

**UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND ADJUSTMENT OF
YOUNG ADULT TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES**

by

Theodoros Liakopoulos

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the identity development and adjustment among young adult Transracial adoptees. To achieve this purpose, I conducted two separate interviews with four Transracially adopted adults (ages 19 to 28) and spoke about their perceptions and experiences regarding their respective identities, and their adjustments in interpersonal contexts such as education.

Although the participants have positive affect about their adoption placements, the participants continue to face challenges regarding their identities. However, as adults, the participants no longer dwell on such hurdles; they consider their identities to be continuously evolving, and their maturity has enabled their adjustment to be within their control. They suggest that a key aspect to this adjustment was their early knowledge of their adoption status. The participants also feel that educators should be aware of sensitivities with respect to Transracial adoption but not intervene specifically with Transracial adoptees except in the case of bullying. Future research should expand the current study by taking a more expansive view of the topic in respect to range of participants and data collection methods.

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PROLOGUE

During the period of one of my field experiences, I was placed in an inner-city school, in a Grade 1-2 split. Throughout the course of my first day, I was informed of the various and sometimes complex backgrounds of my students. Both my cooperating teachers and school administrators felt being aware of my students' personal histories would be necessary to prepare me for any situation, should it arise. It was during this period, through my field experience, that I made a personal connection to the relevance of a student's adjustment within a classroom, and the role a teacher plays.

It was a Thursday afternoon, and like the students, I was eagerly awaiting the end of the day, for it was an upcoming long week-end. For the final lesson of the day, I had my students participate in a very simple task. They were to compose one sentence describing one event they were planning on doing over the week-end. I was circulating the classroom and once the students were done, they were asked to review their sentences for grammatical errors. Once the sentence was looked over and given an okay by either myself or my cooperating teacher, the students were then asked to draw a picture depicting the events described in their sentences.

When one of my students, whom I will name Dina, raised her hand to inform me that she had finished her drawing, I went to see the final product. The drawing was of her, her siblings, and her parents at the local fair. When looking at her drawing, I couldn't help but notice that she had coloured herself and her siblings in, yet left her parents uncoloured. I was unsure as to why, but I simply ignored it.

When the end of the day arrived, I sat down with my cooperating teacher, and we conversed about the lessons of the week. We looked over the students' work, selecting

the lessons we wanted to include in their progress reports. When my cooperating teacher picked up the drawing that Dina had done, she raised her eyebrows and nodded her head. When I inquired about the drawing, I was informed that Dina and her siblings, who were First Nations, were adopted by a White family, and that is why she left her parents uncoloured. What shocked me was not the fact that Dina was adopted but rather the fact that she was Transracially adopted, and that I was oblivious to the situation. Additionally, I was surprised that Dina had an awareness of racial differences at her age.

I have many friends from a multitude of racial and ethnic backgrounds. I also have friends who are Transracially adopted. However, I can honestly say that I was unfamiliar with people of First Nations. I consider myself to be blind to racial lines, mainly due to the fact that I was raised in what I perceived to be a multicultural and diverse neighbourhood. Nevertheless, I could not help but question my degree of unfamiliarity with First Nations. Was I so blind to colour that I could not identify that Dina was not Caucasian? Should it even matter? As a teacher, how detrimental is it to a student's identity formation to ignore his or her racial or cultural heritage? Regardless of the questions that have surfaced, I cannot help but feel that some teachers, like myself, may be less prepared to deal with the topics of race and identity, and more importantly, how they affect our Transracially adopted students.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Teachers may believe that treating all students the same way avoids discrimination against any group, but that practice in itself is discriminatory” (Morgan, 2010, p. 117).

In preparation for this thesis, I began to think about my educational experiences, both as a student and as a professional. The times when I was dwelling on forging an identity for myself, I was not performing as well academically. I would invest most of my time and energy into understanding myself. Reflecting on the progressions and transgressions of my own youth, I understand the importance that individuals place on solidifying an identity for themselves. This quest to fortify an identity is emblematic of all generations. Nevertheless, what remains important is that the travelled road to discover one’s identity differs from person to person with some finding this process more challenging than others. I make this statement because I have experienced such challenges. It is perhaps for this reason that I find myself gravitating to the topic of identity.

I was raised in a traditional household and raised to believe that an individual’s identity is composed of one’s religious upbringing, cultural influences, and the values of his or her family life. However, when I entered into my adolescence, I quickly found my world being turned upside-down; I was a sheltered adolescent with no sense of self and it did not take long before I noticed that I was going through a period of sadness and ambivalence. The truth is that the origin of my self-diagnosed depression was rooted nowhere, at least nowhere that I can pinpoint. For me, it was never an issue of transfer of

blame but rather the product of me becoming overwhelmed with questions pertaining to me and my identity.

During these times, I became very close to a small group of friends who were all going through a similar emotional rollercoaster and there was one person who was also dealing with issues of identity. My friend had been Transracially adopted as an infant and she too was feeling ambivalent about her identity. Together, we bonded over our struggles to fortify our identities and have shared some of the most insightful conversations on the topic. Although we differ in gender, race, family values, spirituality, personalities, and experiences, we raise comparative questions on the topic of identity. We have faced, and continue to face, similar ordeals dealing with identity.

When I decided on the topic of identity development and adjustment of Transracial adoptees, I assumed that I had a strong understanding of the topic. This belief was supported by the fact that several of my friends are Transracially adopted. My friends all share one thing in common: they all dwell on the concept of identity and have all faced challenges in adjusting to their adoptions. Ever since they could recall, they knew that they were visibly different from their parents, which always generated a sentiment of ambivalence about who they were and how they fit into their families.

I hope that the readers of this thesis understand the challenges that some Transracially adopted young adults face with regards to their adoption. As individuals, we invest much of our time and lives in solidifying an identity for ourselves. We are raised with the virtues of our parents and other family members. When we enter into the school system, we are introduced to a whole array of new people; as an outcome, we are

not only exposed to their ways of being, but we may absorb much of what we learn from our peers to create our own identities.

Purpose of the Study

In his book “The Challenge of Youth,” Erik Erikson (1963) lays a foundation for identity formation in the field of psychology. He elaborates that the topic of identity development is never straightforward, and that each individual’s quest to fortify an identity becomes complicated by the many conflicts that one endures during one’s adolescence. There comes a period where one poses to oneself the question made famous by Erikson himself, “Who am I?” As an adoptee, Erikson equally found himself bewildered by this question. Perhaps nowhere else can this question be more momentous than in the identity development of Transracial adoptees.

The acquisition of an identity for individuals who are Transracially adopted can be far more intricate, considering their circumstances. Being racially different from members of their rearing environments, Transracial adoptees struggle to understand their position in their world; they must acquire a knowledge of themselves, of others, and how they are perceived by others (Baden & Steward, 2007). These struggles are further intensified by how their quest to fortify an identity interacts with issues of interpersonal relationships and self-image (Baden & O’Leary Wiley, 2007). How do Transracially adopted children feel about their visible differences contrasting with their parents and other family members? How do they feel outsiders view them and their situations? Are their connections with their parents the same as other parents with their biological children? Often, Transracial adoptees become mystified by such questions. Therefore, a leading stressor for Transracial adoptees can be identity development with the confusion

of identity development resulting from social interactions and relationships rather than their actual adoption per se (Zamostny, O'Brien, Baden, & O'Leary Wiley, 2003). Much of the criticism regarding Transracial adoption targets the concepts of identity development and psychological adjustment (Baden, 2007b), and much of the research questions the notion of a *single identity* for Transracial adoptees (Baden & Steward, 2007).

Transracial adoption is not a new issue, and a multitude of research exists on the subject; however, little research links the topic to education (Lee, 2003). An effect of the rate of Transracial adoption placements include a growing number of Transracially adopted children being enrolled in school systems with generations of teachers, school administrators, and faculty members who may be unknowledgeable on the topic of Transracial adoption and the issues that may arise for these students (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Lash Esau, 2007). Transracial adoptees have concerns that need to be addressed. Furthermore, their concerns need to be made public, awareness needs to increase, and members of the education community need to be informed and advised of the issues of Transracial adoptees. These adoptees represent a marginalized population that is often forgotten in the contexts of our communities and, equally importantly, our institutions of learning.

The purpose of this study is thus to explore how four participants in young adulthood have dealt with the topic of their Transracial adoptions. I asked them to converse about their encounters with such topics as identity development, their adjustments, and their school experiences. The following research questions guided this study: (a) How do Transracially adopted adults perceive the topic of identity development

as they mature? (b) What were their personal experiences in the context of their education? (c) What issues have they overcome to adjust in their personal and social contexts (examples of contexts include their families, education, community, and society) as they matured into adulthood? and (d) What are their concerns for young Transracially adopted children entering schools today? Through their accounts, I tried to better understand the travelled road they have taken, to form an identity for themselves.

Definitions of Key Terms

In every adoption, there exist three sets of members: the adoptee, the birth family, and the adoptive family. Collectively, they represent the *adoption triad* (Zamostny et al., 2003). *Closed adoptions* are adoptions where there exists no sharing of information among members of the adoption triad. *Open adoptions* refers to the sharing of information among members of the adoption triad, and, with some adoptions, there can exist contact between families (Zamostny et al., 2003). There are four types of contact that exist: (1) no contact; (2) stopped contact; (3) contact without meetings; (4) contact with face-to-face meetings. Contact refers to any form of communication between the adoption triad following placement. It can occur between the two families, or it may be mediated by a third party member such as an adoption agency (Grotevant, Miller Wrobel et al., 2007).

Transracial adoption is defined as the process by which an infant or child is permanently placed in the home of a family of a different race from that of the children's birth family (Simon & Altstein, 1996). Such placement can transpire through domestic or international adoptions (Thomas & Tessler, 2007). *Domestic adoption* refers to

placements made within the country in which both adoptee and adoptive families reside. Domestic adoptions can be either public or private. *Public adoptions*, pertain to placements of children who are in the child welfare system and are unable to return to their birth family for various legal reasons. *Private adoptions* are often placements that are arranged by licensed, non-profit adoption agencies (Zamostny et al., 2003). International adoption refers to the union of parents with children from a different country (Levy-Shiff, Zoran, & Shulman, 1997). Often, these children are readily available due to the circumstances of relinquishment or being orphaned (Baden, 2007b).

Rationale

Until lately, there was very little information available regarding the statistics of Transracial adoption placements as these adoptions were unregulated (Quiroz, 2008). Only recently have governments begun looking at adoption statistics with much of the information being provided by various non-profit government organizations (Zamostny et al., 2003). Annually, more than 40,000 children globally are placed in homes through international adoption, and a great number of those are Transracial placements (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). The United States has the highest Transracial adoption rates worldwide; in the last 20 years, rates have nearly tripled in that country (Quiroz, 2008). An American study showed that 6 out of 10 individuals have personal experience with adoption (Demick, 2002).

In Canada, there are only hundreds of domestic adoption placements annually. Long waiting periods have influenced many Canadian families to adopt internationally. There are roughly 2000 international adoptions that take place per year and a great deal

of them are Transracial placements (<http://www.canadaadopts.com/canada/faqs.shtml>). However, these numbers pale in comparison to the United States. In the year 2000, nearly 20,000 children were adopted in the US from other countries. Statistically, there remain close to 125,000 children in the country's foster system who are in need of placement, most of whom are African-American or biracial (Demick, 2002; Quiroz, 2008). Although foster-care adoptions are on the rise, thanks in large part to several legislative acts that have been passed within the last 20 years, the number of children entering the US foster care system continues to rise (Zamostny et al., 2003).

In addition, the topic of Transracial adoption has received considerable coverage within the last decade, due to accessibility of information from various resources. In today's age of mass media, it is almost impossible to be unaware of the emergence and popularity of Transracial adoption. Many automatically associate this topic with famous celebrities, such as Madonna or Angelina Jolie, who have obtained recognition and publicity for adopting Transracially. It is possible that public awareness and the glamorization of this topic have raised concerns for the welfare of these children and their overall adjustment in society.

Given the numbers of Transracially adopted children in North America and the media coverage surrounding Transracial adoption, this area is one deserving of further research. Due to the topic being understudied, especially within Canada, and my personal experiences with identity development, both my own and that of my Transracially adopted friends, this research seemed a valuable path to pursue.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduced my topic and explained the reasons as to why I believe the topic of identity development and adjustment of Transracial adoptees is important. The second chapter discusses literature surrounding Transracial adoption, beginning with an overview of many existing concepts and models of identity development. It then moves on to explore the existing research on adoptees, notably research over the debate of nature versus nurture, and concludes with extant studies on Transracial adoption, including the history of Transracial adoption and its implications on both domestic and international adoptees. In the third chapter, the process of my study is discussed in depth; I explain my choice of data collection and how data were analyzed, how I recruited my participants, and the measures used in assuring the validity and trustworthiness of the data. The four participants are introduced in chapter four using a small character profile and a précis of their experiences concerning the topics of their identities, education, and adjustment. In the final chapter, I begin by introducing common themes that emerged from the four participants in relation to their backgrounds, and their experiences with their identity development, their education, and their adjustment. I then investigate how each one of my participants fits the Racial-Cultural Identity Model and list the recommendations for future practice that were suggested both by the participants and within the literature. This chapter concludes with limitations of my study and recommendations for future research, as well as my final thoughts about this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“A sense of identity is never gained nor maintained once and for all... It is constantly lost and regained” (Erikson, as cited in Konstam, 2007, p. 118).

In understanding the experiences of Transracial adoptees, three main aspects are instrumental and must be considered. First, identity development is a crucial aspect of all persons' development and can be particularly critical for Transracial adoptees. Although there exist several segments in one's identity, special attention is often placed on two significant periods in one's lifespan, notably adolescence and early adulthood. Second, research relating to the topic of adoption should be reviewed, most particularly the debates of nature versus nurture. Lastly, the topic of Transracial adoption, its history, and the many existing challenges that such individuals face as a product of their adoption must be investigated in depth.

Identity Development

Identity development is a central component in our lives. The subject of identity and its formation was first popularized within the discipline of psychology and the works of Erik Erikson, who asked the question “Who am I?” (Grotevant, Dunbar et al., 2007). Erikson is viewed as being instrumental for identity development studies centered on continued psychological development throughout one's lifespan, differentiating milestones throughout (Fishman & Harrington, 2007). In every stage of our existence, we develop attributes, traits, and characteristics that help us and those around us define our

individuality. Although he was a colleague of Sigmund Freud and was heavily influenced by Freud's theory of *psychosexual development*, Erikson revolved his work in what he coined *Ego Identity*. Ego identity is expressed as being the subliminal task of an individual, in acquiring "a positive identity as he or she moves from one stage to the next" (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 31). The concept of identity as well as the path to fortify one's identity differs from person to person. Although Erikson outlined his work in his *Eight Stages of Man*, two stages are repeatedly mentioned as being the most influential and as where many ambiguities and challenges arise: adolescence and early adulthood.

Erik Erikson

In his book, *The Challenge of Youth*, Erikson elaborates on the trials and tribulations of adolescence and how individuals struggle to establish identities for themselves. He begins by emphasizing that there exists a clash between the transitions from childhood to adulthood (Erikson, 1963). The central task for individuals at this stage is the formation of a coherent self. Their self-definitions are formed by selecting values, beliefs, and goals in life (Rice & Dolgin, 2002). Yet, the fusion of the ideologies between childhood and adulthood is what often leads adolescents to experience ambivalence (Erikson, 1963). The process of identity formation entails that the individuals in adolescence must make choices by exploring alternatives and committing to their newly adopted roles (Rice & Dolgin, 2002). If the individuals realize that they do not like their newly adopted roles, then they can refine or redefine their identities. Therefore, these ideas coincide with the notion that identities are never fixed; identity is subject to change and is continuously evolving for any individual.

According to Erikson (1950), the stage of '*Identity versus Role Confusion*' emerges in puberty and adolescence. Most research on development centers on this complex stage. It is exemplified with periods of questioning, often assumed as being a consequence of physical genital maturity. Additionally, Erikson emphasizes this stage by asserting:

The growing and developing youths, faced with this physiological revolution within them, are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the occupational prototypes of the day. (Erikson, 1950, pp. 227- 228)

This stage is closely connected with the proceeding stage, which emerges in young adulthood, '*Intimacy versus Isolation.*' Within this period, one typically tends to explore one's sense of self, which "provides the basis for sexual and emotional intimacy with another adult" via relationships and friendships (Cobb, 1995, p. 81). For many scholars noted in this review of literature, Erikson's work has been influential in the field of identity formation. His eight stages of human development imply that, for each stage, there exists a dual possibility, and that the topic of identity development is never straightforward. The challenges of identity formation are further complicated by the many conflicts that individuals endure during their adolescence. Overall, Erikson was "concerned with how social environments interact with psychological stages along the timeline of physical development" (Hoover, Marcia, & Parris, 1997, p. 16). Similar to that theory, James Marcia (1997) has written on the topic of identity development and has created his own comprehensive understanding of identity development; he constructed a measure of *ego identity*, which tests many of the implications about which Erikson wrote.

James Marcia

According to Marcia, the process of identity development for each succeeding generation is more complex in comparison to previous generations, and a central reason for its complexity is the fact that society is always changing. In addition, one must be willing to take risks and live with the uncertainty of outcomes. Adolescents can take one of two paths in life: (a) exploration, which is the process by which adolescents explore possibilities based on their personal interests, or (b) commitment, where adolescents follow the possibilities outlined and encouraged by their parents (Cobb, 1995). Since adolescents are exposed to a multitude of possibilities, the abundance of choices can make their transitions into adulthood even more complicated. Identity is responsive to our environments, “capable of assuming a self that is nuanced, organized, and informed by environmental expectations and contingencies” (Konstam, 2007, p. 14), which can be especially true of adolescents living in heterogeneous societies, where they are constantly exposed or introduced to new ideologies.

Marcia proposes that two crucial factors are an integral part of identity formation: (a) crisis and (b) commitment. *Crisis* refers to “the adolescent’s period of engagement in choosing among meaningful alternatives, (and) *commitment* refers to the degree of personal investment the individual exhibits” (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 184). In essence, a mature identity can only be achieved once an adolescent has experienced a crisis and has committed himself or herself to an ideology.

Identity and its Link to Culture and Race

Literature seems to support the equation of identity with gender, race, and class (Hoover, Marcia, & Parris, 1997). *Ethnic Identity* “is the sum total of group members’

feelings about those symbols, values, and common histories that identify them as a distinct group” (Rice & Dolgin, 2002, p. 188). Consequently, the on-going process of identity development is undoubtedly infused with the customs and attributes of an individual’s racial and cultural heritage, which has to be adapted repeatedly to the fast-changing pace of globalization, with much of the recent literature suggesting that current models of identity formation have not adequately included cultural influences. This lack is problematic considering that the topic is an important issue in heterogeneous societies, which are infused with a whole array of racial and cultural influences (Konstam, 2007). “Identity is socially constructed through customs and conditioning”; therefore, culture and race not only assist in the formation of one’s identity, but also comprise the attributes and stereotypes that characterize them (Hoover et al., 1997, p. 8). To better comprehend this concept, one must consider the work of Phinney and her stages of *ethnic identity development*.

Phinney and her Stages of Ethnic Identity Development

Phinney believes that one’s evolution toward one’s ethnic identity parallels differences with the identity statuses model proposed by Marcia. Accordingly, she believes that individuals in their adolescence can experience one of the three stages she has outlined. The first stage is *unexamined ethnic identity*, which describes the individuals internalizing the values and customs of the dominant culture in which they are living. These individuals commonly have minimal comprehension of the issues pertaining to their culture. The second stage is *ethnic identity search*, when the individuals experience an emerging conflict between the values of the dominant culture and those of their ethnic group. These individuals are conflicted by which values of the

two groups should be incorporated into their identities. The final stage is labelled *achieved ethnic identity*, with these individuals having a “clear sense of their ethnicity and reflects feelings of belonging and emotional identification” (Cobb, 1995, p. 359). In essence, they display confidence in their ethnicity and the values that come with it.

Phinney’s research is well suited to Transracial adoptees because ethnicity is socially constructed and therefore needs to be modified to include culture as well (Baden, 2007a). An interesting aspect of Phinney’s research revealed that different racial groups placed importance on different aspects of their values. An example was the Asian American adolescents who expressed concerns over their academic achievement, while the African Americans regarded discrimination and negative connotations of their race as their primary concern. Phinney’s findings suggest that, even though these adolescents were internalizing such concerns, they did not reflect negative attitudes towards the content. Instead these individuals merely regarded such values as a part of their ethnic identity (Cobb, 1995). Moreover, this notion is corroborated in Verkuyten’s (2005) book *The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identity*, where Verkuyten mentions that members of any ethnic community perceive themselves as being distinguished by the manner and style in which they are portrayed. He emphasizes that members of most groups prefer to be associated with the origins, descents, and histories that are typified of their ethnic culture. Individuals no longer want to be regarded as culturally uniform. These outlooks tend to be typical of North Americans, where many of the inhabitants are not representative of the dominant culture, and where they may be exposed to, or are active members of, more than one culture. Our society has become more of a melting pot, where

individuals may identify themselves as being part of more than one cultural and/or racial background.

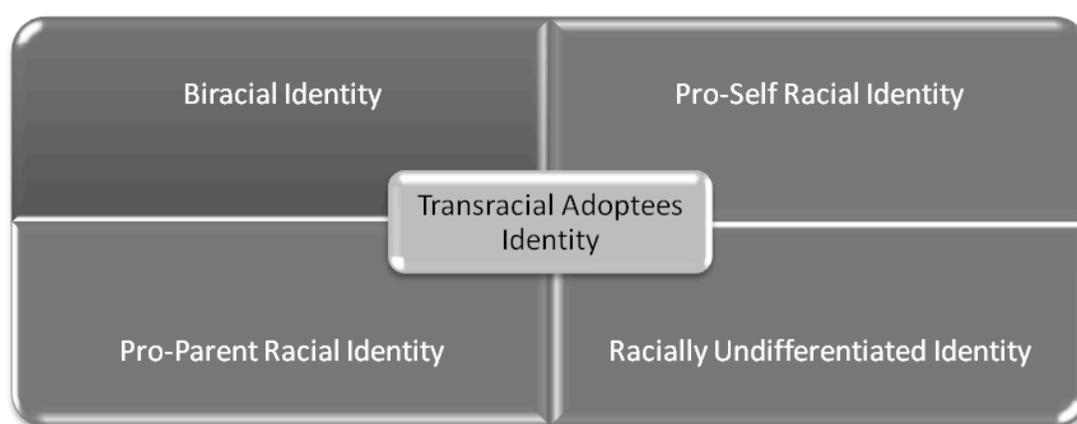
However, there do exist concerns with Phinney's research. Phinney's constructs seem to follow a sequential paradigm, leading the reader to believe that there exists a succession in one's ethnic identity. Whereas this may be the path for some, it is not representative of all individuals. Moreover, Phinney's model of ethnic identity noticeably lacks flexibility in the relationship of one's culture(s). According to her research, individuals have a beginning point with their dominant culture and an ending point with their ethnic culture yet nowhere does her work infuse the two cultures; essentially, Phinney's research neglects to mention or classify individuals as possibly being a product of two or more cultures. Furthermore, Phinney begins with the starting point being individuals' dominant culture, but what about individuals whose parents have either immigrated to a new country or who themselves are first generation families with strong ties to their ethnic culture and/or background? Perhaps it is for these mentioned reasons that Baden and Steward have opted to modify Phinney's model to represent their Cultural-Racial Identity Model, to facilitate in their research concerning the identity development of Transracial adoptees.

Baden and Steward's Cultural-Racial Identity Model

The uniqueness of Baden and Steward's Cultural-Identity Development Model is that it proposes varying "identity standings" among individuals brought up in multiracial families, especially between parents and Transracially adopted children (Baden, 2007a). This representation is particularly important, given the growing racial and cultural diversity within our society, including diversity within individuals (intra-individual

diversity). For example, if a person who has parents with two different racial and ethnic backgrounds then has children with another biracial or bi-ethnic person, then their children would potentially have claim to four racial and ethnic identities. The Cultural-Racial Identity Development Model addresses the compelling roles of race and culture within families where racial homogeneity does not exist (Baden & Steward, 2007).

Figure 1: Baden and Steward's Cultural-Racial Identity Model



Baden and Steward's (2007) model proposes that other factors that have a significant impact on the cultural and racial identities of Transracial adoptees may exist; the attitudes and extent of emotional support provided by members of the community, as well as members of the adoptee's extended family, are aspects that rarely receive any attention. The Cultural-Racial Identity Model emphasizes that Transracial adoptees can essentially develop one of four identities: (a) *Biracial Identity*; (b) *Pro-Self Racial Identity*; (c) *Pro-Parent Racial Identity*; and (d) *Racially Undifferentiated Identity*. When the adoptees are comfortable in the culture of both their own and their adoptive families,

they are said to have a biracial identity. When the adoptees relate more with their biological racial-ethnic group, they are said to have a pro-self racial identity. When the adoptees are most comfortable in the culture of their rearing environment, their adoptive culture, they are said to have a pro-parent racial identity. When the adoptees do not affiliate themselves to either culture, they are said to have a racially undifferentiated identity (Baden & Steward, 2007).

Research Relating to Adoption

Much of the existing literature on adoption, including Transracial adoption, centers around the question of whether intelligence is the result of hereditary and genealogical factors, or the product of one's environment. Several researchers have emphasized the role of culture, both in the understanding of intelligence and in the influence it has on intelligence (Neisser et al., 1996; Scarr, 1996; Scarr & Weinberg, 1997; Scarr, Weinberg, & Waldman, 1993; Weinberg, Scarr, & Waldman, 1992). Some theorists have raised the awareness of the difficulty that exists in comparing intelligence across cultures, and similarly, differences across ethnic groups in their conceptions of intelligence and what it means to be intelligent. Often, we equate one's intelligence with intelligence quotient (IQ) scores and use individuals' scores to compare them against the norm. However, who is the norm? Who represents them? It is by popular belief that IQ is influenced by one's physical and social environments. Yet there is little research on the genetic and environmental differences between siblings, or between parents and their children. However, looking at biological children and Transracial adoptees within families can provide insight into the extent to which heritable traits are fixed or

malleable by the environment (Scarr & Weinberg, 1977). For various researchers, adoptions have long been considered useful “experiments of society” (Neisser et al., 1996) that provide an opportunity to compare genetically unrelated individuals being raised in the same rearing environment with genetically related individuals being raised in different environments.

The Debate of Nature versus Nurture

In the original Minnesota Transracial Adoption study, Scarr and Weinberg (1977) studied the IQ scores of 101 families that had both biological offspring and Transracially adopted children. The researchers also accessed information about the Transracial adoptees’ birthparents via adoption agencies. The IQ scores of Transracially adopted children were similar to their birth parents suggesting the impact of nature and genetics. Similarly, high correlations were found between adoptees and their adoptive parents and siblings due to nurture and their rearing environment. However, selective placement where adopting parents select children with similarly highly educated birthparents was believed to be the cause. Although there were greater similarities in IQ between genetically related individuals, IQ appears to be more malleable than once thought (Scarr & Weinberg).

In a follow-up study conducted by Scarr, Weinberg, and Waldman (1993), 93 of the original 101 families participated once more to determine the extent of familial environments’ influence on the unrelated children’s IQs compared to similarities with biological relatives. Strongest correlations were found between parents and their biological offspring, including adoptees and their birth parents, regardless of the fact there had been no contact between them. Moreover, the biological children were shown

to have higher IQs than the adopted children. In fact, the largest gap recorded during the second study was the discrepancy between the IQs of biological children and those of adopted children. Although selective placements were believed to be responsible for the findings of the first study, it was no longer shown to have an effect on the results.

Therefore IQ is likely due to both biological genetic nature and adoptive environmental nurture, such as responsible parenting and educational investments. Perhaps most relevant to Transracially adopted young adults, when Transracially adopted children age and become adolescents they become less similar in IQ to their unrelated siblings (Scarr & Weinberg, 1983) alluding to the difficulty that Transracial adoptees generally face when they enter into adolescence.

Adoption Research and Education

Weinberg, Scarr, and Waldman (1992) found that IQs were high amongst their participants; they believe that this IQ level might have been the result of their sample population being well educated and having high socioeconomic status (SES). The researchers noted that parents were heavily invested in their children's academic growth and acceleration. Children experiencing difficulties or being challenged by their coursework acquired external assistance such as tutoring. Although all adopted children scored lower than the family's related offspring, the Transracial adoptees scored higher than other students within their racial groups; the researchers attributed these outcomes to the nurturing environments, the overall investment in the children's education, and the encouragement the children received from the parents.

Aside from the concept of genealogy, adoption research heavily relies on the role of one's environment. Environment works against the notion that something heritable is

unchangeable (Neisser et al., 1996). According to Scarr (1996), contrary to mainstream notions, much of how children portray themselves has more to do with the environment and resources to which they are exposed, rather than genealogy. Two competing environmental explanations account for these environmental variations in child development: (a) opportunity, which refers to social class differences; and (b) socialization, which refers to parenting practices, both of which are traits of environment. As individuals continue to develop and mature, they experience more control of the environments in which they immerse themselves. For persons working in the education system, it is imperative that they understand that individuals are not randomly sorted into their environments; instead, people make their own environments, and the older individuals are, the more control they have of their environment and the people with whom they surround themselves. Policymakers can assist adoptees by ensuring that adoptees “have supportive environments with plentiful opportunities to learn and to feel appreciated as individuals” (Scarr, 1996, p. 223). Such opportunities are richer in outcomes for adoptees when parents are involved in exposing and encouraging their children to use such opportunities.

Transracial Adoption

Akin to adoption, Transracial adoption has long been seen as the best approach to provide for a child when the child’s birth parents can no longer provide and/or take care of her or him (Zamostny et al., 2003). There exists a multitude of reasons as to why families adopt Transracial children; they include delayed childbirth, establishing careers, infertility and desires of single people and/or same-sex couples to build families themselves (Dorow, 2006; Quiroz, 2008). Families may also choose Transracial adoption

because there exists a decline in White infants placed for adoption. Declines in children readily available for adoption in North America has arisen through the legalization of abortion, increased availability and use of contraceptives, and an increased societal acceptance of single and/or teen parenting (Quiroz, 2008).

History of Transracial Adoption

The phenomenon of Transracial adoption was popularized after the events of the Second World War, which resulted in a large population of Japanese and Chinese children being orphans (Silverman, 1993). Camacho-Gingerich, Branco-Rodriguez, Pitteri, and Javier (2007) state that the preliminary provision for international, and often Transracial, adoption into the United States “was President Truman’s directive of December 22, 1945, which allowed for the migration of refugees and minors not accompanied by family members” (p. 150). The newfound emergence of Transracial adoption was additionally a solution for many of the North American families who were frustrated with the long wait to adopt domestically and within their same race (Thomas & Tessler, 2007). The Korean War renewed interest in placement of children orphaned from war-torn countries. A prime example is the American farmer Harry Holt, who made it his main goal to provide home placements for these dislocated children; “his efforts resulted in the creation of the largest international adoption program,” known as the Holt Program (Silverman, 1993, p. 104).

Not all Transracial adoptions that took place during this era were the result of international adoption. One of the earliest accounts of domestic Transracial adoption was the implementation of the Indian Adoption Project in the United States between 1958 and 1967. This project was in affiliation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child

Welfare League of America (CWLA), with the purpose of removing “Indian children from their families on reservations in an effort to assimilate them into mainstream society” (Lee, 2003, p. 712). The majority of these children were placed into ‘White’ homes. Additional reasons for Transracial placements were the decreasing fertility rates of the Caucasian-American population, which resulted in many adoptions of African-American children (Camacho-Gingerich et al., 2007), given an abundance of African-American children readily available for adoption. Even more, with the Civil Rights Movement, the nation became increasingly aware of the vast number of parentless Black children and the importance of finding homes for them (Roorda, 2007). Nevertheless, while the adoptions responded to the acute needs of these children, there was a surfacing feeling of antagonism regarding the placement of these children Transracially, particularly by the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) (Roorda, 2007; Silverman, 1993; Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003; Zamostny et al., 2003).

Opposition emerged from racial and ethnic minority communities to the overrepresentation of African-American and other marginalized children available in the adoption system (Lee, 2003). A leading adversary against the placement of children Transracially was the NABSW. William T. Merritt, the president of this organization, was quoted as stating that Transracial adoption was a “blatant form of racial and cultural genocide” (Simon & Altstein, 1996, p. 6). Moreover, the NABSW and other organizations of Black social workers felt that the act of Transracial adoption was compromising the integrity of the Black community rather than helping it progress. They fostered the belief that Black children should only be placed within Black families, whether it be foster care or adoption (Silverman, 1993). In the spectrum of international

Transracial adoption, there was an added concern over the recorded formation of numerous black markets where birth mothers were pressured to give up their infants (Camacho-Gingerich, Branco-Rodriguez, Pitteri, & Javier, 2007). These ‘baby farms’ were found in many Latin American and Asian countries (Camacho-Gingerich et al., 2007). The majority of the oppositional claims by concerned citizens and groups, such as NABSW, were for the overall welfare of the children.

The pressures to ensure the wellbeing of adoptive children resulted in social service agencies and organizations reworking their criteria for adoption, emphasizing the preference for same-race families (Lee, 2003). The movement for intraracial adoption led to racial and ethnic matching, which was regarded as enhancing “the development of self-esteem, racial and ethnic identity, and coping mechanisms of strategies for living in a racist society” (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003, p. 252). In addition, it was the belief of the Child Welfare League of America that the placement of children with parents of similar racial characteristics would contribute to the children’s integration within a family and community as a whole (Silverman, 1993). All the same, there remained (and still remains) an overabundance of minority children awaiting adoption with an even greater crisis of minority foster homes and adoption homes readily available. Barriers in developing these adoptive homes result from the attitudes of social workers, policies implemented by agencies, a lack of recruitment efforts, and community misconceptions concerning adoption (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003). Additionally, the Transracial adoption controversy eventually led to the creation of regulatory laws.

Further public pressure resulted in governments implementing various laws in relation to Transracial adoption. In the United States, two principal laws were passed: the

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) in 1994, which was later refined to create the Interethnic Placement Act (IEPA) in 1996 (Baden, 2007a). Internationally, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption was introduced at the United Nations in 1993. It was created with the “goal of protecting children and parents around the world and preventing child trafficking and abuse” (Baden, 2007b, p. 120). This convention has subsequently been ratified by 67 countries, including Canada. Other countries, such as Argentina, have taken these matters into their own hands, by refusing to adhere to international adoption procedures; they believe that adoption should remain a domestic affair within their homogeneous population, thus resulting in nearly impossible conditions for international/Transracial adoptions (Camacho-Gingerich et al., 2007).

Domestic Transracial Adoption Placements

Many current adoption policies in the United States are supportive of colour-blind adoption practices; they regard such practices as a partial solution to the poverty and racism that exist in many US communities (Dorow, 2006; Quiroz, 2008). However, many families adopting Transracially are now understanding the role that racial differences play; as Dorow (2006) states, “on the one hand it might enable exotic appeal and rescuability, while on the other it might threaten to spoil the illusion of cohesive kinship and national belonging” (p. 365). Yet not all children who are put up for adoption are the result of poverty. In some places, poverty is not the primary cause, but rather societal outlooks on unwed mothers or preference for male children (Quiroz, 2008).

In Canada and the United States, there is a growing awareness of the existence of many children who are readily available for adoption in the foster system. Of the existing

children in the system, a growing number of them are either older in age, children of colour, or both, so-called 'hard-to-place' children. Governments alike have noticed the challenges that exist with placements of these children, so that, by the late 1990's, Transracial adoption placements had resurfaced as part of national policy agendas. Raising awareness on the subject of 'hard-to-place' children continues to be used as a measure in having Transracial adoption be a favourable option for families. Juxtaposed to the existing rhetoric that adopting Transracially is both valuable and a means of rescuing such children, there exists an resurgence of public opinion that continues to work against Transracial adoption; frequently, children existing in the foster system are coined 'crack babies,' a designation that has influenced many families in deciding to adopt Transracially from abroad (Dorow, 2003).

International Transracial Adoption Placements

For families adopting Transracially from abroad, public discourse has provided a view that adopting Transracially provides a 'clean break' from the adoptee's birth family:

Adopting a Chinese child is very simple. There will be no birth mother knocking on your door. In China, it is a crime to abandon a child. If a birth mother changes her mind and comes back to a welfare home for the child, she will be put in prison. (From the Great Wall Adoption Agency website as cited in Dorow, 2003, p. 369)

Many adoption agencies are quick to illustrate that these children available for adoption are often in dire need of a family (Dorow, 2003). Third world and/or non-White children are often depicted as being more in need; they are stereotyped as coming from uncivilized countries. However, within the last few decades, the perception of international Transracial children bringing no baggage is quickly changing. There are more and more adoption agencies offering opportunities of contact among the members of the adoption

triad. There are also more agencies and expediting countries that are promoting contact within their adoption placements (Grotevant, Miller Wrobel et al., 2007). Therefore, parents planning on adopting should be well informed that they may come into contact with either the birth family or a third party member acting as liaison for the birth family; there also exists a shift from closed adoptions to open adoptions as the norm of present-day placements, with information of adoptees' origins being now more easily obtainable (Demick, 2002).

In a 2007 study, Grotevant, Miller Wrobel et al. found high levels of positive affect in families that had contact with adoptees' birth families, whether it be direct contact or through a third party member, or simply the exchange of vital information. All adoptees participating in the study wanted contact to increase and were recorded as having positive feelings about contact. The benefits of having contact cited by adoptees included access to information concerning their origins, and their birth family's medical history, which may be beneficial when adoptees plan on marrying or starting a family of their own. In contrast, some parents of the adoptees referenced two reasons why they had reservations about contact: (1) the general negative impressions about the birth parents; and (2) other individuals' experiences with adoption including media coverage of such cases (Grotevant, Miller Wrobel et al., 2007).

Transracial Adoptees and Education

There is a lack of research regarding Transracial adoption, identity development, adjustment, and education. With this lack in mind, one significant question is posed: how do teachers educate Transracially adopted students who may be experiencing challenges with their identities and/or adjustment? According to Fishman and Harrington (2007),

teachers and members of the education community need to incorporate positive interventions, which include being supportive and understanding of the adoptees' situations. Although such information can be useful for teachers when selecting course content, ultimately, it is the parents' decision to share with the school that their child is adopted. Moreover, teachers need to be respectful of both the adoptees' and their families' wishes for privacy concerning the matter. Additionally, teachers should keep in mind that, after uncovering a student's adoption, certain class assignments, such as having students write a detailed précis of their family history, or a family tree, may need to be restructured. Fishman and Harrington suggest that teacher and staff alike become attentive to adoptees being teased by peers or discussed among staff members. A student's adoption should not be made a public matter. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to not tolerate racial/cultural slurs, humour, or comments made concerning a student's adoption.

Another relevant issue concerning Transracial adoptees and education is how well educators teach them. Morgan (2010) feels that many educators misunderstand the needs of minority students attributable to educators being uninformed of the communication styles of minority students. Communication styles differ from one culture to the next, as does education. Although Transracial adoptees may be reared in a different racial/cultural environment, there may come times when they emulate verbal and non-verbal behaviours of their same-race peers resulting in cultural misunderstanding and confusion between teachers and their students. However, all members of a group cannot be taught in the same manner; therefore, generalizing about students based on their cultural/ racial group can hinder responsive teaching.

Minority and majority students are assumed to differ greatly in performance, perhaps most profoundly between White and Black students, known as the ‘black-white’ academic performance gap (Oates, 2009). Educators are aware of this gap; however, precise reasons for the gap remain unclear. Five presumed reasons include academic engagement, cultural capital, social capital, school quality, and biased treatment. Probably the most common and most contested reason is that of *academic engagement*. There is a belief that some minorities lack effort concerning workload. Academic accomplishment may be viewed as elitist or as ‘acting White’ by members of their racial and cultural groups, prominently by minorities during adolescence. However, balancing this negative peer pressure against academic accomplishments are those teachers and peers who provide support and encouragement. Although the second factor, *cultural capital*, is based on students’ familial socioeconomic status, the concern is that minorities are often assumed to come from low SES, therefore making it race-induced. *Social capital* is dependent on the family structure and parental involvement, which may be challenging for students being raised in a single-parent home. *School quality* is a broad concept that includes accessibility of minorities to ‘good’ schools and how schools go about prioritizing student learning to instil a sense of purpose in their students. Lastly, and probably most dependent on teachers, is *biased treatment* due to the perceptions that teachers create concerning their minority students. Student performance is highly affected by such teacher perceptions (Oates, 2009).

Identity Development and Transracial Adoptees

Regarding Transracial adoptees, one distress is the challenge of identity development. The acquisition of an identity for individuals who are Transracially adopted

is far more intricate than for biological children, considering their circumstances. For individuals who are adopted, the question of “who am I” becomes increasingly complex. According to Baden and Steward (2007), Transracial adoptees in their adolescence experience the “struggle for identity or the struggle to gain knowledge of self, others, and the self in relation to others” as they enter their adulthood (p. 91). Although society is generally in consensus that, by adulthood, most individuals have a forged identity, recent literature suggests that this is not always the case for Transracial adoptees as the topic of their adoption remains a prominent problem in their adult development. The challenge remains for how they can organize the various parts of themselves into a coherent whole to form an identity (Wapner & Demick, 2002).

For adoptees, creating one's identity is perceived as a lifelong process that can result in complications for those with unknown personal, genetic, and social histories. Aspects of identity that tend to present difficulties include ethnic-group self-descriptors, discrimination, a discomfort with appearances, and racial and cultural identity. These challenges can result in adoptees having to address questions that reflect their search for a sense of heritage, origin, and need, when forming their identity. The topic of heritage in identity development can also resurface in adult Transracial adoptees, particularly when they are reaching new milestones in life such as marriage, births, and deaths (Baden & O’Leary Wiley, 2007).

Often, Transracial adoptees experience what Hollingsworth (1998) refers to as *dissimilarity* due to their experiences in feeling different from their adoptive families. Dissimilarity is more common in the cases of Transracial adoption than intraracial adoption because these adoptees lack physical resemblance to parents and members of

the family. Dissimilarity has fostered three elements in identity formation: (a) uniqueness or sameness of self; (b) differentiation from others; and (c) sense of belonging with others who share some common characteristics, thus making it relatively impossible for Transracial adoptees to ignore identity development within social interactions (Hollingsworth, 1998).

The concept of race in adoption is further complicated by many heterogeneous countries that are “shifting from a two-tiered racial hierarchy to a tripartite system” (Quiroz, 2008, p. 441). This shift in how race is conceived of when defining Transracial adoption is mainly due to racial categories consistently changing. A new tripartite system includes: (1) *Whites*; which include Caucasians, some light-skinned Latinos, assimilated Natives, Europeans, and some Asians; (2) *Honorary Whites*; which include other light-skinned Latinos, Korean, Middle Eastern, and Chinese; and (3) *Collective Blacks*; which include Blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, West Indians, and Africans (Quiroz, 2008).

Two noted unpleasant identity development experiences for Transracial adoptees are racism in their adopted communities, and rejection or exclusion by members of their birth community (Camacho-Gingerich et al., 2007). A focus group of 12 Colombian Transracial adoptees all agreed that feeling accepted by members of the Latino community assisted in their identity development. They also stated that, although they were raised in predominantly ‘White’ homes and communities, they always felt as though they were racially and ethnically different. Much of how they felt depended on how members of their community embraced them (Camacho-Gingerich et al., 2007). Often, these children were exposed to racial and ethnic slurs by members of their adopted community and their peers (Camacho-Gingerich et al., 2007). However, the notion of

ethnic hostility is found to be experienced more often in the cases of Transracial adoptees of African lineage than any other group, primarily due to their visible difference from their adoptive families (Silverman, 1993). In some cases, Black children feel they must either relinquish their 'Black' identities and act 'White,' or vice versa (Maehr & Meyer, 1997).

Often in identity development, variations in outcomes were seen depending on the age of the adoptee, the race of the adoptee, and the geographical location of residence (Lee, 2003). Therefore, the identity development of an individual adopted in a homogeneous society will differ from one adopted in a heterogeneous society, because the attributes of the dominant culture differ across societies. There exists a paradox among Transracial adoptees because they are sometimes viewed as members of the majority culture despite not being the same race. As a result, they also may share much of the same cultural issues that intraracial adoptees have, in addition to issues of racial differences. Further complicating their sense of identity, many Transracial adoptees regard these constructs of race and culture as synonymous (Baden, 2007a; Lee, 2003), despite their group membership sometimes being disparate for race and culture. Being aware of prejudice and discrimination in adolescence and adulthood of Transracial adoptees may lead them to conflicting emotions regarding their race and ethnicity (Lee, 2003).

Although most research indicates that Transracial adoptees are capable of identifying their race, rarely does the research ask participants to elaborate on how they relate to the norms and values of that race. The current research on identity development of Transracial adoptees is flawed as it not only centers around children, but also uses

frameworks that often limit participants' responses and make participants unable to raise questions, respond freely, or share their experiences (Roorda, 2007). Therefore, much of this research simply equates identity development of Transracially adopted individuals with their ability to select a racial or cultural group. Researchers neglect to gather data regarding these individuals' awareness about the values of their racial or cultural heritage, and if they integrate these values within their identities.

Thomas and Tessler (2007) emphasize the trait of *bicultural socialization* within society as a whole, which is the process by which Transracial adoptees learn the attitudes, values, and behaviours of their birth culture, as well as the culture in which they are reared. In these instances, the adoptees adopt the characteristics of both the dominant culture and their racial/ethnic culture. This process works best when the adoptees have exposure to their birth culture. However, it may be challenging for Transracial adoptees residing in homes with a strong ethnic or cultural background. For example, in their longitudinal study of 327 parents all of whom had adopted female children from China before their first birthday, Thomas and Tessler (2007) found that children living in strong ethnic households experienced more identity confusion. The study also showed that bicultural socialization was the strongest when parents were supportive and when families resided in communities with large Asian communities (Thomas & Tessler, 2007).

Adjustment and Transracial Adoptees

Three quarters of Transracial adoptees reside in White neighbourhoods. Although the adoptees' parents acknowledge the need to expose their children to members of their birth culture, seldom do they take active steps to facilitate this exposure (Vidal de

Haymes & Simon, 2003). Vidal de Haymes and Simon interviewed 20 Transracial adoptees between the ages of 8 and 14 years old, and their parents, residing in and around the city of Chicago. The hardest aspect of Transracial adoption was visibility, because it raised curiosity and questions by members of society. Similar findings have been noted by other studies (e.g., Baden, 2007b; Lee, 2003). Many of the families realized the challenges of living in predominantly 'White' communities. Being visibly different led to rejection from extended family members and members of the community. Children would report being victims of acts of racism and prejudice; however, the parents would often downplay the situations. Others living in more heterogeneous neighbourhoods felt that the Transracial adoptees were often shunned by members of their birth culture or race. Some children mentioned that they felt society and peers required them to choose a racial identity. As a result, Vidal de Haymes and Simon (2003) listed three primary concerns of parents for their Transracially adopted children: (a) place of residence; (b) schools; and (c) thwarted attempts to engage or interact with individuals and organizations of their adopted child's race (p. 259).

In the 20-year 'Simon-Altstein study'¹, the researchers went in search of the reasons as to why families adopt Transracially and how Transracially adopted children were adjusting. According to the 204 parents and 366 children between the ages of 4 and 7 residing in five cities in the Midwest who participated, these families were adjusting well. The children could properly identify their race and did not feel that there were any advantages to being adopted in White homes.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the information in the following three paragraphs is taken from Simon and Altstein (1996).

In contrast, less positive experiences were reported in the second phase of the study that took place 7 years later. As only the parents participated, this phase focused on the parents' perspectives of their relationships with their Transracially adopted children and how they perceived their children were adjusting to family, school, and society. The 133 parents who participated again reported signs of stress and tension; their Transracially adopted children were in their adolescence and many of them were acting out in rebellion. The biggest problem stated was theft, which many of the clinicians believed was normal behaviour; it was the adoptees' way of testing their parents. For the third phase that took place roughly 5 years later, 96 families and their children took part. The researchers again questioned the families concerning adjustment; the problems from the previous phase of the study had ceased. Parents were found to no longer dwell on the issues of adjustment. They felt that their children were of the age to take matters in their own hands. While during the first phase parents were responsible for the enculturation of their children, they now felt that their children should have control over that matter. One third of the Transracial adoptees reported feeling embarrassed when introducing their parents, or about being the only visible minority in their family (Silverman, 1993).

The findings were once again positive in the final, and fourth, phase that took place after another 7 years. This phase only included interviews with the children and how they regarded their adjustment having been raised in a Transracial household. The Transracial adoptees felt that they were as much a part of their families as intraracial adoptees; however, they acknowledged that, in their adolescence, they did indeed have a distant relationship with their parents. They did not agree with the public opposition

toward Transracial adoption and, when compared to intraracial adoptees, they were found to have the same self-esteem.

Similarly, Feigelman, and Silverman (1984) studied 372 families in the United States, with children between the ages of 7 and 12 years old, asking the parents to provide their perceptions of how well their children were adjusting to their adoptions. Children were adopted either Transracially or intraracially, both groups being included because of shared concerns about adjustment; both groups experienced separation from their birth parents and their birth culture, differences in physical characteristics between adoptees and members of their adoptive family, and a degree of social disapproval for their situation from outsiders. Preadolescent adoptees were well adjusted in their placements, except for several African American children, whose weaker adjustment was believed to have been the result of being placed within their families at older ages (Feigelman & Silverman, 1984).

Problems in adjustment arise from adoptees having to manage difficulties related to the lack of genetic relatedness and physical similarity to their adoptive parents. An additional issue that arises with familial adjustment is the reported inability of children to develop relationships based on trust. Often, the process of adoption is based on children breaking bonds and developing new bonds (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007), leading to the prediction that the ability to make attachments and develop self-esteem would be more challenging for adoptees than non-adoptive children (Demick, 2002; Zamostny et al., 2003). However, little evidence exists to support such a statement (Feigelman & Silverman, 1984). In a meta-analysis of 16 studies with close to 2,200 participants, Juffer

and van IJzendoorn (2007) found that there was no difference in the self-esteem among Transracial adoptees, intraracial adoptees, and non-adoptive peers.

Overview of the Literature

As Zamostny et al. (2003) highlight, “adoption has points of controversy that are not surprising, given the interplay between race, social issues, cultural values, and adoption practices” (p. 656). Much of the criticism surrounding Transracial adoption targets the concepts of identity development and psychological adjustment (Baden, 2007b). Since adoptees have no control regarding their situation, they are expected to come to terms with their adoption; yet, how others perceive them serves a crucial role in the identity and adjustment of these individuals (Grotevant, Dunbar et al., 2007).

A further major dilemma in the study of identity development occurs when cultural identity and racial identity are used interchangeably. The main problem is that clear distinctions of the terms do not exist, with research failing to provide uniformity in the definitions of these concepts (Baden & Steward, 2007). For example, members of West Indian lineage are referred to as Blacks, African Americans, and West Indian to list a few. The focus on race further masks the rich diversity of culture and history within adoptees’ heritage; instead, they are thrown into a melting pot of a race. In addition to blurred origins, research continues to ignore the potential role of local context. A prime example is the lack of Canadian studies; Canada is a heterogeneous and diverse nation that prides itself on its multiculturalism yet lacks appropriate research on the experiences and identity development of its Transracial adoptees. The current thesis begins to address this lack.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As knowing subjects we are intimately a part of any understanding we have of what counts as knowledge or any claim we make to knowledge. (Deemer, as cited in Gunzenhauser, 2006, p. 624).

Throughout my life I have relied heavily on the input and moral support of my friends concerning my life decisions and mental wellbeing, and, in return, they have gained the same from me. Among these friends have been some who were Transracially adopted. With these friends, situations frequently arose when we jointly grappled with issues of identity. These experiences were most influential to me in my adolescence, when I struggled with issues of heritage, religion, and, most importantly, identity.

As a first-generation Greek-Canadian male, the traditional values and norms of my parents were synonymous with my upbringing. Never was I encouraged to question “Who am I?”; for a while, I never did. However, when I entered high school, I began to feel ambivalent about what had been instilled in me from my rearing. As a teenager, I was not content with the simplicity of the statement “just be who you are.” Reality is never as simple and, for me, this idea was especially true with the topic of identity. Juxtaposing my personal experiences with those of my friends, it is my personal ideology that the subject of identity and its formation is even more complex for individuals who are Transracially adopted, which has led to my interest in this topic. As Fontana and Frey (2000) have pointed out, “we find ourselves remembering our lives in terms of our experience with others” (p. 656).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the various challenges with which Transracially adopted persons are faced as they navigate through their lives, and to examine their individual and overall educational perspectives on the topics of identity development and adjustment. Through the use of interviews, I relay their experiences and contributions to society, and highlight their areas of concern for Transracial adoptees, and those who educate them, as they draw on their experiences throughout their educational development.

As a personal goal, I have set out to respectively portray each participant's voice. As Gunzenhauser (2006) has stated when drawing attention to the works of other researchers, it is imperative to obtain and maintain "a deep level of respect for the dignity of their participants, communicating their voices, and providing interpretive analysis explicitly intended to benefit their participants" (p. 643). In the simplest terms, I want my research to be beneficial for all parties involved, and to always represent their expressions and voices in an honest and honourable fashion.

An additional objective to the interactive method of my research is to follow a phenomenological approach, where I would collect data "on how individuals make sense out of a particular experience or situation" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 26). The purpose of this task is to gather information on identity development and adjustment of Transracial adoptees, most importantly information pertaining to what the participants have to say with regards to the topics of their identity development. Additional information related to their overall adjustment in society, and their thoughts and concerns for future generations of Transracial adoptees was also obtained.

Data Collection

After confirming my topic with my supervisor and committee member, the first step in the process of this project was to complete my colloquium, where I carried out a presentation on my topic in front of faculty members and a panel of my peers. The purpose of this presentation was to inform those present not only of my topic, but how it could be relevant in the field of education. It was during this presentation that I gathered insight from others on some aspects of my research that I had failed to recognize. A good example of such was when my supervisor asked what would I do should an adopted participant come forth and want to partake in my study even though the participant might not be considered Transracially adopted by others. It was thanks to the colloquium experience that I was able to address certain loose ends that I had been neglecting.

Once my colloquium was over, the next step was to submit for ethics. Given that my research was dealing with a potentially sensitive population and that my questions might address equally sensitive issues, I had to be attune to ethical issues in that I never wanted to expose my participants or leave them with sentiments of remorse in exchange for their participation. I contacted several resources dealing with individuals in distress. I informed myself about their practices and asked for specific information in dealing with situations related to the nature of my research. Several liaisons from these organizations informed me that, even though some of my participants might not exude sentiments of remorse or distress during our interviews, the possibility existed of participants exhibiting remorse over their contributions to my study later on. With this caveat in mind, I took the added precaution of omitting any questions I deemed invasive or those that had the

potential to promote negative sentiments. Moreover, I attached the contact information for some of these resources within the letter of information that was given to any potential participants prior to our interviews (see Appendix A). Together with the letter of information, applicants were given a letter of consent confirming their contribution to the study, and asking them for their contact information. Additionally, participants were informed of the nature of their involvement in the study, and that they had the right to withdraw or have any content omitted should they want to (see Appendix B).

Justification for Method

Qualitative research can materialize through three forms of data collection, one of which is by the use of in-depth, open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002). As Fontana and Frey (2000) have stated, “the most common form of interviewing involves individual, face-to-face verbal interchange” (p. 645). Due to the potentially sensitive nature of this topic, I felt that conducting face-to-face interviews would permit me, as the researcher, to maintain greater control over the direction of the study. More importantly, I felt that carrying out these face-to-face interviews would make me privy to any signs of distress that the participants might be exuding and thus enable me to take any actions necessary to aid them.

Additionally, the use of interviews helps to address the individual experiences of the participants (Charmaz, 2002), where the researchers “are supposed to be able to appreciate with greater complexity participants’ perspectives” (Gunzenhauser, 2006, p. 624). The research purpose behind the use of interviews on young adult Transracially adopted individuals is “understanding a social situation from participants’ perspectives” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 13). However, since one participant in my study was

relocated for work during the process of the interviews, his first interview was done over the telephone as per his request, although I did manage to meet with him for the second interview. There was also another participant who requested that we carry out both interviews over the telephone. He stated that he not only had a very time-consuming schedule due to work and school, but he did not feel comfortable addressing the issues of his adoption, identity, and adjustment in a face-to-face context. It was for these reasons that I agreed to the participant's request rather than look for a new participant.

Participant Recruitment

The process of gathering information consisted of purposeful sampling. My reasoning for selecting purposeful sampling was that it enabled me to select information-rich cases to study more in depth (Patton, 2002). This type of study permits the researcher to look for opportunities to learn: "We often choose the cases in which we feel we can learn the most" (Stake, 2005, p. 451). The objective is not to generalize but rather to describe in a complex manner.

For the gathering of participants, I began by posting recruitment notices in central locations in and around downtown Montreal. I posted the recruitment posters on bulletin boards to which young adults would have access. Among the locations included were predominantly English College and University campuses, public libraries, and coffee shops. The recruitment notices were written in English and incorporated a concise explanation of the study, with my contact information included. Recruitment criteria included the following: participants must be adults; participants must be adopted by a family of a different race or culture of their birth parents; and participants must speak English as a first-language or fluently.

One of my main concerns about the location of my project was the language situation in the province of Quebec. Although the province is widely deemed Francophone, there does exist a large population of English speaking individuals on the island of Montreal. Also, although I am fluent in French, I wanted to conduct my interviews in English, with participants who were more fluent speaking in English. I wanted to avoid any language barriers, because as Fontana and Frey (2000) state, “although respondents may be fluent in the language of the interviewer, there are different ways of saying things and, indeed, certain things that should not be said at all, linking language and cultural manifestations” (p. 654). For these reasons alone, I decided to post my recruitment notices in predominantly English speaking establishments.

In addition, I used snowball sampling, “where individuals who are interviewed name other individuals for interviewing” (Johnson & Weller, 2002, p. 496), to gather names of possible participants from those already confirming interest in participating in my study. Initially, I was worried about the pool of applicants that would show interest in participating, simply because the possible population of applicants is so limited in scope. In the end of the recruitment process, participation was on a first come basis.

Participant Selection

My study consists of interviews with four Transracially adopted adults between the ages of 18 and 30. My interest in this age group resulted from acknowledgement that “fewer studies have focused on adopted adults” (Baden & O’Leary Wiley, 2007, p. 893). Reflecting on my teaching experiences, I feel that children’s issues change frequently, while adults are better able to reflect on the issues that affected them the most. Adults are in a position where they can provide both hindsight of previous experiences and can

contribute their foresight to these issues in education. It is my perception that adults are better able to comprehend that they have full control of what they choose to reveal, and understand that they have free will. Furthermore, interviewing children on the topics of identity development and adjustment might take more of an emotional toll on them. I was not comfortable, nor equipped, to deal with raising issues that the children might not be prepared to handle (Punch, 2002; Uprichard, 2010). Although this study could be expanded to include children in the future, for my purposes, interviewing adults was the most appropriate demographic for data collection.

Participants

Three males and one female participated in this study. All participants were given pseudonyms to respect their identities and maintain anonymity. One male was domestically Transracially adopted. He is biracial, and refers to himself as “mixed-race.” Although he has uncovered that his birth mother is an amalgamation of mixed European cultures, he does not know his birth father’s heritage, only referring to him as “Black.” The three remaining participants were internationally adopted. The only female participant in this study was adopted from Peru. Of the remaining two male participants, one is of Lebanese lineage and the other is of Haitian heredity. All participants are in higher levels of education, including vocational education, college, or university.

Recruitment of participants spanned a 7-month period. Throughout the course of this study, there were nine other potential participants who did not, for a variety of reasons, continue with the study. Two individuals responded to my recruitment posters and showed interest in the study. They were willing to participate because they were under the false impression that there would be a monetary reward for their participation.

When they discovered they would not be paid for participating in the study, they revealed that they had not, in fact, been adopted.

There were four participants who decided not to participate in the study due to conflicts with their schedules. One female Peruvian adoptee was the first to decline, due to the fact that she was struggling juggling her studies and work schedule. The second participant to withdraw was a female Colombian adoptee, who initially neglected to respond promptly to my e-mails setting up meeting times. Halfway through the interview process, she contacted me to inform me that she was withdrawing as she did not feel that she could commit to the study due to her educational demands. The third and fourth participants to withdraw from the study were males, one adopted from Haiti, and the second believed to have origins from Ghana. Both individuals were slated to be enrolled in a co-op program for the course of the year, and could not commit to the study because of lack of time.

Three other females did not continue with the study. One was adopted from China. She accepted a teaching job in Taiwan during the study and moved away midway through the interview process. Although she was willing to continue the interviews from afar via Skype, we concluded that it would be best if she were replaced by a local participant. The second remaining participant was adopted domestically from Canada; she was uncertain of her origins, but believed she had one birthparent who was Black. She repeatedly failed to appear for scheduled meeting times and refused to sign the letter of consent. It was only after I was finished with all interviews that I received an apologetic e-mail stating that she was unable to respond due to a hectic schedule and the fact that she was out of the country for a good portion of the year.

The last participant to withdraw from my study was a close friend of mine who initially appeared to be excited about my research. Throughout the course of gathering information, it became obvious that my friend, who was adopted from Haiti, was exuding sentiments of remorse. After many conversations, it was revealed that my friend was seeing a crisis counsellor in relation to issues of education, personal life, and her adoption. We came to the agreement that it would be best if she were to discontinue the study, seeing that there were interview questions pertaining to her adoption that she might face difficulties addressing.

Interview Questions

The questions used in the interviews were developed by looking at issues that have been mentioned within various literature, as well as through collaborating with individuals who have been adopted, both intraracially and Transracially. The panel of collaborators were many of my friends who were adopted, and the questions were formulated in accordance with their experiences and perspectives. I also opted to work collaboratively with a panel of adoptees to create the questions to ensure that I did not ask any questions that could be regarded as insensitive or inappropriate. I wanted to collect the concerns of a cohort such as my participant pool and members of my age bracket, to shine light on the issues that could be either unaddressed or addressed but often ignored. The panel consisted of four friends of mine, two who were Transracially adopted and two who were adopted within their race. I asked them what kinds of questions they felt were significant in asking participants concerning my topic, as well as why they were important questions to raise.

After a pool of questions was decided upon, I carried out two individual pilot interviews with two members of the panel. The first pilot interview was with a friend who was adopted at the age of 13 from a same-race family. Although some of the questions were ones that did not apply to him, I wanted to see how long it would take a participant to typically answer the questions. This friend of mine is someone whom I would describe as being a short-answer kind of guy. This informal pilot interview assisted me in ensuring that I had enough questions for the entire duration of the real interviews.

The second informal pilot interview was with a friend of mine who was Transracially adopted at the age of four months. She is a close friend, and I wanted her input on the questions. I thought it might be best if I had her answer the questions as if she were a real participant, to see if there were any questions that I might have initially thought were acceptable to pose, but might otherwise prove not to be once someone is put in the position of having to answer them. It turned out that there was one question that she had approved, but when it came down to answering, it proved to be challenging for her and therefore was subsequently omitted.

The questions were broken down in several domains, which were conveyed as a set of things that go together (Johnson & Weller, 2002). Questions from all domains were designed to elicit responses to the following research topics: (a) Identity development; (b) Education; (c) Adjustment; and (d) Concerns and recommendations for future generations of Transracial adoptees.

Janesick (1991) proposes that interviewers structure their questions as either descriptive, structural, or contrasting, to elicit information having the participants use their own words. I began with descriptive questions, which were broad in scope, in hopes

that participants would describe in great detail their experiences and concerns. Many grand tour questions were followed by mini-tour questions, which were used to confirm an idea (Johnson & Weller, 2002). Additionally, example questions were raised during the interview, when classification was needed, as were experience questions, which brought out the non-routine aspects of life (Janesick, 1991).

After gathering an understanding of the participants and their experiences, structural questions were introduced midway, which are repeated to discover “structures or components of any given social behaviour” (Janesick, 1991, p. 108). Commonly, all interviews ended by leaning on contrasting questions, where interviewees were asked to compare and contrast differences. The interviews included questions that tapped a wide range of topics related to adoption, including identity adjustment, family, education, and origins to name a few (see Appendix C).

Interviews

According to Johnson and Weller (2002), an important starting point in one’s study is explaining its purpose. I met each participant prior to our scheduled interview to thoroughly go over the letter of information and letter of consent of the study to ensure that they did indeed have a comprehensive understanding of their role in my study. I felt that it was necessary to meet with each participant pre-interview, to develop good rapport and trust. Additionally, I wanted my participants to gather a greater understanding of my character and my intentions for this study (Fontana & Frey, 2002; Gunzenhauser, 2006).

I carried out two separate interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. More than one interview was necessary because the interviews assisted in the shaping of my data collection, providing me with an

opportunity to prepare new questions touching on issues that had emerged, and allowing me to go back and address areas that were not covered earlier. Charmaz (2002) proposes the relevance of more than one interview per participant, because having multiple interviews impacts the reliability and validity of the data. Multiple interviews also permit the researcher to follow up on leads from previous interviews, thus enabling her or him to direct questions to developing themes.

All interviews revolved around the schedules of the participants, at a location of their choosing. All locations were as quiet as possible, with minimal interruptions. I wanted the participants to select a location that would be comfortable for them, so that they could speak freely and without distraction or threat. Locations differed from participant to participant, with quiet coffee shops being the most preferred site.

All first interviews were conducted in a similar fashion; they followed Janesick's (1991) six key components of interviewing. They began with (a) a greeting and then a repeated (b) explanation of the study. As soon as these were completed, I turned on the voice recorder and started the interviews. I began by (c) asking questions, often (d) restating the participants' responses to double check on data, and sometimes (e) creating hypothetical questions when needed. When time was up, I turned off the voice recorder, and (f) set up the next interview.

Similar to a constructivist grounded theory approach, I based the questions used in the first interview around a central problem. Past the preliminary background queries, questions were prepared with the topic of identity and its formation for young adult Transracial adoptees in mind, and questions were framed as views rather than facts, addressing the individual experiences of the participants (Charmaz, 2002). As a result, I

learned the participants' inherent meanings of their experiences to build a theoretical understanding of the participants.

For the first round of interviews, I followed a semi-structured approach, with the use of probing questions. With semi-structured interviews, I was able to ask participants the same series of pre-established questions (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Questions were predominantly open-ended, addressing some foreshadowed problems Transracial adoptees could experience regarding identity development and adoptees' adjustment within personal and social contexts. Participants were asked to share their concerns for future families contemplating Transracial adoption, and their worries for these children once they entered schools. I set out to define the attitudes and thoughts of the partakers of this study, and uncover their common themes. Although I followed a semi-structured approach to interviewing, for analysis, I regarded the content from an unstructured approach to 'understand rather than explain' content (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Similar to a grounded theory approach, the preliminary questions used in this research were created with my interests, while the questions designed for the second round of the interviews were pertaining to the concerns of the participants (Charmaz, 2002). Before scheduling the second round of interviews, I went over the transcriptions of each participant's first interview, to determine what I was missing, as well as to determine what new questions I could generate to ask the participants. This process also served the purpose in determining if I was obtaining my preliminary goals; as Wolcott (2001) states, "a first step is to compile what you have in the draft in hand with what you promised or implied in your original problem statement" (p. 111). Although the first interviews followed a semi-structured approach, where all participants were asked the

same questions, the second interviews were similar in the semi-structured approach. What differentiated them was the fact that certain questions were created for each participant; “they explore and examine research participants’ concerns and then further develop questions around those concerns, subsequently seeking participants whose experiences speak to these questions” (Charmaz, 2002, p. 676). With the remaining time at the end of the second interviews, conversations transitioned into open discussions centering on the participants’ experiences of their identity and adjustment pertaining to their adoptions and rearing experiences.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of my research, I relied on the strategies recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2006) including using participant language, mechanically recording data, and member checking and participant review. Charmaz (2002) emphasizes the significance of using the lexicon participants use, to assist with the flow of the interview. Fontana and Frey (2000) further develop this notion by articulating the use of the language is significant in the “creation of a ‘sharedness of meanings’ in which both interviewer and respondent understand the contextual nature of specific referents” (p. 660); therefore, no members of the study become lost in translation.

To achieve the second recommendation, each interview was voice recorded using a hand-held voice recorder, and was transcribed verbatim. The significance of using a voice recorder is promoted in Poland’s (2002) article “*Transcription quality*,” where he explains how voice recordings and transcriptions serve multiple purposes. First, they make the information readily available for the researcher at all times. By having the

content of the interviews in textual form, it simplifies the process of going back and forth from one transcription to the next, especially when it is time to code and categorize the common themes. Also, using a voice recorder, I was able to re-listen to the content for accuracy verbatim, as well as for meaning and intonation. As Poland (2002) points out, the shared relationship between the researcher and the participants could have a bearing on how statements in the interviews are heard and interpreted. All transcriptions were proof-read to incorporate a notation system for nonverbal cues such as prolonged pauses and sighs to name a few (see Appendix D).

The third recommendation requires the researcher to work closely with the participants to ensure clarification of the data for future accuracy in conveying their messages. Participants were e-mailed all versions of their transcribed interviews and were asked to read them over to ensure they were satisfied with the contents, and to clarify any ambiguities, therefore elucidating credibility (Poland, 2002). In member checking, participants were assisting in sorting out the data and were provided with the opportunity to elaborate on any vague responses, thereby making them collaborators in the research. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of member checking corroborates with what Gunzenhauser (2006) explores in his article "*A moral epistemology of knowing subjects: Theorizing a relational turn for qualitative research*," when he puts emphasis on how we, as a society, make assumptions about people and their lives. In the most convenient definition, there needs to exist a deeper sense of mutuality, inferring to a solidarity of what was said and what is meant to be said.

Journals

Poland (2002) points out that it is relevant that researchers capture the social reality of their interviews and suggests that researchers do so by using journals and memoing. With each interview, I kept a journal which served to record my thoughts and observations. Journal writing was done prior to each interview, recording my sentiments and emotions prior to the meeting, as well as listing any additional questions that might have surfaced in preparation. Richardson (1994) emphasizes that keeping a journal provides researchers with opportunities to document their feelings about their work. Janesick (1991) recommends that all researchers try and keep an ethnographic journal throughout the research process. By doing so, one can look at the relationships that stem within a system or culture; it centers on understanding rather than predicting the given social setting.

Post interviews, my journal entries served as a historical record that aided in my narration, and what I experienced during the interviews. All in all, as Richardson (1994) has stated, writing should be seen as a process of discovery. It is a method of inquiry that allows researchers to learn about themselves and their topic, and it may clarify some aspects of the interview context (Poland, 2002). Some tools outlined by Richardson (1994) include: (a) use 'writing up' field notes as an opportunity to expand one's writing vocabulary, habits of thought, and attentiveness of senses; (b) give different labels to different content, such as 'Observational notes (ON),' 'Methodological notes (MN),' 'Theoretical notes (TN),' and 'Personal notes (PN)'; (c) keep a journal, where one writes about one's feelings concerning one's work; and (d) experiment with writing narratives of the self.

Memoing

An additional tool that was used during data collection was memoing. Memoing was used throughout two processes of the study. The first process of memoing was carried out in the interviews that were conducted face-to-face; it involved paying attention to the nonverbal cues of the participants. As Janesick (1991) points out, memoing permits the researcher to document the nonverbal behaviour or outside distractions that take place during the times of the interviews. Additional nonverbal cues that I noted were paralinguistic and incorporated paying attention to pitch, volume, and quality of voice in participants' responses (Poland, 2002), as well as the chronemics, such as the participants' pacing of speech and their lengths in silences (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Memos taken during the interviews could help generate new questions for the participants and the research. Where keeping a journal entailed more descriptive accounts of our interviews and my personal reflections during each interview, memoing served the purpose of a checklist; I collaborated with the participants post interviews, to clarify any ambiguities of which I had taken note.

The second purpose goes hand-in-hand with the works of Corbin (1986), where memos can help capture core ideas, as well as document any recurring themes. Memos show theory developing gradually and permit the researcher to maintain a record of the data as well as order them; "it is in memos that hypotheses are recorded, compared, verified, modified, or changed as new data comes in" (p. 108). Three different types of memoing are outlined by Ryan and Bernard (2000): (1) 'code notes' which are described as the concepts that are being discovered; (2) 'theory notes,' where researchers try to summarize their ideas about what is going on in text; and (3) 'operational notes,' which

are about practical matters. In simpler terms, the use of memos connects the data with any original interpretation researchers may hold with their findings, and forces them to avoid imposing these findings to any preliminary theories.

Data Analysis

Software

I wanted to find the best approach to analyzing my data. Using information obtained from various literature sources and several of my peers, I decided to use the computer program Atlas/ti because it was highly recommended. Having a program that would help show consistency in the data was important to me (Weitzman, 2000). Several weeks after my first interview, I came to the realization that Atlas/ti was not working in my best interest. Although I still believe in its usefulness, I found that I was not able to adapt it to my needs; I quickly became overwhelmed by the amount of time it was taking me to carry out the simplest of tasks. Halfway through my interviews, I made the decision to abandon the use of this software.

Instead I decided on code-and-retrieve programs because I believed that they would be more conducive to my needs. Since all my documents were typed, I began by applying labels to the data. The labels included the aforementioned observational, theoretical, and methodological notes. Additionally, I applied category codes to all of the documents. The category codes were the domains of the original research questions that I set out to answer, namely, identity development, education, adjustment, and concerns for future generations of Transracial adoptees. The use of these labels and category codes facilitated in retrieving the various texts (Weitzman, 2000). I could enter key terms and

all the documents that contained said terms would be retrieved. Scanning through the documents to see in what context the terms were being used, I could organize documents by concepts or categories. In essence, the use of labels and category codes assisted with taking notes, memoing, coding and categorizing, and linking data, which enabled me to specify relationships among the codes and link the content together (Weitzman, 2000).

Coding and Categorizing

When it came time to code and categorize the data, each interview was coded individually. As a novice researcher, I looked at the three main recommendations outlined by Ryan and Bernard (2000) in their article “*Data management and analysis methods*” on the objectives of any researcher: (1) identifying the range and salience of key items and concepts; (2) discovering the relationships among these items and concepts; and (3) building and testing models linking these concepts together. To identify the key items and concepts, I began by using search-and-retrieve software to see the salience of key terms. For each participant, I created an idea map, which had the key terms and their responses from our interviews. Having followed this method, I was able to identify recurring themes among the participants, and to ascertain the relationships among the participants.

To assist me in the building of models, I looked over each participant’s transcriptions and inserted a table with three columns to assist in categorizing: (1) Interview Notes; (2) Initial Code; and (3) Recode (Corbin, 1986). All interview questions and the participant responses were placed in the first column. In the ‘initial code’ column, I wrote down the key concepts and terms that the participants stated in their responses. After reading and rereading the transcriptions, I inserted the recode in the third column;

by recode, I was indicating under which of the main four domains the responses could be classified. In doing this, I was able to further conceptualize my initial codes, to ensure that each code fell under the appropriate domain (Corbin, 1986). This process was repeated several times, with all drafts titled, dated, cross-referenced, and filed for safe-keeping.

After coding all transcriptions, I reviewed all documents that were used within data collection including interview transcripts, journals, and memos, to look at all the content collectively, and to confirm that I was not forgetting anything (Hodder, 2000; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Subsequently, I examined all of the accumulated data and separated them into three piles: (1) Fact or Incident; (2) Code or Conceptual Label; and (3) Theoretical Notes (Corbin, 1986), which aided in different segments of the analysis. The pile for 'fact or incident' helped in writing the biographies for each participant, while the pile for 'code or conceptual label' was compiled to assist in writing the character profiles and findings for each participant. 'Theoretical notes' outlined my train of thought throughout the data collection period and also provided support in generating the common themes across the four participants. All additional coding was written in the margins of all documents, to assure nothing was lost or misplaced (Corbin, 1986).

After all documents were coded and categorized, I repeatedly read over the documents to determine three main features. First, I needed to identify the contexts within which responses had similar meanings. Then I needed to identify the similarities and differences across the contexts. Finally, I needed to measure the findings from the study against the literature (Hodder, 2000). Because data collection spreads across

participant interviews and multiple literatures, coding assisted in developing themes and finding links between the specific groups (Charmaz, 2002).

The process of these interviews allowed me to tell the unique and personal stories of each participant. Although the stories may not generate sentiments of uniqueness, they are special for each participant. They provide a narrative outlining the emotional and perhaps obstacle-filled road each person travelled to represent who he or she is today. Although the literature on identity development explicitly explains that the formation of an identity is a life-long journey, I believe that these participants' experiences can help to shine light on others in similar situations. To further elaborate on this point, I would like to incorporate a quote mentioned in Roorda's (2007) article, when she provides the analogy of adoption with that of jazz music and poetry: "it cannot be fully felt or appreciated in isolation. It needs to be heard in its entirety" (p. 135).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

“Speaking is half his that speaks, and half his that hears; the last of which ought to prepare himself to receive it, according to its motion and rebound” (de Montaigne as cited in Chandler, 2002, p. 180).

I have a great appreciation for the above quote. I was introduced to it from a book I was reading in my semiotics class. The course itself focused on the construct of semiotics and how one may interpret something someone else has said, depending on the person’s tone, quality of voice, pitch and pacing of the statement. It draws attention to the notion that, as listeners, we often cloud what we hear with what we want to hear. I was absolutely fascinated with this viewpoint, because I am a firm believer that often what we say is not really being heard by others as we intended. The reason as to why I decided to incorporate the quote above was to remind myself that one may be put in the position to tell someone’s story and that it is imperative that as an audience member we fully listen to what the speaker is actually saying.

In preparation for this chapter, I went back to the journal records that I was keeping for my interviews with my participants. For a small amount of time, I found that I had mentally escaped to the time of the interviews that had recently passed. I remember sitting down prior to my first interview and recording my feelings. Simply said, I was a nervous wreck. I recall the emotion of nervousness prior to the interview for a number of reasons, but only one is worthy of mention; it had dawned on me that there was no turning back at this point. I could no longer make up excuses for myself as to what I would be doing with regards to this study; I could no longer talk about this study in

foresight. This study was no longer a figment of my imagination; instead, imagination had become reality, and the future was right now.

Yume

²*On the first evening that I set-out to post my recruitment posters, I was amid the coffee shop that is situated next door to my old place of employment. I walked over to the bulletin board of the coffee shop, when I was interrupted by a female outfitted in the uniform of my old employment. She approached me, wanting to know more about my study. After reciting a similar speech I had said to countless others in an attempt to explain my study, the female equated her interest in the fact that she was Transracially adopted; she was probably one of the few people, to whom I did not have to define the term "Transracially." We exchanged contact info, and I thanked her for her interest in my study.*

For several weeks, the female (who would like to be called "Yume," which means dream in Japanese) and I exchanged information via text messaging and e-mail. We met for our preliminary meetings at various coffee shops, where we discussed my study and her future interests. We talked extensively about my research and our experiences concerning the theme of identity. In truth, she was quite persistent about participating in the study;

² The change in handwriting is a narrative account of how the interviews with each participant came to be. It captures my thoughts and emotions throughout my field work, and is taken from my journals and memos.

she kept on messaging me to set up a date for our first interview. I was elated by her eagerness to participate in my study.

For our first interview, we met in the food court of a local shopping center. The mall was deserted, absent of the recent holiday hysteria, which permitted us to talk comfortably. Just before I began the interview, I was experiencing a bit of nervousness and, as I began the voice recording, Yume broke into laughter. When I asked why, she simply replied that it was to break the awkward silence. According to her, my nervousness was transparent. She informed me that everything was going to be okay and that I had nothing to be nervous about. Her candour put me at ease.

The first interview went very well but Yume had revealed something to me that bothered me a bit. Yume's mother was not happy with the idea that she not only would be meeting up with a stranger, but also that she would be discussing her adoption. At that time, I was a little uneasy with proceeding with the interview, solely because I was not sure if Yume would follow through with the second interview. However, something inside me told me to ignore the information and to just proceed with the interview.

For the second interview, we decided to meet at a local coffee shop. As soon as Yume took her seat, she once again began by bursting out laughing. I immediately knew why. However, the truth was that I was not nervous this time around. We proceeded by going over the transcriptions to our first interview. It was during member checking that Yume confessed that she had an intimate conversation with her mother regarding my study

and her involvement. Yume came forth and explained that her mother had had her apprehensions because she was unsure of how I would portray the topic of Transracial adoption. Yume explained to her that that was not the case and that she really wanted to participate, mainly because she could talk about her adoption with someone who was simply there to listen and not attach his opinions to her experiences. I must admit, I was pleased to hear this information and only then, did I finally understand Yume's eagerness to participate in my study. We relocated to a different coffee shop with our interview lasting for nearly 75 minutes.

Yume is a 19-year-old female, the youngest of my participants. She has graduated from high school and has opted to enter into vocational education. She is in the midst of switching programs, and has been accepted to electrician school. She is fully bilingual in Canada's two native languages, regardless of being raised in the dominant English-speaking province of Nova Scotia and having acquired an English education. Our interview sessions were carried out in English.

General Information

Yume was born in Peru, and was several days old when she was adopted by a Quebecois family. Her parents had travelled to Peru to adopt two children. Originally, they had all of the necessary documents to adopt two children. However, according to Yume, something had happened to one of the children and her parents were devastated at the thought of returning home with one child. Yume was several days old when she was brought to her adoptive parents from a tiny village near where her parents resided while finalizing her adopted sister's paperwork. Yume remains in the dark as to why her birth

family opted to give her up for adoption and is content with remaining ignorant of their motives. As soon as all the adoption paperwork was finalized, Yume and her family moved to the province of Nova Scotia where her parents were hoping to start a new chapter in their lives, in a new location.

Identity Development

Due to Yume's closed adoption and the fact that she has had no real involvement with any people from Peru, she has a feeling of disconnect from her birth culture. She is honest with others when they inquire about her knowledge of Peru, stating that all she knows is that they speak Spanish and that the people of Peru really enjoy celebrating Halloween. Aside from these basic facts, she does not feel that she can relate with Peru or its people: "I never really got the chance to learn about my culture...I can say that I was never really given the chance to learn about my culture since I was adopted and my parents really wouldn't know anything about it." Not only has Yume not had the opportunity to revisit Peru; however, according to her, her parents have also sadly painted for her a poor depiction of the country. They are worried about the current state of the country and feel that it is too dangerous for Yume or her sister to revisit. Although she has not gone back, one day she would like to.

Equally, due to her being visibly different from her parents, Yume does not identify with her adoptive culture either. Yume's parents were born in the province in Quebec, and her father's family has a long history there. Her mother is of Belgian descent, but her family members largely consider themselves as Quebecers and view their culture as being that. As for Yume, although she has a Quebecois last name, she cannot hide the fact that she looks different from members of her family, and so, always informs

people that she is adopted. She is honest about her adoption because she is conscious that it will elicit questions from individuals who see her with her family. She listed a number of common questions but the one that surfaces the most frequently is “aren’t you Spanish or something like that?” It is for these reasons that Yume sometimes regards her adoption as a double-edged sword. She cannot fit in with her fellow Peruvians because she does not speak the language and is not well informed about the culture and traditions, and, at the same time, she does not really fit in with native Quebecers because she feels like she stands out like a sore thumb. There are many times when Yume does not feel that she can identify herself culturally: “I can’t identify myself culturally, except that I can say that I am a little bit of everything.” In sum, Yume views her cultural identity as being an amalgamation of everyone she has met in her life and with whom she has built a friendship and relationship. As Yume puts it, “I’m just creating my own little world.”

For Yume, what is imperative is developing her personal ideology on culture, which has progressed since she has moved to a more heterogeneous location. She views Montreal as more multicultural than Nova Scotia: “Quebec has a lot of different cultures, so I can learn from them.” Quintessentially, she relishes the diversity since it is a drastic change from her upbringing from a small town in a rural area, that was absent of racial and cultural diversity: “When I was young, I was surrounded by only White people, and when I moved here, it was something new and something I liked because it was exciting to see all the different cultures. It’s nice to learn about other people’s cultures.” As a child, Yume never paid much mind to the logistics of race and culture; it was only when she reached her adolescence that she faced such topics. When Yume entered high school in Nova Scotia, she could not hide from the racism that existed around her. She was told

on several accounts that she was hated because she was different: “People...didn’t really like me, because like I had told you, because I looked like I was Chinese. For some reason, they didn’t like Chinese people, so...they would like just say they hated me.” Sadly, even when Yume would inform people of her origins, they would retaliate by saying that they still hated her. It is clear that Yume has had to constantly deal with issues pertaining to her identity and her being Transracially adopted. Discrimination by members of her community was no exception.

Regardless of her experiences, Yume does not find it difficult to discuss her adoption. She has had a lot to deal with in her youth, including the divorce of her parents, so she does not spend much time dwelling on the topic of her identity nor her adoption. However, there was a period after she was told by her parents that she had biological siblings, when she began reflecting about her origins: “I do think about, why I was adopted...why only me...and not the other children.” Finding out that she had siblings briefly plagued her with questions of her adoption. She began to ask herself questions such as why her and not any of the other children? What were the reasons around her being given up for adoption? Although she has all of these lingering questions, Yume has no desire to meet members of her birth family. However, it was during this time that she began to think that it might be beneficial for Transracial adoptees to learn about their adoptive cultures.

Education

When Yume was enrolled in elementary school, she was living in a homogeneous community. As a child, she was keen on believing that peers her age were not concerned with the topic of her adoption. As she points out, children are children, and they simply

want to play. Instead, it was often the parents of these children who exhibited disapproval of their children's friendships: "I know when I was little, some parents would, wouldn't like it or wouldn't like their kids to play with me because I was different." Yume becomes saddened when thinking back to these occasions, because memories of unacceptability from members of her community might very well be the driving force that fuels newer generations' unwillingness to accept diversity in others.

For Yume, when Transracial adoptees enter high school is an exceptionally crucial period in their lives, because, at this point, adoptees are most probably attempting to sort out their cultural identities. According to Yume, children in this stage of their lives will most probably have a firm understanding of who they are and how they want to represent themselves: "They would know a lot about their own culture and would like to stick with it." Yume now laughs at all the comments that were made at her expense concerning her identity, but acknowledges that adoptees have weeded out all their kinks concerning their adjustment with the identity, because people around them could often subject them to harsh criticism. When she moved to Montreal, Yume initially had a hard time building connections with her new peers. She was in that awkward stage of adolescence, when people have already cemented their groups of friends and have a hard time letting new people in. Some of the first people she befriended happened to also be visible minorities, some of whom just happened to be Transracially adopted themselves. These friendships helped alleviate the complexes and insecurities Yume had about her identity and adoption. Yet, there was no escaping those people who would bring up their own negative opinions on adoption. A prime example is how many of her peers often told

her about their sentiments concerning her adoption. They would expect her to be well informed on her birth culture:

Like, some people would bring up the fact that I am adopted, and then ask questions about my birth parents. They would say their opinions on the fact that I am adopted and that I should only care about my adoptive parents or not care about my birth parents... but they don't know my situation.

Yume's experiences led to an enormous dislike of multicultural week. She avoided it like the plague. Yume's teachers and fellow classmates expected her to present on Peru, and have ties to the culture: "I just didn't want to talk about the culture when I don't know a lot about it." She generally escaped getting involved by telling them that she was adopted at a very young age, and knew nothing of Peruvian culture. There were times in Yume's education when her teachers made her feel inferior: "Teachers, I would say were okay but some were... less interested in me sometimes I would say, maybe because I was from another country." There were instances when teachers would press her for information concerning her origins and Peru, and Yume was left feeling disengaged from the classroom: "It's just that I don't really know anything about that culture and people expect you to know everything about it." There were even some cases where Yume would approach her teachers and inform them of her situation and how it made her feel. Unbelievably to Yume, some teachers responded by saying: "You should know where you came from." Yume feels that teachers should be accepting of adoptees and not display any sentiments as to the child being disadvantaged for being adopted or different, and should overall, look at the situation positively.

Adjustment

Adjusting to her adoption was not an easy task for Yume. Frequently, when people discover that Yume is adopted, she receives negative reactions: changes in

people's facial expressions, harsh words, racism, prejudice and discrimination, and worst of all, people's unwillingness to accept her for who she is. Regardless of the context, Yume refuses to dwell on such incidents. A self-described pacifist, Yume instead focuses all of her attention to the family members and friends who were there for her during these times. The main reason Yume has adjusted to her adoption is thanks to her parents. Ever since Yume can remember, her parents have always been honest with Yume about her adoption: "Ever since I was young they told me that pretty much every day that I was adopted." Yume believes that her parents' honesty helped brace them for public scrutiny, especially as Yume and her sister do not resemble their parents:

When they see me together with my mom, they know that something is different, and that maybe I might look more like my dad, or on my dad's side... or probably that I was adopted... they wouldn't think that I was her child.

Being relatively close in age, Yume and her sister were able to share their intimate thoughts and feedback during hard times. Often, they have had to deal with insensitive and invasive questions from society and sometimes, from people with whom they were friends. With all of the public commotion centered around their adoptions, in the end, they were comforted to have each other. Their bond was especially useful when coping with situations or topics both were not comfortable sharing with their parents, such as queries about their birth parents and families: "We thought that they might be hurt if we were thinking about our real parents."

Another staple in Yume's adjustment were her friends. Yume was delighted upon relocating to Montreal and making friends with other Transracially adopted individuals: "It was kind of nice knowing that people were also adopted, so I could speak to them sometimes. It was nice." She was enrolling into a new high school, living in a new

location, and entering into adolescence during a very relevant transition period. Yume acknowledges that, initially, the thought of attending a new school, at a time when some adolescents might not be welcoming to strangers, was quite the challenge. She recalls that the first person with whom she made friends was another Transracial adoptee. She shares the story of how she was asked by her teacher to provide the class with a quick summary of who she was, and how she shared with them her adoption. Immediately after, her friend approached her confessing that she too was Transracially adopted from China; the two became immediate friends thanks to their conversations centered on their adoptions: “We couldn’t always talk about it with other people.” Having friends who were Transracially adopted assisted in Yume’s adjustment and fortifying her confidence. Yume regards these friendships as the missing pieces that both her parents and sister could not fill: “And talking about it with our parents, just... it just didn’t feel right for us. Some things, you just want to talk about it with people of our own age.” These friendships, combined with the love and support of her family, have contributed to Yume’s character and her coming into her own.

Yume does not shy away from the topic of her adoption. She is candid about it and all she has had to deal with: “I don’t really mind coming out and saying that I’m adopted to anyone. It’s just something that is so natural to me now.” Generally, the problems that she has had to face begin with people’s invasive questioning. The problem is that people often want to know more about her experiences and, at times, they can be intrusive and not respectful of boundaries. Although this is a common occurrence, Yume does not hold this intrusive questioning against people: “Here I can probably understand because people always want to know about other people’s cultures.” The real challenges

of people's questions are that at times, it could become irritating answering the same questions repeatedly: "There were some people who just like... who were asking me... many questions that I couldn't answer." Additionally, with many people's posing of questions, come individuals who voice their sentiments concerning the topic.

One incident that will forever remain clear in Yume's memories was the response she received from a classmate. His background was Peruvian, and when it was brought to his attention that Yume was adopted from there, he shared his disgust for her and the fact that she was not proud enough to have learned about the country's traditions and history, or even more, speak its language. When Yume informed him that it was out of her control, seeing as she was adopted at several days old and had no way of learning both the language and about Peru, the classmate did not show any sympathy. When I asked her for her feelings regarding that incident and how it still makes her feel, Yume could not hide the truth that she was and still is very hurt from that situation: "He should have realized that sometimes, when you're adopted, you don't know about where you came from... and... you don't get to know about your culture." Although this incident will most likely forever stay branded in Yume's memories, she refuses to allow it to define her or her adoption. She truly believes that she is fortunate to have lived the life she has, and to have shared it with such wonderful and significant people.

Concerns for Future Generations

Although Yume believes that today's generations of Transracial adoptees and their experiences will be slightly different from those of her generation, she trusts that there are certain aspects that will remain the same. Yume believes that it never becomes easier for adoptees to discuss their adoption because there are many emotions that are

attached to it; however, with maturity, one can address the topic without one's emotions being apparent to others. Yume clarifies that there comes a time when conversing about one's adoption becomes part of a natural process. She recommends that adoptees learn from their experiences and learn to apply them to figuring out who they are and how they want to represent themselves: "When you get older, you figure out that being adopted has a certain meaning, and you can learn from it." At the same time, Yume firmly believes that it will be emblematic of future generations of adoptees to struggle with identity and adjustment, based on the simple principle that they will always have unanswered questions: "When you are of a different culture, and you don't know anything, it's kind of hard to fit in." It is for these reasons that Yume holds a conflicting and maybe contradictory attitude concerning adoptees learning about their birth culture. On the one hand, she understands why some adoptees may not want to learn about their birth culture. It could be challenging, and there might always be a feeling of not being able to relate or being unaccepted. On the other hand, Yume believes it is imperative that adoptees be raised with knowledge of their adoption and their birth culture. Parents should assist their children in learning about their birth country, its culture and traditions, and, if possible, its language.

Yume believes that parents play an instrumental role in their Transracially adopted children's identity development and adjustment. Fundamentally, the parents are the ones who plant the roots to their children's overall progression of accepting themselves and their adoption. It is the responsibility of the parents to assist in their child(ren)'s learning of their birth history and culture. It would be beneficial for the adoptees to know the truth of their origins because it will assist in the answering of the

barrage of questions they will undoubtedly receive from others. This knowledge will especially come in handy when adoptees reach their adolescence; when they are faced with questions of their origins and identity. Yume does not shy away from the trials and tribulations she faced when she entered high school. In her opinion, high school is an era in one's life that is impacted by the connections one makes. It is a time when being social could have precedence over everything else. One of Yume's primary concerns is that she is worried that some people might not bestow Transracial adoptees a fair chance.

Transracial adoptees will already be facing hardship with a slew of often unanswered questions concerning their adoptions, their identities, and perhaps their origins:

They might sometimes be thinking and asking themselves, why they are adopted? ... Like why me?... Or like why or how could our parents just like, give us away?... like without telling them or like giving the adopting parents a letter to let them know... some of these questions don't have answers.

She feels that Transracial adoptees should be forewarned that there will be incidents where people might not accept them and view their adoption negatively. For Yume, intolerance is frustrating because outsiders really have no reason to look at adoption in that fashion.

Analysis of Yume

Yume has faced many hardships being Transracially adopted. Although she is curious about many cultures, it is apparent that she is bewildered by the fact that she has no real connection to any culture. Whereas many families distinguish their identity by their cultures and heredity, Yume's family has solely focused on language. Coming from Quebec, her parents were raised with the notion to preserve their language and transferred this concept onto their children. Essentially, Yume has an unidentified culture; it is a fusion of the cultures of everyone with whom she has built a friendship or relationship

over time. This fusion incorporates little aspects of everyone's identity that she finds interesting. Yet, there are pieces that Yume has incorporated in her identity that she does not fully understand. An example is how Yume discussed how she was interested in one of her friend's culture. Her friend's lineage is from communist Korea. Yume stated she was interested in their culture as well as concerned about the turmoil that existed there; she went on to say that she was interested in perhaps adopting a child from there. However, when I asked her what about their culture she found interesting or she felt she could relate to, Yume did not answer.

Yume has experienced real challenges with her identity. Although Yume is adopted from Peru, rarely has anyone speculated correctly what her origins are. Growing up, when people were informed that she was adopted, many made the assumption that she was adopted from China. For Yume, it was difficult to feel attached to her Peruvian culture when everything was working against her. She had no real exposure to her culture, she never made connections with people from a Peruvian background, and she did not resemble members of her birth culture. Where Yume discussed one of her friends who was adopted somewhere from Africa and her friend having a solid understanding of both her racial and cultural background, Yume shared that she was not as fortunate. Yume's journey with her identity formation was complicated even more being raised in a community that lacked racial and cultural differences.

Mortimer

Mortimer learned about my study in a casual conversation with an old co-worker of mine. I had met with that co-worker for coffee earlier that week, when I was explaining to him concerns of finding participants for my study. In a subsequent conversation between Mortimer and my friend, it had come up that Mortimer was adopted, and my friend, remembering his conversation with me, told Mortimer about my study. Interested in learning more, Mortimer asked that we meet, so that we could converse about my study, and what would be the extent of his involvement, should he agree to participate. We met in the food court of the local mall, where we chatted about my study. Although our conversation seemed to deviate from the topic of my study, we continued to converse about things of mutual interest, such as music, pop culture, and education.

Within our initial gathering, Mortimer had informed me of three different bits of information: First, he would be interested in participating in my study, under the condition that our interviews take place on the telephone. Second, this would not be the first study in which Mortimer had participated concerning the topic of adoption. Although he had taken part in what he refers to as countless other studies, the others did not deal with the topic of identity development and adjustment. Third, was the fact that our paths had crossed before that day. Apparently, we had worked together. I worked at the same establishment for a little over 10 years, and, during that time, I had seen many people come and go from the company.

Apparently, for the duration of his time with the company, I was anything but pleasant to work with, and, given my mental timeline of when Mortimer was there, I can only agree. So it was to my surprise that Mortimer would even consider participating, given our unpleasant history. Yet, Mortimer assured me that our history is a thing of the past.

I would characterize Mortimer as being straightforward; he dives right into issues. Where some people might feel intimidated to approach someone with this characteristic, I find it relatively easy, considering the fact that many people who know me would classify me similarly. He is insightful in linking much of his opinions to his personal experiences, and those of his close friends and family members. Additionally, I would typify him as being unapologetic for who he is and how he represents himself, something I quickly took notice of during the course of our interviews.

Our first phone interview was carried out on an evening that Mortimer had selected. We corresponded via text messaging and e-mails beforehand. Tuesday evenings generally worked best for him, so we selected the following Tuesday. I stayed in the confines of my bedroom, preparing for the interview. We dove right into the interview, which lasted roughly an hour. After the interview session was completed, we spoke for an additional 20 minutes, setting up the date and time to our next interview, and talking casually about aspects of our lives, such as education and friendships.

The second interview followed an identical routine as our first, in that it was held on a Tuesday evening, was done over the telephone, and

lasted roughly an hour. Again, once our interview was completed, we conversed about ourselves, but this time, our conversation steered in a more personal direction; we were talking about our brush with illnesses. Similar to each other, we found ourselves in a time of our lives when we were actually free of any obligations. We were freshly graduated from our institutions of learning, and we were eagerly looking forward to the prospect of our futures. Yet, we found that our personal goals for ourselves were put on the backburner, due to illness that was out of our control.

Mortimer is a 23-year-old male and is the only participant to not be internationally adopted. He is also the only participant to have had contact with certain members of his birth family. He graduated high school, and then went into college. Half way through his first year at college, Mortimer decided to put his education on hold to travel and tour North America as a member of a band. He recently returned from his adventure, half-heartedly because he became ill. After several months of medical mayhem, Mortimer is well and excited about recommencing school. He is slated to attend university as a mature student this fall. Although he is uncertain of which program direction he wants to head in, he envisions himself in business.

General Information

Mortimer was domestically adopted at one month old. He is not knowledgeable about his living environment during his first month, and, at the same time, unconcerned about his experience during that month. In his opinion, he regards his adoption as being a rapid process. He is biracial and was adopted in a Jewish-Canadian home, where the parents had been trying to have children for some time. After a long duration of trying,

Mortimer's parents opted to look into alternative methods. Together, they made the decision to adopt and contacted an adoption agency. Within months, they adopted Mortimer. After a couple of years, they decided to adopt another child, a Caucasian little girl from the United States.

He describes himself as being laidback, admitting that he enjoys sitting back and observing people in their natural demeanours. He believes that this tendency often leads people to view him as being quiet. Additionally, he considers himself to be independent and ambitious. He has great pride in himself, and enjoys the feeling of overcoming his obstacles and challenging his self-appointed goals. Additionally, Mortimer describes himself as creative and inspired. When we further discussed these two points, he went on to say that he selected them in view of his love of music, in that he had put all his academic and professional aspirations on hold, to focus on his aspirations and passion for touring with his other band members. Although some may view this as an act of impulse, Mortimer perceives this decision as fulfilling his lifelong dream. His ideology is that there is nothing sadder than not acting on one's dreams.

Identity Development

Mortimer does not find it difficult to discuss his adoption with others: "I'm comfortable with the conversation and what people will ask." He does not beat around the bush about his adoption or the fact that he is visibly different from his family. When asked his identity, he informs people that he is a Canadian mixed-race and Transracially adopted. Although he was raised in a Jewish-Canadian household and environment, he does not really associate himself with the religion or members of the community: "I decided for the most part, it definitely was not my thing. I like multiculturalism. I like

learning about different religions and learning about different viewpoints.” Similarly, with his outlook on identity, Mortimer does not envision himself conforming to just one ideology or way of being: “I’m more diverse than one-dimensional.”

His outlook in life has contributed to him self-educating on different religions and cultures: “Learning about culture is important. It makes you worldly. It makes you knowledgeable.” While he enjoys these two facets of multiculturalism, Mortimer is not keen on learning different languages, as he has found it challenging to grasp languages other than English. Although Mortimer was educated in the English sector, he still had to learn French. While he can understand and read French, Mortimer sometimes finds it hard to speak French fluently. He would only learn other languages such as Spanish, Italian, and German, for their business potential. Ideally, he feels that he can relate with most cultures. Being biracial, or as he refers to it, mixed-race, Mortimer is comfortable with the Black and White communities. Even though he finds that he can assimilate with members of either race, he does not like to attach himself to any label, mainly because he is quite happy staying in the self-designated ‘neutral zone.’

Staying in the ‘neutral zone’ has enabled Mortimer to avoid the politics of race. When questioned about his origins, he typically pronounces that he is Canadian. In truth, identifying himself as Canadian is all he knows. Many people are not content with this response and further question him about his background, apparently not being enough for someone who is a visible minority, whether a first-generation or a fifth-generation Canadian. This approach outrages Mortimer and so, he typically responds by stating that he is mixed-race. This answer generally ends all further inquiries into his origins. When asked how he would like others to describe him, Mortimer affirms that he would expect

people to refer to him as mixed-race: “Mixed-race. Simple. Because I don’t know what I am. If someone were to describe me, they should be describing me like that.” When further questioned on the topic of his identity, Mortimer finds his identity is forged through his experiences: “It came with knowing about my situation from a very young age.” While Mortimer experiences no difficulties conversing about such topics as his adoption or his identity, it becomes apparent that there exists a haziness about his background.

Several years ago, Mortimer was frustrated with all the questions he had concerning his origins. Additionally, when people generally uncovered that he was Transracially adopted, they often posed questions for which he had no answers. He decided to sit down with his family and inform them that he was interested in finding out about his origins: “I’m kind of interested in finding out who I am...and like, what my history is.” Although his parents did not play a part in his quest for information regarding his origins, they were very supportive of his decision. Mortimer then “took the initiative to...it was mainly to discover what my origins are.” His quest began with the basics: “I was looking mainly for origin, like just my background. And like my, my genetics.” It was a two-year process that began with Mortimer contacting the adoption agency and informing them that he was interested in finding out information about his genetics and background. The adoption agency was informative and was able to provide him with some answers. Time passed, and then Mortimer was contacted by his birth mother. She had been informed from the adoption agency that Mortimer was in search of information. His contact with his birth mother provided him with partial information regarding his racial background. His birth mother is a mix of different European cultures. As for his

birth father, all that was revealed was that he is Black: “I’m completely in the dark about my...well my...at least my father’s side.”

Ultimately, Mortimer put to an end all contact with his birth mother. His initial intention was to gather information, and he was not really in search of a reunion or continuous contact with his birth family. For any adoptee contemplating going in search of information, Mortimer found the process relatively easy but forewarns that adoptees might not receive the wanted outcome: “I didn’t really get the answers that I needed in the end.” Eventually, he realized the only real answer he required was the one that he had all along. He had a family that loved him and nurtured his identity: “Home is like where you were raised and your parents are, are those who raised you.”

Somewhere in the middle of our interviews, our discussion deviated from the original questions, and we began speaking about the debate of nature versus nurture. Mortimer believes that his identity is composed of both of these two constructs. On the one hand, he understands that the person he is today is heavily influenced by the support of his parents and how they raised him. He shares many viewpoints with his parents and believes that his character is encompassing of the nurturing of his parents and other family members. On the other hand, Mortimer has come to the conclusion that he has acquired some skills from his birth parents: “After finding out about my birth parents, I found out that I acquired skills from, from my birth parents.” He considers himself as a good writer and has found out that his birth mother is a journalist. Furthermore, Mortimer is a drummer and his real passion is music, and he found out from his birth mother that his biological father is in the music scene: “I developed a talent and a passion for music, and I learned that my biological father was heavily involved in the music background.”

Education

When Mortimer first began primary school, his parents decided to enrol him in a Jewish private school. Unbeknownst to them, Mortimer would end up being the only mixed-race student there: “In elementary school I had gone to a Jewish elementary school and I was, I think I was the only mixed-raced child there.” He was persistently teased about his racial difference and, although it may have been unnerving at the time, he harbours no grudges. He understands that people typically point out differences with their reactions being fuelled by others: “I think that mainly, when it came to my school, the problem was that people were more segregated.” Although he does not condone such actions, he understands that they are representative of real-life situations. Mortimer’s parents selected this particular private school because they believed that Mortimer would be in an environment that would nurture his acquisition of the Hebrew language and that he would be educated on the customs of the Judaic faith. What they did not anticipate was the obstacles he would face, an experience best described as striking: “I felt as though there was a bit of a culture barrier.” After several years in the private sector, Mortimer’s parents realized that he was not adjusting accordingly in that school environment. When Mortimer was entering Grade 4, they collectively decided to transfer him to a public school that was more heterogeneous and more diverse in setting. Mortimer admits that he adjusted better in the public sector: “I switched schools and I felt more in my element.” Not only was he surrounded by friends, but he was enjoying the multiculturalism that existed around him.

When it comes to teachers and having Transracially adopted students, Mortimer unyieldingly believes that teachers should not involve themselves in students’ personal

lives except in bullying. He prefers those teachers who did not give special attention to him simply because he was adopted. He detested it when teachers would treat him differently and recalls instances where he was not treated fairly, although he refuses to view his adoption as a disadvantage: “Just because...I...I was adopted does not mean that I was at a disadvantage.” He often was made to feel inferior to his peers: “They put me to a disadvantage, and I really wasn’t.” However, he recalls these events in public school to not be as intense as they were when he attended a private school. In most cases, he benefited from teachers who treated him equally to his counterparts. In the end, Mortimer’s transition from the private sector to the public sector helped him become more integrated and assisted in his adjustment with his identity.

Adjustment

Mortimer’s adjustment with his adoption originates with his parents. He believes that he is who he is because he comes from a loving and nurturing family who emit positive vibes. When discussing his parents, he uses words such as humble, kind, and loving to describe them. He respects his parents because they have been honest with him from a very early age and have been candid with their children concerning their adoptions: “They made it of importance to let us know that we were adopted at an early age and understand what that was about and what the reasons were.” His parents’ honesty regarding his adoption was instrumental in his adjustment, for the simple fact that he does not resemble them. Additionally, his parents’ sincerity about the topic supported him in his character and how he lives his life “to allow us to live our lives honestly.” His extended family was also very supportive of his and his sister’s adoption: “It was a pretty

big day for not just my parents, but for my entire family...because, they were bringing someone new” into the family.

The most important lesson that Mortimer has learned from his family is how to carry himself. He believes that he is well adept to handle situations thanks in large part to his family and how his parents raised him: “They’ve always made sure that I understood what was happening, and from then, and from there on, I knew how to handle it.”

Mortimer regards himself as exceedingly independent, and his parents have fostered this independence. When it comes to times of hurdles, Mortimer looks no further than himself to handle the situation: “I am very self-dependent as a person.” Only in drastic situations, does he look to his mother for support: “At extremely desperate times, I will probably, in terms of emotional needs, I would probably turn towards my mom,” such as when he had to quit his band because he became ill. After touring for several months and playing in multiple venues, there came a time when he found that he was not feeling well. After seeing several doctors, he was informed that he had lost functions of his kidneys.

Devastated by the news, his entire family was tested to determine if any one of them was a match to donate one of their kidneys. While both his sister and his mother were matches, his mother decided that she would be the one to donate her kidney. Mortimer’s mother saved his life, and he is forever indebted to her. He cannot deny that his mother is a pinnacle person in his life.

When it comes to Mortimer’s relationship with his sister, he feels that they are dissimilar in many ways. They do not share much of their experiences. While they are both adopted, Mortimer is Transracially adopted, apparent to any outsider when he is next to his parents. As his sister is Caucasian, some people might not be quick to presume

that she is adopted. Additionally, being relatively close in age, sibling rivalry exists between them. Although they love each other very much, they cannot yet work together. Still Mortimer is optimistic about their relationship, and believes that it will only evolve given time. Despite their different experiences, both siblings have positive beliefs about their adoptions, which Mortimer attributes to the love and support of his parents and family.

An additional support for Mortimer is the community in which he was raised. Even though he lives in suburbia, he lives in a multicultural location: “There are people from all around the world and that is just very cool.” Many of his close friends stem from the neighbourhood in which he grew up, and they are individuals who knew of his situation from the very beginning. As children, they never paid much mind to the logistics of Mortimer’s differences from his family and still accept him for who he is. Mortimer’s adoption does not even surface in discussions with his friends. It is habitually new individuals who are more concerned about his adoption. He is unsure as to why people place such an emphasis on adoption as a topic in general: “I have two parents and they raised me...and that’s it.” Yet, he admits that more often than not, he finds that people become inquisitive about his adoption: “Some people are obviously like more concerned about it, more so than others.” Mortimer has a hard time wrapping his mind around why certain people regard adoption as being an enormous issue, when, in his opinion, it is not:

There are those other people, and other situations where I find that certain people find out or that I would just casually mention it...and then, like sometimes, they will sit there and ask certain questions, which I’m fine with, but then to have an awkward pause.

Concerns for Future Generations

Mortimer's concerns for new generations of Transracial adoptees are that some might enter the school system with no concrete understanding of who they are as individuals. Although much of that awareness comes from experiences, Mortimer feels that a portion of it also comes from having a fortified understanding of who you are before you enter into education. He recommends that adoptive parents encourage their children to become comfortable with themselves and their adoption: "I would say that it's important that they encourage...that they encourage their kids to come into their own." For Mortimer, it is important that adoptees not only know about themselves, but to be informed of their situation. Fundamentally, knowing about their situation will assist adoptees in dealing with it. While it is important that adoptees have a solid understanding of themselves and their situation, Mortimer believes that it is equally important that they be surrounded by loving parents and a nurturing environment. It is imperative that adopting families embrace their child as if he or she were biologically theirs: "Love your child! ... as though it's your own." Additionally, it is imperative that adoptees be brought into strong families. For Mortimer, strong families are those that are united and work together collectively. It is in comparison with his experiences that he feels that having a strong family base will assist future generations of adoptees to cope better with anything that comes their way.

In truth, Mortimer explains that he is not as concerned with the newer generations of Transracial adoptees. It is his perception that society and people are more accepting and understanding of adoption nowadays: "I find that people are far more tolerant than, and more accepting of different cultures." He also acknowledges that this generation of

youth is far different than when he was growing up. In his opinion, many barriers that existed when he was a child have since been broken down in the primary and secondary school systems, as well as the public and private school sectors. For instance, Mortimer believes that the topic of Transracial adoption is no longer a newfound phenomenon, and that there exist more diversity in schools nowadays.

Analysis of Mortimer

Mortimer's experiences clearly differed from his sister, who was intrracially adopted. As children, they were first enrolled into a private Jewish school. Mortimer found it extremely difficult to adjust in his school's environment whereas, in his opinion, his sister faced no real challenges adjusting. Mortimer was persistently ridiculed by other students, for the fact that he stood out racially, where his sister appeared to be able to fit in with her peers. Although both Mortimer and his sister were open about their adoptions, it appeared that Mortimer was the only one who had jokes made at his expense. Even transferring to the public sector, although the teasing diminished, Mortimer continued to experience similar situations. Regardless of the context, Mortimer and his sister have had drastically different experiences dealing with their adoptions, and much of that seems to come from the simple fact that they differ in race.

People respond to Mortimer's cultural identity in ways that often prove challenging to him. While Mortimer informs people that racially, he is mixed-race, when it comes to culture, he is Canadian. Yet, when people see that he is Black, they always want to inquire about his origins. Mortimer is domestically adopted, and, although he has discovered that his mother is of a mixture of European cultures, all he has been told about his father is the colour of his skin and that he was Canadian as well. People seem not to

be content with hearing that Mortimer is Canadian; they always want to know what his origins are. Being mixed-race (Black and White) and stating he is Canadian is never enough; people want to hear from where in Africa or the Caribbean does he have roots.

Anthony

Anthony is the friend of a friend of mine. They attend the same university and, although they are in different programs, they have a similar school schedule. They meet once a week. On one afternoon, they met in the main entrance hall of their university, where my friend pointed out my recruitment poster. She explained to Anthony the background to my study. To my friend's surprise, Anthony wanted to know more. She was a bit baffled, and then went on a tangent on how my study was looking for Transracially adopted persons, individuals who are of a different race than their adoptive parents. What my friend hadn't realized is that Anthony is of a different race of his parents. He is adopted from Lebanon, and is often considered by many as Middle-Eastern. Anthony contacted me to express his interest in my study. Although we had never had a proper introduction, we came to the conclusion that we had been present at similar events, knowing of the other, but never being able to put a face to the name. Nevertheless, we proceeded with our conversation of my study.

Anthony's initial question regarding my study is if he would be considered Transracially adopted. Although he does not conceal the fact that many might not initially consider him Transracially different from his

European parents, Anthony can't evade the reality that he is of Arab descent. In my colloquium preceding my carrying out of these interviews, I was asked a "what if" question by my supervisor; "what if someone who was not so easily identifiable as being Transracially adopted, such as someone from a Jewish background or perhaps Middle-Eastern, wants to participate in your study...what would you do?" Corresponding with my answer for my colloquium, I explained to Anthony that if he interprets being born in Lebanon and raised by European-Canadian parents means that he is Transracially adopted, then who am I to say otherwise. After all initial inquiries were addressed, we set up a meeting date.

Our first meeting took place in a local coffee shop. The first thing that I noticed, was how Anthony spoke very softly in a diminished voice; at times, I found myself taking prolific notes in fear that I would not be able to hear our interview on my voice recorder. After roughly an hour, our interview ended, and I was left with a feeling of uncertainty; I felt that I didn't really get much from our interview. It was only after I began to transcribe the interview that I noticed that there was much more there than I had originally recalled.

After this interview, I decided to redirect my approach for my second interview. It was during this period that I decided to end my second interviews in a discussion manner, similar to one that takes place in a social gathering. In hindsight, when I think about myself, I'm initially the strong-silent type. As time passes, I come out of my shell, and I become one

of those people you might sometimes wish could lose their voices indefinitely. I especially find that, when there is a discussion taking place, I just want my voice to be heard. So, with this being said, I opted to follow my discussion style for the second half of my second interview.

After a couple of weeks, Anthony and I reconvened at the same coffee shop, to carry out the second interview. I immediately noticed a change in character in Anthony. Anthony was more comfortable with the interview, speaking in a higher tone, laughing a lot, and just being more inviting of the questions. During the course of the discussion, I had asked Anthony to describe himself using five words. He concentrated on the fact that when he meets new people, he is somewhat reserved, but when he gets comfortable with people, he's extremely welcoming and inviting, exactly as I found with our interviews. The interview lasted nearly 90 minutes.

Anthony is 22 years old and is currently finishing his last year in university. He is enrolled in business, and is part of an intensive course that has students registered in a co-op at the same time. He is eagerly anticipating his graduation, and hoping to continue working where he is currently placed for his co-op.

General Information

Anthony was born in Lebanon and was six months old when he was adopted. During the time of Anthony's birth, there was a civil war happening in Lebanon, which sets the premise as to his adoption. Although much of the details surrounding his adoption are obscure, he has been informed that there was political unrest being felt

around the country. To add to the situation, there were also conflicts concerning the clash of religions that divided the nation:

I was told that there was a war going on in that country...and, and I guess that my mom couldn't keep me. She thought that I was going to die, or that something bad was going to happen to me.

It was his godfather that arranged his adoption. His parents were yearning to have a child, and they were informed that there was a family in Lebanon that had a child they wanted to be adopted by members of the same faith. Seeing as how they wanted children, his parents adopted Anthony.

Anthony is an only child, and his parents are of European backgrounds. His father is Italian and his mother is Polish; however, both parents are first-generation Canadians. He has a closed adoption, and has never had contact with any members of his birth family: "I don't know how I would deal with that." Although he was informed that his parents have always had their hearts set on adopting, he has never raised the questions with them as to why.

Identity Development

Anthony's journey with his identity development has been interesting. His story begins with his birth in Lebanon during a time of political and religious unrest. Although he was too young to recall his time in Lebanon, he has been informed of the harshness that surrounded him during that time: "At the time of my birth, they had a huge civil war going on...which is also a factor in why I was adopted...and the war, it was very aggressive and very violent." While he has an adequate understanding of the events during his time in Lebanon, he is hesitant in revealing information with others. He does say that he has friends who come from Lebanon and how they are always informing him

of how wonderful Lebanon is. He has thought about going back to visit; however, he believes he would like to take that trip in the future with his friends. As Anthony's time in Lebanon was for a small duration, he does not really identify himself with his birth culture. "I never really lived there and I don't remember anything about that place, and my parents aren't from there so, I don't really know anything about that culture like their traditions and stuff." Anthony reveals that he identifies more with his adoptive culture: "It's the only culture that I can really say I know. It's been with me from the beginning and yeah...I identify with it...all the way." His parents are Italian and Polish, and, as a child, he understood and spoke both languages. He comes from a strong family-base that exposed him to the customs and tradition of their faith and cultures. Equally so, he attributes much of his knowledge of the histories of his adoptive culture to his history courses in high school. While he is pleased with his knowledge of his adoptive cultures, he admits that he sometimes ponders his birth culture.

Anthony openly admits that his parents did not assist him with learning about his birth culture. He is not sure of the reasons except he believes it may relate to their lack of knowledge. While his parents were never opposed to his learning about his birth culture, Anthony never expressed any desire to learn about it, aside from a menial project he did when he was in Grade 5. One question about his background that has consistently plagued him is if he has any biological siblings. He is interested in uncovering background information about these possible siblings: "I would also wonder what their experiences were like...like whether they were adopted as well, or if they know about me." Anthony believes he would be able to relate with any birth siblings and would be interested in contact with them. However, Anthony has no desire to have contact with his

birth parents. Once contact is established, it would be challenging and emotionally difficult to cut ties should he want to: “I just don’t ever want to put myself in that position, where...where I could...where I couldn’t get myself out of.” He is confident in stating that not wanting contact with his birth family has nothing to do with his parents’ sensitivity. Instead, he believes if he were to opt for any contact, his parents would be supportive of his decision, as they have been supportive of all his decisions in the past: “Any questions I’ve ever had...they’ve always answered...at least to the best of their knowledge.” He knows that if he needs any questions answered, the foremost person to approach would be his godfather. Yet, he has reached a point in his life where he feels he does not want to learn more than he already knows.

Anthony asserts that his identity is an amalgamation of his parents’ cultures and being Canadian. He acknowledges that he cannot separate from his parents’ identity when he discusses his identity: “I’m an individual, but my identity as an individual has everything to do with my parents...I can’t separate myself from that.” Aside from the fact that he was born in Lebanon and that his origins lie there, he cannot disengage from his parents’ rearing. They raised him with their morals, and these morals will forever be a part of him. Similarly, Anthony acknowledges that sometimes he experiences a culture clash with his parents’ background. It was difficult for him to articulate in what ways, but he believes that, even though his parents were born in Canada, there are certain elements from their ethnic backgrounds that tie them to their respective cultures. As for Anthony, in these situations, his Canadian identity comes into effect. Identifying himself as Canadian is all he knows and can relate to. Much of his character is influenced by being

Canadian. He attributes his tolerance and acceptance as being a by-product of Canada and its diversity and multiculturalism.

Anthony's exposure to multiculturalism has sparked his interest in different cultures, his slight interest in his birth culture, and his confidence in his identity. He admits that he is interested in different cultures, mainly because they provide insight into how members of these cultures represent themselves. He understands how his family's cultures have shaped his persona, and he finds it interesting to observe how cultures do the same for others. With regards to his birth culture, Anthony is interested in learning its language: "Like Lebanese, just because, like I'm from there, and it would be my learning, a little bit, like me learning about my birth culture." Learning about his birth culture has been something that has concerned Anthony for a long while. When outsiders see him with either his mother or father, they might not leap to the conclusion that he is Transracially adopted. Since he is quite fair in skin complexion, people might not instantly make the connection that he is Middle Eastern. Since his origins are not so apparent, Anthony views himself as an 'honorary member' of his parents' race. Perhaps because of this view, Anthony has spent much of his youth thinking about the infamous question 'Who am I?' causing him to be nervous answering questions about his origins; additional reasons include the influx of questions he receives when people uncover he is adopted and the invasiveness of questions altogether. Now in adulthood, Anthony is comfortable with himself and he no longer lingers on his identity in relation to his adoption.

Education

Anthony believes that he was spared many tribulations in his education because his adoption was not so apparent to his peers. To some, he might even resemble his parents. Regardless of the reasons, Anthony understands that his story differs from many who are Transracially adopted: “I don’t really stand out to everyone that I’m that, at least I don’t think I do, I could be wrong...I don’t know...I could most often pass as being White.” Anthony openly admits that, in his experience, children tend to become meaner with age. It begins with invasive questioning, which expands into children developing opinions and later to judgment. He finds this situation to be especially true of students who bully other children simply because they are experiencing ambivalence about their identity. For him, he never openly discussed his identity with just anyone, and he feels that he was able to overcome most obstacles thanks to his confidence. He never viewed his adoption as a handicap: “The truth was that I knew that I was adopted, I was confident about it, and I didn’t really care what others thought of it.” Anthony feels that his exuded confidence aided him in not becoming prey to bullies. Moreover, he was, and continues to be, supported by good friends and a strong family. Anthony shares how his friends, who had created a lucrative story of his origins, would tell him the story whenever he was bothered about anything dealing with his adoption; he views these memories as being a significant support for him in his adjustment.

When Anthony entered high school, his parents had Anthony enrolled in the school’s ‘international program,’ where he met many of his closest friends. Being in the international program separated him from the majority of the students and he therefore escaped much of his peers’ scrutiny: “I went without a lot of that high school drama.” He

realizes that his entire secondary school experience could have been drastically different if he had been enrolled in the regular stream:

What I think helped was the fact that I was confident in my own skin...and that I was confident in my situation...at the same time, maybe if I had been in the regular program...in the regular stream, maybe things might have been different...I might have been picked on from people who might have wanted to dissect me and my confidence.

Anthony recognizes that his entire high school experience would have had a different outcome if he had not had his confidence and his wonderful friends, who never drew attention to his adoption and any insecurities he had with the subject. Likewise, Anthony is thankful that none of his teachers attracted attention to him. He believes that teachers should not intervene in their Transracially adopted students' identity formation or adjustment, except under the condition that the student is being bullied or ridiculed for his or her adoption. If teachers raise the topic of a student's adoption or treat adopted students differently from the remaining students, it may draw attention to the adopted students and lead to negative consequences both in and outside the classroom.

Adjustment

Anthony is extremely open to discussing his adoption: "There's nothing really to be embarrassed about or to shy away from." He is comfortable speaking about his adoption principally because his parents have time and again discussed his adoption with him from very early on, and have taught him to have acceptance concerning it: "They told me from a very young age, and continued as I was growing up, they told me, that I was adopted." Anthony's parents have always been welcoming of questions and discussions involving his adoption. His parents explained his adoption by describing how most families are, and how their family is slightly different. He believes that it is

imperative that parents have their children understand from an early age about their adoption: “If they think it’s right from the beginning, then they won’t question themselves later on.” Yet, at the same time, he is candid in admitting that he is not forthcoming with details to just anybody. “There are some personal things that I wouldn’t just tell anybody.” Anthony finds that this reluctance to disclose has become especially true with age. Now that Anthony is working in a professional setting, he finds that he does not have to share his life story with his colleagues: “I guess that when you get older you start meeting people, and you don’t have to reveal as much of yourself as like, when you are a kid.” Nowadays, he wants to maintain a simple portrait of himself, and to not feel obliged to answer the same redundant questions about his adoption.

Anthony is both comfortable and confident with his adoption; however, he admits that these attributes were not always easy to maintain throughout his upbringing. Growing up, Anthony had no friends who were adopted and had no one with whom to converse about any real issues he was facing, at least anyone who could relate to his experiences. His journey with adjustment began as a young child, with his parents explaining his adoption. He believes having this knowledge provided him with both poise and awareness of his situation:

In my situation, I always knew, I was always told about it and like I never thought differently about my mom and dad...My mom and dad are still my mom and dad...I think that if they suspect something when they are very young, when they get older, they’ll just be questioning things and continue to question things...I would think that if you are of a different colour of skin than like your parents, then things are probably obvious for you at a very early age, and if you have questions about it when you are younger, you’re only going to have more and more questions as you get older.

He recognizes that having self-assurance as he matured enabled him to see past people’s intolerance and, in fact, become impervious to it. Much of the criticism and prejudice

were not only directed at his adoption, but also because he is Middle Eastern. One time when Anthony was traveling, the border officials asked him rigorous questions about his family and why he was born in Lebanon. When he informed them that he was adopted, they took him to the side, and rechecked his documentation. It was a dragged out process that Anthony will never forget. The border officials asked him inappropriate questions of how his adoption came to be. Although at that time he was dumbfounded by the response he received, he maintains that he harbours no resentment to such individuals. He believes that stereotyping is inevitable and his outlook is to not dwell on such stereotypes and to not let it leave a lasting impression. Instead, Anthony believes that adoptees should work at desensitizing themselves to external negative reactions, a viewpoint that worked very well for him when he was in school. Often, instead of shying away from the topic, Anthony welcomed it thereby opening the forum for discussion. Such candour kept people interested in the conversation.

Concerns for Future Generations

Anthony's main concerns for future generations of Transracial adoptees begin with adoptees' lack of knowledge concerning their adoptions. He believes it is imperative that parents of Transracial adoptees be honest concerning the details of the adoption as early as possible. With regards to his own experiences, Anthony perceives that his confidence is ultimately the result of his knowing of his adoption early on: "I think that parents should tell their kids from a very early age, so that they have a solid understanding of who they are and of their experiences." Knowing early on has equipped Anthony with the necessary tools to deal with any hurdles affecting his identity development and his adjustment. He even goes as far as stating that it may assist with

desensitizing many issues of adoptees' adoptions. Furthermore, Anthony feels that adoptees' knowledge pertaining to their adoption will assist adoptees as they mature and enter school, and are faced with questions from individuals they do not know.

An additional concern for Anthony pertains to the parents of Transracial adoptees, who may struggle with how to educate their children of their birth culture. He is unsure of how much enculturation these parents can expose their children to. He perceives parents' ability to explain about the birth culture as being dependent on how much the parents know themselves about that culture. Parents have a hard enough challenge teaching their children about the adoptive culture, let alone the child(ren)'s birth culture, with which they may be unfamiliar. Moreover, he feels that parents of adoptees become consumed with following all the right steps of parenting.

I think that parents shouldn't be concerned about following the 'right' steps because what are the right steps? ... No one knows. It's like they think that you have to classify these special steps to carry out and like, they don't exist.

Instead of rummaging around for non-existing quote-unquote 'right steps,' Anthony recommends that parents should instead invest their time in their children by loving them, embracing them, and explaining to them all they know concerning their adoptions.

The final concern that Anthony shares relates to adoptees and educators. He feels that newer generations of Transracial adoptees entering either elementary school or secondary school should not be anxious about acceptance from their peers. Although he acknowledges that there may be times when Transracial adoptees will be faced with stereotypes or experience intolerance, they should not dwell on matters over which they have no control. In the end, people will embrace them for who they are. Where educators can play a role is in paying attention to their students and their sensitivity with their

adoption. Anthony believes that some students may need guidance dealing with particular aspects of their adoption. Perhaps teachers can provide direction to networks or resources for these students, especially if they ask for such.

Analysis of Anthony

Anthony's experience of being Transracially adopted is affected by the limited visible dissimilarities between him and his adoptive parents. As Anthony relates, there are certain instances where he can be viewed as an honorary member of his adoptive culture. I myself would not have known at first glance that his origins were Middle Eastern. He admits that society would not stare at him with his parents and automatically come to the conclusion that he is adopted; in this context alone, Anthony realizes that different reactions from the public may have affected or altered how he felt about his adoption and how he handled it. While Anthony states that, as a child, he had confidence and would openly engage in conversation with everyone about his adoption, as he matured, he realized that he did not have to discuss it, and people would not question him about it. Anthony does not deny that, in certain cases, outsiders may view his adoption as being intraracial somewhat simplifying many areas of his upbringing. For example, as he was growing up, Anthony was spared various stereotypes associated with his birth culture.

With regard to his identity development, Anthony confirms that, although he does have a desire to potentially learn about his birth culture in the distant future, it was never a priority for him throughout his childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood. He explains that he is comfortable with his combined adoptive cultures and feels that it would be difficult for him to detach himself from them; they have been a part of him

from as early as he can remember and he firmly believes that they represent his morals and values, in conjunction with his character. Although he has an interest in learning about his birth culture, he is uncertain of how strong a role it can have in his life.

Anthony cannot immerse himself in his birth culture and embrace it at equal value with his adoptive cultures.

Winston

Winston is the only participant whom I knew relatively well prior to my study. He is the brother of a friend of mine who is also Transracially adopted. Initially, my friend was to participate in my study, but my friend had to back-out from the study at the last minute. To compensate, my friend suggested that I contact her brother, who might be interested in participating. I contacted him via e-mail. Winston immediately responded, indicating his interest in my study.

Although he went to a different high school than his sister, and they hung out in different social circles, my path had crossed with Winston on several occasions. Although our relationship can be classified as simply "acquaintances," due to my close friendship with his sister, I felt that I was made privy to much of his experiences. Although the two are now estranged, there is no denying that much of her experiences encompass his.

In my opinion, he is the polar opposite of his sister. They listen to different genres of music, have different personalities, and regard their adoption experiences dissimilarly. Where his sister believes that Transracial

adoption is never the answer, Winston is a firm believer that his adoption is the best thing that could have happened to him and is always vocal about his opinion. Much of our conversations in the past centered on the topic of their adoptions and how he does not understand his sister's outlook on the topic as a whole.

With Winston, the first interview was done over the telephone. Winston had recently relocated to Ottawa, for both school and work purposes, and spends every second week over there. I initially recommended that I come down to Ottawa to carry out our interview, but Winston insisted we execute it over the telephone. Our interview lasted for an hour. Post interview, we arranged for our following interview. As time was approaching for our second interview, Winston was not responding to any of my phone calls, text messages, or e-mails. I was beginning to fear that he was dropping out of my study. I had been down this road several times before, and I began getting anxious thinking of what I was supposed to do.

It was nearly two weeks after our scheduled second interview, that Winston contacted me. He informed me that he had gone through a very difficult time with finding a new apartment and having his phone and computer stolen. He apologized profusely, and we immediately scheduled our next interview for the week-end. I travelled down to Ottawa, and we went to a local coffee shop. Seeing how it was my first time in Ottawa in years, Winston showed me around the city for the first couple hours. Then we

settled on yet another coffee shop and sat down for what would be my final interview.

The interview lasted for nearly an hour and 20 minutes. I had not noticed how fast time passed, mainly because our conversation was both interesting and informative. Winston can only be described as an excellent storyteller. Although I cannot deny that he is humorous, I should also mention that I felt as if I was having a most insightful and candid conversation. His experiences combined with his approach kept me on the edge of my seat, wanting to know more. After our second interview, Winston was interested in knowing more about my study; after going more in-depth into my research, Winston explained that he thought it was interesting that I was linking the topic of Transracial adoption with education. Seeing how both his parents are professors, they too were interested in how the two topics link, despite the limited literature that connected the two topics. I left our interview with a new sense of purpose for my study.

Winston is 28 years old and is the oldest of the participants. He recently graduated from university in human relations, and is now enrolled for a certificate course in Ottawa. He intends to finish his certificate course in several months. Winston does not speak French very well, and when he became employed by the government, he made the decision to relocate to Ottawa, which is more English-based than Montreal.

General Information

Winston was internationally adopted from Haiti when he was 2 months old. He was abandoned at the hospital immediately following his birth, where he was soon

transferred to a local orphanage. After several weeks at the orphanage, he was sent back to the hospital for medical tests and was immediately set up for adoption. Two local residents were friends of his parents, and they were aware that his parents wished to adopt a child. They contacted the hospital, which sent them a photograph of Winston and a female infant. His parents were unable to decide between the two children, and so, they filed the paperwork to adopt both of them. Winston's sister is not biologically related to him. They are two months apart in age.

Identity Development

Winston describes his identity as being Canadian-British with a dash of Haitian spice. It is an amalgamation of all the cultures to which he is exposed: "I definitely think that all three parts make up who I am." His Canadian influences are that he is humble, kind, and caring. From his parents, he has obtained British influences: "I definitely inherited like...the British sense of sly humour and like...timing, the wit." Since he has bounced around between Canada and England, Winston finds that he can assimilate easily to either culture. Even though there have been no focal people in his life who represent a Haitian influence, Winston still relates part of his identity with being Haitian: "I'm proud to be Haitian." Yet he does not conceal his struggles to relate with his Haitian culture.

When Winston was a child, his parents felt it would be beneficial for Winston and his sister to be exposed to their birth culture. When they were growing up, the parents brought them to various Haitian festivals and functions, making friends with members of the community, and exposing them to Haitian foods. They even took the children to visit Haiti on two separate occasions; once when they were 6 years old, and then again two

years later. It was on Winston's trips to Haiti that he realized how fortunate he was to be adopted. Although the family resided in a primarily wealthy neighborhood, they took the children to see how the majority of Haitians live in rural areas. After witnessing the real dilemmas that plague Haiti, Winston recalls feeling privileged to have been adopted and to have the luxury of healthcare and an education: "Nothing beats seeing the level of poverty and being aware of that...even at that young age thinking that definitely these people did not have it as good as I do back in Canada." Winston credits his parents for assisting in his identity development. Aside from exposing their children to Haitian culture as well as their two adoptive cultures, Winston's parents felt that it was imperative that their children have an understanding of their origins. For each child, they created a personal history book, which housed all documents and important information pertaining to their adoptions. This history book is of sentimental value and is Winston's most prized possession. In desperate times, he always refers back to the book, and imagines he will one day pass it on as a family heirloom.

Winston does not find it difficult to discuss his adoption. He admits that there were times when it was challenging, especially in his youth, where he had experienced many periods of soul searching. He often questioned what Haitian attributes he reflected. Winston identifies culture as being a combination of the country of origin, and the values of the places one lives. At times, he is still confused about how his definition of culture coincides with someone like him, who does not have a strong connection with his birth country. Nevertheless, with all his experiences, Winston feels that he has a good grasp of who he is and attributes much of this self-knowledge to the fact that he is Transracially adopted: "I definitely know who I am as a person, and I guess that that's one of the perks

to being, in being Transracially adopted as opposed to a normal adoption from the get go...you know you're going to stand out." Winston goes on to elaborate that Transracial adoptees are unwillingly forced at a much younger age to forge their identity, largely because they stand out. Being aware of this difference and having a solid understanding of himself are essentially the tools that Winston needed in creating his identity. He is fully aware that he stands out in the communities where he was raised, but instead of standing out for his Transracial adoption, he made the decision to be noticed for other reasons. He has a very outgoing personality that often draws attention to him, and would rather be known for this reason. Winston is also aware that people generally appoint stereotypes to his adoption and his cultural identity. He notices that stereotypes are especially true in culturally diverse settings and, instead of being affected by stereotypes, Winston's practices making individuals laugh. A bona fide practical jokester, Winston believes that making people laugh not only disarms them and the situation, but also helps in unveiling his situation. Where there are certain individuals who are not pleased with Winston's approach, Winston believes that approaching stereotypes in this manner has only empowered him and his situation.

Education

The area in his life where Winston feels he has been the most challenged concerning his adoption has always been in his education. His peers always had comments concerning how Winston carried himself. Winston has been insulted about his adoption, about being Transracially adopted, and about his personality not matching traits of his racial background, to name a few. Winston does not shy away in discussing the difficulties he faced adjusting in school. Classmates would inform him that he was not

acting in accordance with other Black peers: “People would always be like ‘oh man...you’re so White’...and like ‘oh, you’re like the Whitest Black guy’.” He admits that such comments always got under his skin; however, he quickly moved past such statements. He is proud of his adoption, of his parents, and of his character. He understands that his unique situation has provided him with opportunities that he most probably would have never experienced back in Haiti. Where Winston can understand that children can be cruel, he cannot ignore the negative responses that he received from teachers and other school officials.

Winston recalls one incident in his education that will forever be engrained in his memory. He tells the story of how he and several other students who were visible minorities were asked to report to the principal’s office. They were told to sit down and were then informed that they were all privileged to be allowed in Canada and to be permitted an education, and how they all needed to work to improve their citizenship. Although he is uncertain if this experience was the product of him not being born in Canada, or because he is a visible minority, or both, Winston was outraged by his principal’s statement. He telephoned his father and informed him of the recent event. Winston’s father marched right down to the school and, when he inquired as to why his son was told to improve his citizenship, the principal attempted to backpedal out of the conversation. His father was upset about the situation for two reasons; first, being a teacher himself, he believes that a teacher does not have the right to tell students that they need to improve their citizenship. Second, he believes that the only reason that Winston was brought into the office was simply being Black. With this situation, and countless others, Winston believes that teachers and other school officials should have a personal

interest to help their Transracially adopted students and students who are visible minorities. Instead of displaying ignorance, they should be empathic to these students and their situations.

Adjustment

Winston's challenges with his adjustment began with members of the Black community and his fellow Haitians. Fellow Haitians view him as an outsider, despite the fact that he was born there and his background is Haitian. He acknowledges that it is never easy for him interacting with other Haitians; they instantly uncover that he is different because he does not speak or understand Creole. Furthermore, they often ridicule him when they discover he is Transracially adopted by White parents; they always share their disapproval for his adoption. These experiences have always made those situations where new people in his life meet Winston's parents for the first time uncomfortable and something to dread. He is never sure if he should forewarn people or wait to see their reactions to the encounter. He cannot count the number of times people have done a double take when they encounter his parents for the first time. Such situations also take place with unfamiliar individuals; there have been times when strangers have stared in awe when they realize he is with his parents. It has happened when he and his parents have gone out for supper, rented a family film, or enjoyed extracurricular activities. Winston feels that he cannot always address the social acts of racism that he experiences, because somehow, confronting such situations most often results in him appearing as the callous one.

Although Winston very much liked the communities in which he was raised, he cannot deny that they always lacked racial and cultural diversity; he was one of three

visible minorities residing in his neighborhood. The most frustrating aspect of growing up in a homogeneous community lies in most residents believing they have a solid understanding of his situation. Many members of the community think they should be privy to information concerning Winston's background and adoption, often resulting in Winston's family revealing more about their children's adoption than the children wanted. Winston feels most fortunate to have the company of his sister, who was also facing the same hurdles concerning her adoption:

I started to talk to my sister more about it, and like we would bounce ideas back and forth, and yeah, it was definitely good to have that. But it wasn't really about the interracial thing, but more about being adopted.

Winston credits his parents' honesty about his adoption in facilitating his adjustment. He believes that openness and honesty are the best approaches in aiding adoptees' adjustments, and recommends other adoptive parents follow suit.

I always knew that I was, that I was different from my parents. There was no, there was never a doubt in my mind that that was not the situation...and like any questions that I had, my parents would like answer...like, like where am I from? Who are my real parents? And like all those issues, they would like easily answer.

Winston recalls that the most unforgettable memory that he has concerning his adjustment was when he was in high school and approached his parents about learning more about his origins.

One of Winston's best friends is also adopted, and he had explained to Winston that he found the documentation from his adoption and how he was interested in contacting his birth family, to uncover his origins. After much thought, Winston thought about finding out about his origins more for himself; he approached his father about the topic and his father handed him an envelope. When Winston and his father looked over the document, they immediately noticed that it lacked much of the necessary details.

Winston was abandoned at the hospital, and his parents were listed as ‘unknown.’

Winston was blindsided by his discovery but quickly drew his attention to his father who was crying for the very first time:

He was like ‘don’t worry...it doesn’t mean anything’... ‘We love you and all this means is that they gave you to the best people in the world and we’re so happy to have you and your sister’... and like ‘you’ll always be our son.’

This was Winston’s most touching moment, mainly because his father had provided him with the only answer he needed to hear; the love and support that he received from his parents were, in his opinion, the most crucial resource he had, and continues to have, with any challenges concerning both his identity development and his adjustment.

Concerns for Future Generations

Winston’s main concern for future generations of Transracial adoptees is the potential scrutiny that they may receive from the general public. He admits that there is a new found interest with Transracial adoption, thanks in large to mass media outlets that have popularized it. One such example is the movie ‘The Blind Side.’ Winston wants people to realize that the events in that movie do not depict the true challenges of an individual who is Transracially adopted. He fears that some people will look at Transracial adoption as a form of charity, and he is opposed to such viewpoints. Winston is worried that people will begin to regard Transracial adoption as an easy process, when truly, it is everything but that; it is not as effortless as many films and television series portray it to be.

Analysis of Winston

Winston is embracing of all cultures that represent him. He feels that his assimilation of both his adoptive cultures, Canadian and British, is a product of his

environment. Winston cannot deny the fact that he is who he is because he lives in Canada. He understands that his experiences would have been drastically different if he were domestically adopted, or if he were internationally adopted but raised in a more homogeneous country. He acknowledges that Transracial adoptees living in culturally diverse countries such as Canada have more of an advantage, in that they have ample opportunities to expose themselves to their birth culture. Similarly, Winston understands that he is fortunate to have had exposure to his birth culture; many Transracial adoptees do not have the opportunities to visit their birth countries nor to be exposed to various features of their birth cultures. Nevertheless, the actions of Winston's parents cannot be ignored. Here are two individuals who thought long and hard about how they could contribute as parents to the proper development and adjustment of their children. Both parents being teachers have witnessed firsthand the dilemmas that often plague their students who are adopted and/or who have a vague understanding of their origins, and realized the efforts needed to help with their own Transracially adopted children.

Winston has undergone his fair share of scrutiny by peers, neighbours, authority figures, and strangers. Winston has experienced intense discrimination concerning his race, whether it is people informing him that he is a fraudulent Black person or labelling him as 'White-wash.' He shares the story of how, on one occasion, his family had gone out for supper. While the parents excused themselves from the table momentarily, Winston and his sister sat down glancing over the menu. While they were deciding on their meals, two waiters from the restaurant marched over and asked both Winston and his sister to quietly leave the table. When they inquired as to why, the waiters informed them that there was already a reservation for their table and that they were wary as to

why they would sit themselves down at a table where a family had already been seated. When Winston and his sister informed them that the table was reserved for their family, the waiters looked at them in disbelief. Upon their parents' return to the table, the waiters asked if they knew these two young children and their parents informed them that they were indeed their children. Where this was one example of social racism, Winston admits that such incidents happened more often than he cared for. He has experienced numerous unpleasant situations concerning topics such as his adoption, race, and origins; however, he refuses to allow these experiences to be a crutch for him. Instead, he has a positive outlook on most experiences and utilizes them to empower himself. He regards his adoption as being somewhat unique, and shares many of his experiences in different social circumstances such as meeting new people, job interviews, and first dates. He admits that his adoption is a great conversation starter and admits to using the topic of his adoption to his advantage.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

“Every child deserves to grow roots in a family” (Roorda, 2007, p. 134).

Although the participants of my study are unique in many ways, they still share commonalities that contribute to the trustworthiness of the data, specifically being Transracially adopted, and experiencing identity development as continuously evolving.

All four participants consider themselves to be Transracially adopted, although diverse in specific experiences and locations. Three of the four participants (excluding Mortimer) were adopted internationally, with all participants being adopted before their first birthday. All four participants were in their early adulthood (i.e., between 19-28). Three of the four participants had siblings who were also adopted. None of the participants except Mortimer had ever had contact with her or his birth family. For him, contact had been initiated and ceased within the span of several months. All four participants were residing in surrounding boroughs of Montreal (with the exception of Winston who moved to the city of Ottawa midway through data collection). Other than Yume, who received her primary education in Nova Scotia, the participants were educated in Quebec.

Identity Development

The identity development of all the participants is continuously evolving. As young adults, they understand that much of their experiences dealing with identity have been heavily reliant on their social interactions and aspects of their environment. Such interactions involved a variety of people including family, peers, members in the

community, school officials, and employers (Demick, 2002). Although general society is in consensus that, by adulthood, most individuals have a solidified identity, these four Transracial adoptees have confirmed that there are many overlooked challenges to their identity. Furthermore, the participants are in agreement that there remain many aspects to their identities that they are still working to resolve; they experience challenges with coming to terms with the lack of information concerning their origins, and how they want to portray themselves to the general public.

As Transracial adoptees, the four participants have dwelled on the topic of their origins. This struggle to develop a fully formed identity is consistent with Baden and O’Leary Wiley’s (2007) suggestion that adoptees face complications with their identities when they have unknown personal, genetic, and social histories. All have many unanswered questions stemming from their adoptions such as “why me?” and “how different would my life be if I had not been put up for adoption?” In Yume’s case, she is aware that her biological birth family have other children, and often wonders what about her is so insignificant, that her birth parents could simply give her up for adoption. She feels that there is no closure with her adoption considering she has no information as to the reasons why. As for Mortimer, he went in search of his birth family’s medical history when he found himself faced with illness. Although he had the chance to meet his birth mother and pose many of his questions, there still remained an ample number of questions for which she had no answers. Being an only child has led Anthony to ponder about his birth family and the thought of having siblings; he wonders if they exist and if they are aware of his existence. He is curious about the possibility of meeting his biological siblings, and wonders what kind of relationship they would have. Winston

found himself interested in his personal history quite recently when he discovered that his best friend, who also happens to be adopted, was looking into his own birth history. Winston was devastated to discover that most of the information regarding his birth family was unknown.

The participants have faced additional challenges with their identity as per the responses they have received from the general public for being racially different from their family members. Zamosny et al. (2003) believe that much of the confusion that adoptees endure is a consequence of social interactions and relationships rather than their actual adoptions per se. All participants report that most of the general public treat their adoptions as exceptional cases, mainly because they are of a different race than their family members. Time after time, invasive and personal questions concerning their adoptions and their identities are imposed on them. Yume is repeatedly discouraged by the ways people react to her being Transracially adopted. Not only do people's reactions change when uncovering her adoption, but often, people immediately respond by apologizing for her situation. Not only is it unnerving to have people repeatedly apologize for matters about which they know nothing, but it also becomes exhausting to have individuals consistently presume you come from a different racial background than you do. In Yume's case, although she is Latina, people are always quick to presume she is Chinese. As a consequence, Yume feels that she has been led to not be able to relate to her birth culture. With Mortimer, it becomes problematic that he is a domestic Transracial adoptee. Aside from knowing that his birth mother is European, he has no information regarding his birth father's ancestral lineage. Often when people meet him and discover he is adopted, they are interested in the fact that he is biracial and are

curious to know what his racial and cultural background is. As a result, he is forced to answer such inquiries by stating that he is 'mixed-race' or Canadian. Anthony is perplexed with his racial identity, mainly because he feels that he is spared much of the public scrutiny posed on Transracial adoptions. Being very fair in complexion, he feels that he does not stand out for being racially different from his parents. However, when members of his Lebanese birth culture discover his origins, he is unsure of how they view him. Undoubtedly, Winston has also faced challenges identifying with members of his birth culture and other members of his racial group. He has experienced hardships in his interactions with members of his birth culture and Black individuals, primarily because they keep referring to him as being 'White-washed.' Often, people pose questions in reference to his mannerisms and why he acts in a certain way.

However, all four participants feel being informed of their adoptions early on has provided them with the necessary tools to assist them in organizing all aspects of their identity. Information concerning their adoptions proved to be most instrumental during their adolescence, when they experienced acts of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Adolescence is when an alarming number of the difficulties that Transracial adoptees face in relation to their identities surface (Feigelman & Silverman , 1984). Yume's early knowledge of her adoption has facilitated the development of a resiliency to varied public reactions to her adoption. During her adolescence, she refused to feel victimized by others' disapproval. Mortimer's early knowledge has helped him forge an identity through his experiences; the process has resulted in him being self-reliant and independent. Similarly, knowing about his adoption has resulted in Anthony becoming comfortable with his adoption, and the situations leading to his adoption. With maturity,

Anthony realizes that he does not need to disclose all matters of his private life to the general public. He is better equipped to deal with other people's judgements revolving around his adoption. For Winston, knowing helped foster an acceptance of his adoption and his differences of racial-influenced character traits. Having seen firsthand the problems that accompany children and youths still residing in orphanages in Haiti, he is thankful of the opportunities and luxuries that have come with him being adopted.

Education

All four participants agree that teachers and other school officials should not intervene in the school lives of Transracial adoptees, with the sole exception of bullying. However, this belief does not accord with Vidal de Haymes and Simon's (2003) statement that schools should not ignore racial issues. This disparity may be the result of a mixture of instances when an educator's intervention would be helpful, and those when it would be unwelcome. The data collection process for this thesis brought to light several avenues where intervention may have benefitted Transracial adoptees. For instance, Yume, Anthony, and Winston express having no real opportunities to obtain cultural awareness regarding their respective birth cultures. Yume, Mortimer, and Winston feel that many of their instructors were less interested in them because they were visibly different, and this is an area where educators should be more conscientious. Mortimer expresses his frustrations with the school system that continuously tried to place him at a disadvantage even though he was excelling academically. All participants want educators and school officials to treat all students equitably, and, if educators are to intervene with

any dilemmas that their Transracial adoptees are facing, the participants want them to do so genuinely.

Adjustment

Although none of the participants find it challenging to discuss their adoptions, all express their frustrations with the varied reactions they receive from the general public concerning their Transracial adoptions. All participants perceive that, when new people discover they are Transracially adopted, these people tend to treat the adoptees differently and view their situations as being exceptional. As a consequence, such experiences have frequently hindered the participants' adjustment in social contexts. They have been the victims of rejection, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, which Camacho-Gingerich et al. (2007) have attributed as being the most unhelpful experiences that hinder Transracial adoptees' adjustment. During such hurdles, my participants were assisted by the people with whom they have surrounded themselves. Aside from their loving and nurturing families, three of the four participants have benefited from having a sibling who was also adopted. Having an adopted sibling has enabled Yume, Mortimer, and Winston to express an array of emotions with their siblings during hard times. Sentiments are simplified by the shared understanding and relatedness that exists between the siblings and their experiences. Similarly, all four participants have friends who accept them for who they are, thereby facilitating in their adjustment. While the participants endured a great deal of hardships throughout their adolescence, they leaned on the close connections they had made with their friends. Even now in their adulthood, their

friendships continue to be a driving force in their abilities to cope with all obstacles they face.

The most crucial period in adjustment of Transracial adoptees is during their adolescence. It is a time in one's life where social relationships with others are critical in establishing reputations and solidifying identities (Erikson, 1963). Within this period, adolescents must make choices by exploring alternatives and committing to their newly adopted roles. If the individuals realize that they do not like their newly adopted roles, then they can refine or redefine their identities (Rice & Dolgin, 2002). Yume used to allow people's discriminatory comments to offend her; however, with time, she began to look at their questions and comments as a form of curiosity. She now enjoys having individuals guess her origins. Having undergone a period of feeling like a social outcast, Mortimer has come into his own. He provides a simple explanation of being mixed-race and not knowing of his origins and no longer cares how others regard him and his adoption. Likewise, Anthony also provides a simple explanation of his origins by stating that he is Italian-Polish (his adoptive culture), insisting that people are on a 'need to know' basis. Having confidence in himself and being comfortable with his adoption has assisted Anthony in evading many of the problems commonly expressed by Transracial adoptees. In Winston's case, he did not encounter full-blown racism until he was in his adolescence, with being ridiculed for acting 'White.' Although, at times, such comments are unnerving, Winston exudes a certain confidence that lets others know they cannot break his spirit. Instead of standing out for being Transracially adopted, he chose to have people be attracted to his humour and contagious personality.

Baden and Steward's Cultural-Racial Identity Model

To determine the extent of influences that social interactions have on the development of Transracial adoptees, Baden and Steward (2007) developed the *Cultural-Racial Identity Model*. The model draws attention to the construct of ethnicity and how it is influenced by two critical factors: culture and race. The problem with previous models of racial identity, according to Baden and Steward, is that they use culture and race interchangeably when they clearly should not be. This lack of clarity may be the product of the terms not being clearly defined in much of the existing literature. An additional component of the Baden and Steward model is that it encompasses feelings, attitudes, knowledge, competences, and comfort within one's own racial and/or cultural group; it differs in asking adoptees how they relate to the norms and values of their race and culture, and if they integrate these values within their identities (Baden & Steward, 2007).

Figure 2: The Cultural-Racial Identity Model

Pro-Self Racial Identity	Biracial Identity	Pro-Self Racial Identity	Biracial Identity
PRO-SELF CULTURAL IDENTITY		BICULTURAL IDENTITY	
Racially Undifferentiated Identity	Pro-Parent Racial Identity	Racially Undifferentiated Identity	Pro-Parent Racial Identity
Pro-Self Racial Identity	Biracial Identity	Pro-Self Racial Identity	Biracial Identity
CULTURALLY UNDIFFERENTIATED		PRO-PARENT CULTURAL IDENTITY	
Racially Undifferentiated Identity	Pro-Parent Racial Identity	Racially Undifferentiated Identity	Pro-Parent Racial Identity

This model combines two axes: the Cultural Identity Axis and the Racial Identity Axis. The combination of the two axes represents a 16-cell model of the potential cultural-racial identities that Transracial adoptees may have. It pairs the four potential culture combinations (i.e., Bicultural Identity, Pro-Self Cultural Identity, Pro-Parent Cultural Identity, and Culturally Undifferentiated) with the four potential racial combinations (i.e., Biracial Identity, Pro-Self Racial Identity, Pro-Parent Racial Identity, and Racially Undifferentiated) (Baden, 2007a).

Comparison Groups

Drawing on Baden and Steward's (2007) *Cultural-Racial Identity Model*, the cultural-racial identities of each of the four participants can be categorized based on the data from my interviews. While it is possible to debate these classifications, they represent my thoughts on the data at present.

Yume seems to have a *Culturally Undifferentiated-Racially Undifferentiated Identity*. Individuals in this group do not affiliate themselves with either their birth race or culture nor their adoptive race or culture (Baden & Steward, 2007). For Yume, growing up in a homogeneous community, she was never exposed to diversity in race and culture simply because there were no avenues for her to immerse herself in any form of multiculturalism. Moreover, she does not identify with her adoptive culture; although there is some European lineage, she feels that her parents' culture is represented by language only. As an adolescent, her family relocated to Montreal, where she now found herself surrounded by diversity. She made connections with the individuals who surrounded her, and developed a personal interest in learning about their cultures. In this manner, Yume is creating her own identity, not being exclusive to any one group.

Mortimer would appear to have a *Pro-Self Cultural Identity-Pro-Self Racial Identity*. Individuals in this group identify with members of their own racial ethnic group; being biracial, Mortimer does identify with both races. Additionally, being domestically adopted, he identifies himself culturally as being Canadian. Living in a heterogeneous community, Mortimer was encircled by a multitude of people from different races and cultures, where distinction in race is blurred and at the same time profound. Additionally, Baden and Steward (2007) explain that individuals in this group “may have rejected their adoptive parents’ culture and may feel like an outsider in their parents’ culture due to negative experiences in their parents’ culture” (p. 104). For Mortimer, having felt ostracized and discriminated against by members of his adoptive culture, he no longer involves himself in his parents’ faith or customs.

Anthony most closely resembles a *Pro-Parent Cultural Identity-Pro-Parent Racial Identity*. Individuals in this group are described as feeling most comfortable with their parents’ racial ethnic group. When Anthony talks about his background, he generally informs people that he is Italian-Polish, the combined cultures of his adoptive parents. He does not identify with his birth culture, mainly because he does not know the traditions, histories, or customs of this culture. He firmly feels as if he cannot separate himself from his parents’ cultures principally because it is a part of his rearing environment. Members in this identity group “may not be visibly racially different from their adoptive parents’ appearance” (Baden & Steward, 2007, p. 105). Anthony perceives that he can pass as his parents’ biological offspring. Furthermore, although his parents were never opposed to Anthony learning about his birth culture, they never exposed him

to his birth culture. Similarly, Anthony has never really made any efforts to familiarize himself.

Winston seems to fit a *Bicultural-Biracial Identity*. Individuals in this group tend to feel knowledge and familiarity with members of both their birth and adoptive cultures. Although Winston admits to finding it sometimes challenging to relate to members of his birth culture, he still identifies himself as being Haitian; there exist certain elements of his Haitian culture that he cannot evade. Likewise, Baden and Steward (2007) state that individuals in this identity category have generally been exposed to members and role models of their birth culture. Winston has been exposed to his birth culture repeatedly, and growing up, his parents have established role models for him since he was an infant. As an individual, Winston is comprised and influenced by both his adoptive British-Canadian culture and his Haitian roots.

Recommendations for Practice

Three recommendations for practice are suggested by this research. The first recommendation is that adoptees be informed at an early age of their adoptions. All four of my participants acknowledge that they have faced various challenges with their identity development and adjustment with regards to being Transracially adopted. In their journeys into adulthood, they recall the challenge of concealing their adoptions from others; there is an immediate awareness that they are racially different from their parents. This immediate awareness often elicits an invitation to others to pose questions regarding the participants' backgrounds. One advantage in their experiences was the fact that they were all informed of their adoptions as young children. They believe that it is imperative

that parents share information regarding a Transracial adoptee's adoption as early as possible. All four of my participants were adopted before their first birthdays, and were informed at an early age about their adoptions by their parents. My participants feel that this early knowledge of the details surrounding their adoptions assisted in their identity development and knowing who they are. Similarly, knowing about their adoptions early on facilitated my participants' adjustments with their adoption situations. Rather than having an influx of questions all at once, the participants feel that they could address issues as they surfaced. Knowing about their adoptions not only built up their self-confidence, but throughout the years, they became desensitized when dealing with the topic. In all, early knowledge of their adoptions seems to have contributed to the participants having positive affect concerning their adoptions.

As for families planning on adopting or who have already adopted, Roorda (2007) provides three recommendations for parents to assist them with their Transracially adopted children's adjustment: (1) exposing their child to members of his or her birth community; (2) establishing role models of their child's birth culture; and (3) establishing a 'multicultural adoption plan,' which entails members of the family becoming both comfortable and knowledgeable about the racial/ cultural/ ethnic heritages of their child. The first recommendation is believed to assist Transracial adoptees in becoming comfortable with members of their birth origins and interacting with said members. The second recommendation is believed to be helpful in building connections with members of their birth origins as well as having a liaison to expose the adoptees to various cultural functions and events. The third recommendation is directed to the parents, and is beneficial in the enculturation and socialization of all family members. Often, adopting

parents become fixated with following all the ‘proper steps,’ even though such steps do not exist. Instead, Baden (2007b) recommends that parents align themselves with schools and teachers to resolve such issues, and educate others in the community on misconceptions about the child’s birth country’s culture, traditions, and practices.

The final recommendation targets teachers and suggests how teachers should interact with Transracial adoptees. The participants feel that it is imperative that teachers and others in positions of authority not draw attention to them or their adoptions. Often, when teachers uncovered these participants were Transracially adopted, they assumed that the adoptees had existing knowledge about their birth culture, the customs of their birth culture, and/or their personal histories of their adoptions. There were times when the participants were involuntarily volunteered to discuss either the topic of their birth culture or their personal histories involving their adoptions. Instead, as Fishman and Harrington (2007) have illustrated, school professionals should be accommodating and considerate that some families are joined by adoption, and that private information regarding a student’s adoption is exactly that, private; they should be cautious to avoid overly generalized approaches (Grotevant, Dunbar et al., 2007).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The present study was designed to investigate the journeys of four young adult Transracial adoptees and their experiences regarding their identity development and adjustment in relation to their adoptions. This study focused on four individuals who reside in or around the heterogeneous city of Montreal, all of whom were able to communicate in English.

The first limitation of this study relates to the extent of data collection manageable for a master's thesis. There was a small sample size in that only four participants were asked to participate. Having more participants may contribute to emerging common themes in similarities and dissimilarities among the participants. Incorporating more participants from the same racial/cultural background may substantiate emerging themes from that group. Additionally, the small sample size was restricting in that not all racial groups were included in this study. For example, there were no Transracial adoptees from a First Nations or Southeast Asian birth culture. Much of the existing studies on Transracial adoption centers on Southeast Asians, considering they account for most of the Transracial placements in both the United States and Canada. Future research on Transracial adoption should be more inclusive of all race groups. Such research can define the variation in the dilemmas that Transracial adoptees face across their racial groups.

A second limitation results from my positionality. As someone who is neither adopted, nor of the same race of any of my participants, it was challenging to address any issues that had not been mentioned within the literature review. I do not have firsthand knowledge of the ordeals that Transracial adoptees face in regards to their adoptions, their environments, or their constructs of racial or cultural identities. I cannot pretend to envision or understand their experiences. My only connection is partial to what I have read, what I have learned, and the experiences of some of my peers. Future research may benefit from having Transracial adoptees be the interviewers. They will share a personal connection to the topic and may be more understanding of the complexity of the participants' challenges. Additionally, a Transracially adopted researcher may have

firsthand knowledge of the problems that adoptees face in accordance to the topics of their adoptions, race, identity development, and adjustment.

A third limitation is in data collection, which consisted of two separate interviews with each participant with an hour per interview. Future research should incorporate prolonged periods of time with participants. Prolonged periods may facilitate researchers to use other forms of data collection such as observation. Furthermore, data collection relied on the perspectives of my participants, and many of the questions posed during data collection had the participants rely on their memories of experiences. There was no documentation of the participants' knowledge or emotions during any of the periods in their lives about which they were asked, and so, all responses were retrospective. Research could look to see if the participants have any form of reflection logs such as diaries or journals, to recount the experiences of the participants during various periods of their lives. In having such documents, participants may be able to express more accurately their emotions during those periods.

There are currently many gaps in the existing literature on Transracial adoption. Notably, there is currently a lack of studies that look at Canadian Transracial adoptees. Canada is a heterogeneous nation that prides itself on its multiculturalism and diversity, and yet, there is little information on the subject of Transracial adoptees residing in Canada. There exist many children who are adopted (both domestically and internationally) into Canadian households and the lack of information may suggest that these families do not have the necessary resources for their families. There also exists a gap in the literature that combines the topics of Transracial adoption, education, identity development, and adjustment. Although much of the existing literature on identity

development and adoption looks at seminal works from Erikson (1950; 1963) and Marcia (1997), it rarely address the constructs of race and culture.

Additionally, there is no research that directly concentrates on Transracial adoptees and their adjustment in education. Perhaps future research should investigate the challenges that teachers and school officials face with the topic of school adjustment of Transracial adoptees. Seeing how students' adjustment may be dependent on aspects of their interpersonal associations, it may be beneficial for future generations of educators to be informed of the possible challenges that teachers and their Transracially adopted students face in the context of the classroom and school environment.

Final Thoughts

This research set out to discover the challenges that four Transracially adopted adults have faced in relation to their identity development, and how the constructs of their identities have impacted them in their education and in their adjustment. All participants share positive affect concerning their Transracial placements, and attribute their positive affect as being a direct result of knowing about their adoptions as young children. In knowing, they believe their parents provided them with the necessary resources of coming into themselves, in fortifying an identity regardless of the fact that they were and remain unknowledgeable about many aspects of their origins. In fortifying their identities, the four participants have overcome obstacles in their education, as well as their adjustment in interpersonal relationships and contexts.

When I first decided to write a thesis, I decided that I would select a topic that does not receive the necessary attention it deserves. Thinking back to my own

experiences as a student, I recall always struggling with the concept of identity. One's identity relates to one's adjustment. I reflected on my experiences with the two topics, and I began to think of my adolescence, my bout with depression, and what my life was like during those times. Although in hindsight, I realize that the challenges that I was facing were typical of many individuals in that age group, I recall feeling that my experiences were unique. During my adolescence, I had made close connections with my friends, many of whom were Transracially or intraracially adopted; they too, were perplexed with the concept of identity. Although we were different in many facets of our rearing environments, I have always been interested in understanding their challenges with identities.

When I confirmed that I would be looking at the identity development and adjustment of young adult Transracial adoptees, I was under the impression that I knew all that I needed to know. I was interviewing individuals who were in my age group, and therefore, I made the associations that their experiences and sentiments would be very similar to those of my friends. Knowing that none of my close Transracial friends have positive affect concerning their adoptions, I believed that my research would yield similar findings. It was to my surprise that all my participants felt positively about their adoptions and, although they experienced many hurdles in their upbringing, they have managed to rise above them. The findings of my research opened up my eyes to the relevance of how things are different when one looks at them objectively. Perhaps I was able to do so because the topic of Transracial adoption is not an issue that directly affects me as an individual. That is why I inserted the quote in the beginning of this chapter.

Although there may be challenges to being raised as a Transracial adoptee, nothing can substitute for being loved, wanted, and part of a family.

Finally, it is my understanding that identity development is continuously evolving. I am not the same person I was as a child, as an adolescent, or as a young adult. I am not the same person I was 10 years ago. This thesis has expanded my personal ideology on identity in that people are constantly evolving. There is no such thing as stability in identity. Interactions are always changing and, as a result, we too are also always changing.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title: Understanding identity development and adjustment of young adult Transracial adoptees

I am a student in the Faculty of Education, Queen's University, working on a thesis in order to complete the requirements for an M.Ed. I am writing to request your participation in research aimed at furthering the understanding of identity development and adjustment of young adult Transracial adoptees. The ultimate goal of my research is to identify how Transracial adopted adults perceive the topic of identity development as they mature, to outline their personal experiences in the context of their education, to highlight issues they have overcome to adjust in their personal and social contexts (examples of contexts include their families, education, community, and society) as they matured into adulthood, and to provide their concerns for young Transracially adopted children entering schools today. This study was granted clearance by the General Research Ethics Board for compliance with the TCPS: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and Queen's policies.

If you are willing to participate in this research, I will interview you twice, for approximately 45-60 minutes, in a public place of your choosing, on two separate occasions. I am planning to voice record the interviews and take notes to make up a written record of your interviews. The audio recorded interview will be transcribed and maintained on a pass-word protected computer file and then the audio recordings will be destroyed. None of the data will contain your name, or any information that may reveal your identity. Data will be secured in a locked office; your identity will be kept confidential to the extent possible. The transcripts will be destroyed after five years in accordance with Queen's University policy. The verbatim transcripts of your interview will be emailed to you for a chance to edit the interview. In this stage you will have the opportunity to expand on answers, withdraw answers, or offer new information. The edited transcripts may be returned to me via email. Even if you are satisfied with the interview and wish to change nothing, a return email would be appreciated.

While some of the questions may be considered sensitive and therefore might involve some psychological and emotional risk, I consider this to be very low and have taken precautions to ensure that any such risks are minimized. I will begin by e-mailing you the questions prior to our interviews and thus providing you with ample opportunity to read through and ask any questions concerning them. After each interview is completed and transcribed verbatim, I will go over the responses with you, to confirm that you would like this information to be used. Post interviews, should you need further assistance coping with any content matter, you may contact the available resources; Suicide-Action at 514-723-4000, Distress Centre for Emotional Crisis at 514-278-2130, or Tel-Aide at 514-935-1101.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any questions you find objectionable, and you are assured that no information collected will be reported to anyone. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data by contacting the researcher via e-mail or telephone. Any removed data will be destroyed immediately. This research may result in publications of various types, including my master's thesis, journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, and books. Your name will not be attached to any form of the data that you provide; neither will your name be known to anyone tabulating or analyzing the data, nor will these appear in any publication created as a result of this research. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. If the data are made available to other researchers for secondary analysis, your identity will never be disclosed.

Any questions about study participation may be directed to Theodoros Liakopoulos at 514-654-9239, email: 7tl14@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

Sincerely,
Theodoros Liakopoulos

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information concerning “UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND ADJUSTMENT OF YOUNG ADULT TRANSRACIAL ADOPTEES,” and all questions have been sufficiently answered. I am aware that the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Transracial adoptees. I understand that I will be interviewed twice for between 45 and 60 minutes each time, in a public location of your choosing. Each interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. After completing of transcriptions, audio recordings will be destroyed.

I have been notified that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point during the study and I may request the removal of all or part of my data without any consequences to myself. I have also been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality to the extent possible of all information.

If I wish to withdraw from this project, or any questions about study participation may be directed to Theodoros Liakopoulos at 514-654-9239, email: 7tl14@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at 613-533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

Participant’s Name (please print): _____

Participant’s Signature _____

Date: _____

Please write your e-mail or postal address at the bottom of this sheet so I am able to contact you with your interview transcripts and to provide you with study results.

e-mail or postal address: _____

Please sign one copy of this Consent Form and return to Theodoros Liakopoulos. Retain the second copy for your records.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How old were you when you were adopted?
2. From which country were you adopted?
3. What do you remember/what have you been told about your living environment prior to your adoption?
4. What do you remember/what have you been told about your adoption experience?
5. How difficult is it for you to talk about your adoption?
6. What do you know about the culture of your birth country?
7. To what extent do you identify with your birth culture?
8. What do you know about your adoptive culture?
9. To what extent do you identify with your adoptive culture?
10. How would you identify yourself culturally?
11. What efforts did your parents make to help you learn about your birth culture?
12. What efforts have you made yourself to learn about your birth culture?
13. What are some societal challenges you have faced being Transracially adopted?
What were some challenges in your education being Transracially adopted?
14. What could an educator/school system have done to help you during your youth?
15. What recommendations do you have for families planning on adopting
Transracially?
16. What are your primary concerns for students who are Transracially adopted?

APPENDIX D: NOTATION SYSTEM

Word-	Elongated Word
...	Three Second Delay
... (small pause) ...	Pause Longer Than Three Seconds But Less Than Ten Seconds
... (long pause) ...	Pause Longer Than Ten Seconds