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Korean Adoptees Who Adopt: Ethnic, Racial, and Adoption Socialization with Second- Generation Adoptees

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about Korean adoptees who are also adoptive parents and their parenting, especially related to ethnic, racial, and adoption socialization. This article describes a secondary analysis of Korean American adoptee adoptive parents ($N=7$) from a larger study of Korean adoptee parents. The research question guiding the analysis focused on intergenerationality (participants' dual positionalities as an adoptee and adoptive parent) as an influence in their racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization practices. Using thematic analysis, the findings of this exploratory study include themes related to (a) desiring a *different experience* for their adopted child than their own, (b) participating in *active adoption socialization strategies*, (c) understanding the *complexity of adoption*, and (d) considering *family legacy* as both an adoptee and adoptive parent. The unique experiences of Korean adoptee adoptive parents offer additional insight into both adoptive parent and adoptee experiences and parenting second-generation adoptees.

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Introduction

Transnational, transracial adoption from South Korea (hereby referred to as Korea) started in the early 1950s as a legacy of the Korean War (Lee, 2003; Park Nelson, 2016). An estimated 160,000 children have been sent from Korea to the U.S. and other countries for adoption (Selman, 2015). In the U.S., adoptions from Korea peaked in the 1980s and began to steadily decline over the next two decades. While Korea continues to place some children for adoption in other countries most Korean adoptees in the U.S. are now adults themselves and many have experienced parenthood, including by adoption. This article describes the ways in which adult Korean adoptees incorporate racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization

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strategies with their adopted children in the context of *intergerationality* (the influence of the racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization these parents received from their adoptive parents).

Across general parenting studies of adoptees, the process of becoming a parent has been found to prompt a reexamination of their adoption identity and consideration of how the topic of adoption will be introduced to their children, if at all (Day et al., 2015; Greco et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2021). Adoptees may form families with partners who do not share their adoption experience or racial/ethnic background. Greco et al. (2015) found that adoptee parents' reevaluation of their adoption experience both influenced, and was influenced by, their non-adopted partner's attitudes, with some additional association between specific parenting choices (such as telling their biological children about adoption and the couples' interest in adopting in the future) depending on congruence of opinion between the couples. Wu et al. (2020) found that Korean adoptee parents often agreed with their White partners on the ethnic and racial socialization practices they chose to focus on with their multiracial children, though the Korean adoptee parents generally were more active in the socialization practices and occasionally had to "prepare their partners for the experience of culturally socializing multiracial children" (p. 27).

Overall, there is very little literature on second-generation adoptees—children who are adopted by parents who are also adoptees. Survey studies of adoptive parents tend to focus on income, race, marital status, and geographic residence but do not include demographic information about whether the adoptive parent was also adopted (Bramlett & Radel, 2010; Hanlon & Quade, 2022; Lee et al., 2018). Similarly, no studies have specifically explored the phenomenon of Korean adoptees who are also adoptive parents. While Bergquist and Kim (2018) included Asian adoptee adoptive parents in their study of Asian American adoptive parents, their focus was on Asian *adoptive* parents generally rather than specifically about Asian *adoptee* parents. Six (8.8%) of the adoptee adoptive mothers in their study were Asian (including four Korean American and two Chinese American) and one of the four adoptee adoptive fathers was Asian (Korean-born). Bergquist and Kim asked participants their motivation for adopting and for adopting an Asian child. Personal experience as an adoptee was not one of the options parents could select.

Intergenerationality

This article applies an intergenerationality lens to racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization. Intergenerationality refers to the notion that individuals' parenting beliefs are influenced, but not determined solely, by their own parent's modeling (Gelso et al.,1978). van Ijzendoorn (1992) defined

intergenerationality "as the process through which purposively or unintendedly an earlier generation psychologically influences parenting attitudes and behavior of the next generation" (pp.76–77). Genetics and social/environmental contexts are included as influencing factors for intergenerationality. In other words, each generation of parents socializes their child partly in response to their own experiences of being parented. In particular, Bengtson (1975) considers the "intrafamilial transmission of values and behaviors" an important aspect of considering intergenerationality. Transmission of parenting attitudes, values, and behaviors occurs through observation, past experiences with parents, and supporting a child's behavior toward peers (Crittenden, 1984). In a longitudinal study of constructive (or supportive) parenting across generations by Chen and Kaplan (2001) the researchers found that parental role modeling was the strongest influence on constructive intergenerational parenting attitudes and practices. Longitudinal studies by Belsky et al. (2005) and Scaramella et al. (2008) both found parenting practices were influenced by the previous generation's parenting. Children who received harsh or supportive parenting went on to parent in similar harsh or supportive ways.

In terms of adoptive families, intergenerationality has been used to assess the adoptive parent-to-adoptee educational transmission (Scheeren et al., 2017) and economic mobility (Björklund et al., 2007). Zhou et al. (2021) explored Korean adoptee parents' reflections of their adoptive parents' racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization practices and influence on their current socialization strategies with their children.

Racial and ethnic socialization

Socialization practices are related to intergenerationality. Socialization practices refer to the ways in which parents maintain an emotional environment (parenting style) and the engagement in activities and communication that transfer the family's beliefs and values (Parke et al., 2008). Children of color have the added developmental task of integrating race and ethnicity to their identity; thus, parents must implement ethnic and racial socialization practices to help their children navigate experiences of racism and discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006; Lee, 2003). While there is significant overlap, racial, ethnic and cultural socialization are often regarded in the literature as distinct practices. Racial socialization is defined as "strategies parents use to promote positive self-esteem while also preparing children to navigate race-based barriers" (Bergquist & Kim, 2018, p. 314); and can includes tasks such as passing on information about the family's heritage, talking to their child about how to respond to racial or ethnic-based harassment, promoting mistrust as a means of helping their child develop a sense of intuition about how to stay safe (Hughes et al., 2006). Ethnic

socialization refers more specifically to the activities and messages that parents practice related to knowledge and a sense of affinity to others in one's ethnic or cultural heritage, while cultural socialization refers to the transmission of cultural values and beliefs in order to help the child adapt to societal norms (Hughes et al., 2006, Lee, 2003).

Racial and ethnic socialization literature tends to focus on the practices of monoracial, Black and other families of color, with children born to them. In a meta-analysis of 46 studies examining ethnic and racial socialization by Hughes et al. (2006), all but two of the studies exclusively examined biologically related families. The two remaining studies focused on adoptive families. In racial and ethnic socialization studies parents have been found to engage in a variety of different approaches that change overtime as children grow older, often shifting from more simplistic discussions with younger children and gradually engaging in more nuanced dialogues about race, discrimination, culture, and identity (Hughes et al., 2006). Adding to the complexity of racial and ethnic socialization are a variety of mediating factors including the child-rearing environment (like geographic location); parental education, socioeconomic status, immigration status; historical ethnic and racial perceptions, current political climate, and aspects of individual children such as racial appearance, gender, and the child's experiences with discrimination (Ayón, 2016; Baden et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 2006; Caughy et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2020).

To date, studies documenting racial and ethnic socialization practices in adoptive families focus on White adoptive families and their children of color (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008; DeBerry et al., 1996; Jacobson, 2008). Montgomery and Jordan (2018) systematic review of the research on racial and ethnic socialization in transracial adoptive families found discussions about race, racism, preparation for bias, and frequent participation in cultural activities were significantly associated with adoptee outcomes. Seol et al. (2016) found that lower levels of ethnic socialization were associated with lower sense of adjustment in schools for adopted Korean youth.

Some studies have found white adoptive parents engage in a "colorblind" or color-averse approach to socialization wherein race and ethnicity are minimized or even rejected in favor of humanistic values (Samuels, 2009; Zhou et al., 2021). White parents of Korean adoptees have been found to be more comfortable providing cultural socialization opportunities (often extrinsic, intermittent, isolated events) than racial socialization (Chang et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2013; Quiroz, 2015). In Killian and Khanna's study (2019) six different attitudes/approaches to racial and ethnic socialization practices were used by white adoptive parents. White adoptive parents in their study downplayed race and ethnicity for various reasons including their belief that race and ethnicity *was not* relevant, that race and ethnicity *should not*

be relevant, or because the parents prioritized other life activities over engagement in racial and socialization activities. Other parents in the study valued race and ethnicity and their socialization approaches ranged from superficial activities such as buying artifacts and eating food from their child's culture (as noted above) to more intentional and deeper strategies such as being in community with their child's racial and/or ethnic group. Killian and Khanna note that White parents of Black children were more likely to give significance to race and racism while White parents of Asian and Latino children focused more on ethnicity/culture (2019). A few studies explored agreement or discrepancies related to racial and ethnic socialization in transracial adoptive families with parents reporting higher levels of ethnic socialization engagement or discussions about race and racism than their adopted children reported (Hu et al., 2017; Langrehr et al., 2019).

One important consideration is that parents tend to emphasize socialization strategies based on their own experiences, an aspect related to intergenerationality (Ayón, 2016; Hughes et al., 2006; Juang et al., 2018). White adoptive parents' lack of personal experience with racial discrimination and their child's birth culture may contribute to variability in the quality of ethnic and racial socialization (Lee, 2003). Since transracial Korean adoptee parents are socialized by their White adoptive parents, as parents they may have insufficient, racial, and ethnic socialization narratives to draw upon from their own childhood (Lee, 2003). For transracial adoptee parents, parenthood may initiate a renegotiation of racial, cultural, and ethnic identity so that the parent gains knowledge to pass down. Day et al. (2015) found that for Korean adoptee mothers the process of becoming a parent was accompanied by an awareness of, and responsibility to, meet their child(ren)'s racial and ethnic identity development needs. Motivated to benefit their child, these participants actively pursued and engaged different strategies to nourish healthy racial and cultural identities that they themselves were not provided growing up, thus prompting instances of "…reflecting, action, and reframing related to central identity questions in a reciprocal process with their children" (Day et al., 2015, p. 368). This parallel learning is also captured by Zhou et al. (2021) as "reculturation with children," illustrated by participants' descriptions of learning Korean culture alongside their children (p. 15). This process expanded on Baden et al. (2012) concept of reculturation in which adoptees reclaim birth culture in order to mitigate the effects of the transracial adoptee paradox.

Adoption socialization

Adoption socialization is the "process by which parents introduce adoption information and experiences into the family in such a way as to promote healthy identity and psychological adjustment in their children and the

family as a whole" (Pinderhughes & Brodzinsky, 2019, p. 328). This process includes tasks such as (a) sharing adoption-related information, (b) supporting curiosity about adopted child's origin, (c) helping adopted child cope with adoption-related losses, (d) promoting positive views of adopted child's birth heritage, and (e) managing potential contact and/or relationships with adopted child's birth family. Wydra et al. (2012) explored the impact of disclosure and communication about adoption with 18 adult adoptees. The adoptee participants described adoption socialization practices their parents employed such as reading adoption-themed books together and sharing information through scrapbooks and adoption documents. Promoting positive views of an adopted child's birth culture may, in some instances, be an amalgamation of adoption socialization and racial/cultural socialization. For example, in Crolley-Simic and Vonk (2008) study, some white mothers brought their Asian adopted children to activities and groups with other Asian adoptees as a racial socialization practice. However, these parents did not actively engage in conversations about race and these activities were centered on normalizing Asian transracial adoptive families as "families like ours" (p. 310) rather than about racial socialization for their child. This unclear distinction between adoption socialization, ethnic socialization, and racial socialization may happen because adoption socialization opportunities often occur in places like culture camps where activities are centered around culture and adoption rather than race (Baden, 2015). Baden also suggests the benefit of the culture camp experience for adoptees may be related to the adoption socialization that occurs in these spaces and not from racial/ethnic socialization. The current study is a secondary analysis of a previously published study of Korean adoptee parents (Zhou et al., 2021). We specifically focused on seven participants out of the original 52 adoptee parents that adopted or were in the process of adopting. We explored the racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization practices from the perspective of Korean adoptee adoptive or adopting parents. In particular, reflections related to intergenerationality (participants' dual positionalities as an adoptee and adoptive parent) as an influence in their racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization practices were considered.

Methods

Procedure

The research question that guided the current analysis was: what was the influence of the participant's dual positionality as both an adoptee and adoptive parent on racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization with their adopted children? The sample for this analysis was a subset of a larger study of Korean adoptee parents (Zhou et al., 2021). In the original study

the first author participated in the recruitment of participants, data collection, and data analysis. The study was approved by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board. An electronic flyer describing the original study aims and inclusion criteria was created and posted on social media sites where Korean adoptees were known to visit or interact and the first author's website. In addition, leaders at several Korean adoptee social organizations in the U.S. (e.g., AK Connection, Asian Adult Adoptees of Washington) were asked to promote the call for participants in their online and in-person networks. Eligibility criteria for this study included: identifying as a Korean adoptee, having White adoptive parent(s), and parenting a child between the ages of three and 18 years old. Interviews lasted from one to one and a half hours and were conducted in-person and through online video platforms (Vsee). The interview protocol included questions asking participants to reflect upon how they were parented as well as their own parenting strategies related to discipline, communication styles, aspiration and expectations for children, activities children participate in, co-parenting strategies, and socialization practices (racial, ethnic, and adoption). Participants were also specifically asked questions related to the complex identities that Korean transracial adoptees may hold such as, "Can you recall an instance where you struggled with whether to parent in a more Asian/Korean way versus a more American way?" and, "As a Korean adoptee or adopted Korean American parent, what unique challenges do you face?" All interviews were transcribed by research assistants and edited lightly for clarity and to remove identifying information such as names (all participants were given pseudonyms). All participants received a $20 gift card.

Sample

Eight of the overall sample of Korean adoptee parents ($n = 52$) in the original study (Zhou et al., 2021 also identified as adoptive parents. Unfortunately, one participant whose interview was not recorded due to technology problems was an adoptive parent leaving a total of seven Korean adoptee adoptive parents for this analysis (see Table 1). Six of the participants identified as female and one identified as male. Participants ranged in age from 33 to 52 years. All were married; five had White spouses, one had a Korean spouse, and one had a Black spouse. All of the participants were raised by White, married, heterosexual couples. Five of the participants were raised in the Midwest.

Four of the participants had children who were adopted as well as children born to them, and two had only adopted children. In total, these parents had 7 birth children and 9 adopted children, and two were in the process of adopting.

Table 1. Parent demographics.

Participants	*N* = 7
Gender	
Female	6
Male	1
Age	
30s	3
40s	3
50s	1
Partner's Race	
Asian	1
Black	1
White	5
Education	
High School Diploma	2
Bachelor's Degree	1
Master's Degree	4
Household Income	
$50,000–75,000	1
$75,000–100,000	1
$100,000–125,000	1
$125,000–150,000	2
$150,000–200,000	1
$200,000+	1
Religious affiliation	
Protestant Christian	4
Catholic	1
Jewish	1
Unaffiliated	1

Analysis

The first author was a member of the original study and was granted re-access to the de-identified transcriptions for the seven participants stored in a secure electronic file. For the specific analysis of adoptive parent participants, data was analyzed using the six phases of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis as an approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (Braun et al., 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2023) is a systematic process of analyzing data. Thematic analysis was chosen because this analysis does not focus on a specific theoretical approach to qualitative analysis. The small sample and the use of secondary data limited the ability of the research team to conduct follow up questions that could inform other analytic approaches.

Braun and Clarke emphasize the importance of owning one's perspective when conducting data analysis (2023). The research team for this analysis of Korean adoptee adoptive parents included two individuals with a connection to transracial transnational adoption. The first author is a Korean adoptee with experience as an adoption professional as well as a child welfare researcher and is also a parent of biological children. The second author is a White sibling to a transracial transnational adoptee from Vietnam. Other members of the original research team, including a Chinese doctoral student, a Korean adoptee who is also a parent of biological

children, and a Korean American psychology scholar, provided additional feedback on the current coding and analysis as a way to increase rigor in the data coding and analysis. None of the research members were adoptive parents. The main author had previous professional experience working with adoptive parents including conducting home studies, training adoptive parents, and conducting follow-up visits following an adoption finalization. Each of these personal and professional experiences contributed to the process of analyzing data.

The first and second author conducted all of the coding activities, first reading through all of the transcripts multiple times to become grounded in the data. The team then began open coding, creating initial codes. Both coders independently coded the transcripts and met to discuss codes. Based on the first round of open coding, a coding scheme was developed, and the research team next reviewed the transcripts again to select passages from the transcripts that exemplified these codes. The research team discussed all codes and coded data. Any codes in which there was disagreement or lack of clarity were discussed by the coders and included revising definitions and providing examples from the literature to support the code until both coders agreed with the utility of any code in question. Finally, in the last round of coding, the research team looked at the codes and coded data and looked for broader themes that helped explain the experiences of the participants. Each of the two main coders for this study had identified potential subthemes related to the *family legacy* theme. After discussion, three subthemes that were considered to provide additional dimensions to the broader theme without rising to the level of being a standalone theme were included.

Results

Major themes that were identified from the data include (a) desiring a *different experience* for their adopted child than their own, (b) participating in *active adoption socialization strategies*, (c) understanding the *complexity of adoption*, and (d) considering *family legacy* as both an adoptee and adoptive parent (Table 2). Quotes used to exemplify themes have been lightly edited to remove filler words.

Theme: a different experience

For some parents, reflections on their own childhood informed their desire to parent in a way that enabled their child to have a different experience from their own in terms of understanding race, culture, and adoption. Different experiences largely focused on the reduction of potential negative experiences (such as adoption or racial/ethnic discrimination) and

supporting potential positive experiences (including ethnic pride). Parents discussed lacking role models with whom they could identify as Korean Americans: "I… didn't want to identify as Korean at all. But I also didn't have any Korean older, like, mentors or anything like that," Deb shared. "So, I feel like I'm their mom, but I also can be, like, a mentor, you know?" The limited exposure to Korean culture prompted some parents to participate in specific ethnic socialization strategies. For example, one parent, Courtney, wanted her adopted Korean child to enjoy Korean food because this aspect of ethnic socialization was missing in her own childhood and she related enjoyment of Korean food an important aspect of being Korean.

> I wanted to have them explore the food more than, um, the culture itself. Just because, uh, I find myself that I don't really like a lot of Asian food other than rice and kimchi…So, I really wanted them to have that background of exposing them to the food more than anything because I didn't want them to be close minded like I am with my food.

Another participant, Anna, ensured her adopted children attended culture camps. Access to Korean birth family meant potential increased access to Korean culture for their children. Hannah, who was reunited with her birth family, shared,

> I feel like [my son] will just have a better… it's just going to be a different experience for him. Especially because of being in a reunion with my family in Korea… I mean he definitely eats a lot more Korean food, and we'll definitely take a lot more trips back to Korea, and… I'll encourage him if he wants to take lessons, language lessons, or if he wants to go live and study in Korea. I'll do that for him, and I also want him to be involved in cultural camps. I feel like, there's part of the culture you just never will get because you're raised in America and it's a Western country, and it's just, it's just different. I mean, I can see the difference when I'm with my birth family.

Racial socialization practices were less evident although some parents did reflect on race. Deb shared she had to explain to her husband why it was so important to her that their children attended a school that had racial and ethnic diversity because of her own experience as the only Asian in her school. Eric prioritized raising his children in a diverse area

Table 2. Participants' children.

Participant	Birth	Adopted	In process	Adopted children's birth country
Anna	–	2	–	China, Taiwan
Barb	1	2	–	South Korea
Courtney	1	2	–	South Korea
Deb	1	1	1	South Korea
Eric	3	1	–	South Korea
Grace	1	–	1	South Korea
Hannah	–	1	–	South Korea

based on his own experience being raised in predominantly white neighborhoods. In terms of racial socialization Eric stated, "as the situation comes up we're able to talk about [race, ethnicity, and discrimination]."

Parents also acknowledged that their adopted children would have an inherently different experience than them. The parents in our study described how socialization practices in their adoptive parent's generation emphasized assimilation and racial color blindness. As a result, they had limited availability to racial and ethnic identity resources during their childhood, particularly if they lived in a predominantly white area. In addition, parents remarked on how current advances in technology and the increased availability of information as well as transracial and adoption-specific programs have positively impacted their children. Parents acknowledged and expressed a desire to honor their child's unique experiences including recognizing and supporting their child's individual identity. As Deb commented, "…it's their story and it will be their…turn to tell when they want to."

Theme: adoption socialization

Parents were more pronounced in the ways they discussed adoption socialization with their children. Adoption socialization practices included creating books about their child's birth and adoption stories, engaging in frequent discussion of their adoption stories, preparing children for a new adoptive sibling, having contact with their children's birth or foster families, and fostering their children's bonds with other Korean adoptees through camps or intentional social connections. Some of the socialization was reflective of their own personal experiences. Anna shared,

> But being adopted I thought [it] was important for them to know because it was important for me, and that's kind of me putting on them but…their adoption stories' important to them and knowing the process when you were born to where you are now. I thought was really important for my kids.

Deb's method of socialization involved connecting with her child over their similar experience as adoptees.

> [My daughter] knows I'm adopted 'cause…we've talked about who in the family's adopted and who is not and 'cause we use it to talk about… how families are built. So, you know, we say [brother] is adopted, I'm adopted, daddy is not, [brother] is not. So, we just - we're trying to make it like just a common thing. Some people are adopted, some are not, and that's just how families are built.

Parents sometimes made conscious efforts to socialize their child on adoption in part because they had limited adoption socialization growing up. For example, Anna said,

> And my parents never discussed, you know, birth families with us or the process of the adoption. Only my mom would say, "Oh we just fill out the paper works and then five months there where you were." And so, with my kids we talk about…the process of adoption and the process of them being in Korea and being born and being with their birth family give birth to them and then they went to a foster family and these people took care of you. And we have photos of their foster families. My husband and I met my son's foster family when went to Korea to get him. And so, we share those stories with our kids because I think it's important for them to know that.

Theme: complexity of adoption

Participants spoke at length about the complexity of adoption, including discussion about adoption narratives, the ethicality of adoption, loss experienced by adoptees and their birth families, and the similarities between themselves and their children. Parents often described having mixed feelings. For example, Grace shared the anticipated feelings of empathy, loss, and joy at becoming an adoptive parent:

> I feel like when we finally adopt it's going to be like this amazingly joyful experience and… I've seen videos of when my parents got me um, and just tears of joy, you know, and so for as an adoptive parent, I look forward to that, but I know that that same moment it's going to be just this horrible, you know, just, heart-breaking experience for someone else, for a birth parent and that … My journey as a parent is beginning and their journey as a parent is ending, and that they're going to have to deal with that for the rest of their lives.

Sometimes these mixed feelings, often influenced by experience, also shaped future decisions. Hannah, after learning more about her own adoption and meeting her birth family, was unsure of whether she would choose to adopt again in the future, "We may adopt again, I'm definitely more torn about it in some ways but in some ways I'm not." Anna expressed how both her experiences as an adoptee and an adoptive parent informed her perspective on adoption:

> I know there are a lot of Korean adoptees who think adoption is a horrible thing. And they feel that is kind of human trafficking type situation…maybe their experiences have a lot of them to feel that way. I have not felt that way because I feel that the family that I had [growing] up was an amazing family. And they continue to be amazing. And adoption got me my family for my husband and myself so…I feel adoption is really good thing…

In our sample, Anna was unique in her consistently positive sentiments toward adoption. She also acknowledged that this subsequently affected her interaction with other adoptees: "I rarely tell people that I don't know in the [Korean adoptee] community that I have adopted kids because they are really opposed to that," she shared. "And I could go on the defense

and say, 'Well, you know, adoption is so wonderful to me, and my family and I have two beautiful children who are adopted.' But then I think why. It's not gonna change the way they feel about it. And it's put on a target on my back."

Several respondents spoke to how their understanding of adoption narratives have become more nuanced over time. "I still really want to adopt but I also realize that it's a lot more complicated I think than I understood when I was younger," said Grace. She added, "That it's not just like…a child gets adopted and everyone's happy and they have a loving family, and you know, love is more, you know, family is more about love than it is about blood and stuff like that. I think, it's a lot more complicated than that." Hannah commented on her son's experience of loss as a result of his adoption and how it reflected her own:

> I met my birth family at the same time, umm, we picked up [our son] …I think after meeting [my birth family], how I'm going to say good-bye to them. Well, I haven't really said good-bye…I would just walk with [my son] on my back in the hotel, and both of us would just be crying our eyes out. (laughs) Seeing the loss that he was going through, I think it was a lot… Feeling that 'cause the language barrier is brutal, and then knowing what we were taking him away from. I think that's what, where it hit me the hardest.

Theme: family legacy

Legacy, in which adoptees examined ancestral and genetic ties along with identity as part of families in the past, present, and future, was another theme. Three subthemes emerged related to the notion of legacy: history, nurture over nature, and mirroring.

The history subtheme centered upon parents contextualizing themselves within social, familial, and historical timelines. For example, Grace stated, "I just kind of got dropped in on to…my adopted family's timeline, in the middle of it." Courtney acknowledged she and her children may have different views of their history and genealogy based on their age at adoption.:

> I mean, you're trying to make a history for your kids. And they will know their history… I guess I say that because they were five months old [when] adopted, I think that makes a huge difference. I was adopted at six and so that's a huge chunk of my life that I'm missing. Whereas [their unknown past] it's just a very small blip…I'm sure as they become older, they'll want to know, like, where, you know, "where did I get my looks from? Am I one hundred percent Korean? What is my genetic makeup?"

Additionally, the history subtheme included parents' integration and emotional repercussions of information about birth family into larger

family identity. For some parents, this was associated with learning more about their birth story or having contact with their birth parents. Others also recognized the role that their children's birth parents had in their formed family history. Barb expressed how being conscious of her children's birth family was incorporated into her children's adoption story. "…[W]e waited for them, and we hoped for them…and their birth families had a part of the story too. They didn't just appear in our family." Eric reflected, "Our oldest daughter, we also adopted her from Korea so, she's definitely an extension of us and in every way, shape, and form, 'cause we get to re-live, really relive our lives."

For some adoptees, their legacy is more aligned with their adoptive family in that participants reported valuing nurture over nature, a second subtheme. Parents discussed passing on traditions, moral values, and parenting practices that they gleaned from their adoptive parents. As Deb explained,

> I think a lot about, I guess that nature versus nurture thing and I mean the huge thing is as I get older is I just I see my parents in everything I do, you know? The way they raised us with adoption, the way we talk about it - adoption. All of that I feel can be attributed to my – not my biological parents, my actual parents.

In the third subtheme of mirroring, participants discussed similarities or differences in appearance, behavior, or circumstance related to their family members. Barb shared how she and her adopted child had a connection based on sharing the lack of birth parents: "I don't know my birth parents and she will never meet her birth parents - like, we have that connection," she said.

Parents spoke about their genetic futures. Grace shared,

> One of the biggest things is I just wanted to see…someone that looked like me…so I could have that kind of sense of, um, of coming from somewhere, you know. And I wanted…the same thing with the personality traits, just seeing that I am grounded in some sort of history of the world and that's–and that that's going to keep, you know, carrying on, you know, in the future.

As most of the participants (5) had White partners, these parents were also aware of how their multiracial families will have a different experience with mirroring than they encountered growing up due to having two White parents who do not phenotypically resemble them. However, Anna explained how she saw aspects of herself and her husband, who is white, in her children despite not being biologically related. She shared a photograph of her family with the interviewer and said at one point, "But they couldn't be any more our kids than they are already… I mean my son is very much like my husband and daughter is very much like me, if you met them you would see (laughs). I mean, yeah, they're very similar to us."

Discussion and implications

This study explored the ways Korean American adoptee-adoptive parents' racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization practices are informed by their dual positionality as both an adoptee and an adoptive parent from an intergenerationality perspective. While the number of participants in this exploratory, secondary analysis was small, these parents begin to provide perspectives not yet explored in studies of Korean adoptees or of adoptive parenting (Table 3).

Racial socialization practices were not articulated as much as ethnic and adoption socialization practices by our participants. Parents expressed a range of personal opinions surrounding adoption in general and often described possessing mixed feelings about adoption-related aspects. Participants often remarked on understanding the complexity of adoption through the process of gaining more experience as parents and processing their own adoption. The recognition of the complexity surrounding adoption affected their motivation to adopt again in the future, and often included reports of a more nuanced understanding of their child's adoption story.

Table 3. Summary of themes.

Theme and definition	Quote
A different experience *Parent's desire to provide the racial, cultural, and adoption support for their children that was missing in their own childhood; understanding their child will have their own unique experience*	"I just said "you know, I feel it's very important because I was - me and my brothers were the only Asian kids in our school." [Deb]
Adoption socialization strategies *How parents talk about or actively pass on adoption information to children and/or active parenting strategies affirming child's adoption identity*	"As soon as they could talk. I mean the kids each have their picture with their foster family in their rooms. So they always know that they have foster family. I said to them when they're old enough if they're interested in…they want to do a family search, that their dad and I would be a hundred of percent willing to have them do that." [Anna]
Complexity of adoption *Parent's thoughts about the nuances of adoption including grief and loss associated with adoption, and ethical challenges related to adoption*	"That it's not just like…a child gets adopted and everyone's happy and they have a loving family and…I think, um, it's a lot more complicated than that." [Grace]
Family legacy *How parent thinks about adoption related to past, present and future family relationships*	I think the only challenges that you face is really, um, the unknown, um, overcoming not knowing really your own history. I mean you're trying to make a history for your kids." [Courtney]
History: *Contextualizing adoptee in context of family histories*	"And I didn't have that history you know that all my friends have" [Grace]
Nurture over nature: *Valuing adoptive family environment over genetics*	"I feel that I have so many personality traits from my parents. Um, the only difference for me is my biological make up, my genetic makeup. That's the only difference cause I'm so much like my mother, and so much like my father…I don't think about my birth family all that much." [Deb]
Mirroring: *Seeing oneself reflected in parents or children*	"My eighteen-year-old, I don't think she has a problem with being adopted. She just, you know, she has a good sense of humor about it, probably because, um, I'm that way." [Eric]

Parents in this study participated in many of the adoption socialization practices laid out by Pinderhughes and Brodzinsky (2019) including: supporting their child's curiosity about their family and cultural heritage, sharing information about their birth, Korean foster families, and the adoption process; promoting and facilitating opportunities for their child's participation in adoption and/or cultural activities, and being cognizant of the adoption-related losses their children may express. None of these parents had assisted their child's contact or relationship with birth parents at the time of the interviews, but they discussed openness to future search opportunities as well as connecting to their child's former foster parents. While the transmission of parenting practices is never a carbon copy from one generation to the next (van Ijzendoorn, 1992), most of the parents in our study ($n = 6$) reported the desire to provide their children with a different experience from their own to compensate for the lack of ethnic, racial, and adoption socialization opportunities available to them during their childhoods. By and large most of the parents adapted the adoption socialization techniques they were exposed to as children into their own adoption socialization practices, even if these practices were meager or limited.

Despite sharing racial, ethnic (for six of the seven parents), and adoptee identities with their children in ways that participants did not with their own white adoptive parents, these parents also acknowledged their children were unique individuals. Overall, parents expressed a desire to implement parenting practices aimed toward more active engagement in adoption and ethnic exploration than they experienced growing up. Day et al. (2015) noted a similar process in which expectant Korean adoptee mothers' reflection about the past and anticipation of their children's needs ("reflecting with intention" phase) led to conscious efforts to pursue identity development opportunities for their children ("reframing and taking action" phase).

Consistent with prior literature regarding second generation Asian American parents and other Korean adoptees, parents in our study did not view themselves as "authentic" keepers of cultural knowledge (Day et al., 2015; Juang et al., 2018). Korean adoptee adoptive parents may embark on a process of reculturation (Baden et al., 2012) alongside their adopted children, exploring their birth culture through activities such as eating at Korean restaurants, attending Korean cultural events, and traveling to Korea as a family. Enjoying Korean food was mentioned by Courtney and Hannah as one important aspect of ethnic culture. Prioritizing these surface aspects of culture are similar to what many White transracial adoptive parents employ (Quiroz, 2015) and may be symbolic of more easily accessed markers of culture. It is possible these Korean adoptee parents were either passing on or differing from what their adoptive parents offered.

Juang et al. (2018) examined the role that first-generation grandparents play in passing along ethnic heritage directly to grandchildren and suggest their socialization contributed to the second-generation parents' feelings of inadequacy. In our study this phenomenon was demonstrated by Hannah, an adoptee parent in reunion with her birth family in Korea; she felt her Korean birth parents provided her son access to Korean culture in ways that she herself could not. Transnational adoptees may be able to draw from both adoptive and birth family intergenerational transmission of parenting but in different ways (Gladstone & Westhues, 1998); what might be missing in the adoptive family could be provided in the birth family and vice versa.

Some of the parents discussed identifying physical similarity between non-biologically related family members through "resemblance talk" (Becker et al., 2005, p. 1301), a cultural mechanism of legitimizing familial relationships, and the implications this had for adoptees' identity development (Lifton, 2009; March, 2000; Samuels, 2009;). This might be particularly salient for adoptee parents who lack that physical similarity in their own adoptive families. For example, Anna noted the similar mannerism between her husband and their adopted children as captured in a photograph she showed to the interviewer. In that moment, the value Anna placed in the adoptive family environment, despite the clear physical difference between her white husband and Korean American children, illustrate this participant's desire to engage in sharing intergenerational adoption narratives (i.e., passing down the narratives her adoptive parents may have used) and/or suggests the desire to minimize the differences that exist in adoption (Kirk, 1964). Parents in this study also remarked on seeing aspects of their own adoption stories reflected in their children's experience, an opportunity to "re-live our lives" as Eric said, suggesting that perhaps the desire for resemblance may extend to narrative similarities about adoption.

Becoming parents can catalyze an adoptee's emotional processing of their own adoption and identity development as they consider how they want to socialize their children and provide a supportive environment (Day et al.,2015; Zhou et al., 2021). Most of the current literature about adoptees as parents focuses on their biological children and seems to indicate that the bulk of parental processing involves efforts to provide ethnic and racial socialization for their children, while adoption socialization often functions more as a means of providing family history (Day et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). Our study's findings suggest that for adoptee parents, adoption socialization may present a unique opportunity to reflect and reconcile their own adoption. Zhou et al. (2021) propose that adoptee parents negotiate their culture partly through engaging in parallel learning with their children regarding ethnic socialization. Our findings suggest that adoptee parents may engage in a

similar parallel process related to adoption with their adopted children based on their similar status as adoptees. Elements of racial and cultural socialization may be less prioritized by Korean adoptee parents who adopt Asian children because of the opportunity to engage in parallel learning or because the racial mirroring is seen as enough of a benefit.

As a secondary analysis with a small sample, this study includes several limitations. This analysis is exploratory, and the purpose was to explore specifically the intergenerational influence of adoptees' racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization. As a secondary analysis, one major limitation is the inability to probe participants about being adoptive parents since the original study did not ask about adoptive parenthood. Thus, we were unable to ask about the adoptees' motivations to adopt. In addition, participants in the original study were not asked about their motivation for why they chose to adopt Asian children *via* intercountry adoption. Of the six participants that had already adopted, five adopted from Korea and one adopted from other Asian countries (China and Taiwan). Two were in the process of adopting; one parent was in the process of adopting a second child from Korea and the other did not specify their adoption plan (domestical foster care, private infant adoption, or transnational). For the participant who was in the process of adopting, their ability to compare and contrast parenting an adopted child with a birth child was limited. These would be interesting dimensions to analyze further.

Since the original study did not specifically ask about the participant's adopted children, there were also no follow-up questions specifically asking about adoption socialization. This analysis did not include interviews with the participant's children or co-parents due to the limitations of the data from the original study so the adopted child's perspective and the non-adopted parent's perspectives regarding racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization practices would be another area for future research.

With the exception of Eric, whose wife was Korean, the other parents in this study were technically part of transracial adoptive families given their White or Black partners. Given their multiracial family makeup, we do not know why all the parents in our study with adopted children in the home had chosen to adopt children internationally from Korea or other Asian countries. Presumably each of these Korean adoptee participants could have chosen to adopt from the U.S. foster care system in which Asian children make up a small portion of children available through foster care adoption and private domestic adoption. Bergquist and Kim (2018) study of Asian American adoptive parents who adopt Asian children found the most frequently reported reasons as to why Asian parents chose to adopt from Asian countries was racial and/or ethnic similarities. Ishizawa et al. (2006) suggests other reasons why Asian parents are more likely to adopt children of the same race may include the widespread availability

of Asian intercountry adoption programs, because of social and systemic racial obstacles, or in some cases due to preferences held by agencies and sending countries to match children and families of the same race. The adoptee parents' desire to see physical and narrative similarities in their children in this study may provide some insight; more research exploring this phenomenon is recommended.

This study is the first to explore the racial, ethnic, and adoption socialization of Korean adoptees who have adopted. Adoptee adoptive parents may become more aware of, or process, adoption-related grief, loss, trauma, or identity development in a parallel process as their adopted children. As Hannah and Grace both articulated, the process of adopting has the potential of awakening Korean adoptee parents to core issues in adoption (Roszia & Maxon, 2019). Korean adoptee parents might confront these core issues in their own adoption experiences through parenting their adopted child. It would also be relevant to consider the impact of intergenerational trauma on Korean adoptees' parenting (Cai & Lee, 2022; Cowan, 2020).

Adoptee adoptive parents (and perhaps others including adoption agency staff or clinicians) may assume one's personal experience with adoption will render them better equipped to implement racial, cultural and adoption socialization practices than those without personal experience as an adoptee. However, Korean adoptees have described lacking racial and cultural identity support in their own childhood (Zhou et al., 2021) and Korean adoptees may continue to explore their identity in adulthood (Park Nelson, 2016). Korean adoptee adoptive parents may reflect the intergenerational transmission of minimizing racial, cultural, and adoption identity needs of their white transracial adoptive parents. As a result, these families cannot be assumed to have a priori information or skills related to racial, cultural, and adoption socialization strategies. Adoption professionals and clinicians should not assume these second generation adoptive families do not need the same supports as other adoptive families. In some ways these adoptive parents may need additional support as the process of becoming adoptive parents may prompt them to reflect on their own adoption. Korean adoptee adoptive parents may feel they occupy a liminal space, knowing other Korean adoptees do not agree with adoption and not quite fitting in with other (White) adoptive parents of Asian children.

Currently, few studies of adoptive parents ask participants about their own adoption histories. Increased demographic data on adoptees who adopt would help answer whether people with lived experience as adoptees would be more or less likely to adopt than parents without that experience and whether adoptee adoptive parents have different reasons for adopting among other questions. More research about Korean adoptee adoptive parents would increase understanding on the motivations for why

transracial and/or transnational adoptive parents choose (or do not choose) to adopt children whose experiences mirror their own. Given the availability of children for adoption from Korea continues to decrease each year, Korean adoptees wishing to adopt from Korea will likely experience greater delays and fewer options compared to adopting domestically in the U.S. from foster care or from other intercountry adoption programs.

Although the subsample of participants included in this study is small, this analysis is an important first step in exploring aspects of second-generation adoption and the intergenerational parenting strategies of Korean adoptees who adopt. Our findings reveal the influence of adoptees' dual status as both adoptees and adoptive parents on participants' socialization philosophies and practices. Our current study only begins to examine the rich insights into adoption, ethnicity, race, and intergenerational parenting strategies of Korean adoptee adoptive parents. The uniqueness of this group of parents offers a more comprehensive understanding of both adoptive parent and adoptee experiences which to date has largely been segmented as two highly distinctive groups in current practice, policy, and research.

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