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WHITE ENVY AND PIGGY-BACKING PRIVILEGE: EXPLORING ADULT KOREAN
TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES' IDENTITIES IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

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Master of Arts, 2010
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how adult Korean transracial adoptees reflect on their racial and adoptive identities throughout their lifetimes, developing a unique sense of belonging and membership in the Canadian context. The main question under investigation is: If transracial adoptees have been raised among predominately white family and community members, then how do their processes of racial and adoptive identity formation fit into to critical theories of racialization and frameworks of normalized whiteness and colour blindness? Six interviews explore processes in which Korean transracial adoptees develop complex identities to navigate through difference, engaging with ethnic communities and their birth cultures to develop a distinctive membership in society. Research in the field of transracial adoption is crucial for revising policy and practice, engaging with adoptive parents' racial (in)sensitivities, expanding the notion of the traditional family, and pushing social workers and adoption agencies to step outside their comfort zones.

Keywords: transracial adoption, racialization, Othering, identity, whiteness, colour blindness

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	3
Notions of Colour Blindness and Racial Invisibility	6
Racial Visibility.....	10
Development of Racial Identity Survival Skills.....	12
Exploration of a Hybrid Identity	14
Theoretical Perspectives on Canadian Race Relations	17
Methods.....	23
Recruitment and the Sample	25
Data Collection.....	27
Analysis of Data.....	30
Limitations of the Study.....	32
Findings.....	34
Adopted Family.....	35
Racial Visibility.....	37
Life-time Experiences of Racism.....	42
Internalized Racism: Instances of “White Envy” and “Piggy-Backing Privilege”	44
Hybrid Identities: “Adoption Trauma” and the “Chameleon Effect”	47
Discussion.....	50
Conclusion	57
References.....	59
Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire.....	72
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	74
Table 1: Demographic Profiles of Study Participants.....	75

White Envy and Piggy-Backing Privilege: Exploring Adult Korean Transracial Adoptees' Identities in the Canadian Context

"Some might argue that I was already living my second life, my first left behind when I departed Seoul the first time as a seven-month-old infant. In some ways, my investment in a project that seeks to understand the experiences of other Korean American adoptees is a return to that first life, but I have not entirely given up the life I was living [before]" (Park Nelson, 2010: 2).

Introduction

This Major Research Paper (MRP) has taken me on an unexpected discovery of myself as an overseas adopted Korean and of the larger global community. I have a heightened awareness and sensitivity to adoptees' experiences and write this MRP in the hope to better understand the range of subjectivities I have encountered. I began this research dissatisfied with the current Canadian literature on transracial adoption. Challenging traditional adoption research from the disciplines of social work and psychology, I question, theorize, listen, research, and reflect on the experiences of adult Korean adoptees in Canada, and at the same time critically examine theoretical notions of race as a significant factor in adoptees' self-identifications and identities. This approach offers a new way of understanding Korean adoption by incorporating adoptees' perspectives and narratives and reveals an alternative outlook on Canadian race relations.

Korean adoptee and academic, Kim Park Nelson explains his and many others' understanding of themselves. He claims that adoptees' "westernized" upbringing creates feelings of awkwardness between their self-designation as "white" and their "Korean looks" that separate them from their adoptive families and communities (Park Nelson, 2010). Most adoptees' first-generation immigrant identities are entirely erased as a result of their socialization among white, upper-middle class families from a young age (Park Nelson, 2010; Dorow, 2006;

Quiroz, 2006; Hubinette, 2009; VanderMolen, 2005). Unlike most immigrants, adoptees are not given a choice to emigrate. From this standpoint I then pose the question: If transracial adoptees have been raised among predominately white family and community members, then how do their processes of racial and adoptive identity formation fit into to critical theories of racialization and frameworks of normalized whiteness and colour blindness?

Scholars define transracial adoption as a child adopted by parent(s) of a different race, “including what are probably the most frequent transracial adoptions in the US [and Canada]—adoptions of Asian children by [two] white parent[s]” (Quiroz, 2007: 43; Donaldson Institute, 2009; Dorow, 2006; Park Nelson, 2010; Bergquist, 2003; VanderMolen, 2005; Hubinette, 2009; Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). In this analysis transracial adoption is limited to inter-country adoption (ICA), also referred to as international, or transnational adoption (TNA), defined as the adoption of a child born abroad (Donaldson Institute, 2009). Given the global context of inter-country adoption, it may be assumed that most transracial adoptees also cross racial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. In the studies examined, the majority of adoptees are received by white, upper middle-class, heterosexual couples, raised in homogenous white neighbourhoods, and possess exceptional social and economic mobility compared to other first-generation migrants (Dorow, 2006; see also Hubinette, 2009; Park Nelson, 2010). Hubinette (2009) states that “[transracial adoptees] are the only demographic subgroup of foreign-born first-generation migrants from non-Western countries who share socioeconomic conditions with the most privileged part of the native-born white majority population” (Hubinette, 2009: 52). In most cases, adoptees’ socialization harmonizes with the white mainstream ethnicity, but physical markers of race exclude transracial adoptees from full membership in society (Dorow, 2006: 243; see also Lee, Yun, Chol Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010; Park Nelson, 2010; VanderMolen 2005;

Hubinette, 2009). Race becomes the measurable variable at work when adoptees are treated differently in their everyday life (Hubinette, 2009; Park Nelson, 2010). Both race and ethnicity in this context are socially constructed concepts; the former, a system of classification on the basis of physical characteristics in societal relations, the latter based on shared cultural patterns of an identifiable group (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010; see also Omi & Winant, 1986).

The following literature review surveys what is already known about transracial adoption from Asian countries to the United States and Western Europe. The review provides a general context for the study of adult Korean adoptees in Canada. Underlying racial theories and processes of belonging among transracial adoptees may be transferable across countries; however, individuals' experiences may vary. The review is an important starting point in investigating self-identification and identities of racialized adult Korean adoptees in Canada.

Literature Review

A literature review of transnational adoption indicates burgeoning social science enquiry in the areas of race relations, identity, and issues surrounding the retention of birth culture. Until recently, American social work, national government, adoption agencies, and adoptive parents' perspectives dominated adoption literature, problematizing issues of familial adaption and identifying levels of distress in the adoptive child's psychological well-being (Fiegleman & Silverman, 1984; Simon & Alstein, 2000; see also Lee, Yun, Chol Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010; Bergquist, 2003). Preceding studies viewed a "successful" adoption as complete cultural and ethnic assimilation into the white majority, leaving no room for the formation of an individuals' "adoptee identity" (Park Nelson, 2010). Park Nelson (2010) states that previous research claimed to focus on the adoptee, yet actually centered on adoptive parents' concerns.

Since 1953, over 200,000 South Korean adoptees have been sent to North America and parts of Western Europe; the largest portion—110,000—adopted by families from the United States (South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2007, as cited by Lee, Yun, Chol Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010; see also Kim & Smith, 2009; Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2007; Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010).

In this study, discussion of North Korea has been completely excluded, and thus, short forms such as “Korean adoption” refer to South Korean children that have been internationally adopted by white parents. Since its conception, overseas adoption represents a national shame for South Korea, as the “number one exporting country of children in the world” (Kim, 2004: 6). Following the Korean War, approximately 60,000 mixed-race or “GI babies,” born to Korean women and fathered by men from the United Nations armed forces were adopted by Western families (Oh, 2008: 49; Kim, 2004). Motivated by fundamentalist Christian faith, American couple Harry and Bertha Holt adopted eight Korean children and legitimated overseas adoption as the first instance of modern western aid (Kim & Smith, 2009; Shiao & Tuan, 2007). In 1956, the Holt International Adoption Program was founded, introducing “proxy adoption,” or the practice of chartering US flights to send adoptees to the US and Canada without parents travelling directly to Korea (Kim, 2004). Today, the Korean adoption program provides a model for overseas adoptions from China, Guatemala, and Columbia, maintaining power differentials between wealthy child-receiving nations and poor child-sending countries (Kim, 2004, see also Oh, 2008; Herman, 2008; Jacobson, 2008; Kim & Smith, 2009; Park Nelson, 2010).

In Canada, the Montreal Open Door Society initiated the first domestic interracial adoption placements in the early 1950s. Most were underprivileged black children who found homes in white middle-class families (Strong-Boag, 2005; Simon and Altstein, 2000). Growing demand

for overseas adoptions from Korea and Vietnam to Canada occurred in the 1970s as an offshoot of public criticism of the growing number of domestic adoptions of black children by white parents by the American National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) (Jacobson, 2008; Patton, 2000). According to Shiao and Tuan (2007), North American society viewed the adoption of black children by white parents as “stealing” the minority community’s most precious resource. In response to overriding calls for the preservation of the African American family unit, in 1973, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) changed its national regulations, favouring mono-racial over transracial domestic placements. Soon after, the Open Door Society and other Canadian adoption agencies followed suit.

To avoid adverse public scrutiny from family and community members, many prospective parents, from the late 1970s onwards searched abroad for children (Jacobson, 2008). Pull factors contributing to demands for international adoptions in Canada and the U.S., included declining fertility rates, a growing number of non-traditional family structures, and a diminishing supply of healthy, white children eligible for domestic adoption (Lovelock, 2000; see also Simon and Alstein, 2000; Hogbacka, 2008; Kim, 2004; Kim & Smith, 2009). During the same period, the South Korean government expanded overseas adoption under state emigration and population policy (Kim, 2004). Media spectacles of the Korean “adoption problem” at the 1988 Olympic Games critiqued the expansion of overseas adoption globally (Kim, 2004). As a related offshoot, over 200 countries implemented The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, governing transnational adoption by affording universal human rights to children everywhere, and affirming the right of a child to “preserve his/her identity, including name and family relations” (UNCRC, Article 9, 1990; as cited by Westhues & Cohen, 1998; see also Lovelock, 2000; Worotync, 2006). Four years later, sixty countries amended the UNCRC

legislation, resulting in the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (1993) (Kim & Smith, 2009).

Kim (2004) views present day adoptions from Korea as a “permanent solution to a temporary problem” (Kim, 2004; see also Kim & Smith, 2009). Following the Korean War, immediate humanitarian rescue of mixed-race children and war orphans necessitated a large number of international adoptions from Korea. Fifty years later, South Korea has recovered as the twelfth largest economy in the world, yet, still continues to send a large number of its children abroad. Spending less on social welfare than any other OECD country, some argue that South Korea unethically relies on international adoptions as a long-term social welfare scheme (Kim, 2004; Kim & Smith, 2004). Ironically, the small Asian nation holds the lowest birth rate, and highest adoption rate worldwide (Kim, 2004). Much of society still views Korean adoptees as “pitiful orphans of a sad circumstance,” a persisting perceptions despite South Korea’s status as one of the richest Asian countries (Park Nelson, 2010: 10).

Notions of Colour Blindness and Racial Invisibility

Critical migration research and ethnic studies challenge common assumptions of racial tolerance in Western societies (Said, 1978; Henry & Tator, 2006; Park Nelson, 2010; Dorow, 2006; Jacobson, 2008; Patton, 2000; Fogg-Davies, 2002; Shiao, Tuan, & Rienzi, 2004; Tuan, 1998; Henry & Tator, 2006; Hubinette, 2009). “Non-white bodies of the adoptees are constantly made significant in their everyday lives,” affirms Hubinette (2009), and thus “race has to be taken into consideration” (Hubinette, 2009: 51; see also Park Nelson, 2010; Bergquist, 2003). Transracial adoptees constantly negotiate their racial identities, shifting between identification as first-generation immigrants and belonging within their immediate adoptive families.

Park Nelson (2010) documents a shift in societal thinking in the mid 1980s and early 1990s from a “colour-conscious” to a “colour blind” approach, celebrating cultural diversity without recognizing racist national histories and current discriminatory policies. During this time period, Western interpretations of transracial adoption, representative of successful race, class, and societal mixing, epitomized notions of the “rainbow family” or normalized assimilation processes under the guise of multiculturalism (Park Nelson, 2010). On average, a colour blind discourse neglects the realities most racialized individuals face in everyday life, contributing to assumptions of a “problem-free identity development” (Shiao & Tuan, 2007: 160; see also Dorow, 2006b; Jacobson, 2008; Park Nelson, 2010; Henry & Tator, 2006; VanderMolen, 2005). This approach denies the reality of systematic racism and the “salience of race and cultural difference in a racially stratified society, while claiming a high moral ground of race neutrality” (Patton, 2000: 22; see also Quiroz, 2007; Henry & Tator, 2006). Elaborating further, Park Nelson (2010) explains the flaws in this colour blind logic. If race is recognized as a social construct, assigned fluid and changing meaning dependant on situational contexts and historical time periods, denial or rejection of race in a particular instance would bring an end to racism. Such an approach appeals mainly to whites, as a group that experiences minimal racism while simultaneously seeking to solve racial problems. “While colour blindness frequently figures in neoliberal discourses under the guise of racial justice, race as not a real category” (Park Nelson, 2010: 305). Instead this argument “ends up concealing current and historical inequalities unresolved in our [still] very racist society” (Park Nelson, 2010: 305).

Whites at the top of the racial hierarchy are privileged with “ethnic exploration, multiple ethnic heritages, and experimental choice...choice not challenged” (Park Nelson, 2010: 307; see also Henry & Tator, 2006). From a whiteness perspective, Jacobson (2008) positions white

adoptive parents within “the unraced center of the racialized world” and as a result many do not realize their elevated social status since white privilege is “so far-reaching so taken for granted, and so enmeshed in [their] daily interactions that they appear not to be benefits, but a normal part of the ‘natural order’” (Jacobson, 2008: 128; see also Dorow, 2007; Shiao, Tuan, & Rienzi, 2004; Tuan, 1998, Quiroz, 2007; Henry & Tator, 2006; VanderMolen, 2005). Bernardi (2001) alternatively suggests “whiteness” as a performance by visible minorities; a process of “passing” as white by absorbing typical acts or appearances of the majority population to escape racialization (as cited by Park Nelson, 2010). For transracial adoptees, “passing as white” is feasible, even without matching, physical characteristics of the majority, in part due to the white family and community members' emphasis of racial sameness. France Winddance Twine outlines four conditions possessed by transracial adoptees, essential in the construction of a “white identity” among non-whites: 1) isolation from other non-whites; 2) racially neutral or “colour blind” environments; 3) ethnic privileges granted to the individual by the majority; and, 4) priority of material achievements of middle-class existences (Twine, 2001: 215, as cited by Park Nelson, 2010: 322).

In contrast to negative stereotypes associated with black domestic communities, Asians as a racialized ethnic group are often positively differentiated from blacks by the white majority, in that they pass as “model minorities,” yet are inherently “other” to whites (Tuan, 1998; see also Park Nelson, 2010; Dhingra, 2003). The adoption of Asian children into homogenous white neighbourhoods goes unquestioned given the stereotype of “Asians [being] smarter” and only blacks experiencing “real racism” (Dorow, 2006: 371). Dorow (2004) describes this construction of “Asianness” in relation to the black-white binary central to Chinese adoption, wherein “blackness emerges as a kind of “white noise against which Asianness becomes flexible

in the white American imaginary...Asians [are constructed as] baggage free, desirably different, and salvageable” (as cited in Shiao & Tuan, 2004: 8).

Dorow (2006) further links Western prospective parents’ favouritism toward Asian children to the gendered aspect of transnational adoption. Notions of femininity assume social and aesthetic meanings, under the guise of racial difference (Dorow, 2006). The romantic notion of “saving a child on the other side of the planet” positions Asian birth mothers as victims of a “backwards patriarchal system that throws away its girls” (Dorow, 2006: 373). Patton (2000) contrasts images of the abandoned “rosy cheeked Asian girl” (Dorow, 2006: 373), to vilify the “irresponsible,” typically black, birth mothers in the domestic U.S. (Patton, 2000). In a contrasting example, both authors view the Western construction of white adoptive mothers erasing or “concealing sexual deviance” or saving the orphaned child from a life of ruin (Patton, 2000: 40; see also Dorow, 2006).

Fogg-Davis situates this construction of Asians as a “second shift in the conception of race;” moving beyond race as a socially constructed concept towards notions of colour blindness that “socially dismantles race into an unspeakable logic” (Fogg-Davis, 2002:9). This flexible racism, bound in likeness and equality, creates an unspoken exclusion for Asian adoptees in their white adoptive family and society (Dorow, 2006). Paradoxically, Korean adoptees, Park Nelson (2010) writes, are “caught in the white gaze of socialization and must create social distance with “Asianness” to be an assimilated [English-speaking Canadian]” (Park Nelson, 2010: 206). Asian adoptees’ socialization in white families and neighbourhoods highlights only non-threatening aspects of Asian adoptees’ racial differences, in turn, “re-casting” them into positions of “honorary whites” (Shiao, Tuan, & Rienzi, 2004: 9; see also Tuan, 1998; Lee, Yun, Chol Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010). Adoptees employ cultural capital in their white communities, shedding their

positions as “racially ‘Othered,’” as they are able to coalesce with white community members (Park Nelson, 2010: 188). Park Nelson (2010) claims that most Korean adoptees grow up wanting to be white, ever mindful of their visibly Asian features, and conscious to dissociate with their “Korea(ness)” to become fully “American” (Lee, Yun, Chul Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010; see also Bergquist, 2003). Adoptees’ life stories reveal realizations of “non-whiteness,” most often brought on by perceptions and inquiries in the public sphere (Park Nelson, 2010). Asian adoptees may appear “normal,” yet the failure to acknowledge multiple racisms, immigrant histories, and normalized whiteness act as barriers to transracial adoptees’ full acceptance in white society (Hubinette, 2009).

Racial Visibility

Richard Lee identifies the “transracial paradox” as the identity contradiction experienced by transracial adoptees in society. On one hand, most transracial adoptees are perceived by close family and neighbours as members of the majority culture (as cited in Park Nelson, 2010; see also VanderMolen, 2005; Hubinette, 2009). On the other, curiosity surrounding transracial adoptees’ multiple racial and ethnic identities in the public sphere attracts a steady stream of questions that range from harmless to offensive, and transgresses white middle-class privacy norms (Jacobson, 2008; see also VanderMolen, 2005; Hubinette, 2009). Common questions of “Where are you from?” or “Gee, your English is good” expose a double standard based on racialized categories reaffirming “American” or “Canadian” as white and Asian as “ethnic” or “immigrant” (Tuan, 1998: 141). Hubinette and Tigervall (2009) suggest that an imagined, naturalized belief system associates a particular physical appearance—i.e. race, language, and name—with an engrained cultural image. For instance, whites in North America are expected to speak and act in a certain way, on the other hand, Western society associates the non-white body

with a foreign nationality, ethnicity, and language. A disconnect exists for persons with non-white features who speak and perform under the cultural script prescribed for whites, causing them to constantly explain their identities (Hubinette & Tigervall, 2009; see also Hubinette, 2009). Jacobson (2008) refers to public questioning as form of “border patrolling” or “discrimination faced by those who cross the colour line, do not stick with their own, attempt to claim membership, or are placed by others in more than one racial group” (Jacobson, 2008:148). A form of “othering” or regulation by the white normative gaze holds transracial adoptees “accountable for their apparent difference by unsolicited attention being drawn to their non normative form—inscribed on their bodies through race” (Jacobson, 2008: 150).

In other cases, assumptions based on transracial adoptees’ physical appearance may lead to specific racial or cultural questions, such as teachers calling on adoptees for historical or culturally specific facts about Asia (Hubinette and Tigervall, 2009). Within the private sphere, relatives, frequently of an older generation, exhibit negative attitudes toward racialized minorities or immigrants from the developing world through “funny stories” and denials of racist behaviour (Hubinette and Tigervall, 2009: 348; see also Hubinette, 2009). A constant awkwardness or feelings of displacement may result in Asian adoptees’ cautious behaviour when interacting with whites. Many report feelings of unease meeting new people or having interactions in a rural or racially homogenous area (Tuan, 1998). Twenty-three year old Crystal Lee Hyuan Joo Chaspell describes her experience of being “Raised by white parents in a predominately white town, [she] considered herself white...others saw [her] differently. People stared as if I were alien, and children asked if [she] could see through [her] ‘Chinese slanted eyes...” (Shiao & Tuan, 2008: 1023).

Development of Racial Identity Survival Skills

Most studies conclude that given their physical markers of difference, transracial adoptees will never fully assimilate, or achieve full acceptance, in their adoptive family and society (Jacobson, 2008; see also Hubinette and Tigervall, 2009; Baden and Steward, 2000; Park Nelson, 2010). Park Nelson (2010) argues that an acculturated upbringing in the dominant culture impedes transracial adoptees' racial survival skills, best learned from parents of the same race. Referring to Osajima (1993), Tuan (1998) suggests that transnational adoptees develop "hidden injuries of race" or an emotional cost of self-identification associated with subtle and reoccurring forms of racial marginalization (Tuan, 1998; 3). Set apart from other researchers in this field, Patton (2000) hypothesizes that transnational adoption unsettles the traditional familial channels of socialization and acculturation, resulting in formations of positive identities and survival skills. A technique of cultural observation of a wide range of social groups leads to an understanding of oneself as a participant but not full member of one's family and related social groups (Patton, 2000). Similarly, Baden and Stewart (2000) propose from a social work perspective, that transracial adoptees form multiple, situational identities that enable them to navigate through individual, familial, and group systems. Transracial adoptees "write [their] identities through a trope of difference within themselves, [as] authentically other," a circular process which returns them to a "primary identity" of adoption (Patton, 2000: 8). This "rupture," as Korean adoptee Tobias Hubinette describes, is "caused by loss of birth family and country and re-absorption into another family and country" (as cited in Park Nelson, 2010: 64).

Patton (2000) identifies a "radical phase," among some transracial adoptees, wherein individuals question the racial assumptions they were raised under, often immersing themselves in their birth culture, history, and community (Patton, 2000: 16). Rarely, Park Nelson (2010)

observes, do Korean adoptees directly confront public inquiries about their race, but rather respond to queries with “polite silence” (Park Nelson, 2010: 339). Shiao and Tuan (2008) suggest that racial visibility and in many cases discrimination on the basis of race cause many adult adoptees to embark on a personal exploration of racial and ethnic identity development, shifting “one’s attitude about ancestry from a descriptive category to a meaningful sense of membership” (Shiao & Tuan, 2008: 1024). Cherot (2006) distinguishes a group of Vietnamese adult adoptees in the U.S. as “claim makers” or “community intellectuals” who speak from the perspective of transracial adult adoptees, within the structures of inter-country adoption (Cherot, 2006: 1). This “autobiographical pedagogy” allows adoptees to redefine popular “adoptive truths” held by social workers, adoptive parents and policy makers, instead emphasizing that inter-country adoption from Asia is a “racialized [longitudinal] experience” (Cherot, 2006: 2; see also Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). Cherot (2006) describes an exercise of public pedagogy, or active story-telling through internet channels, as a site of adoptees’ discursive resistance. Since the early 2000s, development of an adoptee global community, maintained through websites, published information, and social education, uncovers commonalities and support networks.

Many adoptees return to their birth countries, signifying a “rite of passage,” and legitimization of their current identities. Since 1999, the South Korean government officially recognizes adoptees as part of the seven million people that make up the “overseas Korean” population (Kim, 2004; see also Bergquist, 2003). Kim (2004) qualifies official recognition as creating a new form of “Koreanness”—“the overseas adopted Korean, a distinct, spatially dispersed ethnic Korean identity” (Kim, 2004: 8). These return journeys are often life altering, in how adoptees view themselves as Asian [Canadians], often grieving loss of family records,

family memories and apparent language and cultural barriers with their birth country (Park Nelson, 2010; see also Bergquist, 2003). Some also embark on birth searches for biological family member (VanderMolen, 2005).

Exploration of a Hybrid Identity

According to Hall (1996), adoptees' exploration of a "Korean identity" uncovers the "extraordinary diversity of subject positions, social experiences and cultural identities, which compose the category of [Asian]" (Patton, 2000: 16). Diverging from previous research on transracial adoption (i.e. Fiegelman & Silverman, 1984; Simon & Alstein, 2000), current studies disregard the view of adoptees as "frozen in time," instead recognizing the structural power relations involving a multiplicity of racial and ethnic identities that affect adoptees on a daily basis (Dorow, 2006).

In an American survey of sixty Asian adoptees, Shiao and Tuan found that identities were fluid, often emerging out of experiences of marginalization (as cited in Park Nelson, 2010). By constructing positive identities within these racial narratives, individuals resist culturally infused narratives of subordination and identify inconsistencies in racist ideology. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1999) term this process a "hybridization of identity," occurring as a result of cultural or racial oppression. The individual, in this case the adoptee, incorporates traditions from that which oppresses it with new practices and formations in a process of "mutual development" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1999: 184). Patton (2000) references W.E.B. Dubois' theory of a "double consciousness," to explain the renegotiation of one's state of being and the feeling of two identities (VanderMolen, 2005). On one hand, a person may internalize the "cultural messages" of the oppressor and the "alienation from one's self;" on the other, (s) he may develop

a “second sight” to distinguish inconsistencies in racist ideologies and reconstructing meaning of one’s self (Patton, 2000:66-69; see also Hall, 1996; VanderMolen, 2005). This shift progresses further than identifying instances of racial discrimination in adoptees’ everyday experience, towards examining how racism affects the construction of individuals’ self-identification and well-being (Tuan, 1998). New approaches challenge assumptions of a “problem-free identity development” taken for granted by many adoptive parents, segregating adoptees from their Asian peers, and denying the reality of racist incidents (Shiao & Tuan, 2007: 161).

Park Nelson (2010) identifies a “context-based identity” among transracial Korean adoptees, “shifting in an experience of in-betweenness,” assuming a “chameleon effect to adapt to whatever identity was dominant or expected” in a given social situation (Park Nelson, 2010: 335; see also Bergquist, 2003). For some adult transracial adoptees the need to disengage from white communities and grow closer to an Asian diaspora and adoptee populations signals formations of hybrid identities rooted in shared racial identities and trauma. Unfortunately, disassociation with white family histories carries a high price for many adoptees; a number experience rejection by adoptive family members or personal hesitation due to their lack of knowledge surrounding their birth culture (Park Nelson, 2010). Western society’s low tolerance for hybrid identities, indicated by Korean adoptees’ strategies for “passing as white” or ability to claim more than one racial or ethnic identity to manage their “socially enforced (in)visibility, reveals the breadth and multifaceted nature of their identities” (Park Nelson, 2010: 257). Omi & Winant (1994) note that the “fundamental task of a racial movement is to form new identities and meanings” (as cited in Cherot, 2006: 4). Hall (1990) qualifies the evolution of the Asian identity, asserting that “identities are historically constructed rather than fixed and essentialized” (as cited in Cherot, 2006: 4). Mary Watkins (2004) writes “She is not exactly a ‘migrant,’

brought to one culture from another. She moves between multiple cultural locations in the present, not just two...And yet the adoptee is not that different from many others whose identities have complexity as a result of migration or exile” (Dorow, 2006: 211).

The literature, situated in the American and Western European contexts, explores Asian adoptees’ fixed and fluid racialized and adoptive identities, emphasizing their unique first-generation immigrant experience given their mainstream socialization and class privilege (Dorow, 2006). Transracial adoptees embark on a longitudinal process of belonging, (re)negotiating their racial, ethnic, and adoptive identities in the context of normalized whiteness. Young adulthood is a pivotal time in adoptees’ racial identity formation due to separation from white family members and connections with ethnic networks (Shiao & Tuan, 2008; see also Lee, Yun, Chol Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010; Hubinette, 2009). According to Shiao and Tuan (2008) early adulthood is a crucial time to study adoptees’ processes of racial self-identification, given their recent legal, social, and/or geographic separation from their white adoptive families. In most cases, increased freedom to explore their ethnic ancestry prompts many to embark on a period of racial, and in most instances ethnic identity exploration (Shiao & Tuan, 2008; see also Lee, Yun, Chol Yoo, & Park Nelson, 2010; Bergquist, 2003), the majority departing from previous racial and ethnic identifications of their childhood and adolescence (Louie, 2004).

Faced with multiple exclusions, transracial adoptees develop complex identities to navigate through difference, engaging with ethnic networks and their birth communities to develop a distinctive membership in society. Adoptees’ experiences of multiple exclusions refer to a common reality among transracial adoptees of “appearing to fit everywhere, but never really belonging” (Tuan, 1998: 3). In other words, adoptees have the ability to “perform” in numerous different social locations, but are never fully accepted by each group unquestioned. It is

hypothesized that there will be positive correlations between lived or subjective experiences and adoptees' perceptions of their own ethno-racial identities. Separate from this relational identity development, adoptees may explore a personal or individual identity, exclusive to one's own personality traits and value system.

My research seeks to address the gap in the current literature, conducting a study on adult Korean transracial adoptees in the Canadian context, posing the question: How do adult Korean transracial adoptees negotiate their racial and ethnic adoptive identities, through their childhood, youth, and young adulthood? This study also explores the unique sense of belonging and membership which transracial adoptees may uncover in the context of everyday experiences of racial discrimination.

Theoretical Perspectives on Canadian Race Relations

Post-modern theoretical assumptions guide this study, examining the interplay of language, discourse, and power relations to view social relations as fluid and unpredictable. In particular, an anti-racist framework underpins working definitions and principle assumptions, referenced by authors such as Himani Bannerji (2000), Frances Henry (2000), and Edward Said (1978). This study's interpretative framework reflects works by John Creswell (2007; 2009), and Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson (1996).

The concept of race is a broad area of social science enquiry, in that it is approached by multiple epistemological stances and interpreted by a number of theoretical frameworks. Post-colonial studies combined with post-modern methodologies frame the analysis of the literature and participant accounts, recognizing the intersectionality of race with other fluid signifiers such

as culture, class, gender, and sexuality. Broad frameworks of imperialism and nationalism encompass global power relations between the East-West and North-South binaries, in which adoptees' identities are shaped. Bannerji (1993) adds that understanding Canadian society is impossible without consideration of colonialism. Henry and Tator (2006) connect post-colonial approaches with whiteness studies mentioned above, in that both employ historical accounts to situate "whiteness everywhere even where white bodies are not...whiteness, thus is not merely just about bodies and skin colour, but rather more about the discursive practices, that because of (neo) colonialism, privilege sustains the global dominance of white imperial subjects and an Eurocentric world view" (Henry & Tator, 2006: 47; see also Bannerji, 1993; Hubinette, 2009).

Contextualizing transracial adoptees' experiences of discrimination in North America's colonial history, Razack (2000) outlines the development of Canadian White Settler society through "genocide of Aboriginal peoples and the theft of land, followed by the enslavement and exploitation of racialized peoples" (Razack, 2000: 129; see also Bannerji, 1993). A racial hierarchy was simultaneously established with whites in the center as the main contributors to modern citizenship and development (Razack, 2006: 74; see also Hubinette, 2009). Canadian society represses all memories of its imperialist tendencies towards nation-building, maintaining a narrative of "innocence," distinct from the Americans (Razack, 2006; see also Henry & Tator, 2006). For the most part, racist practices are generally invisible, except for people who suffer from them (Henry & Tator, 2006). As Anthony Farley articulates, "for white people race is a form of pleasure in one's body which is achieved through humiliation of the Other and then, as the last step, through the denial of the entire process" (Farley, 1997: 464, as cited in Razack, 2000).

Critical theorists explain a two-fold process of exclusion, whereby the Western subject maintains dominance by assigning socially constructed differences to individuals in subordinate positions (Bannerji, 1993; Said, 1978). “Othering” takes place as a result of perceived physical or cultural dissimilarity by the dominant majority, and is not exclusively or necessarily tied to race (Said, 1978). Said positions the West as a self-identified “civilized, rational, scientific, culturally and morally superior entity in relation to the East, while the East has been depicted as uncivilized, irrational, unscientific, culturally inferior, and immoral” (Said, 1979, as cited in Razack, 1998: 91; see also Henry & Tator, 2006; Said, 1978). Said’s discursive theory of Orientalism unveils the logic in which we, as Westerners view the disorderly, and racialized Third World, as a chaos that can be mended through guidance from a civilized North (as cited in Gajardo & Macias, 2000). The West employs the “Other” as a tool to locate itself; a reflection of what it is not (Said, 1978 cited in Minh-ha, 1995; Said, 1978). Said (1978) explains that the relationship between the East and the West is an involvement of power, domination and complex hegemony. In perpetuating Western domination, notions of Third World inferiority are upheld through knowledge sustaining imperial, racist, and colonial binaries.

Foucault additionally theorizes projections of the modern subject in space. Power operates through replications of surveillance structures, in the end producing two types of bodies: the normal and the abnormal body, “the later exiled and spatially separated” (Foucault, 1984: 252 as cited in Razack, 2006: 78). Razack (2006) connects the spatial power relationship with the body through notions of the “respectable body,” “the Enlightened individual,” or “the Cartesian subject;” all behaviours reflected throughout one’s rational environment (Razack, 2006: 78). The interplay of normalized power relations, reflected in the binary between the normal and abnormal body, allows for the rational subject to extend his authority beyond his residency

through acts of imperialism. In other words, once the rational subject's value and belief system becomes institutionalized in a state apparatus, he may justifiably claim global goods, territory, and people on behalf of his nationality (Razack, 2006).

Stuart Hall (1996) states that this (racial) binary permeates every aspect of North American society so deeply that "racism, far from being a reaction to crisis in which racial others are scapegoated for social ills, is a permanent part of the social fabric...[it] is not an effect but a tactic in the internal fission of society into binary opposition, a means of creating "biologized" internal enemies, against whom society must defend itself" (as cited in Smith, 2003: 72; see also Hall, 1996; Henry & Tator, 2006). Henry and Tator (2006) emphasize a "democratic racism" present in Canadian society, in which two conflicting value systems are maintained. On one hand, there is societal adherence to principles of liberal democracy underpinned by egalitarian values of fairness and justice; on the other, discriminatory feelings towards people of colour result in differential treatment and inequality (Henry & Tator, 2006). Racism, by nature is fluid and changing, explains Henry and Tator (2006), and thus it is adaptable and applicable in various historical time periods and social environments. It is an essential impulse of human society to classify diverse variables into meaningful units; and as such, races exist as a meaningful unit of classification which works at maintaining order and stability of a culture by dividing populations in terms of superior and inferior characteristics (Hall, 1996; see also Omi & Winant, 2006).

Fogg-Davis identifies race as a structural variable that implies a level of significance for individuals' identities (Fogg-Davis, 2002). "Race is above all a marker of difference, an axis of differentiation" (Frankenburg, 1993: 138). Hall (1991) agrees that discourses, in this case a process of racialization, always "come from a place, outside of a specific history, out of a specific set of power relations" (Kim, 2006: 384; see also Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). In

this context, race functions as a “discursive concept,” a “floating signifier,” meaning that all attempts to ground racial classifications scientifically have shown to be untenable, thus it exists as a cultural definition, part of the society’s imaginary (Hall, 1996). Assumptions are derived from one’s racial appearance, presupposing how a person should perform, act, or speak (Hall, 1996). Race is absorbed in the “social terrain of identity—the backdrop of opportunities and constraints against which individuals negotiate their affinities with others and their understandings of themselves” (Kibria, 2002: 67).

This multilayered context deeply affects the experiences and identities of transracial Korean adoptees, as immigrants and visible minorities in Canadian society (Park Nelson, 2010). Situating inter-country transracial adoption in global spaces and unequal power relations, narratives of “rescue” and benevolence encapsulate the Asian adoptee, constructing her as “knowable” and easily transferrable into Western subjectivity (Yngvesson, 2000). Admittance of a needy migrant into “safe northern spaces,” highlights the “goodwill” and “moral superiority” of Western generosity (Gajardo & Macias, 2000: 27; Razack, 1998). Razack links the free flow of bodies to a process of nation-building, highlighting the imperialist North as the center through its “white saviour practices” (as cited in Gajardo & Macias, 2000: 32). In contrast, the act of “rescue” positions Third World immigrants as “victims” of backward regimes, in a sense “branding” individuals as “peripheral” (Gajardo & Macias, 2000: 27). Set apart from refugees, whose bodies function as “expendable” entities within a larger empire (Gajardo & Macias, 2000: 27), the adoptee becomes an object of “sentimentalized meaning” (Yngvesson, 2000: 170). The child is easily “cut away” from “everything that constitutes her grounds for belonging to this family and this nation, while establishing her transferability to that family and that nation. With a past that has been cut away, the adoptee can be re-embed in a new place as though she never

moved at all” (Yngvesson, 2000: 173). Both types of migrants are “saved” by the benevolent North, a process which positions them as “permanent outsiders” even after attaining legal citizenship (Gajardo & Macias, 2000: 27; Yngvesson, 2000). The modern immigrant, Minh-ha (1995) claims may “be met at the centre, where they invite her in with much display, it is often only to be reminded that she holds the permanent status of a ‘foreign worker,’ a ‘migrant,’ or a ‘temporary sojourner’—a status definable location is necessary to the maintenance of the central power” (Minh-ha, 1995: 216).

Boyden identifies the global media as an exponent of the West, reporting “stolen childhoods of the Third World” as innocent and vulnerable casualties of adult violence and exploitation (Boyden, 1996: 185). The “image in need,” or a blanket representation of children in the Third World, directs the viewer away from the structural origins of poverty, instead presenting images of an emancipated “waif,” often in a mother’s arms, situated in the Madonna and child pose, rallying ideologies of “rescue” and “victimization” (Briggs, 2003: 180). Images are representative of the UNICEF campaign of “Things not There,” inciting pity towards the racialized child and evoking themes of universal liberalism (Briggs, 2003; 193). Briggs argues that this form of visual iconography allows white middle-class prospective parents to imagine themselves the saviours of these orphans (Dubinsky, 2007; Briggs, 2003). A study done on adoptive parents from Sweden reveals an overall sense of “responsibility” to adopt from orphanages in the Third World, as one mother writes: “To be an angel helping them not to fall down on the cliffs” (Yngvesson, 2000: 181).

Methods

A qualitative design underpins this study, establishing a fluid methodology that explores meanings produced by human interactions and social environments (Creswell, 2009; see also Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The study of context, depth, and discovery differentiates qualitative methodology from quantitative studies, necessary to explore social constructs of “race” and “identity” (Morgan, 1998). “We consider qualitative analysis to be a very powerful method for assessing causality...It is well equipped to cycle back and forth between *variables* and *processes*—showing that ‘stories’ are not capricious, but have connections overtime” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 147, as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 143). This approach assumes that knowledge is “value-driven,” dependent on context and time; thus, participants’ realities are constructed by their surroundings, social interactions, and fixed perspectives (Higgs, 1998; see also Byne, 1982). An inductive method builds the study from the bottom up, “highly effective for creating a feeling for the whole” and “for grasping subtle shades of meaning” (Neuman, 2003: 83). Silverman (1983) explains qualitative analysis as “centrally concerned with avoiding a social problem perspective by asking how principles attach meanings to their activities and ‘problems’...they *make* problems, grounding them in everyday realities and meanings of social worlds and actors, rather than *taking* problems from policy makers, general theorists, and others” (Silverman, 1983: 19, as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 5). Qualitative narrative inquiry centralizes social actors, offering potential for empowerment and conscious-raising discussions (Park Nelson, 2010; see also, Patel, 2005).

Reflexivity guides data collection and analysis processes, ensuring transparency and a cyclical course of study (Creswell, 2009; see also Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Gray, 2003).

Creswell (2007) writes that “through omniscient narrators, post-modern thinkers ‘deconstruct’

the narratives challenging texts as contested terrain that cannot be understood without references to ideas being concealed by the author and the contexts with the author's life" (Creswell, 2007: 178-179). The researcher interprets data based on the social, cultural, gender, class, and personal politics that sway our research (Creswell, 2007). As a transracial Korean adult adoptee, I am personally invested in this study, since similar to the participants, my identity and experiences have been shaped largely by external perceptions and personal identification of my racial identity. My enrolment in the Immigration and Settlement Studies Program (ISS), in combination with my relocation to Toronto from a small rural town, has served as a catalyst of inquiry into processes of racism, social exclusion, and personal isolation in relation to identity. The ISS program encouraged me to make critical linkages between my personal experiences and theoretical frameworks, contextualizing my racial and adoptive identity in societal issues and the larger Canadian immigrant experience. My social location influenced the formation and design of this study; I write from an adoptee's perspective, to challenge adoptive parents' and social workers' appropriations of their children's racial, ethnic, and adoptive identities, speaking on behalf of the "voiceless subjects" from an advocacy position (Harding, 1993; see also VanderMolen, 2005; Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Gray, 2003; Giles-Vernick, 2006).

Significantly, this "in-group researcher" methodology presents unique benefits and liabilities (Twine, as cited in Park Nelson, 2010: 22; see also Patton, 2002). "Researchers are not invisible, neutral entities... Both researchers and their subjects are apprehended as producers, as well as products of history and shapers and builders of culture" (Park Nelson, 2010: 24; 44). As such, my research questions and approach are derived from my understanding and experience as a transracial adoptee. Tuhiwai Smith emphasizes the importance of an "insider" researcher to "be ethical" and respectful, both "reflexive and critical" because the researcher belongs to the

community (as cited in Park Nelson, 2010: 45; see also Patel, 2005; Creswell, 2007).

Consciously, I attempted to remain autonomous from my analysis, restraining my own passionate reactions to personal experiences, yet aware that the study's analysis would be in some part a "version of the narrator's truth" (Patel, 2005: 328). Park Nelson (2010) affirms the importance of researcher autonomy during the interview stage of research, so as to avoid shaping replies of subjects and fusing their experiences with personal stories.

Recruitment and the Sample

A mode of purposeful sampling, derived from criteria laid out in the research questions and problem, determined the sample size and composition of the population of the study (Creswell, 2009). Coordinators of the Canadian-Korean Adoptee Network (CKAN), based in Toronto, and the Asian Adult Adoptees of British Columbia (Triple ABC), rooted in Vancouver, facilitated initial contact with participants, circulating recruitment emails to member list serves.

Recruitment through a parent adoptive organization was intentionally avoided, since the aim of this study diverges from extracting the psychological outcomes of an adoptive family, rather centering on the personal realities that shaped adoptees' racial identities from the perspective of adoptees themselves (Shiao & Tuan, 2008). In total, five adoptees responded to recruitment emails to CKAN and Triple ABC list serves. The sixth respondent was referred to the researcher by one of the five involved participants. Creswell (2009) refers to this method as a snowball sampling technique, used to access a larger number of research participants. In most cases, respondents already recruited are asked to identify or ask other participants to join in the study (Creswell, 2009).

Self-selection of participants assumes that the sample is not representative of all Korean adoptees in Canada, in that voluntary respondents may have a higher degree of “adoptee identity” than others not involved in member organizations (Berguist, 2003; Park Nelson, 2010; Hubinette, 2009). In contrast with the prevalence of adoptee organizations in the U.S. and Western Europe, the geographical dispersion and cultural assimilation of adoptees in the Canadian context presented challenges for recruitment and interviews. On the whole, the population of Korean adoptees in Canada is proportionally smaller than other Western nations. Indicative of this reality, three participants self-identified as Korean adoptees raised in Belgium, later immigrating to Canada in their early adulthood. In general, Canadian-raised Korean adoptees may be hesitant to share personal narratives and adoption related struggles. For many, this subject matter may be private as it prompts unwanted psychological distress and hidden traumas. In contrast, frequent adoptee gatherings and established community networks in the U.S. and Europe foster strong “adoptee identities,” and may have influenced these transplanted adoptees to take part in this study.

My social position as a Korean transracial adoptee allows me a crucial access point to the target population. I speculate that participants’ willingness to take part in the study was in part due to my adoptive status and membership in the CKAN. This form of community based research exists as an established, informal ritual of exchanging stories between members of the global adoptee community (Park Nelson, 2010). As a result, at some points throughout this project, I experienced overwhelming pressure to properly represent participants’ accounts, at the same time, was careful not to offend community members.

Data Collection

According to Patton (2002) and Tutty, Rothery, and Grinnell (1996), multiple methods of data collection test the consistency and increase credibility of the overall research findings. Creswell (2007) adds that numerous interconnected methods of data collection—including locating the site/individual, gaining access and making rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data—may be combined to address the original research question. A triangulation of data collection processes creates an overall trustworthiness, founded on the logic that no single method is capable of capturing complex explanations (Patton, 2002; see also Gray, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) affirm the “dependability” in mixed methods; separate approaches may reveal different aspects about the topic of enquiry (as cited in Creswell, 2007: 204). This study employed two qualitative approaches for collecting data.

A demographic questionnaire gathered profiles of the participants, establishing a common context for subjects’ narratives. Standardized autobiographical data ensured that the analysis and interpretation of life stories collected during interviews originated from similar sources, also allowing for a degree of generalizability between various interviews (Byrne, 1982) (see Table 1). Participants included five female and one male adult South Korean transracial adoptees, between the ages of 27 and 47 years of age ($M = 38.5$ years; mean age at adoption = 4.83 years). The age range was selected to give adoptees ample perspective on their childhood experiences and the racial encounters in their early adulthood (Shiao & Tuan, 2008). Given the age span of participants, a presumed bias exists among older adoptees, in that they may have fewer or varied memories of their childhood and early adulthood due to the diverse social contexts which these time periods represent. All participants had been adopted transracially by two Caucasian

parents, and were raised in predominately white communities. Half of the respondents were adopted by Canadian families, the other three identified as Korean-Belgian, as they were adopted by Belgian families, later immigrating to Canada in their adulthood.

The sample was varied in terms of the number and racial makeup of siblings, current marital status, and exposure to racial and ethnic aspects of their birth country. These factors were documented as variables in respondents' demographic profiles, and in some instances contributed to variations in the findings and discussion (see Appendix A). In all cases, respondents reported having either one or more adopted Korean or biological siblings within their adoptive families. Variations also occurred in participants' level of exposure to their birth culture and current marital status. The sample was also unequally balanced in terms of gender, reflecting the high percentage of female infants adopted by Canadian parents from the 1970s onwards. Four participants identified as female, one male, and one specified no gender.

Secondly, semi-structured interview questions permitted participants to share uncensored viewpoints and facilitated a highly flexible mode of communication (Byrne, 1982; see also Creswell, 2007) (see Appendix B). Questions aimed at uncovering participants' past and current perceptions of their racial and adoptive identities, and what factors contributed to their identity development. Expected levels of trauma relating to their racial visibility or adoption related issues were hypothesized in the literature, and respondents were correspondingly asked to describe how they achieved a sense of belonging and individual acceptance among their adoptive family, Asian communities, and overseas adoptee network in the face of these unique barriers. The "how" and the "why" were examined, exposing personal motivations, attitudes, and values that could not be evaluated in the formal questionnaire (Patel, 2005: 332; see also Byrne, 1982). Questions were formulated to address issues in the context of everyday experiences, in some

cases reiterating themes to elicit varied responses (Stroh, 2000). Cognisant of the context, mood, familiarity, gender, class, and cultural backgrounds at play during the interview, Burgess (1998) refers to “conversations with purpose” as a method which encourages participants to speak at length about a particular topic (Burgess cited in Mason, 1996: 38; as cited in Byrne, 1982: 181). By engaging in semi-structured dialogue on transracial adoption, adoptees shed an alternative view on the multifaceted nature of race relations, processes of racialization, and belonging.

Given my social location, participants may have assumed a variety of motivations that may or may not actually be true (Gray, 2003). According to Tutty, Rothery, and Grinnell (1996), a shared connection between the researcher and participants is anticipated and appreciated. Aware that disclosing personal information about my adoption and upbringing might influence or present biases to my interview findings, I introduced my age, location where I spent the majority of my childhood, and number of return trips to Korea in the initial recruitment email, in order not to disrupt the interviews in progress. At times I felt awkward during the interview, given that participants offered so much personal information, and I could give little in return. This statement speaks to the epistemological debate of approaching within-group research from a hierarchical versus communal approach (Park Nelson, 2010). I conducted this study recognizing my unique ability to advocate for my group, adding knowledge based on my own experiences to prompt and interpret participant testimonies. In contrast, my personal sense of professionalism inhibited me from opening up and sharing my own individual experiences during the interviews. These observations may complicate my research, yet are addressed to bring an element of self-reflexivity to the research process.

Analysis of Data

Miles and Huberman (1994) find that coding facilitates an analysis to “differentiate” and “combine” data that the researcher has collected and develop theories reflective of the study’s findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 27). Seide and Kelle (1995) maintain that “codes represent the decisive link between the original ‘raw data’ that is the textual material such as the interview transcripts on the one hand and the researcher’s theoretical concepts on the other” (Seide & Kelle, 1995: 52, as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 27). A layered coding method identifies themes by assigning conceptual markers to segments of participants’ narratives to exclude irrelevant material, at the same time, grouping material to test and develop relevant theories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; see also Seale, 1982; Creswell, 2007). As a form of systematic indexing, codes mark material, reflect interactions that occurred during the interview, and simplify large amounts of data into manageable portions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Significantly, negative instances or contradictory experiences contribute to emerging concepts and add complexities to analysis and discussion (Seale, 1982). This deconstructive-reconstructive process requires the researcher to move back and forth between abstract and concrete data fragments, reducing and expanding it into new organizing principles (Harvey, 1990; see also Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The researcher may enlarge and tease out data to decipher how the data links to the original research question, in turn creating alternative levels of interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

By skimming the material and categorizing data according to defined code words, first-level coding identified broad topics. Most often, codes reflected a mixture of key words articulated by participants, and themes pre-identified by seminal authors. In most instances, patterns in the data were identified based on pre-existing groupings in the literature, such as “the

transracial paradox” (Park Nelson, 2010), “the chameleon effect” (Park Nelson, 2010), or “hybrid identities” (Jacobson, 2008). Participants’ also prompted key groupings through repeated and detailed descriptions of their childhood experiences in the adoptive families or comparisons between the Canadian and European contexts. Second-level coding subdivided umbrella topics and compared observations across transcripts. Emerging from a more detailed analysis, sub-themes included participants’ desires to “blend in” with adoptive families, alluding to instances of internalized whiteness or recognition of white privilege. In other cases, accounts revealed acknowledgement of families’ colour blind treatment, and feelings of belonging within the larger adoptee community.

Third-level coding secured concepts and interpretations detailed in nature and indicative of the various emerging concepts and issues. Multiple revisions of the transcripts allowed for potential changes in the codes or identification of contradictions in the sub-categories. Detailed sub-categories may have overlapped or been “nested or embedded” in one another, since within the socially constructed categories relating to “race” and “identity,” multiple issues intersect simultaneously (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 36). Once saturation of the categories occurred, no new themes or sub-themes could emerge. At this stage, all data accurately fit into the developed coding scheme (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell Jr., 1996). Although patterns and themes had been noted throughout the entire coding process, the interpretation stage of analysis linked the narratives to the theoretical framework and isolated emerging concepts.

Prior to interpretation, transcripts were double checked to ensure that coded sections of data remained consistent with their definitions (Creswell, 2009). Cross-checking, Gibbs (2007) suggests, contributes to qualitative reliability procedures, indicating that the researcher’s approach is consistent with other academics and studies in the field (Gibbs, 2007, as cited in

Creswell, 2009). Conscious efforts were made throughout the study to maintain validity strategies, including triangulating data sources to build a composite foundation of themes, a reflective perspective to all data collection and analysis, and the use of rich, thick descriptions to communicate findings (Creswell, 2009). Thick descriptions may illustrate a background or setting for the reader, giving depth to the overall analysis and adding alternative perspectives to the cited themes. For instance, atypical terminology—i.e. “transracial paradox,” “chameleon effect,” “piggy-backing privilege”—was defined repeatedly throughout the analysis, adding detail and substance through each recurring description. Additionally, information contradicting the themes was recognized and noted, contributing credibility to the account (Creswell, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

Bias in qualitative inquiry represents any “systematic error that obscures correct conclusions about the subject being studied” (Seale, 2004: 505). Most often bias occurs in procedures during sampling, collection, and interpretation (Drisko, 1997). Consistent with concerns of sampling technique in most qualitative studies, the sample size in this study presents challenges to the generalizability and conditional usefulness of the results (Creswell, 2009; see also Gray, 2003). Notably, results of qualitative social research tend to have low levels of generalizability; rather, studies represent a highly specific analysis of the target population, rather than society as a whole (Higginbottom, 2004; see also Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010).

The researcher’s self-identification and membership in an adult adoptee organization enabled access to potential participants through the CKAN and Triple ABC, on the other hand, restricted sampling of other adult adoptees with no ties to adoptee organizations. Non-probability sampling schemes, such as self-selection of participants and snowball sampling

recruitment techniques also present barriers to replication of the study's methods. Given the small sample size, combined with specific data requested on the demographic questionnaire, protecting the anonymity of the participants may only be partially guaranteed. While it is rare to achieve complete anonymity, the researcher may guarantee confidentiality seeing as participants' identities were not revealed to adoptee organizations or other participating adoptees (Morgan, 1998).

"Researcher bias" or the selected collection and interpretation techniques influenced by the researcher, may be countered with conscious attempts to maintain reflexive practices (Patton, 2002). I formally discussed my self-identity and motivations behind this project in an attempt to identify potential biases that may have swayed the outcome of this study. The theoretical framework and highlighted literature also indicate the framework and assumptions guiding data collection and analysis. Presentation of the interviews was done in two parts, first by way of verbatim quotes in the "Findings" section, and secondly, through the researcher's interpretations in the "Discussion" section. Themes in both sections linked to the general literature, also expanding on authors' conclusions to provide some original interpretations. Drisko (1997) affirms that stating raw data independently spotlights the researcher's analyses, allowing readers to assess if the summaries are indeed accurate. Overall, given the limited time-frame and resources due to other program requirements, recruitment and interviews were conducted in a one-month time frame, insufficient for a representative sample of the adult adoptee Korean-Canadian population. This study may be viewed as a necessary starting point for future research of adult adoptees' racial and adoptive identities in the Canadian context.

Findings

Presentation of qualitative findings, explain Miles and Humberman (1984), most often involves a narrative form, creating a holistic picture with thick descriptions to construct participants' experiences (as cited in Creswell, 2009). Key patterns that emerged across all interviews assist in shaping an accurate account of social life embedded in social science theory (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Overlapping, intersecting, and conflicting themes speak to the complex experiences encountered by individuals with racialized or adopted identities. In general, participants were enthusiastic and willing to elaborate on personal information beyond the designated interview protocol.

In this section, the researcher presents five themes—Adopted Family, Racial Visibility, Life-Time Experiences of Racism, Internalized Racism, and Hybrid Identities—predominantly centered on verbatim quotes by respondents. Headings follow sequential order, first revealing early childhood experiences of love and support contrasted with racism and rejection within respondents' adoptive families. The second section accounts for adoptees' "Racial Visibility" or inquiries into participants' racial identities in the public sphere. Often public inquiry would take the form of "Racial Discrimination" or mistreatment present of participants' life-times, leading to the forth section "Internalized Whiteness." Five out of six respondents admitted to desiring whiteness at some point in their life-time, a theme that is directly correlated to repeated instances of differential treatment on the basis of race, consequently leading to feelings of "Internalized Whiteness". Finally, indications of "Hybrid Identities" in participants' adulthood, prompted by exploration of their birth culture exhibited the development of alternative senses of belonging, and comfort in their unique identities as transracial adoptees. Short descriptions or observations during the interview follow the verbatim quotes. The main objective of this section allows the

reader to interpret primary transcripts, at the same time providing an additional level of transparency to the researcher's interpretations of the findings.

Adopted Family

Even in adulthood, participants relied heavily on familial examples to recount instances of love and belonging, or exclusion and trauma. Familial relationships varied among all participants, half strongly disagreed that they belonged among their white adoptive families, whereas the remaining three felt at ease in the midst of their adopted parents. Dissimilarities may be assumed in all cases, especially given that in four out of the six cases, participants reported emotional or experiential distinctions between themselves and their adopted Korean siblings. Two adoptees stated that they no longer had an adoptive family, disclosing that they had cut all ties with them in their early adulthood. Instances of racism and sexual abuse weighed heavily in adoptees' decisions to disconnect from family members all together.

F2: I don't have family anymore. Like for 20 years I didn't talk to them. Uh basically my adoption; I was the first one adopted in my family; parents couldn't have children. They were pretty much Orientalist, they loved Asia. So they thought, they wanted to adopt a Japanese baby but they couldn't because Japan doesn't send their kids away. So the process was the whitest uh was Korea because they didn't like too dark. It was pretty obvious in my upbringing, so uh I was the first one and then after came a sister. Every year there came another child from Korea. And the last one was free because the original adoptive parents didn't want it, uh him. So uh that's it. And they were pretty racist.

F2: Yeah...um...when I think 11 years old or something, my adoptive mother used to take us from school. And we would go back by train. Then one time we were just playing, the kids were playing and my mother was looking at the woman next to ugh... to the blanket. And the woman was looking at us like curiously because it was not every day that she was seeing Asian kids. Then she looked at my mother, but mother felt very defensive and she said "did you see that ugly woman, how can she even like....uh....look at my kids, when they are so wonderful." And then I felt like so, so ashamed. That's the moment that I felt that I felt pity for my adoptive mother because she needed to put down someone else to feel better. Do you understand? It was very the moment that I felt that she would never be my mother.

F3: I felt I belonged to my family (father and mother). I considered them as my real parents. I felt they both considered me as their “real” daughter. However, when I looked back to those years, it must have been different for my father. According to my mother, he treated better (materially) than his children and he was more severe with them. He also abused me sexually while he didn’t abuse any of his real children; I’m sure that’s because my Asian body gave him the okay to abuse me since I wasn’t blood related to him.

One respondent cited her experiences as president of the Belgian-Korean adult adoptee organization, Kobel, to decipher unhealthy parent-adoptee relationships. Relating to her own experiences of “toxic love, possessive love,” she profiled typical adoptive parents lacking individually and thus unable to maintain a stable relationship with their adopted child.

F4: I perceive adoptive parents, and again I met several [as the president of Kobel]. Usually they have a profile of parents that they (pause) something lacking before and then they want to feel it and then I think something wrong (pause) I think a lot of expectations, a lot of frustrations, a lot of um...imbalance that they didn’t resolve on a personal level, emotional level that they transferred to the adoption. And that’s not fair, that’s not the correct way (pause). Probably there is more love in adoption than non adoption. Unfortunately healthy love is not toxic love, possessive love. For all these reasons, for myself I don’t really recommend adoption.

In contrast, three respondents affirmed positive relationships with their adoptive families, citing “one-hundred percent belonging” (F1), yet identifying a separation with respect to race related issues. Participants’ accounts highlight adopted parents’ “lack of empathy” (F1) or colour blindness towards their racial and adoptive identities through instances of denial or refusal to recognize public curiosity or differential treatment. Stated explicitly, M1 believed that his adopted parents “perceive me more just western, Belgian, white.” These instances speak to the contradiction in public perception of adoptees as “Asian immigrants” and adoptive parents’ acceptance of adoptees as “just another member of the family.” Narratives suggest that parents’ failure to recognize adoptees’ differences, in adulthood creates distance between adoptees and their adoptive families. F4 recounted her separation with her family in her early adulthood due in part to these underlying issues; she was a “baby bird” leaving the nest, “the only way for me

probably was to go very far. Because it was the only for me to take off.” Additionally, another respondent revealed her discomfort surrounding her adoptive families’ apparent ignorance towards her racial visibility.

F1: um I think, my family they don't see any differences which is good and bad. Um the good thing is that they have always treated me you know like, like any other member of the family which is good because you know, there has never been any difference and they've never considered me to be the adopted daughter or anything like that. The bad one is that they also don't kind of appreciate some of the challenges that you have with it. Um when people say certain things like, you know "are you with this party?" you know cause there's an Asian table in front of you kind of thing, they assume that you're with them as opposed to with your own family, they don't get that. Or they just think no, no it's just because you were standing next to them, as opposed to I know that it's because I look like them, that's why. Um so sometimes they fail to kind of notice those things or appreciate the differences. Um, so that's kind of a difference, that they really don't see a difference, which is both good and bad.

Racial Visibility

All participants referred to their race as the main factor differentiating them from their peers and family members. This heightened self-awareness of not “blending-in” forced adoptees to acknowledge their adopted and Asian statuses on a daily basis. Participants expressed a sense of racial self-consciousness through the use of “everybody” or “family” terminology, signifying “normal” as Caucasian. Adoptees’ overt desire to not stand out visibly, showed also in comparisons of their experiences as transracial adoptees to adopted friends who were able to “pass” as a white biological family member. For instance, F2 described her experience of being unable to integrate as a “real [white] Belgian” which forced her to adhere to certain stereotypical behaviours associated with her phenotypical characteristics. These “pressures” to present herself in ways that she believed society viewed Asian women, such as acting “submissive” and “pretty,” contradicted her internal identifications and socialization in her white adoptive family.

F2: I think that the fact that we were adopted and obviously adopted because we couldn't hide the fact that we were adopted by the fact that we were racially different. Like if I were Russian I could pretend like I was a real Belgian. But like there I couldn't even hide. But like the fact that Asian women are seen as ugh like... prostitute or like cheap, ugh... cheap I don't know cheap sex women kind of...I didn't. And even though I was like six years old, ten years old, I knew that it was the way that people were talking about Asian women. So ugh...it was some hard, very pressure, gave a lot of pressure that you had to be pretty, you had to be this, you had to be like submissive. And ugh, I think it's very different for a woman, than for an Asian male adoptee.

F5: Pause – yeah I think as a transracial adoptee you kind of always know, just because it is so visually salient. Like I know friends that are not transracially adopted, and um like they were invisible in terms of adoption status. And even one of my friends who's First Nations, and adopted to a Caucasian family but because she wasn't, she didn't have the stereotypical features, she still really “blended in,” quote, unquote, with her family. And so I think simply due to the fact that being a transracial adoptee and being Asian in a very Caucasian family; well I guess all families are Caucasian, but my family was blonde haired and blue eyed, I mean, I am literally the only person on both sides of my family that has brown eyes. I mean, for that reason I've always known that I was adopted.

During childhood, participants recounted the impossibility of hiding their adoptive status due to their physical dissimilarities and close proximity to their adoptive parents. On average close friends and community members knew that they were adopted, and often referred to them as such. Compared to adult experiences, throughout childhood strangers would direct questions regarding adoptees' racial backgrounds towards adoptive parents since children would rarely travel unaccompanied.

M1: Ah as I said you stick a bit out initially, but you don't meet too many new people or something as a child, so you know after a while you just part of the class or of the school. Everybody knows because it's very obvious that you're a Korean adoptee, it's quite fine as a child.

F1: I think during the childhood it did because ugh everybody knows that your adopted um and kids are really obvious and they say things. So you're always aware that you're adopted. Ummm I don't think that I was ever kind of the butt of any jokes or anything like that as a result, but I do think that though everyone knew that I was the adopted kid and I would sometimes be referred to as the “adopted kid” like there was no need for that kind of descriptor but it was always kind of put on you know. Right like, you know, “that's [so and so] with the white parents or something like that” you know, that was always well known.

Participants reported wanting to “blend in” with their peers most during adolescence. It was generally agreed upon that looking different for any teen was difficult, but being a transracial adoptee and one of the only Asian students in the school increased individuals’ overall uneasiness. Racially homogenous environments, similar to those during childhood, accompanied feelings of exclusion or lesser status during their youth.

F4: But as a teen yeah, I suppose, maybe it is that period I thought, not adoption itself but to be different, to look different. Because when there was a dance party, at that age, adolescent teens they are stupid, they are attracted to things that are similar not what is different. So, always my sister and me always dance alone in our corner. No boys were inviting us. But there were all the girls and boys mingling and we were all kind of left alone. And I thought at that time that I was really ugly. That's the only, as a teen or adolescent you concentrate on physical appearance. So I thought that was the only reason, that I'm ugly, I'm disgusting. So until the university I started to realize no it's the opposite and I started to receive feedback, and the opposite I started to be attractive. So as I was telling you it is difficult to be different.

At some stage in adulthood, respondents remarked that public curiosity often took the form of being asked “Where are you from?” or being forced to explain their racial and familial backgrounds to complete strangers. Most were more than willing to share large amounts of personal information to fulfil interests; rarely did participants mention frustration in relation to this question. Most found questions unintentionally offensive, because they were accustomed to perceiving themselves as “different” or “complex.”

F1: [Questions] even occurs even in adulthood too you know, that kind of continues to happen. I'm sure that you've seen that. Or they ask, you know if they see your mother as Caucasian, they'll, they assume your father is Asian, that kind of thing. And you've also got like a Caucasian last name as do I, so people never expect to meet somebody that looks like me when they see my name. So that's usually something that I get. Especially now because my email or things like that, when I have clients come to meet me, umm when I introduce myself, like I usually have to introduce myself once or twice cause they're just not sure if they are meeting the right person.

Only one respondent expressed anger when being asked to explain her small size, emphasizing the private nature of these inquiries. Comments brought back painful memories from her early life in Korea, also drawing attention to the continual lack of control to change her perceived identity.

F4: When I arrived in Belgium, I was in really bad physical condition. That's the reason they released from the orphanage, because they knew if they keep me I would not live long. So they thought probably with the western medicine and the western means, they could save me. And ah...so the first year, I was literally, my parents were fighting to save my life. Because I was 6 or 8 years old, I couldn't reach the door, to open the door. I couldn't reach the sink. That's the reason I am short. This maybe, yes, I start to be angry, but the next step is to able to reply to people when they comment on my size, because when people comment on my size they don't know which reason is behind, for which reason I am short. Ugh... this I have felt for a long time that I have a complex because I am short. Um... and then also because also when I met my Korean family, they say "oh why are you so short" and I wanted to tell them "I am this way because it is your fault!" I am this way because of starvation in the orphanage, because of lack of nutrition. But I can see in my current family, they are not short. And I can't complain, I could be disproportionate. I am still proportionate. And this way, physically I suffer from that. And sometimes you see adults, even smart, clever adults they make comments on. Sometimes not really they don't mean, not that they want to be mean, even sometimes it is in an affectionate way, they are still commenting and sometimes it is inappropriate. Because now that my next step, is to tell them that "You are fat," that you know, "you are a giant," I don't comment you know. In my way, it's all the hurt behind, its link with the starvation, the lack of food. And I remember, I remember my childhood in the orphanage. We were fighting for food among kids. And this I remember clearly, so this, when you know comments on my size, that is coming from that period.

Three Belgian-Canadian Korean adoptees clearly distinguished themselves from the Canadian-born and Korean-Canadian adoptee population. All three participants reported that public inquiries became more confused and increasingly intrusive in Canada, since their accents, racialized appearance, and ethnicities made their exact identities difficult to place. One participant appeared frustrated that the Canadian-born population assumed that he was as immigrant from East Asia. Another took comfort in the racially diversified Canadian population.

M1: um... the thing is that, the one main thing that I should emphasize is the experience being a Korean adoptee in Belgium is actually somewhat different than being a Korean adoptee in Canada. That is actually quite a big difference actually.

Yah, so I'll explain. So being a Korean adoptee in Belgium, so, where I grew up was very noticeable because everybody is white and you're the only Asian. So you know you are jumping out very, very obviously. Ugh but then they speak with you then actually speak with a local dialect, you have the local customs and things like that so after a while its, ok. There are quite a lot of Korean adoptees in Belgium so they understand that you are a Korean adoptee, ok so you look different but actually you are just us essentially. So that's the Belgian experience.

The Korean experience, oh sorry, the Canadian experience is when I came here people, when they look at you they immediately think that you are an immigrant from East Asia. And that is completely wrong of course. That's completely wrong. And then they ask "oh where are you come from?" and I say "I come from Belgium." And they say "no, no where do you really come from?" (laughter). And so, being a Korean adoptee in Canada is very different. And even after they know you are a Korean adoptee they still treat you like, more like an immigrant from East Asia. Sometimes I feel, I have to emphasize all the time that I come from Belgium. So it's a bit confusing for Canadians, being a Korean adoptee in Canada. Where as in Belgium you're placed quite rapidly, ok so you're a Korean adoptee, they know ok so yeah, as a child you have been....but here in Canada, oh yeah you look Asian so you have spent some time in Asia, you have Asian parents and so on, so that's what people assume when they see you.

Apart from public curiosity, two adoptees recognized the benefits in their racial visibility. These self-designations are consistent with immigrant "model minority" status, or high levels of socio-economic prosperity among second- and third-generation Asian-Americans (Tuan, 1998). Respondents positively differentiating themselves from their peers occurred rarely and only in a professional adult career. Adoptive parents' upper-class background may have contributed to their socio-economic success. Also, societal perceptions of Asians being "smarter" than other minority groups (Shiao & Tuan, 2004: 8) may have privileged adoptees transition into higher educational institutions and to professional careers.

F1: Now, like especially like working at someplace like this, where it's like um very homogenous (laughter) and women are a minority, and especially Asian people are a minority, like there is only one other Asian lawyer here. Um I've come to be more proud about being the visible minority and I have been asked to be part of some like some minority panels and things like that to just show just the changing face of law and things

like that. So I kind of feel quite proud to be a minority now in the profession to show that like you know we're pushing our way through, were getting there you know, so in that sense I would much rather identify myself as a visible minority or as a woman or things like that just to show kind of the progress and that kind of thing, rather um than saying no I'm just a Canadian who kind of made it, you know made her way through law school and things like that. I'd rather say that, you know, I'm a Korean-Canadian who was born outside of Canada and still managed to get where I am. So I kind of take more pride in that.

Life-time Experiences of Racism

Half of the respondents described experiences of name calling as a form of racialization, "Othering" through racial slurs, or blatant racism. Overt racism can be defined as differential treatment or the denial of rights and benefits on the basis of physical features which differentiate an individual from the rest of the group. Racial discrimination was not isolated to specific phases in participants' lives, but was consistent, and spread out through their life-times. Notably, testimonies related closely to stereotypes associated with Asian immigrants.

F3: I began school 3 months after my arrival in Canada. My first day had been traumatic. The following weeks were difficult as the first day: I was mocked and treated badly by schoolchildren; each day, before beginning of class and during playtimes, I was in the middle of circle of children who pulled their eyelids calling me "Chinese eyes" or "yellow skin". Nobody wanted to be besides me while waiting in the rows to enter classroom; once a girl said "Chinese people are dirty", that's why she didn't want me to be beside her. Teachers saw their spitefulness, but didn't do anything. I didn't see any difference between their eyes and mines, between their skin and mine, thus I didn't know why they were so mean. I understood few weeks later, when I saw myself in the mirror with my ugly slant eyes. My adoptive mother said the right expression was "slant eyes", and not "Chinese eyes." I didn't know it had anything to do with my race, because in my memory, all persons I've known in Korea weren't like me; moreover, the words "race" and "racism" were still unknown to me.

I was bullied two times near where I lived. The second time, a teenager threatened to kill me because of my Chinese eyes; it scared me so much that I stopped going outside alone. In fact, I never went out except to school or outings with my parents after that day. So, this prevented me from being mocked outside of school too

F2: [My parents were racist] and the society. But not like I receive active racism, but words and stuff, like how they label Asians, how they label blacks, how they label migrants was not very nice.

F1: Yeah I think so, I think so for sure. Like people are like, always jerks. And people always make comments and ah, you know sometimes it's just like an honest mistake, it's just a very harmless comment, and other times it's kind of like full blown discrimination. Um.. I have a, my partner is actually Italian and I don't know if you have ever dated an Italian person but it is not easy to do. It has been riddled with challenges. Um they always date each other, um and so, I am always the only non-Italian person at every event, every wedding, every, everything. And they just can't even comprehend, like anyone not being Italian, so um... like I have told them that I'm catholic like a hundred times and they still explain the ways to me like I'm not catholic. They just can't associate an Asian person as being like a catholic person. So there are kind of some difficulties there. And then there have been some straight out racist comments made by you know extended members of the family, where you know, um.... They'll say things like, you know, sorry we don't have Chinese food for your girlfriends or stuff like that, you know stuff like that. Yah. So it has been challenging.

Three female participants noted that racialized labels were most often gendered in nature, describing the hyper-sexualized stereotypes that Western society associated with the Asian female body. In contrast, F2 stated that “Asian men are desexualized;” physical traits common to the Asian male body—such as hairlessness and a petite frame—are representative of an effeminate body or homosexual identity. The same participant, earlier specifying she identified with no gender, disclosed the overwhelming social pressure to act in a certain way due to her race and gender. These social expectations blatantly contradicted her individual gender identity.

F2: But like the fact that Asian women are seen as ugh like... prostitute or like cheap, ugh... cheap I don't know cheap sex women kind of...I didn't. And even though I was like six years old, ten years old, I knew that it was the way that people were talking about Asian women. So ugh...it was sometimes hard, very pressure, gave a lot of pressure that you had to be pretty, you had to be this, you had be like submissive. And ugh, I think it's very different for a woman, then for an Asian male adoptee.

In contrast, three respondents denied being treated differently because of their race. Responses implied levels of dismissal or ambivalence towards the topic of racism. Others expressed an air of defeat that they had come to terms with a society that involuntarily treated

individuals differently if they looked atypical. These reactions could be viewed a coping mechanism or form of personal resistance.

M1: umm...I wouldn't say that I have been discriminated, but treated yes somewhat differently. Again, it's part of human nature that you associate or connect easier with people that look, let's say look very similar to yourself. Ugh yeah.

Yah, I think it's all around...ugh particular instance?? (pause). Ugh that's a very hard question because you don't know how to distinguish because if I was not looking like I am now, so I guess it's just a suspicion actually, it's more like a suspicion than a hard fact.

F4: No, I would not say. No not really. Um... in terms of racism, as I said in teens it was the most painful part. But otherwise, overall no not really. But it's more in terms of self-identification and self-identity. In that way that I don't feel listened to, or respected, or heard who I am really. The way that I view myself. (pause).

Internalized Racism: Instances of “White Envy” and “Piggy-Backing Privilege”

Experiences of discrimination contributed to respondents' problematization of their own identities or self-worth. Five out of six participants admitted to self-identifying as white at some point in their lives, a process that implies some form of differential treatment on the basis of race. Notably, this result contradicts three participants' denial of negative racial treatment, as cited in the section above, and may confirm the process of racialization as fluid and contextualized. Self-identifying as or desiring white features may also be attributed to adoptees' close proximity to white adoptive families and homogenous neighbourhoods, and an adjacent pattern of family members reassuring the adoptee of their racial sameness. Internalized whiteness refers to a process of sub/conscious internalization of negative stereotypes and racism that define people of colour as inferior. It simultaneously supports the notion that “white is right, white is superior” (Razak, 1998). When prompted, five adoptees cited specific instances where

they “desired” white physical features, reminded only by public curiosity or observation of their racialized appearance.

F3: One day, I looked at the photos of my orphanage friends, and I was stunned to see all my friends had slant eyes too; we all looked like each other, even the girls that I found cute and pretty when we were living together looked same to me. Even the nun and the caretaker had slant eyes like me. I’ve wondered why I had never realized that before. It’s only three years ago that I heard about the term “internalized racism” when I talked about my experience. Without realizing it, I started seeing myself as the foreigner and others as normal persons. I often told my mother that I wanted to be blond like her and most importantly, I wanted her eyes and nose. Around the second year of my adoption, my mother had a plastic surgery (to get rid of wrinkles on her forehead). After then, I’ve often told her that I wanted to get a plastic surgery to get rid of my slant eyes and my flat nose. I was obsessed by that idea for a while. I wanted to become like other children; I wanted to be part of the group (of children) whether in school or outside of school. I wanted to look like the real daughter of my parents. It hurt me and it annoyed me that when people saw me and my neighbor together with my mother, they always believed my friend was her daughter and not me.

F3: During my adolescence and my 20s, I saw myself as a white person. There were times where I knew I was an Asian because of remarks from people, but in general, I felt and thought I was a white. I rarely looked in the mirror. In my early 20s, I met an Asian guy who wanted to date me. Although he was nice, I felt ashamed of myself and him, whenever I was with him. So, I completely cut contact.

Only one participant disclosed a white self-identification in adulthood, unlike other respondents that developed an alternative, “Korean-Canadian” or “adoptee” identities in their twenties (Shiao & Tuan, 2008). M1 displayed feelings of disappointment that public perceptions mismatched his cultural self-identification as white, and his Asian appearance which accompanied racialized stereotypes and immigrant treatment. Differentiating himself from other first-generation immigrants through an “us” versus “them” mentality, M1 expressed frustration that cultural assimilation in white society throughout his childhood did not translate into all the privileges that his white family members enjoy. He alluded to “desires of whiteness” in his professional career to facilitate a rapid connection with clients on first meeting as a “white buddy” without the hassle of explaining his identity (M1).

M1: Yeah, I guess again, so in Belgium I definitely do not consider myself an immigrant, I considered myself to be a white Belgian. Ugh in Canada of course I am an immigrant, but that is a very different kind of immigrant than people think I am. So they think I'm an Asian immigrant but of course, people don't see... Yeah of course I am a WHITE BELGIAN. But of course when I fill in questionnaires, I have to categorize myself seemingly as a visible minority which I don't consider myself to be. But that's what ugh, if I follow the definition, I have to tick that but I consider myself actually a white Belgian. It is a very odd thing to say. Yes you understand what I want to say, but of course culturally we are white, and so many immigrants for instance, in second generation Asian, they are mostly white in, culturally, as well. But we are more culturally as well, because our parents are white. So we are much whiter. We are 99% white. There is just another superficial layer, that we are genetically Korean. Ugh...no I still consider myself to be, maybe I should call myself to be a 98% white Belgian. Ugh...but of course now that I am in Canada the last years, the last 9 years, ugh...it, I think it reinforces the notion that I am a white Belgian.

Participants associated their relationships with white parents and spouses as an access point to achieving white Canadian privilege and “non-immigrant” status. Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes white privilege as an “invisible package of unearned assets that I [as a white person] can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (McIntosh, 1988: 1). Adoptees’ socialization in white, upper-middle class families allow them to “piggy-back” elevated social privileges, demonstrating their flexible and adaptable identities. In these unique instances, “passing as white” is feasible, even without matching physical characteristics of the majority, in part due to the white family and community members’ emphasis of racial sameness. Cognisant that the loss of ties with their adoptive parents dissolved these symbolic benefits, one participant stated that privilege could be reclaimed if an adoptee were to marry a white person.

F3: I say yes [I am an immigrant], but I only accepted it recently. My answer would have been “No” not long time ago, because I was raised as if I wasn't an immigrant. As long I was living with my parents, I've had all the privileges that non-immigrants have. Now that I don't have any family, I lost all the privileges.

F2: But ugh I guess Asian women, adopted, we don't have many expectations, I guess in Europe and more in North America. But um... for us it's like if we are married to a white guy it's like the adoption is a success. Because, this is how the adoptees are

perceived...normal, then we don't have to get a nice job or anything, just married to a local.

Hybrid Identities: “Adoption Trauma” and the “Chameleon Effect”

Participants reflected on instances of racial discrimination or differential treatment, through anger, sadness, isolation, anti-Korean sentiment, and activism. Each participant articulated a level of “adoption trauma” or (sub) conscious acknowledgement of experiences of inequity or prejudice. Consistent with the literature, participants’ verbal linkages between their experiences and racialized stereotypes alluded to an awareness of themselves as “different” or “apart.” Often feelings of not belonging anywhere translated to experiences of “in-betweenness” or the “chameleon effect” of adapting to multiple identities; whatever is dominant or expect in a given social situation (Park Nelson, 2010, see also Patton, 2000; Baden & Stewart, 2000). In many of the cases, recognition of these specific instances prompted opportunities for empowerment and the definition of a differentiated sense of self.

All respondents agreed on their self-conceptualization as “transracial,” or “Born in Korea, but adopted by non Koreans, i.e. white people in [a] non-Asian country” (M1). Another described transracial adoption as the “jackpot...two adults will take care, fully and exclusively of me alone” (F4). Distinctive of “boxed,” homogenous categories, respondents specifically self-identified using hyphenated indicators such as “Korean-Canadian” (F1), “francophone-Quebecer” (F3), or “white-Belgian” (M1), rather than standardized “visible minority” or “person of colour” terminology. One participant noted that he did not perceive himself as a “visible minority,” but only “ticked the box” when filling out government forms (M1). F2 found the label “minority” inaccurate, since “Asians are the most in the world,” and “minority is, I feel, a way to put you down.” Rather, hyphenated identities were specifically ordered, in terms of

affiliation with a particular community or to the birth country. “I think the Korean is first and just because that’s kind of how I was born and that’s kind of my origin, whereas Canadian is, truly what I am today” (F1). Respondents did not deny the term “immigrant” as a self-description, suggesting an alternative, at times unspoken, belonging to their birth country. Notably, the way participants labelled themselves mirrored public perceptions and self-identifications, signalling the multiplicity of imposed factors that contribute to an individual’s identity construction. The interplay between imposed or relational categories and affiliation with one’s birth country or culture indicates the social and power relations at work.

F2: No, No, I feel, I don't feel Belgian, I feel more European. Yeah, like I feel, I feel Korean too but not strongly, but I always present myself as Belgian-Korean, Belgian and then Korean. Together, I never say just Belgian or just Korean. Sometimes people they tend to see only your roots side or your blood side, and they emphasize they are Korean. But for me no, since after, especially after Japan—I realized that I am less acculturated then I thought, so I realized that I am 50/50 and what do, probably you heard they said about that “banana.” (she laughs) Which is probably not true for me, because I feel even inside a mixture. I would probably say emotionally more Korean, and intellectually more European.

Five participants articulated defining moments in their adult life, departing from previous self-identifications with their white families and communities and embracing an alternative identity or “third space.” Most often, these transitions were prompted by return trips to their birth country, membership in to the global adoptee community, or reactions to racism or adverse treatment during their childhood or adolescence. All participants identified their membership in an adoptee organization or among other adoptee friends as a contributing factor in their positive identities.

F4: I am from the Far East, as I said, before I left Belgium to start my active life, I always felt that I was Belgian. I didn't question anything. I didn't question my identity. It was from Japan that I started to question my identity. (pause). And this, otherwise the, my I graduated from university from law I went to Japan. It was the first, first time to be reconnected with an Asian country, with Asian people, living in Asia. That was also so

interesting feeling, because so far I have been surrounded by white faces, and I was forgetting that I didn't have a white face. Except when some circumstances, people obviously never left their place, never had been exposed to non-white face, and then suddenly they were looking at me. And this was the only way to realize that it's true I don't have a white face. And then in Japan all of a sudden, I am surrounded, not to be spotted anymore, that was a mixture of interesting pleasant and unpleasant feelings. All of a sudden I am nobody, but on the other side it was good not be spotted.

So yeah, that's, but from my Japanese experience I started to realize that I am not 100% westernized as I thought. And I started, because in similar situation I could see that Japanese were reacting one way, and foreigners reacting another way, and I thought, oh I would have reacted like the Japanese. And it was the way that I started to question myself, and to say oh I am probably less acculturated that I thought. And then, ugh when I left after 5 years in Japan, back to Belgium, I decided to be more involved with the Korean culture, community, roots or whatever. And then it's the way that I end founding and presiding the Korean Association.

Independent from their adoptive families, early adulthood promoted natural decisions such as “where to go to school, what profession you're going to study, what you're going to do with your life pretty much” (F5). Simultaneous to increased self-sufficiency, adoptees developed a new self-awareness, contrasted to how others perceived them because of their external appearance. Indicative of adoptees' re-appropriation of their identities, many addressed previously overlooked prejudice of Asians or minority groups by family members and friends. Verbal resistance towards close relatives marked a progression in adoptees' self-awareness and belonging to multiple groups in society.

F5: Yeah, cause I think, pre me going to Korea I was pretty quiet as far as me being like “Yeah I'm Asian but whatever.” You know it's not a big deal. Whereas now it's like “I'm Asian, I'm Korean.” And that's part of who I am, like think I'm much more confident and vocal in the fact that I am Korean, and I think because of that it was an adjustment for my friends and family. As far as lots of people say things in jest, jokingly about racial stereotypes or about whatever and before I let those things slide, whereas don't I now. Like I don't think it's appropriate for people to say certain comments you know. Whether it's in a joke or in a story, it just helps to perpetuate a lot of negative things about Asian people, Asian females, and about young Asian females. Like all of those things. Umm, before used to laugh along with them and be like OK this is kind of awkward but now, maybe because I'm older or something, I've certainly found my voice. And I'll just say no, you are not allowed to say that in front of me. I would prefer if you never said that but I mean, but certainly when you are in front of me you can't.

F1: Um.. I think it makes me more sensitive to some things. Like when people make, not necessarily racist comments, but if they make racial comments about, you know couples that are transracial or you know families that are transracial umm....I guess I'm more, like I have a heightened sensitivity to that stuff then. It doesn't mean that its good or bad, I just mean that I just notice that people point out those differences more. Ummm... I think it also makes more, kind of compassionate and understanding too, like I think that though when you're, when you've been like adopted, you faced a lot of challenges so that I think that you're able to handle things better, then some other people would.

Discussion

Participant narratives unveiled the complex and layered dimensions of race, identity, and feelings of belonging, contributing to a dense and lengthy discussion. “Figurative tropes, analogies, similes, and other kinds of imagery” expose the multifaceted essence of cultural experience and forces the researcher to interpret language grounded in shared conventional knowledge (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996:85). Themes discussed in the “Findings” section reflect adoptees’ perceptions of their adoptive and racial identities, as well as their processes of belonging. Distinct from collective patterns emphasized by participants, unanticipated accounts, and at times ambivalence among participants, contribute to the richness and complexity of the topic of study. Comparable to individuals who do not fit into clearly defined racial and ethnic categories—i.e. multiracial people—transracial adoptees derive a sense of belonging and exclusion from relational experiences that shape their self-identifications and their social positions relative to others (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). Kim et al. (2010) describe a sense of belonging as “the experience of personal involvement in a systems in such a way that people have a sense of valued involvement, fit between themselves and the system and legitimacy” (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010: 180; see also Phinney, 1992). Conversely, a sense of exclusion involves feelings of alienation from a group, “not because one feels personally different per se, but because he or she perceives that the group rejects or challenges the

legitimacy of a claim of affinity (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). As well, adoptees form individual identities, in this study referred to as “adoptee identities,” contingent on their personal claims and experiences (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). This analysis reveals the concept of identity as context-based and fluid in nature, at the same time, shedding an alternative light on Canadian race relations and embedded hierarchies.

This analysis confirms the racially stratified nature of Canadian society, in that certain racialized groups experience social exclusion or differential treatment on the basis of their physical features. Based on varying degrees of social and economic privilege racial groups are ranked superior to inferior, whites at the top of the hierarchy and blacks at the bottom (Galabuzi, 2006). Dorow (2004) described the black-white binary, most prevalent in U.S. civil rights history, as a backdrop in which Asians and other racialized immigrants are also inserted. This study examines the embedded hierarchies in the Canadian context, confirming the existence of a historic, institutionalized racism, which impedes non-whites on a daily basis. Operating terminology such as white privilege and colour blindness exposes the establishment of social, economic, and cultural norms in Western society benefiting whites, at the same time setting unachievable benchmarks for racialized groups. These norms are institutionalized, elevating whites to an invisible ethnic status, and establishing unquestioned privileges that govern in society. For instance, despite the elevated social and cultural capital which transracial adoptees possess due to their close proximity and socialization in white families, public inquiries into their racial backgrounds indicate their exclusion from the white majority and confirm their statuses as “honorary whites.” In contrast, in some cases, Korean transracial adoptees capitalize on their social and economic privilege to climb the racial hierarchy, achieving “model minority” distinction, achieving a higher level of success than other first- and second-generation racialized

immigrants. In both instances of “honorary white” and “model minority” treatment, adoptees and other socially and economically privileged racialized groups achieve recognition and elevated privilege yet never achieve belonging within the white majority.

Richard Lee describes the “transracial paradox” as an identity contradiction experienced by transracial adoptees in white society (as cited in Park Nelson, 2010; see also VanderMolen, 2005; Hubinette, 2009). Upbringing in white upper-class families endows adoptees with white social norms, yet public scrutiny and negative elements in their family lives cause many adoptees to re-think their racial and adopted identities. This study reveals diverse factors which comprise and expand upon Lee’s version of the “transracial paradox.” Beyond exclusion experienced through public questioning or discrimination, five out of six respondents disclosed that they had self-identified as white at some point in their lives, simultaneously desiring Caucasian physical features which they generally defined as “normal.” All respondents described white family members’ appearances referring to a racial standard where they could never “blend in.” Set apart from other respondents, the self-identification of the participant who constructed herself as “Asian” may represent an individual with weak or nonexistent ties to a particular ethno-racial community and should not be discounted. Denial or rejection of a white identity could reveal this participant’s stronger identification with ethnic communities at younger age, due to a more multi-racial upbringing. This testimony was made in short retorts, perhaps indicating hesitancy or a desire to disguise alternative meanings.

As cited in the literature, participants’ (sub) conscious recognition of white privilege underpins their yearnings for white physical features and links this study to the larger arena of Canadian race relations. If transracial adoption exists as a microcosm of embedded racial hierarchies, then whites enjoy unearned power and privilege, while simultaneously relegating

other groups to subordinate positions based on perceived differences (Razak, 2000, 1998; Henry & Tator, 2006; Jacobson, 2008; Park Nelson, 2010; Said, 1978). Respondents' desires for whiteness emphasized their proximity to white communities, concurrently highlighting their racial differences; features which both associate and differentiate transracial adoptees from other first-generation immigrants. These conclusions confirm the separation between racial and ethnic identities, suggested by Baden and Steward (2000). Like other first-generation racialized immigrants, Korean adoptees may culturally assimilate into white society, but will never truly "belong" unquestioned to the white majority due to their racial dissimilarities. In contrast, two respondents noted they were able to "piggy-back" white privileges as a result of their close relations with white family members. Another described a "successful adoption" as marriage to a white local. Taken as whole, the "transracial paradox" exposes embedded racial hierarchies in Canadian society that outweigh cultural resemblance and familial bonds forged through the forced assimilation of adoptees into white families. Although not prevalent in all accounts, the extremely racist and abusive behaviours of family and community members documented by certain participants were startling and required much reflection.

Narratives verify that participants felt distant from white family members due to their denial of, or colour blindness towards adoptees' dissimilar racial features or refusal to acknowledge negative social treatment. Ironically, experiences of colour blindness exposed concurrent features of adoptees' racial hyper-visibility and racial invisibility. On one hand, race exists as the main factor differentiating respondents from their peers and family members, on the other, family members' emphasis of racial sameness or ignorance towards adoptees' racial identities in all cases created an (un)spoken separation between the adoptee and his or her family. Consistent

with Shiao and Tuan's (2008) study of Korean-American adoptees, adopted and racial identities emerged in young adulthood, once respondents achieved autonomy from their adoptive family.

Apart from the adoptive family, participants reported the highest levels of belonging among the global overseas adoptee community, rooted in a shared "adoptee trauma" (Park Nelson, 2010). "Adoptee trauma" encompasses participants' feelings of not really belonging anywhere, but appearing to fit everywhere (Park Nelson, 2010; Patton, 2000). As discussed above, transracial adoptees share a cultural similarity with the white majority, at the same time, they possess some physical resemblance with other Asian groups in Canada. These features allow the adoptee to "pass" in both groups to a point, yet never truly achieving belonging. Instead, all participants identified the global adoptee community—through online forums, annual gatherings, friends and roommates—as the largest support network and in some cases source of their "adoptee identities." Perhaps these instances reflect the overall salience of racialized identity over ethnic identity, in that prominence of dis/similar physical features largely outweighed cultural resemblance during social interactions with a particular group. Reflective of engrained racial hierarchies, whites may move unquestioned in Canadian society, while racialized people must constantly negotiate and explain their physical dissimilarity (Frakenburg, 1993).

In this study, "adoptee trauma" took multiple forms, such as self-identification as white, anger, anti-Korean sentiment, sadness, appropriation of a hyphenated identity, or activism. Large variations in participants' age at adoption should be noted as a contributing factor to "adoptee trauma." Three out of the six respondents were received by adoptive families over the age of three, and two reported memories of their lives in Korea (F4; F3) and culture shock entering western society (F3). Dissimilar from other accounts, interpretation of F3's experiences involved levels of grief and separation trauma through descriptions of "missing Korea daily,"

unconsciously “losing” her birth culture, and experiences of racism in Canada (F3). Another was reminded daily of her experiences of malnutrition and life in an overcrowded orphanage through public enquiry of her short stature (F4).

Extracted from a summary of the six narratives, participants developed an “adoptee identity,” extending beyond “knowing I was alone in this world” (F4), to a context-based identity or an “in-betweeness” or the “chameleon effect” of adapting to whatever identity is dominant or expected in a given social situation in their young adulthood (Park Nelson, 2010; Shiao & Tuan, 2008). Respondents cited their ease of interaction with white family and community members, the Asian-Canadian population, and other racialized or ethnic minorities. Public perceptions of adoptees’ identities morphed, depending on the social context. These situational meanings gave each respondent agency to choose his or her identity in a given instance. The six also noted a conscious process occurring during their young adulthood where they advanced beyond identifications with their white families towards conscious decisions to shape their adoptee self-identification. Five out of the six respondents described reconnecting with parts of their birth culture, through return trips to Korea or cultural organizations in Canada as the main contributors to their new found “adoptee identities.” In these instances, adoptees described finding belonging within themselves, highlighting the formation of an individual identity rather than relational identities shaped by others’ perceptions (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010). Overlapping with other accounts, the divergent testimony identified membership in the global adoptee network as a safe place to express her self-identity, uniquely as a transracial adoptee.

In this study, “adoptee identity” also encompasses self-awareness and agency to resist social processes which may differentiate the adoptee from previous racialized classifications. Five participants alluded to a sense of empowerment re-discovering Korean culture, finding

alternative membership in a community of their own. A conscious choice to immerse themselves in their birth culture may be viewed as self-determination or taking ownership of their identity. The significance of this shift should not be underestimated; for the first time since their forced emigration from Korea and subsequent placement in adoptive families, adoptees gain autonomy and choice to decide their own futures.

Finally, necessary distinctions must be accounted for between Belgian and Canadian childhoods and upbringings. Although, all three Belgian-Canadian Korean adoptees obtained Canadian citizenship and have resided in Canada for longer than four years, their previous experiences and European socialization impacted their narratives. Belgian-Canadian adoptees were included to enlarge the sample and offset Korean-Canadian adoptees' overall hesitation to participate. As a former president of the Korean-Belgian adoptee organization, Kobel, remarked, Korean-Canadian adoptees are distinctively private and isolated regarding their "adoptee identities," a division separating the Canadian context from the U.S. and Western Europe.

The concentrated population of Korean adoptees in the small country of Belgium made it possible to develop an understanding of respondents' "adoptee identities" early on in life through adoptee community connections. One respondent expressed frustration coming to Canada and being assumed to be an "immigrant from East Asia" (M1). This notion is "completely wrong" he accentuated, subsequently describing multiple daily instances wherein he was forced to explain his adoptive origins to Belgium and immigration to Canada. The participant's irritation at the public's false perception of his ethnic and racial identity may be interpreted as his distance from his Korean origins or unfamiliarity with open curiosity into his identity. In contrast, another adoptee noted her satisfaction counter-interrogating Canadian "white persons'" probes into her racial background. She easily responded with "you're a foreigner too, because it's true,

everybody comes from another place, except the natives of course” (F2). Canadians, one participant commented, have a more subtle discrimination, rather than the “aggressive racism” present still in many European countries (F2).

This analysis explores the fixed and fluid racialized identities of adult transracial adoptees, emphasizing their unique first-generation immigrant experience given their mainstream socialization and class privilege (Dorow, 2006). Transracial adoptees embark on a longitudinal process of belonging, (re)negotiating their racial, ethnic, and adoptive identities the context of normalized whiteness. Faced with multiple exclusions, transracial adoptees develop complex identities to navigate through difference, engaging with ethnic communities and their birth cultures to develop a distinctive membership in society.

Conclusion

Giluck (2010) and Gnanamuttu (2010) assert that research in the field of transracial adoption holds significant relevance in revising policy and practice for adoption professionals and families. For decades adoption “experts”—the majority from disciplines of social work and psychology, as well as white adoptive parents—have been interpreting adoptees’ racial and adoptive experiences (Gnanamuttu, 2010). Policy and practice recommendations of this study focus on improving pre-, post-, and current adoption services, engaging with adoptive parents’ racial (in)sensitivities, expanding the notion of the family, and pushing service providers and families to step outside their comfort zones (Crawford, 2010; Gidluck, 2010; Gnanamuttu, 2010). Pre-adoption services—such as the Halton Multicultural Council’s Transracial Parenting Initiative—provides training in racial and cultural awareness for parents adopting a child of a difference race than their own (Crawford, 2010). This particular pre-adoption service speaks to

the unique experiences, privileges, and identities present in multi-racial families and aims to improve parental competency and enhance child resiliency early on in the relationship.

Some participant narratives indicate the need for post-adoption service providers, responsive to transracial adoptees' racialized encounters and fluid identities. Specialized service professionals may ease levels of "adoptee trauma" or provide support to individuals that have experienced emotional or sexual abuse related to their adoption. Additionally, the current success of global adoptee networks offers one of the best environments of learning, kinship, and growth for transracial adoptees at all ages. Adoptee organizations run for and by adoptees themselves present a multi-faceted space for adoptees to share resources, engage in self-reflection, and contribute to the development of an "adoptee identity." Notably these recommendations are not made to problematize transracial adoptees, rather to recognize their unique processes of belonging and identity formation inherent in daily social interactions.

- An "open environment that validates adoptees' racial experiences and educating adoptees about the possibility of encountering exclusion based on race and ethnicity" fosters a supportive network for transracially adopted people (Kim, Suyemoto, & Turner, 2010: 188). Awareness of these various issues allows for adoptive parents, social workers, medical professionals, and government policy workers to see through the eyes of the adopted child dismantling systems of privilege, colour blindness, and misplaced intentions, encouraging policy implications with a long-term and case specific agenda.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

The purpose of collecting this information is to enable the researcher (Kelsea Goss) to get a sense of the backgrounds of all study participants. Please read each statement or question carefully and choose the answer which most closely matches your present view. You may skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw your consent or stop your participation at any time.

Interviewee Code: _____

Date: _____

1. What is your gender? (Please circle one of the following)

a. Male b. Female c. other _____

2. Year of birth _____.

3. How old were you when you were adopted from Korea?

a. 1-12 months b. 1-3 years c. 3-5years d. 5years +

4. Which Canadian city did you live in for the majority of your childhood? _____.

5. What is the ethno-racial background of your adoptive father?
_____.

6. What is the ethno-racial background of your adoptive mother? _____.

7. How many siblings do you have? _____.

a. What gender

_____ Male _____ Female

_____ Transgender/transsexual/other

b. What ethno-racial

background _____
_____.

c. Were your sibling(s) biological? _____.

- d. Were your sibling(s) adopted? _____.
If so what was his/her source country?

_____.

8. Have you travelled back to Korea? How many times? For what purpose?

9. What is your marital status? (please circle one)

a. single b. married/common law c. divorced

10. How many children do you have? _____

- a. What are their genders?

i. _____ male _____ female

- b. Are they adopted or biological

i. _____ adopted _____ biological

Thank you for participating in this demographic questionnaire.

By completing and returning this document, you are:

- Giving your consent to participate in the survey
- Granting permission to the researcher to use the information you have provided. Please be assured that all responses are confidential.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: Kelsea Goss

Interviewee Code: _____

Adoptive identity

1. This interview is taking place because you are a transracial adoptee from Korea. What does that label or description mean to you?
2. Tell me about your adoption story.
3. Do you think your adoption affects your daily life? If so, how?
4. What is the significance of your adoptive status on your childhood? In adolescence? In adulthood?
5. Can you think of a significant moment involving your life with your adoptive family? If so, please tell me about it? Why was it so significant?
6. Do you consider yourself an immigrant? Why or why not?

Self identification of racial identity:

7. In terms of race, how would you describe or label yourself?
Prompts: How do you feel about the labels “person of colour”? “visible minority”? “white”? “Asian”? “East Asian”?
8. Have these identifications changed since your childhood? If so, what do you think led to this change?
9. Do you think your family and friends perceive you in the same way that you perceive yourself? In terms of your ethnic and racial identity? Why do you think so?
10. Have you felt that you have been discriminated or treated differently because of your racial status? Please explain.

Home and Belonging

11. Do you feel like you belong in your family? Why or why not?
Probes: Do you think it has anything to do with your identity as an adoptee or a member of a racialized group?
12. Do you feel like you belong among your friends? What about within your community?

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of Study Participants

Table 1							
Demographic Profiles of Study Participants							
Code Name	Year of Birth	Age at Adoption	Location where adoptees Spent the majority of their Childhood	Ethno-racial background of father/mother		Adopted sibling(s)	Return trips to Korea
F1	Official: 1979	1-3 years	Ottawa, ON	Scottish-Canadian	French-Canadian	1, also Korean	1
F2	Official: 1965 Actual: 1968	1.5 years (actual)	Brussels	Italian-Belgian	French-Swedish-Flemish	3, also Korean	3
F3	Official: 1966	9 years	Laval, QC	White-Franco QC	White-Franco QC	0 (5 biological)	3
M1	Official: 1970	3 years	Brussels, Belgium	White-Belgian	White-Belgian	1 also Korean	2
F4	Official: 1966 Actual: 1963	9 years (actual)	Lillois, Belgium	White Belgian-Franco	White Belgian-Franco	1 also Korean	4
F5	Official: 1983	4.5 years	Surrey, BC	White-German	German-Irish	0 (2 biological)	2
<p>Note: Inconsistencies occurred in the sections "Year of Birth" and "Age at Adoption." Korean adoptees are rarely issued a birth certificate; rather the majority are assigned a birth date when they reach the adoption agency. For children who are received by the adoption agency at an older age, it is more difficult to approximate their birth date. In some cases, adult adoptees correct these inconsistencies while conducting a birth search, recovering birth records or reuniting with a biological family member. Under the "Year of Birth" section the "Official" date reflects the adoption agency's approximation of their birth date which appears on government documents. The "Actual" date indicates that participants have uncovered original birth records or reconnected with their birth family to adjust their date of birth.</p>							

② BL-21-19