Identities of transracial adoptees: Outsiders looking in?

Patricia G. Ramsey and Kalyn Mika

Mount Holyoke College (United States of America)

Título: Las identidades en las adopciones interraciales. ¿Espectadores extraños?
Resumen: En este estudio se analizó cómo, con frecuencia, en las adopciones interraciales los adoptados se identifican como *'fuera de lugar'* así como los factores que influyen en esta percepción. Participaron cinco universitarias coreanas adoptadas a las que se les realizó entrevistas en profundidad sobre su identidad racial/cultural y sobre cómo la habían formado. En sus respuestas aparecieron varios contenidos relacionados con la sensación de sentirse *'extraño'* o *'fuera de lugar'*. Aunque las participantes manifestaron tener relaciones estrechas con sus familias adoptivas y amigos estadounidenses, también relataron haber vivido experiencias y sucesos que afectaron negativamente estas relaciones. Del mismo modo, señalaron que cuando habían intentado unirse a grupos de asiáticos, se sintieron a menudo excluidas debido a su falta de familiaridad con la cultura y la lengua coreanas. Varias de ellas establecieron relaciones muy cercanas con otros jóvenes adoptados o con grupos de iguales multirraciales o multiculturales.
Palabras clave: Adopción interracial; identidad racial; contexto social; discriminación.

Abstract: This study focused on how transracial adoptees often identify as outsiders and what factors influence this perception. Five female Korean adoptees attending college participated in in-depth interviews about their racial/cultural identities and how they were formed. Several themes related to identifying as outsiders emerged in their responses. Although participants described close relationships with their adoptive families and European American friends, they also had experienced events and assumptions that undermined these connections. Likewise, when attempting to affiliate with Asian groups, they often felt excluded because of their lack of familiarity with Korean culture and language. Several found close connections with other adoptees or with multiracial or multicultural peer groups.
Key words: Transracial adoptees; racial identity; social context; discrimination.

Introduction

Over the past four decades people in the United States and in Europe have created families through increasingly diverse types of adoptions. This trend has influenced many aspects of family functioning and children's development. In this study we focus on how transracial adoptees in the United States navigate between their birth and adoptive identities and often feel like outsiders in both.

In the United States, adoptions are classified as either domestic or international. These groups are each subdivided into two other categories: in-racial adoptions and transracial adoptions (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2005; Trenka et al., 2006). Transracial adoption is defined as the "joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families" and encompasses the adoption of "black, Native American, Asian and Hispanic children by white families" (Silverman, 1993, p. 104).

Transracial adoptions in the United States began in the aftermath of World War II. The first international/transracial adoptions involved Amerasian children who were fathered by American GIs in Japan and China and adopted by the soldiers and their families (Macmillan Library Reference, 2004; Silverman, 1993). Also many Asian women, who lost their husbands in the war, were unable to raise their children alone and were forced to consider adoption as an option (Macmillan Library Reference, 2004). Between 1948 and 1962, American families had adopted approximately 3,000 Japanese and 840 Chinese children (Silverman, 1993).

The Korean War (1950-1953) reinvigorated interest in transracial adoptions in the United States (Silverman, 1993). Children fathered by American GIs during the war were adopted into American and European families because they were ostracized for their biracial heritage (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008). Furthermore Korean in-country adoptions were rare for two reasons. First, children who were born out of wedlock were often rejected. Second, a connection to the male side of the family is an important part of Korean heritage, and with an adopted child that link is missing (Kim, 2005; McGinness, 2007)

Religious groups sponsored many of these first Korean transracial adoptions (Macmillan Library Reference, 2004). Harry Holt, an Evangelical Christian adopted 8 Korean children and began to search for homes for other Korean children displaced by the war. He and his wife founded Holt International Adoption Agency (now called Holt International Children's Service), the largest international adoption program in the United States (Kim, 2006; Silverman, 1993). Americans adopted over 38,000 Korean children between 1953 and 1981. By 1990, 37% of transracial adoptees adopted into American families were from South Korea (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008). American families have continued to adopt approximately 1,000 to 2,000 Korean children each year (Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006). Because of the great influx of children during the time right after the Korean War, a lot of those adoptees are beginning to reach middle age and are beginning to have a voice in adoption policies and practices (Kim, 2005). Many adult adoptees serve as consultants to agencies and mentors to younger adoptees. They also have been in-

Dirección para correspondencia [Correspondence address]: Patricia G. Ramsey. Department of Psychology and Education. Mount Holyoke College, 50 College Street. South Hadley, MA 01075 USA.
E-mail: pramsey@mtholyoke.edu, kymika@mtholyoke.edu

strumental in organizing gatherings and internet groups of Korean adoptees that bring individuals together to share and voice their common concerns. While much has changed in the adoption process, many of their experiences are similar to those of a younger generation of Korean adoptees.

Starting in the 1950s, white Americans also began to adopt children of color from other countries and from communities in the United States. Political upheaval and severe poverty in Latin American led to a rise in foreign adoptions. American families now annually adopt almost 1,000 children from Central and South America each year (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2008). In the United States economic, social, and political discrimination has undermined Native American and black communities for many decades leading to high levels of poverty and family disruptions. As a result, many of their children have been placed in foster care and ultimately in white adoptive homes.

Although the numbers of transracial adoptions have increased over the past 4 decades, the practice has been controversial. At the beginning of this trend, many people assumed that placing a child of color into a white family would be detrimental and hinder the ability of the parents to love the child. It was a common belief that "…parents can more easily identify with a child who resembles them…the fact of adoptions should not be accentuated by placing a child with parents who are different from him" (Simon & Alstein, 2002, p.1). When Holt International Adoption Agency first started, it was criticized for bringing very sick children to the United States and for placing children in inadequate and unsuitable homes. There also was concern that the strong Christian orientation of the Holt organization meant that families were judged on their religious beliefs rather than on their ability to care for children (McGinnis, 2007). Moreover, some countries are ashamed to have many of their children adopted by outsiders because it shows the world that they cannot care for their young. In the 1970s and 1990s Korea passed legislation to limit international adoptions (Simon & Alstein, 1981). Several Latin American countries have either suspended or stopped international adoptions because of political pressures. In the 1970s, domestic transracial adoptions were condemned by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) and by Native American groups as a form of genocide that deprives struggling communities of their children and future generations (Silverman, 1993). Furthermore, some view all transracial adoptions as the ultimate form of exploitation, in that the rich white western families 'take' children who were born to the poor and powerless (Bartholet, 1993).

Despite these concerns, transracial adoptions have continued to increase, largely fueled by the growing infertility among affluent white couples and the declining number of domestic white babies available for adoption (Macmillan Library Reference, 2004; Ramsey, Cobb, Ryang Do, & Whyte, 2008; Trenka et al., 2006). Families often choose to cross racial and national lines to adopt children because the process is often quicker and less expensive than adopting a white baby born in the United States (Erera, 2002).

In addition to giving rise to political, moral, and legal concerns, transracial adoption has been the subject of debate among adoption specialists and mental health professionals. Many contend that transracial adoption significantly hinders the development of positive ethnic identity and therefore is detrimental to the child's welfare (Griffith & Bergeron, 2006; Hollingsworth, 1997). However, others argue that transracial adoptees develop positive ethnic identities, high self-esteem, and are able to successfully assimilate into their new culture (Friedlander, 2003). These two perspectives are discussed in more detail below.

Several scholars claim that transracial adoption potentially harms children because they have little or no contact with their ethnic group, which may lead to lower self-esteem, identity crises, and difficulty relating to their communities of origin (Brodzinsky, 1987; Trenka et al., 2006). Hollingsworth (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of six studies and concluded that transracial adoption produces a moderate negative effect on racial and ethnic identity. Transracial adoptees may experience a fair amount of confusion because, on one hand, they tend to identify more with their genetic ancestors (Baden, 2002; Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006). On the other hand, they have limited contact with members of that group. Thus, transracial adoptees may experience double rejection: they were relinquished by their biological parents and then are often isolated from their racial and cultural communities (Long, 2002). In their model of transracial adoptee identity development, Baden and Steward (2007) posit that racial and cultural identities may function as separate constructs. Because of their appearance and the way that others categorize them, transracial adoptees may identify with their birth race, whereas growing up in white middle class families may lead them to culturally define themselves as white or European American.

Transracial adoptees also may have trouble relating to their adoptive families and communities (Verhulst & Versluis-den Bieman, 1990), and as result experience psychological distress. Many studies have shown that children by the age of three become aware of racial differences (e.g., Ramsey & Myers, 1990; Ramsey, 1991) and the status differences among racial groups (e.g., Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; see MacNaugton & Davis, 2009 for a review). As transracial adoptees begin to notice racial differences, they start to realize that they do not look like their parents (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983) and may feel somewhat isolated or marginalized. However, because they lack contact with people who look like them, many try to blend into their white peer groups (McRoy & Zurzher Jr., 1983). However, these efforts are not without cost. One study revealed that Korean-American adoptees had lower self-esteem than white adoptees or Korean non-adoptees due to feelings of inferiority that stemmed from their inability to wholly as-

similate into the dominant European-American culture (Vonk, 2001).

For children adopted at older ages, their entry into their adoptive families and communities may be further complicated by the necessity to learn a new language. It can be especially difficult for children who were fluent speakers in their birth language. The process of re-learning a language is similar to an infant's process of learning its first language. Because they do not have the same language abilities as others their age, they may have more difficulty assimilating into peer groups (Snedeker, Geren, & Shafto, 2007).

Even though they are raised by white families, transracial adoptees grow up as people of color within the dominant white society. As many critical race theorists (e.g., Feagin, 2000; Kivel, 2002) have pointed out, in the United States whiteness is the invisible norm and a source of privilege and power; and other racial groups are often marginalized and seen as outsiders. In some respects, their experiences may be like those of other people of color, who often have to deal with racism, prejudice, and discrimination (Phinney & Kohatsu, 1999). In one study, 80% of transracial adoptees reported experiencing some form of racial discrimination (Simon & Altstein, 1992). Another study showed that transracial adoptees are more likely to be the targets of racist teasing than in-race adoptees (Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006).

Kirton (2005, cited in Harris, 2006) reported that transracial adoptees often feel unable to cope with racism and, as a result, experience an "uneasy relationship with Whiteness and an equally ambivalent one with 'community of origin', characterized by a powerful gravitational pull but also by distance and discomfort" (p. 90). The juxtaposition of privilege enjoyed by their white adoptive families and the racism suffered by their birth group may be especially disconcerting to transracial adoptees. In particular, their parents probably have not had any direct experience with racial discrimination and may neither understand nor prepare them for dealing with racism living as a "minority" in this society (Kim, 2005; Long, 2002).

Other research contradicts these negative findings and shows that transracial adoptees develop positive ethnic identities and are able to successfully assimilate into their adoptive culture. Many studies have found that transracial adoptees, despite some challenges, develop positive self-esteem and a strong sense of belonging to their adoptive families (Simon & Altstein, 1987, 1992; Westhues & Cohen, 1998). They also demonstrate adjustment levels (indexes of self esteem and well-being) equivalent to, and sometimes higher than, in-race adopted children (Lee, 2003; Simon & Alstein, 1987) and comparable to those of non-adopted children, teens, and adults (Friedlander, 2003). Using the Asian American Cultural Identity Scale, the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale, and the Self-Description Questionnaire III to measure self-concept, Wickes and Slate (1997) found that transracial adoptees perceive themselves as having an integrated cultural identity that incorporates

both their birth and adoptive ethnicities. Moreover, their academic competence is comparable to their non-adopted peers (Child Welfare League of America, 2007; Pertman, 2000).

Growing up in ethnically and racially diverse areas may help transracial adoptees develop healthy identities and positive psychological adjustment (Yoon, 2004). Exposure to many different ethnic groups, regardless of whether or not they match the race of the adoptee, seems to support ethnic identity formation (Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006). Families also may play a role, as the development of ethnic identification is often contingent upon the adoptive parents' commitment to foster an allegiance to their racial and cultural heritage (Silverman, 1993).

However, parents vary in how much they support this connection as found by Dorow (2006) in a series of interviews with parents of Chinese adoptees. At one extreme are parents who minimize differences between them and their child. For example they may give their child a Westernized name and avoid talking about the child's birth background. One adoptive father expressed concern that if his daughter was exposed to Chinese culture that, "…Oh my God, we're going to send Faye to this bilingual school, and we're going to wind up with her moving to China, and we'll never see her again. She'll take a job over in China because we put her in Chinese kindergarten" (Dorow, 2006, p. 218). At the other end of the spectrum are parents who actively help their children integrate the past and present. As one adoptive mother said, "…they [adoptees] had a life before we came, and they deserve to keep that" (Dorow, 2006, p. 222). Interestingly, Dorow found that the prospect of their children learning to speak Chinese raised concerns for the parents, even those who wanted their children to feel connected to their birth country. They viewed bilingual and bicultural education as something that would take time away from other normal childhood activities. Some also were concerned that exposure to Chinese would slow down their children's learning of English and perhaps lead them to affiliate with immigrants, and possibly become alienated from their adoptive parents (2006, p. 252).

Despite reports of positive outcomes, adoptees in general experience a higher rate of mental health problems than the general population (Miller, Fan, Grotevant, Christensen, Coyl, & van Dulmen, M., 2000; Pavao, 2007). A study conducted by Hjern, Lindblad, & Vinnerljung, 2002, (cited in Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006) suggests that transracial adoptees may be particularly at risk. The authors found that, compared to their Swedish born adoptive siblings, transracial adoptees were three to four times more likely to have serious mental health problems (i.e. suicide, suicide attempts, and psychiatric admissions), five times more likely to be addicted to drugs, and two to three times more likely to abuse alcohol or commit crimes. This overrepresentation implies that transracially adopted youth are at a higher risk for academic, behavioral, and emotional problems (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2005). Many of

these problems may be rooted in difficulties creating "an identity that accepts their own physical appearance, their birth heritage and their heritage of upbringing" (Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006, p. 446).

For adopted adolescents, regardless of whether they are transracial or in-racial adoptees, the process of forming identities can be challenging (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990). As they approach adulthood and think about themselves as future parents, physical and personality differences from their adoptive parents often become more salient, which, in turn, may cause feelings of isolation and identity confusion (Community Paediatric Society, 2006).

Researchers have developed some models of how adoptees might form their identities. Triseliotis (1973) argued that to create a complete self-image of themselves, adoptees may need to first understand their past history. The Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project revealed four subgroups of adoptive identity that are based on Erikson's (1968) and Marcia's (1966) work: *unexamined identity, limited identity, unsettled identity*, and *integrated identity* (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2007). Adoptees with an *unexamined identity* do not think about their adoption, as they do not consider it central to their lives. Adoptees with *limited identity* are beginning to explore their adoptive identity through talking about their adoption with peers. However, their adoptive identity is not that important to them. Adoptees with *unsettled identity* believe that their adoption is significant and have thought about and explored the idea of adoption. They may feel estranged from their adoptive families and moderately or highly negative about adoption. Adoptees with *integrated identity* view themselves as fortunate to be adopted and believe that the overall process and placement was positive.

For transracial adoptees, the process of identity formation is potentially even more challenging because, in addition to dealing with their adoption, they also may be exploring their racial and ethnic identities (Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006). Pertman (2001 as cited by Fisher, 2003) notes, "color and ethnicity add layers of complexity to a process that is complicated to begin with" (p. 92).

Phinney (1992) who has studied ethnic identity formation in teens and young adults of color, notes that ethnic identity is an aspect of a person's social identity that is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of memberships in a social group(s) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership…[It includes] "self identification, language, social networks, religious affiliation, endogamy, positive attitudes, and many varied cultural traditions and practices" (Phinney, 1992, pp. 156-157).

According to Phinney (1993), ethnic identity begins to form in childhood and goes through three stages. Like the adoptive identity stages found by Grotevant et al. (2007), Phinney's also are based on Erikson (1968) and Marcia's (1966) work. The first stage is called *unexamined ethnic identity* and is characterized by a lack of exploration of one's background and an acceptance of the values and attitudes of the dominant culture, including stereotypes about one's own group. The next stage, ethnic *identity search/moratorium*, is the time when individuals begin to explore and investigate their backgrounds. *Identity achievement*, the third and final stage of Phinney's model, is characterized by a solid sense of one's ethnic identity and the confidence and ability to commit to a firm identity.

Transracial adoptees may experience some of the identity issues that multiracial individuals do. As Phinney and Alipuria (2006) point out, many multiracial people are able to forge hybrid identities that incorporate all of their backgrounds. However, some feel that they have to make a choice and affiliate with only one of their backgrounds. Others feel that they have to switch identities as they go back and forth between groups. Kich (1992) describes how bi-racial people often go through phases where they feel torn between their two groups and may go through periods when they feel that they can only identify with one of them (see Root 1992 for many accounts of multi-racial people). As evidence that transracial adoptees might feel these same tensions, Kim (2005) observed that some adult Korean adoptees described themselves as pendulums swinging back and forth between their adoptive and birth communities. As one person said, "Koreans reject the American side, Americans reject the Korean side" (p. 66).

Ethnic identity development occurs in the context of interactions with family, peers, and others in society along with, values and traditions, and cultural standards (Phinney & Alipuria, 2006; Triseliotis, 1973). For transracial adoptees this is not a straightforward task because they have to choose which cultural "norms" they use (Hoopes, 1990, p. 150). Moreover, one of the most effective ways of creating a sense of belonging for adoptees is having contact with peers or siblings of the same ethnicity (McRoy & Zurcher, 1983), but many adoptees do not have access to their birth community. Moreover, most do not speak the language, which further limits their opportunities for meaningful connections. Pallier, et al. (2003, cited in Snedeker, 2007) found that adult transracial adoptees who had lost their native language as children were unable to hear the differences between their birth language and another unfamiliar language. Thus, their birth language was truly a foreign language to them.

As a result of these experiences, transracial adoptees may have several, often contradictory, layers of identity development. They may feel both culture shock and identity confusion (Patton, 2000). Patton defines culture shock in adoptees as a "…sense of displacement at the heart of transracial adoptees' identities" (Patton, 2000, p. 63). One African American woman that Patton interviewed described her "culture shock" when she entered college and realized that many of the behaviors that she had learned from her white adoptive family were different from what others expected of her as an African American. Identity confusion is evident when adult adoptees experiences tension and ambivalence as they vacillate between identifying with their adopted culture and their birth heritage. According to Patton, culture shock

and identity confusion arise when adoptees' assumptions about themselves do not match their external realities including others' expectations of them (2000).

As this research review has illustrated, transracial adoptees face many challenges in forming their identities -- as adoptees, as members of their birth racial and ethnic groups, and as members of their adoptive families and communities. They have to navigate between groups and expectations and often are the targets of discrimination. As documented in several chapters in Trenka, et al., 2006, transracial adoptees often feel estranged from both their adoptive and birth communities and identify themselves as outsiders. At the same time, many transracial adoptees have found ways to manage these tensions and grow up and do well psychologically, socially, and academically. To look beyond global measures of positive and negative adjustment, we used in-depth interviews and qualitative analyses to learn how academically and socially successful adoptees navigate between their ancestral and adoptive selves. In particular, we examined how their perceptions and experiences foster isolation from or connections with their birth and adoptive backgrounds and communities.

Method

The five participants (all are pseudonyms) were all female Korean adoptees between the ages of 18 and 23 at the time of the interviews. They included:

- **Randi** (spent her early years in a predominately white rural community and later moved to a west coast city with a large Asian population and developed a close relationship with a Korean family)
- **Hallie** (grew up in a city with a small Asian population)
- **Paula** (originally lived in an area with a lot of Korean adoptees but later moved to a small predominately white town)
- **Tara** (grew up in a small white rural community but had a lot of contact with Korean adoptees in a nearby city)
- **Diana** (lived in a small white rural community but attended a nearby high school that was more diverse)

Participants all attended the same liberal arts college and were recruited through cultural groups and mutual acquaintances in the college. Before the interview, participants signed a consent form, which explicitly stated their participation in the study was voluntary, that they could terminate the interview at any time, and that all information would be treated confidentially.

After signing consent forms, the participants participated in individual open-ended interviews. The interview (See Appendix A for the interview protocol) included questions about their backgrounds and current situations. They were designed to encourage interviewees to reflect on their past and present racial/cultural identities and their connections and disconnections with their adoptive and birth communities. Also of interest was how their identities were influenced

by and reflected in their family relationships, friendships, and their academic and work lives. The interviewers were 3 undergraduate students and were trained in conducting open-ended interviews. They included two Korean adoptees and one African American student. During the conversations, they used prompts to encourage participants to elaborate and clarify their answers. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted in quiet private spaces. They were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Initially four researchers (including one Korean adoptee, one Korean American, one African American, and one white parent of transracial adoptees) used Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis procedures to identify several themes related to identity development (Ramsey et al., 2008). One domain that emerged in this first analysis was the theme of feeling like an outsider in both their adoptive and ancestral communities. There were nuances and individual differences in this theme that merited further exploration. Therefore, in the second phase of the analysis two researchers (including another Korean adoptee and the same adoptive mother) read the transcripts using Hatch's (2002) typological analysis procedures. In that case the interviews were read and re-read to identify places where adoptees referred to feeling like outsiders. These passages were then reviewed for similarities and differences in participants' experiences, perceptions, and relationships that heightened or mitigated estrangement. They were also compared to theories of adoptive and ethnic identity and examined through the lens of critical race theory.

Findings and Themes

All five participants described some experience of feeling like an outsider in both their birth and adoptive cultures. For instance, Tara stated "I do understand white culture, and I understand to a certain extent Korean culture…But it's very interesting to recognize how you are a stranger in both." Her experiences reflect many of the concerns raised by writers in Trenka et al. 2006, who also felt that they did not fit in anywhere. This statement also echoes earlier studies that show transracial adoptees are potentially alienated from their birth culture (Long, 2002) and the white community (Verhulst & Versluis-den Bieman, 1990) or both (Kim, 2005).

Outsiders in Their Adoptive Communities

Participants had a range of experiences of feeling connected and disconnected with their adoptive communities but all expressed some recognition of physical and status differences between them and their white families and communities. In some instances the price of "fitting in" involved denying their Korean heritage.

Physical differences. As many researchers (e.g., McRoy and Zurcher, 1983; Ramsey, 1991, Ramsey & Myers, 1990) have noted children as young as three years old are able to recognize racial differences and begin to categorize people according to racial groups. The participants described how this awareness often led to feeling out of place in their white families and communities.

Diana talked about feeling conspicuous in her mostly white community when she was growing up. She described attending a school function where she was sitting with her parents and her white peers and their parents. "…I started looking around the room and was like, 'Oh my god you know everyone looks like each other and then there's me'…I think it was the first time I felt embarrassed about that…" Randi also described feeling self-conscious and wanting to look more Caucasian, "I like tried to make my eyes bigger…in pictures and stuff…"

In contrast to the other interviewees, Paula who grew up in an area with a large population of Asians and many adoptees said that it seemed natural that she was adopted. She recalled that when she was asked why she did not look like her adoptive parents, "It totally didn't bug me…the first time someone…said, 'Why don't you look like your parents?' I was like, 'I don't. I'm adopted.'…there was a huge population of people who were adopted around me, and so, it wasn't that big of a deal at all." As McRoy and Zurcher (1983) noted, having peers and siblings who share the same background can serve as a buffer from feeling estranged and can support identity development. Hallie also describes this effect, "I'm sure that's been really helpful that he [her brother] was adopted too…I've never experienced having like a white sibling or like a biological [child of] …my parents. So I'm sure that's been helpful, and I think our relationship is good."

As Kirton (2005, cited in Harris, 2006) found, participants and their families were often the targets of curiosity and discrimination, which reflects how whiteness is the invisible norm and that people from different racial groups are often seen as "others" (Feagin, 2000; Kivel, 2002). These experiences also exacerbated feelings of being outsiders. Diana described how her friends were curious and then more distant when she explained why she looked different from her parents. For example, a friend "…came up to me, and she said, 'You know Diana, you kind of don't look like your parents (laughs).' And I said, 'Really? That's amazing!' And then I had to tell her that I was adopted, and she was confused, and then I had to explain to her what that was. And then from then on she was really kind of weird."

Hallie claimed that the physical differences between her and her parents didn't bother her. She laughed while describing an incident where she and her mother were out in public with one of Hallie's friends. She recalled, "…somebody like thought that my friend was my mom's daughter just because they look more similar. But… we kinda laughed that one off. It wasn't anything serious cuz my mom just corrected them. She was like, 'This is my daugh-

ter.'" Although Hallie laughed at the recollection, it is notable that the incident made a strong impression and may have been more disturbing to her than she currently acknowledges.

Status differences. In varying ways the participants experienced status differences between their racial group and white privilege that is described by Feagin, 2000 and Kivel, 2002. Tara noted how these disparities contributed to her sense of being an outsider. "When you're in America, and you're a person of color, you're never fully accepted in…I don't believe you're ever fully accepted into white culture."

These feelings of alienation were aggravated when adoptees experienced racist teasing by their peers as described by Kirton (2005) and Simon and Alstein (1992). Randi spoke about being teased by her peers when she was in elementary school, often being called "flat nose" and "squinty eyes" which led to her desire to look more Caucasian, as previously mentioned. Hallie said that she experienced some racist teasing for being Asian. Her classmates sometimes called her, "Hey China!" or by the name of some other Asian country.

Diana, in contrast, sometimes saw her Korean heritage as an advantage. She recounted a conversation with her father when she was applying for a research opportunity. He said, "You know don't forget that you're Asian…You want to put that down that you're Asian 'cause that may help you that you're Asian…" It is interesting to note that the affirmative action laws and guidelines that potentially made her Asian background an advantage came about because of the discrimination suffered by many generations of Asians and other people of color. Moreover, the wide-spread belief that people of color unfairly benefit from affirmative action often leads to racist assumptions that discount the abilities and accomplishments of people of color. These reactions often arise despite the overwhelming evidence that for hundreds of years American whites have enjoyed unearned economic and educational benefits (Feagin, 2000; Kivel 2002).

Randi acknowledged the privilege of having grown up in a white family and community. "And then like on the inside, like obviously I was raised by white parents in a white family like, for a lot of my life in a mostly white town. So like I know… "whiteness". I know white privilege." At the same time, she points out that her "whiteness…isn't recognized ever, which like sometimes I'm like…'that's a part of my identity'…" Randi goes on to define herself as being a "twinky swirl", Asian on the outside that everyone can see and white on the inside. She noted that she may not benefit from white privilege because her "whiteness" is often hidden.

Hallie also is aware of status differences but primarily sees how she has benefited from the privileges of growing up in a white family. "I'm thankful that like I've been able to be raised in America like, with a loving family…This is a much better situation." She remembered when she was younger feeling resentment towards her birth mother for

giving her up, but she realizes now that she would not have had the same opportunities that she enjoys in her current situation. However, she also implies that these benefits have come at a cost and that she is missing some critical pieces of her life. She recalled that during high school "…I wished I was…like, not more Asian but…I wished I could relate more to being like Korean…"

In a different vein Paula referred to celebrity adoptions as evidence that transracial adoptees might have some advantages over white biological children. She noted that Angelina Jolie, when talking about her adopted children Shiloh and Maddox, said that "…she felt more for those two because they were adopted. Like they had to overcome many difficulties and were survivors…she loved them more then her own white privileged biological [children]…" While Paula did not recall Jolie's comment in its entirety, she noted that the media interpreted it to mean that, Jolie was saying that, in her case, transracially adopted children enjoyed the advantage of being more loved than their white biological siblings. Paula did not believe that this is what Jolie was really saying but saw this comment as a positive way of opening up the topic of adoption in popular culture. However, from a critical race theory perspective (e.g., Feagin, 2000; Kivel, 2002), this comment also suggests that Jolie sees herself as the white rescuer of poor children of color, a view that still privileges whiteness and portrays children of color as victims rather than as individuals.

Denial of Korean heritage. In an attempt to connect to their predominantly white adoptive communities some interviewees either internally or externally denied their Korean heritage. These reactions reflect Wilkinson's (1985) denial stage and Phinney's (1993) stage of unexamined ethnic identity. Paula states that, "It's interesting because I sometimes tell people, 'Yeah I forget that I am Korean.' I don't necessarily feel like I am all the time. It's a weird feeling, and it's hard to explain. I sometimes forget that, because so much of my upbringing has been in like the Caucasian world." Similarly, Hallie said that she also at times forgets that she is Asian. On occasion, she deliberately tries to confuse others about her background. "…sometimes I tell people I'm Irish cuz my parents are Irish. That throws them off guard a little…our like family practices are very American, I guess."

On the advice of their adoption agency, Randi's parents did not tell her that she was adopted until she was a teenager. This lack of information may have resulted in Randi feeling particularly pressured to fit in with her white family and peers. As mentioned before, Randi tried to make herself look more Caucasian. She also notes, "I came from like a white family or whatever and so I kind of considered myself white and my parents didn't talk to me about like…being, like ok like, 'You're Korean duh-duh-duh…' Like, they wouldn't explain really to me, so I just considered myself, like…Like I didn't really think about it you know." Randi's parents fit Dorow's (2006) description of parents who deliberately ignore differences between themselves and their

adopted children. Possibly as a result, Randi worked hard at assimilating and avoided examining either her adoptive or ethnic identities, the first stage in both Grotevant et al. (2007) and Phinney's (1993) models.

Outsiders in the Korean Community

All of the interviewees had made some attempts to learn about aspects of Korean culture or connect with members of Korean communities, which potentially aligns with Phinney's (1993) second stage of search/moratorium. They had a range of experiences, but all experienced cultural and language barriers to making authentic contacts and feeling at home in Korean communities as noted in previous studies (e.g., Community Paediatrics Committee, 2006; Kim, 2005; Trenka et al., 2006).

Korean culture camps. Four of the five respondents had attended Korean Culture camps when they were young children. Most of the activities revolved around artifacts and food. Hallie stated, "We'd do like arts and crafts, games…learn the letters…build things out of clay…do Korean cooking…". She really enjoyed the culture camp until adolescence, but she wondered just how much she actually learned about Korea. Paula had similar impressions noting that, "It was a bunch of white moms teaching us about Korean culture…we painted little [Korean] wedding vests. I remember doing that. I remember cooking. I think it got me an idea in the base line…[but] it was never a big thing in my life." She did not remember learning anything in-depth.

Diana experienced a similar experience as the previous respondents but also noted that the focus of the camp changed as the participants grew up. When she was young the camp activities included traditional dances, drumming, and Korean food. However, as she grew older, the focus changed to discuss more of the experience of being adopted. "I don't know like middle school age then it [the culture camp] started getting weird we never talked about Korean culture; we would talk about what it was like being adopted…they called it Korean culture camp, but we were talking about being adopted, and I know what its like to be adopted 'cause I am adopted…" This reluctance to talk about adoption suggests that at the time, Diana may have been in Grotevant et al.'s (2007) stage of unexamined adoptive identity.

The descriptions of the Korean culture camps attest to parents' efforts to try to address the differences in race and culture and to alleviate anxiety and stress that transracial adoptees may experience about where they belong in society. They appear to be engaging in what Dorow (2006) has termed a balancing act, encouraging their children to maintain some connection with their Korean backgrounds as well as connecting with their adoptive family and communities. However, the interviewee's statements also show how difficult it is for non-Korean adults to offer anything other than superficial information that may actually reinforce rather

than mitigate stereotypes. While the Korean culture camps were effective in bringing adoptees together, they did not prepare them for becoming part of a Korean community, as will be discussed later in this article.

Not surprisingly, Randi, in contrast to the other participants, did not go to culture camp, which is consistent with her parents' avoidance of talking about her adoption or her Korean background. When she was older they gave her some letters and gifts from her Korean foster family, but did not attempt to expose her to Korean culture in any way. As will be described later, Randi had to go outside of her adoptive family to accomplish this.

Contact with Koreans growing up. The extent to which participants got to meet and know Korean people varied a great deal among the participants and played a major role in whether and how they felt connected with that community. Opportunities for contact depended largely on where the adoptees grew up. For example, Diana noted that in "…elementary school (pause) pretty much I was the diversity…there wasn't really too much diversity at all…I'm from [a small New England town] so pretty much a white Catholic town, conservative town, yah not too much diversity…" Diana's situation illustrates the isolation that a number of the authors in Trenka et al. (2006) describe. Her context is in direct contrast to McRoy and Zurcher's (1983) point that transracial adoptees are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and acceptance when there is an opportunity to integrate with others of the same ethnic background.

Interestingly, Randi, who had virtually no exposure to Korean culture as a child, went to a fairly diverse high school where she began to explore her background. "I met a Korean girl [in high school] and like immersed myself in Korean culture." This experience dramatically changed her views, moving her to Phinney's (1993) second stage of identity exploration and moratorium. "Like I'm still the minority but at least… But it's a very… I'm a very different minority. Whereas like before I was like white people… and now… you know what I mean?" Later on in the interview Randi talked about how she currently identified herself, "Like inside I identify as like practically pretty split half-half. But like in society as a whole, like a minority just because that's…that's what box I check or whatever, you know what I mean, that like…that really like reflects me the most." Randi's story illustrates Phinney's (1993) three stages of ethnic identity. She went from identifying only as white and not examining her Korean heritage at all (first stage), to immersing herself in Korean culture (second stage), and finally to achieving the third stage of an integrated identity that embodies both her white and Korean selves.

Tara also had the opportunity to form deeper connections with the Korean community. In addition to attending a culture camp, Tara also went to a summer Korean language camp that included first and second generation Koreans as well as adoptees. "I hung out with them for five weeks, and now we are trying to get together when I go back…since I do know Korean, I can pass for second gen [generation]." By having intensive and continuing contacts with first and second generation Korean Americans as well as Korean adoptees, Tara was able to gain more in-depth knowledge about Korean culture and, perhaps most importantly, begin to learn how to speak Korean. As we will discuss later, this skill is critical for connecting with the community. Tara was also able to "try on" being Korean, as part of her identity exploration.

Not being a "real" Korean. Some of the interviewees lived in areas where there were Asian communities and/or Asian student groups in high school. Others had the opportunity to join Korean student groups in college. However, they often did not feel accepted by the Korean community. As Long (2002) noted, transracial adoptees often suffer double rejection from both their birth parents and their racial and ethnic communities. The following accounts suggest that other Asian students may be working through their own identities and affirming their loyalty to their culture by rejecting others such as transracial adoptees who have a more tenuous connection to their roots.

Paula, who had initially lived in a community with many Korean adoptees, moved to a new community where there were very few Asians. She described the somewhat cold reaction she received from the small, tightly knit group of Asian families and her reaction to them. "The first question out of their mouth was, 'Oh you're new here?'" And I was like, 'Oh excellent, small town Ohio where there is a population of like nine Asians.'"

Although Randi did eventually form close relationships with her Korean peers, she initially felt excluded by them. She recalled that most of the Asian students in her high school were enrolled in a special accelerated academic program. However, she was not in this program, which confused other students about who she was. "I was so quiet…everybody thought I was an F.O.B. which means 'fresh off the boat'…doesn't speak very much English. And so people didn't really talk to me." Randi spoke about one incident when another Korean student came up to her and began conversing in Korean. Randi recalled that the other student said, "…I thought you'd be fluent, and I could like speak Korean with you." Thus, much like the culture shock that Patton (2000) describes, Randi felt excluded because, as an adoptee, she did not know how to act and talk and did not meet the expectations of her Korean peers.

Diana's high school was more diverse than her elementary school, and she was happy to find an Asian American Association. However, she too experienced some culture shock as described by Patton (2000). She found that "…everyone…[had] their traditional Asian cultures…[A girl] started talking about all these traditions that her and her family had, and I said, 'Oh we don't really do any of that cause I'm adopted.' The girl kind of looked at me, and then she walked away from me." Interestingly, this interaction

mirrors the (previously described) one Diana had with a white peer who was wary about her adoption.

Diana went on to describe some of the complications and conflicts that arose when she tried to join a Korean group in college. Initially Diana was at a disadvantage because she didn't know how to speak Korean. She said, "…[when] I joined the Korean American Association my freshman year I went to one meeting and they were all talking in Korean, and I was really not feeling like I fit in again…" However, after this experience the group made a rule that English was to be the main language used at these meetings, and Diana gave the organization another try. However, "then the Koreans from Korea felt excluded so they took out the 'American' [from the title of the group] and now it's just the Korean Student Association. And I told the president [of the organization] that now we [Korean Americans, including adoptees] feel left out because we're not true Korean Koreans, so you can never make everyone happy…" This experience illustrates how all cultures are multifaceted, fluid, and often contentious. In this case the label "Korean" meant a wide range of identities and interests that varied across individuals with different experiences and loyalties.

Language barrier. As Diana's story illustrates, one obvious outcome of being raised by an English-speaking family is that it is difficult for adoptees to learn the language of their birth country, which in turn is a significant barrier to connections with those communities. These experiences are common to many adoptees when the language of their birth country is different from that of their adoptive country. As Snedeker et al (2007) reported most adoptees quickly forget their birth language and do not recognize it all as adults. Without continuous exposure to the language, the opportunity to become bilingual falls away. Because English is used to converse with families and peers, it quickly overwhelmed any trace memories of Korean.

The interviewees frequently mentioned the inability to speak Korean as an obstacle to connecting with Korean peers. As Diana said, "…[I] can't relate really well to other Asians 'cause they are all speaking like you know in Korean or Chinese…even though I look like them you know I don't feel like I identify with them." Randi found that her inability to speak Korean not only made it difficult to communicate, it evoked a sense of scorn from other Koreans. "And like other Korean people, kind of like looking down on me because I don't have the language. And that's something that can't just be easily learned or like picked up, you know?"

For others this linguistic barrier made them avoid contact with Koreans all together. Paula and Hallie both cited their inability to speak Korean as a primary reason that they did not join any Korean cultural organizations in college. Interestingly, Paula when asked if she was interested in joining a transracial adoptee cultural club seemed to erroneously assume that her fellow adoptees would speak Korean. "But I don't, I don't necessarily feel that I would fit in. I would

imagine that a lot of them speak fluent Korean and would do around each other. And I have no idea. That's not in my repertoire of skills. So I think that barrier alone is a pretty big barrier to overcome internally." While the language barrier is clearly an issue, Hallie and Paula may also be using it as an excuse to avoid taking the risk of trying to join groups where they may not feel comfortable or be welcomed.

As Dorow (2006) found, many parents, even those who want their children to feel connected to their birth country, are reluctant to have their children learn their birth language for fear of distancing them from American culture and the English language. Ironically these decisions to try and "normalize" their children into Western society may have repercussions for their "normalization" with members of their birth culture. The interviewees' comments underscore how their lack of Korean language resulted in their avoiding Koreans altogether or being excluded if they did.

Trying to "pass" as Korean. As mentioned previously, Randi and Tara had opportunities to experience Korean culture in more depth than the other three interviewees. They illustrate Phinney's (1993) second stage of exploration and moratorium and are advancing toward the third stage of identity achievement as they develop more authentic connections with the community. However, as the excerpts below show, they still had to work at it and sometimes felt uncomfortable trying to "pass" as Koreans because of the gaps in their knowledge of Korean culture. At times, Randi and Tara felt pressure to prove that they were Korean. Moreover, they were not integrating the other parts of their lives into their nascent Korean identities.

As mentioned earlier, Randi formed a close relationship with a Korean classmate and her family and through them learned a lot about Korean culture and social values as well as practical skills. However, she still struggled at times as she recounted, "I was…trying really hard…to like be Asian…we'd go out to eat at like an Asian restaurant and like they'd only have chopsticks…I'd like be struggling with it, and my friends would be like, 'Oh do you need us to ask for a fork?' and I'd be like, 'No its ok, I can do it'…I was trying so hard to be…Asian or whatever or be Korean."

Tara's ability to speak Korean also enabled her to "pass" as Korean at college. She spoke of experiences at cultural meetings when she would speak Korean, if she did not want non-Korean-speakers to know what she was talking about. Interestingly, even though she had felt excluded in other Korean groups, she did on occasion exclude adoptees who did not speak the language. Tara did recognize her advantage during her interview, "…subconsciously I thought all Korean Adoptees had this kind of network and these resources and they don't…" She may have been doing this to prove her connection with the Korean community, a common response during the second stage of the identity formation process (Phinney, 1993).

Split Loyalties

As transracial adoptees navigate between their birth and adoptive groups, they may experience feeling torn between their loyalties to both groups, a phenomenon that is often experienced by bi-racial individuals (Kich, 1992). Often peer pressure to align with a particular group plays a role as well as adoptees' own confusion about where they belong, as Kim (2005) described. Hallie notes that her friends sometimes jokingly encourage her to identify only as white by saying, "Oh Hallie, you aren't Asian, you're white." Hallie notes that she does not feel connected to other Koreans. "I don't hang out with many Asian girls on campus. Uhm…I'm not close to many of them…I'm not in any Asian cultural orgs I guess or so I don't…I don't meet a lot of them. Like I know them but like as acquaintances I guess. And I don't like hang out with them. I hang out with like…not majority white but…or Mexican. I never hang out with Korean girls that often." Throughout the interview, Hallie maintains that she consistently identifies as white. However, this excerpt and the earlier one regarding her regrets about not being part of any Asian groups in high school suggest some ambivalence about her isolation from Korean peers.

The following quote captures the psychic cost of these split loyalties. Diana notes, "I have like no tight Asian friends…most of my friends are white, and we always joke saying like that I'm the 'bad Asian' (laughs)." Although Diana is laughing, the description of herself as a "bad Asian" suggests that she is feeling both conflicted and guilty about not connecting more with Korean people. She and Hallie both seemed to feel they could only ally themselves with one group, as described by Kich (1992) and Phinney and Alipuria (2006), but had some misgivings about their choices.

Randi experienced pressure from a different quarter. Her Korean friends criticized her for losing her heritage and trying too much to fit into white culture, "Oh too…Oh so American, she's too American…She's lost her respect and her pride…cultural pride…" This quotation is reminiscent of Kim's (2005) description of the identity pendulum thtat make Korean adoptees feel that Americans see them as too Korean; and Koreans see them as too American.

These accounts illustrate how transracial adoptees, like many multiracial people, are caught between two cultures. They often feel torn in their loyalties and pulled by pressures from peers who are aligned with different groups as described by some of the authors in Trenka et al. (2006).

Forming Identities and Connecting with Others

Despite sometimes feeling like outsiders in both their adoptive and birth communities, all of the interviewees, except Paula, also talked about developing identities that were beginning to connect their birth and adoptive backgrounds. Often they found a sense of belonging with other adoptees or multicultural groups. These affiliations suggest some progression toward Phinney's third stage of achieved ethnic

identity and Grotevant et al.'s (2007) integrated adoptive identity. Hallie grew up in an urban neighborhood with very few Asians at her school and primarily identified as white, but she did connect with another transracial adoptee in high school. Although her friend was not Korean, they found a lot of common ground. "So it was just interesting to compare experiences with other like kids. And like know that you weren't alone. Like you weren't the only one that doesn't look like your parents."

Randi recalled an experience at college that had significant meaning for her. "I sat down with a couple of other [transracial] adoptees for coffee at [a conference at another college]. We met in a workshop, and then we skipped the second half of the conference and hum just talked for a few hours about like our experience of being adopted, and so much came out that…I don't think about on a daily basis, but it's all like, you know, inside and there just waiting to…be explored."

Diana describes her shifting friendships and identities at college as she tried to find where she felt most connected: "When I came here [to college] I thought it was so cool that there was so many Asians…so I kind of clung on to them…[but] they didn't really talk to anyone outside their group and then we drifted apart." She goes on to say,

Second semester freshman year, I was hanging out with pretty much Caucasians, and then beginning of this [sophomore] year I started um diversifying. We met this group of friends…we're very very diverse…we're very colorful…we're kind of misfits that came together" (laughs). At one "Mixing It Up" club meeting [organized by students from mixed racial and cultural backgrounds, including transracial adoptees]…they were talking about the difference between cultural and racial identity and all that, and that's the first time I really thought about [it]…so now racially I identify as an Asian and culturally I identify as being white.

Interestingly, Diana's resolution to the conflict between her racial and cultural identities affirms Baden and Steward's (2007) model of tranracial adoptee identity in which race and culture may function independently.

Paula, unlike the others, does not identify at all with either her ethnicity or her adoption. "I'd say…my strongest identification is as an athlete. Probably [also] artistic, independent, introverted. I guess in terms of when I circle the little bubble on the surveys, I am Asian American. But I think those [other attributes] are probably the four strongest ways I would describe myself." Paula's identities may be primarily a reflection of her interests and skills, but the fact that she downplays her background as a Korean adoptee may also stem from her earlier experiences. Initially she lived in a community with many other Korean adoptees, so as she said, being adopted was "no big deal at all." Then she moved to a city with a small close-knit Asian community and did not feel welcomed by them, which may have discouraged her from exploring her background.

In contrast, Tara, who speaks some Korean, has the most solid connection with Korean/Asian communities and

seems to be immersed in Korean and Asian cultural activities: "Here at college, I'm actually really involved with my ethnicity. I'm an active player in AIR [Asian American Interpretive Realities]. I'm a member of TAN, which is the Transracial Adoptee Network. And I'm in the KSA, Korean Students Association. And that's actually all of my extracurriculars too now that I come to think about it." However, even with these strong connections and extensive exposure to Korean culture growing up, she sometimes still feels like an outsider. "So it's very interesting realizing that to a certain extent Korean culture is as foreign to me as it would be for almost any other person, but it isn't, because I kind of immersed myself in it, but I still don't know everything."

Conclusions

This group of highly successful young women shows that success and struggle can co-exist. To varying degrees and at different times, the interviewees had felt alienated from both their birth and adoptive communities, yet they were able to thrive in school and within their communities and try many avenues to develop their identities and find groups where they belonged. As illustrated by Diana's story of her shifting affiliations during college, these women were able to manage discomfort, disappointment, and exclusion and move on to try different social groups.

This study has many limitations. In particular we had only five participants, and they all were female Korean adoptees and attended the same college. Obviously, we cannot claim that their experiences are representative of all transracial adoptees or even Korean adoptees. However, the interviews do provide insights into the nuances of these participants' experiences and perceptions and how they vary across individuals and situations.

Given the small number of participants, the wide range of experiences, perceptions, and relationships was striking. It varied from Paula who did not identify at all with her Korean background to Tara who was immersing herself in Korean culture. This variation seems to be associated with both individual interest and opportunities for in-depth experiences with the Korean community. Similarly, participants differed in their relationships with their adoptive communities from Hallie, who consistently identified as white, to Tara who felt that as a person of color she would never be fully accepted in the white community. Surprisingly, the families in this study may not always have played a decisive role. Randi, whose family avoided any discussion of her Korean background, initially ignored her birth heritage but ended up with close Korean friends and became quite comfortable in a Korean American community. Other families tried to create those connections, but they were limited by their own backgrounds and the local options. The Korean culture camps were based on good intentions, but they did not provide the background necessary for fostering close connections to the Korean community. In contrast, Tara's family encouraged her to attend a Korean language camp, which

provided a more extensive and in-depth exposure to Korean people and the language, and proved to be a better way to achieve this goal. Because of the proximity of the program and her parents' support, Tara was able to take advantage of this opportunity. We, of course, cannot say whether the other interviewees would have been interested if it had been a viable option for them.

The participants varied across all three stages of Phinney's ethnic identity development. They not only differed from each other but also shifted within themselves across time and situations. Like some multiracial people they experienced some conflicts about where they and their loyalties belonged. Identity development for these young women was clearly a convoluted process. At the same time, they were all forming multifaceted identities that embraced many aspects of their lives.

Transracial adoption involves both loss and gain. Adoptees clearly lose their birth parents and the comfort and consistency of being imbedded in their birth culture. At the same time, they gain access to another culture and usually greater material comforts and opportunities. They are on the cusp between these two cultures and often have to decide which set of norms to use. When they are young, they seem to feel culturally at home in their adoptive communities but often feel visually conspicuous and wish to look more like their white parents and peers. As they get older, they may try to learn more about ancestral culture and to affiliate with those ethnic groups but may realize that they lack the language and cultural background to make meaningful connections. They may also become more aware of the contradictions and status differentials that define their lives of being Asian, yet growing up as whites.

These findings suggest Korean transracial adoptees (and perhaps transracial adoptees in general) often feel like outsiders in both their ancestral and adoptive communities. As is true for many multiracial people or recent immigrants, they have to navigate between the expectations of both groups. It is as though they are standing on stepping stones in a river – drawn toward both banks but also caught in the middle of the stream. Sometimes they are on a sturdy rock that enables them to leap easily to the next one, but at other times the rock wobbles, and they lose their balance. As they move from shore to shore, they select and discard elements of their identities. Over time, they hopefully will weave together experiences, insights, and connections to create bridges so that they are able to easily and smoothly move between the shores.

As a result of their complex identity formation and ambiguous relationships with different groups, transracial adoptees may feel the most connected with other adoptees and with racially and culturally diverse groups or with peers who share specific interests (e.g., sports, artistic activities). Their identities and affiliations are dynamic and multifaceted and change as they learn about themselves and others. All the participants appear to have benefitted from opportunities to explore a wide range of interests and cultural groups.

As these interviews show, each adoptee has a unique path with her or his own starting and ending points. At the same time, these young women's accounts of their lives of duality can help us to understand the cultural "in-betweenness" that characterizes the lives of many people.

References

Baden, A. L. (2002). The psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees: An application of the cultural-racial identity model. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless, 11* (2), 167-191.

Baden A.L. & Steward, R.L. (2007). The cultural-racial identity model: A theoretical framework for studying transracial adoptees. In R.A. Javier, A.L. Baden, F.A. Biafora, & A Camacho-Gingerich (Eds.) *Handbook of adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families* (pp. 90-112). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bartholet, E. (1993). International adoption: Current status and future prospects. *The Future of Children, 3*(1), 89-103.

Brodzinsky, D.M. (1987). Adjustment to adoption: A psychosocial perspective. *Clinical Psychology Review, 7*, 25-47.

Brodzinsky, D. M., & Schechter, M. D. (1990). *The psychology of adoption.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Child Welfare League of America. (2007). *Transracial adoption and the multiethnic placement act.* Retrieved on January 13, 2009, from http://ndas.cwla.org/research_info/publications/home.asp

Community Paediatrics Committee. (2006). Transracial adoption. *Paediatrics and Child Health, 11*(7), 443-447.

Dorow, S.K. (2006). *Transnational adoption: A cultural economy of race, gender, and kinship.* New York and London: New York University Press.

Erera, P. I. (2002). *Family diversity: Continuity and change in the contemporary family.* London, England: Sage Publications.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis.* Oxford: Norton.

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. (2005). *Overview of adoption in the United States.* Retrieved October 10, 2008, from http://www.adoptioninstitue.org/FactOverview.html#head

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. (2008). *International adoption facts.* Retrieved March 15, 2009, from http://www.adoption.state.gov/news/total_chart.html

Feagin, J. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations.* New York: Routledge.

Fisher, A. P. (2003). Still "not quite as good as having your own?" Toward a sociology of adoption. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*, 335-361.

Friedlander, M. L. (2003). Adoption: Misunderstood, mythologized, marginalized. *The Counseling Psychologist, 31*(6), 745-752.

Griffith, E. E. H., & Bergeron, R. L. (2006). Cultural stereotypes die hard: The case of transracial adoption. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 34*(3), 303-314.

Grotevant, H.D., Dunbar, N., Kohler, J.K.& Esau, A.M.L. (2007). How contexts within and beyond the family shape developmental pathways. In R.A. Javier, A.L. Baden, F.A. Biafora, & A Camacho-Gingerich (Eds.) *Handbook of adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families* (pp. 77-89). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hatch, J. A. (2002) *Doing qualitative research in education settings,* Albany, NY, State University Press.

Hollingsworth, L. D. (1997). Effect of transracial/transethnic adoption on children's racial and ethnic self-esteem: A meta-analytic review. *Marriage & Family Review, 25*(1), 99-130.

Hoopes, J.L. (1990). Adoption and identity formation. In Brodzinsky, D.M. & Schechter, M.D. (Eds), *The psychology of adoption* (pp. 144-165). New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kich, G. K. (1992). The developmental process of asserting a biracial, bicultural identity. In M. P. P. Root (Ed.), *Racially mixed people in America* (pp. 304–317). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Kim, E. (2005). Wedding citizenship and culture: Korean adoptees and the global family of Korea. In T. A. Volkman (Ed.), *Cultures of transnational adoption* (pp. 49-80). Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Kim, J.R. (2006) Scattered seeds: The Christian influence on Korean adoption. In J. J. Trenka, J.C. Oparah, & S.Y. Shin (Eds.), *Outsiders within: Writing on transracial adoption* (pp. 151-162). Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Kirton, D. (2005). *"Race", ethnicity and adoption* cited in Harris, P, (2006). No longer alone in this grief: Service-user-led support for transracial adoptees. In J. J. Trenka, JC. Oparah, S.Y. Shin. *Outsiders within: Writing on transracial adoption. (*pp. 267-283) .Boston: South End Press.

Kivel, P. (2002). *Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice* (revised edition). Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Lee, R. M. (2003). The transracial adoption paradox: History, research, and counseling implication of cultural socialization. *The Counseling Psychologist, 31*(6), 711-744.

Long, J. K. (2002). Information packet: Domestic transracial adoption. *National resource center for foster care and permanency planning: Hunter College School of Social Work.*

Marcia, J. E., (1966), Development and validation of ego identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 3*, 551-558.

Macmillan Library Reference. (2004). Adoption. In *The encyclopedia of bioethics* (3rd ed.). (Vol. 1, pp. 68-74). Boston, MA: MacMillan.

Mac Naughton, G. & Davis, K. (2009) *"Race" and early childhood education,* New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

McGinnis, H. A. (2007). From the ashes of war: Lessons from 50 years of Korean international adoption. In R.A. Javier, A.L. Baden, F.A. Biafora, & A Camacho-Gingerich (Eds.), *Handbook of adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families* (pp. 160-170). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

McRoy, R.G. & Zurcher, JR., L.A. (1983). *Transracial and inracial adoptees: The adolescent years.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Miller, B. C., Fan, X., Grotevant, H. D., Christensen, M. Coyl, D., & van Dulmen, M. (2000). Adopted adolescents' overrepresentation in mental health counseling: Adoptee's problems or parents' lower threshold for referral? *Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 39*, 1504-1511.

Pallier, et al., (2003). Dehaene, Poline, LeBihan, Argenti, Dupoux, & Mehler cited in Snedecker ADD

Patton, S. (2000). *Birth marks: Transracial adoption in contemporary America.* New York and London: New York University Press.

Pavao, J. M. (2007). Variations in clinical issues for children adopted as infants and those adopted as older children. In Javier, R.A., Baden, A.L., Biafora, F.A. & Camacho-Gingerich, A. (Eds.), *Handbook of adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families* (pp. 283-292). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pertman, A. (2000). *Adoption nation.* New York: Basic Books.

Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 7*, 156-176.

Phinney, J. S. (1993). A three-stage model of ethnic identity development in adolescents. In Bernal, M. E. & Knight, G. P. (Eds.) *Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among hispancis and other minorities* (pp. 61 – 71). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Phinney, J. S. & Alipuria, L. L. (2006). Multiple social categorization and identity among multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural individuals: Processes and implications. In R. Crisp. (Ed.), *Multiple social categorization: Processes, models and applications* (pp. 211-238). East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press.

Phinney, J. S. & Kohastu, E. L. (1999). Ethnic and racial identity developmental and mental health. In J. Schulenberg, J.L. Maggs, & K. Hurrelmann (Eds.), *Health risks and developmental transition during adolescence* (pp. 420-443). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University

Ramsey, P. G. (1991). Salience of race in young children growing up in an all white community. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83*, 28-34.

Ramsey, P.G., Cobb, L.T., Do, H.R., Whyte, H. (March 2008). *Racial and cultural identities of transracial adoptees.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Research on Identity Formation. Chicago.

Ramsey, P. G., Myers, L. C., (1990). Young children's responses to racial differences: Relations among cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 11*, 49-67

Root, M. P. P. (Ed.). (1992). *Racially mixed people in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Silverman, A. (1993). Outcomes of transracial adoption. *The Future of Children, 3*(1), 104-118.

Simon, R.J. & Altstein, H. (1981). *Transracial adoption: A follow-up*. Lexington and Toronto: LexingtonBooks.

Simon, R. J., & Altstein, H. (1992). *Adoption, race and identity: From infancy through adolescence*. New York: Praeger. Simon, R. J. & Altstein, H. (1987). *Transracial adoptees and their families: A study of identity and commitment*. New York: Praeger.

Simon, R.J. & Altstein, H. (2002). *Adoption, race, and identity: From infancy to young adulthood* (Second Edition). New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Snedecker, J., Geren, J., & Shafto, C.L. (2007). Starting over: International adoption as a natural experiment in language development. *Psychological Science, 18* (1), 79-87.

Trenka, J., Oparah, J. C., & Shin, Y. S. (2006). *Outsiders within: Writing on transracial adoption*. Boston: South End Press.

Triseliotis, J. (1973). *In search of origins: The experiences of adopted people*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Van Ausdale, D. & Feagin, J.R. (2001). *The first R: How children learn race and racism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Verhulst, F. C., Althaus, M., & Versluis-den Bieman, H. J. (1990) Problem behavior in international adoptees: An epidemiological study. *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 29*(1), 94-103.

Westhues, A. & Cohen, J. S. (1998). Ethnic and racial identity of internationally adopted adolescents and young adults: Some issues in relation to children's rights. *Adoption Quarterly, 1*(4), 33-52.

Wickes, K. L., & Slate, J. R. (1997). Transracial adoption of Koreans: A preliminary study of adjustment. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling, 19*, 187-195.

Yoon, D. P. (2004). Intercountry Adoption: The importance of ethnic socialization and subjective well-being for Korean-born adopted children. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 13*, 71-89.

Appendix A
Interview Guide

Background Information

1. Can you tell me about your family?
    a. Who lived in your home? What did they do?
    b. How old were you when you were adopted?
    c. What did you learn about your ethnic background from your home?
    d. Can you describe some family celebrations in your home? What cultures and traditions did they represent?
    e. hat are some values that your parents taught you?
    f. What efforts have your parents made to introduce you to your birth culture through foods and artifacts?
       in more experiential ways? For example, taking you to culture camp, making friends with people of your ethnicity, living in diverse areas, joining social and religious groups. What impact did these experiences have on you?
    g. How well prepared did you feel to cope with people's curiosity and questions about your background and with racism? What did your parents do when related events occurred?
    h. Do you have any adopted or non-adopted siblings? Please describe their ages and racial and cultural backgrounds.
    i. Talk about your relationship with your siblings (if any). (adopted vs non- adopted AND same vs different Race).
    j. Talk about your relationship with your adoptive parents. Do you think that this relationship was affected by the fact that you were adopted transracially?

2. Can you tell me about the schools you attended?
    a. What was the racial make up of the student body?
    b. Can you tell me about the friends you had? Were any of them adopted?
    c. Growing up, were your friends of the same or different race and/or culture? Has that changed over time?
    d. Can you describe what you did and felt with friends from your own ethnic group? with friends from other groups? Did you act differently?
    e. Did you date much while In high school? What were the backgrounds of the kids you dated?

Present Situation

1. How would you describe the student makeup in the college or university PUT IN SPECIFIC NAME you now attend?
2. How well do you think people of different races and cultures interact with one another?
3. How would you describe your group of friends? Has the composition of your friendship group changed from that in high school?
4. Do you think the group of people you presently interact has had an influence on you, your attitudes, your beliefs in any way? If so, can you describe some of that Influence?
5. What extracurricular groups are you participating In? Are they related to your birth or adoptive culture(s) and experiences?
6. How do others perceive you? Do people sometimes express confusion about your identity? Do they question you about your racial/cultural affiliation?
7. How do you feel about talking to people about being adopted?
8. What does being adopted mean for you?

Reflecting back

1. What are all the ways that you identify yourself? Which ones are most salient? How has this changed while you were growing up and while you are attending college?
2. How do you identify yourself racially and culturally? Describe practices and beliefs that represent your culture.
3. Has your involvement with different cultural and racial groups changed over time? If yes, please describe approximate ages and circumstances.
4. If you could, would you change your choice of close friends? Can you say why or why not?
5. How does your family feel about your choice of self-identification? Do you think they have a preference?
6. May I ask you if you have ever wished that you looked more like your adoptive family? Describe any event(s) that may have contributed to that. How old were you when these things occurred?
7. May I ask you how do you think your life might have been different if: (a) You had been raised by your biological parents? (b) You had been adopted by a family of your ethnicity?