Alternation may be thought of as a bicultural competence or knowledge of two distinct cultures and the ability to deploy the appropriate behaviors or attitudes in response to cultural cues within a given context. Fusion denotes a third emerging culture that merges the two cultures but is itself distinct from both. Fusion is not

simply a competency in two cultures but a synthesis of the two and identification with the third created culture.

As with the acculturation process overall, the process of biculturalism is also highly dependent on the social context. Whereas research often cited national immigration policies as a key factor in facilitating a bicultural identity (Berry 1984), Phinney and colleagues (2001) found that such policies and the relationship to biculturalism are, in fact, weak. This led researchers to suggest that local contexts, such as the number of heritage culture members in a local community, parental socialization, and peer relationships, are more influential in facilitating biculturalism (Wang and Benner 2016). These smaller and more intimate contexts can be thought of as proximate social structures.

In contrast to acculturation research with its focus on immigrant groups and supportive social contexts, transnational transracial adoptees immigrate alone, typically do not bring pre-existing knowledge of their heritage culture, though older adoptees might, and are not socialized into their heritage culture by their (adoptive) parents (Park Nelson 2016; Scherman 2010). In fact, research finds that adoptive parents engage in heritage culture activities that rely heavily on symbolic material culture rather than integration into heritage culture networks and communities (Jacobson 2008; see also Chapter 2). Further, research finds that adoptees' individual-initiated exploration takes on heightened importance for

adoptees' identity development in contrast to parent-led attempts at heritage

culture involvement during childhood or adolescence (Shiao and Tuan 2008).

Although transnational transracial adoptees provide a unique case to study the

effects of immigration, little research has examined the process of acculturation

for these immigrants. The research that has examined transracial adoptees'

potential for bicultural identity neither takes into account how an adoptee identity

is incorporated into adoptees' understanding of their heritage culture and

receiving culture, if at all, nor the role of other proximate social structures, such

as social networking sites, instead relying primarily on family socialization or

peer relationships (Manzi et al. 2014; Samuels 2010).

Proximate Social Structures

Proximate social structures created by and for Korean adoptees, such as Facebook

Groups, may become a key site where racial and heritage culture adoptive identity

is formed. Proximate social structures provide a space for identity to be

performed, transformed, and shared. In an examination of Facebook Groups

created for specific racial group members, Korn (2015) finds that:

> [D]igital culture around race reflects empowerment by users of color to
> create their own identification practices. Online representations of race are
> examples of interactive culture in which culture, identity, and
> communication are interconnected, with individual users of color self-
> categorizing as racialized and producing digital identities about race that
> communicates agency. (p. 22).

Korn finds that people of color create Facebook Groups that counter negative

stereotypical portrayals of their racial group. For example, Black Americans

create groups that emphasize intelligence and Asians create groups that emphasize political activism. Other research finds that Facebook Group participation translates to offline activity (Park, Kee, and Valenzuela 2009). Specifically, Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) find that among college students who use Facebook Groups for informational purposes there is a link between Facebook Group participation and civic and political involvement. A study by Parker and Song (2006) demonstrates how British-born Chinese and South Asians use the Internet to respond to their marginality in their national context. Through online forums British-born Chinese and South Asians are able to expand past the identity constraints they experience because of their "mixture of local, national and racialized [sic] loyalties" (578). In sum, research demonstrates how online social networking sites, like Facebook, operate as a proximate social structure where racialized minorities can re-imbue meaning into their shared identity.

In what follows, I demonstrate how Korean adoptees use the proximate social structure of Korean adoptee Facebook Groups to re-create their identity as adoptees and create an adoptee culture that fuses elements of their white cultural upbringing and their Korean heritage culture. I also provide evidence of how their online identity translates to offline action.

FINDINGS

In the online survey (N=107) one of the questions I asked states: *There are many different ways in which people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following most closely describes how you view yourself?* Respondents were then presented

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with eight different options plus the opportunity to write in an answer if none of the eight accurately captured how they thought about themselves. Figure 2 shows the responses.

Figure 2. Online Survey Identity Responses

*Something Else is a combined category including biracial exclusively, race is meaningless, and write in answers (banana).
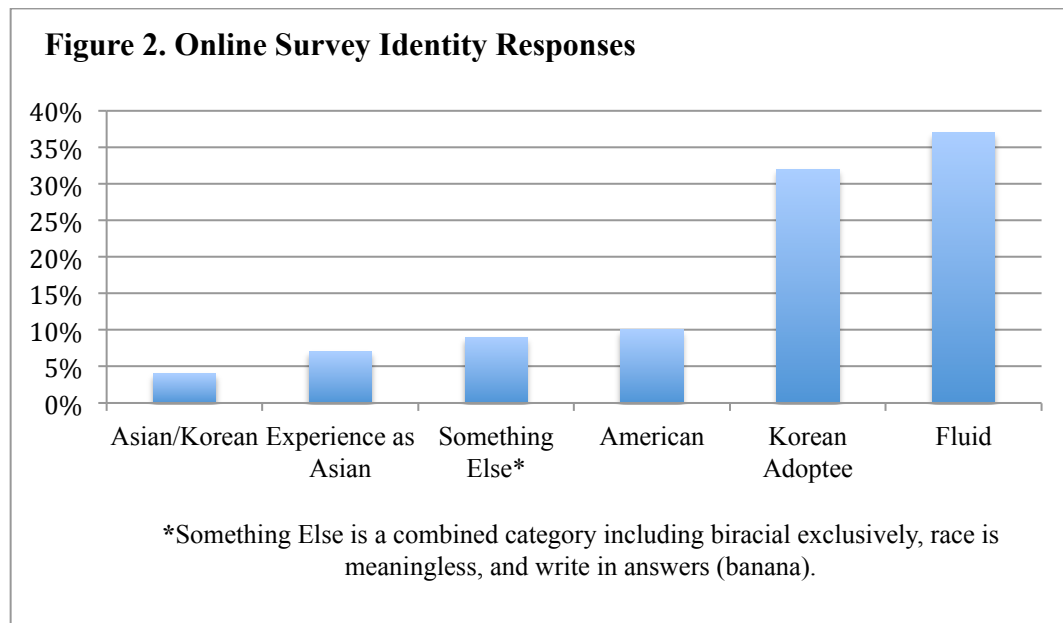
Four percent of the survey respondents (n=4) identified primarily as Asian or Korean. Seven percent (n=7) stated that they identify as multiracial or biracial but experience the world as an Asian person (racialization), and ten percent (n=10) identified primarily as American. The "Something Else" category (9%, n=) refers to respondents who either identified as multiracial or biracial exclusively, who feel that race is meaningless, or who wrote in an answer. Of the few respondents who found none of the eight options accurately reflected how they viewed themselves, the most frequent write-in response was "banana." This derogatory term refers to being yellow on the outside but white on the inside.

Thirty-seven percent of the online survey respondents (n=40) stated that they

sometimes identity as white, sometimes as Korean depending on the context.

These respondents can be thought of as displaying a bicultural alternation. They

can identify and respond to the cultural cues in both white and Korean social

settings with the appropriate cultural capital. Although these fluid respondents

demonstrate bicultural competence, for the purposes of this chapter, I am much

more interested in the 32% (n=34) that identified as "Korean Adoptee." In

contrast to the fluid respondents, these "Korean Adoptee" identifiers, are not

necessarily saying that they have achieved competency in both cultures, rather

they are stating that they identify as "Korean Adoptee" as something different and

distinct from any other way people adopted from Korea identify.

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics on the Korean adoptee identifiers compared

to all other respondents (for a breakdown of Korean adoptee identifiers, "fluid"

identifiers, and other identified, see Appendix C Table 4). Overall, the Korean

adoptee identifiers and those who identified in some other way share similar

background characteristics. I conducted t-tests to examine more closely if there

were any statistically significant differences between the two groups. Only one

variable was significant – participation in Korean adoptee and Korean heritage

culture activities. To examine the relationship between participation in Korean

adoptee activities and heritage culture exploration on identifying as a "Korean

adoptee," I ran a series of logistic regression models where my outcome was

Korean adoptee identification. I controlled for all of the independent variables in

Table 5 and find that throughout the various models Korean adoptee activity remains significant at the .05 level. Though the online survey demonstrates that Korean adoptee is a salient identity, it does not elucidate what meaning, if any, that identity holds beyond referring to one's entry into their family. To understand what Korean adoptee identity means to my respondents, I draw from my in-depth interviews.

In total, 60% (n=22) of the interview respondents identified as "Korean adoptees." These respondents had a variety of experiences with other adoptees growing up. About a third (32%; n=7) had proactive parents who provided opportunities for connections with other adoptees through adoption agency meetings and social events and Korean culture camps. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, the majority of these interactions with other adoptees was not substantial and frequent enough to move beyond symbolic engagement with Korean culture. Over 60 percent (n=15) had little to no connections to other adoptees or heritage culture activities.

Between Spaces, Races, and Identities: Korean Adoptee as Identity
Experiences of adoptees' belonging were filtered through their adoptive status, meaning that respondents experienced both honorary whiteness and limitations to their heritage culture group membership because of the transnational transracial nature of their adoption into white families. In Chapter 2, I explored how my respondents were raised as honorary whites, including their lack of connection to Korean culture and Korean American communities and their parents' colorblind

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approach to race and racism. The majority of respondents (n=24, 65%) reported

identifying as white at some point in their lives. In Chapter 3, I examined how the

change in social contexts from their predominantly white hometowns to more

diverse settings in college provided more opportunities for my respondents to

interact with other Koreans and Asians. Through their interactions they learned

that the white cultural identity of their upbringing was not a valued identity in

these spaces. Although they were seeking out Asian peers in an attempt to learn

more about their heritage culture, they were penalized for not already having this

cultural knowledge. In this case, their experiences with Asian peers mirrored

those of their white families – neither valued or promoted a bicultural

competency, instead emphasizing the primacy of their own cultural values,

beliefs, and behaviors.

As a result of their experiences as dual insiders and outsiders among the white

community of their upbringing and the Asian community of their heritage culture,

respondents reported a deep level of introspection about their belonging. James, a

28-year-old Korean adoptee man, explains:

> The challenge, of course, is that we're kinda stuck in this really weird in-
> between area of identity and race, being that we can't be white, even
> though most of us were raised by white families. . . But, at the same time,
> we can't really be Asian or Korean completely even though we look it.
> Because we didn't, we weren't raised with that cultural identity. So, it's
> really hard to sort of navigate race or race relation in America.

James makes the important connection that identity and race is not only about

personal meaning but related to a larger system of racial interaction. Korean

adoptees' in-between status places them in a precarious position when navigating the U.S.' racial landscape. Respondents' experiences of neither being completely white nor Asian produced a feeling of liminality. This experience of not being wholly members of the white racial group of their adoptive families or the Asian racial or Korean ethnic group of their heritage culture coupled with their personal Korean cultural exploration began a process of some respondents' identification as a "Korean adoptee."

Hannah, a 30-year-old Korean adoptee woman, described how she came to the "Korean adoptee" identity. She had little exposure to other Korean adoptees or Asian Americans growing up, but about five years ago a friend connected her to an organization that hosts month-long homeland tours for Korean adoptees. At that time, she was experiencing massive changes in her family life, which prompted her to explore questions around identity, belonging, and the effect of adoption, nature (her biological family), and nurture (her adoptive family) on who she is today. Hannah went on the tour with four other Korean adoptees. From those questions, the trip to Korea, and the relationships she built with the other women adoptees on the tour, Hannah identifies as a "Korean adoptee." She explained this identity as:

> I am not Korean and I'm not American but it's like this category that I share more attributes with Korean adoptees than I would with Koreans or would with Americans. Maybe it's the adopted part but the Korean adoptee community in terms of the individuals that I've met that share that identity, I feel like I have more things in common with them in terms of trying to figure out my own identity or questions that I have. . .I feel like it's almost like that place in between or maybe it's not even a continuum,

maybe it's just a different group. It's something that I've just more recently thought about. I felt like it was either Asian or American or Asian-American, there wasn't anything else.

Prior to the homeland tour, Hannah felt constrained by the identification options of Asian, American, or Asian-American. These identity options reflect a traditional view of acculturation, with one's heritage culture on one end (Asian), complete assimilation into the receiving culture on the other (American), and biculturalism somewhere in between (Asian-American). Through meeting other Korean adoptees who identify with and created meaning into the identification of "Korean adoptee," Hannah has a new conceptualization of her own identity. As she states, the Korean adoptee identity is not "even [on] a continuum, maybe it's just a different group." Rather than viewing her identity within a white-Asian dichotomy as previous research does (Kim et al. 2013; McGinnis et al. 2009; Meier 1999), Hannah understands the Korean adoptee identity to be something more than the sum of its parts. To identify as a "Korean adoptee" is not to have bicultural competency in white culture and Korean culture but rather to have merged those two cultures as experienced through the adoptive status into a third, distinct culture. Hannah alludes to components of the "Korean adoptee" identity citing the shared experiences as adoptees, identity introspection and heritage culture exploration, and feelings of difference from both white and Korean peers.

The Korean adoptee identity is something that respondents came to understand in adulthood separate from parental attempts at heritage culture socialization or Korean adoptee socialization. Harry, a 30-year old Korean adoptee man, explains

how he came to an understanding of himself as a Korean adoptee as a shared

cultural identity:

> It wasn't only until probably the past two years where I really felt like I could identify as that [a Korean adoptee], not in the sense that I didn't identify myself as that but in the sense that I never really thought of it as a category that people could fit into, if that makes sense. Growing up it's pretty easy to know that there's white people, there are Black people, there are Asians, there are Native Americans, the list goes on and on. Never had I really thought critically that there's a group of people out there called Korean adoptees, who sort of fit in the same cultural understanding of each other as white people, Black people, Native American.

Similar to many respondents, Harry grew up without connection to a Korean

ethnic community or other Korean adoptees. As he entered adulthood, left his

hometown, and moved to a city with a substantial population of Korean adoptees

and that had a Korean adoptee organization, Harry found that there were "a group

of people out there called Korean adoptees, who sort of fit in the same cultural

understanding of each other" as other racial or ethnic groups. Like Hannah, Harry,

also 30-years-old, had only recently come to an understanding of himself as a

member of "Korean adoptee" cultural group. Harry's career path was what led

him to a more racially diverse city, and after he quit his job due to burnout, he had

the time and resources to actively explore adoptee connections or as he put it he

had run out of excuses for not exploring his heritage culture.

Harry's quote highlights important elements of the "Korean adoptee" identity.

First, unlike research that conceptualizes adoptive identity as a personal identity

with adoption as a fact of personal biography (Grotevant et al. 2000; Grotevant

and von Korff 2011), being a "Korean adoptee" is a shared social identity with

significant emotional meaning. Even though Harry was always a Korean adoptee

because of his personal history (i.e., being born in Korea and adopted to the U.S.),

he had not understood Korean adoptee as a category of shared group membership.

Unlike other cultural identities where parents socialize children into the group

membership or where social contexts such as schools, neighborhoods, or other

social groups support the expression of cultural identity, the "Korean adoptee"

identity is typically accessed through individual-initiated exploration. Finally,

"Korean adoptee" is a cultural identity that is similar to what other racial and

ethnic groups share. This cultural identity includes shared experiences, values,

and cultural production.

Karen, a 38-year-old Korean adoptee woman, explains what some of those shared

experiences are, stating:

> I also grew up in an all white community. I was also made fun of. I was
> also called out for being different. That is something that most people
> share.
>
> I found that kind of shocking, actually. I really thought I was the only one.
> I grew up in such isolation that I didn't know there were other people that
> had these experiences. . .
>
> Wendy: You mentioned some experiences that kind of define being a
> Korean adoptee or identifying in this way. Anything else? Any activities?
> Any food, music, that is part of identifying as Korean adoptee?
>
> Karen: Food. Being able to explain food to my friends and introduce my
> friends to more of the Korean culture as I'm learning it too. That's sort of
> fun. The get togethers. They all seem pretty cool. I haven't been on too
> many. Then there are moments when I'm like, "Oh god, is this the world."
> We went to dinner somewhere in [city, to a Korean restaurant] and then
> went over and did karaoke. Which is like, "Huh. Okay." Is this what I
> should be enjoying? I don't know.

Karen's quote alludes to the components of the "Korean adoptee" identity and

culture. She begins by noting most adoptees' shared experience of growing up in

predominately white environments and familiarity with white culture. These

environments were devoid of the supportive social contexts that are typically

included in the biculturalism literature. Adoptees also share experiences of

racialization as Asian – "also made fun of [for being Asian]. I was also called out

for being [racially] different." Karen's excerpt alludes to what other respondents talked about in much more explicit detail – teasing because of racialized physical features, being the target of racial slurs and racial stereotypes. Finally, Karen's quote closes with her discussing some of the activities or heritage culture exploration associated with the Korean adoptee identity. She identifies Korean food, Korean culture, and also engaging in typical Korean leisure activities, in this case karaoke,[13] with other adoptees. Other respondents mentioned individual-initiated heritage culture exploration that included learning Korean language and Korean history as well as listening to K-pop or watching K-dramas. What is important to note here is that respondents' heritage culture exploration revolved around *Korean* history and contemporary culture but not *Korean-American* history, culture, or communities.

Although Karen resided in the same city for over a decade, and that city had a Korean adoptee organization, she had only found the group about a year and a half ago. She shared:

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[13] Although karaoke is enjoyed in many cultures, including the U.S., it takes on heightened cultural significance in Korea. Karaoke was introduced to Korea in the early 1980s but remained an adult form of entertainment (often linked with illicit behavior) until the 1990s. In the early 1990s, karaoke became a more family-friendly activity and quickly gained popularity across the country. Noraebang (translated singing room) is the Korean word for karaoke and refers to how karaoke is performed in Korea. Korean karaoke, noraebang, groups of friends or business associates will rent a private karaoke room. There will also be snacks and often alcohol. It is not a sporadic leisure activity but integrated into Korean culture and business. Corporations will have karaoke as part of business retreats, and potential new business partners will karaoke as part of their business deals.

I was searching on Facebook for groups with adopted people and [the group] popped up in the sidebar. I was like, "Oh, what's this? Oh my god, there are people here." It didn't cross my mind that, of course, there are a million Korean adoptees in this area. That opened up a whole world of information and people and potential friendships that I hadn't even considered.

I don't know if it's because I never made time for it or I just never knew it was there. Now I kind of shoot myself for not discovering this 15 years ago because I really could have used it.

For respondents who grew up thinking they were the "only ones" or had limited engagement with Korean adoptees, there would have been little reason for them to think there were others like them out there. Since there are typically no visual cues indicating that someone is an adoptee or that there is an adoptee group in any given city, respondents could reside in an area with other adoptees and never know it, like Karen had. Without Facebook, it is unclear if Karen would have ever found the Korean adoptee group in her city. This is similar to other respondents' experience. The majority of respondents (78%, n=29) reported entering the Korean adoptee community as adults, with slightly over half becoming involved within the year of or the year directly preceding our interview, and sixty-nine percent (n=20) reported becoming involved via online Korean adoptee groups.

Teresa, a 48 year-old Korean adoptee woman, described the feeling of belonging participation in online Korean adoptee groups provides:

It's been kind of interesting to me reading a lot of the posts that people make [in online Korean adoptee groups]. I was kind of, I don't know if gratified is the word, but I felt much better when I read that other people had grown up kind of feeling white, because I grew up feeling that way. I grew up feeling very white because as I mentioned, back in those days parents were encouraged to assimilate their children into their new so-

called culture as soon as possible. My parents did not really bring any
Asian identity into raising me. They just didn't.

Teresa describes an important aspect of the adoptee community in that it provides
a space to connect with others over their experiences as having a mis-match
between their personal racial-cultural identification and their ethnic background.
This space also provided a forum to discuss the challenges in being unable to
discuss racial issues with their parents. It is unlikely that adoptees had other
spaces to fully explore their identity dilemma. In fact, for many respondents
online groups were the initial way they made contact with other Korean adoptees.
In Teresa's case, she still had yet to meet another Korean adoptee face-to-face,
and our interview was the first time she had spoken with another Korean adoptee
outside of online message boards.

"The single biggest catalyst for Korean adoptees": The Role of Social Networking Sites for Korean Adoptee Identity Formation

In-person interactions are often thought of as the building blocks of identity
formation (Stryker and Vryan 2003). However, for Korean adoptees, in-person
interactions are limited. This is because of geographic distance but also because,
even when there may be a number of adoptees in one geographic location, there
are typically no physical cues to signal someone's adoptive status. As a result,
online spaces are one of the key organizing sites for Korean adoptees. For
example, Southern California-based Korean adoptee group, Association of
Korean Adoptees (AKA-SOCAL), is one of the earliest known U.S.-based
Korean adoptee groups still in existence. Founded in 1994, this group was the
result of an Internet post seeking other Korean adoptees. Around this same time,

other meetings of Korean adoptees in cities across the U.S., Europe, and in Korea

facilitated by similar internet postings were happening, such as NYC-based

Korean adoptee group Also-Known-As founded in 1996 by Hollee McGinnis;

Also-Known-As San Francisco in 1997 co-founded by Crystal Hyun-Ju Chappell;

Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (G.O.A.'L.) in 1998 founded by Ami Nafzger, a

Korean American adoptee, along with 11 other Korean adoptees; Boston Korean

Adoptees (BKA) in 1998; AK Connection serving the Minnesota Twin Cities

region in 2000; and Adoption Links DC in 2002, which originally started as an

offshoot of the first International Gathering of Adult Korean Adoptees ("The

Gathering") in 1999.

Although some of these groups have been in existence for over 20 years and are

full fledged non-profit organizations that host a variety of activities (e.g.,

mentoring, monthly meet ups, annual conferences), as my respondents' responses

highlight, adopted Koreans are continually finding these organizations and

Korean adoptee Facebook Groups for the first time. Forty percent of my interview

respondents stated that they found and joined Korean adoptee Facebook Groups

within the past two years. Although most Korean adoptee organizations have a

Facebook Group, the Groups that respondents found and joined were primarily

Korean adoptee Facebook Groups that were unaffiliated with an offline

organization.

Jessa, a 56 year-old Korean adoptee woman, explained the importance of the

Internet for Korean adoptee identity and community formation.

> I was actually part of an adoptee back in the Yahoo group days, so you know starting with the Yahoo group days, I had never met another Korean adoptee before. For grins and giggles one day, I was running around the Internet back in the, maybe the 80s? Maybe? I thought, you know, let me see, what would happen if I Googled Korean adoptees? Well, Google didn't exist back then, I found this Yahoo group and so I joined it and I introduced myself and then I participated. . I will have to say social media and Facebook, is probably the single biggest catalyst for Korean adoptees and it's because all of a sudden, we could gather and we could talk. Oh, by the way, we could do video conferences and see each other's faces across the country. We can start getting organized. . .Let's start gathering people, let's start having get togethers. Now granted people like Holt and KAAN, they all existed prior to Facebook and probably prior to the Internet, but you didn't know about them unless you were part of a population that had mass quantities of Korean adoptees.

Here Jessa recognizes that Holt adoption agency organized Korean adoptee

activities and that the Korean American Adoptive Family Network (KAAN)

organized Korean adoptee and adoptive family events including an annual

conference beginning in 1998. However these organizations were primarily

known among those in communities with a high concentration of Korean

adoptees. For those who were adopted outside of those areas or whose parents

went through other adoption agencies, these resources would not have been

known. Furthermore, if adoptive parents did not think these activities were

important, then adoptees would not have been exposed to them as they were

growing up. Another important element of Holt and KAAN[14] is that these

organizations were adoptive parent led. The Internet provided a venue for Korean

adoptees themselves to connect with one another, organize local Korean adoptee

in-person groups, and create programming according to their self-identified needs

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[14] Currently, KAAN is led by a board of adoptive parents and adult adoptees.

and outside of a white gaze. Further, Facebook Groups provide some level of

assumed privacy in that Groups can be private or hidden and potential members

can be screen before being allowed entry into the online space.

Whereas Jessa was an early adopter of the Internet and also Korean adoptee

groups, joining one of the earlier Korean adoptee message boards on Yahoo, she

identifies Facebook as "the single biggest catalyst for Korean adoptees." At two

billion monthly active users, Facebook is the most used social networking site

(Constine 2017). A study by PEW Research Center, finds that 79% of adult

Americans who use the Internet use Facebook, and 68% of ALL ADULT

Americans use Facebook (Greenwood, Perrin, and Dugggan 2016). Due to its

mass availability, Facebook is a prime site connecting people across the U.S. but

also around the world. Because it is easily accessible and largely integrated into

everyday life, Facebook becomes a natural space to seek out others – both those

who users may have pre-existing connections to and those who may share similar

interests, though they have not met in real life.

Respondents often shared how the Internet and Facebook Groups, in particular,

facilitated their connections to other adoptees. Thomas explained:

> There's a book, which you probably read, called *Adopted Territory*, which
> explored that in some detail about how it was really the Internet that
> helped bring a lot of these adoptee groups together. I think that's really
> important for adoptees in particular because as an ethnic group we are
> actually isolated. Most ethnic groups, you can go meet other people of
> your ethnicity, you can go to your ethnic town, Chinatown, have your
> ethnic food. So there are natural places to congregate. Even if you're a
> lesbian, you might have a gay or lesbian bar or something that you can
> kind of go to meet other people who are like you. Adoptees have no such
> place like that. There is no physical place that you can go to and say,

"Hey, is this a good place to go and meet other adoptees?" Other than these local groups. If you don't happen to live near a local group, then you have nothing. That's why I feel like for the transracial adoptees in particular, the Internet is really critical for getting a sense of community.

As Thomas points out, the Internet provides a space for adoptees to get " a sense of community," especially because "[i]f you don't happen to live near a local group, then you have nothing." Although there are Korean adoptee groups in several major metropolitan areas across the U.S., not all Korean adoptees are in those areas. Thomas' excerpt also highlights another aspect of the Korean adoptee groups – exchange of key Korean adoptee texts. Through texts like *Adopted Territory* (Kim 2010), Korean adoptees learn more about their own adoptee organizational history. Korean adoptee readings and documentaries are often recommended through Korean adoptee online groups, viewed at Korean adoptee organization meet ups, and supported through crowd funding. Of particular importance during this time frame was the Netflix documentary *Twinsters* (Futerman and Miyamoto 2015), which followed Samantha Futerman and Anaïs Bordier, Korean adoptee twins who were adopted to different families in different countries (the U.S. and France, respectively), as they learned of each other's existence, met, and attended the 2013 International Korean Adoptee Associations' (IKAA) Gathering in Seoul, S. Korea (For more information about *Twinsters*, see Chapter 3). Several Korean adoptees at the 2016 IKAA cited *Twinsters* as how they learned about IKAA and why they decided to attend the 2016 Gathering in Korea.

Whereas mainstream Korean adoptee cultural production helped bring awareness to the Korean adoptee community, Korean adoptees had also been using other user-generated media to bring attention to their experiences. Harry explains how he came to learn that there was a community of Korean adoptees and how interacting with adoptees through a Korean adoptee organization began his understanding of Korean adoptee identity. He explained:

> I did a lot of just like searching and watching some YouTube videos about other people's experiences as Korean adoptees, like they're searching [for birth family], how to search, going through Holt [adoption agency], what it costs. And, found local roots as well, that were like, "Hey, we're just a bunch of Korean adoptees who like to eat and hang out." So, I just signed up for the listserv. [They] would send out blast emails, like, "Hey, we're hosting an event. We welcome anyone who wants to come." I was like, ok, give it a shot. Honestly really nervous about the whole situation. I never hung out with Korean adoptees like that before. But, you know, I went, introduced myself, and there were like a good four or five people who were just like extremely welcoming, and just open to hearing my story, where I was from, where I grew up. They shared stuff about themselves too, which was like, "I can relate to that. I can relate to that." Going back to your question about culture, that instant identification and comfort level with someone who understands you without really knowing you, to me is sort of like a fundamental definition of what a culture is.

> Wendy: And you mentioned it was often these experiences where they would say, "Oh yeah that's me too."

> Harry: Talking about kinda what I was saying earlier how growing up whenever you were introduced to people, always being asked like "Are you gonna find your birth parents?" That's definitely a big one. You know, simple jokes honestly, like, "Oh, you're good at math." Or whatever, I'm sure you can understand. Being on the other side of that and how that makes you feel, everyone can relate. It's different when someone who isn't Asian makes that joke versus someone who does. It's, in its nature, the exact same joke but the meaning is inherently different, and it's really hard to explain to someone who isn't the subject of that joke. So, yeah to me those are the things that sort of created a feeling of connection.

Harry's excerpt begins by him acknowledging the role of the Internet for connecting Korean adoptees to one another. Through YouTube and other online platforms, Korean adoptees are able to share valuable information with one another, in this example tips for conducting a birth family search, and find and meet one another.

The birth search is an often convoluted process shrouded in mystery. The process typically includes contacting 1. One's U.S.-based adoption agency; 2. The correlated Korean-based adoption agency; and/or 3. Korean adoptee organizations in Korea to request one's adoption file, to initiate contact with biological family, typically the birth mother listed on the adoption paperwork, and/or, in the case of Korean adoptee organizations in Korea, to help facilitate the process, particularly when the Korean-based agency is not forthcoming. At times the process involves contacting all three agencies. Through online Korean adoptee spaces, Korean adoptees learn how to navigate the birth family search process, including how to enlist the help of Korean adoptee organizations in Korea, and the pros and cons of searching and reunifying with birth family.

Like Harry, most respondents found online Korean adoptee groups first before local in-person opportunities to meet up with Korean adoptees. Many respondents echoed Harry in their initial apprehension to meeting up with other Korean adoptees face-to-face for the first time. For some respondents it took several months after joining an online group or listserv before they attended an in-person

event. However, like Harry, once they attended, they found solace in the shared experiences between themselves and other Korean adoptees.

Harry describes how Korean adoptees he met at the his first meet up were "open to hearing my story." In Korean adoptee circles, whether online groups or in-person meet ups, the process of sharing and listening to each other's story is paramount. Often some of the first questions Korean adoptees ask one another are those that would normally be understood as intrusive questions (Docan-Morgan 2010), such as where they were adopted to, if they have conducted a birth search, or if they've been back to Korea. Each of these personal questions would be interpreted differently if asked by a prying non-adoptee stranger, yet within these spaces the questions are non-intrusive. It is understood that instead of an indictment on one's belonging, whether as family members or to the U.S. polity, these questions are bonding tools among in-group members. The shared experiences as Korean transracial adoptees, including intrusive questions and racialized teasing, coupled with the genuine desire to hear one another's story facilitates "that instant identification and comfort level with someone who understands you without really knowing you."

Whether through participation in Facebook Groups, face-to-face meetups, various forms of material culture, or a combination of these activities, the contours of a Korean adoptee identity are produced. This understanding of a shared history and experience is important for a group that's largely "isolated." Bradley, a 34 year-

old Korean adoptee man, and Julia, a 29 year-old Korean adoptee woman,

explain:

> For adoptees, I think, again adoptees tend to feel isolated at times, or tend to feel forgotten or left behind, and that's the opposite of what these social groups are. Everyone is there at a thumb's notice. Everyone is there and willing to support one another, be there for each other. That's wonderful. – Bradley

> I think the adoptee experience online is just connecting and finding that community and being able to say things to people with them being able to understand that you can't say to maybe even your regular family or your friends because they have no idea how to comprehend or relate. – Julia

As Bradley and Julia state, the proximate social structure of online Korean

adoptee Facebook Groups combats the isolation that many members experience

throughout their lives. Through participation in online groups, members are able

to experience a more holistic acceptance among those who can understand them

in ways that their "regular" relationships cannot. Korean adoptee groups provide

members with a sense of belonging, a space to acknowledge the identity

challenges inherent in transracial adoption, and a space to explore their identity as

adoptees.

Finally, Sarah, a 34 year-old Korean adoptee woman, summarizes the effects of

participation in these groups, stating:

> I don't think I would normally think of anything to do with ethnicity with that question [the question who am I?]. I would probably say a dog lover or something like that. I'm more identifying myself now as a Korean adoptee after joining the forums and getting more involved.

Even though they are adopted from Korea to the U.S. and therefore Korean

adoptees by fact of personal history, most respondents, like Sarah, did not

consider themselves to be "Korean adoptees" as a designation of shared group membership among similar others. Through online Korean adoptee forums, such as Korean adoptee Facebook Groups, respondents were socialized into this new understanding of themselves, and the "Korean adoptee" identity became salient.

"It drives my life decisions, my life goals": Korean Adoptee Identity in Action
Participation in Korean adoptee Facebook Groups facilitated respondents' "Korean adoptee" identity and also translated into off-line action. As stated earlier, respondents often found Korean adoptee Facebook Groups first before attending face-to-face meet ups. These meet ups played a dual function: they provided a space for respondents to enact the "Korean adoptee" identity they developed online and also continued to act as a socializing agent into the "Korean adoptee" identity. Through these meet ups and Korean adoptee conferences, participants learned about books (fiction and non-fiction), research studies, and movies created by, for, and about Korean adoptees. In addition to Korean adoptee material culture, meet ups fostered a sense of community and shared values. For example, at Korean adoptee meet ups and conferences there were announcements about and advocacy on behalf of the Adoptee Citizenship Act; support for adoptees' careers whether contributing to adoptees' calls for research participants, promoting or attending adoptee theatre productions; and statements about or activities to express being in solidarity with other minorities' rights movements in general (ex. Black Lives Matter or LGBTQ) or immigrants specifically (ex. DACA-recipients).

Respondents not only attended adoptee activities but also became involved in

Korean adoptee organizations in a more substantial way. For example, several

respondents reported holding a leadership role in their local Korean adoptee

group, volunteering at culture camps for adoptee youth, or participating in Days

of Action or other activities related to adoptee rights. These commitments are one

way that "Korean adoptee" identifiers enact their identity.

James, described how the "Korean adoptee" identity is enacted in his life, stating:

> I've, not only integrated it [Korean adoptee identity], but it also drives a
> lot of my life decisions, my life goals. I'm pretty involved with the
> adoption community. I've served on a couple boards. Then I do a lot of
> unaffiliated work with people who've been taking the 23andMe DNA tests
> and I also do a lot of [Korean language] translations for people. It's really
> fulfilling to be able to help people, especially those people that are sort of,
> somewhere in some shape or form in their grand journey of being an
> adoptee.

For James, the "Korean adoptee" identity is inscribed throughout several facets of

his life, including his social group affiliations, how he spends his free time, and

his future goals. Although not included in this excerpt, in our interview, he shared

how his career goal includes being an adoptee advocate on an international

platform. James and other respondents described how they feel, in the words of

one interviewee, a "moral obligation" to give back to the Korean adoptee

community.

Respondents often shared how they have become more involved in Korean

adoptee or transnational adoptee advocacy as they have taken on the "Korean

adoptee" identity. Alex described it as follows:

> I was just doing a Facebook search one day... I found the Korean adoptee
> Facebook group, and I introduced myself, and one of the board members
> was like, "Hey, we're doing this thing in [a nearby city]. You should
> come!" And that was my first trip... Because there was always this feeling
> of not really being accepted by other Asians, and then since I don't know
> any Asian language at all, it's one of those ... I didn't know what to
> expect, and then knowing that there's other people with similar stories and
> similar track records, it feels like I'm not so alone, because at one of the
> latest Days of Actions [for the Adoptee Citizenship Act] one of the women
> was like, "I always felt like I was unique in this circumstance," and she
> never really knew how to feel. And listening to her talk, I was like this
> feels sort of similar because I've never really known how to feel about
> this. And I've always ... Because of the way that my parents kind of holed
> us in this isolationist silo, feeling like ... not really knowing how to accept
> the adoption and everything.

Again we see in Alex's excerpt the almost happenstance discovery of the Korean

adoptee Facebook Groups and the hesitation to participate in face-to-face

activities. However, her interaction with other Korean adoptees put her on a path

to begin to understand her adoptive status and her identity as an adoptee. Her

activity in the Facebook Group not only led her to meet other adoptees for the

first time but also to get involved with advocacy around the Adoptee Citizenship

Act through Days of Action on Capitol Hill.[15] Later in our interview, Alex shared

how she has also travelled to other states to discuss the Adoptee Citizenship Act

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[15] The Adoptee Citizenship Act seeks to close a loophole in the Child Citizenship Act of
2000 (CCA). The CCA granted automatic citizenship for transnational adoptees under the
age of 18 and to all future transnational adoptees at the time the bill went into effect.
However, excluded from the bill were about 35,000 transnational adoptees who were
over the age of 18 and whose parents did not take the necessary steps to naturalize them.
For more details about Korean adoptees' participation in advocacy for the Adoptee
Citizenship Act and its relationship to their identity, see Chapter 3.

at Asian American festivals. Alex went from being the "isolationist silo" devoid

of contact with other Asians or Koreans that her parents created to being a

spokesperson for adoptee rights in front of Asian American audiences.

Angela, a 33-year-old Korean adoptee woman, described how her identity as a

"Korean adoptee" was developed and how it fits into her life. She shared:

> I've never reached out to any Asian adoptee group before. I didn't even
> know that existed. I actually, to be honest, never really cared. Wanting to
> learn more for the school purpose is what really got me started in that
> [adult adoptee face-to-face] group. From there, they started realizing my
> interest of wanting to ... work with adopted kids in some way, especially
> transracial adopted kids. They were like, "We really want to start this
> program where we mentor adopted youths from Asia." But, it was really in
> the very early stages of getting people together and figuring out how we
> wanted to really do this program. Somehow, I became the co-chair and I
> have been for the past three years …I had no connections. I didn't seek
> anything out prior to seeking out [the adult adoptee group] but I found it
> so rewarding.

Angela's excerpt begins with her minimizing her interest in connecting with other

adoptees. This may have been a reflection of the lack of connections to other

adoptees and heritage culture members in childhood and adolescence, including

absence of a visible heritage culture community and adoptee community and little

support from parents in promoting her heritage culture. However, her career

interests were deeply shaped by her adoptive status. She was pursuing a graduate

degree that would help her in her goal of "work[ing] with adopted kids in some

way, especially transracial adopted kids." This suggests that her adoptive status

was an important characteristic of her life even though she previously had few

opportunities to develop this part of her identity. Even though Angela describes

her involvement with the Asian adoptee adult group as utilitarian in order to

further her progress in her graduate program, it was connected to her adoptive history. Up until reaching out to the Asian adoptee group, being an adoptee was not a salient part of her identity. However, through her participation with the group and assisting in creating the Asian adoptee youth mentoring program, she learned "Korean adoptee" was an identity that she could have and began to integrate into how she thought about herself. Whereas her initial involvement in the youth mentoring program helped her develop her "Korean adoptee" identity, it now provides a space for her to enact that identity.

In fact, many respondents viewed their participation in my interview as a way to give back to the adoptee community both to the community at large and to me as an individual member. Karen, the 38-year-old Korean adoptee woman, explained:

> We've got to help each other. I think that anybody who can do any more writing on sort of what it means to be an adoptee from any angle, I think is really good because so much of the literature that's been written is from parents. We're all old enough now to write our own narrative so we should be.

Hannah, the 30-year-old Korean adoptee woman, echoed her sentiments, stating:

> If there's research being done or things like more awareness about Korean adoptees or ways that we can help Korean adoptees, that's something that I really want to do and I think is important. I don't even know what the research is about, what there is to research out there but I find that if there's any way that I can help or anything that I can do to help us learn about individuals who are Korean adoptees then that's something I want to be a part of.

Karen and Hannah identify the Korean adoptees as a community that should invest in itself. She points out that all experiences and perspectives should be

included and that adoptees should take control over "our own narrative." This desire to help me as a fellow Korean adoptee was reflective of understanding adoptees as having a "linked fate" (Dawson 1994).

CONCLUSION

I find that in responding to the transracial adoptee paradox some Korean adoptees create a distinct "Korean adoptee" identity that goes beyond acknowledging their adoptive status as part of their personal biography but rather merges their white cultural upbringing, racialization as Asian American, and Korean exploration. Korean adoptee Facebook Groups act as important proximate social structures in developing this shared identity as "Korean adoptees." Through this social networking site, Korean adoptees imbue the label "adoptee" with shared, significant meaning and create a "Korean adoptee" culture.

As a shared system of meaning, Korean adoptee culture encompasses the values, beliefs, rituals, and material artifacts that comprise a way of life shared among Korean adoptees. Korean adoptee culture that is characterized by feelings of liminality, specifically a dual insider-outsider position; shared history and common background, including the role of loss even if that loss is not conceptualized as making adoptees' feel less than; searching, whether searching for birth family, answers about circumstances of relinquishment, or accurate birth date and health info; exploration and sharing of one's adoption narrative; and understanding and assigning meaning to adoption.

In classifying Korean adoptee identity as shared group membership and the process by which this identity emerges, this study addresses gaps in previous research on acculturation and proximate social structures. First, in regards to literature on acculturation more broadly and biculturalism specifically with its focus on the process of acculturation among immigrant groups and the role of supportive social contexts during formative years (Mistry and Wu 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Umaña-Taylor et al. 2006), my findings demonstrate that attaining a bicultural identity is possible even in the absence of supportive social contexts during childhood or adolescence or without pre-existing knowledge of one's heritage culture. Specifically, I argue that the process of biculturalism must include individual-initiated exploration.

Through this exploration of how Korean adoptees think about themselves, I find that transnational transracial adoptees create a third, distinct culture that merges the white culture of their upbringing, the Korean culture of their heritage group, and their experiences of both as adoptees. The process of this "Korean adoptee" identity is facilitated through individual-initiated exploration. It also demonstrates that Korean adoptees' identification is not bound between identification with their adoptive families' or birth families' race and culture (Beaupre et al. 2015; Kim et al. 2013; Randolph and Holtzman 2010).

Second, this research also demonstrates how social networking sites, not only not in-person social contexts like neighborhoods, peer groups, or families, act as a

proximate social structure that facilitates biculturalism. Social networking sites, such as Facebook Groups, serve as a crucial proximate social structure that helped socialize respondents into the shared identity as "Korean adoptees." Online spaces provide a dynamic space to affirm shared experiences unique to Korean transnational transracial adoptees and learn from others who have explored their heritage culture, all while collectively creating meaning around their racial and ethnic identity as adoptees. Together Korean adoptees construct their racialized group categorization online. The identity expressed online is linked to offline beliefs, behaviors, identity. Korean adoptees explore and enact their "Korean adoptee" identity through participating in face-to-face meet ups hosted by Korean adoptee organizations, volunteering at adoptee events, and mobilizing around adoptee-related issues.

Although limited research has examined the role of Korean adoptee online groups or organizations (Kim 2010), this study mirrors findings on the use of online groups as an important proximate social structure for groups whose members are negotiating group meaning and membership boundaries (Hughey 2008; Willam and Copes 2005). This study demonstrates how online space can act as a catalyst for identity exploration and serve an integral role in the identity process particularly for groups of people who otherwise would not be able to find one another.

Whereas the "Korean adoptee" identity and the proximate social structures that facilitate this identity play a crucial role in resolving feelings of in-betweenness, it is important to note that through this identity Korean adoptees explore their Korean heritage but not their racial group membership. Their exploration into their Korean ethnicity and heritage culture group membership but not racial group membership raises questions for future research. For example, what conditions lead Korean adoptees to identify primarily as Asian American? For those who identify as "Korean adoptee," when do they integrate racial group membership into their identity, if at all?

Additionally, future research should consider how generalizable these findings on transnational transracial adoptee biculturalism are among other transnational transracial adoptee populations (e.g., adoptees from China, Guatemala, India, Russia, Ethiopia), especially those whose phenotype may not be visually distinct from their adoptive parents though their heritage culture differs. Future research may also consider how the process outlined here maps onto acculturation experiences of other immigrants who immigrate alone, such as unaccompanied child migrants.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In early 2018, Korea took the global stage, hosting the 2018 Winter Olympics. Thirty years ago, in 1988, the Summer Olympics were hosted in Korea and aside from the buzz around what countries would win which medals, one of the main headlines was Korea's export of its own children. Sending Korean children to Western countries, North Korea argued, was the "ultimate form of capitalism" (Liem 2000). Amidst this global shame, Korea announced that it would cease international adoption. The minister of health and social welfare at the time stated, "For the sake of the image of the nation, which has achieved notable economic development, it is time for us to depend on domestic, rather than foreign, adoption" (Jameson 1989). Afterwards, adoption slowed, but even today Korean children continue to be adopted to the U.S.

This dissertation employed an AsianCrit (Chang 1999; Museus 2013) lens to examine how Korean adoption contributed to constructions of race – racial meanings and a racial order – and the effects on Korean adoptees' identity development. This work has implications for AsianCrit, sociology of race and ethnicity, and social psychology. In taking seriously AsianCrit's call to addressing the exclusion of Asian Americans from American history, I focused on the exclusion of Korean adoptees from *Asian* American history. I incorporated policy decisions, broader social discourse, parental decision-making, and the effect of

these on Korean adoptees' identity development to demonstrate how Korean adoption contributed to the then burgeoning model minority myth (Chapter 2). By focusing on Asian adoptive families, I diverged from where AsianCrit is primarily currently concentrated and investigated a new institutional arena. Understanding the pathways to Asian transnational adoption is important because it is one long-standing area that has shaped racist beliefs and practices towards Asian Americans as well as other racialized minorities. Whereas understanding various institutions' roles in creating and upholding racial inequality is important, the family cannot be overlooked as it is one of the first places of race learning.

In regards to sociology of race and ethnicity, this dissertation critically analyzes the concepts of model minority and honorary white. Rather than focus on socioeconomic outcomes of Asian Americans compared to other minority groups or within Asian ethnicities, I examined the structural and cultural factors that contributed to Asian Americans' middleman minority position. This dissertation illustrates how racist policies, practices, and assumptions about East Asians shaped the immigration history of Korean adoptees and their adoptive parents' childrearing practices. By focusing, not on external outcomes as an indication of honorary whiteness, but rather on adoptees' own internalization of honorary whiteness and the process to that identification, I demonstrated the psychological practices that contribute to this population of Asian Americans' identification with and evaluation of themselves as white.

As a small number of Korean adoptees continue to identify as white well into adulthood, this finding speaks to the debates around the current (and future) racial order. These adoptees' personal identification with whiteness complements socioeconomic and educational indicators that situate some Asian American ethnic groups, particularly East Asians, into the "white" side of the white/non-white divide. It also bolsters common (mis)understandings about East Asians as honorary whites in relation to whites and other racial minority groups and, in doing so, provide support for Kim's (1999) theory of racial triangulation. However, as the majority of respondents did not identify as white but with their Korean heritage and relayed experiences with family members, friends, strangers, and peers throughout the life course that racialized them as non-white, it is unlikely that Korean adoptees, or East Asians writ large, are being incorporated into whiteness. Rather, as Adam Crapser's case and adoptee deportations more generally remind us, non-whiteness is at the core of their honorary whiteness.

In addition to the critical examination of honorary whiteness and the model minority myth, this dissertation has another implication for sociology of race and ethnicity, namely an investigation into the political implications of ethnicity. Race is typically understood to have political implications. For example, scholars examine the creation and reinforcement of a particular racial formation (Omi and Winant 2015). Ethnicity, on the other hand, is less readily understood as having political implications even as historically ethnic groups have used their ethnicity as a basis for inclusion into the social fabric of the U.S., access to resources, or

social movement organizing (Wu 2014). In my examination of Korean adoptees'

organizing around adoptee citizenship, I demonstrated how their shared ethnicity

(and adoptee status) becomes a basis for advocacy.

Finally, in regards to the implications of this work for social psychology, through

my analyses of Korean adoptees' identity development I demonstrated the

sometimes overlapping but also distinct processes of Korean adoptees' racial and

ethnic identity development and how identity salience and prominence can shift

over time and in different contexts. Though virtually all of the respondents were

reared within colorblind logics that minimized their racial and heritage culture

differences from their adoptive parents and downplayed experiences of

racialization, respondents grappled with their racial and ethnic group membership

throughout their lives. Respondents' racial awareness often began with internal

questioning about the differences in physical features between themselves and

their adoptive families. Later this racial awareness was triggered through

experiences of racialized teasing, racial discrimination, and racialized

expectations for group membership. Through these competing messages about

inclusion within their white families and colorblind racial socialization versus

experiences of racialization that delineated them as non-white, respondents

engaged in heritage culture exploration. Though this exploration into their Korean

heritage was linked to experiences of non-belonging it may have also been an

extension of their childhood socialization. Rather than exploration into racial

group membership, respondents explored their heritage culture as perhaps a safer identity option.

Respondents' identity changes were shaped by their individual-initiated heritage culture exploration and participation in social networking sites. The former helped respondents integrate Korea into how they thought about themselves and also resolve feelings of shame in being adopted; the latter expanded their identity as Korean adoptees. Both forms of identity exploration demonstrate the agency individual's have in identity development. Even though structural and cultural forces largely shaped the identities and group membership respondents believed were available to them, for some respondents, it was through individual-initiated exploration that they were able to challenge the constraints around their identity options. Individual exploration and participation in Korean adoptee Facebook Groups facilitated an identification as "Korean adoptees" as a shared group membership – not simply a personal identity referring to one's biographical history.

Even though face-to-face interaction is thought of as the building block of identity, this research demonstrates how changing online contexts contribute to identity formation and to reshaping racial meaning. It also demonstrates how personal biography intersects with socio-historic conditions. Whereas respondents' adoption from Korea to the U.S. reflects a specific geopolitical moment and their upbringing reflects specific socio-historic race relations in the

U.S., the emergence of a "Korean adoptee" identity also reflects a certain moment in technological history that merges with the history of Korean adoption. The ease and availability of the Internet, and Facebook in particular, along with the peak decade of Korean adoption, the 1980s, made it possible for the digital enclaves (Florini) and cultural production that facilitate "Korean adoptee" social identity.

That this identity is largely constructed online through Facebook Groups that rely on text exchanges via Facebook posts illustrates the role of "friendship talk" (Anthony and McCabe 2015). Research finds that individuals undergoing identity change employ narratives about their friends, whether similarities among or differences between, to assert their own identity, who they are, and who they potentially can become. Through their interactions with friends and their descriptions of their friendships, individuals engage in identity work to assert their newly forming identities. Similarly, I find that through Facebook respondents begin to establish new "friends" and friendship groups that assist them as they undergo identity exploration and revise their self-identity to that of "Korean adoptee."

Although the "Korean adoptee" identity is primarily created through Facebook Groups, it is not constrained to online spaces. The Adoptee Citizenship Act demonstrates how collective identity is activated in service of activism. Adoptee Citizenship Act advocates call attention to and call upon shared status as adoptees to motivate adoptees to act on behalf of those without citizenship. This advocacy

also demonstrates how white racialized scripts are used in service of non-white movements. Even as respondents use Adoptee Citizenship Act advocacy as a way to explore and enact their identity as adoptees, the bill itself is used in service of other racial projects. The framing of adoptee bill as a family bill and not an immigration bill reifies East Asians' honorary white status and the criminalization of immigrants. Taken together, this research demonstrates the enduring nature of racism, the changing racialization of international adoptees over the life course, and how this group of Asian Americans can and do actively engage in racial meaning-making.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

In addition to the theoretical implications of my work, there are also practical applications as it applies to adoption both in regards to adoptive parent training, adoption policy, and adoption resources. By now the importance of cultural competency in adoption is well known. As my respondents often mentioned when I asked them for advice to prospective parents, providing opportunities for heritage culture engagement is necessary but not sufficient. Chris, a 29-year-old Korean adoptee man, explained it this way when he said, "you're accepting not just a child from another culture into your household but you're accepting another culture into your household." As such adoptee's heritage culture should not be a weekend activity or week-long summer camp, but integrated into the family. This means incorporating the heritage culture and community relationships into the everyday lives of the family.

The second practical application in relation to adoptive parent training is around empathy. Adoption is often seen as a benefit to both the child and adoptive family, but loss is also a part of the story. Mi Na, a 22-year-old Korean adoptee woman, offered this advice to prospective parents. She stated, "If you're adopting because you couldn't have kids, maybe think about it a little bit more. Think about that loss a little bit more. Think about what it means to you." In thinking about that loss, parents could then empathize with birth families as they relinquished their child. More over, adoptive parents can extend that feeling of loss to their adopted child as that loss, often unspoken, shapes their experiences of adoption. While not all adoptees view their adoption as a loss or that they have lost out or are missing something, broader misconceptions about adoption or narratives around family are incorporated into how adoptees are viewed by others. As my respondents shared being teased because of their adoptive status and the assumptions around being unwanted or their families not being as good as those created through biological ties.

In regards to adoption policy, this research underscores the need for transparency in the adoption process. The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Convention) attempts to provide this transparency and protection for children and families, however it is still possible to adopt from countries that have not agreed to the terms of the Convention. Teresa, the 48-year-old Korean adoptee woman, stated, "My first

piece of advice would be to really make sure that when you're working with an agency that there are records and that you are not adopting a child that's been trafficked, or stolen, or surreptitiously dropped off by some relatives, that all of that stuff is on order. I also think it's important that, if possible, that there is birth parent information in the file so that the child can get back in touch with them if they ever want to in the future."

Finally, adoption resources cannot stop after the placement of an adoptive child with their adoptive family. My research underscores a need for comprehensive post-adoption services. Post-adoption services such as support groups for parents, children, and families, heritage activities, education resources, search and reunion, and therapy are important components of the adoption process, yet many of these services are only available during the adoptive child's childhood and adolescence. Additional services, particularly during adulthood, are needed. One area that needs improvement is post-adoption therapy and training in post-adoptive services for therapists. Transnational transracial adoptees experience unique challenges related to their race, family, and adoptive statuses that therapists must be aware of. Training specific to those experiences are needed in order to effectively help adoptees.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations to this work. Herein I only examined one sending country. This raises questions around how might the process of race-making look differently if adoptees from other countries, especially those whose members

within the U.S. are often included as honorary whites, were examined. For example, Guatemala and Colombia have been top sending countries. What might these transnational transracial adoptees tell us about racialization processes and the racial order, particularly those who might be white-passing.

Whereas the sampling method facilitated my access to Korean adoptee respondents and was necessary in outlining "Korean adoptee" identity development, it is unclear to what extent my findings are generalizable to the Korean adoptee population at large. Although the majority of my online survey respondents identified as either fluid (Korean or white depending on the social context) or distinctly as "Korean adoptees," there were a small number of respondents who identified primarily as Asian or Korean, American, or as a "banana." It may be the case that had I been able to capture more respondents outside of Korean adoptee Facebook Groups that I would have had more respondents who identified in these other ways. Those who do find these other identities more salient may point to new avenues of identity work and racial meaning-making.

Finally, although I was able to include data on key experiences that shaped respondents' identity outcomes, I was not able to examine the direct relationship between their adoption stories and identity outcomes. Additionally, I had no measures of the psychological costs of my respondents' identifying differently. These are both important areas to consider the former for its practical applications

in adoptive parent training, the latter for its implications for mental health and well-being.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several key questions that this research raises, some of which I have mentioned in the previous sections and three that warrant more detailed attention here. First, as I alluded to in the Limitations section, future research should consider how generalizable these findings are among other transnational transracial adoptee populations (e.g., adoptees from China, Guatemala, India, Russia, Ethiopia), especially those whose phenotype may not be visually distinct from their adoptive parents though their heritage culture differs. Future research may also consider how the process outlined here maps onto acculturation experiences of other immigrants who immigrate alone, such as unaccompanied child migrants.

Second, this raises the question if there will be an international adoptee consciousness and what such a consciousness might entail. In my participant observation, there were often moves towards making Korean adoptee-organized events more inclusive. For example, the Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network conference is open to all international adoptees and their families, and panel sessions during the conference reflect desires to be more intentional about including adoptees from other sending countries. At the 2016 IKAA, member organizations discussed strategies to include more adult international adoptees. If and how Chinese adoptees, who are beginning to enter

early adulthood, will create Chinese adoptee organizations was a frequent topic of conversation. The Adoptee Citizenship Act advocacy provides one avenue that might help facilitate an international adoptee consciousness, and the creation of the Adoptee Rights Campaign provides one avenue towards such an outcome.

Finally, there is an opportunity for examining immigrant rights advocacy through comparative analysis of the Adoptee Citizenship Act, and adoptee deportations, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients. Both cases provide an opportunity to examine the role of immigration policy in racial inequality. Adoptee deportations and the revocation of DACA serve disciplinary functions, (re)positioning Asian Americans and Latinos, who are the primary DACA recipients, as outside of the U.S. polity. Whereas these cases have similarities in their racialized framing and impact on immigrants, they potentially diverge in strategies for activism. Even though transnational adoptees are immigrants, because of their exceptional immigrant status and historic exclusion from immigration histories, the Adoptee Citizenship Act and related advocacy may be separate from other immigrant rights activism. This raises questions of if and when these two immigrant rights movements form coalitions and the challenges and possibilities advocates face in doing so. This research will have implications for policy reform and strategies for immigrant rights activism.

APPENDIX A

Online Survey

The purpose of this research project is to understand how Korean adoptees understand and make-meaning of their racial/ethnic and cultural identities. This is a research project being conducted by Wendy M. Laybourn at the University of Maryland, College Park. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are a Korean adoptee who is at least 18 years of age.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The procedure involves filling an online survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address.

Types of questions included in this survey include:
Social/political attitudes
Views on U.S. social issues
Ethnic and adoptee identity

We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Wendy M. Laybourn at wendyml@umd.edu or (301) 405-6392. This research has been reviewed according to University of Maryland, College Park Internal Review board procedures for research involving human subjects.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.
Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:
• you have read the above information
• you voluntarily agree to participate
• you are at least 18 years of age and a Korean adoptee

If you do not wish to participate in the research study or do not meet the criteria, please decline participation by exiting the browser.
❍ Agree (1)

When you think about yourself, how important is your ethnic group membership to your sense of who you are?

○ Very Important (1)

○ Somewhat Important (2)

○ Slightly Important (3)

○ Not at all Important (4)

Here are some opinions some people have expressed in connection with ethnic issues in the United States. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each one?

Answer Choices:

Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree/Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

A. Harmony in the United States is best achieved by down playing or ignoring ethnic differences.

B. Ethnic minority groups will never really fit in with mainstream American culture.

C. If we want to help create a harmonious society, we must recognize that each ethnic group has the right to maintain its own unique traditions.

D. In order to have a smoothly functioning society, members of ethnic minorities must better adapt to the ways of mainstream American culture.

In general, how warm (close) or cool (distant) do you feel towards

_____ African Americans (1)

_____ Asian Americans (2)

_____ Hispanics/Latinos (3)

_____ White or Caucasian Americans (4)

Think about the various ethnic groups within the U.S. including Whites, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans, and so on. To what extent do you agree with the following statement.

Answer Choices:

Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree/Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Individuals who belong to the same ethnic group tend to be fairly similar to one another.

Now think only about ethnic minority groups within the U.S. such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Native Americans. To what extent do you agree with the following statement.

Answer Choices:

Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree/Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Ethnic minority groups in the U.S. are very distinct and very different from one another.

Think about Whites in the U.S. compared to ethnic minority groups. To what extent do you agree with the following statement.

Answer Choices:

Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree/Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Whites as a group are very distinct and different from ethnic minority groups.

Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same.

○ Strongly Agree (1)

○ Somewhat Agree (2)

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)

○ Somewhat Disagree (4)

○ Strongly Disagree (5)

Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

○ Strongly Agree (1)

○ Somewhat Agree (2)

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)

○ Somewhat Disagree (4)

○ Strongly Disagree (5)

Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

○ Strongly Agree (1)

○ Somewhat Agree (2)

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)

○ Somewhat Disagree (4)

○ Strongly Disagree (5)

It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only

try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

○ Strongly Agree (1)

○ Somewhat Agree (2)

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)

○ Somewhat Disagree (4)

○ Strongly Disagree (5)

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements.

Answer Choices:

Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree/Disagree, Somewhat Disagree,

Strongly Disagree

I feel I am different from the majority in the culture.

I feel a sense of incompleteness because of my adoptive status.

I don't know what ethnic group I belong to.

I feel isolated because of my adoptive status.

I have a clear sense of who I am as an adopted person.

I feel I don't belong to either American or to my birth culture.

I feel accepted by the people of my own ethnic group.

Think about the cultural activities your adoptive parents are providing to you or had provided while you were growing up. For each item below, please rate how important you think each developmental activity is/was TO YOUR ADOPTIVE PARENT(S).

Answer choices:

Not at all important, Slightly Important, Moderately Important, Very Much Important, Extremely Important

Learning values and traditions of my birth culture

Appreciating the fine arts, such as music and dance, of my birth culture

Learning the history of the people of my birth country

Feeling pride in my racial/ethnic heritage

Including traditions of my birth culture, such as ethnic holidays, in my family celebrations

Teaching what to do when a non-family member uses racist language

Learning the language or dialect of my birth culture

Talking about race and racism openly within the family

Visiting my country of birth

Be fluent in the language of my birth country

Establishing relationships with children from my birth culture

Establishing relationship with adoptees from different racial and ethnic background

Seeking support and advice from adults of my race/ethnicity about how to cope with prejudice and discrimination

Living in an integrated neighborhood with neighbors who reflect my race and ethnicity

Learning about racial differences

To be proud of my skin color

Educating me about the realities of prejudice, bias, racism, and discrimination

Teaching me a variety of coping strategies from which to choose when faced with prejudice or bias

Go to schools that have a diverse student body in terms of race and ethnicity

Attending culture camps frequently

Rate the amount of emphasis that YOUR ADOPTIVE PARENTS placed on learning the values and heritage of your birth country

_____ The emphasis was (1 Not Enough -10 Too Much)

There are many different ways in which people think of themselves. Which ONE of the following most closely describes how you view yourself?

❍ I consider myself exclusively Asian (1)

❍ I consider myself exclusively Korean (2)

❍ I sometimes consider myself Asian/Korean, sometimes American, and

   sometimes both depending on the circumstances (3)

❍ I consider myself biracial or multiracial, but I experience the world as an

   Asian person (4)

❍ I consider myself exclusively as biracial or multiracial (5)

❍ I consider myself exclusively American (6)

❍ Race is meaningless, I do not believe in racial identities (7)

❍ I consider myself as a Korean Adoptee (8)

❍ I consider myself something else. Please specify: (9) _____

Thinking about your social environment, what was the racial/ethnic background

of people in each of the following settings.

Answer choices:

 Mostly White, Mostly Black, Mostly Asian, Mostly Latino, Nearly evenly Black

   and White, Nearly equal representations of three or more racial/ethnic groups

Neighborhood where you grew up

Elementary school

Junior/middle high school

High school

Current church or place of worship usually attended, if applicable

Current workplace

Current neighborhood

What is the racial/ethnic background of your five closest friends?

❑ Close Friend 1 (1) _____

❑ Close Friend 2 (2) _____

❑ Close Friend 3 (3) _____

❑ Close Friend 4 (4) _____

❑ Close Friend 5 (5) _____

Of the following activities, which if any have you participated in? Check all that

apply.

❑ Korean culture camps (1)

❑ Korean language classes (2)

❑ Classes on Asian Americans, Adoptees, and/or Korean Americans (3)

❑ Homeland tour (4)

❑ Visited Korea (not a homeland tour) (5)

❑ Korean Adoptee-only social groups (6)

❑ Attended Korean adoptee conferences (7)

❑ Birth family search (8)

❑ DNA testing (9)

❑ Incorporation of a Korean name (10)

❑ Adoption-related activism (11)

❑ #FliptheScript social media campaign (12)

❑ Moved to Korea (13)

❑ Specifically sought out an adoptee as a dating/marital partner (14)

❑ Adopted a child(ren) (15)

❑ Held a leadership role in an adoptee-only social group, culture camp, adoption conference, adoption activism, or homeland tour (16)

❑ Volunteered at an adoptee-only social group activity, culture camp, adoption conference, adoption activism, or homeland tour (17)

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

With what gender do you identify?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Queer (3)

What is your current age?

How old were you when you were adopted?

Where did you grow up (city, state)?

Name of your high school and location (city, state).

Current zip code

Before your adoption, what was your pre-adoption setting?

○ Orphanage (1)

○ Foster Care (2)

○ Biological family (3)

○ Multiple placements (4)

○ Other; please specify (5) _____

○ Don't know (6)

In your adoptive family, how many siblings do you have?

Of these, how many are adopted?

Adoptive mother's race

○ White/Caucasian (1)

○ Black/African American (2)

○ Asian American (3)

○ Latino (4)

○ Multiracial (5)

Highest level of education completed by your adoptive mother

○ Did not finish high school (1)

○ High school graduate or equivalent (2)

○ Some college but did not graduate (3)

○ Graduated with an associate's degree or from a trade/vocational college (4)

○ Graduated with a four-year bachelors degree (5)

○ Graduated with a masters degree (6)

○ Advanced graduate degree (7)

Adoptive father's race

○ White/Caucasian (1)

○ Black/African American (2)

○ Asian American (3)

○ Latino (4)

○ Multiracial (5)

Highest level of education completed by your adoptive father

○ Did not finish high school (1)

○ High school graduate or equivalent (2)

○ Some college but did not graduate (3)

○ Graduated with an associate's degree or from a trade/vocational college (4)

○ Graduated with a four-year bachelors degree (5)

○ Graduated with a masters degree (6)

○ Advanced graduate degree (7)

Religious background of your adoptive parents

○ Christian/Other Protestant (1)

○ Catholic (2)

○ Jewish (3)

○ Muslim (4)

○ Other non-Christian religion (5)

○ None/Atheist/Agnostic (6)

What is your current marital status?

○ Married (1)

○ Separated (2)

○ Divorced (3)

○ Widowed (4)

○ Never married (5)

○ Domestic partnership (6)

What is the highest level of education you've completed?

○ Did not finish high school (1)

○ High school graduate or equivalent (2)

○ Some college but did not graduate (3)

○ Graduated with an associates degree or from a trade/vocational college (4)

○ Graduated with a four-year bachelors degree (5)

○ Graduated with a masters degree (6)

○ Advanced graduate degree (7)

What is your current occupation?

What is your current yearly pre-tax income?

○ Below $20,000 (1)

○ $20,001-$39,999 (2)

○ $40,000-$59,999 (3)

○ $60,000-$79,999 (4)

○ Above $80,000 (5)

What is your religious affiliation, if any?

- ○ Christian/Other Prostestant (1)

- ○ Catholic (2)

- ○ Jewish (3)

- ○ Muslim (4)

- ○ Other non-Christian religion (5)

- ○ None/Atheist/Agnostic (6)

Of the following choices, which do you consider yourself

- ○ Extremely liberal (1)

- ○ Slightly liberal (2)

- ○ Moderate (3)

- ○ Slightly conservative (4)

- ○ Extremely conservative (5)

If you are willing to be interviewed as part of this research project, please enter your name and contact information (email address and phone number) below.If not, click the arrow below to complete the survey.

APPENDIX B

In-Depth Interview Guide

ADOPTION STORY & ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION

I'd like to start the interview by asking you a few questions about your adoption story.

1. What did your parents communicate to you about your adoption?
    a. How did that make you feel?
        a. What did you think about being an adoptee when you were younger?
        b. Has that changed over time?
    b. Did that information change over time?
    c. Do you wish they had done anything differently in regards to explaining adoption to you?
    d. How did your family acknowledge your adoption while you were growing up?/ Was your adoption or arrival regularly celebrated in your family?
    e. How did your parents explain your adoption to others?
    f. How does being an adoptee effect you?
        a. Are there any privileges of being an adoptee? Constraints or challenges?
        b. **How important is being an adoptee to your sense of who you are? (or how you think about yourself)**

2. Tell me about your adoptive family:
    * How do you think about your parents' racial, cultural, religious, and political ideologies/identities?
    * Siblings? Adopted?
        o If adopted siblings, do they approach their adoption similarly to you?
        o If non-adopted siblings, do they participate in adoptee activities?
    * Frequency in participating in religious activities.
        o Current religious participation? Did your parents' religious activity impact your current religiosity?
    * What is your relationship with your adoptive family like currently?

SOCIAL CONTEXTS & RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

Let's talk about where you grew up.

1. Where did you grow up? (city, state)

- What were the characteristics of the neighborhood you grew up in? (class, racial demographics, rural/urban/suburban)
- What were the characteristics of the schools you attended?
- Who were your closest friends? (race/ethnicity, culture)

2. When growing up, did you feel different? In what ways?

3. How important do you think it was to your parents that you have connections to other Koreans or Asian Americans?
- Did your parents ever place **you or themselves** in Asian American social networks?
- Did they ever send you to culture camp, ethnic summer camps, ethnic language classes, or other similar programs?

4. How important do you think it was to your parents that you have connections to other adoptees?
- Did **your parents ever participate in adoptee support groups**, informally or formally?
- Did they ever send you to culture camp, ethnic summer camps, ethnic language classes, or other similar programs?

5. Did your family ever speak to you about racism or discrimination that you might face?
- What did they say?
- **How did your family deal with the fact that you're racially different from them? Have a different ethnic heritage than them?**
- Did they suggest any coping strategies for dealing with racism or discrimination?

Do you wish your parents had done anything differently in regards to providing connections to other adoptees? Other Asians? Or in regards to racism/discrimination?

6. Where do you currently live?
- If different from where they grew up, why did you move?
- **Did the racial/ethnic/cultural demographics of your current city play a role in why you moved?**
- Would you ever move back to your hometown? Why or why not?

IDENTITY

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the ways in which you identify yourself and how others might identify you.

1. When you think about yourself, how would you answer the question "Who am I?"

- What does it mean to you, to consider yourself _____?

2. How do others categorize/describe you?

- If their identity is different from how others identify them, ask: how do you assert your _____ identity, given that others identify you differently?

3. Do you consider yourself part of a biracial/multiracial family? Why/why not?

4. Do you consider yourself biracial/multiracial? Why/why not?

5. Do you or was there ever a time where you identified with your adoptive family's racial group?

6. **HOW IMPORTANT IS YOUR RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY TO YOUR SENSE OF WHO YOU ARE?**

7. Some adoptees identify as "Korean Adoptees" as separate or distinct from other identities, do you? If so, why? Why not?
- What does it mean to identify as a "Korean Adoptee"?
- Are there certain experiences, beliefs, values, activities, or objects that are part of a "Korean Adoptee" identity?
- **How important is identifying as a "Korean Adoptee" or "Korean American Adoptee" to your sense of who you are?**

8. How important has the internet and social media been for adoptees?

EXPLORATION & ENACTMENT

1. Has there been a point in your life where you started to explore your **ethnic heritage**? If not, why not? If so, tell me about that experience. (ex. language, history, or culture classes)
- When? And Why?
- How did you explore your ethnic heritage?
- How did you learn about this activity?
- Did the group have a racial/ethnic specific mission? If not, what were the races/ethnicities of other members?
- Do you still participate in it?

2. Has there been a point in your life where you started to explore your **adoptee identity**? If not, why not? If so, tell me about that experience.
- When? And **Why?**
- What did you do to explore your adoptee identity?
- Did this make you think differently about your sense of self?
- How did you learn about this activity?
- Do you still participate in it?

- How did family and friends react?

3. In what ways, if any, have you participated in the **adoptee community/adoptee-specific activities?** (adoptee groups, conferences, talks, heritage camps)
- Why?
- Tell me about that experience? (attended, volunteered, organized/lead)
- How did your family and friends react?

4. **Have you participated in any other adoptee-related interviews, studies, or projects?** Why or why not?
- Why did you decide to participate in this one?

5. Have you considered or have you **returned to your birth country**? If not, why not.
- Why?
- Tell me about that experience? When did you go, for how long, was it part of an organized group?
- How did you feel while there? Once you returned?
- How did your family and friends react?

6. Have you visited or lived in any other Asian countries?
- If not, would you? Why?
- If so, how did your experience compare to being in Korea?

7. Have you considered or have you **initiated a birth family search or DNA testing**? If not, why not.
- Why?
- Tell me about that experience?
- How did your family and friends react?

8. Have you considered or do you **incorporate parts of your Korean name into your name**? Why/why not?
- Are there any differences in experiences when using your Korean name versus your adoptive name?

9. Are you familiar with the **Adam Crapser case and the Adoptee Citizenship Act (S.2275)?**
- Have you participated in any actions regarding Adam's case or the Adoptee Citizenship Act? If so, what? If not, why not?

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your friendships and dating history.

1. Are you married now or currently in a relationship?
   - What is the race/ethnicity of your partner?
   - How did you meet?
   - How do your respective families respond to your relationship?
   - Do you have children or plan to have children? **Would you consider adopting?**

2. What has been the race/ethnic background of people you have dated in the past?
   - Any racial/ethnic preferences?
   - What about currently? Who do you find yourself attracted to?

3. In terms of comfort, with which racial/ethnic/cultural groups are you most socially comfortable? Least comfortable? Why?
   - Asians
   - Whites
   - Blacks
   - Latinos
   - Biracial/multiracials
   - Adoptees
   - Transracial adoptees
   - Korean adoptees

4. With which racial/ethnic/cultural groups are you most accepted? Least accepted? Why?

5. Do you feel accepted by other Koreans? Asians?

6. Do you feel you have to hide parts of who you are from certain individuals? Groups? Or in certain situations? Why/why not?

7. In general, where do you call home?

ADVICE

Now I'd like to ask you to give some advice:

1. What advice would you give to adoptees?

2. What advice would you give to prospective parents looking to adopt a child transnationally and transracially?

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

We have reached the end of the interview and I just have a few closing questions to ask you. (phone)

Now that we have completed the interview questions, I have a short survey that I'd like you to complete and then you're finished. (face-to-face)

SNOWBALL SAMPLING

Do you know any other Korean adoptees who would be willing to be interviewed as part of this research study?

APPENDIX C

Tables

Table 1. Descriptives of Online Survey Respondents and In-Depth Interview Respondents

	Online Survey (N=107)	In-Depth Interviews (N=37)
Age	34.5 (21-29)	34.3 (21-56)
Gender (Female)	65%	70%
Income		
<$20,000	14.42%	9%
$20,000 - $39,999	16.35%	15%
$40,000 - $59,999	26.92%	30%
$60,000 - $79,999	18.27%	18%
>$80,000	24.04%	27%
Education		
Less than College	26.42%	29.73%
Bachelors	33.02%	21.62%
Masters/PhD	40.57%	48.65%
Marital Status (Married)	41.5%	32.4%
Political Ideology (Liberal)	62.26%	
Age at Adoption (≤1 year)	59.81%	62.16%
Placement Prior to Adoption (Foster Care)	60.38%	49%
Adopted Siblings (Yes)	58.82%	56.75%
Father's Education		
Less than College	33.98%	
Bachelors	28.16%	
Masters/PhD	37.86%	
Mother's Education		
Less than College	43.28%	
Bachelors	27.88%	
Masters/PhD	28.84%	
Racial Socialization (0-1)	0.36	
Ethnic Socialization (0-1)	0.27	
Participation in Korean Adoptee Activity	3.1	
Hometown Location		
West	23.53%	27%
Midwest	30.39%	35%
Northeast	23.53%	19%
South	22.55%	19%
Current Location		
West	27.18%	30%
Midwest	18.45%	19%

Northeast	19.42%	24%
South	32.04%	24%
International	2.91%	3%

Table 2. Racial Demographics of Social Contexts		
	Online Survey (N=107)	In-Depth Interviews (N=37)
Hometown		
White	92%	92%
Black	2%	3%
Black & White	1%	
Three or more races	5%	5%
Elementary		
White	86%	86%
Black	1%	3%
Asian	2%	3%
Black & White	4%	
Three or more races	7%	8%
Junior HS		
White	85%	89%
Black	3%	3%
Asian	2%	
Black & White	2%	
Three or more races	8%	8%
High School		
White	77%	84%
Black	3%	3%
Asian	2%	
Black & White	4%	
Three or more races	13%	13%
Current Neighborhood		
White	59%	60%
Black	7%	5%
Asian	5%	5%
Latino	4%	3%
Black & White	3%	
Three or more races	22%	24%

Table 3. Descriptives of "Korean Adoptee" Identifiers and all other identified

	"Korean Adoptee" (n=34)	Other Identified (n=73)
Age	34 (21-57)	35 (21-59)
Gender (Female)	65%	66%
Education		
Less than College	15%	31%
Bachelors	39%	30%
Masters/PhD	45%	38%
Marital Status (Married)	38%	45%
Political Ideology (Liberal)	73%	58%
Age at Adoption (≤1 year)	68%	57%
Adopted Siblings (Yes)	55%	60%
Racial Socialization (0-1)	0.36 (.33)	0.37 (.33)
Ethnic Socialization (0-1)	0.27 (.28)	0.27 (.28)
Participation in Korean Adoptee Activity	3.4 (.81)	2.8 (1.2)
Hometown Location		
West	19%	26%
Midwest	31%	30%
Northeast	31%	20%
South	19%	24%
Current Location		
West	23%	29%
Midwest	19%	18%
Northeast	26%	17%
South	29%	33%

Table 4. Descriptives of "Korean Adoptee," Fluid, and all other identified

	"Korean Adoptee" (n=34)	Fluid (n=40)	Other Identified (n=33)
Age	34	33	36
Gender (Female)	65%	65%	67%
Education			
Less than College	15%	33%	30%
Bachelors	39%	35%	24%
Masters/PhD	46%	32%	46%
Marital Status (Married)	38%	43%	45%
Political Ideology (Liberal)	73%	55%	60%
Age at Adoption (≤1 year)	68%	50%	64%
Adopted Siblings (Yes)	55%	63%	58%
Racial Socialization (0-1)	0.36	0.38	0.37
Ethnic Socialization (0-1)	0.27	0.27	0.28
Participation in Korean Adoptee Activity	3.4	2.6	2.8
Hometown Location			
West	19%	29%	22%
Midwest	31%	24%	38%
Northeast	31%	29%	9%
South	19%	18%	31%
Current Location			
West	23%	33%	24%
Midwest	19%	13%	24%
Northeast	26%	13%	21%
South	29%	36%	31%

Table 5. Logistic Regression of "Korean Adoptee" Identification

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Adoptee Activity	1.7**	1.7*	1.6*	1.7*	**1.8***
Age at Adoption		0.6			0.7
Hometown Region		1.2			1.1
Age			0.9		0.9
Education			1.2		1.1
Marital Status			0.8		0.8
Political Ideology			0.8		0.9
Current Region			1.1		0.9
Ethnic Socialization				0.5	0.3
Racial Socialization				1.1	1.9
Constant	.09	.08	0.12	0.10	0.07
N	107	101	102	106	99

*p<.01
**p<.001

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