MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES OF TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES OF THE GLOBAL
MAJORITY (BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR–BIPOC)

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Antioch University Seattle

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Phebe Brako

ORCID Scholar No. 0009-0001-7044-4999

March 2025

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES OF TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES OF THE GLOBAL
MAJORITY (BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR—BIPOC)

This dissertation, by Phebe Brako, has
been approved by the committee members identified below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
Antioch University Seattle
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation Committee:

Stephanie Thorson-Olesen, PhD, Chairperson

Susan Branco, PhD

Porshia Daniels, PhD

ABSTRACT

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES OF TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES OF THE GLOBAL
MAJORITY (BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR—BIPOC)

Phebe Brako

Antioch University Seattle

Seattle, WA

This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of

transracial adoptees of the global majority (BIPOC), focusing on their bicultural identity

integration and its impact on mental health. During semi-structured interviews, nine participants

shared their stories of navigating cultural and racial dynamics as adoptees in predominantly

White adoptive families and communities. The findings revealed six core themes: (1) the Quest

for Bicultural Identity Formation, (2) Cultural Integration and Adaptation, (3) Navigating Racial

and Cultural Tensions, (4) the Role of Family in Cultural Integration, (5) the Importance of

Community and Support Systems, and (6) Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences,

addressing the complex interplay of identity, mental health challenges, and the healing potential

of culturally responsive therapy. This study underscores the need for increased cultural

competency in adoptive parenting and mental health interventions to better support the unique

experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority. This dissertation is available in open

access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: bicultural identity integration, transracial adoption, adoption, mental health, cultural

identity, cultural tension

Dedication

To Korto Greene Thrune—Thank you for beginning this valuable work.

For my boys, Kwame, Kweku, and Kwabena. Thank you for sharing your mother with this

important work.

Acknowledgments

To Dr. Thorsen-Olesen, you have brought so much into my life just by being who you are. Thank you for showing me everything that is possible. You hold a special place in my heart.

To Dr. Branco, thank you for believing in me from the very beginning. I appreciate your time, support and the constant words of encouragement.

To Dr. Daniels, I appreciate you for being such a strong supporter and stepping up when I needed you most. You are such an inspiration to me.

To the faculty and staff of the Counseling Education and Supervision program at Antioch University, Seattle (past and present), you all have made this journey possible with your cheers and support.

To Dada Jorge, my brothers Michael and Matthew, thank you for always reminding me that I could do anything I put my mind to.

To my village, my friends, my sisters, my support system here in the United States, Ghana, and across the world, you all have held me up especially when it felt like the world around me was crumbling.

To my 253 Therapy and Consult team, thank you for holding it down so I could focus on this research. You all gave me the gift of space, time, and patience, and I will never forget it.

To my twin, my dear mother, Mama Ceci, this is for you. For the endless prayers, the support, rallying the boys so I could study and write, reminding me of my worth and strength, medaase Mama. Thank you for standing by my side through this journey.

To all the participants in this study, thank you for the privilege of being able to share your stories and allowing me to share space with you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Transracial adoption is defined as the adoption of a child by parents who are of a different race (Javier et al., 2007). This type of adoption has gained much attention in the United States over the years and is a growing trend based on statistics from a Department of Health and Human Services report (Kalisher et al., 2020), which shows that transracial adoption rates were remarkably higher than same-race adoptions: a 58% increase in the former and 24% increase in the latter over the last decade. In addition, over the last decade, about a quarter million children were brought into the United States from abroad (Raleigh, 2016). Moreover, 85% of international adoptions are transracial (Park-Taylor & Wing, 2019). Historically however, transracial adoption was not as acceptable as same-race adoptions and was sometimes a last resort in placing children (Brooks et al., 2005). Adoption was viewed through rose-colored glasses for the most part, with a picture of adoptive parents and their happy and grateful child, coming together as a "forever family," ignoring some of the difficult realities of adoption (Henderson, 2007).

With much of the focus of adoption research being on transracial adoption, there have been a higher number of studies on the topic especially as adoptive parents move towards more international and transracial adoption (Raleigh, 2016). According to Miller et al. (2000), adoptees are disproportionately represented in the number of people who receive mental health support or therapy. Adult adoptees seek mental health services more than non-adopted adults even though they make up only 2.5% of the American adult population (Baden et al., 2012). Mental health concerns around adoption are some of the least talked about concepts in the mental health field, which points to a high need for further research and training on the topic (Betts,

2003). Previous studies have hypothesized that transracial adoptees may face higher risks regarding self-esteem issues and the development of their ethnic identity, which can all be tied to their mental health (Hamilton et al., 2015). Additionally, Baden et al. (2022) posit that adoptees have a higher risk of substance use compared to their non-adopted peers, with Asian and Latin American adoptees in White adoptive families having a more pronounced risk. Malott and Schmidt (2012) discussed the inability of mental health providers to meet the needs of transracial adoptees and their families, pointing to other studies that found that a significant number of adoption agencies are not providing enough training for families. In addition, counselor education may not be adequately preparing counselors to work with transracial adoptees and their families, even though studies have highlighted the importance adoptees place on being in services with counselors who discuss adoption in sessions and show competence in supporting adoptees (Meyer et al., 2023; Post et al., 2019).

Transracial adoptees at adolescence or adulthood sometimes experience being associated with their White adoptive families and less with their ethnic group and may experience a desire to be identified with their ethnic group, a phenomenon that has the potential to impact parts of their mental health (Baden, 2008; Baden et al., 2012). The complexity of identity, and the information surrounding it, happens to be an important theme in the lives of adoptees who are sometimes curious about their backgrounds and how they make sense of their current lives (Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011). As such, this study seeks to explore the mental health experiences of adoptees of the global majority, popularly known in the United States as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). This study focuses on their mental well-being, integration of their identities, and their experiences in the mental health systems in the United States.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

To provide a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority, this hermeneutic phenomenological study will engage the Bicultural Identity Integration model. Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) introduced Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) as a construct that describes a bicultural person's thoughts and feelings about the crossroads of their two cultural orientations, ethnic and mainstream (Ferrari et al., 2015). It focuses on how people who identify with different cultures integrate and manage them within themselves. For a transracial adoptee of the Global majority, this would be the integration of their birth culture and their adoptive family's culture, which in this study is White or non-BIPOC culture. Ferrari et al. (2015) refer to them, respectively, as the "heritage culture" and the "host-country" culture, in reference to internationally adopted transracial adoptees of the global majority (p. 64). This is especially relevant as about two-thirds of transracial adoptees have a difficult time identifying with their racial identity and sometimes connect more with being White, per previous studies (Baden et al., 2012; Feigelman & Silverman, 1984).

BII consists of two important and separate constructs—cultural harmony versus conflict and cultural blending versus dissociation, also known as perceptions of distance and perceptions of conflict in identity in reference to a person's cultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Ferrari et al., 2015). In terms of this study, cultural conflict would be the transracial adoptee feeling caught between their birth culture and their adoptive family's culture (Ferrari et al., 2015). The opposite would hold for cultural harmony, where they would feel connected. Transracial adoptees may also experience their two cultures as separate, which would define dissociation (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Huynh et al., 2011). Therefore, having a higher BII would mean a transracial adoptee is able to view their two cultures as harmonious, and one with

lower BII would be experiencing conflict with their identities (Huynh et al., 2011). Studies have concluded that BII is an important predictor of mental well-being and adjustment in transracial adoptees (Ferrari et al., 2015; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority (BIPOC) raised by White parents, navigating their dual identities and its intersection with their mental health. The study explores the unique challenge and coping mechanisms that are related to transracial adoption and identifies the factors contributing to positive mental health outcomes of transracial adoptees of the global majority (BIPOC). Additionally, the study explores the role counseling may have played in their lives as recipients of mental health services.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority in navigating their dual cultural identities?
2. How does bicultural identity integration impact the mental health of transracial adoptees of the global majority?
3. What role does cultural socialization play in the mental well-being of transracial adoptees of the global majority?
4. What role does counseling play in the bicultural identity integration and mental health experience of transracial adoptees of the global majority?

Significance of the Study

In the United States, about 40% of all adoptions are transracial adoptions (Eser, 2024; Vandivere et al., 2009). With such a significant percentage of adoptions being transracial, it is

imperative that there is research that focuses on transracial adoptees, especially because there is a gap in the understanding of the complexities of their identities (Baden et al., 2012). The significance of this study is to generate knowledge for mental health professionals to better serve transracial adoptees of the global majority. A theory such as the Cultural-Racial Identity model by Baden and Steward (2007), for example, makes for a useful backdrop against which the construct of racial and ethnic identity can be discussed. Other theoretical models can also be used in explaining some of the results obtained from this study. This leads to the implications of the study that highlight some of the social justice needs of the population being studied and the connection with the gap in the research and practice in the counseling field. Much of the research on this topic has occurred in the early to mid-2000s, so it is the hope that this study provides some more recent findings for further research. Additionally, not much research has been done around the process of establishing identity in transracial adoptees (Manzi et al., 2014).

Adoption research has focused on the experiences of adoptive parents and not as much on the adoptee, especially the transracial adoptee of the global majority (Killian & Khanna, 2019). Most of these adoptive parents are also White (Baden et al., 2012). This research study is an attempt to uplift and highlight the voices of transracial adoptees of the global majority, with the hope of reaching adoptive parents, clinicians, and other researchers. Counseling training is also lacking in research and information about the intersection of racial identity and the mental health of transracial adoptees (Branco et al., 2022). A needs assessment conducted in 2021 by this researcher yielded results that showed 71% of counselors strongly believed that mental health professionals needed more training on working with Black international transracial adoptees, a subset of the population under study (Brako-Owusu, 2021). Additionally, 80% strongly believed that mental health professionals needed more skills and tools to assess the unique lived

experiences of Black international transracial adoptees. In another study of licensed psychologists, 90% of the participants believed they needed more education on the topic of adoption, with 81% showing interest in courses that focus on adoption (Sass & Henderson, 2000). Despite the prevalence of mental health issues within the adoptee communities, the mental health community has not been vocal about mental health concerns within this community with a significant deficit in the educational training of counselors (Henderson, 2007). With the difficulty of connecting with and developing a connection to one's birth culture, the bicultural identity integration is utilized as a construct in this research study and provides a lens through which the cultural identity of transracial adoptees of the global majority can be hermeneutically dissected (Baden et al., 2012).

Definition of Terms and Operationalized Constructs

In consideration of key terms, *ethnicity* encompasses the social and cultural attributes, backgrounds, or experiences that are collectively shared by a group of people. These characteristics involve elements such as language, religion, beliefs, values, and behaviors, which are frequently transmitted from one generation to another (National Cancer Institute, n.d.). *BIPOC* is an abbreviation for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and is exclusive to the United States as a term that promotes unity among non-White groups (Davidson, 2024). This term will be used sparingly in the text to maintain the integrity of previous studies. However, the term *global majority* will replace BIPOC as this author's intentionality about writing from a lens that does not only center American language and conceptualization of race, especially when researching a topic that transcends the borders of the country. *Race* refers to outward differences that exist among people and is thought to be a social construct (Baden et al., 2012). *Adoptee* is a child placed in a family through adoption, sometimes domestically or internationally (Zhang et

al., 2023). *Transracial adoption* is defined as the adoption of a child by parents who are of a different race (Javier et al., 2007). *Identity* is the view of one's self as influenced by their psychological being, social roles, values, beliefs, and the flow of who they were, are, and continue to be (APA, 2018). *Bicultural identity* is the combining of two different identities or parts of one's self (Manzi et al., 2014). *Cultural distance* is the perceived contrast or difference between a person's cultural identities (adoptive and birth identities in this case; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). *Cultural conflict* is the perception of two cultural identities being at odds with each other, which can result in internal tension (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). *Reculturation* is the attempt to reconnect with one's birth culture post-adoption (Baden, 2012). *Integration* is the intentional identification or connection with two or more cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). *Hermeneutic philosophy* refers to the exploration of the meaning and interpretation of different phenomena (George, 2020). *Hermeneutic circle* is a process by which we understand phenomena, and not a technique to be used in research (Peoples, 2021).

Assumptions and Limitations

The stories of transracial adoptees of the Global majority in this study are not monolithic but were expected to have similar themes around the exploration of identity. It was expected that participants may not want to talk about parts of their ethnic development as it may feel like a betrayal to their adoptive family. Narratives may also focus more on the negative experiences of transracial adoptees and less on the positives as part of self-selection. It is also noteworthy that this study captures only the voices of adoptees and not of adoptive parents. Another foreseen limitation is that the small sample size will impact generalizability of the study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature review examines studies about the mental health of transracial adoptees of the Global majority and the factors that impact their experiences. The review begins with a review of adoption and transracial adoption research. Identity development and cultural integration within adoptive families is also addressed. Furthermore, the conceptualization of race in adoptive families, transracial adoption mental health research, and research about possible contributing factors and interventions are examined. Keywords searched include the following: BIPOC transracial adoptee mental health, transracial adoptee mental health, adoption, international adoption, and adoptee mental health.

Theoretical Orientation

First, it is important to look at bicultural identity integration as the theoretical backdrop of this study. A study by Huynh et al. (2018) focused on the development and validation of the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 (BIIS-2), writing new items on the scale using qualitative data. The BIIS-2 was designed to measure the individual differences in how bicultural people affectively and cognitively cope with their dual cultural identities (Huynh et al., 2018). This study was a multiphase cross-sectional observational study with a test-retest reliability assessment, using 1,049 participants from a university on the West Coast. The average participant age was 19.3 years, and they were recruited via an online database of psychology department students. Three main groups of measures were the focus of the study: acculturation, bicultural and ethnic identity, and psychological and physical well-being (Huynh et al., 2018). The result of this study was a longer version of the bicultural identity integration measure, which demonstrated validity and reliability over diverse ethnic and generational groups. The two main

dimensions of this measure, cultural harmony versus conflict and cultural blendedness versus compartmentalization, were respectively linked to psychological adjustment and cognition, behavior, and acculturation variables (Huynh et al., 2018). The findings of this study however may not be generalizable to people who are not in college or are older than college-age. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the data may also limit the ability to draw conclusions. Lastly, the participants lacked age and educational diversity even though there was ethnic diversity (Huynh et al., 2018).

A related study explored the relationship between bicultural identity integration, bicultural self-efficacy, and critical consciousness of racism, and how they are predictors of psychological well-being of People of Color who are bicultural (Lee et al., 2022). This cross-sectional observational study had 289 participants recruited from an online platform and utilized a number of validated measures to assess bicultural identity integration, bicultural self-efficacy, critical consciousness of racism, and psychological well-being. The Bicultural Self-Efficacy scale was used to measure self-efficacy within a bicultural context. Participant perception of their two cultures was measured using the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 (BIIS-2), focusing primarily on harmony versus conflict, as well as blending and compartmentalization. Participants' level of critical consciousness of systemic oppression was measured using the Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure. The study found that greater psychological well-being was associated with the harmony component of the BII and that harmony and blendedness were connected to bicultural self-efficacy. The association between BII blendedness and psychological well-being was also strengthened by critical consciousness of racism. Worth noting in this study is the necessity of considering that despite high bicultural self-efficacy, the development of the bicultural identity integration harmony can be hindered by

critical consciousness of racism in the exploration of the bicultural experiences of people of color. The BII measures' (harmony and blendedness) low internal consistency will need to be addressed in future research as the authors noted that as a limitation of the study. They added that the integration studied here could look different for different minority groups (Lee et al., 2022). With the theoretical considerations in mind, the next portion of the literature review takes a wider perspective on transracial adoption.

Review of Research Literature and Synthesis of the Research Findings

Review of Research on Adoption and Transracial Adoption in the United States

Historically, adoption agencies have had an easier time placing White children in adoptive homes, especially with White parents, who also happen to be the largest population of adoptive parents (Brooks et al., 2005). The first population-based cross-sectional survey of adoptive parents who adopted children internationally in Minnesota between 1990 and 1998 was conducted by Hellerstedt et al. in 2008. This study, designed by the International Adoption project (IAP), involved mailing a 556-item questionnaire to 2,977 parents who adopted children internationally, with a 62% response rate. The 1,834 parents who returned the survey represented 2,291 adoptees (Hellerstedt et al., 2008). Of this sample, 88% of parents surveyed had adopted transracially, and 97% identified as White. This sample was also highly educated, with at least 70% having at least a college degree, and 85% reporting household incomes of over $50,000. At the same time, the statistics of these parents who have adopted internationally showed a stark difference socioeconomically with birth parents who live in Minnesota. The study highlighted the importance of understanding the needs of families who go through international adoption and the challenges they experience. Approximately three-quarters of the participants of this study took steps to immerse their children in experiences from their birth culture. At the same time,

98% of them had no regrets about adopting internationally and would recommend it. The limitations of this study include the survey not capturing essential aspects of the experience of adopting internationally, why parents pursued international adoption over domestic, and other psychological adjustments in the adoptive family. The survey also focused on happenings up to 11 years in the past, which may bring up some recall bias among the participants (Hellerstedt et al., 2008).

In a later study regarding White adoptive parents, Raleigh's 2016 research highlighted the differences that exist in how White adoptive parents view the variety of Black children available to them for adoption, based on their heritage or where they are from. This study looked at how Black children born in the U.S. are considered differently from Black children from countries outside the U.S. and from Black children who are multiracial (Raleigh, 2016). This qualitative study used a semi-structured interview to interview 25 adoption workers due to their ability to be objective about reasons why some groups of Black children are adopted over another and the thought processes that accompany them. The study found that Black children who were born outside the U.S. were more favored than Black children born in the U.S. when it came to selection by White adoptive parents. Raleigh posited that there was more focus on the children's ethnicity over their race but did not give further details about how this is harmful to the children in the grand scheme. Additionally, the adoption worker participants emphasized that in their experience with White adoptive parents, there is an emphasis on whether Black adoptees are U.S.-born or born outside the U.S., with a preference for the latter. They also added that with children of the Global majority, Hispanic and Asian-identifying children are more likely to be adopted by White parents than Black children (Raleigh, 2016). Even though White parents appear to be more open to transracial adoption, the results of this study showed that there are

more requirements of the adoptees such as their skin tone and country of origin. Raleigh's contribution to the topic of transracial adoption points to the hierarchy that exists within the adoption world and how White adoptive parents could contribute to their Black children's future internalized racism. Further research that would include the experiences of parents and adoptees is warranted. Limitations include the sample focus on adoption workers in the private sector as well as the limited data that is available on how race factors into private domestic adoptions (Raleigh, 2016).

Still on the topic of racial perceptions, Katz and Doyle (2013) examined different responses to transracial adoptive families and adoptive families of the same race. The study explored how individual racist attitudes of White American observers moderate the responses to the different adoptive families. The 167 subjects of this study were undergraduate students who were mostly White and female, with an average age of 19. Some reported having a relative in their extended family who was adopted, and a small number reported having an adopted family member in their nuclear family. The researchers used an experimental manipulation where the subjects of the study were assigned randomly to a photograph of either a same-race family (White couple holding a White baby) or photo of a transracial family (White couple holding a Black baby). They concluded that participants' negative emotions when they looked at the transracial family signaled desirable attitudes towards adoption. These negative emotions and attitudes about adoption were measured by established scales such as the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale and the Modern Racism Scale. This study found a difference in how participants view adoptive families, in that they reported less favorable attitudes towards adoption if they viewed an adoptive family that was transracial, and the opposite with adoptive families of the same race. Limitations include the sole undergraduate sample, which is not

representative of the general population, and their awareness of the study's purpose, which could have impacted the experimental manipulation of the study. There were also some misperceptions from the participants about which families were or were not transracial. The researchers recommended diversifying the participant population and exploring participant responses to transracial adoption in real-world settings, not experimental settings (Katz & Doyle, 2013).

In building upon previous research about adoptee psychological well-being, this longitudinal observational study explored the long-term effects of pre-adoptive risk on emotional and behavioral functioning in children who were adopted out of the foster care system (Blake et al., 2022). These pre-adoptive risks included both pre- and postnatal risk factors. The study was a non-randomized, non-controlled study that followed a cohort of 82 children who were adopted from foster care over time, connecting with them again about 10–15 years after the initial assessment. They were recruited between 1996 and 2001 through organizations connected to the prospective adoptive parents. The children were mostly African American or Latine, and the adoptive parents were mostly White, heterosexual, and female. Approximately half of the adoptions were also transracial. The study focused on using latent variable methods to capture pre-adoptive risk, including both prenatal and postnatal risk. The data used on pre-adoptive risk were from previous records instead of adoptive parent reports. The researchers also examined whether childhood behavioral problems mediated the effect of pre-adoptive risk on teen or young adult functioning. They found that postnatal risk predicted higher levels of internalizing and dysregulation across childhood, not prenatal risk. Additionally, the dysregulation profile was the one factor that influenced the impact of postnatal risk on teen and young adult functioning. The results are consistent with previous research that showed long-term effects of postnatal pre-adoptive risk, but not prenatal risk in adoptees. Limitations are the small sample size and the

lack of generalizability of the results to other groups of adoptees in the child welfare system. This study focused solely on adopted children who had histories of prenatal substance exposure (Blake et al., 2022). With a better understanding of the history of transracial adoption, the next section focuses on the role of parents.

Transracial Adoption and the Role of Parents

In an early study from DeBerry et al. (1996), there was a focus on the effects of racially relevant antecedents on the adjustment of transracial adoptees who are African American. The participants were 130 adoptees who were either African American or biracial and adopted by White parents. The method involved data from the Minnesota Transracial Adoption Project and a longitudinal assessment of families through structured interviews over 2 years and then 3 years. The parents and adoptees were interviewed about their demographics, lifestyles, family environment, and the adoption process, as well as their impacts on the adoptee's development towards the end of their teen years. The results showed that family racial socialization is a predictor for ecological competence and therefore the adjustment of transracial adoptees. Afrocentric reference group orientation decreased as the adoptees grew older and more towards adulthood. Their adjustment also decreased over time. Limitations of this study include family racial socialization being the only predictor studied and how it provides limited information about adoptees' socialization. Future research could focus on other predictors or variables that focus on ecological competence (DeBerry et al., 1996).

A study exploring the experiences of 25 multiracial (Black and White) transracial adoptees who were being raised by White people was the focus of Samuels and LaRossa's 2009 study. It centered on the navigation of racial differences, how they managed social expectations and perceptions of their transracial adoptee status, and their efforts towards developing their

cultural and racial identities. The authors emphasized previous research studies that mentioned some adoptive parents hold the belief that race is not as important for multiracial adoptees as it is for Black adoptees. This qualitative interpretive study utilized the extended case method and the participants were given in-depth interviews. Data analysis for this study was a multisystemic interpretive approach that included open coding by the team of four researchers, which led to a final coding scheme that utilized a reflective process. The researchers found that transracial adoption plays a significant role in the feelings of difference around race as transracial adoptees attempt to figure out their sense of racial belonging and developing community and that multiracial adoptees actually live racialized experiences as they move into adulthood. Limitations included how only the voices of participants were studied, not including the perspectives of other family members within the adoptive family. Additionally, this study had a small sample size, and this sample had a unique experience that did not leave room for adoption experiences that included access to other support networks such as on the internet or multiracial organizations, or being adopted when they were not infants (Samuels & LaRossa, 2009).

Later, Killian and Khanna (2019) explored how parents process the concept of racial and ethnic socialization. Interviews with 34 participants who were in a larger study on the topic of adoption were analyzed. The criteria included having at least one adopted child in a transracial adoption. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling and through adoption groups and agencies. The 45–75-minute semi-structured interviews were analyzed for common themes, out of which six major themes arose, including results that some parents downplayed race and ethnicity, did not have the capacity to discuss the topics, or had some shift in their levels of awareness of the topics post transracial adoption. These results showed that there is no one way in which race and ethnicity are explored within multicultural families, if ever. The results also

showed that parents had varying reasons for the different levels of exposure, including wanting to protect their children from complex topics like race and ethnicity and rather focusing on other personal goals. Socialization was also approached differently with children of different racial backgrounds. Latino and Asian children were not socialized with an emphasis on race and ethnicity like Black children were. Limitations include not getting the perspectives of both parents as the study only interviewed one parent within the family, therefore not getting a whole picture of the parenting experience within the family. Further research could include the adoptees' experiences of their own socialization as well. This study is important because it highlights the shifting attitudes around race and ethnicity that some parents experience after adopting their children and becoming more aware of their own racial privilege (Killian & Khanna, 2019).

To further consider parental involvement in the life of a transracial adoptee, the following study focused not only on how to support adoptees but also on how to develop a way to include the adoptive parents. Baden et al. (2022) discovered a gap in substance use disorder prevention methodologies or programs that specifically cater to transracial adoptees and their families. The authors proposed a substance use disorder program exclusively for transracial adoptive families. They utilized the biopsychosocial model and theories that focus on adoption-related development issues to explore and conceptualize substance use disorders. The aim of the study was to develop a prevention program that includes the particular issues that adoptive families with adopted children face in addition to the role adoption and race play in the development of substance use disorders. Baden et al. (2022) also discussed findings that transracial adoptees tend to use substances as a way to cope with some of the difficulties they face, such as racial and identity issues. Additionally, they highlighted the higher prevalence of substance among transracial

adoptees compared to their non-adopted peers. This research led to the development of the Strengthening Transracial Families (STAF) program with a foundation of the Guiding Good Choices (GGC) prevention program. STAF consists of seven sessions designed to address the distinctive risk factors and needs of transracial adoptees when it comes to preventing substance use disorders. It includes psychoeducation, activities promoting reflection, and skill building (Baden et al., 2022). They also proposed that the STAF modules include topics like culture, race, and trauma. The main limitation is that STAF needs empirical validation and evaluation through further research.

A later qualitative phenomenological study explored the depth of cultural socialization within transracial adoptive families, primarily how adoptive parents addressed the concept of cultural socialization (Zhang et al., 2023). Through semi-structured phone interviews, 30 transracial adoptive parents including 29 mothers and one father were interviewed about their understanding of culture, their cultural knowledge and the steps taken to include cultural socialization in their families. Ninety-three percent of the participants identified as White, one identified as Black, and one identified as biracial. In addition, 17 of the participants were dual mother-father parent households, 10 were single-mother households, and three were two-mother households. The children in these families were ages 2 through 17 years. The interview had questions such as "What are the challenges you have faced in providing cultural experiences for your child?" and "What does it mean for your child to be well adjusted?" (Zhang et al., 2023, p. 5). The study found that transracial adoptive parents had varying depths of cultural socialization, which showed up in how they understand culture and their views of how to empower their adopted children in constructing their cultural identities. Zhang et al. (2023) added that on the other hand, adoptive parents who did not acknowledge their lack of knowledge or underestimate

the value of culture contributed to a superficial cultural socialization of transracial adoptees. Approximately 15 themes were developed through a phenomenological analysis, and these themes included "understanding of culture, lack of cultural knowledge, culture is not everything, providing role models and creating diverse context" (Zhang et al., 2023, p. 8). Limitations of the study include a possible overrepresentation of parents with similar racial and cultural ideologies, especially because all the participants were US adoptive parents. Additionally, the researchers mentioned that there was a significant difference between the international and the domestic transracial adoptee families which shows up in their engagement with cultural socialization and cultural activities. Further research could consider a connection between the thought processes of transracial adoptive parents and the cultural activities they provide for their children (Zhang et al., 2023).

From an international perspective on the topic of identity and transracial adoption, Reinoso et al. (2013) conducted a study on the perceptions of adoption, discrimination, and cultural identities with 68 families in Spain who adopted children internationally. This was done through the assessment of the feelings and thoughts of the adoptive parents and their adopted children. Of the 68 families, 71% were transracial adoptive families, and 29% were adoptions of the same race, all of whom had White parents. Additionally, the children in these families were between the ages of 8 and 12 years old. The study included 64 adoptive mothers and 37 adoptive fathers. The subjects of this study were recruited through snowball sampling from adoptive family associations, healthcare professionals, and schools. A questionnaire named "My Experiences" was utilized in the assessment of the thoughts and feelings of the adoptive parents and their adopted children in regards to adoption. This assessment was given separately to the children and to the adoptive parents. The questionnaire included questions about what

participants knew about adoption, whether adoptees and adoptive families spoke the same language, and whether they had visited the adoptees' birth countries. This study found that adopted children had a solid understanding of their status as adoptees and transracial adoptees had more curiosity and interest in their birth countries than same-race adoptees. They also reported the fathers of same-race adoptees reported higher levels of identification and family satisfaction compared to those who adopted transracially. The generalizability of these results were impacted by the diversity of the convenience sample, although they highlight the experiences of this sample. Additionally, the researchers reported difficulty in finding standardized measures that would include all of their study considerations and expressed hope that a standardized measure would be developed in future studies for this topic (Reinoso et al., 2013).

Another international study added to the research on transracial adoption and the factors that play a role in their success (Moffatt & Thoburn, 2001). A sample of 254 placements in the United Kingdom was the subject of this quantitative study that focused on the "success" or "breakdown" of permanent placements of children of minority ethnic origins. This sample was part of a large sample of surveys of 1,165 children in placement with adoptive families between 1980 and 1985. Moffatt and Thoburn (2001) addressed the highly controversial topic of placing minority children, especially with considerations such as risk of placement stability, transracial adoption versus same race adoption, and the racial makeup of the adoptive parents. The subjects in this study were between 9 and 30 years old, and the mean age at the time of their placement was 6.6 years. Sixty percent of them were boys, and 42% of the parents in this study were ethnic minorities. Additionally, 70% of these placements were also transracial. The results showed 72% of the placements were still living with their adoptive/placement parents or connected to them in

some way at the time of the study. However, the remaining 28% may not be an accurate representation because of the variable reports of placements not working out or being "successful." Simple descriptive statistics were utilized in analyzing the data, which showed the majority of the placements for children were successful whether they were placed with the same ethnic family of transracial adoptive parents. In placements that were unsuccessful, the factors that impacted the transracial placements were similar to those of families with similar ethnicities as the adoptees (i.e., White children). Another discussion of the results of this study showed a significant difference in regards to gender. It was observed that boys in transracial placements had higher success rates than in same ethnicity placements. With the female adoptees, there was a higher rate of success when placed with same ethnicity parents than in transracial placements. To understand this, a two-way variance was used within the context of the binary logit model, and it showed that boys had considerably significant behavioral problems. However, in exploring other factors such as behavioral problems at the time of placement, there were no significant differences observed. Further research is needed to better understand the relationship between ethnicity of adoptees and their gender, as this study did not have a conclusive result. A limitation of this study was the small number of disrupted placements that limited the conclusions from the qualitative data that influenced this study (Moffatt & Thornbull, 2001).

In continuing to explore the role of parents in their adopted children's socialization, a quantitative longitudinal study of families who have adopted children from China looked at what adopted Chinese children need to achieve adequate levels of bicultural competence (Thomas & Tessler, 2007). Some of the factors considered include racial composition of the adoptee's community, parental attitudes, and parental social networks. This study included 327 parents, with most of them being White, female, married or living with a partner, highly educated, and

with incomes considerably above national averages. The children represented in this study were all female with an average age of 7 years. Participants were gathered by word of mouth and through an organization called Families with Children from China. The parents were surveyed in 1996 and again between October 2001 and May 2002. The researchers found that cultural competence in Chinese adoptees is positively impacted by the composition of the community surrounding them, their adoptive parents' attitudes towards bicultural socialization, and their social networks. The researchers named the possible bias in parent-reported data as one of the limitations of this study. They also added that the county-level analysis of this study was possibly too broad for the small sample size, although they found significant effects. Additionally, they posited that the children in this study who were raised in the United States achieved modest levels of cultural competence when compared to their peers raised in China. To address this, they recommended future studies address the bicultural competence of Chinese children who are adopted and those raised by Chinese American parents (Thomas & Tessler, 2007).

A later systemic research synthesis examined studies with the following variables: parental practices of racial-ethnic socialization and transracial adoptee outcomes, and the racial-ethnic socialization experiences of transracial adoptees and their outcomes (Montgomery & Jordan, 2018). The authors conducted a systematic search process and utilized coding tables in a consistent coding procedure. The study gathered data from 13 studies and found that healthy adoptee outcomes are connected to racial-ethnic socialization of adoptees. This socialization includes adjustment, psychological well-being and self-esteem. Montgomery and Jordan (2018) also found that practices such as preparation for bias, family discussions about racial differences, and exposure to adoptee cultural experiences, all examples of racial-ethnic socialization

practices, significantly impacted adoptee outcomes. Also of note is their finding that adoptive parents need more support, education, and resources to effectively include racial-ethnic socialization in their families. At the same time, Montgomery and Jordan (2018) also noted that some of the findings pointed to adoptive parents not being aware of their own biases. A number of limitations exist for this synthesis. The studies did not use a consistent measure across the studies to assess parental practices of racial-ethnic socialization and future studies could use validated measures (Montgomery & Jordan, 2018). Additionally, the 13 studies were limited in the races studied so the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other races. For example, most of the studies were focused on Asian and Asian American transracial adoptees.

A different study sought to examine the relationship between attitudes of color blindedness and the following outcome variables: views towards institutional discrimination, views towards microaggressions, and perceived racist occurrences that adoptees faced (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019). Participants for this study were recruited from adoptive family organizations who support transracially adoptive families. There were 172 participants who identified as White and were between the ages of 38 and 69. Most of these were women (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019). Worth noting also is that these participants were highly educated and were high-income earners. The adoptees in the participating families ranged from 3 to 18 years of age and were mostly from Asian countries. The following were the measures of focus of this study: colorblindedness (assessed by the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale), adoption stigma (assessed by the Stigmatization Scale), racist occurrences, hypothetical views of racism, impression management (assessed by the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding-16; Morgan & Langrehr, 2019). These measures were on a variety of scales and were initially screened to make

sure that linear regression assumptions were met. Further analysis of the data included using the PROCESS model to explore interactions between color evasiveness and the different moderators being studied. The researchers found that higher levels of perceived adoption stigma increased the negative relationship between color evasiveness and parents being able to recognize their adoptive children's racist experiences. Secondly, they found that the negative relationship between parents being able to recognize microaggressions and institutional discrimination was reduced by high levels of adoption stigma, primarily with parents of younger adopted children. They asserted that it is important for adoptive parents to explore their own sociocultural identity so they can recognize different forms of discrimination their adoptive children face. The cross-sectional design of this study limits the ability to draw causality. Another limitation is that the sample of participants limits the generalizability of the results to other transracial adoptive parents. Thirdly, experiences of adoption stigma could differ for parents who have both biological and adopted children. Finally, this study relied on parent reports of racism and not the reports of the adopted children who have actually experienced racism (Morgan & Langrehr, 2019).

A newer study had 104 adoptive parents who were recruited across 25 states in the United States through snowball sampling for this study that focused on adoptive parents' communication with their adopted children on the topic of adoption microaggression. Lee et al. (2022) looked at how adoption microaggressions were addressed through teaching external boundary management, internal boundary management strategies, and preparation of bias outside the home. They developed a 176-item web-based questionnaire in different stages, piloting it with parents for further validity. The final survey had questions about nine adoption microaggression situations faced by parents and their adopted children. Some of the questions addressed responses to people

saying their child was lucky to have been adopted by the parent, comments about their adopted child's looks, or the status of their birth parents. The parents were also asked open-ended questions about how they responded to their children in situations where adoption microaggressions occurred. Themes were established through a qualitative thematic analysis of the parents' open-ended responses. The findings of this study highlighted the different communication strategies used by adoptive parents in addressing adoption microaggressions. Three communication strategies frequently appeared in the responses the parents shared. Preparation for bias sometimes included teaching external boundary management, while internal boundary management mostly co-occurred with either external boundary management or preparation for bias. Additionally, parental perceptions of adoption-related microaggressions impacted how they communicated preparation for bias with their children, but did not affect their internal boundary management or the way they taught external boundary management. Lee et al. (2022) also asserted that increased education and training for parents of adoptees can improve their understanding of how to help their adopted children address adoption bias. The data may have been limited due to the structured survey used in the study. Secondly, the study only focused on adoptive parents' experiences with a small number of adoption microaggression situations that do not cover all the possible scenarios they may face. Also, this study only focused on parent information and data and did not highlight the experiences of the adoptees. Next, it is important to understand bicultural identity and transracial adoptee mental health considerations.

Bicultural Identity and Mental Health

This section begins with a study on the effect of bicultural identity, bilingualism, and social context on the psychological adjustment of multicultural individuals (Chen et al., 2008).

They sought to explore the differences between bicultural identity and bicultural competencies and the role they play in individual psychological well-being. The study focused on three groups of bicultural individuals namely, Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese college students, Mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong, and Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, in three separate studies. Chinese culture was maintained as a constant variable across the three studies. In all three studies, participants were given questionnaires that assessed their cultural identification, bicultural identity integration, acculturative stress, language proficiency, and psychological adjustment. These questionnaires were in both English and Chinese, depending on the sample of participants. Study one had 67 Mainland Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong with ages ranging from 17 to 49 years. Their language proficiency was assessed through self-reports, asking how they rated their Cantonese language ability and their exposure to Cantonese media. Their identification with their culture of origin and receiving culture was measured on a 6-point scale. The participants were also given the Bicultural Identity Integration scale in addition to eight other assessments that focused on psychological adjustment or symptoms. Study two had 153 female Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong aged 22 to 51 years old. This study used similar measures to those used in study one above with a difference of language, Tagalog (instead of Cantonese). Study three had 452 college students in Hong Kong and Mainland China with an average age of 20.58 years. The questionnaires were in Chinese and in English, with measures also similar to those in studies one and two. In this study however, language proficiency was focused on Cantonese and English. Collectively, these studies found that BII had a positive effect on psychological adjustment for immigrants and majority-culture people such as the Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong immigrants and students, but not the Filipino domestic workers. Individual language proficiency and use in their receiving culture were significant

predictors of psychological adjustment with the Filipino participants, compared to the other groups. Also, a predictor that was significant across all three groups and negatively impacted psychological adjustment was acculturative stress. It was stronger in immigrants though compared to majority-culture individuals. The researchers asserted that the varying indicators for psychological adjustment in these groups were likely due to their varied situational demands as well as opportunities. As detailed and varied as this study was, the newness of the research questions posed leaves much room for the replication and refinement of the study. Another limitation is the correlational nature of the data from the study. This got in the way of definitive conclusions about directionality and causality in the relationships between the variables in the study (Chen et al., 2008). The results could have also been impacted by the political, economic, sociocultural, and historical contexts of each population and their respective regions.

In building on previous research, another study explored the relationship between the identity status of individuals and acculturation-related variables such as values, cultural practices, and identifications (Schwartz et al., 2013). The study explored this with a sample of 2,411 first- and second- generation immigrant college students from 30 higher education institutions around the United States. They completed an online survey that had questions measuring personal identity and acculturation-related variables. The measures used included: Multigroup Acculturation Scale to evaluate cultural practices, Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure to assess cultural identifications, Dimensions of Identity Development Scale to assess personal identity, and Trandis and Gelfand scales to evaluate cultural values (Schwartz et al., 2013). The researchers used cluster-analytic procedures to place participants into different personal identity statuses based on their personal identity processes as part of a 5-step analysis process for this study. Some of the clusters include commitment, identification with

commitment, and searching moratorium. Results from this study showed that participants in the achieved and searching moratorium statuses, in addition to the high levels of exploration commitment had the likelihood to be bicultural and hold both the American and heritage identities, values, and cultural practices. They also found that those in the carefree diffusion status who did not report doing any identity work, reported significantly lower levels of connectedness with their heritage and American cultures. The researchers also added, based on their finding, that heritage culture may not be a fixed concept but rather a cultural stream that can be molded based on a person's creativity (Schwartz et al., 2013). The cross-sectional design of this study did not allow for examining change over time, and the limited sample diversity also meant that there may not be generalization to other populations.

A different study looked at a sample of 128 transracially adopted teenagers who were born in Latin American countries and adopted in Italy, to explore the connection, if any, between bicultural identity integration (BII) and behavioral problems (Manzi et al., 2014). Additionally, the authors explored the impact of family dynamics and social identity on BII. Their adoptive parents also participated in the study, bringing the total number of participants to 384. Of the adoptee participants in this study, 48.1% were female and 51.9% were male. They were recruited through Italian adoption agencies. All the participants received questionnaires regarding their ethnic identity, behaviors, and family processes, and these were analyzed with a structural equation modeling using SPSS AMOS software. This study found that an important factor in the understanding of adoptee behavioral issues is how they conceptualize their two cultural backgrounds as conflicting or compatible, that is, their level of bicultural identity integration. As such, adoptees who struggle with their two cultural backgrounds: birth and adoptive cultures, have difficulties with their behaviors. Furthermore, BII holds more weight for adoptees than their

national and ethnic identity when it comes to their adjustment. They also found that adjustment is determined by the adoptive parents' cultural socialization strategies. Lastly, an important part of national identity development in adoptees is their perception of belonging in their adoptive families. Limitations include a sample from just one country (Italy) with the participants recruited through adoption agencies, which may not be a full representation of the entire adoptee population. Secondly, the study utilized a cross-sectional design, not a longitudinal one that could be better suited for estimating the outcome and influence of BII on adoptee adjustment (Manzi et al., 2014). The authors recommended future research focusing on racial socialization and other ways of understanding the topics that go beyond self-report.

In continuing the research on the BII, Ferrari et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal study on how impactful national identity, ethnic identity, and bicultural identity integration (BII) are as protective factors for the psychological well-being of adoptees. They asserted that transracial adoptees, even though bicultural, do not typically have access to both cultures, and this identity formation is a predictor of successful adjustment in their adoptive families. This study included a self-report questionnaire that was administered to 79 transracial adoptees at the beginning of the study and then a year later. They found that bicultural identity integration plays a significant role in increasing psychological well-being in adoptees. Their findings suggested that strong BII is associated with higher levels of psychological well-being in adoptees one year later. The small sample size and limited generalizability of the results are limitations of the study. Additionally, self-report may produce biases in the research results, and the study did not also explore other factors that may impact the well-being of adoptees.

Much later, Tikhonov et al. (2019) explored the connection between symptoms of anxiety and depression in immigrants of color in the U.S. who are first and second generation and a

number of cultural identity factors such as their American identity, ethnic identity, and Bicultural Identity Integration (BII). One of the hypotheses was that higher BII and strong ethnic and American identity would be a predictor for low depression and anxiety. There were 766 participants, who identified as minority immigrants, selected from a pool of undergraduate students aged between 18 and 29. Of these, 40% of the participants were male and 60% were female, with most being Latino or Asian American, and majority being first-generation Americans (Tikhonov et al., 2019). A multiphase approach was used to develop and validate the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 and included a qualitative inquiry, expert evaluation, a pilot test and an administration to a considerable sample size of bicultural college students. The key finding was that bicultural identity harmony influenced the relationship between American identity and both depression and anxiety. With anxiety, American identity was only indirectly linked to it through its connection with bicultural identity harmony. A longer version of the Bicultural Identity Integration measure was developed and validated through this study—Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 (BIIS-2). This version is made up of two factors: cultural harmony versus conflict and compartmentalization versus cultural blendedness. In this case, cultural harmony was more linked to psychological adjustment, and cultural blendedness was more behaviorally and cognitively driven and connected to acculturation variables. Although there is ethnic diversity among the participants, there was not much diversity in the educational level and age of the participants. Also, the findings could not be generalized beyond college-age participants. Another limitation is the cross-sectional and correlational nature of the data in determining causal direction of effects (Tikhonov et al., 2019). Future research could utilize a qualitative approach to better understand bicultural identity and the experiences of immigrants.

Another study by Schwartz et al. (2019) explored how two essential concepts of the bicultural identity integration framework are connected to each other. They looked at cultural identity blendedness and cultural hybridization or mixing. This was done over a 12-day diary study that had 824 Hispanic college students as the subjects. Thirty-four point five percent of the participants were first-generation immigrants and 45% were second-generation. The rest were 1.5 generation where they and one of their parents were born in the United States. The surveys utilized in this study were of varying lengths and were given intermittently between 10 days. There were measures of identity, biculturalism, identity, psychosocial functioning, and well-being (Schwartz et al., 2019). These measures were given on a 5-point Likert scale. Participants were also given the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-2 (BIIS-2) to assess their identity integration, in addition to the Multicultural Identity Styles Scale (MISS), which assessed their hybridizing and alternating biculturalism. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was also used to measure their well-being. Lastly, the Beck Anxiety Inventory and Centers for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale were used to assess internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety. The data was analyzed in four steps to address the researchers' questions. The main findings of this study were that BII blendedness and harmony had a strong correlation and predicted bicultural hybridizing over time. Additionally, fluctuations in BII blendedness were negatively correlated to well-being and positively correlated to internalizing symptoms. They explained that maintaining an integrated bicultural identity is necessary for well-being and protecting against anxiety and depression. Furthermore, the study found that alternating between cultural identities was not necessarily related to the other components of biculturalism. Limitations include the use of college students as a sample, which can impact generalizability to other young adults. Additionally, there was an overrepresentation of women in the study. There

may also be a regional bias with the study participants being located in Miami and their cultural experiences being very different from others in other parts of the country. Lastly, the researchers added that the MISS scale which was used in the study had not been used previously in the United States (Schwartz et al., 2019).

Additionally, a cross-sectional observational study sampled 200 Hispanic adults from Arizona and Florida, between the ages of 18 and 25, who were recruited through quota sampling (Cano et al., 2021). Participants included 70% being U.S.-born, 69.5% of them being college students, and 44% being of Mexican descent. The study explored the connection between parts of bicultural identity integration, namely blendedness and harmony, and bicultural self-efficacy, with psychosocial stress in Hispanic emerging adults. Cano et al. (2021) defined bicultural harmony as the perceived compatibility between receiving cultures and a person's heritage. They posted that high levels of the previously-stated were connected to lower levels of psychosocial stress. Also associated with lower levels of psychosocial stress are high levels of social groundedness (confidence in building social networks in both cultures). However, a connection between bicultural blendedness and psychosocial stress was not established. The authors explained that even though these factors play a role in people managing the expectations of a bicultural social environment, blendedness may have a stronger connection to sociocultural adaptation and bicultural harmony may be more connected to mental health. The use of self-report measures and non-probability sampling were listed as limitations of this study. This study used bicultural self-efficacy, and while useful, it does not directly mention the term "Hispanic," and there could be broad explanations for the concept of heritage and ethnicity. This study's cross-sectional design is another limitation due to the fluidity of stress over time and how that can play a role in how bicultural identity integration components are measured. The use of a

survey that was only in English was particularly limiting to the generalizability of the results for non-English speaking Hispanics. Future research could take language into consideration (Cano et al., 2021).

More recently, Henriquez et al. (2023) examined how Latinx emerging adults navigate their ethnic and American identities, and how they are associated with their psychological well-being. In this context, they focused on the blendedness and harmony concepts of bicultural identity integration. There were 568 Latinx first-year college students with an age range of 16 to 22 years, with the majority identifying as Mexican/Mexican American and U.S. born. The researchers gathered data through a longitudinal observational design with three waves of data collection over one academic year, in the Fall, Spring of the following year, and the Fall of the same year (Henriquez et al., 2023). The participants for the study were recruited through social media, emails, listservs, and Latinx organizations. A survey was used to assess participant ethnic identity (using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised) and American identity (using the American Identity Measure), both on a 5-point Likert scale. They also assessed bicultural identity integration in the first two waves of data collection, using eight items on the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 (Henriquez et al., 2023). Four of the items focused on blendedness, and four on harmony. Lastly, the psychological well-being aspect of the study focused on assessing anxiety with the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7, depression with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, hope with the Adult Trait Hope scale, and self-esteem with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. All these were measured during the first and third waves of data collection. The study found that more ethnic identity exploration and commitment to American identity were associated with more blendedness and harmony, which extended to better psychological well-being. Participants having more harmony and blendedness

typically meant higher self-esteem and hope scores, as well as lower depression and anxiety scores. Limitations of this study include the predominantly female populations, which limits the generalizability to other demographics. Additionally, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that could have played a role in participant results. Further research could explore the complexities between American identity exploration and ethnicity, as well as the commitment to ethnicity and being able to blend identities (Henriquez et al., 2023).

Transracial Adoptee Mental Health

The following section reviewing research on transracial adoptee mental health begins with Hjern et al.'s 2002 retrospective cohort study that examined the high risk of severe mental health and social adjustment issues in adoptees in Sweden using a national register of adoptees. The study focused on intercountry adoptees and highlighted the need for support and interventions for this population. The researchers inquired about the mental health disorder and social maladjustment outcomes in adolescence and young adulthood in adoptees who were born outside Sweden. Additionally, they highlighted the research gaps and the need for studies that had larger sample sizes. The participants of this study were a combination of international adoptees from Latin America and Asia, who were immigrants to Sweden. Some of these adoptees were siblings. There were a total of 862,554 participants in this study (Hjern et al., 2002). The researchers obtained data on sociodemographic factors from the 1985 Swedish census, identified international adoptees born outside Europe who were adopted and brought to Sweden by Swedish parents before age 7. They then linked the individual-level data on suicide, mental health, substance abuse, and criminal outcomes using data from the national health and court registers. The data was analyzed using multivariate regression models, and risk factors were identified within the adoptee groups, compared to a general population of children who

were nonimmigrants and born in Sweden. This study found that international adoptees in Sweden have a higher risk of developing mental health problems and face more issues with social adjustment in their teen and young adult years, compared to the general population (non-adoptees). Limitations of this study include the exclusion of some groups of adoptees due to register data limits and the inability to identify Swedish-born adoptees who may have been in the general population group. The study also focused on extreme negative outcomes such as suicidality and severe mental illnesses that may not be as common or applicable to the general sample. Hjern et al. (2002) recommended that further studies could focus on less severe mental health outcomes to get a well-rounded picture of adoptee mental health and social adjustment.

Another perspective from Hovey et al. (2006) explored the impact of ethnic identity, preservation of Asian cultural values, and maintenance of the Korean language on the mental health of Korean American students and their mental health. There were 133 Korean American college students aged between 18 and 29 years were recruited via email directories and convenience sampling, with 88 being women and 45 being men. This cross-sectional study included self-report surveys with participants completing background information questionnaires and rating their Korean language proficiency as well as standardized measures of self-esteem, anxiety, depression, cultural values, and ethnic identity. Some of the instruments included the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Asian Values Scale. Pearson correlations were used in establishing relationships between cultural variables and mental health variables. This study found that strong identification with Asian cultural values is connected to lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety and depression. The researchers called this being caught in an "ethnic bind," a conflict of traditional and modern values that plays a role in psychological distress. Plus, 42% of the students reported clinically

relevant high depression levels. Compared to general male college students, Korean American males reported higher levels of anxiety (Hovey et al., 2006). Limitations for this study include the lack of generalizability of results due to the homogeneity of the participants, not leaving room for other Korean American groups. Additionally, the researchers highlighted the fluctuation of ethnic identity over time and recommended a longitudinal study to further explore the impact on mental health.

A later study examined the self-esteem and identity development of transracially adopted children by comparing their views on their adoption, birth parents, and adjustment to those of adoptees who are the same race as their adopted parents (Hamilton et al., 2015). This study utilized data from a longitudinal study Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIB; McGue et al., 2007) with a sample size of 692 (492 families represented), and 448 of the adoptees born outside the U.S. There were a number of questionnaires used to assess the different indices the study was focused on, including the Opinions About Adoption, which assessed adoptees attitude towards their adoption status. The results showed there were not significant differences between the experiences of transracially adopted children and same-race adoptees when it comes to their adjustment and general attitudes towards their identities. Another finding was that rates of maladaptive behavior when it came to social behaviors as explored in this study were higher in same race adoptees. Limitations of this study included the imbalance in diversity of the subjects, not allowing more generalizability of the results. Asian participants were disproportionately higher. The study also didn't account for gender differences in the results. A future study would include how parental socialization played a role in their adopted children's identity development. This study is relevant because it highlights the similarities in identity development between transracially adopted children and same-race adopted children, adding to the literature about the

hypothesis that there are similarities in the adoption adjustment process for the different groups of adoptees (Hamilton et al., 2015).

Using a cross-sectional survey methodology, Mohanty (2015) explored the relationship between psychological well-being and ethnic identity with a sample of 100 internationally adopted Asian teens and young adults residing in the United States. Sixty-one percent of these participants were female, and the median age at which they were adopted was 5 months. The participants also had an average age of 20 years, and 70% of them were adopted from South Korea. Recruitment of these participants was through online adoptee support groups and email lists. The researchers measured ethnic identity using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Brief Symptom Inventory were used in assessing psychological well-being. The results showed an association between positive self-esteem and moderate levels of ethnic identity. Mohanty (2015) also found that low and high levels of ethnic identity were associated with low self-esteem. Additionally, ethnic identity and psychological distress had a U-shaped relationship, where it began with a negative association and then the relationship diminished with an increase in ethnic identity. Thus, the study concluded that there is a curvilinear relationship between ethnic identity and psychological well-being, rather than a linear relationship. Limitations of this study are as follows: probable gender bias with over 50% of participants being female, using a cross-sectional design, and the study not considering the adopted country's culture in exploring ethnic identity. For further research, Mohanty (2015) recommended a longitudinal study to explore the development of ethnic identity for internationally adopted teens and a qualitative study for a deeper understanding of the former.

In another study, 209 participants, consisting of 119 international transracial adoptees (TRA) and 90 immigrants, all of Latin American origin, were recruited through snowballing,

schools, and adoption workers for this cross-sectional observational study comparing experiences of perceived discrimination, self-esteem, and ethnic identity affirmation (Ferrari et al., 2017). The authors were curious about whether ethnic identity affirmation informs the relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem in different ways among international TRA's and immigrants. Self-esteem served as a proxy for psychological well-being. Reportedly, 45% of the international TRA's were male and the rest female, with ages between 15 and 24. They were all adopted at an average age of 4.8 years and spent an average of 14.31 years living in Italy. The immigrant participants were aged 15 to 24, with 36% of them being male and 64% being female. They also spent an average time of 10.2 years in Italy, and 21.1% were born to Latin American parents who were immigrants in Italy. The results of the study showed immigrant participants recognizing higher levels of discrimination and ethnic identity affirmation as compared to the TRA participants. They also found that the negative impact of perceived discrimination with international TRA's was buffered by their ethnic identity affirmation, likely due to TRA's greater vulnerability towards positive acceptance and social context. This was not the case however with the immigrant participants. At the same time, Ferrari et al. (2017) concluded that there were no significant differences in self-esteem between international TRA's and immigrants. Limitations of this study include the use of only one ethnic group impacting the generalizability of the results. The study also utilized self-esteem as the only measure of psychological well-being and did not include other factors such as life satisfaction that could play a role in a person's psychological well-being. Ferrari et al. (2017) recommended exploring other ethnic groups for further research and approaching the study longitudinally to further explore the relationships between ethnicity, self-esteem, and perceived discrimination over time.

On the topic of identity, Brocious (2017) conducted a qualitative study where adult transnational adoptees were interviewed to examine the significance of ethnic identity exploration for transnational adoptees. This study was informed by Erikson's identity theory and identified four themes from the ten adult adoptees (ages 19–34) who were recruited through snowball sampling and email listserv. The participants were from birth countries like Korea, China, Thailand, and Philippines. These in-depth interviews inquired about their adoption stories, their desire for exploration of their birth countries, their conceptualization of their ethnicity, and their exposure to their birth country and culture. The themes from this study were: the transformative nature of travel to their birth counties, importance of relationships with other adoptees, varying feelings about cultural activities, and uniqueness of ethnic identity combined with "feelings of marginality" (Brocious, 2017, p. 324). Participants shared a longing for the language of their birth country, with all of them stating that they did not have fluency in their birth language. The authors also stated that their findings were consistent with Erkison's identity theory, as participants experienced a stronger desire for identity exploration as their sense of identity resolution increased. Limitations include the lack of generalizability due to the qualitative nature of the study. They added that the perspectives of the participants are also likely to differ from participants from the same group who are of a different generation (Brocious, 2017).

Another cross-sectional observational study collected data over 18 months from a sample of 206 adult transracial adoptees, examining the relationship between mental health outcomes and perceived racial discrimination. Presseau et al. (2019) sought to examine the relationship between adoptive parent socialization and adoptee mental health and perceived discrimination. The researchers hypothesized that transracial adoptee experiences of racial discrimination would

be connected to poor mental health outcomes and that transracial adoptees would report weak

mental health outcomes if connected to parents with higher racial socialization. They found that

racial socialization is a protective factor when facing racial discrimination. They added that

while racial socialization served this purpose, it only had an impact on the psychological distress

of transracial adoptees, but not on their psychological well-being. Their findings also highlighted

the connection between transracial adoptees who reported lower levels of racial socialization and

experiencing negative impacts of racial discrimination. Limitations of the study include the

reliance of the study on self-reported data, which could be biased or inaccurate. The

cross-sectional design also gets in the way of establishing causality. Lastly, the results have

limited generalizability because of the demographic characteristics of the sample: mostly female,

Asian/Pacific Islander, and adoptees from two-parent families (Presseau et al., 2019). Additional

research is needed to understand and mediate the experiences of racial discrimination.

A later study examined the experiences of transracial Chinese adoptees who live in the United

States. The study focused on their racial socialization and identity within the context of being

raised by adoptive parents, using a qualitative grounded theory approach. Reynolds et al. (2021)

conducted in-depth interviews with eight transracial Chinese adoptees between ages 18 and 25.

The participants were adopted between 6 and 17 months old and were adopted into White

families living in the United States. The data was analyzed with a multistep coding process that

identified themes and built theory focused on understanding the experiences of the adoptee

participants. The participants shared that they experienced racial and adoption microaggressions

throughout their lives. Reynolds et al. (2021) found that Chinese American transracial adoptees

were ill-prepared to face the realities of the aforementioned as BIPOC folks in the U.S. and

learning about their culture from White adoptive parents felt ingenuine. At the same time, they

found that diversity in their communities and access to communities with shared lived experiences such as Chinese adoptee communities were helpful for their racial and ethnic identity development. The study's small sample size was noted as one of its limitations, in addition to the limited diversity of participants (Reynolds et al., 2021). The authors hope that there will be more studies about identity, recultutration, return trips to China, and transracial adoptive parenting practices.

The abovementioned studies provide research evidence and a review of the current literature, the gaps and a backdrop for the necessity of this current study. The studies provided a history of the development of the bicultural identity integration model, the development of its constructs, and the validation of the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 (BIIS-2) as an assessment tool. The review also included a review of the current literature on adoption and transracial adoption in the United States, pointing to the focus of many of these studies focusing on adoptive parents and especially the demographics of parents who are adopting transracially. Studies also highlighted some of the preferences adoptive parents appeared to have for transracial adoptees who are of the global majority, but are not Black. Results from several studies also emphasized the important role adoptive parents play in the racial and ethnic socialization of their adopted children and pointed to the lack of the abovementioned and its impact on transracial adoptees. Positive indicators such as community connectedness, parental networks, and exposure to birth culture are also highlighted as some of the factors contributing to healthier mental health, better self-esteem, and higher BII.

Rationale

This study seeks to give a voice to transracial adoptees of the Global majority especially since previous studies have shown that transracial adoptees have a higher probability of having

difficulties with their ethnic and racial identities, as well as with their mental health (Baden et al., 2022; Hamilton et al., 2015). The research reviewed in this chapter points to the prevalence of transracial adoption in the United States, but more importantly to the connections between bicultural integration and transracial adoptee mental health. The studies also point to the lack of preparedness on the part of White adoptive parents for raising their adopted children, as indicated by their reported Color evasiveness, lack of conversations about race and ethnicity, as well as their underestimation of the importance of race. Furthermore, the discomfort of White adoptive parents of transracial adoptees of the Global majority with discussing ethnicity creates a void in the development of the adoptees' ethnic identity. This gap may lead to a lack of self-confidence and uncertainty regarding their own ethnicity, and one of the studies reviewed above also indicated that adoptees who had an understanding of their adoptee identity had more interest in exploring their birth cultures (Killian & Khanna, 2015; Reinoso et al., 2013). Boivin and Hassan (2005) conducted a review with the primary aim of consolidating the current knowledge about the interconnectedness of heritage ethnic identity, discrimination, racial socialization, and psychological well-being in transracial adoptees. Their review also sought to assess the potential impact of racial socialization on the development of ethnic identity and psychological adjustment in transracial adoptees. The study revealed that the degree of ethnic identification, whether with one's birth culture or adoptive parents' culture, does not significantly influence the psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees. Instead, psychological well-being, encompassing personal growth, self-acceptance, and positive relationships, is determined by both ethnic identity and adaptation to adoption. Furthermore, cultural socialization is associated with personal growth, and the strength of ethnic identity fully accounts for this relationship. Although this study does not aim to establish a causal relationship, its

objective is to examine the mental health experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global

majority and the role their identity integration plays in it. Previous studies reviewed in the

literature review above point to the relevance of BII and its indication for positive mental health

outcomes. This exploration paves the way for future research, such as studying a population of

same-race adoptees, to further enhance our understanding of the mental health experiences of

adoptees.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Introduction to the Method

Taking a constructivist approach to this study is in line with the attempt to empower a group of historically marginalized people and amplify the voices of transracial adoptees of the global majority whose voices have historically been suppressed due to much of the research on the topic being focused on adoptive parents. Thus, the researcher has relied solely on the qualitative meaning created by the participants of this study to understand lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Also worth noting is that there are varied lived experiences for transracial adoptees of the Global majority, so it is pertinent that the meanings behind their experiences are accurately and equitably captured. In qualitative research, the researcher plays an important role as they are possibly involved with the research participants in some extensive form that requires them to name their biases and how they could impact how the results are interpreted (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018).

Study Design

This study is a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global majority, their bicultural identity integration, and its impact on their mental health. This study design allows for the identification of themes, patterns, and the meanings ascribed to them by the subjects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The aim of the study is to understand a particular group of people and honor the meaning created through their life experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The main phenomenological framework for this study is Heidegger's hermeneutic philosophy, focusing on understanding all of the data collected during the study, breaking it down, and exploring how it is understood (Peoples, 2021). In the case of this study, transcripts were interpreted and analyzed, with themes

developed after. This required the use of the hermeneutic circle where the researcher's biases are noted during the analysis.

For a qualitative study, the research findings mentioned in the review above and other pertinent findings are necessary for the receiving audience of the research study to pique their interest, as well as to understand the necessity of this research study. This methodology is also selected due to the nature of the topic, which will be discussed further below, and the preference to not quantify findings from a phenomenological study. A phenomenological method that focuses on the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global majority allows for an understanding and interpretation of their mental health experiences (Peoples, 2021).

Study Context

Informed consent and demographics were collected via Survey Monkey. In addition, Zoom was utilized for individual interviews. Zoom transcription captured the spoken word, which was then de-identified for analysis. This study was reviewed and approved by the Antioch University Seattle Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F).

Participants

The main population for this study is transracial adoptees who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. They must have been raised in a White adoptive family. They must have participated in therapy or counseling for at least two sessions. The sample is one of convenience, recruited through email, social media (Instagram, Facebook groups, LinkedIn), and snowball sampling technique. Social media recruitment efforts were concentrated on mental health communities due to the study's requirement of participation in mental health services. The participants receive an electronic survey with informed consent and demographic (for example, how they identify racially) questions to ensure that they meet the study criteria stated above.

Participants received a $25 gift card as a token of appreciation for their emotional labor during this interview. Participants must be age 18 and above only. Participants who are adopted but raised by parents of the same race and ethnicity were excluded as were individuals under age 18. The original aim was to gather eight to 10 participants. The study ended up with nine participants. There was also a demographic question about whether participants are in reunion with their birth family to provide deeper context.

Data Sources

The following topics were included as demographic questions for participants: age, geographic location, ethnicity, race, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and reunion status.

The study utilized pre-written questions for the researcher to ask all participants, which occurred after introductions and a reading of the purpose of the study, as well as an inquiry about how they learned about the study. The following prompts and questions were asked of the participants:

1. How did your adoptive parents talk to you about your birth culture and identity?

2. Describe your experiences with identifying with your birth culture and the culture of your adoptive family?

3. What are some of the challenges you have faced in blending your birth culture with your adoptive culture?

4. Can you share specific examples of these challenges?

5. What are some feelings you associate with the process of blending your birth and adoptive cultures? How does it impact your mental well-being?

6. Describe any times in your life where you felt particularly confident or not confident about your cultural identity?

7. If you have ever sought mental health support around blending your cultural identities, what was it like and how did it impact your mental health?

8. How did your family influence how you blend the two cultures? Any particular parts that were particularly supporting or challenging?

9. What kind of community support have you received in blending your identities? Any challenges?

10. Looking back, is there anything you wish you had known or resources you wish you had access to when it comes to trying to blend your cultural identities?

Data Collection

After the participants consented to participation, they completed demographic questions and provided availability for interviews. Email was utilized to confirm the interview. This study also utilized a semi-structured interview that lasted between 30 minutes and an hour on a secure Zoom link. The participants were identified by number (i.e., Participant One). The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. The transcripts were individually saved securely. The data was collected over a 2-week period.

Data Analysis

Before analysis of the data, the analysts engaged in reflexivity through journaling for bracketing purposes. The interview transcripts were read and reviewed for accuracy as well as to begin to understand the statements and opinions in the data. The Moustakas (1994) approach was the main method of analyzing the data from this study, looking at the transcripts horizontally, and identifying the words that stand out and composite summaries were completed. Through this, themes were established, which can be connected to the bicultural identity integration theory of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, the hermeneutic approach was

engaged to ensure the preservation of participant voices and the honoring of the complexity of their experiences throughout the research, with the researcher revisiting the understanding of the data as it was analyzed (Peoples, 2021). The hermeneutic circle was used to interpret and reinterpret the narratives shared by the participants from the whole (the themes of the study) to the parts (individual participant experiences). Data analysis using the hermeneutic circle required reviewing the transcripts to find keywords or sentiments that explained the themes that were formed from the transcripts. Over time, the narratives required returning to another participant's narrative to help understand and make connections with the initial narratives. For example, the initial interpretation of culture camps as a mostly positive experience for adoptees was explored through the hermeneutic process. One participant shared that culture camps were a welcome space that were free from the everyday judgment they received, where they did not have to deal with the states and scrutiny they typically faced when they were around their adoptive parents. At the same time, another participant highlighted the persistent need to explain who they were or their presence in their adoptive family, emphasizing the larger social challenge of being visibly different. The hermeneutic circle as a data analysis tool allowed for the revisiting of these narratives and offered a deeper understanding of how adoptees navigate social perceptions as well as cultural spaces, refining the initial interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study per the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) include: Maintaining the confidentiality of the research participants of this study (G.1.b.). Due to the sensitive nature of the topics in this study and the impact the content could have on family dynamics, it is important to keep the identities of the participants confidential. In addition, informed consent in research (G.2.a.) was utilized to ensure the survey material includes a

detailed informed consent, not limited to a thorough explanation of the study, but also the research participants' right to not participate at any point in the study. This study especially requires recording, and participants need to consent to this. During the interview, participants may have an emotional reaction and might be hesitant to continue the conversation, and that is also permitted. This study does not seek to present causality. Participants need to understand that the study is not one to undermine transracial adoption. Rather it is an explanatory one. This research also encourages replication (G.4.e.), which includes provision of original research information to other researchers who may want to replicate this study with other theories such as identity theories. In addition, this study was reviewed and approved by the Antioch University Seattle Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F).

Positionality

For the purpose of this study, I identify my position as a licensed marriage and family therapist and counselor who has had experiences working with adoptees. This researcher is also a Black, African cisgender woman who is an immigrant with cross-cultural experiences that play a role in the understanding of the differences in cultural experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority. it is very important that I am clear about my positionality as not being a transracial adoptee and the purpose for my engagement with this population. As an observer, I bore witness to the participants and their shared experiences as transracial adoptees. My personal biases include being a Ghanaian woman who has observed children being taken from the country into Western countries like the United States and the worry of children losing their cultural connection. As an infertility survivor, I also considered adoption in the past as an option to grow my family, which carries some bias around viewing children as an "option." My positionality as

a Black woman in the United States also adds the layer of interpreting most experiences from a racial lens and not always entertaining other lenses.

For data analysis, I engaged one co-analyst. The analyst is a psychologist with a specialization in marriage and family therapy who is a counselor educator and researcher. She is a White, Norwegian-American cisgender woman, who is married to an immigrant. She has three biological children and has considered expanding her family through adoption. She was not adopted, but shares an interest in social justice and advocacy and has previously collaborated on research of this nature as a methodological expert. Together the researchers engaged in the data analysis. Data analysis ensued until a coding consensus was met. Further, the co-analyst reviewed all chapters to ensure consistency and accurate representation of participant experiences.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority raised by White parents, while navigating their dual identities and the intersection with their mental health. This study explores the unique challenges related to transracial adoption, navigating dual cultures, families, and the role of community in identity exploration. Additionally, the study explores the role of mental health services in managing their identities, focusing on their mental health experiences in the counseling space and the importance of their therapist or counselor identities. This study's main research questions are:

1. What are the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority in navigating their dual cultural identities?

2. How does bicultural identity integration impact the mental health of transracial adoptees of the global majority?

3. What role does cultural socialization play in the mental well-being of transracial adoptees of the global majority?

4. What role does counseling play in the bicultural identity integration and mental health experience of transracial adoptees of the global majority?

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative phenomenological analysis of the data gathered in the study are presented. This data is presented in the form of themes that describe the total findings of the study. There are six main themes from the data that also include sub-themes that are explored further in the chapter. These main themes are: Bicultural Identity Formation, Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions, Role of Family in Cultural Integration, Importance of Community and Support Systems, Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences, and Cultural Integration and Adaptation.

Demographic Information

The participants of this study consisted of nine individuals who all met the following

inclusion criteria: Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color, a transracial adoptee raised by White

parents, attended at least two counseling/therapy sessions and at least 18 years of age. Participants

from the study reported locations from coast to coast across the United States. Ages ranged from 18

to 44 years, with three participants being 18 to 24, three are 25 to 34, and three in the 35 to 44 range.

When asked about ethnic identity, participants could select all that apply and indicated the

following: three participants are Black/African American, three are Hisptanic/Lanix/é, four are

Asian/Asian American, one is Arab, Middle Eastern, or North African, one participant is Native

American/Alaska Native, two are White/European American, and four participants indicated more

than selected. For racial identity, participants indicated Black ($n = 3$), Hispanic/Latinx/é ($n = 1$),

Asian ($n=5$), Indigenous, Aboriginal/First Nations

($n = 1$), and one participant indicated more than one selected. In terms of gender identity, six

participants identify as cisgender women, two participants are cingender men, and one participant is

a transgender man. Sexual orientation included bisexual ($n = 2$), pansexual ($n = 1$), heterosexual ($n =$

6), queer ($n = 1$), and one participant selected more than one. For socioeconomic status, three

participants reported lower middle-class, one working-class, four middle-class, and one upper

middle-class. Another demographic question inquired about whether they were in reunion with their

birth family, to which four participants replied that they were in reunion, and five indicated that they

were not in reunion.

Factual Reporting of the Project Results

The results of this study were merged into six main themes: the Quest for Bicultural Identity

Formation, Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions, Role of Family in Cultural Integration,

Importance of Community and Support Systems, Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences, and Cultural Integration and Adaptation (see Table 4.1). A range of subthemes also emerged from the above themes, ranging from two subthemes to six subthemes. The themes from the study are a reflection of transracial adoptees' lived experiences around their identities as transracial adoptees and as people of the global majority, with a focus on mental health related experiences. They are also a reflection of the process of understanding their identities, merging cultures, and the involvement of their adoptive parents and support systems. The section below details these themes as informed by direct quotes from the participants, a deeper explanation of the subthemes resulting from the analysis of the study's data.

Table 4.1

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
The Quest for Bicultural Identity Formation	1. Quest for Identity Understanding 2. Reconciling Identity Separation and Overlap 3. Solo Identity Discovery 4. Connection to Birth Culture 5. Identity Grief 6. Reclaiming Identity and Culture
Cultural Integration and Adaptation	1. Cultural Isolation 2. Point of Interest in Cultural Identity 3. Bicultural Existence 4. Emotional Impact of Cultural Integration

Theme	Subthemes
Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions	1. Being Raised "White" 2. Denial of White Culture 3. Whiteness and Fragility of Adoptive Parents 4. People Were Not Prepared for Racism
Role of Family in Cultural Integration	1. Lack of Parental Preparedness 2. Color Evasiveness 3. "You should be grateful"
Importance of Community and Support Systems	1. Role of Community and Support System 2. Role of Culture Camps
Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences	1. Mental Impact of Reunification 2. Transracial Adoptees in Therapy 3. The Importance of Therapist Identity

Theme One: The Quest for Bicultural Identity Formation

The theme of bicultural identity formation consists of the experiences transracial adoptees undergo in attempting to construct their identity while working to get in touch with their birth culture in the midst of the dominant White culture. The participants described experiencing complexities in their journey of identity formation, which was mostly characterized by feeling torn between two cultural worlds. A significant number of participants

discussed the struggle of trying to reconcile their ethnic or racial heritage and identity with the culture they were raised in, which many times led to feelings of confusion, loneliness, and grief. There was also a significant discussion about being "enough" among a number of participants. Bicultural identity formation is further expanded on in the following subthemes: Quest for Identity Understanding, Reconciling Identity Separation and Overlap, Solo Identity Discovery, Reclaiming Identity and Culture, Identity Grief, and Connection to Birth Culture.

Subtheme One: Quest for Identity Understanding

This subtheme is a clear picture of participants' experiences of navigating who they are as transracial adoptees in addition to their identities as people of the global majority, against the backdrop of their White adoptive families and society at large. A common thread was the feeling of disconnect and imposter syndrome, with Participant Two stating the following:

> Physically, in outward appearance, I look Korean or Asian, but I didn't really identify that way, I think, because culturally, I wasn't raised that way. So I always kind of felt a little bit like I'm an imposter, like people would know I'm not, like, a real Korean, which I am Korean, but I used to think like, Okay, I'm not quite because I don't have x, y, and z, what, whatever people deem is making you a real Korean. But I felt that way for a long time, and then at some point I was like, well, I am Korean, and I just have a different story and way that I was brought up.

Participant Seven highlighted the challenge of working through internal experiences and societal expectations, in addition to struggling with holding their personal truth, saying, "My identity always was what other people saw me as, instead of how I actually felt." This is an illustration of how disconnection can create a prolonged internal struggle in a transracial adoptee's attempt to find their authentic self.

In the quest for identity understanding, there were also questions about circumstances surrounding the participants' adoption. One participant articulated this by asking, "Why was I even left in the first place to be adopted? That's like, the one thing I'm questioning a lot, and it's just like, I'm happy I am adopted, but just wondering, why was the reason?" Unanswered questions like this fueled a deeper desire for understanding participants' cultural and biological roots. The process of "coming out of the fog" was also mentioned in connection to this quest, while challenging the idealized adoption narrative: "It's not this wonderful loving thing that I need to be grateful for … I can be really angry and mad … while still being close to my adopted family."

Subtheme Two: Reconciling Identity Separation and Overlap

A significant sentiment expressed by the participants was the feeling of being caught between two identities—their biological identity and that of their White adoptive parents. They reflected a sometimes painful journey of navigating the separation and overlap between their biological and adoptive identities and the dissonance of being raised in mostly White environments while being in a non-White body. As one participant stated, "Because I felt White, because I was raised White, but I'm not White." Some also described how their behaviors were described as "acting White," a phenomenon that was met with accusations of inauthenticity from people with their shared birth backgrounds. One participant compared this experience to a "Moses syndrome," comparing it to the Biblical figure's struggle between his upbringing as an Egyptian and his birth identity as an Israelite:

> But is this really my culture, or was I just raised in it? You know, I used to call it like, you know, if you watch Prince of Egypt, like Moses syndrome. Where he had that, like, identity crisis of, I am an Israelite. That's a prince of Egypt, and these are my people, but

the Egyptians love me. It's very me. Crazy. But in my case, not even all the White

people love me.

This sentiment highlights the complexity of feeling like one belongs and is also rejected, one that was shared by many of the participants. This reconciliation also had the undertone of feeling caught between two cultural words. For one participant, their Korean identity felt minimized in their White adoptive family and environment but was also challenged when they found themselves in Korean spaces: "I always felt like too Korean for my family and too White for Korean spaces." This phenomenon added to feelings of inadequacy as participants reported feeling caught between the expectations of the two cultural identities.

Assumptions and microaggressions from White communities and communities of the global majority exacerbated the challenges of attempting to reconcile participant identities. One participant recalled the following: "So I never felt comfortable with my identity, because, again, everyone wanted me to be White. Would say everything possible to make me as White as possible but then would always point out the reasons why I actually was not White." Other participants recollected moments of being mistaken for nannies or strangers within their own family, a misinterpretation that left adoptees questioning their sense of belonging and furthering the feeling of separation. A participant explained, "So people thought maybe I was like a nanny, or all sorts of things. So I think that was always like, Oh, okay, I just always have to explain why I'm here."

Subtheme Three: Solo Identity Discovery

For some participants, exploring, understanding, and embracing their cultural identities was a task they had to embark on alone. One participant shared, "So technically, I am Afro Latino. Then how do you explain that to people? So it's like, that's another identity that I have

to prove, to learn, to figure out what that means. And I had to navigate that by myself." The expressed sentiment is a picture of a person who not only has to carry the weight of multiple identities, but also having to "prove" themselves. Another participant aptly said,

> It's been really difficult because I've not been getting any help. You're doing it all by myself, trying to navigate through everything, and a major factor is also not being surrounded by people of my color before I can even say, Oh, I found someone who's got roots there, and I can have conversations, you know, grow, and go deeper.

While on this solo journey, participants shared how digital resources helped their identity discovery process. One participant said, "Well, the most I've done is done online research. And meet some friends online, try to be normal and see. So that's as far as I've gone." Others were introduced to podcasts and books that introduced them to concepts like "coming out of the fog" and the meaning created behind a topic like transracial adoption. As one participant said,

> I didn't know transracial adoption existed, like I didn't know the term existed. I found a book randomly. I listened to a podcast, and when I listened to the podcast, I was like, this woman, I can understand what she's saying, but it sounds very extreme. And now 3 years, 4 years later, I'm like, 'No, that makes sense.'

Another participant described attempting to include her adoptive parents on her journey of identity discovery, in ways like cultural activities, but being met with resistance: "I've tried to get them more involved. To eat Korean food with me, to go to a Korean restaurant, to go to some different cultural events in the area that are Korean-related … My dad was open to it last year, and we went to a show. My mom was not." The lack of support described here added to the participant's sense of loneliness in exploring their identities. The process of solo identity

discovery also involved emotions such as confusion, frustration, and anger: "I was very angry, and I didn't know how to deal with that anger. I didn't really know what that kind of anger felt like. It really was like an anger in my chest, like physical anger."

Subtheme Four: Connection to Birth Culture

Part of the journey towards bicultural identity formation has also included participants working to connect with their birth culture. This brought a profound sense of belonging that was in contrast with their daily lived experiences while existing in a predominantly White environment. A participant vividly described an immensely transformative experience while traveling to their birth country: "Well, when I got to Brazil, it felt more like home than in some ways it ever did with my adoptive parents, and not because they weren't loving or friendly, but there I fit in. I don't have to explain why I have White parents, or I don't stick out. I don't stick out." This sentiment expresses a yearning for a cultural environment where they do not feel the pressure to justify their identity. For other participants, there was more of an abstract yet meaningful connection to their birth culture. One of the participants of Vietnamese heritage reflected, the dissonance they experienced with their White adoptive parents' cultural identity and how that ultimately led them towards a stronger alignment with their birth heritage:

> I think where I am now, I love my adopted parents, and they are my family. But, I still
>
> feel like it's, can I describe it? Like, not detachment, but I just don't identify at all with
>
> their cultures. I mean, I, A, either I kind of feel like they don't have a culture, and then B,
>
> I just feel more aligned and connected to my own Vietnamese, my birth culture. That's
>
> just not even something that impacts my mental health, really, at this point either.

For another participant, a visit to a Paraguayan restaurant in New York, which was seemingly a smaller attempt of connection, brought about cultural nostalgia and a sense of belonging:

> There's a Paraguayan restaurant in Queens that is literally just, it's the people that own it were from Paraguay. I went there with my aunts, and it was such a wild kind of experience, because people were just, you could just tell they were from Paraguay. And at least the people that were in there looked very Paraguayan, since I went back and the food was authentic from when I ate in Paraguay. It very much tasted similar, so it was very cool. So my family is very open to it.

While seemingly mundane, efforts such as this illustrate how adoptees can connect with their birth culture.

Subtheme Five: Identity Grief

Participants' narratives highlighted moments of emotional turmoil in navigating their bicultural identities as transracial adoptees of the global majority who were raised by White parents. The stories revealed deeply personal experiences of having to face the absence of knowledge about their birth culture, the complexities of belonging to multiple cultural spaces that sometimes feel incomplete and wrestling with unmet expectations. Identity grief was described as a prolonged sense of loss that is tied to their cultural heritage and the missed opportunities to build a solid foundation within their birth culture. A participant expressed this loss, sharing,

> It really, really hurts. It hurts for two different reasons, because, at first, my parents didn't, originally, always teach me about my culture … So then, physically, I'm Black and I'm a Black child being raised with a White family not being taught Black values or how to survive as a Black. So I felt deprived of culture on two levels.

Another sentiment worth noting was the limited exposure, if any, to birth culture, cultural practices, traditions, and language. Participants shared that this lack of exposure added to a sense of being "othered," and one adoptee addressed this by saying, "You know, the whole AAVE, African American Vernacular English. For a very long time, I didn't know how to … It shows. Someone nicknamed me 'different strokes.'" This statement added to the narrative of feeling excluded and the shame and confusion about where transracial adoptees fit in culturally. The feeling of exclusion was also connected to the difficulty of navigating the nuances of cultural heritage and identity as explained by a participant who said, "There's a lot of nuance in culture in general that you just don't know unless you're brought up in that space. So I always was like, oh man, I just don't know … Everyone took some secret course of how to be Korean, and I just, like, missed out on it or something."

The topic of identity grief was also compounded by the unknowns and "what-if's" around adoptees' upbringing in White families, especially around questions about how their identities could have been different if they had been immersed in or intentionally exposed to their birth cultures. A participant reflected, "If I had been taught about my culture, what kind of person might I be now? Would I have a bigger community or a different kind of community, more supportive? I don't know, just all those what-ifs that just cause anxiety." Another aspect of the continued process of questioning raised by participants was explained as, "I think it's just a constant struggle … Am I Vietnamese enough? Am I connected enough to my Vietnamese identity or birth culture?"

Subtheme Six: Reclaiming Identity and Culture

This subtheme described transracial adoptees' attempt to explore, rediscover, and integrate their cultural identities. Factors that shaped these attempts included personal and social resources, as well as participants' unique life experiences. Another significant factor in this subtheme are the tangible attempts participants disclosed they were undertaking. Examples were cooking, connecting to other adoptees of similar cultural backgrounds, and engaging in media from their birth countries. One participant said,

> I think as I got older … Korean cooking … was a way for me to share that with other people … it felt like, okay, I am making a lot of things that I feel like maybe aren't traditional, or I didn't learn from, you know, like a parent or grandparent, but like, I'm finding my own way. So I feel like that has been a confidence booster for me.

Another described their attempts saying, "I learned the culture, like, from videos from YouTube … Because, like, I know a little bit from my mom … I listen to videos on YouTube the way I could do it."

Reclaiming identity also meant embracing and reclaiming birth names as a means to connect to cultural heritage, and one participant shared her journey:

> My birth mom named me … I always knew *NAME redacted* was my birth name. I always felt actually more connected to *NAME redacted* … but then as I got older … life and whatever [happened] … Since COVID … I really want to reclaim it back in a different, more meaningful way for me.

An obstacle in trying to understand and reclaim one's identity was the absence of cultural role models who could provide guidance. One participant stated, "I only have people to show me what a White culture is and what Mexican culture is … If I'm trying to pull in a Black

culture, I have to look around or research what it's supposed to look like." This loss of cultural knowledge was also described by this participant as being "completely ripped away."

These findings feature the compounded and often complicated journey of balancing birth culture and the dominant White culture transracial adoptees are raised in. Study participants recounted feelings of identity confusion and disconnection as they navigate these identities. The quest for understanding who they are as transracial adoptees and people of the global majority included difficulties with unanswered questions about their adoption and societal expectations, some felt torn between two worlds and did not feel like they fully fit in either one. The process of solo identity discovery was a journey taken without support and led to participants pursuing connection with their birth culture, sometimes through digital resources such as the internet. Participants also experienced identity grief stemming from the lack of cultural connection, knowledge, and exposure to their heritage. Feelings of inadequacy also prevailed. Reclaiming their identity and culture was still a solid pillar in the discovery of identity as participants sought to integrate their cultural practices, traditions, and names to create a more authentic connection to their birth culture and roots.

Theme Two: Cultural Integration and Adaptation

This theme brings together the process of integrating dual cultural identities and the complexities of navigating the contrasting worlds. Cultural Integration and Adaptation is expanded into the following subthemes: Cultural Isolation, Point of Interest in Cultural Identity, Bicultural Existence, and Emotional Impact of Cultural Integration.

Subtheme One: Cultural Isolation

Participants talked about ways in which their cultural and racial identities were molded and, in many ways, hindered due to a lack of connection to their birth communities. They talked about this being a barrier to their ability to explore their bicultural identities, often leading to feelings of isolation and struggles with finding their place in their culture. Feelings of isolation were compounded by lack of cultural fluency, like not being able to speak the language of their birth country or culture. A participant shared the following about their attempt to integrate into Korean spaces when they were in college: "I didn't really feel like they blended. I wasn't really sure where I fit in. I was kind of in between the spaces, yeah, and I never really knew how to blend them."

The absence of cultural peers was highlighted by several participants who added that this was a major factor in their lack of connectedness to their birth cultures. A participant elaborated on this by explaining,

> I just didn't really have any other Korean friends. We didn't know a lot of other Korean people. And so for a long time, I was like, okay, since we're not talking about it, I don't really know other people that are part of Korean culture. Like, maybe talking about it or thinking about it.

Another shared their experience growing up without having access to community from their birth country. They said, "In part, they were limited by the very few cultural opportunities or just Vietnamese people in the area. I don't—I literally didn't know another Vietnamese person besides my sister until college."

Being the only people of color in their adoptive families increased the sense of cultural isolation felt by some of the participants. One shared,

The thing that was really tough for my sister and me, that I've only really kind of understood as an adult, is that, you know, most White people have people of color in their families who have, like, they've married in, whatever, right? I have White friends who have that kind of situation. I literally, my sister and I were the only people of color in our entire family, no extended family members, you know, anything like that. And so I think that definitely was one of the hardest parts for my sister and me. I'm grateful we had each other.

When interacting with people from their birth culture, some participants described how the sense of isolation and loneliness also led to feelings of loss, shame, and judgment. A participant recalled an interaction with a former colleague who was of Indian descent:

If I did run into other Indian folks, like at a job I used to have, there was a nurse who was Indian, and she brought up a celebration. It might be the celebration of lights or something. I'm not 100% sure, but I think it was Diwali. I got the name right, yeah? And she was like, 'Oh, yeah, you know, you're gonna celebrate or something?' And I just looked at her, and I was like, 'I'm sorry, I don't know what you're talking about.' And she just looked at me, like, shocked and confused and like, who are you? Where are you from? Like, why don't you know this thing? And then I just kind of walked away.

Subtheme Two: Point of Interest in Cultural Identity

As participants engaged in cultural exploration, there were significant moments that seemed to call them to exploring and creating stronger connections to their cultural identities. One participant shared the following in regard to her moment of awakening:

So then when I went to college, I saw so many other races, so many other cultures, started

traveling, and started trying different foods. I was like, wow, okay. Like, no, I am

Korean. I identify as Korean. I don't have to pretend that I'm something that I'm not.

Another moment of awakening was during the racial reckoning that occurred in the United States

especially during the COVD-19 pandemic, where participants were forced to face the

significance of their cultural and ethnic identities within a broader social context. For example,

some participants named the rise in anti-Asian hate as a reason for a deeper engagement with

their Korean heritage: "The pandemic because of isolation and really having more time to think

about myself, and also because of all the Asian hate and realizing I'm part of that category and

what that means for me." Another said,

> The only time I felt like not so confident was around 2021 where, like, some major thing
>
> happened and was like, Oh God, I feel like I'm going to be targeted. It, like around then it
>
> kind of made me feel like, Oh, damn, I'm going to be targeted. And, yeah, but overall, I
>
> think I'm confident in my saying I am Chinese, even though, when people look at me,
>
> they do not immediately think I'm Chinese at all …. Well, when 2021 happened, and at
>
> the first beginning of 2021 was like, the first month, and I was like, I don't feel this
>
> confident being Asian right now, because I don't want to be targeted from crazy people. I
>
> don't want to but then after that month, I don't care I'm Asian, I don't care.

Even though Whiteness was dominant in participants' upbringing, they recollected some pivotal

moments that were stimulated by interactions with other people of the global majority. One

participant shared an instance where they went out with friends and had a moment with peers

that served as a catalyst for them to unpack their identity. They said, "We went clubbing,

and we're all dancing, having a good time and twerking and everything. And someone said, 'Oh, Lord Jesus, she does have some Black in her.' That is how jarring the Whiteness in me was … when I did that, someone's like, 'Oh yes, there's still Black in her, like she can still be saved.'"

Another crucial point was in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, which served as a reminder of systemic and racial inequality in the United States. These moments also brought up moments of deep reflection about personal history and upbringing, as well as and reminders of how adoptees' proximity to Whiteness may have shielded them from the reality of being a non-White person in the United States. One participant shared,

> When COVID hit and New York City shut down, and Black Lives Matter, and all that stuff, and George Floyd, unfortunately, really kind of triggered my body and my mind to a whole other life or mindset that I didn't even know was in my mind. I became very, very angry at my parents and at my culture and being raised in a White family.

Subtheme Three: Bicultural Existence

Often perceived as conflicting, some participants noted that their bicultural or multiple identities could actually exist harmoniously. One participant articulated this as, "I feel like there are so many identities in me, and I think I just got to a place I'm like, why do they have to clash? Why can't they peacefully coexist?" They also added an additional layer of exposure to shared experiences with others in larger cultural or academic contexts. They added,

Then I was actually reading up on something, and it was this paper, and it was the experience of Afro Latina women. And I'm just like, Oh, wait. So this identity is not alone to me. There are a lot more people like me, and we have progressed to a point where it's important enough for them to be in research, like people want to know enough so I'm just like, my identities can peacefully coexist.

The bicultural existence also included participants being able to embrace a fluidity in their cultural expressions, a way in which they embraced their right to be able to adapt and express their bicultural identities. One said, "Some days I wake up feeling more Black than Afro Latina. Some days I wake up feeling more Afro Latina than Black. Some days I want to eat soul food. Some days I want to eat pico de gallo, but whatever I feel at that moment, I have the right to coexist."

Participants made mention of sociopolitical events and how they impacted their bicultural expression. A participant shared a story about having to remove their Jewish necklace when anti-Semitic incidents were prominent a few years ago in the United States. This experience underscored the vulnerability of having to navigate bicultural existence in a time of fear, especially highlighting how external pressures like social climates can impact individuals' bicultural identities. They explained this saying, "I was confident that I was brown, but I was not confident in being Jewish, if that makes sense."

For some, it was not as simple as integration but rather a recreation. Participants talked about the possibility of not fully integrating all their identities, which may mean holding a bicultural existence or establishing a unique sense that holds space for the complexities of their cultural upbringing. One said, "I'm not really any culture, because I don't fit in any of the categories. So now we just have whoever we have to make our own culture up."

Subtheme Four: Emotional Impact of Cultural Integration

In order to normalize and blend their identities, participants shared the significance of closing the gap between their birth and adoptive cultures. One participant described it as "draining." This journey was also fraught with emotions, and a participant recounted their attempt to integrate their Jewish and Paraguayan identities: "Yes, you are, you were, you are. You were raised in a White, Jewish, middle-class family, but you are also a Paraguayan Guarani woman."

Cultural integration also brought about a considerable emotional toll as explained by one participant who said,

> I felt like each time I was living with one, I had a personality disorder, like maybe some dissociative identity. I probably was *NAME redacted* in one and *NAME redacted* in the other. And I'm like, you're going to lose your mind if you do not merge these people together.

The sentiment illustrated the desire transracial adoptees may have in trying to suppress parts of their identity to be able to fit in with their adoptive families and the larger society.

Beyond everyday frustrations, transracial adoptees shared the long-term mental health challenges that came with cultural disconnection during their integration attempts. There was a reflection of the loss of identity and cultural disintegration that was also connected to the lack of emotional support within their adoptive families. One said,

> I've always been very anxious, very depressed, never understanding why it started … Depression really started, probably in sixth grade, and me feeling very unloved and very confused and angry and needing a lot of reassurance from my parents that I was loved.

In summary, Cultural Integration and Adaptation Theme examines the dynamic process undertaken by transracial adoptees to integrate their dual cultural identities, emphasizing the socio-emotional complexities of existing in contrasting worlds. It also underscores the disconnection from birth communities and how this impacts identity exploration and cultural fluency. Point of interest in cultural identity highlights significant moments in participants' lives where they deepened their connection to their birth cultures. The theme also explores the fluidity of multiple cultural identities as well as the psychological toll of attempting to bridge adoptive and birth cultures. Some of the feelings that rose from this experience include disorientation, grief, loss, and other mental health challenges. Overall, the theme uplifts the creativity participants shared in trying to reconcile and integrate their cultural identities in a complex world.

Theme Three: Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions

The focus of this theme is the reality of facing interpersonal, familial, and systemic racism as a transracial adoptee of the global majority, while being socialized in predominantly White spaces. Participants explained a lack of harmony between their racial identities and the cultural environments they were raised in, underscoring the complication of navigating racial and cultural tensions.

Subtheme One: Being Raised "White"

Participant experiences of being raised "White" described numerous experiences and moments in their upbringing where they felt the centering of Whiteness and White culture, mostly to the exclusion of their cultural and racial origins and cultures. They described the various ways in which their White adoptive families worked to assimilate them into Whiteness and White culture, at the expense of critical parts of their racial identities. Additionally, there

was an expression of feeling "White" internally and facing an othering in society that did not match the privileges of being White. One expressed,

> We were made to be like White people … I wish we weren't lied to. I wish we weren't made to believe these stories about stuff and who we were and where we came from. So I would, I mean, at least me, I would have liked to have known those things so I could have picked who I wanted to be a little better, instead of trying to end up being this, basically a White person in a brown skin costume.

Some also talked about being faced with resistance when they attempted to connect with their racial identity, a reflection of the sometimes subtle ways in which Whiteness was centered and White cultural norms were encouraged. One participant explained, "Because I remember sometimes maybe being around Black friends, I would probably teeter and, you know, pick up a few things, and those things were reinforced out of me at home."

It is also worth noting that not every part of being raised "White" was experienced negatively. There was discussion about some of the benefits of experiences, the instilling of values, and a number of privileges that adoptees shared they received from their adoptive families. One noted, "I was raised to be inquisitive too, and it's enabled by White privilege. And I'm not going to deny that, but that's just to show it ain't all bad either." Another participant added: "Being raised by White parents, it's not all bad. And the same way, I want to identify with the cultures that are naturally with me, the culture I was raised in isn't all negative as well."

Subtheme Two: Denial of White Culture

For some participants, there was a sense of ambiguity as they tried to navigate cultural tensions, and this also connected to a denial of the existence of what they referred to as "White culture." Participants expressed perceptions of the dominant White culture they were raised in, being one that lacked specificity and the distinct cultural markers that are associated with

 other cultures. A participant articulated this saying, "They don't really have a culture, per se. It's just like, we just do stuff as we do stuff more than, like, no, really, no culture." In this participant's case, they were referring to the unstructured and sometimes default ways in which they were raised in regard to culture, as well as the ways in which White culture appeared to be hailed as the norm. Another added a layer of what could be perceived as a cultural invisibility by saying, "My dad's side of the family is British, and they don't really have a culture. I don't really know what culture British people have."

Subtheme Three: Whiteness and Fragility of Adoptive Parents

A predictor of how the topics of race and culture were discussed in participants' families was how their adoptive parents broached the topic, responded to the topic, or avoided it. There was an expression of an invisible boundary between adoptive parents and adoptees that was dictated by the parents' level of discomfort. One participant articulated this poignantly saying, "Well, it's, as far as I can remember, it's always been a sensitive topic to discuss because having been adopted by White parents and that already separates me from the pack, so every time I try to discuss my racial involvement, it's always met with some level of hostility, because they already, even if they try to, like, see it's no problem, they already have this viewpoint of Black people." Despite the reality of raising a Black child, it appeared from the abovementioned quote that the adoptive parents had some challenging perceptions of what Blackness meant and looked like. This extended to racialized fears these parents shared with this participant when they tried to engage with aspects of their racial identity. The participant added, "So they always had this worrying, sense of worry in the replies when they talk to me about stuff like that, because they were like, hope I'll be safe from there, hope I'll not get in trouble."

This dynamic sometimes meant that the adoptee was left prioritizing their adoptive parents' comfort over their need for identity exploration. This in turn became a silencer for one participant during an important time of identity formation: "You know, I was, and so I just dialed down on talking about it as a whole until like I grew older." The participant's experience was an example of the pursuit of relational harmony and a sense of peace in the family, a sentiment that was shared by a number of participants in the study.

Subtheme Four: People Were Not Prepared for Racism

A common sentiment expressed by participants was how unprepared they felt in discussing and navigating racism in their everyday lives. Many expressed feeling vulnerable due to the lack of guidance from their adoptive parents, such as not having the "talk" that Black families give their children about how to interact with the police. They narrated the following: "I grew up in a southeastern state, and it was really hard, you know, the whole when Black children are talking about how their parents give them to talk about interacting with police and all of that. I didn't get none of that. And that cost me, and that caused me a lot of trouble. So I got it from my Black friends."

The lack of preparedness also translated into the tension that existed for participants wanting to identify with the culture they were raised in versus the culture they identified with biologically. This sometimes meant a suppression of parts of their racial and cultural identity, which sometimes led to feelings of inauthenticity and guilt. One participant admitted, "When I was younger, I did not know any better. Sometimes I think I felt like a sellout." Another reflected on the tension:

How do I identify with the culture I was raised in when it's a culture that doesn't like me and perpetuates heavy levels of racism, but yet it is what I am most familiar with, because it's for a very long time, the only thing I identified with, what I was raised with for most of my formative years?

One participant's experience illustrated how unprepared they were for different forms of prejudice due to their adoptive parents' limited knowledge about systemic racism. This childhood interaction became a source of connection with their Black peers but also a moment of enlightenment about the knowledge they were lacking at home. They explained,

One experience that has stood out to me the most in identifying with my culture was one time in middle school I made some Black friends in school. It was a bit fascinating to me to really meet people of my color because being adopted by White people and living in a White-dominated area just shut me off from a lot of things. So I made friends in middle school, and along the line, we kind of got in trouble. And after I got back home, I was trying to explain to them that it wasn't really a big deal. It was just a misunderstanding, because we got in trouble with the cops, and it was really bad.

Racism was also pervasive in adoptive families, with participants recollecting moments of overt racism and microaggressions from people in their families, even though their adoptive parents sometimes attempted to shield them from it or, in some instances, minimized it. One participant recalled an uncle who consistently ignored them when they were a child, a phenomenon that they initially ignored until they learned more about them later. They explained,

I don't feel like they treated me any different. For the most, most of them, I don't feel like they did, not that I recognized. But there was one person, my uncle, who I don't have any memory of him talking to me at all, like not even a hi. And I never, I don't know why, but

I never questioned it … But then one day in adulthood, it hit me, and I was like, huh. And so I asked my mom that. I said, 'Why did Uncle *REDACTED* ever talk to me?' And she hesitated for a while, and then she said, 'Uncle *REDACTED* was a very quiet person.'

More internally, some participants experienced their own internalized racism, which shaped their perceptions and relationships with their cultural and ethnic identities. A participant shared: "I was told as a kid, all the time, that I was yellow on the outside, White on the inside. And so that's a common thing that many Asian, East, or Southeast Asian adoptees who are lighter-skinned are told—that you're a banana. And so I think that I internalized that for sure growing up." In summary, the theme of Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions analyzed some of the challenges faced by transracial adoptees as they try to reconcile their racial identities while existing in predominantly White cultural environments. There was also an emphasis on the familial, interpersonal, and systemic racism that transracial adoptees experience. Participants described themselves as being assimilated into Whiteness many times at the expense of their own racial identities, and some of them highlighted some of the losses and privileges that were connected to this upbringing. Another sentiment that was expressed by participants reflected the ambiguity felt about the cultural norms of their White adoptive families, which were often perceived as lacking distinct cultural markers. The participants also discussed how their identity exploration was limited due to their adoptive parents' discomfort with the topic of race and how this led to the suppression of emotions and conversations that sometimes strained family dynamics. Adoptees also talked about being unprepared for systemic and interpersonal racism due to the limited guidance they had from their adoptive families, and this also led to complicated feelings of guilt and inauthenticity, as well as attempting to independently maneuver this, sometimes with the help of their peers. Overall this theme highlights the complex interplay

that exists between cultural belonging, racial identity, and the long-term impact of growing up in environments that are racially incongruent.

Theme Four: Role of Family in Cultural Integration

This theme examines parental attitudes, actions, and positionality and their impact on how transracial adoptees navigate and integrate their cultural identities.

Subtheme One: Lack of Parental Preparedness

A common thread was the juxtaposition of gratitude for adoptive parents and resentment towards their lack of cultural awareness and preparedness. Because of this ambivalence, some participants reported approaching their cultural exploration in ways they wished could have been better. This duality was explained as: "Even though my parents caused mostly unintentional harm growing up and didn't expose me to my cultural identity or background, they love me and I love them. And to this day, I still love them a lot. And I don't really fully, I can never, I never fully show up around them and that I just don't really talk about race or being Vietnamese." Central to participants' frustration was their adoptive parents' approach to maneuvering racism outside of their home. This lack sometimes led to adoptees not feeling the much needed support required to confront systemic racism and microaggressions in the outside world. This vexation was captured by a participant who said, "I feel it's very irresponsible of White parents to have an ethnically racial child if you're not going to put in the work to teach them how the world will be for them and prepare them for that world. You are preparing us for your world, not what the world would be for us."

A participant shared frustration about their parents' inability or lack of support when it came to the process of exploring their cultural background and identity: "It is hard for me to blend when I don't know many Korean people and when my parents aren't always the most

supportive in me finding it, so I just kind of stop looking." Another expressed the emotion of

isolation in regards to the impact of the lack of parental preparedness, adding, "It was very

isolating. I just wish my parents had helped me learn about my culture or even just celebrated

being an adoptee. Instead, I was ashamed, and I didn't have anyone to talk to about it."

In some cases, parents invalidated or minimized their adoptive childrens' lived experiences of

racial inequalities and such. One participant highlighted this: "Whenever a racist comment was

made, or a microaggression, my dad's response would always be, 'I'm sure they didn't mean it.'

That constantly undermined my experience and invalidated the harm I was experiencing."

A contributing factor to their level of disconnect from participants' birth culture was adoptive

parents' lack of intentionality around connecting them to their birth culture. What may have

seemed like an oversight extended to the absence of influential cultural engagement, which one

participant said: "My parents just didn't know having a tie to my culture or talking about my

Korean identity was important, so we just never did. I think I saw them not speaking about it, so

then I felt like I shouldn't either." Even though it may have been perceived as a desire to not

impose on their adoptive children, one adoptee explained that they felt a sense of loss with the

language of their birth culture. They said, "They didn't want to force us to do anything. But I

would have really appreciated being forced to learn Vietnamese … I wish they would have

encouraged us more strongly." For some adoptees, this lack of cultural integration added to their

sense of shame and alienation in regards to their birth culture. One participant shared,

> My mom didn't talk to me about adoption. She didn't talk to me about India. She didn't
>
> talk to me about my birth culture or anything. So it was really a foreign concept to me,
>
> and I didn't like talking about the fact that I was from India. I was very ashamed.

Participants also shared that as they got older and began to verbalize their experiences, they noticed a shift in their parents' attitudes about cultural identity and how unaware they were. One said, "When I talked about how things were in my childhood, they were just like, 'Oh, I had no idea.'" Even though some parents expressed openness to some of these conversations, transracial adoptees also expressed having to hold the emotional labor of educating their adoptive parents. One reflected, "They're willing to listen, but I think my dad actually takes it in more. My mom tends to shut down or stay silent, so it's still challenging to openly express how I felt all these years."

Subtheme Two: Color Evasiveness

In an attempt to create a racially neutral environment, some adoptive parents unintentionally minimized or disregarded the racial and cultural differences between them and their adoptive children. Participants described these instances as well-intentioned, but also harmful to them, with some of the consequences being the ways in which their identities were shaped. One participant noted, *"*My parents are the type of people that would say they don't see color." Another said, "Yeah, I think they meant well. I don't think they were ever like, 'no, let's never talk about it.' I think this just wasn't top of mind for them to be like, 'Oh, this is a part of [me] that we should bring in.'"

This color evasiveness was also indicated in the unspoken erasure of transracial adoptees' cultural identity. Even though this was an attempt to appear inclusivity in the family, this also did not give adoptees the opportunity to explore and understand their cultural heritage. A participant of Korean descent said, "I very much grew up in the time of, you know, we don't see color. Like, this is our daughter. We don't really see that. 'She's Korean' type of mentality." In contrast to this alienation experienced in their home, one participant talked about how they felt a strong

sense of belonging when they visited their birth country: "When I'm in Brazil, I find home, but when with my parents, I think the greatest thing is they get uncomfortable with the harsh truth of how my life is different from theirs."

Participants described how this approach did not equip their parents in dealing with microaggressions and systemic racism. This led to further feelings of isolation and a lack of support in moments such as when they were exposed to racism or discrimination. One explained, "Just experienced a lot of colorblindness growing up. Or just like, also just other, just microaggressions and racism, just by family friends, and also, like my parents, as White people just don't understand what it's like to be Asian in this country, what's it like to be a person of color in this country."

Subtheme Three: "You Should Be Grateful"

The sentiment, "You should be grateful," was a common theme in many participants' lived experiences. This pointed to the feelings of obligation, the suppression of authentic emotions, and the cultural disconnect reflected by adoptees. Their reflections showed how these expectations frequently led to the suppression of complex emotions about their adoptive and cultural identities. This expectation to be grateful was communicated through explicit and implicit means and frequently emphasized how drastically different their lives would have been if they had not been adopted. One participant shared,

> There's this weird savior complex they do have of 'Where would you have been if we didn't adopt you?'… And I'm not saying I'm not appreciative, but the image you have of me—I'm not the Von Trapp siblings. Louisa, Ricky, no. I am not a Von Trapp. Probably the only trapping is I listen to trap music.

Another participant added in sharing how the expectation of gratitude was set against the backdrop of a direct comparison to the current living circumstances of their birth family:

> There was always this kind of comparison to what my life would have been like in Vietnam … It was like, because we adopted you, you've been given all of these opportunities, you know, loving family, all the resources you could ever want and need. And it was that you should basically be grateful for everything … I didn't even have the space or ability to just think about what was missing in terms of the cultural identity piece.

Although there was a recognition of the privileges and resources participants had access to due to adoption, participants also shared some of the struggles they had with the lack of validation for complicated emotions such as grief, anger, disconnection, and feelings of loss. One participant elaborated on this emotional duality:

> I always felt like there was never really room or space, because there's feelings of guilt, like, oh yeah, I should feel lucky and grateful … but I kind of wish someone would have been like, 'Okay, well, you have all these other feelings.' Like both can be true.

This stress also manifested in significant internal conflict for one participant who said:

> I think what I just said, like, the physical adoption ends, but the mental and … recovery, healing, whatever, the process of it never ends … It's not just like, 'Oh, this is great. Here's the happy couple with the new family, and they saved this child.' But letting adoptees speak out, like, 'Yeah, I am happy, but this also kind of sucks.'

> The myth of the model minority added another complexity for one participant to navigate as they dealt with the pressure to perform in addition to high levels of anxiety and self-imposed pressures, which further complicated their personal relationship with their identity. They shared,

"It compounded the already existing model minority myths … I've been given all these resources, opportunities. I should make the most of them. Like, I can't fail in any way."

For another participant, this expectation of gratitude brought up some emotional dissonance:

> They just, I'm remembering, at that point, I was having a lot of flashbacks of, like, growing up … I would remember these very, very happy memories, and then just like a moment … would just get automatically angry. And I couldn't explain that I wasn't happy to be in DC, but I was also angry … They just all kind of, at that point, was just like, 'No, like, you're just angry for no reason, like be happy you're here.'

This theme of the Role of Family in Cultural Integration looked at how the attitudes of adoptive parents, their preparedness, and behaviors played a significant role in the ability of transracial adoptees to navigate and explore their cultural identities. This theme also highlighted the frustrations that participants experienced with their parents and their limited cultural knowledge and support, which many times left adoptees feeling ashamed, isolated, and also unsure about their cultural heritage. That minimization or avoidance of racial discussions by parents added to the invalidation that transracial adoptees experienced as they faced racism in society, and this also hindered their cultural exploration. Even though it was well intentioned, the harmful erasure of racial and cultural differences played a significant role in the shaping of transracial adoptees' identities and added to the sense of alienation that they felt, leaving them ill-equipped to face systemic racism. There was also revelation of how the expectation of gratitude suppressed the complex emotions that transracial adoptees experienced, such as anger and grief, and also emphasized the perceived "savior complex" that some adoptive parents are perceived to have. Even though adoptees acknowledged the privileges they got due to being in

their adoptive families, they also talked about a desire for validation of their struggles and more intentional efforts to connect with their birth culture.

Theme Five: Importance of Community and Support Systems

The emphasis of this theme is the significance of external support systems, especially in organized efforts like culture camps and the larger community, in helping support and shape the identity of transracial adoptees of the global majority.

Subtheme One: Role of Community and support system

Participants expressed a sense of belonging and validation when they found themselves in spaces that were in alignment with their cultural and racial identities. These spaces included online communities and cultural festivals, which offered a refuge from the isolation they faced in predominantly White spaces. Some discussed the importance of feeling "at home," not only because they were surrounded by people of similar cultural backgrounds, but it was also about being a part of cultural celebrations, they affirmed their birth cultures. One participant elaborated on this: "But do you know one of the most, the places I feel the most like me, is when I go for any carnival, not just carnival. I've been to carnival once, but any carnival, really, because I'm going there with my Afro and my outfit, and I'm just seeing everybody."

Due to the lack of preparedness on the part of some adoptive parents, participants shared a significant number of experiences where they had to rely on their peers and other external support to help them navigate situations that their adoptive parents were not prepared for or did not anticipate. Community also included virtual ones on social media, where participants found much needed support from people with similar lived experiences, as shared by one participant who said:

I wouldn't say I have a lot of communities, but I do say I follow a lot of different people on social media that kind of have similar experiences to me, and you pick up tips and tricks from them. Because I think what has helped me is realizing I'm not the only one navigating this.

Another key form of community noted by participants is friendships with others, some of whom are fellow adoptees or share similar cultural backgrounds. These friendships have been an avenue for learning and connection and an opportunity for adoptees to engage with their birth culture. The significance of such friendships was highlighted by one participant: "I do have other friends now that are also Korean and adopted that have been supportive, because they kind of understand in a different way. I'm also part of some … adoptee communities around the area." Another discussed how instrumental her Korean friends have been as they pursued reconnection with their birth culture: "I have a couple Korean friends who they know I'm so interested in learning about all Korean culture. So they will like … share about Korean holidays and invite me."

Adoption-specific communities were repeatedly spotlighted by participants, who discussed the depth of connection they felt in these in-person or virtual spaces where they could address a wide range of topics from questions about identity to the complicated feelings they share about adoption. According to the participants, one of the draws to such spaces was the ability to explore one's identity fully without having to explain lived experiences or water them down. One participant discussed the impact and importance of being a part of an online group for Latinx adoptees: "Having that support just like changed everything, at least for me, because I didn't have, growing up, other adoptees that I could relate to … having this group really just helped my mental health."

Community organizations were shared as another instrumental aspect of connection that participants valued. They discussed the cultural connections and cultural engagement they were able to experience, as well as the space to learn more about their identities. A participant reflected,

> I joined the Vietnamese Student Association … I was also just very involved with the Center for Asian Pacific Islander American students on campus. And so that's where I met a bunch of my friends who are still in my life to this day.

At the same time, participants also reflected on some of the strain geographical locations put on their ability to connect with others who shared similar backgrounds or lived experiences. This resulted in participants feeling like they were unable to develop their identities until adulthood, when they had some autonomy of location. Participants raised in predominantly White areas lamented about the absence of local communities they could have learned from or connected with. A participant who grew up in a predominantly White community in North Carolina said, "Had we grown up in Seattle, you know, there's a way bigger Vietnamese community. There would have been way more youth to introduce us to different parts of our culture."

Subtheme Two: Role of Culture Camps

Culture camps provided a structured setting that allowed for participants to have some cultural exposure. These spaces were instrumental for identity exploration, cultural connection, and fostering a sense of belonging for adoptees. They were an introduction to birth culture for many participants who had the opportunity to learn about their birth culture and connect with others who shared similar lived experiences. One participant reflected,

So I went to a couple when I was younger. So I'm Korean, and they had some Korean

culture camps where you basically go with other Korean adoptees, and they try to teach

you about Korean culture. So I did a few of those in the summer.

Some participants explained that they attended these camps at a very young age and may have

underestimated their significance at the time. But as adults, they saw the value of such spaces.

One said, "I think I was really young, and so I'm not sure I really like grasped it exactly, but

yeah, I think it was helpful to kind of learn what we did, like Korean cooking. We learned

different Korean traditions."

One participant also explained how culture camps were a welcome respite from the

realities of being in White dominated spaces where they did not face as much social scrutiny.

One adoptee highlighted how being at camp gave them a sense of acceptance and normalcy

which was opposite of their experience at school:

I really enjoyed it because for one thing, I didn't have, you know, like, let me, let me just

take you back going to school when I was being dropped off, when my parents, my

adoptive parents, dropped me off, I would have stares from other parents, you know,

looking like, oh, A Black kid has been dropped off by White parents, those stares, those

judgmental looks. I didn't have any of that. There you know everybody welcomed me as

a family. No one looked at anyone differently. So it was a really really good experience.

However, the connection to culture camps diminished for some adoptees as they got older or their family circumstances shifted. One adoptee talked about their initial engagement with a university affiliated adoptee program but stopped engaging over time: "We stopped going because the place is destroyed right now, and also it kind of gotten less interesting, less interesting as I got older." Another part of the diminishing of culture camps in the lives of adoptees was the lack of reinforcement in their adoptive families and the gap that was created once the adoptee left the camp and went back home. One adoptee said, "We don't really talk about it too much at home, so just like, a few things here and there." Another talked about how rarely integrated their cultural lessons from culture camp were in their family life:

> I think anything that I learned in Korean culture camp, I would maybe bring it into conversation. Sometimes my older siblings, who are not adopted, would come to the culture camp with me … But I can't remember it ever being really infused into what we were saying. It was mostly if I brought it up.

In summary, external networks such as friendships, culture camps, and cultural organizations played a significant role in the shaping of the identities of transracial adoptees of the global majority. Adoptees receive support and get to experience a solid sense of belonging and validation, as well as opportunities to explore their cultural heritage and ways that are sometimes inaccessible within their adopted families. Participants in this study talked about how friendships, online communities, and certain cultural organizations played a role in helping them navigate some of the challenges they experience, connected to cultural and racial identity, offering practical guidance as well as emotional support. Particularly influential were culture camps, which also provided structured opportunities for participants to engage in identity

exploration and connection with peers who had similar lived experiences. Unfortunately the benefits of these camps were sometimes inhibited by the lack of reinforcement in adoptive family environments. Despite these challenges, participants talked about valuing these support systems when it came to the understanding and emerging of that they provided. These communities and spaces were important in countering the isolation that participants expressed that they felt in predominantly White spaces.

Theme Six: Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences

The theme of Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences goes in-depth into how transracial adoptees process their lived experiences through counseling/therapy with the support of counselors/therapists. The therapy space allowed for them to disentangle the complexities and knots of their lived experiences, and for some, help them in the process of integrating their cultural identities. The topic of cultural competence and the importance of counselor/therapist identities, shared or not, is also addressed. Reunification with birth families is also addressed from the mental health perspective.

Subtheme One: Mental Impact of Reunification

This subtheme explored what can sometimes be a long-awaited moment, entrenched in emotions such as excitement that can quickly wane into disappointment, as illustrated by one participant's experience of reconnecting with his birth father and relatives after a DNA test. He shared, "I talked to him first. I met him, like I said, a couple months ago at my grandfather's funeral … I knew him. Oh, I should write a book … It's a disastrous story." He explained that his father had been focused more on the participant's older brother, further highlighting the emotional neglect experienced by this participant who also happened to be the one to initiate contact. He explained, "He just wanted the firstborn … He really didn't care about me. He really

didn't care. You know, he just wanted the firstborn, and it's basically he hasn't reached out. He has my number. I'm the one who did all the legwork to reach out." This participant had to face the harsh reality that their reunion was not marked by the warm embrace and connection they anticipated.

Reunification also magnifies the complexity of bicultural identity integration as participants reported struggles to understand their cultural heritage, especially in the presence of language and geographical barriers. One participant discussed her reconnection with her Paraguayan birth mother and the experience of not being able to fully merge their birth culture with their lived one due to the language barrier. She stated,

> I don't know what my Paraguayan culture is … I don't know the traditions. I don't know. And because of the language barrier, it's hard for me to ask my mom and get a clear understanding of what she's saying and what different traditions she'll say.

At the same time, the participant expressed hope that despite this challenge, they continue to work towards connecting their two worlds: "I still speak to my birth mom today, and she asked me about certain things and so that I haven't been able to merge it fully. They kind of have been separate, but hopefully."

Subtheme Two: Transracial Adoptees in Therapy

The topics for participants' initial therapy sessions were focused on broader parts of their lives, rather than exploring their adoption experiences or layered identities. One adoptee reflected:

> When I first started therapy, I was probably in my 20s, early 20s, and I was going just to kind of navigate life transitions and stuff, and I didn't really think about it at that time. I

wasn't really thinking about my adoption. At that point, I didn't really know how big of

an impact it was having on me.

Another explained that issues related to identity were initially overlooked, but over time, they

began to address it more in sessions: "Identity wasn't a big topic for the most part, but it is

becoming more and more."

Although bicultural identity and cultural blending were not the primary focus of therapy,

participants acknowledged how transracial adoption played a role in their therapeutic needs. One

participant explained, "I wouldn't say I necessarily sought therapy or mental health-related

support for the cultural piece or the merging or blending of cultures … more around …

navigating, like, a lot of transracial adoptees, I imagine, experienced." They however

acknowledged that a recurring theme for their therapy was the absence of knowledge about their

birth family: "There's like that whole, like, we've never even really seen what our birth mom or

dad look like. So just there's more of like that. That kind of is like what I've struggled with or

sought therapy for, more than the like blending of cultures or just identifying with the culture."

The therapy space was instrumental for adoptees on their path towards healing, as one

participant explained, "Through therapy, I started realizing how everything was pretty much

linked to my adoption, and my feelings towards adoption, my feelings of identity and worthiness

and being loved and all of those things." The process provided participants with significant

coping skills and tools to help them in exploring their emotions and understand the impacts of

adoption on their lives. One said,

I would say it was one of the best decisions I've ever made, because even I did not realize

how much it had impacted my life. I just tried to push through it all, and that wasn't

really good, and therapy really helped me to understand my situation and see better ways to move forward in a more healthy manner.

For one participant, although there were significant benefits to receiving mental health services, they faced some emotional barriers and external pressures that got in the way of them continuing their services. They shared,

> I really was kind of afraid to go back because of the anger that I had felt. I wanted to graduate, and I was like, I can't anything deter me at this point. I'm definitely still nervous to go back, but I can feel it in my body and starting to stir up a little bit more.

A major recurring theme in the narratives about seeking mental health support was the importance of therapists who had adoption competency. Participants expressed some of the difficulties faced in trying to find therapists who understood adoption:

> Even when I was looking for my own therapist who had adoption competency … I think I was the one other box I checked was like, except my insurance, and there was, like, three people that I could find. I was like, Oh, that is not very many.

In some cases, participants found their therapeutic support lacking because of the complex nature of their lived experiences as transracial adoptees. One explained:

> My therapist, I love her, but she was very honest. She was like, 'I don't know how to help with this complexity.' So at that point, I stayed with her to help manage my anxiety … but I needed somebody who specialized.

At the same time, adoptees who were able to connect with adoption-competent therapists recounted the life-changing experience of being with a therapist who understood them deeply: "It was a world's difference for me to have a therapist who understood adoption, I guess, on a personal level."

Also important to participants was the emphasis on centering adoptee experiences and perspectives in therapy, which is the opposite of the common narrative that prioritizes adoptive parents and their needs in therapy. One participant stressed the following:

> There's just a … often the focus around adoption, is on the adoptive parents and less about your adopted child. And so I think it's important for clinicians to be able to, I don't know, center the adoptee more, because there's so much focus around the other parts of the adoption that it is easy to get lost.

Subtheme Three: The Importance of Therapist Identity

The narratives around therapist identity emphasized the role of clinicians in the lives of transracial adoptees who seek therapists who understand the unique challenges of exploring bicultural identities. It was not simply trying to find a "fit" but more about a necessity for self-discovery. In finding a therapist who could relate, one adoptee said,

> Yeah, I've had therapy, but therapy for, specifically for that was a bit more of a journey, okay? Because I needed someone who could relate. I didn't want … Is it weird if I say I was looking for either a mixed-race therapist or an immigrant therapist?

They further explained that therapists with similar lived experiences, being mixed-race or exploring immigrant identities, would allow the therapist to understand the "crisis of identity," which is central to the lives of transracial adoptees of the global majority.

One participant highlighted the positive impact of working with a therapist who was also a transracial adoptee: "My previous therapist is also a Korean adoptee, transracial international adoptee, and she specializes in her practice also, but there was, like, a lot of overlap, and it made such a difference." They went further to explain that working with someone who held the dual

identity of being a clinician and a transracial adoptee allowed them to bypass the explanation of foundational parts of their lived experience. They added that,

Sometimes I didn't have to explain that kind of stuff. Like, for a big portion for me, relationships were a big part where it showed up for me. And yeah, my therapist was really great in understanding it and also being able to name it … parts of my adoptee identity that maybe I hadn't thought of or made the connection myself.

Participants' narratives also underscored the importance of cultural and racial congruence between therapists and clients. One participant explained what it was like working with a Black therapist: "While I went for therapy, I tried to opt in for Black therapist, so I got to feel more comfortable relating to my experiences. And it was really good … He really understood my situation and welcomed me as a father." In this case, the therapist was not only providing a sense of comfort, but they were a positive representation of Black masculinity for this participant. Another participant reflected on their personal requirement for a therapist to be educated within White cultural framework but also the experience of being racially marginalized:

I have to find someone who's educated to the parentheses, 'White people standard,' because that's how I was raised. But also has the background of being Black and what it was like to just be not accepted with anything that you do or who you are.

There was also acknowledgment of the systemic barriers that come with accessing clinicians who can meet their identity needs. As such, some participants shared being willing to wait to find a therapist who had a shared background or lived experience. One participant discussed this perseverance saying,

The only problem is trying to get someone who understands the problems we face. So that's when you go to a person, you know, a BIPOC, a person of color, right? And that

you have to go find your therapist that is going to look like you and is going to have a background that best fits who you are.

In summary, this final theme looked at how transracial adoptees explore their unique lived experiences through mental health services or therapy. Participants in the study highlighted the value of therapy in extricating the complex emotions around their identities, adoption, and worthiness, while emphasizing the desire and need for therapists within the mental health field who have cultural competence and adoption-specific competence. Reunification with birth families was a topic that brought on discussions about emotional challenges that ranged from struggles with bicultural identity integration due to language or cultural barriers and disappointment after meeting birth families. Adoptees also shared how immensely impactful therapy was in helping them grow their coping skills and understand who they are. They also highlighted some of the systemic barriers they faced in trying to find therapists who understood their lived experiences. A very important recurring theme was the identity of therapists, where participants shared the preferences they had for clinicians who have shared racial backgrounds, lived experiences, or cultural backgrounds. For many participants these therapeutic connections facilitated deeper understanding and removed the need for in-depth explanations of foundational aspects of who they are, emphasizing the importance of centering adoptee narratives and perspectives in therapeutic spaces.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Interpretation of Data

This research study seeks to understand the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the global majority who were raised by White adoptive parents in terms of their bicultural identities and mental health experiences. This exploration delves into six interwoven themes centered around the complexities of cultural identity, integration, and resilience: (1) the Quest for Bicultural Identity Formation, (2) Cultural Integration and Adaptation, (3) Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions, (4) Role of Family in Cultural Integration, (5) Importance of Community and Support Systems and, (6) Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences. Each them will be discussed in the context of bicultural identity integration. Following this, the research questions for this study will be addressed from the lens of the results and the Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) model. The research questions for the study are as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global majority in navigating their dual cultural identities?

2. How does bicultural identity integration impact the mental health of transracial adoptees of the Global majority?

3. What role does cultural socialization play in the mental well-being of transracial adoptees of the Global majority?

4. What role does counseling play in the bicultural identity integration and mental health experience of transracial adoptees of the Global majority?

Implications for clinical practice, adoptive parents, and organizations are provided based on these results, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Theory and Research

The following section is a summary of the research results in response to the research questions connected to the study. There is also integration of the BII model as the main theory of reference. All the themes discussed below highlight the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global majority in navigating their dual cultural identities, answering the primary research question of this study: What are the lived experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global majority in navigating their dual cultural identities?

Theme One: The Quest for Bicultural Identity Formation

The following subthemes capture how transracial adoptees construct their identities, as people who are in a unique position of negotiating a birth culture they were not immersed in and a dominant culture they were socialized into. The focus of this process is primarily an internal identity formation.

Quest for Identity Understanding

Participants described their journey towards identity understanding as one interlaced with confusion, curiosity, and the desire for authenticity. The quest for identity understanding meant pursuit of connection with others who had shared identities, and for some, marred with the grief of not knowing their birth families or having cultural role models. Identity has domains that are central to the construction of an adoptee's identity, and in this case, comes with sophistication (Brocious, 2017). Conflicting emotions were prevalent in the narratives about adoptees accepting who they are while not fully understanding or knowing who they are. At the same time, some also had to reinvent their identities through integration of the different cultures they were exposed to outside the dominant White culture. Baden (2002) highlights the different paths adoptees may take to navigate their ethnic identities, ranging from a thread of self-perceptions to

fully aligning with birth identity and to identifying with adoptive family culture. This quest is not a destination but rather an unfolding that happens for transracial adoptees. Past research prioritized outcomes over exploration, a traditional assumption from the lens of identity theory (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). The findings highlighted this quest as a journey for adoptees, many of whom continue to take different paths to understand themselves.

Reconciling Identity Separation and Overlap

A rather profound sentiment expressed by the participants in the study was the attempt to reconcile their birth culture and their adoptive culture while juggling the separations and overlaps that exist. Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) explain that this complex navigation is often explored in more than one way and the overlaps and separations can be viewed both as positive and negative. This pointed to the complexity of being a part of different worlds but not feeling like one truly belongs to either, while still experiencing positives and negatives in both worlds. The dissonance of being raised in White families and environment while in a non-White body was present for many participants who talked about the challenges of being reminded of who they were not, while also being called out for their perceived inauthenticity.

Solo Identity Discovery

Participants demonstrated their commitment to understanding their heritage through their stories of self-reliance and having to navigate their bicultural identities without any guidance. Although faced with the absence of familial understanding and cultural exposure, adoptees expressed being able to turn to outside sources like podcasts, books, and the internet as a way to give life to their emotional experiences as transracial adoptees. In talking about the loneliness of this journey, many highlighted the reality that they were in families with adoptive parents who would never understand their lived experiences and with some who had the privilege of being

removed from their realities as people of the Global majority. Travel to one's birth country played a significant role in adoptees' solo identity discovery, and as research has indicated, this journey can also include other layers such as the attempt to create biological connections and the varying impacts of the journey based on the adoptees' developmental stage (Brocious, 2017). The findings from Brocious (2017) support the idea that the journey to identity discovery is more effective when it is supported by others and is not a one-time trip to a birth country, for example.

Connection to Birth Culture

This subtheme describes how pertinent moments of reconnection to culture and a sense of cultural belonging shaped adoptees' understanding of themselves as transracial adoptees. Connecting with birth culture provided adoptees with validation and emotional grounding, which participants described as instrumental to their identity discovery and mental health journey. It served as a means to bridge the gap between their identities as transracial adoptees and people who also belonged to their birth cultures. This was also in contrast to the lived experiences and daily reality of existing in predominantly White spaces as adoptees. Participants described efforts such as traveling to their home or birth countries and visiting restaurants that provided them with connection to their birth culture.

Identity Grief

In addition to the disconnection from their birth families and cultural heritage, this theme brought to light the impact of living with loss and an unfulfilled desire to embrace the totality of adoptees' cultural identities. The theme also highlights the missed opportunities to build a solid foundation in birth culture as well as the reality of facing a lack of cultural knowledge. Participants described times when they felt like outsiders within their cultures due to the lack of cultural exposure to specific traditions, practices, and languages, leading to feelings of

inadequacy and shame. In addition to the above, many participants questioned the possibilities of how they would have been different or how their identities would have shifted if they had been raised in or intentionally immersed in their birth cultures.

Another important aspect of identity grief discussed by participants in this study is the grief of medical identity and history and the inability to track or find out data about one's medical history. Several stories were told about completing medical paperwork and not being able to disclose relevant medical history that could impact an adoptee's current health and course of medical treatment. As though it is not already difficult to not know these parts of one's history, some states in the United States may not allow for adoptees to gain access to their records and birth history, adding another block to grief that may already be difficult to face (Caffrey, 2014).

Reclaiming Identity and Culture

This subtheme further elaborated on the efforts transracial adoptees undertake to connect with their cultural roots. It explored how participants discovered, embraced, and integrated their cultural identities in unique ways that were based on the resources available to them and their own life experiences. This was also the attempt to fill the void left from being raised in White families and being in White environments. The participants shared more details about everyday efforts such as cooking food from their birth culture as a way to reclaim their identity or consuming media simply to hear the language of their birth culture being spoken. Transracial adoptees described the experience of cultural dissonance (disconnection between ethnic identity and being raised in a White family), which may lead to the reclamation of culture as a means to ease this dissonance (Baden et al., 2012). This process of reclamation is also known as re-culturation. Baden et al. (2012) developed the reculturation model, defining reculturation as

the process transracial adoptees go through in order to reclaim their birth culture post-adoption, where they would have lost this. The model emphasizes the continued and dynamic nature of the formation of cultural identity with transracial adoptees. This model came about because Baden et al. (2012) realized none of the existing models, such as acculturation and enculturation models, were a fit for the lived experiences of transracial adoptees. The process helps transracial adoptees integrate parts of their birth culture into their identity, adding to a sense of wholeness and minimizing the conflict that can exist between a transracial adoptee's lived experience in a White family and their identity as people of the Global majority.

Theme Two: Cultural Integration and Adaptation

The following subthemes combine the larger process of integrating birth and adoptive identities, encircling the continued balancing act between dual identities. These are a reflection of both the conflicts and resolutions faced by transracial adoptees as they attempt to develop cohesive and bicultural identities.

Cultural Isolation

Within the broader theme of cultural integration and adaptation, transracial adoptees in this study discussed the theme of cultural isolation through stories of how their identities were hindered due to the lack of connection to their birth communities. This was a notable barrier for this population especially in how they expressed a lack of interest at points of their lives because of the feelings of uncertainty about their place within their cultures. They concluded that the absence of others with shared racial and cultural backgrounds in their lives played a significant role in their level of disconnect from their birth culture. For many who were the only people of the Global majority or people of color in their families, there was a deeper layer of isolation which also impacted their ability to effectively navigate their bicultural identities. This isolation

also added to feelings of shame when participants had moments with others who were from their birth culture and did not have any knowledge, understanding, or experience with different parts of their birth culture.

Cultural isolation appears to be a by-product and symptom of cultural distance, the perceived distance difference or incompatibility between an adoptee's birth culture and the culture of their White adoptive family (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Cultural distance in the context of the BII model forms barriers that make it difficult for transracial adoptees to connect with or engage with their birth culture or adoptive culture. They may experience cultural isolation, for example, because the perceived differences between their ethnic heritage and their adoptive family's culture feels too divided, leading to a lack of meaningful connection to either group and furthers the sense of isolation.

Point of Interest in Cultural Identity

Participants mentioned significant moments in their personal histories where they were faced with the realities of their ethnic and cultural identities. The point of interest in cultural identity for the participants in this study provided context about when they realized their identities within a larger social context. For some participants, this moment was labeled as "coming out of the fog." For others, these moments were connected with the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020 in the United States, as well as the civil uprising that took place around the country. These moments were described as times when they realized that they were no longer under the cover of the privilege afforded to them by being raised in White families. They were also described as a wake-up call for some who realized they needed to embrace who they were but could not do so without an understanding of their identities.

Bicultural Existence

This theme was an example of participants' fluidity and ability to adapt in their adoptive cultures as they embraced the coexistence of their multilayered identities. Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) explain that this fluidity and adaptation are in alignment with cultural context. Participants explained the different ways that they worked to reconcile their diverse cultural identities not only within themselves, but in their environments. There was a realization that these different identities could actually exist harmoniously, even though there were some perceived notions about their existence as conflictual. An adoptee who would be able to see themselves in this integrated manner would be high on BII per the model (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). The process of integrating and living in the bicultural existence came from being exposed to shared experiences in larger cultural and academic contexts such as through research. In this fluidity, adoptees discussed being able to move through their cultural identities as well embracing their right to adapt their cultural identities in ways that fit them. For some, this process of bridging the gap between the different identities was an emotional and metamorphic one, which was made easier due to having a solid support system. At the same time, socio-political events in the United States, such as a presidential election, shaped the expression of bicultural identity for some who suddenly realized that external factors could play a significant role in their internal identity dynamics, such as which identity they felt safe exposing to the world around them. In this case, the BII model points to the difficulty of integrating their identity as a person of the Global majority and as someone who was raised Jewish and therefore a person low on BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). To add to this, the BII model postulates that cultural identity is viewed as incompatible or fragmented by people who are experiencing high cultural conflict, which in turn can have a negative impact on their mental wellness and

their ability to integrate their identities into the wholeness of themselves (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

Emotional Impact of Cultural Integration

This theme was an expression of the emotional turmoil participants in this study experienced as they tried to merge their intersecting identities. Integration in this case refers to the intentional identification with the two cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Participants expressed exhaustion from attempts to assert their identity within a larger culture that sought to dismiss the intricacies of their existence and cultural roots. Many participants experienced a suppression of their identities in an effort to fit into familial spaces and to also take care of their adoptive parents' emotions especially. They talked about not wanting to "rock the boat," another layer that is discussed further in later themes. Although well-meaning, some adoptive parents made attempts to connect with their adopted children by introducing cultural artifacts without explanation or intentionality.

Another emotional impact that was discussed in an earlier theme was the emotional burden of having to navigate culture and attempts to connect with birth heritage alone. This emotional toll extended beyond the everyday struggles for many participants who talked about long-term feelings of anxiety and depression arising from their cultural dislocation. The narratives from this theme answered the research question: How does bicultural identity integration impact the mental health of BIPOC transracial adoptees? It was clear from the narratives that the integration of identities had a significant impact on the mental health of transracial adoptees as evidenced by the emotional burdens, anxiety, and other mental health struggles shared by participants. Additionally, even though they may still identify with both their birth and adoptive cultures, adoptees who struggle with cultural integration would be low on BII

and, per the model, feel pressure to take on one culture over the other (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). In the 2008 study of bicultural identity and psychological adjustment, Chen et al. (2008) concluded that differences in BII are remarkably linked to the psychological well-being of individuals, with well-being being measured by levels of depression and anxiety, self-esteem, and other factors. This finding emphasizes the important connection between identity and cultural integration, and mental health and wellness. A more recent study by Shamloo et al. (2023) posited that there was a positive correlation between BII and psychological well-being. That is, individuals with high BII would report better psychological well-being. In this case, adoptees with a high BII would report less mental health symptoms or difficulties with integrating their cultures. The findings answer the research question: How does bicultural identity integration impact the mental health of BIPOC transracial adoptees?

Theme Three: Navigating Racial and Cultural Tensions

Being raised in predominantly White environments has meant that for many transracial adoptees, cultural tensions in the form of microaggression, systemic racism, and White-centered narratives were the norm. The following subthemes highlight the dissonance between being socialized in a White family and the isolation or racism faced by transracial adoptees due to their ethnic and racial identities.

Being Raised "White"

Participants shared insights that highlighted the internal struggles and evolution of self-awareness that they experienced while existing in the dissonance between their identities as people of the Global majority and being raised in White families. They explained the manner in which they were heavily entrenched in their adoptive families' White culture, neglecting their own cultural and racial origins. Attempts to "whitewash" them or assimilate them into the

dominant White culture were examples of the ways in which transracial adoptees' culture and heritage seemed to be erased, sometimes unintentionally. Even though they felt "White" internally, the stark contrast of their outward appearance was a constant reminder of who they were in society and a reminder of the ways in which they were not prepared to deal with racialized spaces outside of their families. Previous studies highlighted how some transracial adoptees looked at themselves as "White" or wanted to be "White" when they were children (Yoon, 2004). This identification, in conjunction with the experiences of racism or discrimination, is pivotal in the development of emotions like confusion and anger that further lead to cultural conflict within adoptees (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Resistance was a response some participants were met with when they attempted to connect with their birth cultures, emphasizing the hierarchy that can exist in adoptive families where conformity to Whiteness is essential. The narratives surrounding being raised "White" were one of the answers to the research question: What role does cultural socialization play in the mental well-being of BIPOC transracial adoptees? Lastly, the concept of being raised "White" also has the potential to add to the cultural conflict a transracial adoptee might experience as they begin to observe the contradictions between their birth culture and White culture (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). A transracial adoptee who was raised to be individualistic, a common value of White culture, may find themselves at odds with their birth culture that may prioritize collectivism, for example. The adoptee may find themselves struggling with expectations or allegiances to the different cultures they belong to.

Denial of White Culture

Denying White culture for participants in the study was a sign of the lack of emphasis of relevant cultural markers that would be required for them to meaningfully engage with a culture

they were attempting to blend with their birth culture. This sense of ambiguity captured the participants' view of their adoptive families' culture and its implication for their bicultural identity development. While they perceived their birth cultures as rich, their adoptive families' cultures were viewed as lacking structure, substance and also as the default. The feeling of being unmoored was reflected by participants who spoke to the impact of the implicit dominance of White culture on their quest to establish their bicultural identity.

Whiteness and Fragility of Adoptive Parents

The emotional labor undertaken by transracial adoptees to navigate family dynamics appeared to be one of the symptoms of the general suppression participants had to engage in as a means to maintain peace and take care of their adoptive parents' emotions around topics like race. Participants described having to delay their journeys towards self-exploration and understanding, as well as cultural integration, due to the tension of the intersection of personal racial identity development and the fragility exhibited by their White adoptive parents. A pattern mirrored by numerous participants was minimizing themselves in order to reduce conflict, but at the expense of their own growth and exploration. In avoiding topics about race, ethnicity, or identity, Whiteness was centered in these families and became the lens through which these topics were explored. Though not overtly harmful, adoptive parents' responses to racial conversations were a reflection of the underlying biases about race that made participants feel further alienated from their adoptive family. Previous studies about racial socialization in adoptive families have pointed to the lack of conversation and an openness about the topic of race, as well parents reporting a desire to protect their adopted children, which paradoxically puts adoptees in this role of protection in their families (Killian & Khanna, 2019; Zhang et al., 2023). A study by Zhang et al. (2023) found that transracial adoptive parents had different depths of

cultural socialization and that those who did not acknowledge their lack of knowledge contributed to the superficial cultural socialization of their transracial adoptees. Parents who are not aware of their lack of knowledge may not have the capacity to view their adopted children's unique experiences and the toll it may take on the latter in having to educate them as parents.

People Were Not Prepared for Racism

A predominant sentiment shared across the narratives of this study was the lack of preparedness in both the adoptees and adoptive parents in regards to being able to navigate and manage everyday racism. Participants expressed vulnerabilities rising from the lack of cultural guidance from their adoptive parents, with some managing these vulnerabilities with the help of peers and support systems. Due to limited parental awareness of racism and issues that came with it, participants shared experiences where they felt lost and disconnected when faced with the realities of racism outside the home. This lack of awareness can have lasting impacts on adoptees as they explore their identities, as noted in the results of this study. By not focusing on race and racism, adoptive parents fail to acknowledge the systemic inequalities tied to race, especially in a society that emphasizes race and racial experiences (Marcelli et al., 2020). Adoptees are also left with the message that racial identity is not relevant, which can be harmful to their identity and personal development, not to mention their emotional wellness and self-esteem. Adoptive parents also reinforced harmful societal stereotypes or minimized microaggressions faced by their adopted children, sometimes openly admitting not knowing how to manage some of these situations. Participants also talked about the experiences of racism and microaggressions within their family systems and how these experiences were sometimes dismissed by adoptive parents, pointing to the lack of knowledge about the importance of racism and the issues it comes with.

Theme Four: Role of Family in Cultural Integration

This theme leans on the influence of adoptive parents on how their adopted children integrate their identities. Participants shared their roles as educators for their parents and the emotional labor required of them to exist in their adoptive families.

Lack of Parental Preparedness

Many examples of well-meaning adoptive parents and their attempts to provide inclusive spaces to their adopted children were provided by participants. At the same time, their lack of awareness about the importance of cultural integration and the lived experiences of their adopted children focused on the disconnect between parents and children. The lack of awareness included the lack of understanding of adoption being a "never-ending process," like one of the participants said. As Lucy Chau Lai-Tuen (2014) put it, "Adoption is a lifelong condition" (p. 126). These well-meaning intentions many times fell short of adoptees' needs, leading to frequent frustration about the lack of support in confronting systemic inequalities and racism. Exposure to birth culture was an oversight shared by many participants who reflected parental lack of understanding and intentionality towards helping their adopted children connect with their birth culture. Some recounted the lack of conversation about the circumstances of their adoption or their birth culture and the contribution to their lack of cultural awareness and understanding, as well as the broader cultural erasure within their birth families. Research by Manzi et al. (2014) affirmed parental roles in adoptees' BII as their findings supported the idea that a sense of belonging and parental cultural socialization can impact adoptees' mental and behavioral wellness. They explained that adoptees who struggle with identity integration tend to have difficulties with their behaviors and that psychological adjustment was determined by the adoptive parents' cultural socialization strategies.

While there are reports of adoption agencies and organizations providing better support to adoptive parents around their adopted children's ethnic and racial identities, these findings showed that there is more work to be done to prepare White parents especially for the realities of raising adopted children who are of the Global majority (Brocious, 2017).

Color Evasiveness

Color evasiveness emanated as a considerable subtheme within the narratives of this study. It is also worth noting that color evasiveness was a recommendation presented to adoptive parents of transracial or transnational adoptees, as it was assumed to be the way to integrate adoptees into families (Brocious, 2017). The oversight of cultural and racial differences by adoptive parents was expressed through an attempt to form a racially neutral environment around transracial adoptees, which in turn shaped participants' identities and mental health. Participants' lived experiences and cultural complexities were effectively dismissed in the centering of color evasiveness in these families. This sometimes looked like parents attempting to convince their adoptees that they were no different from them. In her book *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*, Sherrie Eldridge (1999) explained that the statement "You are just like us" could translate into adoptees feeling like they needed to be like their adoptive parents, could not be honest about their emotions, and that they were not enough, just as they are (p. 145). Due to this framework, many adoptive parents' appeared ill-equipped to support their children in managing the realities of their lived experiences as people of the Global majority in the United States. Additionally, their adopted children reported an internal denial of their ethnic and racial identities, pointing to identity conflict as described by the BII model. Even though these attempts were focused on inclusivity, the parental lack of awareness and racial illiteracy added to

participants' feelings of isolation, and this stress is an example of the predictors of cultural and identity conflict (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

"You Should Be Grateful"

The narratives of gratitude were intertwined with the feelings of obligation and a suppression of emotions that were deemed "negative." Participants described how these expectations of gratitude shaped their sense of identity and mental health, especially around not being able to show their authentic emotions about being adoptees. These implicit and explicit communications played a significant role in how participants responded to their adoption, especially when faced with reminders of how their lives could have been if they had not been adopted. Participants described having to carry the burden of gratitude in addition to the narrative of being "rescued," which took away opportunities for them to explore their feelings of grief and loss. Critiques about transracial adoption, especially around international adoption, ave challenged this idea of being "rescued,", emphasizing the role of the practice of adoption in the bypassing of larger issues that contribute to the root of people having to give their children away to adoptive families (Briggs, 2003).

Although they recognized the privileges of being raised in their adoptive families, participants also shared the struggles of invalidation of the difficulties tied to their adoption, pointing to the possible roles cultural socialization plays in the mental well-being of transracial adoptees of the Global majority.

Theme Five: Importance of Community and Support Systems

The following provides a picture of the external resources and systems that offer support to transracial adoptees as they explore and integrate their cultures. Community holds a

significant role in providing cultural education, a sense of belonging, and emotional support, especially for adoptees who may lack these attributes in their families.

Role of Community and Support System

The findings of this study highlighted the importance of community and solid support systems for transracial adoptees on the journey to integrate their birth culture and adoptive family culture. Connection to communities served as an anchor for participants who were on the journey towards blending their identities, which appears to sometimes be in competition with each other. Participants shared some spaces, like online platforms, where they felt validated and seen. Their narratives suggest that community supports alleviate identity conflict through the affirmation of the coexistence of all of their identities. Participants also affirmed the importance of friendships both outside and within the adoptee community, as a means for cultural support and exploration. Additionally, adoptee-specific community support was instrumental in participants' mental wellness, as they found the language to express themselves in addition to validation of their lived experiences. These spaces were also a source of resource support on their journeys towards self-exploration. Even with the existence of these spaces, participants also highlighted the experiences of growing up without community support or being far from others who could have served as cultural mirrors. Previous research highlights transracial adoptees' increased desire for connectedness with people with shared ethnic identities, especially due to growing up in predominantly White communities and this desire mirroring the desire to connect with their birth families (Godon et al., 2014).

Role of Culture Camps

While mostly brief and targeted in scope, culture camps played an integral role in providing an introduction to cultural heritage for transracial adoptees. These camps gave

participants the opportunity to learn about their cultural heritage, practices, and languages in a way that was not prevalent in their everyday lives. Participants discussed how impactful these camps were, and even though some were young at the time of participation, most had fond memories of acceptance and community. This is in alignment with the BII, which highlights the significance of context that allows individuals to explore their multiple identities and an indicator for how such community spaces alleviate the emotional toll of isolation and can help improve mental wellness (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). However, some added that they experienced a decrease in their interest as they got older. Even though these environments provided the opportunity for adoptive and birth culture to dwell, participants' narratives from this study suggested that these experiences did not continue past these camps.

Theme Six: Mental Health and Therapeutic Experiences

As transracial adoptees navigate the complexities of their bicultural identities, grief, and the emotional ramifications of reunification with their birth families, the therapeutic process has become an important part of their healing and a lens through which they can view these experiences. This therapeutic theme also includes the role of clinicians in supporting or hindering the adoptees' understanding of their identities, centering the importance of cultural and adoption competence in therapists.

Mental Impact of Reunification

About 44% of participants in this study stated that they were in reunion with their birth families. Participants' narratives informed complicated emotional terrains shaped by cultural disconnection, unmet expectations, and identity challenges, especially as a population that is more likely to seek reunification compared to same-race adoptees (Godon et al., 2014). Often entertained as a moment of belonging, connection, or closure, reunification proved to be an

emotionally fraught moment for participants in this study who had encountered it. Most had hope for reconnection, and the experiences shared were the opposite, leaving them confronting feelings of rejection, pain, and insignificance. The lack of reciprocity had participants questioning their worth and managing a resurfacing of feelings of abandonment, adding to the psychological impact of reunification. The BII model outlined challenges around cultural and relational expectations that can add to feelings of stress and challenges with integrating an individual's multiple identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). At the same time, some participants maintained a sense of hope for reunification and gratitude for the limited contact they have had with their birth families, as they recognize these efforts as a way to understand their identities better.

Transracial Adoptees in Therapy

This theme was an emphasis on how transracial adoptees juggle the complexities between identity, their mental health, and therapeutic engagement. Their stories informed the need for therapeutic care that centers adoptees, as well as the evolution of identity in the therapeutic space. The narratives also answered the research question: What role does counseling play in the bicultural identity integration and mental health experience of BIPOC transracial adoptees? Participants praised therapy as a portal for their deeper understanding of their identity, in addition to being in a safe space where they could explore their complex emotions. Their accounts of their fundamental interactions in the therapeutic space connect with existing literature that mentions delayed awareness of the psychological impact of adoption (Baden & Steward, 2000). Participants talked about initiating therapy sessions due to other life circumstances and not realizing how adoption played a deeper role in their lives and presenting issues. This is in line with the BII model, which asserts that identity integration is a gradual

process that happens as people grow their emotional and cognitive capacity for relational and cultural tension (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Until adoptees are fully equipped to manage the intricacies of their adoption and its related challenges, participants described delaying recognition of these concerns, a reflection of the nonlinear nature of bicultural identity integration. Some participants also noted that although bicultural identity was not the main focus of their therapy sessions, they added that their identity as transracial adoptees still played a role in their therapeutic needs, in alignment with the BII model's maintenance of differing degrees of harmony or conflict between cultural identities (Benet-Martínez, 2012).

The Importance of Therapist Identity

For participants in this study, having an adoption-competent clinician was a major factor in feeling seen and valued in the therapeutic space. They talked about the importance of clinicians who understood the intricacies of adoption and adoptee identity, not simply as a superficial preference, but as the cornerstone of their healing. The process of finding and connecting with a therapist for participants was a mirror to their broader identity journey. Participants shared how their beginning conversations with therapists lacked depth and did not have the necessary connection to explore their intersectionalities. Having shared lived experiences with their therapists was consistently highlighted by participants who discussed the reduction in emotional labor when talking to clinicians who understood their lived experiences. The BII model emphasizes that environments lower cultural conflict through the fostering of understanding and harmony between cultural identities, which means the connection between the clinician and the adoptee cannot be minimized (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Limitations and Recommendations

This study focused on transracial adoptees who lived in the United States, limiting its generalizability for adoptees living in other parts of the world. The lived experiences shared in this study are primarily American-based, and some of the phenomena discussed may not necessarily be applicable to individuals and families living outside of the United States. For example, the conceptualization of race and systemic race-based experiences and their impact on adoptees may not be the same for a transracial adoptee raised by White parents in a country where the adoptive parent is the racial minority.

It is worth noting that the findings of this study may lack generalizability due to the qualitative nature of the study. As a phenomenological study, the findings focused on the lived experiences of a small group of people who are not representative of the larger population. The participants, although of a wide age range (18–44 years), may have experiences that are different from other transracial adoptees aged 45 and older and younger than 18. Additionally, 44% of the participants identified as Asian/Asian-American, which is not an accurate representation of the general population of transracial adoptees, which show Hispanic children being the highest at 46% and Black children at 33% between 2017 and 2019 (Kalisher et al., 2020). As such, the findings may not be generalizable to other populations.

Another limitation of this study is that it did not explicitly measure BII with the Bicultural Identity Intervention Scale. While references were made to "low" and "high" BII throughout the text, there was no explicit data about where participants placed themselves on the scale. As a result, there was no correlation between BII and mental health outcomes, for example. In future studies, this assessment tool could be utilized in gathering the necessary data to support the themes of this study.

Future studies could explore whether transracial adoptees of the Global majority who report cultural harmony and blending report better mental health. They could also look at whether transracial adoptees of the global majority who have explored their identities in counseling report a higher level bicultural identity integration. Additionally, there could be studies on how therapeutic practices informed by the BII model can play a role in identity integration and mental health outcomes among transracial adoptees of the Global majority. Future research could also utilize a longitudinal study to investigate the long-term impacts of community involvement in transracial adoptees of the Global majority to provide further insight into how these relationships evolve over time. Additionally, research could evaluate the strength of community-based interventions like adoptee support groups and culture camps to explore the best practices for supporting transracial adoptees' identity development and their mental health. Researchers could also study how intersecting identities such as adoptee status and race can influence therapy outcomes, as a means to develop intersectional training for therapists.

Conclusions

Transracial adoptees of the Global majority often hold two important identities and navigate the realities that come with them: their birth culture and that of their adoptive families. This duality introduces challenges such as feelings of alienation, gaps in cultural knowledge, racism, grief, and microaggressions. At the same time, these dualities also present many opportunities for self-definition, growth, integration, and adaptability. Being able to navigate and integrate these parts of identity contributes to the formation of a bicultural self that can be authentic in many transracial adoptees. To be successful in this however, transracial adoptees require the support of their adoptive parents, community, and the systems they exist in. This journey is not designed to be navigated solely by the adoptees although it requires some solo and

internal work. This research also underscores the importance of moving away from the adoptive parent narrative and centering adoptee voices. Without this, the following sections to conclude this study will not be possible. Below is a summary of the implications for practice for adoptive parents, counselor educators and supervisors, counselors/therapists, and for advocacy in organizational policy. **Implications for Adoptive Parents**

Several research studies have emphasized that there is a need for White parents to understand the unique experiences of their transracially adopted children (Malott & Scmidt, 2012). Key considerations for adoptive parents of transracial adoptees include the following: (1) Validate the adoptees' experiences, (2) Prioritize emotional well-being, (3) Acknowledge Racism, (4) Commit to lifelong learning, (5) Live with intention.

Validate the Adoptee's Experiences

Many participants shared narratives about their adoptive parents invalidating or minimizing their lived experiences, especially around racism and microaggression. Adoptive parents have to understand that their adopted child's lived experiences are different from theirs and require understanding, validation, and an acceptance that the journeys are going to differ. Even if the adoptive parents are knowledgeable about their child's lived experiences and have the best of intentions, they need to accept that their larger system, such as their extended family or neighbors, may not have the same level of understanding or acceptance. This means that their children will have varied experiences with others that will not be the same as their experiences, yet they still need to be validated. Parents will need to find the courage to protect their adopted children accordingly.

Prioritize Emotional Well-Being

The adoptee journey of identity integration and navigation is fraught with many emotions such as grief, depression, and anxiety. There will be moments when adoptive parents will have to open the floor for difficult conversations about sensitive topics like birth history and cultural loss. Providing this openness could give adoptees the space to process complex emotions openly, especially when they do not have to worry about resistance from their parents or having to minimize themselves to keep the peace.

Acknowledge Racism

In a society that centers race, it will be hard for transracial adoptees to leave their homes and families and not have some encounter with bias and racism. It is an elephant in the rooms of many adoptive families, and not addressing it can inform feelings of irrelevance in adoptees, as some participants in this study mentioned. Adoptive parents will need to prepare their adopted children for the real world, the one where bias exists and tools for navigating those incidents are required. This preparation can include conversations about race and resources for support and defense outside the home when adoptive parents are not available.

Commit to Lifelong Learning

Adoptees answered the following question as part of their interview: Looking back, is there anything you wish you had known, or resources you wish you had access to when it comes to trying to blend your cultural identities? Participants expressed their desire for a number of resources with most of them wishing for resources that could have helped their adoptive parents. The following are examples of the narratives:

Like, maybe if you're from a different culture than your parents, then there are programs that your parents must comply with and making sure you identify with. I think the only

thing I would say is making sure that there's a responsibility on the parents to make sure that you identify with your culture as much as possible.

Another participant said:

Like, if you're a White woman adopting a Black child, learn how to do Black hair, as simple as that. Making sure, like that, should be a standard criteria, things like that, so that the child doesn't lose who they are.

Adoptive parents have to actively educate themselves about their adopted children, their heritage, ethnicity, cultural traditions, and the current social challenges faced by people of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This also means intentionally utilizing resources that are available to them such as internet sources and community members who share similar backgrounds with their adopted child and also fostering an environment where diversity is respectfully and authentically honored. Some participants in the study shared their experiences at culture camps as children and how those lessons did not extend into the home. Adoptive parents need to continue reinforcing the cultural lessons and the learning process outside of culture camps. Learning also includes self-learning and exploring one's own background and how it impacts the adoptive family dynamics. White adoptive parents, for example, can explore more about their own identities with tools such as the Hays (2008) ADDRESSING model to identify their own places of privilege and oppression, as well as how they connect with and differ from their adopted child's.

Live with Intention

Some participants in this study shared experiences about living in White-centered spaces and not being able to connect with others from their birth culture, pointing to the isolation of transracial adoptees experience. There was discussion about the lack of intentionality around connecting them with their birth culture, and some gave examples like being able to go to

restaurants that serve food from their birth culture. While not all families can afford to take their adopted children to their birth countries, for example, adoptive parents can engage in relevant cultural practices such as festivals like Chinese New Year and Diwali, among other celebrations and carnivals, to expose adoptees to parts of their culture. Adoptive parents can seek mentorship opportunities from others who share their adopted child's culture and build community around their families. Seeking out cultural organizations and opportunities for adopted children to connect with their birth culture can open doors for cultural and identity exploration.

Implications for Counselor Educators and Supervisors

A study by Vonk and Anagaran (2003) found that a significant proportion of mental health professionals working with transracial families are White. As such, these practitioners may not possess the knowledge or lived experience required to effectively support this particular population (Malott & Schmidt, 2012; Vonk & Anagaran, 2003). Although there has been much adoption research, there is a shortage of education for mental health practitioners who are likely to come into therapeutic contact with adoptees (Henderson, 2007). According to a 2000 survey by Henderson, 90% of respondent licensed psychologists agreed that they were in need of further education on adoption-related topics. Henderson (2007) also mentioned that

> Adoption received little coverage in text and reading books on marriage and the family from 1998 to 2001. Space devoted to adoption in 21 texts averaged 2.4 pages, and 3.7 pages in 16 books of readings. The information contained about adoption was also likely to emphasize the problems associated with adoption. During the entire 1990s, The *Journal of Marriage and the Family* contained only six articles and four reviews of books related to adoption. (p. 404)

Key considerations for counselor educators and supervisors include the following: (1) Design adoption-specific courses, (2) Discuss adoption in supervision.

Design Adoption-Specific Courses

Counselor educators have an opportunity to bridge this gap by designing and implementing adoption-specific courses, backed by the research finding that adoptees are more likely to seek counseling than non-adoptees (Baden et al., 2012). With the lack of education on this topic, clinicians may continue to do harm to clients by repeating some of the stereotypes or sentiments expressed by the general public such as "You should be grateful," and this can be a significant deterrent to transracial adoptees seeking services (Sass & Henderson, 2000).

Discuss Adoption in Supervision

Supervisors can also add to the conversation during case conceptualizations by inquiring about client and family dynamics, not assuming that all family members are related by birth. Asking these questions draws the mind of the clinician to the reality that there are no "standard" family structures and clients need to be approached from a place of curiosity. Supervisors will also need to educate themselves on relevant research on transracial adoption and best practices to ensure that their supervisees are providing sufficient support to their clients. Extra support may be helpful for counselors who are also transracial adoptees in managing the countertransference that can occur in sessions as they work with clients of similar backgrounds (Zuckerman & Buschsbaum, 2007).

Implications for Mental Health Practitioners

This study draws attention to the importance of addressing the unique mental health needs of transracial adoptees raised by White parents. Mental health practitioners need to prioritize culturally responsive and competent care to support transracial adoptees on their

bicultural integration journey, especially with the significant number of adoptees who seek mental health services compared to non-adoptees (Baden et al., 2012). Key considerations for mental health practitioners are as follows: (1) prioritize identity integration, (2) build self-awareness, (3) talk about the "hard things", (4) expand your network, (5) approach counseling systemically.

Prioritize Identity Integration

It is important for practitioners to highlight identity integration as a dynamic and lifelong process, not a destination to be reached by adoptees (Brocious, 2017). Studies have shown that BII can serve as a protective factor for transracial adoptees and help mitigate mental health issues, as it has been studied as a predictor of mental well-being (Shamloo et al., 2023). Practitioners need to prioritize supporting their transracial adoptee clients in integrating their cultural and ethnic identities. Incorporating BII to understand dual cultural pressure can assist clinicians in selecting therapeutic interventions that can support their clients. Interventions such as Baden and Steward's (2007) cultural racial identity model can help guide conversations around identity in sessions. Clinicians can also support clients in developing adaptive strategies to maneuver through conflicting cultural experiences or expectations.

Build Self-Awareness

While some participants in this study shared a preference for clinicians who are transracial adoptees themselves, it is still important that therapists explore their own biases towards transracial adoption and whether they hold the belief that transracial adoptees can thrive in White families (Malott & Schmidt, 2012). Building awareness also includes engaging in adoption-informed trainings that can help clinicians to address the unique needs of their transracial adoptee clients (Post et al., 2019). It includes understanding the unique experience of

the intersectionality of being raised in a family that is of a different racial and cultural background, as well as the complexities of cultural identity formation. As recommended for adoptive parents, practitioners should also explore their own identities through the ADDRESSING model (Hays, 2008) to recognize their identities and the roles they may play in the therapeutic process.

Talk About the "Hard" Things

In discussing their mental health and counseling experiences, some of the participants in this study mentioned that they had never talked to their therapist about their adoption or it "had not come up." During initial intake sessions, clinicians may ask about family history and presenting issues, and it is important that questions about family dynamics address culture, birth history, and parent-child dynamics. This is where information about topics like adoption has the potential to come up when clients are asked about their parent dynamics. Once clients share their experiences as adoptees, clinicians have an opportunity to go deeper into topics like grief, which participants in this study brought up, and validate the adoptee's lived experiences as an adoptee. There is also the opportunity to discuss family dynamics and the possible unmet cultural needs that exist. Reunification is a reality for some transracial adoptees, and clinicians are in a position to support them emotionally, to prepare for relational disappointment, for example (Godon et al., 2014). As always, if clinicians are outside their scope of practice and consultation does not seem enough, it is best to refer clients to appropriate clinicians.

Expand Your Network

Expanding clinical networks to include other clinicians who are transracial adoptees benefits not only the therapist, but also the adoptee client. Clinicians need to be aware of community resources such as clinicians who specialize in working with this population, not only

for consultation or supervision, but as a possible referral source. Having a list of community resources such as adoption support groups and organizations can come in handy when trying to connect transracial adoptees to the community. Transracial adoptees have shared in a number of studies that being connected to fellow adoptees can be a tremendous support and place of solace (Brocious, 2017; Godon et al., 2014). Clinicians can connect clients to such resources to help bolster their support network.

Approach Counseling Systemically

Even though there might be one identified patient, the adoptee client, they present with concerns that go beyond themselves. Adopting a systemic approach in counseling acknowledges the impacts of external issues like family dynamics, racism, and other disenfranchisement in a client's life or on their presenting issues. Practically, systemic approaches can also include encouraging family involvement and psychoeducation where appropriate. Family therapy can be a powerful tool for adoptees wanting to build connections and improve communication with their families, especially when it comes to topics like race and identity (Caffrey, 2014). A systemic approach also includes understanding the history and complexities of transracial adoption in the United States and how policies, ideas, and controversies (e.g., National Association of Black Social Workers' stance on White parents adopting children of color) have made their way into the mental health field (Malott & Schmidt, 2012).

Implications for Organizations and Policy Makers

Previous studies, such as Hellerstedt et al.'s research in 2008, provided empirical evidence of White parents representing a high percentage of adoptive parents. In this same study, at least 70% of participants had at least a college degree, and 85% of these households made over $50,000 in annual income. The process of adoption appears to be most accessible to White

families who are of middle and upper socioeconomic status (Malott & Schmidt, 2012). A key consideration for organizations, policymakers, and advocates is: Address adoption disparities.

Address Adoption Disparities

There needs to be advocacy to address policies that support the disparities in adoption systems, such as the regulation of the cost of adoption in order to open more options for the placement of children who are to be adopted (Biafora et al., 2007). While culture camps were mentioned and seemed helpful for participants in this study, there was no mention of other organized programs that could provide the much needed support for transracial adoptees. As such, funding for programs, especially in less diverse areas around the country, could be helpful to adoptees and their families who otherwise would not have access to connections to organizations and individuals that can mentor and support them.

This phenomenological study on the mental health experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global majority sought to understand the lived experience of being raised by White parents and the experiences of integrating the two identities. The themes pulled from the narratives shared by participants in this study are a summary of the importance of centering adoptee voices, especially those of the Global majority, which are not always elevated in adoption research. It is clear that the success of a transracial adoptee's bicultural integration depends not only on themselves but also on their family and social support. Bicultural identity integration (BII) model as a theory provided a backdrop that highlighted the positive impacts integration can have on the mental or psychological wellness of individuals. To conclude, the complexity of identity integration cannot be underestimated, and its connection to the mental health of transracial adoptees is imperative.

References

American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA 2014 code of ethics.* American Counseling Association. https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf?sfvrsn=55ab73d0_1

American Psychological Association (APA). (2018). Identity. https://dictionary.apa.org/identity

Baden, A. L. (2002). The psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees: An application of the cultural-racial identity model. *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, *11*, 167–191. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014316018637

Baden, A. L. (2008). Contextualizing race, culture, and identity for transracially and internationally adopted persons: Lessons from a personal and professional journey. *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, *17*(1–2), 106–125. https://doi.org/10.1179/sdh.2008.17.1-2.106

Baden, A. L., & Steward, R. J. (2000). A framework for use with racially and culturally integrated families: The cultural-racial identity model as applied to transracial adoption. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *9*(4), 309–337. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009493827019

Baden, A. L., & Steward, R. J. (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). Sage.

Baden, A. L., Sharma, S. M., Balducci, S., Ellis, L., Randall, R., Kwon, D. Y., & Harrington, E. S. (2022). A trauma-informed substance use disorder prevention program for transracially adopted children and adolescents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *130*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2022.105598

Baden, A. L., Treweeke, L. M., & Ahluwalia, M. K. (2012). Reclaiming culture: Reculturation of transracial and international adoptees. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *90*(4), 387–399. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2012.00049.x

Benet-Martínez, V. (2012). Multiculturalism: Cultural, social, and personality processes. In K. Deaux & M. Snyder, *The Oxford handbook of personality and social psychology* (pp. 623–648). Oxford University Press.

Benet-Martínez, V., & Haritatos, J. (2005). Bicultural identity integration (BII): Components and psychosocial antecedents. *Journal of Personality*, *73*(4), 1015–1049. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00337.x

Benet-Martínez, V., Leu, J., Lee, F., & Morris, M. W. (2002). Negotiating biculturalism: Cultural frame switching in biculturals with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *33*(5), 492–516.

Betts, D. J. (Ed.). (2003). *Creative arts therapies approaches in adoption and foster care: Contemporary strategies for working with individuals and families*. Charles C. Thomas.

Biafora, F., Javier, R., Baden, A., Camancho-Gingerich, A. (2007). The future of adoption: A call to action. In R. A. Javier, A. L. Baden, F. A. Biafora, & A. Camacho-Gingerich (Eds.), *Handbook of adoption: Implications for Researchers, practitioners, and families* (pp. 527–537). Sage.

Blake, A. J., Ruderman, M., Waterman, J. M., & Langley, A. K. (2022). Long-term effects of pre-adoptive risk on emotional and behavioral functioning in children adopted from foster care. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105031

Boivin, M., & Hassan, G. (2005). Ethnic identity and psychological adjustment in transracial adoptees: A review of the literature. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 38*(7), 1084–1103. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.992922

Brako-Owusu, P. (2021). Needs assessment. Survey Monkey. https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-0m1p2PnwYyUo4blehMC0ew_3D_3D/

Branco, S. F., Stella, S., & Langkusch, A. (2022). The reclamation of self: Kinship and identity in transnational Colombian adoptee first family reunions. *The Family Journal*, *30*(4), 514–522. https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807221104112

Briggs, L. (2003). Mother, child, race, nation: The visual iconography of rescue and the politics of transnational and transracial adoption. *Gender & History*, *15*(2), 179–200. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00298

Brocious, H. (2017). Erickson's identity theory and the importance of ethnic exploration for transnational adoptees. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *27*(4), 321–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1284029

Brooks, D., Simmel, C., Wind, L., Barth, R.P. (2005). Contemporary adoption in the United States: Implications for the next wave of adoption theory, research and practice. In D. Brodzinsky, & J. Palacios (Eds.), *Psychological issues in adoption: Research and practice.* (pp. 1–26). Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.

Caffrey, K. (2014). Creating closeness and creating distance: What therapists need to know to help adoptees increase their capacity for emotional connection. In L. Dennis (Ed.), *Adoption therapy: Perspectives from clients and clinicians on processing and healing post-adoption issues* (pp. 93–110). Entourage Publishing.

Cano, M. Á., Marsiglia, F. F., Meca, A., De La Rosa, M., Ramírez-Ortiz, D., Sánchez, M., Colón Burgos, J. F., Alamilla, S. G., Wuyke, G., Parras, D., Ali, S. Z., Forney, D. J., Varas-Rodríguez, E., Ruvalcaba, Y., Contreras, A., Ahmed, S., Vega-Luna, B., Ochoa, L. G., Cuadra, R., & Domínguez García, M. J. (2021). Psychosocial stress, bicultural identity integration, and bicultural self-efficacy among Hispanic emerging adults. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, *37*(2), 392–398. https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2993

Chen, S. X., Benet-Martínez, V., & Harris Bond, M. (2008). Bicultural identity, bilingualism, and psychological adjustment in multicultural societies: Immigration-based and globalization-based acculturation. *Journal of Personality*, *76*(4), 803–838. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00505.x

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Davidson, K. (2024, March 12). Why we use BIPOC. *YWCA*. https://www.ywcaworks.org/blogs/ywca/tue-03122024-1000/why-we-use-bipoc#:~:text=BIPOC%20stands%20for%20Black%2C%20Indigenous,solidarity%20between%20communities%20of%20color

DeBerry, K. M., Scarr, S., & Weinberg, R. (1996). Family racial socialization and ecological competence: Longitudinal assessments of African-American transracial adoptees. *Child Development*, *67*(5), 2375–2399. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01863.x

Eldridge, S. (1999). *Twenty things adopted kids wish their adoptive parents knew*. Delta Trade.

Esser, A. (2024). Transracial adoption statistics: Market data report 2024. World Metrics. https://worldmetrics.org/transracial-adoption-statistics/

Feigelman, W., & Silverman, A. R. (1984). The long-term effects of transracial adoption. *Social Service Review*, *58*(4), 588–602.

Ferrari, L., Rosnati, R., Canzi, E., Ballerini, A., & Ranieri, S. (2017). How international transracial adoptees and immigrants cope with discrimination? The moderating role of ethnic identity in the relation between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 27*(6), 437–449. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2325

Ferrari, L., Rosnati, R., Manzi, C., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2015). Ethnic identity, bicultural identity integration, and psychological well-being among transracial adoptees: A longitudinal study. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *2015*(150), 63–76. https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20122

George, T. (2020). *Hermeneutics*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
    https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hermeneutics/

Godon, D. E., Green, W. F., & Ramsey, P. G. (2014). Transracial adoptees: The search for birth
    family and the search for self. *Adoption Quarterly*, *17*(1), 1–27.
    https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2014.875087

Hamilton, E., Samek, D. R., Keyes, M., McGue, M. K., & Iacono, W. G. (2015). Identity
    development in a transracial environment: Racial/ethnic minority adoptees in Minnesota.
    Adoption Quarterly, 18(3), 217–233. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2015.1013593

Hays, P. A. (2008). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and
    therapy* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/11650-
    000

Hellerstedt, W. L., Madsen, N. J., Gunnar, M. R., Grotevant, H. D., Lee, R. M., & Johnson, D. E.
    (2008). The international adoption project: Population-based surveillance of Minnesota
    parents who adopted children internationally. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, *12*(2),
    162–71.

Henderson, D. (2007). Why has the mental health community been silent on adoption issues? In
    R. A. Javier, A. L. Baden, F. A. Biafora, & A. Camacho-Gingerich (Eds.), *Handbook of
    Adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families* (pp. 403–417). SAGE
    Publications, Inc.

Henriquez, K. L., Lorenzo-Blanco, E. I., & Kim, S. Y. (2023). The association of ethnic and
    american identities with psychological well-being among Latinx emerging adults: The
    mediating role of bicultural identity integration. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*,
    52(10), 2131–2143. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10964-023-01824-4

Hjern, A., Lindblad, F., & Vinnerljung, B. (2002). Suicide, psychiatric illness, and social
    maladjustment in intercountry adoptees in Sweden: A cohort study. *The Lancet*,
    360(9331), 443–448. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)09674-5

Hovey, J. D., Kim, S. E., & Seligman, L. D. (2006). The influences of cultural values, ethnic
    identity, and language use on the mental health of Korean American college students. *The
    Journal of Psychology*, *140*(5), 499–511. https://doi.org/10.3200/JRLP.140.5.499-511

Huynh, Q.-L., Benet-Martínez, V., & Nguyen, A.-M. D. (2018). Measuring variations in
    bicultural identity across U.S. ethnic and generational groups: Development and
    validation of the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale-Version 2 (BIIS-2). *Psychological
    Assessment*, *30*(12), 1581–1596. https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000606

Huynh, Q. L., Nguyen, A. M., & Benet-Martınez, V. (2011). Bicultural identity integration. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 827–842). Springer.

Javier, R. A., Baden, A., Biafora, F., & Camacho-Gingerich, A. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook of adoption: Implications for researchers, practitioners, and families*. SAGE.

Kalisher, A., Gosciak, J., & Spielfogel, J. (2020). *The Multiethnic Placement Act 25 years later: Trends in adoption and transracial adoption*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/264526/MEPA-Data-report.pdf

Katz, J., & Doyle, E. K. (2013). Black and white thinking? Understanding negative responses to transracial adoptive families. *Adoption Quarterly*, *16*(1), 62–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2012.754812

Killian, C., & Khanna, N. (2019). Beyond color-blind and color-conscious: Approaches to racial socialization among parents of transracially adopted children. *Family Relations*, *68*(2), 260–274. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12357

Lai-Tuen, L. C. (2014). The transracial adoptee and body dysmorphia. In L. Dennis (Ed.), *Adoption therapy: Perspectives from clients and clinicians on processing and healing post-adoption issues* (pp. 125–136). Entourage Publishing.

Lee, S., Liu, J., Kimura, A. M., Zhang, X., Kupa, J., Jurca, A., Boland, K., & Pinderhughes, E. E. (2022). Adoptive parents navigating adoption microaggressions through discourse dependency and preparation for bias lenses. *Journal of Family Communication*, *22*(3), 208–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2022.2097237

Malott, K. M., & Schmidt, C. D. (2012). Counseling families formed by transracial adoption: Bridging the gap in the multicultural counseling competencies. *The Family Journal*, *20*(4), 384–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480712451231

Manzi, C., Ferrari, L., Rosnati, R., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2014). Bicultural identity integration of transracial adolescent adoptees: Antecedents and outcomes. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *45*(6), 888–904. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022114530495

Marcelli, M., Williams, E. N., Culotta, K., & Ertman, B. (2020). The impact of racial-ethnic socialization practices on international transracial adoptee identity development. *Adoption Quarterly*, *23*(4), 266–285. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926755.2020.1833393

Meyer, M., Wiggins, E., & Elliot, G. M. (2023). Adult adoptees' adoption-related experiences of counseling, loss, and grief: A transcendental phenomenological study. *The Professional Counselor*, *13*(2), 129–144. https://doi.org/10.15241/mm.13.2.129

McGue, M., Keyes, M., Sharma, A., Elkins, I., Legrand, L., Johnson, W., & Iacono, W. G. (2007). The environments of adopted and non-adopted youth: Evidence on range restriction from the Sibling Interaction and Behavior Study (SIBS). *Behavior Genetics: An International Journal Devoted to Research in the Inheritance of Behavior*, *37*(3), 449–462. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10519-007-9142-7

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

Moffatt, P. G., & Thoburn, J. (2001). Outcomes of permanent family placement for children of minority ethnic origin. *Child & Family Social Work*, *6*(1), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2206.2001.00194.x

Mohanty, J. (2015). Ethnic identity and psychological well-being of international transracial adoptees: A curvilinear relationship. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *2015*(150), 33–45. https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20117

Montgomery, J.E., & Jordan, N.A. (2018). Racial-ethnic socialization and transracial adoption outcomes: A systematic research synthesis. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *35,* 439-458. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-018-0541-9

Morgan, S. K., & Langrehr, K. J. (2019). Transracially adoptive parents' colorblindness and discrimination recognition: Adoption stigma as moderator. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology,* *25*(2), 242-252. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000219

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Sage.

National Cancer Institute. (n.d.). *Dictionary of cancer terms*. Retrieved June 18, 2024, from https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/ethnicity

Nguyen, A. M. D., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2013). Biculturalism and adjustment: A metanalysis. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *44*(1), 122–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022111435097

Park-Taylor, J., & Wing, H. M. (2019). Microfictions and microaggressions: counselors' work with transracial adoptees in schools. *Professional School Counseling*, *23*(1), 1–14. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27136494

Peoples, K. (2021). *How to write a phenomenological dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. SAGE.

Post, R. D., Preacher, K. J., & Hagman, A. (2019). Adoption competent therapy: A model and outcomes for adoption-sensitive clinical services. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 100*(3), 278–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/1044389419856436

Presseau, C., DeBlaere, C., & Luu, L. P. (2019). Discrimination and mental health in adult transracial adoptees: Can parents foster preparedness? *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 89(2), 192–200. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000385

Raleigh, E. (2016). The color line exception: The transracial adoption of foreign-born and biracial black children. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, *4*(1), 86–107. https://doi.org/10.5406/womgenfamcol.4.1.0086

Reinoso, M., Juffer, F., & Tieman, W. (2013). Children's and parents' thoughts and feelings about adoption, birth culture identity and discrimination in families with internationally adopted children. *Child & Family Social Work*, *18*(3), 264–274. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012.00841.x

Reynolds (Taewon Choi), J. D., Elimelech, N. T., Miller, S. P., Ingraham, M. E., Anton, B. M., & Bhattacharjee, C. (2021). In their own voices: Identity and racial socialization experiences of young adult Chinese adoptees. *Review of General Psychology*, *25*(1), 85–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268020963597

Samuels, G. M., & LaRossa, R. (2009). "Being raised by White people": Navigating racial differences among adopted multiracial adults. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *71*(1), 80–94. https://dor.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00581.x

Sass, D. A., & Henderson, D. B. (2000). Adoption issues: Preparation of psychologists and an evaluation of the need for continuing education. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *9*, 349–359.

Schwartz, S. J., Kim, S. Y., Whitbourne, S. K., Zamboanga, B. L., Weisskirch, R. S., Forthun, L. F., Vazsonyi, A. T., Beyers, W., & Luyckx, K. (2013). Converging identities: Dimensions of acculturation and personal identity status among immigrant college students. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *19*(2), 155–165. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030753

Schwartz, S. J., Meca, A., Ward, C., Szabó, Á., Benet-Martínez, V., Lorenzo-Blanco, E. I., Sznitman, G. A., Cobb, C. L., Szapocznik, J., Unger, J. B., Cano, M. Á., Stuart, J., & Zamboanga, B. L. (2019). Biculturalism dynamics: A daily diary study of bicultural identity and psychosocial functioning. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *62*, 26–37. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2018.12.007

Shamloo, S. E., Cocco, V. M., Faccini, M., Benet-Martínez, V., & Trifiletti, E. (2023). Managing the unexpected: Bicultural identity integration during the COVID-19 emergency. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *93*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101781

Thomas, K. A., & Tessler, R. C. (2007). Bicultural socialization among adoptive families: Where there is a will, there is a way. *Journal of Family Issues*, *28*(9), 1189–1219. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X07301115

Tikhonov, A. A., Espinosa, A., Huynh, Q.-L., & Anglin, D. M. (2019). Bicultural identity harmony and American identity are associated with positive mental health in U.S. racial and ethnic minority immigrants. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *25*(4), 494–504. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000268

Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Yazedjian, A., & Bámaca-Gómez, M. (2004). Developing the ethnic identity scale using Eriksonian and social identity perspectives. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, *4*(1), 9–38. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532706xid0401_2

Vandivere, S., Malm, K., & Radel, L. (2009). *Adoption USA: A chart book based on the 2007 national survey of adoptive parents*. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/75911/index.pdf

Von Korff, L., & Grotevant, H. D. (2011). Contact in adoption and adoptive identity formation: The mediating role of family conversation. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *25*(3), 393–401. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023388

Vonk, M. E., & Angaran, R. (2003). Training for transracial adoptive parents by public and private adoption agencies. *Adoption Quarterly*, *6*(3), 53–62. https://doi.org/10.1300/J145v06n03_04

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.

Zhang, X., Pinderhughes, E. E., Matthews, J. A. K., & Liu, J. (2023). Connecting to birth culture: A phenomenological approach to understanding how transracial adoptive parents address cultural depth. *Journal of Family Social Work*, *1*–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2023.2204133

Zuckerman, J. & Buchsbaum, B. (2007). "I don't know you": Transference and countertransference paradigms with 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. 491–504). Sage.

APPENDIX A: Participant Recruitment Email

You are invited to participate in an interview! The aim of this study is to explore the mental health experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global Majority (BIPOC) who were raised by White adoptive parents. The study hopes to examine the lived experiences around navigating their cultural and ethnic identities and how they played a role in their mental health. The criteria to participate include the following:

- Must be at least 18 years old.

- Must be a transracial adoptee who identifies as Black, Indigenous or Person of Color.

- Must have been raised in a White adoptive family.

- Must have participated in therapy or counseling for at least 2 sessions.

If you decide to participate, the initial questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes. The process will include the following:

- Follow this link to review the informed consent form:

  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FSZK7NM

- Complete the demographic form

- Schedule your interview

- Participate in a Zoom interview (and consent to audio recording)

APPENDIX B: Professional Network Recruitment Email

Good day lovely colleagues,

My name is Phebe and I am a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision at Antioch University - Seattle, in addition to being the founder and CEO of 253 Therapy and Consult.

I am writing to request your assistance as I enter the data collection phase of my dissertation. My study is titled Mental Health Experiences of Transracial Adoptees of the Global Majority (BIPOC). This study is going to be exploring the lived experiences of transracial adoptees as they navigate their different identities and the role mental health support plays in it.

You or someone you may know might be a fit for this study and I hope to be able to connect with you soon. This person you may know could even be a client. The criteria for this study is as follows:

- Must be at least 18 years old.

- Must be a transracial adoptee who identifies as Black, Indigenous or Person of Color.

- Must have been raised in a White adoptive family.

- Must have participated in therapy or counseling for at least 2 sessions.

Attached is a flyer for your consideration and distribution. The link to the survey and scheduling the 45-60 minute interview can be found HERE.

With much gratitude,

Phebe Brako-Owusu, LMFT, LMHC, NCC

APPENDIX C: Study Flyer
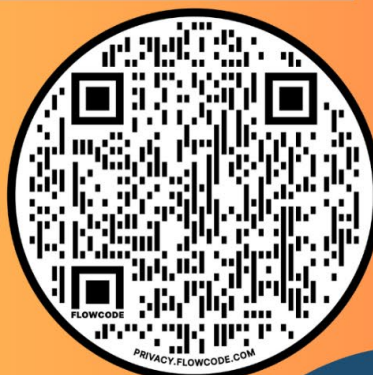
APPENDIX D: Participant Follow-Up Email for Qualified Participants

Hello

It is truly an honor to have you participate in my research study. Thank you for completing the survey! I am hoping to schedule an interview with you in the coming weeks. It will be about 30-45 minutes long and will be over Zoom.

Please see my availability below and hopefully one of these slots will work for you:

10/19 - 11am

10/21 - 11am

10/31 - 10am

I am excited to speak with you!

Thank you

Phebe Brako-Owusu

APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Document

RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM:

You are invited to participate in a research study by Phebe Brako, a doctoral student at Antioch University, Seattle. This form describes the study to help you determine if you are comfortable participating.

CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION:

You are invited to participate if you meet the following criteria:

- At least 18 years old.

- A transracial adoptee who identifies as Black, Indigenous or Person of Color.

- Raised in a White adoptive family.

- Participated in therapy or counseling for at least 2 sessions.

If you do not meet these criteria, thank you for your interest. You do not have to proceed further. You may simply close your browser window.

If you do meet these criteria, please continue reading the informed consent form for more information and to participate.

STUDY OVERVIEW AND PROCEDURE:

The aim of this study is to explore the mental health experiences of transracial adoptees of the Global Majority (BIPOC) who were raised by White adoptive parents. The study hopes to examine the lived experiences around navigating their cultural and ethnic identities and how they

played a role in their mental health. You will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and a live online interview on Zoom. This includes an approximate time commitment of 75 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

No study is completely risk-free. However, we do not anticipate you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable. Occasionally, people who participate in counseling-oriented research find that they would like to seek out mental health care and/or support. For more information, you may want to contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) at: 1-800-950-NAMI (6263).

You should also be aware that there is a small possibility that unauthorized parties could view responses because it is an online survey (e.g., computer hackers because your responses are being entered and stored on a web server).

In terms of benefits, there are no immediate benefits to you from your participation. However, we may learn more about the topic of focus. In addition, upon completion of the survey, you are eligible to share your email address and electronically receive a $25 Amazon gift card for your time and emotional labor.

DATA PRIVACY:

No identifying information will be asked with the exception of an email address. Otherwise, IP address collection is turned off and your name will not be requested.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study at any time and can simply close the browser window or stop your interview at any time. In addition, it is important for you to know that your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your relations with Antioch University in any way.

 CONTACT INFORMATION:

This study has been approved by the Antioch University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have ethical concerns about this study or your treatment as a participant, you may contact the chair of the IRB () or the researcher.

Researcher: Phebe Brako

Email:

Research Advisor: Dr. Stephanie Thorson-Olesen

Email:

 If you have questions about or do not understand something in this form, please contact the faculty researcher for additional information. Do not click "next" unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION:

By clicking "next" you agree to the following statements:

· I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study.

· I have not given up my legal rights as a research participant.

· I fit the criteria to participate in this study and agree to be audio recorded.

· I voluntarily agree to be in this study.

APPENDIX F: IRB Approval

ANTIOCH
UNIVERSITY

Online IRB Application Approved:Mental Health Experiences of BIPOC Transracial Adoptees September 25, 2024, 8:06 pm

Wed, Sep 25, 2024 at 1:06 PM

Dear Phebe Brako ,

As Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for 'Antioch University , I am letting you know that the committee has reviewed your Ethics Application. Based on the information presented in your Ethics Application, your study has been approved.

Your data collection is approved from 10/04/2024 to 01/03/2025. If your data collection should extend beyond this time period, you are required to submit a Request for Extension Application to the IRB. Any changes in the protocol(s) for this study must be formally requested by submitting a request for amendment from the IRB committee. Any adverse event, should one occur during this study, must be reported immediately to the IRB committee. Please review the IRB forms available for these exceptional circumstances.

Sincerely,

Brett Kia-Keating

APPENDIX G: CITI Certificate of Completion

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 10-Sep-2023
Expiration Date 10-Sep-2026
Record ID 56987451

This is to certify that:

Phebe Brako-Owusu

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

Human Participants in Research
(Curriculum Group)
AU Seattle - Human Participants in Research
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Antioch University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wbe918b33-9f50-4052-862b-46a00906d9c5-56987451