I look Asian. I was raised by Whites. I feel Cultureless. An Autoethnographic Case Study Approach on Transracial International Adoption Loss of Cultural Identity

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I look Asian. I was raised by Whites. I feel Cultureless. An Autoethnographic Case Study Approach on Transracial International Adoption Loss of Cultural Identity

by

Sarah Frette

A creative component submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies

Program of Study Committee:
Dr. Tera Jordan, Co-major Professor
Dr. Diana Lang, Co-major Professor
Dr. Amanda Hardy, Member
Dr. Ann Oberhauser, Member

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this creative component. The Graduate College will ensure this creative component is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2020

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I dedicate this to myself and my loved ones, may we understand how our adoption story can help other transracial international adoptees understand their biological and adopted cultural, ethnicity, and race and cultural and racial socialization. I dedicate this to all the transracial international adoptees who have ever questioned which cultural group they belong to or fit in with.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study is to understand transracial international adoptees’ biological and adopted culture and examining the effects having multiple cultural identities have on them. The qualitative study will include participant’s insights on transracial international adoption. Their lived experiences, cultural and racial socialization and parental colorblind attitudes all play a role in their cultural development. The researcher chose autoethography as their qualitative method to give voice to her personal lived experience as a transracial international adoptee. Autoethnography is not a popular research method yet through this study, she hopes to show other researchers the unique opportunities it presents itself in qualitative research.
CHAPTER 1.  INTRODUCTION

We learned that orphans are easier to ignore before you know their names. They are easier to ignore before you see their faces. It is easier to pretend they’re not real before you hold them in your arms. But once you do, everything changes.

– David Platt

I was chosen, I was wanted, I was cherished, I grew in their hearts, I was the missing piece, I was loved, I was adopted.

– Anonymous

My story begins around the age of two, in an orphanage in Seoul, South Korea. I was fortunate enough to have two of my biological siblings take care of me there, as I was the baby of my family. I do not know where I was born, what time I was born, how much I weighed, how many inches I was, or if I looked like my mother or father, or if I was a combination of the two? I do not know my birth story; my story starts with my adoption. Here is my adoption story as a transracial international adoptee (TRIA), as told to me by my adoptive parents. This story is short and does not include the adoption itself:

My adoptive parents saw a picture of three biological siblings from at an orphanage in Seoul, South Korea, and decided to adopt all three of us at one time. We looked sad and undernourished. They waited and waited and finally got the call that the adoption went through. They went to the airport and we stepped off the plane with our escort, who had all of our possessions in one small bag. In the bag was a pair of traditional Korean shoes for each of us. One of my biological siblings received a doll and my other biological sibling had a bloody nose, and blood got on their outfit. I don’t think I received anything.
We left for our new home and stopped at a rest stop to eat vanilla wafers and juice.

When we got to our new house, there were several loved ones and our new adoptive grandparents who came to welcome us. The first night, all three of us slept on the floor in my parents’ bedroom, because we cried when we were placed in beds. The End.

For the rest of this study, I will refer to my adoptive parents as just ‘my parents’ because they are the only parents I know. When it comes to my biological siblings who were adopted with me, I will refer to them as just ‘my siblings.’ Later in my paper, I will introduce my other biological siblings. Lastly, since I am a TRIA, I will make reference to TRIAs throughout my study, but this includes other transracial adoptees as well. This is to avoid confusion as they are not mutually exclusive.

My parents are White, of Norwegian descent, and have lived in a small rural farming community all of their lives. They adopted my siblings and me when I was 23 months and they were four and five years old, according to the orphanage. I learned later on in life that the people at the orphanage looked at our teeth to guess our age and made up our birthdays. We were dropped off at the orphanage in Seoul without any documentation on when our real birthdays were or where we were born. Even though my adoptive parents did not discuss our adoption with us, they did however tell us the story of how we came to live with them, which I just shared. I used to ask my mother to tell me that story frequently, but somehow never associated it with being adopted, or I did not fully understand what it meant to be adopted.

Even though my physical features are 100% Asian, as a young child growing up in a homogeneous, all White, rural community, I went through life thinking I was similar to the kids I grew up with. That I was White like them, not realizing that my adoption made me unlike them. I was from a different country and a different race but still did not recognize for years that I was
not White. It was not until I was 10 years old and babysitting a young child who asked me why my skin color was darker than theirs that I saw my difference. I remember looking at my yellow skin, then at their lily white skin, and finally seeing, for the first time, that I was truly different than this child. That was the day I realized I was adopted.

Our adoption story is somewhat incredible, like a Lifetime movie, because after 30 years of our being adopted, members of our biological family sought us out and found us. According to a loved one of mine, a Holt International (Holt) employee even acknowledged just how incredible our story was, stating that “this just doesn’t happen. We get calls all the time, but this one I think is legit.” Somehow, our biological parents contacted Holt, the adoption agency that they went through, which in turn contacted our adoptive parents, saying they needed to update our contact information. Once we contacted Holt, they told us as to why they were really contacting us. There are varying stories about how my biological family found us, as told by my parents and my siblings. My parents told me that my other biological siblings who were still in Korea, had contacted Holt through their office in Seoul and found out we had been adopted by a couple from the United States. I don’t know if Holt had a time period during which biological families can contact their family members, but we had not heard from them until 30 years after we had been adopted. According to my siblings, after the 2004 Tsunami, they decided to enter their information on Holt’s website for missing family members. That action sent Holt a notification to contact us several years later, who explained that there were privacy laws that prevented our biological siblings from contacting us prior to then. No matter what the circumstances were, there was a possibility to meet members of my biological family.

Typically, when adopted children yearn to find their biological family members, their priority is to find their biological parents. However, we found out that our biological parents had
died years prior to our biological siblings contacting us. With dreams of reuniting with my biological parents dashed, I lost the desire to meet my other biological family members. I was a baby when I was adopted and had no memories of Korea. However, one of my adopted siblings has a handful of blurred memories of Korea—memories of when we lived there, what the neighborhood looked like, and a childhood friend. Another memory was from our time at the orphanage. They always believed we had other biological siblings and informed me that we had another biological sibling with us at the Korean orphanage. That biological sibling and my oldest sibling ran away from the orphanage, but my oldest sibling returned because of guilt for leaving us behind. The other biological sibling never returned to the orphanage and later told my parents when they finally met them on how much they regretted not returning with my other sibling. That biological sibling admitted to my parents that they regretted not getting adopted by them and come to the United States to live.

As I think back on being a Korean adoptee, I remembered being called a “war baby” while I was in college by an acquaintance who was Black. Although it upset me, I never quite understood what the phrase meant. After reading the literature for this study, I finally understood its implications. The Korean War (1950-1953) started the first wave of international adoptions which resulted from a large number of abandoned children being born from Western soldiers and Korean women, who had produced biracial children (Chang, Feldman, & Easley, 2017). Hence the meaning of “war baby.” In 1956, the Holt adoption agency was developed (Chang et al., 2017), the one my parents went through to adopt us. In 1971, came the largest surge of international adoptions with over 330,000 children being adopted by families from the United States (Lee et al., 2006). My two siblings and I were adopted in 1977.
According to the 2018 statistics on the U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs’ website, there has been a decline in transracial international adoptions, with only 4,058 total adoptions taking place in the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2018). Transracial adoption occurs when a child or children from one race are adopted by a family from another, either domestically or internationally, the latter known as intercountry (Lee, 2003). One of the reasons for the decline in transracial international adoptions is that the National Association of Black Social Workers in the early 1970s criticized the potentially damaging effects on the children of such adoptions (Baden & Steward, 2000). Empirical research on transracial adoption states that the majority of families who adopt transracial children, whether domestically or internationally, are White and from the United States (Baden & Steward, 2000). Previous studies have examined how transracial adoptees and TRIAs have cultural, ethnic, and racial identity issues because their race differs from that of their adoptive families and/or how society views them (Anderson et al., 2015; Baden & Steward, 2000; Chang, Chen, & Chatham-Carpenter, 2016; Chang, Feldman, & Easley, 2017; Docan-Morgan, 2011; Hoffman & Pena, 2013; Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018; Lee, 2003; Lee et al., 2006; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019; Neville & Lee, 2000; Seol et al., 2016).

Adoptive parents are encouraged to attend cultural activities and events so that their TRIA can explore their biological culture or other ethnic cultures. Such activities and events can include eating ethnic foods, going to cultural fairs, learning their adoptees’ native language, researching their adoptees’ culture, and attending a cultural camp. Other ways adoptive parents can help foster their adoptees’ acceptance of their cultural difference is to tell them at an early age that they were adopted and thus negate any racial confusion. Talking openly about their children’s cultural, ethnic, and racial identities can enhance their adopted experience and limit
their negative experiences (Anderson et al., 2015).

Specifically, TRIAs can experience cultural, developmental, and psychological challenges due to their differing ethnic identities in comparison to their adopted parents’. According to Docan-Morgan (2011), minority children adopted by White parents may have problems developing a sense of ethnic identity. Some other challenges adoptees may face are, but are not limited to, mental issues (depression), identity issues, language barriers, adoption-related loss (abandonment, grief), behavioral and health issues, and criminal behavior.

Throughout the last several decades, researchers and psychologists have studied and researched the potential damaging effects for children of transracial adoptions. Some risks include, but are not limited to, issues associated with grief and loss, and abandonment issues (Hoffman & Pena, 2013), along with emotional and behavioral (Lee, 2003), and delinquent issues (Anderson, 2015). However, we know that transracial adoptions may pose issues for the TRIA’s emotional, behavioral, and psychological wellbeing, because of their differing cultural, ethnic, and racial statuses. Several factors that could influence how these adoptees choose to identify ethnically and culturally, include socioeconomic status (Seol et al., 2016), geographic region (Lee, 2003), lived experiences (Hoffman & Pena, 2013), and cultural experiences (Anderson et al., 2015) growing up, to name a few.

Colorblind attitudes may be perceived by adoptive parents as a positive, especially if they believe that race does not and should not matter (Neville et al., 2000). Colorblindness can be related to egalitarianism for parents who claim they do not see or acknowledge racial or ethnic differences (Chang, Feldman, & Easley, 2017). There are parents who are hesitant to speak to their TRIA about race, because they are unsure or confused about it, and there is a lack of resources and attention to educating White adoptive parents on how to deal with racial issues.
(Chang et al., 2017).

There are many things we do not understand about transracial international adoptions. We do not know if there are long-term effects for TRIAs who are troubled about their ethnic and cultural identities. We do not know what is “correct” or what culture a TRIA should identify with, that is, their biological or adopted culture, or both. More such issues will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Cultural socialization helps transracially adoptive families understand the psychological and cultural dynamics of their adoption (Lee, 2003). Racial socialization has shown positive personal, psychological, and academic outcomes, and cultural socialization has shown positive outcomes in regard to self-esteem, anger management, and academic performance (Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018). However, long-term studies are needed to follow a TRIA from early childhood to adolescence and then adulthood, and evaluate the development of their cultural and ethnic socialization throughout these phases. The “first wave” of transracial international adoptees are now middle aged, which is a prime time to conduct a study on how their cultural, ethnic, and racial identities changed throughout their lifespan. Without solutions for these developmental and psychological issues, adopted children may experience adverse outcomes during their adolescence and adulthood.

The purpose of this study was to understand how my transracial international adoption and my lived experiences helped me gain an understanding of how I identified with my adopted culture as a child, then how as an adolescent I questioned my adopted cultural identification, and, finally, as an adult, how I feel cultureless. As a TRIA, I chose this subject because of my lived experiences of it. I chose an autoethnography as my approach so that I could be the researcher and a participant. I also chose to do a case study so that I could include my loved ones who have
firsthand knowledge of transracial international adoption.

In regard to cultural identity, TRIAs may view one cultural identity as their own as a youth and then, as an adult, may change how they view it and identify with another culture. Some identify only with their biological or only with their adopted culture. Others may identify with both, taking the best of both worlds. Others gravitate towards other cultures and may not identify with either their biological or their adopted culture. Finally, throughout different phases in a TRIA’s life, one can feel a loss of culture, where they cannot identify with their biological or adopted culture or any other culture. Those select few feel completely cultureless, as I do. For example, I relate to Cianfrocca, a researcher who is a fellow American-Asian adoptee, but who is as conflicted in her cultural identity as I am. In the end, she stated, “I remain cultureless, being redefined daily for who and what I am. I am stuck in a constant state of redefinition. Who knows what I will be identified as tomorrow?” (Cianfrocca, 2010, p. 158). Regardless of how adoptees feel about their culture of origin, a loss of culture is apparent.

If TRIAs identify with their biological culture, it could be because their parents helped foster it by attending cultural activities or events, eating ethnic foods, learning their native language, etc. However, as a child reaches adolescence, they may explore their biological culture independently or become influenced by their peers. Relying on their peers usually happens during high school or college, and when they find peers who are similar to their race and ethnicity. For those who identify with their adopted culture, it is because they want to fit in with their family, peers, and community. If adoptees identify with another culture, it could be that of their significant other or their peers. However, some adoptees just feel cultureless and do not identify with any one culture.
Another purpose of this study was to understand the role of the parents of adopted children and their ability to influence their cultural and racial socialization. Researching these topics will bring insight to other TRIAs going through similar lived experiences. It can teach other adoptive parents who are thinking of adopting transracial international children, and help them understand the implications of cultural and racial socialization that they introduce to their children. However, some parents exhibit colorblind attitudes, which is another way adoptees can be affected. These types of studies can serve as a manuscript for newly adoptive parents and help them understand what their adoptees may experience starting with their childhood. It can also help them understand why being colorblind can be a hindrance for their adoptees (Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018).

Those who will possibly benefit from this study could be TRIAs, families who adopted them, and potential families who want to adopt them. Adoptees will gain an understanding of how their lived experiences, participation in cultural activities, and parental influences can assist them in finding their cultural and ethnic identity. Existing adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents can benefit from this study by understanding how their actions and teachings may influence how their child may choose their ethnic and cultural identities. They might also understand their adoptees’ behavior.

As a TRIA myself who was adopted as a child and is now an adult, I chose to research transracial adoptions. With this study, there are several issues I wanted to educate myself about: a) I wanted to understand how adoptees choose their ethnic and cultural identity, and what the ramifications are, b) I wanted to understand how adoptees’ lived experiences could affect how they identify ethnically and culturally, and c) I wanted to understand if parental colorblind attitudes could affect adoptees’ idealism of racism. While researching these topics, I developed
two research questions I hoped to have answered by my participants’ interviews, my answers to the research questions, and from the literature I reviewed. Research Question 1 is, how do transracial international adoptees describe their cultural belonging and compare it to their parents’ position? Research Question 2 is, what lived experiences of transracial international adoptees help them identify with the Cultural-Racial Identity Model? This model was developed by Baden and Steward (2000) to help transracial adoptees depict their unique identity experiences. In Chapter 2, I further define this model and its significance for transracial adoptees.

The theoretical framework that coincided with my study is a qualitative narrative research. Narrative research can be either a phenomenon or a method. For my research, the narrative was my method, as “it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 67). As the researcher for my study, I collected stories from my participants from their lived experiences with transracial international adoption. Finally, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that narrative research has three types of approaches for analyzing participants’ stories: a) thematic analysis, where themes are identified as “told” by the participant, b) structural analysis, as the “telling” of the story by the participant, and c) dialogic or performance analysis, how a story is produced. I chose the thematic data analysis for my study participants’ interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) also identified four approaches to narrative research: a) a biographical study, where the researcher writes a story about another person’s life, b) an autoethnography, where the researcher is also the participant and includes their lived experiences, c) life history, where an individual’s entire life is presented, and d) oral history, where an individual(s) gathers their personal reflections of events and the cause and effects. I chose the autoethnographic approach for my study so that I could be the researcher and
the participant, and give voice to my lived experiences as a TRIA. Autoethnography is a type of narrative research, where “the researcher’s use of self is personal narrative” (Wall, 2006, p. 151).

The next part of this autoethnography is the literature review in Chapter 2, which presents the research according to these topics: cultural, ethnic, and racial identities; the Cultural-Racial Identity Model, cultural and racial socialization, and parental colorblindness. Specifically, this review intends to determine if there is any correlation between transracial adoptees’ lived experiences and parental beliefs and attitudes toward how they help guide these practices in shaping transracial adoptees. Chapter 3, the Methods, includes my autoethnographic approach, the study participants, data collection, ethical considerations, data analysis, and interview instruments and protocols used in the study. These cover the research design for my study. Chapter 4, the Results, consists of the narrative themes I found throughout my participants’ interviews and my write-up of my research study. Chapter 5, the Conclusion, is comprised of an assessment of the study’s strengths and weaknesses, and proposed future research for my study.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

My Creative Component explores my lived experience as a TRIA and how these adoptees describe their cultural belonging in comparison to their parents’ position, and how their lived experiences contrast with Baden and Steward’s Cultural-Racial Identity Model. I reviewed past research on several topics that affect TRIAs. First, I will investigate the cultural, ethnic, and racial identities of adoptees. Secondly, I will analyze the Cultural-Racial Identity Model developed by Baden and Steward. Thirdly, I will examine the cultural and racial socialization of adoptees. Finally, I will explore colorblindness, specifically parental colorblindness and how it affects them. This section will also include adoptees’ experiences with racism.

Cultural, Ethnic, and Racial Identities

Noted psychologist Erik Erikson first developed the theory or model of identity and later stated that “identity must be integrated into culture so that a ‘unity of personal and cultural identity’ can be formed” (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 317). Baden and Steward (2000) further explained that identity affects transracial adoptees because it sets the stage for theorizing culture and race. They also stated that examining transracial adoptees’ cultural and racial identity is essential to describing their lived experiences in a racial and potentially culturally integrated family (Baden & Steward, 2000).

The adoption paradox for TRIAs is that they have two cultures they can identify with: their biological or adopted culture (Lee, 2003). Some end up identifying with another culture or no culture (feeling cultureless). They are born into their biological culture, yet they live most of their lives in their adopted culture. Their physical features are from their biological culture, but they do not fit in with it because they did not grow up in their place of origin. They grew up in their adopted culture, but they do not look like those in it. Other adoptees may gravitate towards
another culture all together, which usually happens during late adolescence to adulthood. This could happen with the help of their peers (Seol et al., 2016) who could potentially be from a different culture. Lastly, a small group of TRIAs do not identify with any culture because they feel like they do not fit to any. Also, they can also feel a loss of culture and identity when they are raised by a family of another race because they do not look like their adopted parents.

Normally, if a TRIA is adopted as a baby, they identify with their adopted culture because that is all they know. As they grow into their adolescence, they develop a desire to identify with their birth parent (Chang, Chen, & Chatham-Carpenter, 2016) and learn about their biological culture. Chang et al. (2016) further examined the cross-cultural adaption and transformation process for these adoptees in three steps:

First, they have to accept the reality that they are international adoptees who have a different cultural heritage from their adoptive parents. Second, as they encounter societal prejudice against their physical appearance and birth cultural background, they continue to go through identity formation. Third, they may have a life-long concern with what to expect from their birth parents, if they meet them, and how to communicate within their birth culture, which impacts their identity. (pp. 4-5)

Chang, Chen, and Chatham-Carpenter (2016) even call this adaptation an identity crisis, because it stems from conflict that arises and a confusion between their “avowed identity,” who we believe we are, and their “ascribed identity,” who others perceive we are. Especially for TRIAs, they were born in one country and then moved to a new one with their new adoptive families. A loved one of mine once conveyed how sad it must be for people who apply for United States citizenship and then give up their rights to their birth country.
Ethnic identity was defined by Baden and Steward (2000) as “the heritage that individuals are given rather than that which is chosen” (p. 319). Docan-Morgan (2011) asserted that TRIAs who are adopted by White parents may have trouble developing a sense of ethnic identity. In a previous study on ethnic identity development, Hoffman and Pena (2013) categorized unique challenges for TRIAs: a) they have no contact with their biological parents or culture, b) they do not look like their adoptive parents, c) they do not understand the meaning of adoption until they are in their adolescence, and d) there is a feeling of loss, grief, and abandonment because of adoption which can cause behavioral problems. Hoffman and Pena (2013) concluded that ethnic identity development is an ongoing process and is fluid during a TRIAs’ lifespan.

Any transracial adoptees may have racial identity issues because they are from a different race than their adoptive parents (Baden & Steward, 2000). TRIAs may experience additional issues since they are from another country. A primary issue could be a language barrier if they speak their native language but not English. Hoffman and Pena (2013) suggested that adoptees tend to struggle with identity development issues because they do not look like their adoptive parents and cannot imagine what their birth parents look like.

For the most part, racial and ethnic identity in most studies are considered interchangeable, i.e., racial/ethnic or ethnic/racial. Previous research has emphasized that TRIAs’ racial/ethnic identities are studied by finding the correlation between their racial and ethnic experiences and their identity development (Lee, 2003). In Lee’s study, he stated that extrinsic factors include age at adoption, race, and geography attributed to variability in racial/ethnic identity development (2003).
Cultural-Racial Identity Model

The Cultural-Racial Identity Model was developed by Baden and Steward (2000) with the goal of giving guidelines to psychotherapists when working with transracial families and helping them develop racial integration (See Figure 1). Their model can function for racially integrated families for two reasons:

First, the model accounts for racial and cultural differences among parents and their children. Second, the model also takes into consideration the impact that the experiences and the attitudes of their parents, peers, extended family, social support networks, and the larger community have on the children. (p. 310)

Their model was birthed because of the “lack of theory conceptualizing the unique experiences of transracial adoptees” (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 313) and the racial differences between transracial families and existing racial/ethnic identity theories that are not applicable to their lived experiences.

Figure 1

The Cultural-Racial Identity Model (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 327)
(Note: The figure numbers of the three figures here differ from the figures in Baden and Steward’s model below.)
In the Cultural-Racial Identity Model the horizontal axis is the Culture of the Parental Race (adopted) and the vertical axis is the Culture of the Transracial Adoptee’s Racial Group (biological). The model includes four types of cultural identities, which result in 16 potential cultural-racial identities.

In the horizontal axis of this model, there are four types of cultural identities: Pro-Self Cultural Identity, Bicultural Identity, Culturally Undifferentiated Identity, and Pro-Parent Cultural Identity. The level of identification for a transracial adoptee with a culture(s) is “determined by their levels of knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort with either their own] or both the culture of their own racial group, their parents’ racial group, or multiple racial groups” (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 324). The Pro-Self Cultural Identity is when adoptees identify with their biological culture but the Pre-Parent Cultural Identity is the opposite of what an adoptee identifies with in their adopted culture. The Bicultural Identity is when an adoptee identifies with both their biological culture and their adopted culture. The Cultural Undifferentiated Identity is when an adoptee identifies with other cultural groups than their biological and adopted groups.

The vertical axis in the model is comprised of four possible racial identity types: Biracial Identity, Pro-Self Racial Identity, Pro-Parent Racial Identity, and Racially Undifferentiated Identity. This level of identification for a transracial adoptee with a racial group is how they “accurately identify and are comfortable with their racial group membership and [when] they are comfortable with either or both those of their racial group, their parents’ racial group, or multiple racial groups” (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 327). A Pro-Self Racial Identity means that an adoptee identifies with their biological group while a Pro-Parent Racial identity is the opposite, that is, they identify with their adopted group. Biracial Identity means that an adoptee identifies
racially with both their adopted and biological group. A Racially Undifferentiated Identity indicates that an adoptee may identify with other racial groups besides their biological and adopted groups.

Baden and Steward (2000) illustrated how TRIAs developed characteristics with all 16 cultural-racial identities and how these identities may impact their progression through each identity, and described environmental or contextual factors that may affect their identities as shown in Figure 2 (pp. 328-9).

**Figure 2**

*Baden and Steward’s 16 Cultural-Racial Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-Self Cultural Identity—Pro-Self Racial Identity</th>
<th>Pro-Self Cultural Identity—Biracial Identity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High in knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in the culture of their own racial ethnic group and feel most comfortable with individuals of own racial ethnic group. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which the adoptees’ racial group’s culture predominated. May have rejected their adoptive parents’ culture and may feel like an outsider in their parents’ culture because of negative experiences in their parents’ culture or because of perceived pressure from members of their own racial ethnic group.</td>
<td>High in knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in the culture of their own racial ethnic group and feel most comfortable with individuals of either own racial ethnic group or parents’ racial ethnic group. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which the adoptees’ racial group’s culture predominated, but were exposed to many members of their parents’ racial group and role models from both their own racial group and their parents’ racial group.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-Self Cultural Identity—Racially Undifferentiated Identity</th>
<th>Pro-Self Cultural Identity—Pro-Parent Racial Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High in knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in the culture of their own racial ethnic group and feel most comfortable with individuals of multiple racial ethnic groups. May have been exposed to members of multiple racial ethnic groups and to role models from multiple racial ethnic groups. A “human” identity may have been endorsed by parents.</td>
<td>High in knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in the culture of their own racial ethnic group and feel most comfortable with individuals of their own racial ethnic group (e.g., perceived rejection of visible differences or because of transracial adoption status). May have been exposed to members and/or roles models of their parents’ racial ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 4. Depictions of the 16 cells of the cultural-racial identity model.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culturally Undifferentiated—Pro-Self Racial Identity</th>
<th>Culturally Undifferentiated—Biracial Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not affiliated primarily with either their own or their parents' racial ethnic groups' cultures. Instead, they are high in their knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in multiple cultures including their own and their parents' racial ethnic groups as well as other racial ethnic groups. Feel most comfortable with individuals of their own racial ethnic group. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which multiple racial groups' cultures were represented. May have been exposed primarily to members of the adoptees' racial ethnic groups and to role models from the adoptees' racial ethnic group. May have rejected their adoptive parents' culture and may feel like an outsider in their parents' culture due to negative experiences in their parents' culture or due to perceived pressure from members of their own racial ethnic group.</td>
<td>Not affiliated primarily with either their own or their parents' racial ethnic groups' cultures. Instead, they are high in their knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in multiple cultures including their own and their parents' racial ethnic groups as well as other racial ethnic groups. Feel most comfortable with individuals of both their own and their parents' racial ethnic groups. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which multiple racial groups' cultures were represented. May have been exposed primarily to members of both the adoptees' and the parents' racial ethnic groups and to role models from both of those groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culturally Undifferentiated—Racially Undifferentiated Identity</th>
<th>Culturally Undifferentiated—Pro-Parent Racial Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not affiliated primarily with either their own or their parents' racial ethnic groups' cultures. Instead, they are high in their knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in multiple cultures including their own and their parents' racial ethnic groups as well as other racial ethnic groups. Feel most comfortable with individuals of their own racial ethnic groups. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which multiple racial groups' cultures were represented. May have been exposed to members of multiple racial ethnic groups and to role models from multiple racial ethnic groups. A 'human' identity may have been endorsed by parents.</td>
<td>Not affiliated primarily with either their own or their parents' racial ethnic groups' cultures. Instead, they are high in their knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in multiple cultures including their own and their parents' racial ethnic groups as well as other racial ethnic groups. Feel most comfortable with individuals of their parents' racial ethnic groups. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which multiple racial groups' cultures were represented. May not be visibly racially different from their adoptive parents' appearance and/or may have had negative experiences with individuals of their own racial ethnic group (e.g., perceived rejection because of visible differences or because of transracial adoption status). May have been exposed to members and/or role models of their parents' racial ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4. (Continued)
Finally, out of these 16 cells, the Culturally Undifferentiated-Racially Undifferentiated Identity is who I am. Because I do not identify with either my biological or adopted group, but having been around various other racial and cultural groups, my identity is undifferentiated. In Chapter 5, I will discuss in detail why I chose this identity group for myself.

Finally, Figure 3 (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 332) provides a model of “parental attitudes and characteristics for affirming/discounting environments” for TRIAs’ families, schools, teachers, community leaders, and peers so that they can provide resources for transracial families. There are three types a transracial adoptee may be reared in, according to Baden and Steward’s model (2000):

1) either affirm or discount the adoptive parents’ culture and/or racial group membership,
2) either affirm or discount the transracial adoptees’ racial group’s culture and/or their racial group membership, or
3) have some combination of affirmation and discounting of adoptive parents’ and transracial adoptees’ cultures and racial groups. (p. 331)
The Cultural-Racial Identity Model can serve as a guide for adoptees and their adoptive parents on how to understand their child’s life experiences may affect how they identify with racially and culturally. This could be particularly helpful for those who recognize adoptees’ multiple identities. Additionally, this model can serve as a guide for psychotherapeutic specialists who may counsel racially integrated adoptive families.

**Cultural and Racial Socialization**

Cultural and racial socialization are ways for parents to help their adoptive children cope with racism and understand their biological group membership (Seol et al., 2016). Here are the definitions of both. I have included ethnic socialization which is used in very little literature. According to Lee et al. (2006), cultural socialization is:

The manner by which parents address ethnic and racial issues within the family, specifically, the ways parents communicate or transmit cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors to the child and the extent to which the child internalizes these messages, adopts the cultural norms and expectations, and acquires the skills to become a competent and functional member of a racially diverse society. (p. 2)
Seol et al. (2016) defined racial socialization as “specific discussions and instructions in preparing children to deal with racial stereotypes and racism” and ethnic socialization as “communication and teaching children about their cultural values, customs, history, and language” (p. 295).

In a previous study, Lee et al. (2006) examined the cultural socialization of TRIAs’ adopted family, and hypothesized that parents with lower colorblind attitudes are more likely to engage in enculturation and racialization parenting manners. *Enculturation* is defined as a belief in and practice of encouraging ethnicity-specific experiences that are needed for the development of a positive ethnic identity and can function as a protective factor against racism and discrimination (Lee et al., 2006). *Racialization* is the belief in and practice of promoting racial experiences in order for children to develop skills to cope with racism and discrimination (Lee et al., 2006). They also stated that it is important for adopting families to undergo cultural socialization because it can possibly strengthen their ethnic identity, and added that racial socialization is helpful, along with cultural socialization, with ethnic and racial issues that they may experience. Lee et al. believe that these results can be achieved by the enculturation and racialization of the adoptive parents, and the results of their study supported this hypothesis as the findings were derived through adoptive parents’ self-reporting in a long and short survey (Lee et al., 2006).

Lee (2003) researched cultural socialization and found that TRIAs who had negative racial and ethnic experiences could have serious psychological concerns for themselves and their families. Whereas it has the opposite effect for those who have positive racial and ethnic experiences. He also looked into the cultural socialization process and found it to be a lifelong process, and that it takes a village to help TRIAs cope with the process:
For racial/ethnic minorities, it specifically entails the transmissions of cultural values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors from parents, family, friends, and community to children that foster racial/ethnic identity development, equip children with coping strategies to deal with racism and discrimination, and encourage prosocial behavior and appropriate participation in society. (pp. 7-8)

Racial socialization is defined by Chang, Feldman, and Easley (2017) as when White adoptive parents teach their TRIAs about racial diversity and encourage healthy identity development and resilience when threatened with racism and discrimination. Their study explored the racial socialization narratives of Korean Americans by using the observations of a focus group. One of their findings included how boundaries were blurred between race, ethnicity, culture, and adoptive identities. The results from the focus group discussion revealed an amplification of power inequities in transracially adopted families that promoted the role of power in families around race. One finding from the study was that transracially adopted families that exhibited a multicultural perspective had more positive interracial interactions.

Another study on racial and ethnic socialization of TRIAs and their adjustment to school was done by Seol et al. (2016), with adopted Korean American adolescents in two separate studies in 2007 and 2009. They collected data using a survey and gathered non-adopted Korean Americans’ data from a previous study (Seol et al., 2016). These researchers had several hypotheses, but those that are aligned with my study are adoptees’ racial discrimination and racial and ethnic socialization experiences (Seol et al., 2016). They hypothesized that adopted and non-adopted Korean American adolescents would experience identical racial discrimination but that adopted versus non-adopted would have fewer racial and ethnic socialization communications from their White parents (Seol et al., 2016). The results from their study, for
racial discrimination, were not consistent with their hypothesis that non-adopted Korean American adolescents would report more racial discrimination than adopted Korean American adolescents (Seol et al., 2016). Possible reasons were that non-adopted Korean American adolescents were exposed to more occurrences of racism, or their perception of what racial discrimination compared to actual discrimination is may have differed (Seol et al., 2016). As for racial and ethnic socialization, their hypothesis was confirmed, possibly because adopted Korean American adolescents have less exposure and opportunities with their White families in how to deal with racism and what it means to be Korean (Seol et al., 2016).

**Parental Colorblindness**

As stated above, colorblindness has ties to cultural and racial socialization. There are numerous studies on colorblindness and how it relates to TRIAs’ adoption experiences. For my study, I have focused on parental colorblindness and how it affects TRIAs, and if there is potential for negative ramifications or positive outcomes. First, the colorblind perspective has been defined as the “belief that race should not and does not matter” (Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018, p. 357). They (2018) explained that if parents minimize or fail to recognize the role race plays, there is a likelihood that their child will not be equipped for racial socialization. Colorblindness may have a direct relationship to racism, discrimination, prejudices, and microaggressions, and will affect TRIAs.

There are many reasons why adoptive parents may foster colorblind attitudes, according to Hrapczynski and Leslie (2018), which include but are not limited to: a) they want to instill an unconditional love and acceptance in their adoptee by un-identifying racial differences within their family, b) they truly believe their children will not be treated differently, and c) some just do not understand the meaning of their racial privilege and status and for those who are not the
same race, lack the same privilege and status regardless if they are in their family or not. These attitudes could possibly have negative effects for TRIAs that include but are not limited to being unable to recognize racial discrimination and not coming to their parents if they experience racism, especially if their parents do not identify race as an issue. TRIAs may be directly affected because racial prejudice can be linked to negative psychological and behavioral issues (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019).

Morgan and Langrehr (2019) studied the parental colorblindness of transracially adoptive parents and how their children’s recognition of discrimination could negatively affect their experiences with racism and their views towards “racial microaggressions and institutional racism” (p. 242). Their dataset included completed questionnaires by transracial adoptive parents about their lived experiences of adoption, and their results confirmed their hypothesis that strong parental colorblindness perceived lower adoption stigma and that some parents did not view microaggressions and discrimination as forms of racism (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019).

Neville et al. (2000) investigated five studies on the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale with this 3-factor solution: unawareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues, which measures belief in a just world and society as just and fair. In all five studies, this scale was shown to be reliable. Their findings were that TRIAs, on average, reported lower color-blind racial attitudes and if they were adopting a colorblind attitude instead of preserving their privilege, they could be contributing to their own oppression (Neville et al., 2000). All of the studies reviewed here contributed to the design my own study.

In conclusion, previous research and studies, as shown in this literature review, support my conceptual framework for my study. I have included my research questions in Chapter 1, and the literature and my interviews assisted with finding the answers to them. For the first
research question, I was able to find the types of cultural belonging a transracial international adoptee could select from. They can range from their biological to their adopted culture. Some TRIAs may identify with both cultures while others might identify with a different culture. Finally, a few may not identify with any culture. Through my literature review, I found that most research on cultural belonging was found in the article on Baden and Steward’s Cultural-Racial Identity Model (2000).

The rest of the literature gave me insight into parental behaviors towards their TRIA’s biological culture and race and ethnicity (Lee, 2003). In research by Morgan and Langrehr (2019) on parental colorblindness, one result was that the negative relationship between colorblindness and racist occurrences develops a range of adoption stigma. These topics helped me understand an adoptive parents’ position.
CHAPTER 3. METHODS

Autoethnographic Approach

Qualitative research has established the premise of “giving a voice” to silenced groups in research (Giordano et al., 2007, p. 270). Although there are different approaches to qualitative research, the one that best fit mine was an autoethnography as it consists of my personalized accounts through my lived experiences. As the researcher and one of the participants in this study, I have first-hand knowledge of what it is like to be a Korean TRIA who was adopted by White parents in the United States. My qualitative method is unique because it is a combination of an autoethnography and a case study. I have translated my memories of my adoption into stories that have been told to me and that I have told my daughter.

Autoethnography was derived from ethnography, a grounded theory research method. An ethnography focuses on the description of a group culture whereby researchers look for patterns, such as group rituals, their ideas and beliefs through language, and their behavior within a group (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 91). Through their subjects, data are collected through fieldwork, interviews, observations, symbols, diaries, photographs, and artifacts. What follows my data collection can be summarized as a narrative thematic analysis, which I will further explain in this chapter.

As to an autoethnography, there are multiple ways of how it is defined and how it fits into the sociological field and family research. Autoethnography can be divided into three parts according to Adams and Manning (2015): “a researcher’s subjectivity, reflexivity, and personal experience (auto) in an attempt to represent (-graphy) cultural experiences (ethno-)” (p. 351). From a sociological framework, an autoethnography is comprised of “highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending
sociological understanding” (Wall, 2008, p. 38). Wall (2008) explained how autoethnography relates scientifically:

Personal narrative as research is to fuse the form with the content and the literary with the scientific, to create a social scientific art form, thereby revealing the hand of the researcher/author who created the work and demonstrating explicitly the expertise of the author rather than constructing his or her absence. (p. 151)

Wall (2008) further indicated how narratives spoken by adoptive family members can be powerful stories. As for family research, Adams and Manning (2015) described it as follows:

Autoethnography can allow researchers to offer insider accounts of families; to study every day, unexpected experiences of families, especially as they encounter unique or difficult situations; to write against limited extant research about families; and to make research more accessible to nonacademic audiences. (p. 356)

There are some risks associated with autoethnographic writing that need to be mentioned, however. The foremost risk is for the researchers themselves because they are writing about their own personal lived experiences, which opens them to scholarly or artistic critique which can make them feel attacked personally by various groups such as readers, reviewers, and research authorities (Adams & Manning, 2015). They spoke of another risk, which is that autoethnography is based on personal experiences, that is, there is a connection with the people in the researcher’s life and the need for confidentiality for the participants (2015). However, they also stated that it’s difficult for the autoethnographer to de-identify their research participants because they are tied to the researcher’s experiences (Adams & Manning, 2015).

Besides utilizing an authoethnographic approach, my research is multi-methodological, in that it also included a case study. A case study according to Creswell and Poth (2018) is “the
study of a case (or cases) within a real-life, contemporary context or setting” which may consist of an individual, a small group, an organization, or a partnership (p. 96). My case study included myself and two loved ones who have first-hand knowledge of my transracial international adoption.

**Participants**

As previously stated, I was both the researcher and a participant in my case study, which is why my method is an autoethnography. There are many reasons why researchers choose to conduct an autoethnography, that is, to be both the researcher and the participant, which include but are not limited to sharing their lived experiences, having a personal connection with their research, and having a personal relationship with their participant(s). The latter reason could put the participants and the researcher at ease because they know each other personally. I will go into further details of the strengths and weaknesses for using autoethnography in Chapter 5.

As a TRIA, I have lived experiences of this subject matter. My other two research participants were my loved ones who have firsthand knowledge of transracial international adoption. Per Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements (*See Appendix E for IRB Approval*), I was unable to name or identify their relationship to me, so they will be known as Ash and Blake for the remainder of the study. Researchers know the importance of participants’ stories. Even Wall (2008) claimed that “narratives told by members of adoptive families can be powerful stories in which meaning and identity are tested, adjusted, and redefined” (2008, p. 39).

**Data Collection**

My study was multi-methodological which included both an autoethnography and a case study. It was a multiple case study so that I could make comparisons of my participants. A case study, like an autoethnography, is qualitative and collects data through in-depth interviews.
Creswell (2018) informs us that the “entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case” (p. 96). In conclusion, both my autoethnography and case studies’ data collection were done through my interviews of the participants. As required, I received IRB approval before interviewing them.

My data collection was gathered through my participants’ interviews and my own answers to the interview questions. (See Appendix D for Interview Questions sample). A consent form was emailed to each participant to review and sign if they agreed to participate. (See Appendix A for Informed Consent Form). After the interviews were completed, I started transcribing the interviews. As part of my member checking process, I emailed my participants their own individual interview transcript so that they had time to review it, and at the same time, sent them a copy of an additional consent form. After they reviewed their transcript and agreed to continue participating in my study, they would sign the second consent form and email it back to me. (See Appendix B for Post-Interview Consent Form).

With the data I collected, I started coding, and found several common responses among all of my participants. (See Appendix F for Codes). Through those responses, I found my themes and narrowed them down to the most frequent ones and those that related to my research questions. (See Appendix G for Narrative Themes).

**Ethical Considerations**

For any type of research project, there are ethical issues to consider, but especially when employing an autoethnographic approach. I questioned myself throughout my study about my ethics and did not like some of my answers, but had to adjust my processes for the greater good. Ellis (2000) asked, “Does the contribution of the story outweigh conceivable ethical dilemmas and pain for characters and readers?” (p. 276). Similarly, Wall (2008) asked, “Does the deeply
personal nature of my work distort my ability to judge its ethical sensibilities?” (p. 50).

Even though I was interviewing loved ones for my project, I still had to adhere to all ethical considerations. The first ethical issue I encountered was how to keep my participants anonymous. I anticipated being able to identify them by their actual names instead of referring to them as “my loved ones.” However, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at my university denied my request, which eliminated the threat of being unethical. Had I been able to identify my participants by name, anyone could research their identities and find out who they were through the internet and social media. This would have brought up a moral and ethical question: Would I be exploiting them in the name of my research? This turned into an ethical question for my research: Do I remain anonymous and refer to my participants as “loved ones?” Since this study was for my master’s degree, I had no other choice, but the latter.

While reading the literature for my study, I found several researchers who argued for research protection, specifically in regard to participant anonymity. As Reyes (2017) explained:

They argue that researchers cannot guarantee anonymity, it may be more ethical to name people so as to allow them their own voice, and that “masking” information undermines ethnographic methods as a social scientific endeavor because people alter information to ensure confidentiality—thus not allowing for ethnographic revisits—and to make their work seem more generalizable than it is. (p. 11)

Similarly, Giordano et al. (2007) indicated how participants may view their identification as a way of “giving voice’ to their personal experience” (pp. 266-7). These researchers said further, “certain participants might not desire such ‘protection,’ thereby necessitating that no confidentiality (e.g., disclosure of participant identity) would, at the very least, need to be considered, if not directly complied with, by investigators” (p. 264). However, the American
Anthropological Association Code of Ethics has indicated that confidentiality should be up to the participants themselves, stating, “Anthropological researchers must determine in advance whether their host/providers of information wish to remain anonymous or receive recognition, and make every effort to comply with those wishes” (Giordano et al., 2007, p. 268).

In my rationale, I thought that obtaining consent from my participants through their informed consent form would alleviate any issues of confidentiality. I again found researchers who argued that obtaining consent is at the discretion of the participant. I think that Kaiser (2000) said it best, that “a more nuanced view of consent means moving away from the assumption that every respondent desires complete confidentiality and instead recognizing that a research participant might want to receive recognition for some or all of what he or she contributes” (p. 9). She later introduced the post-interview confidentiality form, which considers confidentiality of the actual data that were collected and gives the participants’ options on how they want to be identified and if there is specific data that needs to be handled with care (Kaiser, 2000). I thought I covered this by adding it to my study proposal, but IRB disapproved.

Another ethical issue I stumbled on, as the researcher and participant, was if I would be able to keep each role separate and not blur the lines, raising these questions: When I am answering the questions as a participant, can I do it without thinking like the researcher? Also, since I am interviewing my loved ones, can I stay objective? When I interview them, will I stop myself from interrupting and trying to correct them? I realized during my study, even though I lived my adoption story along with my loved ones’ narration of it, how I perceive events and memories would differ from theirs. Even if I think I know what happened during my childhood, I had to stay impartial and let them tell their story as they perceived it. This was the hardest part of my study, but also the most positive for me personally.
When studying human subjects, researchers are obligated to protect their research participants from physical and/or mental harm (Giordano et al., 2007). This consists of but is not limited to emotional and/or psychological implications; however, physical harm is rare depending on the type of research. This was true for my study, as there could be emotional and/or psychological ramifications for my participants with the sensitive topic of adoption, but no physical harm per se. Since my study was a narrative research, I questioned if it would include evocative memories and/or stories that could harm my loved ones. This study also discussed sensitive topics such as adoption and racism, which might concern them.

**Interview Instruments and Protocols**

For my study, I used phenomenological interviewing which combines life-history and in-depth interviewing. Phenomenological interviewing focuses on four themes. The first is the participants’ experiences and what they make of them. The second is the participants’ point of view on their experience. The third is the lived experiences of these human beings. The fourth is their making meaning of their lived experiences (Seidman, 2013). I collected my qualitative data through in-depth interviews, asking open-ended questions of both my participants.

For my interviews, I asked about their lived experiences with transracial international adoption, their exposure to cultural information, their cultural and social identification, and whether they had personally experienced any racism, stereotypes, and/or micro-aggressions. Prior to the interviews, I asked that my participants refer to their family and friends as “loved ones” instead of by their name or relationship (e.g., family, friends). Throughout the interview, I noted their emotions (e.g., including but not limited to feeling happy, sad, confused, angry, and surprised) and/or their behaviors by focusing on their facial expressions, voice tones and pitch, and body language. If any emotions were detected, I would confirm with them what type they
were feeling and why. I also asked my participants to reflect on their own thoughts, feelings, experiences, but not “voice” their perceptions of others’ beliefs, emotions, and reflections. That is, they were encouraged not to mind read others. They were strongly advised to speak only for their self. If they made a statement(s) about third parties, I would remove this information from the transcripts and, hence, the analysis.

Prior to their interview, I asked my participants to sign an Informed Consent Form. After the interview was completed, I asked them to review the Post-Interview Consent Form. This form gave my participants an opportunity to provide written permission as to how they wished their own lived experiences to be reflected and shared, and if they wished to continue to participate in the study. Once they reviewed and signed it, they emailed the form back to me.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, namely COVID-19 in 2020 when I did the interviews, they could not be done face-to-face; instead they were conducted by video conferencing. I chose Zoom, a video conferencing software, because I could record my interview and lock the meeting. As a back-up, I also recorded each interview using an Olympus digital audio recorder. Through Cybox, a university monitored, password-protected, and cloud-based file storage system, I uploaded my data. In order to maintain confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for my participants: Ash and Blake. The interview questions were the same for Ash and myself. I had a different set of questions for Blake, although they were similar in content. Each interview with my participants lasted over an hour. In regard to my interview of myself, I typed my responses to my questions directly into my computer, so I did not have to transcribe an audio tape of my interview of myself.

I interviewed Ash first, on a Saturday morning, and it was a really nice day as I remembered. We both logged into Zoom using the link I emailed and talked pleasantries for a
couple minutes before starting the interview. Throughout the interview, Ash looked at me, but mostly stared away in the distance as many do when they are reminiscing about their lives. There were times when they emphasized what they were saying. There was also laughter, when they told stories from their childhood. During my question about parental colorblindness and how it relates to racism, I noticed that Ash was looking and sounding frustrated, or maybe even annoyed. I asked if there was something that they did not understand and if there was something they were feeling. Ash proceeded to tell me, “I do not know how to answer those questions.” Once I explained what colorblindness meant and the consequences of parental colorblindness, Ash understood why I asked the question and we proceeded with the interview.

I interviewed both participants on the same day, Blake after Ash. I was anxious to be done so I could go outside and enjoy the weather. I should never have done two interviews on the same day, as I was feeling cooped up inside and feeling a little anxious, especially because I knew my interviews would cover sensitive topics as I have previously stated.

With the first question I asked Blake, I knew it would produce a lengthy response. What I did not anticipate was how emotional that response would be. Within a couple of minutes of telling their story, Blake was crying as they were remising about their lived experiences. Since we were using video conferencing, I felt helpless because I was unable to comfort them. So, I sat there and listened to their stories through their tears. I teared up a couple of times, because of the sheer, raw emotions. Throughout the rest of the interview, there was laughter as well, and a few more shed tears from Blake. I observed Blake looking down during most of the interview and also into the distance as Ash had. I did ask them after the interview and we were off the record, why they were looking down and suggested they were reading a script. They assured me they were not, but I laughed because it looked like it to me. Instead, they replied that they were
concentrating on remembering the past.

The following day, Sunday, I did my personal interview of myself. I stayed inside the whole day and answered all my interview questions. Since I did not record my own interview using audio or video, I was unable to record my facial expressions or hear the tones in my voice. I do, however, remember feeling a little emotionally drained after recounting my adoption story. I did not tear up or cry. I did, however, smile a few times as I was recalling my childhood memories. Writing my interview responses instead of recording my own voice and facial expressions is where I limited myself, which I will discuss in Chapter 5, under the strengths and weaknesses of my study.

Data Analysis

My study consists of narrative stories as told by myself and my participants about our lived experiences with my transracial international adoption. I chose a data analysis strategy that uses the thematic approach to process the data I collected from my interviews of my two participants. My autoethnographic study was based on the life history of my participants and myself. Researchers use this type of analysis to identify different themes as “told” by their participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 70). Through my recruitment script, my loved ones agreed to participate in my study. (See Appendix C for Recruitment Script sample).

After I completed the two interviews, I transcribed and uploaded them to Cybox, my university’s data storing service. There were no follow-up interviews, just one per participant. As part of my member checking process, I allowed my participants to view their own transcript virtually, which gave them an opportunity to review and edit any content by removing, replacing, or clarifying information. The member checking process also included my Informed Consent Form and Post-Interview Consent Form. Finally, I allowed my participants to view my research
paper that contained their individual participant data and once again give them an opportunity to review and edit any content they deemed necessary.

I chose In Vivo Coding to analyze my interview data. This method of qualitative data analysis uses the participants’ words or short phrases for the data record as codes (Miles et al., 2014). I found common words or phrases in all three transcripts which I constructed my codebook. I labeled and put each of my codes into sub-groups and narrowed them down and combined them into my final codes.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Narrative Themes

Through the codes I created, I found some commonalities between Ash and myself, Blake and myself, Ash and Blake, and all three of us. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there were significant differences between all three of us. This study shows how people’s perceptions, even if they have had the same experience(s), may differ individually from each other. At one point, Blake told me a story I had never heard before and they had never told anybody else. As it is of a personal nature, I feel I should not share it even though they remain anonymous. For the most part, Ash and Blake’s stories were more similar than mine because I was only 23 months old when I was adopted, so my memories are limited.

I created narrative themes that presented themselves throughout the codes I had derived from the data analysis. I then narrowed them down and found the most common ones and combined those that were similar. Finally, my narrative themes appeared as follow: a) Narrative Theme 1: Familial lack of communication and b) Narrative Theme 2: The need to assimilate and fit in with the TRIAs’ adopted culture

Next, I wrote the sub-themes for my first narrative theme. I could have included them as four other main themes, but those sub-topics had the same commonalities so I kept them as one theme. The last theme, I included was to be American or Americanized referring to a TRIAs’ desire to fit in with their adopted culture as told by Ash. During Ash’s interview, he said, “being American, you know talk English and eat American food” and continued, “you grow up in America, you become American, you become more Americanized.”

Theme 1: Familial Lack of Communication

The first theme has four sub-themes that are related to familial lack of communication,
which are: a) lack of communication about their adoption, b) lack of communication about their biological race and culture, c) lack of communication or openness to talk about racism, and d) lack of communication by the TRIA in telling their parents of incidences of racism. This last theme relates to Docan-Morgan’s study of topic avoidance, and more specifically, adoptees who avoid discussing racial topics with their parents and why (2013). For all of these themes, the participants’ interviews and my write-up of my own interview have served as the data for this study.

The first issue is prevalent in transracial adoptions, whether the adoption is domestic or international. Lee (2003) defined transracial adoption as “the joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families” (p. 2). Since TRIAs’ physical appearances are different than their parents’, they obviously look adopted and have different biological, cultural, ethnic, and racial identities than their adopted culture. I recalled how my adoption was never discussed by my family, and I figured it was because I am Asian and not White, so it was obvious. During Ash’s interview, they stated “I’ve always known, because I’m different than my parents and everybody else. I am Asian and they are White, so I mean I always knew I was adopted; there’s no ifs, ands, or buts about it. There’s no denying that.” During Blake’s interview, they said “from the very beginning, it was just a given.”

The second issue is about the adoptive parent’s lack of communication about their TRIAs’ biological race and culture. Hoffman and Pena (2013) stated that transracial adoptees have difficulties with ethnic identity development because they do not have contact with their biological parents or culture. Though in most cases it is not intentional, nevertheless Chang, Chen, and Chatham-Carpenter (2016) argued that in developmental psychology, one needs to know their biological and historical past which is “an integral part of one’s identity” (p. 4). This
assertion is supported by previous research and studies as I indicated in Chapter 2, my Literature Review.

As the participant, I did not remember my parents talking about my birth culture. I also grew up thinking I was the same race as my parents and the homogenous White community I lived in as a young child. I eventually figured out I was from a different race. I did indicate how I thought my parents should have initiated the conversation, because they were the parents and I was the child. When I asked Ash if their parents talked about their birth culture while they were growing up, Ash stated “very little” and blamed it on technology or the lack of since their adoption was over 40 years ago. When I asked what their parents told them about their biological culture, Ash replied, “I don’t know if they really specifically talked about my birth culture.” I asked if their adoptive parents could have helped them identify with their birth culture and they said “I think maybe more, but I don’t think I wanted more. I wanted to fit in and be American, so I think they might have done more if I showed more interest but I didn’t.” They added, “I think it was my choice but I didn’t want to learn about my birth culture.” I asked Blake during their interview if Holt, the adoption agency, could have helped them deal with telling their children about their birth culture and they said:

Maybe they were willing to all along. I never got the feeling that our middle child didn’t want to know, they say that but I don’t know, they showed no interest. I think if we would have had the feeling that was a concern to them, we would have dig into it, and we would have found some ways and maybe they would have been helpful. When they were young and I didn’t think about doing that because we seem to be just a normal kind of family, the kids went to school, church, and the kids had friends. It wasn’t until later years, maybe High School and definitely College, they were seeking their own way to
find their identity.

Here is another reason why I stated it was up to the parents to discuss these topics. If they did not talk about biological race and culture, how did they know their children were not interested? The statement above about “a normal kind of family” is part of the colorblind issue. As a TRIA myself, I believe it is not normal because adoptees are different racially and culturally.

The last issue is the lack of communication between adoptive parents and their adoptee on racism, including: prejudice, stereotyping, and microaggressions, which their TRIAs may have experienced during their childhood but not told their parents about such racial incidences. Parental colorblindness is part of this discussion as well. Both Ash and I experienced racism growing up. It was during middle school that I was called “chink”, “jungle bunny”, “Oreo”, and “war baby”, and people sang the Rice-a-roni commercial to me because of the stereotype that Asians eat rice, which is true, but this was done in malice. Just to show how ignorant of racism people can be, “jungle bunny” and “Oreo” are racial slurs for Black people and Black and White people mixed, though I am neither. The children who said such racial slurs to me were children I grew up with and children from a nearby school who knew me growing up. I was not a stranger to them. Ash had similar experiences, saying, “I just think it was ignorant on that person’s part because they called me the wrong slur, the wrong racist remark. I just told them “well I’m not Chinese, I’m Korean.” In Blake’s interview, they confessed that “I didn’t ask the kids if they experienced any of that and I guess that was my fault. I should have.” But then stated, “My loved ones are so troubled by racism and have been active against racism.” So, Blake’s adoptive parents were aware their children had experienced racial discrimination.

As I stated above, Docan-Morgan’s study on Korean adult adoptees discussed their adoptive parents’ topic avoidance and communication challenges on subjects of racism, and the
adoptees’ reluctance to disclose personal experiences to their adoptive parents (2011). In her study, Docan-Morgan stated the reasons that adoptees may avoid racial topics with their adoptive parents included: parent unresponsiveness, perceived parent unresponsiveness, and past parent unresponsiveness. For myself, when I told my parents what had happened to me, they made excuses for the kids who hurled racial insults at me; so after that, I never told them of any other racial incidents I experienced, because of their lack of acknowledgement and support. So, after their unresponsiveness, whenever I experienced any racial discrimination, I wouldn’t tell my parents because of their past unresponsiveness. When I asked Ash if they told their parents about the racial incident, they told me, “It was not worth mentioning (Ash scoffed while saying this), because I solved it myself and the kid never did it again to me.” They followed up by saying “I did not tell them (their parents) very much at all, you know teens, they do not talk to their parents.” When I asked Blake if their TRIA told them of any racial incidents they had experienced, they said:

I remember the first time I really remember it was in bible school, there was this naughty little (Blake laughs while saying this) who was naughty to everybody. Our oldest child came to us and I don’t remember what the comment was but it was very hurtful to them. When we talked about it, I guess I tried to make it more about him, I don’t think I probably handled it well, than them being different that he was that kind of person. If someone had red hair or was too skinny, there would still be a name, it was that kind of person. In high school, I saw our youngest child act out at a time when it wasn’t Korean, but it was something in the news and it kind of divided the kids in the class between the kids that were racist and the kids that weren’t. I didn’t get it at the time because they didn’t say what was going on at the time, but there was something going on then. I didn’t
ask the kids are you experiencing any of that and I guess that was a fault, I should have. My loved ones are so troubled by racism and have been active against racism. I guess I’m just naïve, I like expect good of people, I don’t realize how negative people can be?

Yet another example of a parent who did not ask their child, instead waited for their TRIA to come to them about their issues.

They continued by saying, “I didn’t understand the depths of what could be racism, because it makes no sense to me. I understand the stereotypes, but I don’t understand cruelty, I don’t get it. I probably didn’t realize how bad some people can be, racist.” Herein lies why Hrapczynski and Leslie (2018) asserted that “parents with greater awareness of institutional racism were more likely to engage in preparation for bias” (p. 354). They also indicated that if adoptive parents participated in racial socialization, it would foster their TRIAs’ racial-ethnic identity development, help their self-esteem, and help them cope with discrimination. Depending on how Blake’s TRIAs had reacted to the racial incidents, they may not have been able to cope with them. When I asked Blake if they had heard about parental colorblindness and what it meant to them, they answered, “Yes, to me it means that color isn’t an issue, you see people the same regardless of what color they are.” They continued by saying:

To me, it seemed like the goal was more assimilating the children into what we were. They offered the picnics and the Holts themselves adopted like 16 children from Korea or something like that, but they didn’t dwell on that. It was more assimilating the kids into our family, our lives, whatever we were, like our kids (emphasizes) regardless of what color kids they were. I think some of that had to do with the times and unawareness. Maybe I am wrong about this, but I don’t think of our Korean children as people of color, I consider them as Asian. I think of Black people as people of color. Is that not right? I
initially told my parents who made excuses for the ones who hurled racial slurs to me. I answered their followup question and corrected them by telling them that all minorities are people of color. Honestly, I was a little mystified with the question.

**Theme 2: The Need to Assimilate and Fit in With TRIAs’ Biological Culture**

The second theme, the need for adoptees’ to assimilate and fit in with the TRIAs’ biological culture resonated throughout my study. I have already referenced this above. According to Blake, “I always got the feeling that the kids were more interested in assimilating with their classmates and our family.” Adoptive parents were told by Holt that “the goal was more to assimilate the children into what we were.” Blake also told their story about how their child no longer speaking their native language. They said “we English now” and stopped. They also recalled how their child would make family drawings and they would always make the people with round eyes. This is telling, because their child has slanted eyes, but they have round eyes. According to Blake, “I wouldn’t say assimilate, but you become more Americanized.”

This is why I included American or Americanized with this theme.

Besides assimilating and fitting in, Ash spoke of wanting to be an American several times during their interview. They spoke of wanting to be American when I asked why their family stopped going to cultural events, and later they said “I just wanted to be like my loved ones, you know, Americans.” When Ash described their cultural belonging and they spoke about going to their biological country, they said, “You know when you grow up in America, you become American” and spoke of being Americanized. Ash also spoke of the need to fit in and being American together, so when I asked if they believed their parents could have helped them identify with their biological culture, they said, “I wanted to fit in and be American, so I think they might have done more if I showed more interest but I didn’t. I wanted to be American, my
friends were American.”

In my own interview, I also spoke of being Americanized and being American like Ash. I said I was too Americanized and that is why I never tried to search for my biological parents. I referenced to being American when I stated how I celebrate American culture like American holidays, eat American food, and listen to American music.

Conclusion

Throughout the narrative stories as told by my participants and myself, I was given a clearer understanding of how these TRIAs’ adoptive identities have been influenced by their lived experiences and parental outcomes based on Chang, Feldman, and Easley’s (2017) study of transracial adoptees’ identity development. Considering my family’s lack of communication and openness to talk about issues, I have chosen to be forthcoming when it comes to my own child. I am honest and open, perhaps too much, but I would rather be that than not communicating with them. I do not want my child to feel they cannot talk to me about their personal issues or I cannot ask them about theirs. Through my participants’ personal stories, I realized I am not alone when it comes to having a family that does not talk openly about personal/family issues.

Through Ash’s narrative, I comprehended the parallel of multiple identities as referenced by Hoffman and Pena (2013) and Baden and Steward (2000). As Ash told their story when they were a child, they wanted to be American, but as an adult, they researched their Asian culture. When Ash answered how they described their cultural belonging, they said, “I’m an American who is Asian. I’m an Asian American. I am proud of both cultures. I identify with both, I think I am both. I feel Asian. I feel I’m Asian and I’m American” (sic). They also relayed their American traits and their Asian traits.
I came to the realization through my study participants’ stories, that I identify with American culture over any other, because I grew up in it and it was all that I knew. I chose not to “get over” the Korean traditions that I disliked, in order to discover Korean culture more. However, I do not feel as though I fit in as an American either, because of the racism I experienced throughout my childhood, and even as an adult. Visibly, I feel I am not accepted because I look Korean and have been called racial slurs by my adopted culture. Chang, Feldman, and Easley (2017) described how Asian adoptees were verbally attacked and singled out because of their physical features or insinuated as being ethnic stereotypes. In my opinion, to be part of a culture, is to be accepted by that same culture.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

All my life, I thought my adoption story was complete. Through the stories my loved ones provided, I learned new information about my adoption. Stories that may have been lost, if they had not been told for my study. As has been done from the beginning of time, stories have told people’s histories, even before paper and pen were invented. This is why stories are also known as artifacts in qualitative research. This is why in Chapter 1 when I referenced my adoption story, I wrote “The End” because the story is short and no actual details about my adoption were given me by my parents.

Through the narratives in my interviews, I was able to determine that TRIAs’ cultural, ethnic, and racial identity can change throughout their life span, as I noticed about my own pattern. As a child, I identified with my adopted culture, then as an adolescent, I questioned it because of the racism I experienced. Finally, as an adult, I abandoned my adopted culture and felt I was cultureless, not fitting into any. I feel like a mutt, like one who does not belong to any one pedigree, which is how I have always referred to myself. I never identified with my biological culture except for my physical traits. As a young child, technically and hopefully, children have parents who can give them guidance, especially for adoptees, who rely on their parents to tell them about their biological culture. Lee (2003) noted that parenting responsibilities shift from the parents to the child, as the former age. A child’s adoptive identity depends on their parents’ involvement in cultural activities and events and their parents openness about their adoption and their biological culture and ethnicity. As adolescents, adoptees are influenced by their peers, their parents, and the possibility of initiating their own research on their biological culture. As an adult, their influences transform into their own initiative through possible interactions in college with cultural events and activities and through initiating their
own research into their biological culture.

If TRIAs explore their biological culture, the results can produce a positive identity (Chang, Feldman, & Easley, 2017). And if their adoptive parents discuss their racial differences and inequalities with them, they will have a better understanding of racial bias and institutional racism (Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018).

Drawing from my interviews and narrative analysis, I was able to successfully answer my first research question on how transracial international adoptees describe their cultural belonging in comparison to their parents’ position. In Chapter 4, I included Ash’s answer to this question, as like many other TRIAs, they identify with both American and Asian culture. However, when I pried further and questioned if there was a cultural identity box and an American box and they could only pick one, Ash chose American. So, with that answer, Ash’s cultural belonging is the same as their parents’ position. As for myself, as a participant in this study as a TRIA, I do not identify with my parents’ position, American culture. As I stated previously, to belong to a culture, one has to feel accepted by that culture, and I do not feel accepted by American culture.

My final research question was how the lived experiences of transracial international adoptees help them identify with one or more descriptions in Baden and Steward’s Cultural-Racial Identity Model (2000). While examining Figure 4: Depictions of the 16 cells of the Cultural-Racial Identity Model (Baden & Steward, 2000), the identity status that best suits me is the Culturally Undifferentiated-Racially Undifferentiated Identity, which is defined as:

Not affiliated primarily with either their own or their parents’ racial ethnic groups’ cultures. Instead, they are high in their knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in multiple cultures including their own and their parents’ racial ethnic groups as well as other racial ethnic groups. Feel most comfortable with individuals of multiple racial
ethnic groups. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which multiple racial groups’ cultures were represented. May have been exposed to members of multiple racial ethnic groups and to role models from multiple racial ethnic groups. A “human” identity may have been endorsed by parents. (p. 329)

I was impressed that there was an identity status in Baden and Steward’s model that aligned with how I see myself. I do not associate with my adopted or biological culture. I do associate with other minorities groups. I feel more comfortable with other racial groups, and have found role models in other ethnic groups.

When it comes to Ash, I cannot correctly state their identity status because during their interviews, I did not have a copy of the Cultural-Racial Identity Model. For Blake, they are adoptive parents, so they are exempt. This in turn is a weakness of my study, which I will include in my final analysis. Nevertheless, from their answers to my interview questions, I can theorize which identity status is closest to what their narrative stories revealed. I believe that Ash’s closest identity status is Bicultural-Biracial Identity (Baden & Steward, 2000), that is, possesses:

- High in knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort in the culture of both their own and their parents’ racial ethnic groups and feel most comfortable with individuals of either their own racial ethnic group or their parents’ racial ethnic group. May have been raised in a neighborhood in which both the adoptees’ and the parents’ racial groups’ culture predominated, and were exposed to many members of their parents’ racial group and role models from both their own racial group and their parents’ racial group. (p. 330)

Ash stated in their interview that they like both American and Asian culture in which they actively indulge. They also loved the predominately White community they grew up in,
although their best friend is Asian and their ex-partner was Asian. Again, through their own words in Chapter 4, I believe they are identified with both their biological and adoptive culture.

When I started my master’s program, this topic was my first choice for my Creative Component. I switched subjects earlier on though in hopes of doing a field research study, but unfortunately that did not happen. While taking my last course, HD FS 504 Qualitative Research Methods, I returned to the project I was passionate about, with the assistance of my professor, Dr. Amanda Hardy. She saw my passion when I spoke about my adoption process and encouraged me to follow my heart.

I thought I knew everything in regard to my adoption and how my participants would answer my interview questions. I was wrong. The literature review provided me with knowledge on transracial adoption and families that I was unaware of. The literature helped me comprehend the thoughts and feelings I had in regard to my own transracial international adoption. Especially those feelings of abandonment and loss I felt when I was a child. Hoffman and Pena (2013) who researched adoption issues and included feelings of loss and grief have indicated that they are birthed from feelings of abandonment. When I was younger and my parents would go out to dinner alone, I would walk around the house until they returned. Many times I would call the restaurant if I knew which one they were going to and ask to speak to them. Before I fell asleep from crying, I would write a note asking them to wake me up when they came home. There were times I would fall asleep at the front door waiting for them to come home. As I grew older, those feelings subsided but have never fully gone away. I never spoke about my feelings of abandonment and found out that other TRIAs felt the same, including Cianfrocca (2010) who said she constantly had feelings of abandonment but did not discuss them with her loved ones either.
Now, I have a clearer understanding of cultural, ethnic, and racial identities and how they can affect a TRIA and their families. As an adult reliving my childhood through the telling of my stories, I saw my transformation throughout my lifespan. I went from wanting to assimilate and fit into American society and culture as a child, then during my late adolescence, started to gravitate towards another culture, other than my biological or adopted one—where I am now, a person who does not feel she belongs to any specific culture. Again, I feel like a mutt: I have Korean and American identities and cultures running through me, but I do not belong to either.

There were certain challenges during my study. The first was my primary angst is confidentiality is of the utmost importance to IRB guidelines, and for that reason alone, I was unable to identify my study participants. I feel that my research would have been enriched had I been able to do so. I could have written more freely during my own interview when telling of my lived and family stories.

Another challenge I faced was in remembering my stories from childhood. As a middle-aged adult now, my memory is not as sharp as it once was. I also wanted the stories that I told to be useful for my research. Coinciding with this challenge was wondering if my memories and my perceptions from my childhood were correct. This was not necessarily negative, but something I assumed I knew, but was uncertain about. I was almost cocky believing I knew all my family history and that I would not find out anything new. This was a truly a humbling experience. These are examples of how I brought my own “baggage” to my study.

Conducting an autoethnography has its own challenges; one is knowing your participants, personally, which I did. This is also a strength because the participants feel at ease and know that you, as the researcher, have the same lived experiences as theirs. However, there were challenges. While interviewing my loved ones, I did not maintain professionalism a couple of
times, and as the researcher, you should always be professional. Another challenge of knowing your participants personally is that you know most of their stories. During my interviews, if my participants did not tell a story that I knew about, or that would benefit my research, I would ask them questions to get them to divulge the information. At one point, I felt like a manipulator or a puppet master when trying to elicit what I wanted or needed to know from them.

As I sit back and reflect on my study, I am satisfied with my decision to research my adoption process and my journey in learning my adoption identities. If I had to do it over again, I would still choose the same research topic and methods. Learning about myself and my loved ones was emotional, but uplifting as well. It helped me understand myself as a TRIA and my thoughts and actions thus far. It has given me clarification, and I am at peace with the person I am today and my personal journey as a TRIA.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

My study has several strengths and weaknesses. Most of the strengths I list are true because my research is about TRIAs and I am one. One strength I had was that I was considered trustworthy because I am, and my participants know me because they are my loved ones and know me personally. A corresponding strength of being trustworthy in this study is that I chose an autoethnography as my research method. So I was the researcher and a participant in this study. My two other study participants could find it reassuring that I have similar lived experiences to theirs. Transracial adoptions, whether domestic or international, are a sensitive topic because of race, but it helped that I am another minority.

My last thought regarding the strengths of my study is that as a TRIA, I could help others who are confused about their adoption identities and feel, as I do, as if they do not belong in either culture that was ascribed to them. Also, I may have helped current adoptive parents who
may have questions about their child and about teaching them about their biological culture or not. I could possibly help potential adoptive parents by assisting them with what they may endure when adopting a TRIA. I could help them understand the importance of teaching their child their biological culture and frequently attending cultural events and activities. Lee et al.’s (2016) study included enculturation behaviors and measured the direct enculturation of children who participated in seven cultural activities. Their results showed that recently adopting families are more attuned to the importance of cultural socialization and have more resources than previous generations (Lee et al., 2016). This is consistent with my transracial experience, since I was adopted in 1977 when there were few resources or opportunities to gain cultural knowledge and understanding, especially because I lived in a small rural community.

There were several weaknesses in my study. The primary one, which I made reference to earlier in this chapter, is that I did not have a copy of Baden and Steward’s Cultural-Racial Identity Model when I interviewed Ash. Since I realized it too late, I was unable to follow up with Ash, because of my limited time. So, answering my last research question was only partially successful. Adding to this, Blake was not adopted, so the last research questions were not applicable to them. Therefore, I should have chosen a research question that was applicable to all of my participants.

Another weakness of my study is that I was unable to identify my participants as I have previously stated. I feel that my study could have been stronger had I been able to identify my participants. This could be a weakness also in that I only identified two themes, so other researchers may find that I was not detailed enough. However, my first theme had several sub-topics, which I went into detail about.
While writing my Creative Component, I encountered limitations I had not thought of. Not being able to identify my participants, as I spoke of under strengths and weaknesses. I referenced not being able to speak or write freely as the researcher and the other participants, my loved ones, were unable to do the same. Since I did not record my own “interview,” I did not have a record of my facial expressions or the tones of my voice. This hindered my research. Another limitation was that the Cultural-Racial Identity Model does not address gender, race, or age of the adoptees.

Time was a limitation for my Creative Component as well. It made me question if I should have extended my graduation to Fall and then I would have had more time to research and write this autoethnography. Perhaps all researchers feel the same way, with the vast amounts of literature available to us. Research bias also comes to play when the researcher is the participant as well. So, readers can think my research is one-sided even though I interviewed two of my loved ones. Autoethnographers may be criticized for being narcissistic, self-indulgent, introspective, and individualized and that the lack of thick description threatens to substitute for a sociological view of life (Wall, 2006).

**Future Research**

Since there is limited research on transracial international adoption, there are countless areas for further research. As a TRIA myself, I will name several topics that I feel are important for further study. If there was an actual study to test Baden and Seward’s (2000) hypotheses regarding the Cultural-Racial Identity Model, that would be informative. Further research is needed on children’s ethnic identity and their parents’ responsibility to provide cultural experiences which can affect how they identify with their biological culture. More extensive research is needed about parental cultural socialization, especially related to TRIAs. One is to
study parents’ racial attitudes and beliefs and how they contribute to their practices within the family as they affect their adoptees. Another study is needed to compare mental health issues as related to cultural and racial socialization in adopting families. A study of how TRIAs and their parents handled cultural socialization and its affects as they became adults would be valuable (Lee et al., 2006). According to Anderson (2015), future research is needed to determine the long-term outcomes of transracial placement, psychologically and medically. With the first wave of TRIAs now middle aged and beyond, more research could be done on their lived experiences throughout their lifespan. Finally, I think a long-term cumulative case study of TRIAs and how their adoptive identities change or stay the same throughout their lifespan could also be valuable.
References


APPENDIX A. Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: I look Asian. I was raised by Whites. I feel Cultureless. An Autoethnographic Case Study Approach on International Transracial Adoption Loss of Cultural Identity.

Investigator: Sarah Frette

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate—please review it carefully. Research studies include only people who choose to take part—your participation is voluntary. You can decline to participate at any time during the research process.

You are encouraged to ask questions about the study before signing this form. Please ask the investigator, Sarah Frette, any questions you have about the study and this form before deciding to participate. Sarah can be reached through her secure, university-monitored, and password-protected Iowa State e-mail account at ablssian@iastate.edu, or her cell phone at 515-451-4558. You can also contact her supervising co-major professors, by emailing either Dr. Diana Lang (dianabl1@iastate.edu), or Dr. Tera Jordan (trh@iastate.edu). Dr. Jordan can also be reached by phone at 515-294-9804.

Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how transracial international adoptees describe their cultural belonging and their lived experiences. Autoethnographies are useful research methods to make the investigator’s own experience a topic of study and attend to feelings, thoughts, emotions, and ways of understanding a way of life (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

The Cultural-Racial Identity Model was developed to depict “the unique identity experiences of those reared in racially and/or culturally integrated families” and “allow distinctions to be made between racial identity and cultural identity” (Baden & Steward, 2000, p. 309). Baden and Steward (2000) wrote:

The model allows distinctions to be made between racial identity and cultural identity. These distinctions comprise 16 proposed identities of transracial adoptees and are made up of the degrees to which they have knowledge of, awareness of, competence within, and comfort with their own racial group’s culture, their parents’ racial group’s culture, and multiple cultures as well as the degree to which they are comfortable with their racial group membership and with those belonging to their own racial group, their parents’ racial group, and multiple racial groups. A model for understanding the role of parents, extended families, and social and environmental contexts was also presented as a guide for demonstrating the factors impacting the cultural racial identities of transracial adoptees or others from racially and/or culturally integrated families (p. 309).

The research method for this project is an autoethnographic case study of the investigator’s lived experiences as a transracial international adoptee.
Eligibility to Participate

This case study is about the investigator’s lived experience as a transracial international adoptee. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are related to the investigator. You should not participate if you do not wish to share your experiences with the investigator.

Description of Study Procedures

To begin participation in the study, the investigator will review the Informed Consent document with you to ensure you are well informed about the nature, intent, and goals of this study. If you agree to participate, you will take part in one interview. The investigator will conduct your interview using Zoom, a video conferencing software that can be accessed through signing up for a free account on Zoom’s website. The investigator will ask if you are willing to participate using Zoom for your interview by e-mail and ask you to send your response by e-mail to have written documentation of your response. The investigator will send you a Zoom link to your e-mail. Zoom software has a security feature that allows the investigator to lock the meeting while the interviews are being conducted to ensure your confidentiality. As a back-up, the investigator will also record the interview(s) using Olympus digital audio recorder. At the conclusion of the interview, the Zoom and Olympus files will be immediately uploaded to CyBox, a university-monitored, password-protected, and cloud-based file storage system. Only the investigator and the supervising faculty members will have access to your files. After the investigator transcribes your interview(s), she will provide you with your interview transcript(s). You will have your own CyBox folder that will allow you to access transcripts; access will be limited to only you and the approved research team members. You will have exclusive access to this CyBox folder via an online link. After transcription, the interview files will be deleted from Zoom and the Olympus digital audio recorder that was used to conduct the interview.

The investigator will ask about your lived experiences with adoption, your exposure to cultural information, your cultural and racial identification, and whether you have experienced any racism, stereotypes, and/or micro-aggression. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to refer to family and friends as “loved ones” instead of referring them by their name or relation (e.g., family, friends). The investigator will make note of your emotions (e.g., including but not limited to happy, sad, confused, angry, and surprised) and/or behaviors by focusing on your facial expressions, your voice tones and pitch, and your body language. If any emotion is detected, the investigator will confirm with you what type of emotion you are feeling and why. Your acknowledgment is required, in order for the investigator not to instill in her perspective.

You should only reflect on your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences and not “voice” your perceptions of others’ beliefs, emotions, and reflections. That is, you are encouraged not to mind read. You are strongly advised to speak only for yourself. If you make any statement(s) about third parties, this information will be removed from the transcripts and hence, the analyses.

After the interview is completed, the investigator will ask you to review a Post-Interview Consent Form. This form will give you an opportunity to provide written permission on how you wish your own reflections on your lived experiences are shared and if you wish to continue to participate in the study. Once you have reviewed and signed, you will send the signed form back to the investigator by e-mail.
After the investigator completes the interview, she will transcribe your audio recordings and upload your interview in your exclusive CyBox folder. To gain access to CyBox, the investigator will send you an e-mail with an individualized link to view your own transcript(s).

She will ask you to read the transcript(s) and correct any misinformation. This procedure is called member checking. It gives you an opportunity to review your transcript(s) and edit any content by removing, replacing, or clarifying information. You will have one week to review your transcript(s) and send any corrections to the investigator via e-mail to document your revisions. The investigator will also ask you to e-mail if you still wish to participate in the research study and ask you to send your response by e-mail to have written documentation of your response.

As the investigator works to analyze the data, she may ask you follow-up questions to clarify information that you provided in your interview(s). This follow-up could last approximately one-half hour and can be conducted via Zoom videoconferencing technology. Though the investigator only anticipates one follow-up interview, as many as five follow-ups may occur.

After the investigator completes a write-up of the research study, she will e-mail you a link to view in CyBox. You will have one week to review the document. If you have any corrections or concerns, you should e-mail the investigator to document these revisions. Then, the investigator will share this draft with her Creative Component Committee members. If the committee members request any revisions, she will contact you again to provide you an opportunity to comment on proposed revisions before the document is sent to the Graduate College and stored in the university library’s collection.

Despite efforts to maintain confidentiality (e.g., not using names and not stating relationships), it is reasonable that someone familiar with the family could deduce your identity.

**Expected Time or Duration of Participation**

Your participation in the initial interview will last up to an hour. The investigator may conduct a follow-up interview with you that could last up to 30 minutes. Each time you review a transcript or a draft of the Creative Component paper, this could take 30 minutes to 2 hours to review.

**Risks or Discomforts**

While participating in this study, you may experience the following emotional or psychological discomfort, embarrassment, and/or stigma about adoption or other sensitive questions. Common concerns may include sadness, anger, confusion, anxiety, and/or guilt.

There may be a discomfort in the relationship you share with the investigator or other family members as you offer your honest reflections about your lived experiences during the interviews. If you feel at any time you need to seek professional guidance, here is a list of trained and professional therapists you can contact.

1. Ames Counseling and Psychological Services: 3600 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50014. Phone: (515) 239-4410. Here is their website link: [https://www.amespsych.com/](https://www.amespsych.com/)

At any time during the interview, you can choose not to answer any questions, take a break, and/or decide to decline participation in the study. You can contact the investigator or the supervising faculty members at the information previously provided.

**Benefits to You and Others**

This study has the potential to provide you with personal benefits as well as positively impact society. Some personal benefits may include, but not limited to, finding your “voice,” sharing your lived experiences, helping others understand your life experiences, and providing insight about family dynamics. A societal benefit includes assisting international transracial families understand cultural identities that are associated with adoption. Therefore, participating in this effort may also be a way for you to do something meaningful for not only yourself, but also the world (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

**Your Rights as a Research Participant**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you withdraw from the study early, only a phone call or e-mail is necessary to inform the investigator.

If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

**Confidentiality**

Research records will not be made publicly available without your permission. However, it is possible that other people and offices responsible for making sure research is done safely and responsibly will see your information. This includes federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

At the conclusion of the interview, the Zoom and Olympus files will be immediately uploaded to CyBox, a university-monitored, password-protected, and cloud-based file storage system. Only the investigator and the supervising faculty members will have access to these files. After the investigator transcribes your interview, she will provide you with your interview transcript. You will have your own CyBox folder that will allow you to access transcripts; access will be limited to only you and the approved research team members. You will have exclusive access to this CyBox folder via an online link. After transcription, the interview files will be deleted from Zoom and the Olympus digital audio recorder that was used to conduct the interview.
Audio/video will be deleted but other data (e.g., transcripts) will be stored in CyBox and all meaningful identifiers removed. Despite efforts to maintain confidentiality (e.g., not using names and not stating relationships), it is reasonable that someone familiar with the family could deduce the subject’s identity. Transcripts will remain on file and de-identified until the work is disseminated through peer-review journal articles or related outlets. After the work proceeds through peer review and is accepted for publication, then transcripts (and hence, all study data and records) will be deleted.

**Future Use of Your Information**

Transcripts will remain on file and de-identified until the work is disseminated through peer-review journal articles or related outlets. After the work proceeds through peer review and is accepted for publication, then transcripts (and hence, all study data and records) will be deleted.

**Questions**

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, contact the investigator, Sarah Frette through her Iowa State e-mail account ablasian@iastate.edu or by phone at 515-451-4558. You can also contact the supervising co-major professors, by emailing either Dr. Diana Lang (dianabl@iastate.edu), or Dr. Tera Jordan (trh@iastate.edu). You can also call Dr. Tera Jordan at 515-294-9804.

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to participate in this study. Make sure you understand what the study involves before you sign. If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this document, and e-mail it to the investigator’s secure Iowa State e-mail account at ablasian@iastate.edu.

☐ I certify that I am 18 years of age or over and agree to participate in this research study.

Participant’s Name (printed) __________________________________________

Participant’s Signature ___________________________ Date ______________
APPENDIX B. Post-Informed Consent

POST-INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: I look Asian. I was raised by Whites. I feel Cultureless. An Autoethnographic Case Study Approach on Transracial International Adoption Loss of Cultural Identity

Investigator: Sarah Frette

Future Use of Your Information

The investigator’s goal is to use the information that you have shared responsibly. Now that you have completed the interview, the investigator would like to give you the opportunity to provide her with additional feedback on how you prefer to have your data handled. Please check one of the following statements:

____ You may share the information just as I provided it; however, please do not use my real name.

____ You may share the information I provided; however, please do not use my real name and please change details that might make me identifiable to others. In particular, it is my wish that the following specific pieces of my data not be shared without first altering the data so as to make me unidentifiable. Please describe all data that you wish to be changed in the space below:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to share your information consistent with the response that you checked above. If you have any questions about these procedures after you agree to participate, contact the investigator, Sarah Frette, through her Iowa State e-mail account at ablasiar@iastate.edu or call her cell phone at 515-451-4558. You can also contact Sarah’s supervising co-major professors, by emailing either Dr. Diana Lang (dianabl@iastate.edu) or Dr. Tera Jordan (trh@iastate.edu). You can also call Dr. Jordan 515-294-9804.

Participant’s Name (printed) ________________________________

Participant’s Signature ____________________________________ Date ____________

This form has been adapted from Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. Qualitative Health Research, 19(11): 1632-1641.
APPENDIX C. Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script per Phone Call

Hello,

I am researching transracial international adoptees' loss of cultural identity. My research is an autoethnographic case study about my relatives' lived experiences with adoption. You are invited to participate in the study. If you agree, you are invited to participate in one interview that should take no more than an hour. The interview(s) will be done remotely using a software called Zoom. I will help you set up Zoom if you wish to participate. I will send an e-mail from my Iowa State e-mail account with a link provided that you can click on when it is time for our interview. The total hours of commitment to this study could take up to 4-8 hours depending on follow-up interviews and editing of your transcript and a write-up of the research study if needed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will be held confidential. If you would like to participate, ask me to send you the Informed Consent so that you can read more details about your participation. If you wish to think about it, you can contact me later. But also, if you do not want to take part, that is okay as well. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Thank you for your participation,

Sarah Frette
Iowa State University
Masters in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies
APPENDIX D. Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

Participant 1 and Researcher

1. Describe when you realized that you were adopted.
2. Tell me about what types of cultural activities did you participate in growing up.
3. Tell me about any types of racism, stereotypes, and/or micro-aggressions you experienced while growing up.
4. Tell me how you define cultural and racial identity.
5. Tell me if your parents talked about your birth culture growing up.
6. Tell me if your parents talked about race growing up.
7. Tell me how you describe your cultural belonging.

Participant 2

1. Tell me about your adoption process.
2. Tell me about your decision on when to tell your children they were adopted.
3. Tell me about what types of cultural activities you and your family participated in.
4. Tell me about any types of racism, stereotypes, and/or micro-aggressions your children faced growing up.
5. Tell me how you define cultural and racial identity.
6. Tell me what you think your children identify with culturally and racially.
7. Tell me how you describe your children’s cultural belonging.
APPENDIX E. IRB Approval

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515-294-4566

Date: 05/13/2020
To: Sarah Frette Tera R Jordan, PhD
From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: I look Asian. I was raised by Whites. I feel Cultureless. An Autoethnographic Case Study Approach on Transracial International Adoption Loss of Cultural Identity.

IRB ID: 20-091
Submission Type: Initial Submission Review Type: Full Committee
Approval Date: 05/13/2020 Approval Expiration Date: N/A

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- Use only the approved study materials in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.

- **Retain signed informed consent documents** for 3 years after the close of the study, when documented consent is required.

- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study or study materials.

- Promptly inform the IRB of any addition of or change in federal funding for this study. Approval of the protocol referenced above applies only to funding sources that are specifically identified in the corresponding IRB application.

- Inform the IRB if the Principal Investigator and/or Supervising Investigator end their role or involvement with the project with sufficient time to allow an alternate PI/Supervising Investigator to assume oversight responsibility. Projects must have an eligible PI to remain open.

- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

- IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. Approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are

IRB 10/2019
protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

- Your research study may be subject to post-approval monitoring by Iowa State University’s Office for Responsible Research. In some cases, it may also be subject to formal audit or inspection by federal agencies and study sponsors.

- Upon completion of the project, transfer of IRB oversight to another IRB, or departure of the PI and/or Supervising Investigator, please initiate a Project Closure to officially close the project. For information on instances when a study may be closed, please refer to the IRB Study Closure Policy.

If your study requires continuing review, indicated by a specific Approval Expiration Date above, you should:

- Stop all human subjects research activity if IRB approval lapses, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Human subjects research activity can resume once IRB approval is re-established.

- Submit an application for Continuing Review at least three to four weeks prior to the Approval Expiration Date as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.
### APPENDIX F. Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Code 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>My adoption was never discussed in my family</td>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>My parents never talked about us being adopted or that we were from another country</td>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I don’t think we participated in many cultural activities because of where we lived</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>predominately White community and surrounding communities, there wasn’t any cultural events</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I was immersed with the White culture I grew up</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I had White friends, ate American food, and listened to American music</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I feel I had abandonment issues</td>
<td>ADOPTION ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I didn’t ask to come to America</td>
<td>ADOPTION ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I felt accepted into their culture</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I felt part of my community</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I experienced racism and stereotyping</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I was called racial slurs</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>more shell shocked then upset about the racial names</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>After the lack of support, I never told them of any other racist situations I experienced</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I felt my loved ones were racist towards Black people</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Racism was always a tough topic growing up or either a non-topic when I was younger</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>disassociating myself with White people because of my own personal experiences and my friends’ experiences</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I feel like a mutt who doesn’t belong to one race</td>
<td>CULTURELESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Racially, I look Asian, but don’t identify with Asian culture</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I feel alone and left out without identifying with any culture</td>
<td>CULTURELESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>they never spoke of racism, discrimination, or stereotyping</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Society considers me Asian because that is what I look like physically</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I had to deal with racism on my own and that made me resentful</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>They also believe race does not matter</td>
<td>COLORBLINDNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>grow up thinking they are the same race as their parents and society tells them differently</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I feel my parents participated in colorblindness</td>
<td>COLORBLINDNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I do not remember my parent’s talking about my birth culture</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I do not recall any discussions as a young child about Korea</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I believe I was too Americanized that I didn’t search for my biological parents and family</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>didn’t feel anything when I found out my biological parents were dead</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I didn’t feel the need to meet my biological siblings</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>No, my parents did not talk about race to me</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I grew up thinking I was the same race as my parents and the homogenous community I lived in as a young child</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I don’t feel like I belong to any cultural group</td>
<td>CULTURELESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I am not Asian enough because I only look it, I don’t speak Korean or know about Korean culture</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I am definitely not White, but know American culture</td>
<td>ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I have been in America for over 40 years, I am Americanized</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Asian people were depicted negatively and made them look like goof balls and dumb</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>What I know about Korean culture is not a lot</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I never researched Korean culture</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Their strict traditional views and way of living is not who I am</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I am Americanized because I have I have lived in American for over 40 years</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>feel like I only had American culture to identify with</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>I don’t identify with American or Korean culture</td>
<td>CULTURELESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I’m different than my parents and everybody else</td>
<td>RACIAL IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I always knew I was adopted</td>
<td>ADOPTION ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Holt picnics for a couple of years</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>in my hometown there isn’t anything else or in the surrounding towns</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>My parents, planned International dinners</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>My parent learned how to make Chinese food</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I wanted to be American</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I just wanted to be like my loved ones you know, Americans</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Being American, you know talk English and eat American food</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>“where did you come from” or “where are you from.”</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>they called me the wrong slur, the wrong racist remark</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I first felt discrimination</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I cannot blatantly say it was racism because of my race, RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>why would them talking to me solve racism (scoffs) with other people? RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I never got racism in my hometown, they never treated me differently than other people RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>My hometown has treated me good ADOPTED CULTURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>why my parents never talk to me about racism because I never felt it in my hometown RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I don’t think it’s racism I felt but discrimination RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I wanted fit in ASSIMILATE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>parents treated me different than their own child then what’s the point of being adopted COLORBLINDNESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>When you adopt a child you treat them as your own COLORBLINDNESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>even if our parents talked to us about racism RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>even if my parents raised us with colorblindness, I dealt with it COLORBLINDNESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I should have talked to my parents COMMUNICATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I was born Korean, but I grew up in America ADOPTION ISSUES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>called me names because of my Asian ethnicity RACISM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I love the fact that I am Korean, I love Korean culture, Korean food, but I also love American culture BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I feel proud to be both cultures, from both cultures CULTURAL IDENTITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I think my race defines my culture CULTURAL IDENTITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>what race you are is what your culture is CULTURAL IDENTITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I guess it kind of ties together, race and culture CULTURAL IDENTITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>what your race is, the culture comes with it and the language culture, all ties together CULTURAL IDENTITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I don’t know if they really specifically talked about Korea COMMUNICATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I wanted to fit in and be American AMERICAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I wanted to be American, my friends were American AMERICAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I said that “no more English” AMERICAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>we don’t speak anymore Korean, we going to speak English to my parents AMERICAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I didn’t want to learn about Korean culture BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>was never something I was interested in, the Korean culture because I wanted to be American AMERICAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I think my parents did not talk to me more about my Korean heritage COMMUNICATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>all about hierarchy, it’s all about age, and it’s about prestige BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>not to speak up because they were older that you shouldn’t speak back to them BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I grew up the Korean society that would have been totally normal BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I’m an American who is Korean. I’m a Korean American</td>
<td>ADOPTION IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I am proud of both cultures. I identify with both, I think I am both</td>
<td>ADOPTION IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>when you grow up in America you become American</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I lived in America for 43 years, so I identify with the American culture</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>The way I grew up in America, I appreciate it</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>They would stop and say we “English now”</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>We did have rice sometimes</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>She worked so hard to learn English</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Korean church, a picnic of other families that adopted Korean</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>We got to those events and they just hid behind my skirts like they were scared to death</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>they were abandoned orphans</td>
<td>ADOPTION ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>They didn’t enjoy it, they didn’t want to go back</td>
<td>CULTURAL ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>I always got the feeling that the kids were more interested in assimilating with their classmates and our family</td>
<td>ASSIMILATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>I tried to make it more about him, I don’t think I probably handled it well</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>I didn’t ask the kids are you experiencing any of that</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>My loved ones are so troubled by racism and have been active against racism</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>color isn’t an issue, you see people the same regardless of what color they are</td>
<td>COLORBLINDNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>goal was more assimilating the children into what we were</td>
<td>ASSIMILATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>more assimilating the kids into our family, our lives</td>
<td>ASSIMILATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>I don’t think of our Korean children as people of color</td>
<td>COLORBLINDNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>oldest one would always make people with round eyes</td>
<td>AMERICAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>there was no support groups</td>
<td>ADOPTION ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>prejudice in Korean and other Asian countries about adoption</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>I stereotype Scandinavian people as being very stoic and not emotional and rigid</td>
<td>RACISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>very male dominated</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>lived on top of each other, there so squished there</td>
<td>BIOLOGICAL CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>I think they identify with both</td>
<td>ADOPTION IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G.  Themes

1. Adoption was not discuss because of race
2. Being Americanized
3. Lack of cultural activities in area adopted kids grew up in
4. Racism was not discussed in adopted family
5. Didn’t tell parents of racial incidences
6. Feeling of belonging to American culture
7. Acceptance into heterogeneous community
8. Assimilating to American culture
9. Wanting to fit in, be American
10. No discussion of biological race and culture in adopted family
11. Korean culture not appealing