KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEIVED PREPAREDNESS OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS IN THE

RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR HAITIAN-BORN CHILDREN:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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Racial identity development can be a complex journey for transracially adopted children and their adoptive parents. Research and anecdotal evidence have shown that while good intentions are admirable, those pursuing transracial adoptions may not adequately address the vitally important and complex needs of a transracial adoptee's racial identity development.

A racial identity development model that represents the unique needs and experiences of transracially adopted children is currently not easily and readily available for adoptive parents, and in most cases is not highlighted in the limited training offered to adoptive parents. This reality, as well as varying levels of racism present in the predominantly White environments of many transracial adoptees, produces a compelling call to explore the knowledge and perceived preparedness of the adoptive parents in the racial identity development of their Haitian-born children. The focus of this qualitative study is on adoptive parents who only recently (within the past four years) have begun parenting their Haitian-born children, or who are currently in the process of bringing their children home.

Twelve participants were included in this consensual qualitative research study, a method followed while exploring the relationships and concepts tied to uncovering the knowledge adoptive parents have about racial identity development in their Haitian-born children, as well as exploring their perceptions about how prepared they are to guide their children through healthy racial identity development. Participants are all White, North American, female parents having transracially adopted a child from Haiti since 2008, or at least having begun the Haitian adoption process. Hour-long interviews with the twelve participants were conducted and recorded, using fourteen in-depth, open-ended, and unbiased questions related to the topic being explored. The questions identified as important to the interview have primarily emerged from the review of literature related to racial identity development, transracial adoption, training and other services available to adoptive parents and recognized as important, and relevant Haitian-specific issues.

A research team consisting of 4 individuals recruited and selected through the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Counseling Psychology program, along with the primary researcher, worked together collaboratively. This team (1) transcribed all interviews and came to consensual agreement on the coding, categorization and filing of each topic and core ideas identified within each individual case, (2) looked across all cases to identify similarities, and (3) identified patterns and translated the data into meaningful ideas and conclusions.

The research team identified four domains, within which were categories that all data would fit, with varying frequencies. The four domains that emerged from the data included (1) motivations for Haitian adoption, (2) perceptions of other's perceptions, (3) preparations and practices, and (4) racial identity development.

The rich, in-depth information encountered in this study provides a foundation upon which future hypotheses can be established and tested to determine the key training needed,

preparations to be made, and realistic family expectations identified of adoptive parents. The ultimate goal is for adoptive parents to be able to provide the optimal conditions for healthy racial identity development of their Haitian-born children. This will provide greater understanding and confidence in adoptive parents, a helpful response to legitimate criticisms of transracial adoption, and most importantly, the greatest likelihood of healthy racial identity development for these children who find themselves in a situation that is less than ideal. As reflected on by one interviewee: "Adoption is a beautiful thing AND it stems from tragedy."

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Racial identity development can be a complex journey for transracially adopted children and their adoptive parents. Where once intercountry adoptions were a rarity, such adoptions, while still not the norm today, are now becoming more common. For example, the United States has experienced a 45.1% increase in intercountry adoptions in 2004 compared to 1998 (7,110 additional adoptions) making up 13% of all United States adoptions (Paulson & Merighi, 2009). This increase in such adoptions does not come without its criticisms or concerns, as many of these intercounty adoptions are also transracial. As we will see, research and anecdotal evidence have shown that while good intentions are admirable, those pursuing transracial adoptions frequently do not adequately address the vitally important and complex needs of a transracial adoptee's racial identity development. In the worse case scenario, the results can be devastating with concerns of the adoptee experiencing psychological harm related to a lack of healthy identity development (Alexander, Jr., & Curtis, 1996); conversely, the best case scenarios show that healthy identity development can indeed be established when adoptive parents engage in necessary preparation for transracial adoptions (Thomas & Tessler, 2007).

Numerous related issues need to be addressed when exploring the topic of racial identity development of transracial adoptees, and can include: (1) the degree to which White adoptive parents can provide the kind of environment necessary for healthy racial identity formation in their adopted children, (2) the degree to which White adoptive parents have considered and internalized the power and privilege that comes with their societal position and how that plays into their child's developing identity, (3) the challenge that perhaps transracial adoption strikes "at the very heart of the integrity of the Black community and its desires to protect and promote

the well-being of its children" (Goddard, 1996), and (4) the extent to which specialized cultural competency training is and should be provided and required of adoption agencies to adequately prepare adoptive parents to help their children develop a positive racial identity (Vonk & Angaran, 2003). These concerns and questions need to continue to be addressed alongside of the conclusions made by researchers such as Vroegh (1997) who, in her longitudinal study of transracial adoptees of thirty years ago, concluded that the 34 transracial adoptees she studied had similar, healthy, overall adjustment and identity development when compared with 18 adoptees placed into a matching-race family.

Taking into consideration the Racial Identity Development models of Sue and Sue (2003) and of Ung, Harris O'Connor and Pillidge (2012), and the reality of the presence of racism in the predominantly White environment of many transracial adoptees, a compelling call to explore the compounding difficulties of adoption on racial identity development are on order. Additionally, the endorsements, concerns, and criticisms of child welfare professionals, mental health professionals, adult transracial adoptees, and others will be described and will provide important information upon which this study is built (Vonk & Angaran, 2003; Griffith & Bergeron, 2006; Alexander Jr. & Curtis, 1996; Vroegh, 2007; among others).

This paper will contain a review of relevant literature, a description of the methods involved in this consensual qualitative study (CQS), the results of the study, and will conclude with a discussion outlining the summary, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the research literature relevant to this qualitative study. A brief historical review and current picture of international adoption, the differing perspectives on transracial adoption, and Haitian-specific information will be followed by an exploration of cultural competency issues in racial identity development for both adoptive parents and adoption agencies. A look at two racial identity development models will then conclude this chapter.

Historical Review

Paulsen and Merighi (2009) provide a brief historical look at the development of intercountry adoption, which began on a larger scale by connecting displaced children with humanitarian-oriented families post-World War II (citing Lovelock, 2000) and continuing throughout the following years in response to war and social unrest in countries around the world. This humanitarian response has since expanded to now include a pursuit of intercountry and specifically transracial adoption as a result of infertility issues and fewer White infants (often preferred) available to North American parents pursuing adoption as a means to grow their family.

From 1998 to 2004, the U.S. Department of State reports a 45% increase in intercountry adoptions (from 15,583 international adoptions in 1998 to 22,991 international adoptions in 2004). International adoptions made up 13% of all U.S. adoptions during this time, and 40% of these international adoptions are also transracial. The year 2004 was also the peak year for adoptions from Haiti to the U.S., with 355 adoptions being completed during that year. Both international adoptions, as well as Haitian adoptions, have sharply declined in subsequent years, due to tightening restrictions, periods of slowdown or shutdown due to a need for increased

transparency, political and other reasons. Table 1 contains the number of overall international adoptions to the United States over the past two decades, and Table 2 contains the number of Haitian adoptions to the United States since 1999.

TABLE 1

International Adoptions to the U.S.	
2013 (predicted)	7,000
2010	11,058
2008	17,456
2006	20,680
2004	22,991
2002	21,467
2000	18,857
1998	15,583
1992	6,472

TABLE 2

Adoptions from Haiti to the U.S.	
2011	33
2010	133
2008	301
2006	310
2004	355
2002	187
2000	130
1999	96

The initial expansion of transracial adoption had not occurred without significant concerns expressed. For over a decade during the 1970's and 1980's, transracial adoptions

dropped significantly due to a national policy of same-race adoption advocated by the National

Association of Black Social Workers and other mental health professionals, who were concerned

about possible psychological harm and stress to the adoptee (Alexander, Jr. & Curtis, 1996).

These authors point out the reversal of this policy through the passing of the Multiethnic

Placement Act of 1994, forbidding discrimination in adoption and foster care placement.

However, this Act, signed by President Clinton, does allow race to be a factor, but not the sole

factor, in the placement of a child.

Haiti is relevant to the topic at hand due to the fact that most of these adoptions are

transracial and will create visibly multiracial families, frequently in predominantly White

communities. Further, Gupta and Agrawal (2010) emphasize the degree to which children are at

risk in Haiti, finding "32.5% of households with children met the UNICEF definition of

orphaned and vulnerable children" (p. 1997). Prior to the earthquake in 2010, the authors noted

that 51.4% of girls and 48.6% of boys were exposed to violence in these households. The

likelihood is high that post disaster conditions will further deteriorate the safety of these children.

Potential PTSD concerns raises a challenge for further research and effective response be given

to these difficult conditions for children. This reality will provide a compelling call to potential

adoptive parents seeking to respond, and may result in an increase in Haitian adoption pursuits in

coming years.

Relevant to this discussion is the intriguing conclusions found in Lundy's (2011) study,

which highlights the strength and resiliency of the Haitian identity among the second generation:

> If transnationalism is defined as the process by which immigrants fashion a multilayered
>
> relationship that actively binds them to their country of origin while they are

simultaneously fully involved in the social activities of their country of settlement, the

Haitian Diaspora response to the earthquake exemplifies that description. (p. 204)

Thus, adoptive parents of Haitian-born children would do well to heed the implications of this

strong Haitian transnationalism, by creating an environment for positive Haitian identity

development.

Examining the knowledge that adoptive parents have in regards to the racial identity

development of their transracially adopted children from Haiti will provide insight and

perspective that can then be transferred to transracial adoption occurring in other countries. This

insight will become relevant as we consider the growing interest of parents seeking to adopt

internationally and transracially, especially in countries with similar levels of poverty, of limited

medical care resulting in greater numbers of orphans as biological parents succumb to sickness

and disease and high maternal death rates, and where domestic adoption or social programs do

not adequately provide for the needs of children who have become orphaned.

<div align="center">Cultural Competency</div>

A discrepancy can be readily seen between literature concluding the necessity of cultural

competency training for parents adopting transracially and the lack of literature indicating that

this training is actually being provided by adoption agencies (Vonk & Angaran, 2003). These

researchers concluded that such training is provided by about half of agencies facilitating

transracial adoptions (with more private than public agencies providing training). Vonk and

Angaran (2003) looked specifically at three components of cultural competency:

> Racial Awareness refers to parent's awareness of how race, ethnicity, culture, language,
>
> and related power status affects their own and their children's lives; Multicultural
>
> Planning refers to the creation of avenues for the child to learn about and participate in

his or her culture of birth; Survival Skills refers to the recognition of the need and the

ability of parents to prepare their children to successfully cope with racism. (p. 54)

Further, these researchers identified what ended up being a very limited number of hours of

training devoted to cultural competence in public agencies (M = 6.19, SD = 6.85) and in private

agencies (M = 6.53, SD = 7.70). Of concern to the researchers was the lack of helpful diversity

among trainers, with most trainers being Caucasian and female employees of the agency. An

additional concern was related to their conclusion that less than a third of private agencies, and

only a few public agencies, provide post-placement training – the time when life experience and

actual development of racial identity replaces the abstract. As an example, Crolley-Simic and

Vonk (2011) spoke of parents of transracial adoptees who became aware of their own racism

only *after* the adoptions were finalized: "I am racist just like everybody. And people don't say

they are racist; they don't know how racist they really are. So [the adoption] has made me even

more aware of my racism" (p. 175). A study by Dhami, Mandel, and Sothmann (2007) focused

on such necessary post-adoption services and confirmed that most adoptive parents would take

advantage of such services if offered, but that most agencies still need to develop and target such

training.

Paulsen and Merighi (2009) addressed the importance of adoptive parents engaging in

various cultural experiences specific to their child and cite Dorow's (2006) classification of the

level of cultural approaches of these parents: "assimilation, celebrating plurality, balancing act,

and immersion" (p. 4). Validating the child's birth culture through involvement in relevant

cultural experiences, spiritual groups and community organizations, making available relevant

books and music, traveling to birth country, being open and helpful with birth family searches,

and establishing authentic friendships and mentoring relationships of the same race as the child

all work to strengthen the family unit and provide a solid foundation for the child's racial identity development. Surprisingly and interestingly, these researchers found that families adopting from countries with more racially similar features as the White adoptive parents (i.e. from Russia and Romania) were less involved in relevant cultural activities and more likely to experience various challenges than parents who adopted transracially. Vonk, Lee, and Crolley-Simic (2010) came to the troubling conclusion that "adoptive parents still rely primarily on socialization practices that require little to no contact with people of the child's race/ethnicity…" [when recent research] "suggests that more integrative socialization practices actually provide the greatest support for developing positive racial identity and skills with which to handle discrimination" (p. 245). Additional insight from Crolley-Simic and Vonk's (2011) findings reveal that some adoptive parents, due to a "color-blind" approach, "did not relate to their child as a member of another race" (p. 173), and some had very ambiguous racial views resulting in internal struggles over how to view their interracial family. It is with all this in mind that the researchers exhort adoption agencies to emphasize the importance of incorporating birth culture within the family's life values and pursuits. "The challenges of adoption do not end with a secure attachment between the parent and child" (Paulsen & Merighi, 2009, p. 15).

<div align="center">Racial Identity Development</div>

Many adoptive parents do seek to grow in their cultural competency, especially in regards to incorporating components of their child's birth culture, which often feels relatively accessible and safe to the parents. Cultural components of music, language, art, and food can help a child feel a greater sense of cultural and even ethnic connection and pride. However, adoption agencies, and adoptive parents, often focus on the cultural connection at the exclusion of discussion about the racial identity of the transracially-adopted child. An emphasis on the birth

culture does not automatically address and resolve racial identity issues. The Evan B. Donaldson

Institute, in a study of one hundred adult and adolescent transracial adoptees, concluded that it is

racial socialization (and not cultural or ethnic socialization) that results in a decreased sense of

marginalization and a greater sense of self-esteem. Racial identity was found to be *the* salient

issue. Thus, it is imperative for adoptive parents, and for agencies, social workers, and mental

health professionals, to do all they can to nurture healthy racial identity in children transracially

adopted.

Well known and respected among racial identity models, is Sue and Sue's (2003) model

that provides a helpful synthesis of the behaviors and attitudes and experiences of people of color

during their racial identity development. Table 3 provides an overview of Sue and Sue's model

of racial identity development.

TABLE 3

Racial Identity Development Model (Sue and Sue, 2003)

Conformity Stage	Preference for the dominant race or culture. Identifies with dominant group. May feel negatively toward own race or culture.
Dissonance Stage	An encounter raises awareness of the inconsistency of the beliefs in the conformity stage. Denial may occur. May question one's beliefs or attitudes held in the conformity stage.
Resistance and Immersion Stage	Likely to feel anger, guilt, and shame at the oppression and racism of which they previously put up. May reject the dominant values of society and culture.
Introspection Stage	Seeks deeper understanding of themselves as part of a minority group. Less reactive to the dominant culture; more proactive in defining and discovering sense of self.

| Integrative Awareness Stage | Sense of security and the ability to appreciate positive aspects of one's own culture and of the dominant culture. Many of the conflicts in earlier stages resolved. Actively trying to eliminate oppression. |

　　While Sue and Sue's model provides useful language and an understanding of the developmental process, it is not sufficient in and of itself to describe the unique experiences of transracial adoptees. The transracial adoption piece does add a layer of complexity, given that the transracial adoptee's family (of whom they are very intimately a part) is part of the dominant group. This will be likely to lay, more intensely, a foundation for the conformity stage. As a transracial adoptee moves through the stages, it is likely that she will encounter greater struggle due to her intimate connection with the dominant culture and race. Further, it may be true that many White families may not be able to help their child articulate their thoughts and feelings in response to the dissonance that will occur, or give "permission" for him to plunge into the immersion stage.

　　Given the limitations of Sue and Sue's model, it is appropriate to consider an additional model that addresses the uniqueness of the experiences of the transracially adoptee. Such a model is difficult to find and put to use for most adoptive parents. Ung, Harris O'Connor and Pillidge (2012) offer a model that seeks to explain racial identity development in transracial adoptees, and is based on an ecological approach. The authors view racial identity development as a "multi-dimensional construct that evolves as a result of an interactive and reciprocal relationship between a person and his or her social, cultural and political environment" (p. 73). The authors, having found much of the literature on racial identity development to be "adoption blind" and not adequate to fit the experiences of transracial adoptees, compiled a list of autobiographical works by transracial adoptees in order to propose the five constructs that make

up their model. The five dimensions that comprise this model are outlined in Table 4. Table 5

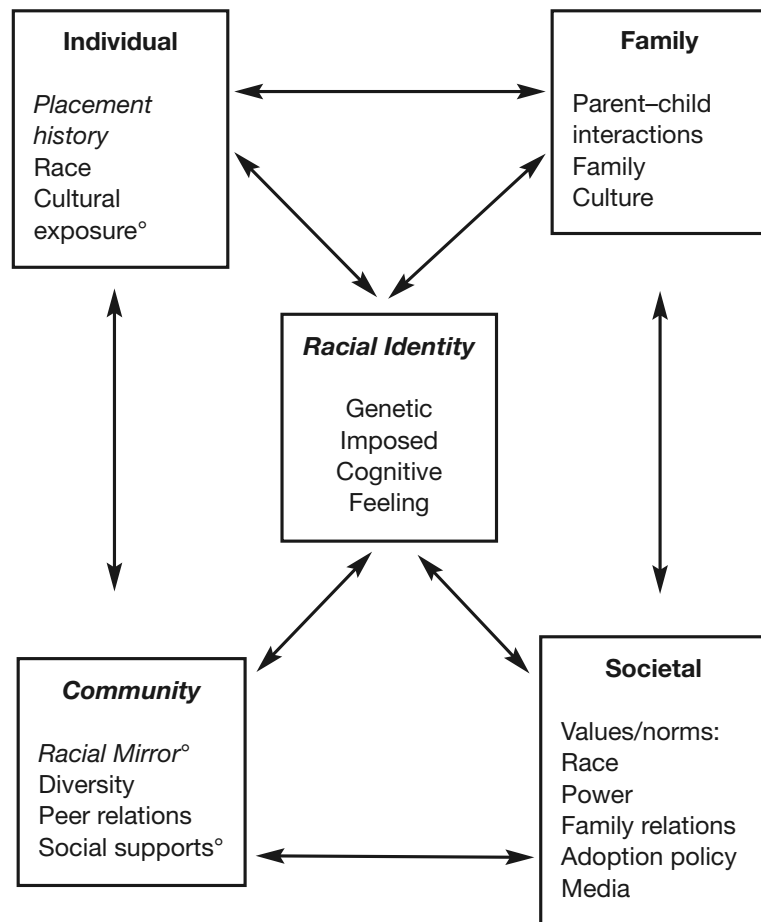provides the "Schematic ecological representation of Transracial Identity Model" (p. 78).

TABLE 4

Racial Identity Development: An Ecological Approach (Ung, Harris O'Connor & Pillidge, 2012)

Genetic Racial Identity	Biological traits (skin color, hair texture, size, etc) that get constructed as race. One's genetic racial identity lays the foundation for later access and input to the development of an accurate racial identity. Birth information (which must be given as accurately as possible) that connects the past to the present and later to the future.
Imposed Racial Identity	Assessed and given to the adopted child (whether accurately or inaccurately). A racial group to which the adopted person is affiliated, as well as a label given based on the perception of their race.
Cognitive Racial Identity	What a person thinks and/or knows herself to be. What a person internalizes of her imposed identity.
Visual Racial Identity	The color one sees one's skin to be; may or may not be congruent with the race a person actually is. Developing an accurate visual representation of one's racial identity may be impeded by the dynamics of the social environment.
Feeling Racial Identity	Derives from one's subjective experience and perception of the values, beliefs, ritual and language, which are embedded in racial and ethnic traditions that contribute to an internalized sense of self. Feeling racial identity can often be in conflict with imposed and cognitive racial identity.

TABLE 5

Schematic ecological representation of Transracial Identity Model

Individual	Family
Placement history Race Cultural exposure°	Parent–child interactions Family Culture

Racial Identity

Genetic
Imposed
Cognitive
Feeling

Community	Societal
Racial Mirror° Diversity Peer relations Social supports°	Values/norms: Race Power Family relations Adoption policy Media

Cultural exposure° = degree of cultural exposure; Openness° = degree of openness; Racial mirror° = degree of racial mirroring; Social supports° = degree of social supports

This model highlights the complexity of racial identity development in the transracially adopted person, not pathologizing the process, but acknowledging the social and political issues that arise and should be tended to by adoptive parents.

This qualitative study will seek to characterize adoptive parents of Haitian children in terms of their awareness of salient issues related to their children's identity development and perceptions of preparedness for a transracial adoptee's racial identity development. It is

expected that this study will help identify relevant information, upon which associated professionals can use in their work with such adoptive families. Limitations of adoptive parents can serve to highlight areas still in need of quality training, resources and requirements in order that the best environment can be established for the children to develop a healthy racial identity.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This third chapter will outline the methods used in this qualitative study. Given the limited number of potential participants that fit the desired target population, as well as a preference for being able to analyze individualized and in-depth responses, this study involved a qualitative and inductive approach for gathering and analyzing data. Using guidelines for conducting consensual qualitative research identified by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), this study does not identify a hypothesis to be tested, but rather will explore the relationships and concepts related to how adoptive parents are informed and knowledgeable about racial identity development in their Haitian children, as well as how they perceive themselves to be prepared to guide their children through identity exploration and development.

The consensual qualitative research (CQR) method was chosen for it's inductive approach. Given the desire to provide a rich and thorough description of the understanding, experiences, and attitudes of adoptive parents in regards to their transracially adopted children's racial identity development, the small sample size encouraged by CQR (8-15 recommended), along with strong validity within the consensual process, it was determined that the CQR method would be a good fit for the aims of this particular study.

In this chapter, a review will first be given of all participants involved: the interviewees, the research team, and the biases and expectations brought to the table by the research team

members. Second, the measures used will be outlined, including the demographic questionnaire completed by potential interviewees, as well as the interview questions used and protocol followed. The chapter will conclude with an outline of the procedure: selecting and contacting participants, the phone interview, transcribing the interviews, training of the research team, and data analysis.

Participants

Interviewees

Recruitment of interviewees involved the use of electronic communication. Three online groups were identified as key networking groups for adoptive parents of Haitian children. These three groups together would produce close to 500 possible respondents. A posting on these three sites resulted in 45 individuals responding to my request for participants by completing an online questionnaire that included an informed consent and request for important demographic information. Most of the respondents responded directly to the posting; a handful of respondents were informed of the study through word-of-mouth of other respondents. Attempt to recruit possible participants through an adoption agency working in Haiti, and an orphanage in Haiti, were met with policy and procedural complications, and produced no interviewees.

In order to be included in this study, interviewees must be White North American parents having transracially adopted a child from Haiti since 2008, or at least have begun the Haitian adoption process. This time limitation will provide the most recent look into the knowledge and perceived preparedness of today's adoptive parents as they engage in their Haitian children's racial identity development. Haitian law requires that potential parents be either single women or married couples of at least ten years, age 35 years or older, with no biological children.

Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis for each one of those requirements, and require an additional step in the adoption process.

Each respondent fitting the identified criteria was followed up with an email to determine their willingness to continue their participation in the study, to set up a time for a phone interview, and to answer any questions they may have. After identifying individuals who fit the criteria, and who were then willing to be interviewed and who followed through with their intention to participate, the original 45 respondents to the questionnaire were reduced to the twelve interviewees who participated in the study. Appendix A gives an overview of some demographics provided by the questionnaire for this group of twelve. It is interesting to note that all but one of the original 45 respondents were women, and all interviewees were women. Further exploration of the reason for this (are mothers more invested in the adoption? Are mothers more likely to participate in, and respond to, social networking? Are mothers more aware of racial identity development concerns?), as well as identifying potential biases of this group of interviewees would prove beneficial.

Participants

Research Team

In addition to the primary researcher, the research team consisted of four other White, female graduate students (Valerie Gallucci, Krystle Koelker, Anna Stremlau, and Darci Ann Weber) in the University of Wisconsin-Platteville's Counseling Psychology program. None of the team members had experience in conducting consensual qualitative research outside of this research project.

The research team gathered together on six different occasions. Due to the scheduling complexities of five graduate students, there were only two of those six meetings where every

member was present. In some instances, absent team members would "check" the work after the team had met. Research team members assisted in transcribing interviews, and worked to consensus in coding the data, establishing domains, identifying core ideas, and conducting cross-analysis of the data.

Participants

Researcher Biases and Expectations

Due to the heavy reliance on the consensual process of research team members, considerable time and attention was given to discussing personal biases and expectations, as well as potential biases that may grow out of the nature of this particular collection of team members. The team recognized that explicitly identifying expectations and biases would raise awareness of, and reduce the impact on, the results of the analysis. All team members had some personal connection to adoption, be it with a relative, friend, or acquaintance who was or has adopted. Two team members had short-term experience in an orphanage setting in developing countries, and one other team member had work experience working with adoptive families. All team members acknowledged that while they were not fully informed about all the intricacies related to the adoption world, their general overall thoughts and feelings towards adoption, including transracial adoption, were positive.

As we further explored our biases, we observed far more biases emerging than what was originally envisioned by team members. Each team member shared a personal encounter with adoption that did have some shaping influence in their overall perspective on adoption. One team member was surprised by how her impression of a foreign exchange student (as lazy and manipulative) found it's way into her thinking about transracial adoptees. Another acknowledged how it didn't even occur to her to consider the racial identity development of a

transracial adoptee with whom she was acquainted. One member expressed how transracial adoption should perhaps be considered as a "special needs" adoption. And three members explicitly expressed their belief that if the potential adoptive parents are not willing to go through extensive work of educating themselves about racial identity development of transracial adoptees, they simply should not continue their pursuit of such an adoption.

A significant discussion of team members consisted of how the adoption process of the primary researcher would influence not only our starting biases and expectations, but also the data analysis process. Additionally and importantly, we needed to explore and resolve differing degrees of comfort with expressing biases and expectations given the primary researcher's investment in her personal transracial adoption that was in process throughout the duration of this study.

Team members identified numerous expectations related to possible outcomes of transracial adoption. All stated their belief (to varying degrees) that many adoptive parents often enter into transracial adoption lightly, and assume a "love is all you need" mentality that could potentially overlook the unique needs of transracial adoptees. Four of us believed that participants would be fairly well-educated. Three members also stated their expectation that adoptive parents living in more diverse communities would likely be more prepared for understanding the needs of their transracially adopted child's racial identity development than those living in a more rural environment. Two believed that most parents adopting transracially would struggle to describe their child's racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. One stated that because of her expectation that participants in this study will be fairly well-educated, she also expected that participants will accurately provide definitions for their child's race, ethnicity, and culture. One mentioned that many, or even most, participants will not have received adequate

training specifically addressing the racial identity development of their transracially adopted

child. Three members expected most participants to be pursuing transracial adoption due to

infertility. Three members believed that there would be a strong religious component, and a

desire to "help others in need" and to do some good in this world. One member expected there

to be a strong connection of prospective parents seeking to adopt from Haiti in the aftermath of

the 2010 earthquake. Finally, one member believed that most parents adopting transracially are

not aware of the importance of racial issues and that their kids may grow up confused and

conflicted, and she worried about those children and their racial identity development.

Research team members reflected on the personal challenges and insights gleaned from

the multicultural counseling class required within the program, and discussed how that content

shapes our expectations of the knowledge that adoptive parents might have regarding racial

identity development. These recent personal insights and reflections on pre-class knowledge and

understanding of racial identity development played into our assumptions of what the general

White population understands about racial identity development. The transference of this

experience may influence our expectations of parents adopting transracially.

Measures

Interview Questions and Protocol

The purpose of the interview was to explore the familiarity, comfort, preparedness, and

knowledge of parents of transracial adoptees in terms of their child's racial identity development.

The interviews began with some introductory remarks expressing gratitude to the participant,

giving an overview of the research being conducted, and ensuring that the participant read and

understood the informed consent (Appendix B). The interviewees were reminded of the

voluntary nature of participation in the study, of there being no right or wrong answers to the

questions, and that all identifying information will be kept confidential. After providing an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions related to the study and to confirm that they gave consent to the interview being recorded, the interview began with a few warm-up questions asking for the participant's reflections on adoption and motives for adoption in general, and adoption from Haiti more specifically (i.e., "Please begin by explaining what adoption means to you, and what was involved in making the decision to adopt" and "Please tell me about your choice of Haiti as the birthplace of your adopted child"). We believed this to provide insight into the motivations behind the adoption pursuit, and also context for the decision to adopt transracially.

The interviewees were then asked to share their understanding of the difference between their child's racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, as well as to define transracial adoption. This was followed by a series of open-ended questions related to transracial adoption (i.e., "Please share your general thoughts and experiences related to transracial adoption" and "What complexities do you believe to be involved in transracial adoption?"). This set of questions provided insight into familiarity, comfort, and thoroughness of interviewee understanding of related terminology, and context for the following questions related to racial identity development.

The next five questions explored the interviewee's understanding of racial identity development (with interviewer providing the same working explanation of racial identity development to every interviewee after receiving their response), and the interviewee's perceived importance of understanding and preparing for the racial identity development of their transracially adopted child (i.e., "What do you believe to be necessary in order for White parents to provide the best environment for healthy racial identity development in their adopted Haitian

children" and "What specific preparations or key experiences have you engaged in to learn about racial identity development of your adopted child?").

One question explored any recognized biases of the interviewee and the final question, in open-ended fashion, provided an opportunity for the interviewee to reflect on any additional thoughts or concerns related to the issues of the racial identity development of her child. These questions provided the research team with the greatest amount of insight into the interviewee's knowledge of her child's racial identity development, as well as preparations for that development that she deems warranting her time and attention.

Most interview questions were open-ended in nature, providing the interviewee the greatest opportunity to give expression to that which is most salient to her as she considers her child's racial identity development. All interview questions can be found in Appendix C. To ensure the greatest amount of consistency in interview style, approach, and follow-up, the primary researcher conducted all interviews.

Procedure

The Phone Interview

All interviewees were recruited, selected, and contacted as outlined above. During the hour-long phone interview, participants were given the same introduction, and were asked the same fourteen questions. Additionally, the interviewer would follow-up on important responses or ideas from the interviewee that were outside of the confinement of those questions. This would frequently produce additional useful data.

Procedure

Transcribing the Interviews

After the interview was completed, the interview was assigned a case number, and research team members transcribed their assigned interviews, omitting identifying information. Voice recognition software provided some assistance in this process. A different team member then reviewed the completed transcription for accuracy and to ensure identifying information had been removed. The transcripts were then sent to the participants, giving them opportunity to make any necessary corrections before sending back to the primary researcher. Few changes were made as a result of this step.

Procedure

Training of the Research Team

To prepare for participation on the research team, training involved team members being given Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) "Guide to Conducting Consensual Qualitative Research" as well as readings on transracial adoption. The research team then thoroughly reviewed together the CQR process, discussed team member expectations and responsibilities, and identified personal and group biases and expectations.

Procedure

Data Analysis

To determine the suitability and appropriateness of the interview questions, a pilot interview was conducted with a family who had grown their family through transracial adoption. Modifications to the questions were made based on feedback.

Following the consensual method outlined by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), the research team: (1) transcribed all interviews and came to consensual agreement (working together until all agreed with the conclusions) on the coding, categorization and filing of each topic and core ideas identified within each individual case, (2) looked across all cases to identify

similarities, and (3) identified patterns and translated the data into meaningful ideas and conclusions agreed upon by all members of the research team. An elaboration of this consensual qualitative research process of Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) follows.

Step one: A list of initial "domains" within which to group related data and stemming from the literature review were identified. This initial list included thirty-four possible domains – an astonishing number. The research team held these domains loosely and worked together to make modifications by sorting through the information contained within the interviews. After coding several transcripts together, the members of the research team individually read and coded the information contained within each remaining transcript. The team then came together to seek a consensus on the placement of data into the most appropriate domain. After domains were dramatically reduced, and the data contained in each were finalized, a descriptive (not interpretive) summarization of each domain's content for each interview was produced, highlighting the core ideas contained in the final list of domains.

Step two: The research team looked across cases to identify similarities and to create categories based on the data that has emerged, as well as to indentify the frequency of the category. This part of the process did include going back to and revising previous work. Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) consider

> a category that applies to all of the cases to be *general*. If the category applies to half or more of the cases it is considered *typical*. If it applies to either two or three to just less than half of the cases it is considered *variant*. Any categories that apply only to one or two cases are dropped because they are not considered to be descriptive of the sample. (p. 550-551)

Step three: The results were then charted in order to organize and focus the data, highlighting the connections, relationships and patterns that have been identified, and will fully be discussed in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

The research team went through a few revisions in analyzing the data and identifying the domains most salient to the data. Our first attempt to identify all possible domains produced an astounding 34 domains, many of which we knew would be combined, eliminated, or adjusted as we worked to consensus through the list. A subsequent meeting resulted in a reduction of the data into twelve domains. We were still not at consensus with those twelve domains, and went to work once again to revise and re-categorize the data in a way that best reflects the most important issues that emerged from the data. Four domains remained as a result of our third and final revision: Motivations for Haitian Adoption, Perceptions of Other's Perceptions, Preparations and Practices, and Racial Identity Development. Though some overlap among domains is inevitable, consensus was reached that these four domains best described the data. Each domain then contains categories, of varying frequency of occurrence, which organizes the data within domains. Table 6 contains the results of these domains and categories. Categories that applied to only one or two cases were excluded from the table, and from the following overview of domains.

TABLE 6

Domains and Categories

Motivations for Haitian Adoption	Spiritual and/or personal calling	*General*
	Haiti's perceived unique needs (earthquake, mortality rates, etc)	*Typical*
	Haiti meets personal requirements or preferences	*Typical*
	A love for (or positive bias towards) all things Haitian	*Variant*
	Fertility issues	*Variant*
	Significant prior connection to Haiti	*Variant*
Perceptions of Other's Perceptions	Most people are supportive and positive about TA adoption	*Typical*
	Believe there will be issues related to others' comfort and familiarity with transracial adoption and/or race	*Typical*
	Believe most negative responses will be from people who are Black	*Variant*
Preparations and Practices	Wants to make preparations, or include practices, that they haven't yet done	*General*
	Consults books, websites, social media	*Typical*
	Maintain connection and contact with Haitians and/or Haiti	*Variant*
	Incorporates Haitian culture (food, artwork, music, history, etc)	*Variant*
	Discusses race and culture openly with child	*Variant*
Racial Identity Development	Not able to define terms or clearly distinguish between race, culture, and ethnicity	*Typical*
	RID of lesser importance than other issues	*Typical*
	Will respond to RID as it arises (reactive approach)	*Typical*
	Low level of multicultural interaction	*Variant*
	Identifies presence of racism, shared example of racism	*Variant*

Motivations for Haitian Adoption

Interviewees appeared most eager and comfortable responding to questions related to their motivations for pursing adoption and in choosing Haiti as the birthplace for their transracially adopted children. This proved to confirm the decision to use these questions as "warm-up" questions for the overall interview. Based on a subjective "quickness," thoroughness, and ease of interviewee response, most were well-prepared for providing personal reflections and insights to their commitment to adoption and to Haiti. Explicitly expressed by all but one interviewee, was a very strong and compelling personal or spiritual calling to adoption. For many, this took the form of pursing adoption in response to a biblical mandate. One interviewee expressed it this way:

> We were reading in the Bible just about our mandate to care for the widows and the poor
> and the orphaned and we just really felt something pulling on our hearts. And that's
> when we started talking about adoption… And you know, we never went into this
> thinking that we were "rescuing" a child… we just had room in our family and wanted to
> bring a child in and to be part of our family.

More than half of participants commented on being compelled to respond to Haiti's unique needs given the high numbers of orphans in Haiti, the high infant mortality rates, and the impact of the devastating earthquake of 2010. One mother stated that "after the earthquake my husband was feeling like we can't do a lot to help Haiti but we can do something to make a difference there for somebody." One family initially looked at China as an option, but decided on Haiti, for "at that time there were 365,000 orphaned children and so as soon as we read those numbers and saw that these children really did not have homes… That's when we picked [Haiti] and proceeded with that." A single mother was struck by a statistic she came across that

every other baby born in Haiti would die before the age of 5…I couldn't live with that statistic without doing something about it. There was the obvious ways of trying to help through NGO's…but I really wanted to become a parent and to put the personal touch on that too. To be a part of the solution and to provide a child with a mother, who may not even survive if not for adoption.

Another typical category for the "Motivations" domain was quite simply that Haiti met personal requirements or preferences, such as Haitian adoption requirements, timeline for or cost of Haitian adoption, and/or relative ease of travel to Haiti.

A variant category of interviewees expressed being motivated by their positive bias of Haiti and Haitian people and culture. Such interviewees expressed very positive biases about Haiti and her people, expressing a desire to share "just the love that the [Haitian] people have for Haiti that I think is very unique to their culture. They are very warm, loving people." Another mother expressed her "appreciation for the strength of character and the strength of will of the Haitian people: that they go through so much and yet they continue to sing and they continue to smile and they continue to work." And one final interviewee shared that she has:

> such an overwhelming love for Haiti and I kind of lump everybody from Haiti in that. That the bias I would probably most have is maybe even being a little naïve about this overwhelming love that I have for Haiti. And being a little blinded to some of the downfalls of the dark sides of the culture because there is this sense of overwhelming love for Haiti that I could be a little oblivious to.

Surprisingly few participants were primarily motivated to adoption from Haiti due to fertility issues. One final variant category consists of interviewees motivated to adopt from Haiti due to their prior connection with Haiti, expressed in this way by one adoptive mother:

I worked in Haiti for 12 years before I started the adoption process for [daughter]. Because I've already immersed myself in loving Haiti and being passionate about Haiti and the people of Haiti, and the culture, and all of those things… Haiti has been a part of my life for so long, that it just felt like a natural extension of that…Because I already loved Haiti and was very passionate about it – it is my life's work. So bringing it home just felt very natural in those ways.

<div align="center">Perceptions of Other's Perceptions</div>

Though never directly asked among the interview questions, most interviewees commented on how they perceived others to be observing or interpreting or perceiving their transracial family or the race of their child. While not a primary domain identified at the early stages of data analysis, the more the research team worked with the data, the more this domain stood out to the team, perhaps especially because of it's recurrence in most interviewee reflections though never directly prompted by interviewer. Two typical categories emerged from the data: (1) the belief that most family, friends, and community members are generally positive about transracial adoption and specifically the race of the child, and (2) the belief that there will be issues and difficulties related to the comfort and familiarity of family, friends, and community members have toward transracial adoption and race, specifically. For examples, one mother share this observation:

You go places…you go to the doctors office and they ask you are you a foster mom? No I'm his mom. And then they have to say what, you're an adoptive mom, right? And you think yes, but this child can never get past they are adopted. They can't just go to a doctor's office and to say that's my mom and not have people ask questions or it's always you have to differentiate between and that's my real mom or that's my adopted mom. Or

I'm a real child. I wish society just let him be a kid. Why do we always have to say, that's my adopted child, and that's my biological child. Your real kid. Your real mom. I think people's lack of sensitivity or knowledge or they are just curious or it is just that you don't look like you fit together so they have to ask questions. I think that's probably one of the hardest things… You stick out like a sore thumb.

In the variant category of the "Perceptions" domain, four interviewees juxtaposed the belief that experiences with others were generally positive with regards to transracial adoption, with comments that most difficulties or issues either do occur, or may occur, with individuals who are Black. Due to the intriguing nature of this category, two excerpts will be provided. One adoptive mother stated that her family's

experiences have been positive and…I think that has a lot to do with where we live. People are very accepting where we live. And people that we know and people that we meet on the street are very accepting. Although that said we don't live in a very racially diverse area… When we do encounter a stranger that doesn't know us, that is Black, sometimes I think oh gosh what are they thinking? What are they thinking about: oh my daughters hair is such a mess, why is my son's skin so dry?

And another:

I think by and large the experience [with other people in their community responding to the transracial adoption] has been positive… There are some people who perhaps, I don't know if disapprove is the right word, I'm not sure, but there have been some situations where I've been around other Black families and they sort of look at my daughter, look at me, look at my daughter, look at me, and it doesn't seem like it's a positive response. But I've never asked them so their facial expressions may not be revealing what they're

feeling. So I could be jumping the gun there for sure. And it could be my own, and it's not just that it could, it is my own, I'm not sure, my own discomfort.

Preparations and Practices

Interviewees provided numerous examples of preparations they have or would like to make, as well as practices they believe would best serve their transracially adopted children in their racial identity development. While the responses yielded great variation in ideas, one response was true of all interviewees. All adoptive parents expressed their recognition that they are not currently doing some or many of the very things they believe to be important to their child's racial identity development. This will be discussed more fully in the discussion chapter.

More than half of participants tap into social capital to prepare for their child's racial identity development via websites, social media, books, and other resources. This response was far more prevalent than the variant category of maintaining connection and contact with Haiti and Haitians. One mother, however, saw this connection with Haitians as her responsibility: to connect her Haitian-born child with Haitian mentors and role models. She stated: "one of the main things for us, is to help them find role models and find people that they do fully identify with." Another mother, when her daughter is older, plans to "take the whole family back to Haiti and I really want her to be more familiar with Haiti and what it's like. I hope to find her birth parents some day and have contact with them because I think that could be vital for her development." One final mother stated that her daughter "has been to Haiti twice since the earthquake….have the opportunity to touch, see, and feel what is her birthright." When others would question why she would take her daughter back to Haiti, she responded that

> this is her culture. She has a right to know, she has a right to be comfortable in it. She
> has a right to experience the love and the joy and the beauty…And also to know and love

her birth mother. We are in a unique position in that we can remain in fairly open contact with her birth family.

A second variant category is that of adoptive families incorporating components of Haitian culture in their daily life, such as food, artwork, music, Haitian history, language, etc. Two mothers, acknowledging the connection between culture and language, are taking Creole lessons, with one mother intentionally being in an environment where it would be likely to connect with Haitian-American college students. An interviewee reflected that she "cannot re-create being a Haitian mother and I cannot re-create Haiti where we're living… Because I feel so strongly about my daughter's culture I really did believe I was adopting another culture into my life…."

The final variant category in the Preparations and Practices domain is that of the adoptive parent intending to openly discuss race and culture with the transracially adopted child. One mother provided this intriguing example:

I think the hardest part for [daughter] will be the cultural part as far as she grew up in a White family. I think that people are going to see her as a Black woman who acts weird. I think probably because she's got all these weird White nuances about her and in fact the other day she told me 'God was White' and I said 'No, God is Black' and she said 'No mommy, God is White' and I said 'Look at me. God is Black.'…And I don't know why I fought so hard for that because who really knows what God looks like…and she said 'Ok. Ok mommy. God is Black.' But that, already at three and a half, and I was like 'whoa, she's being taught things… like God is White'.

A second response: "I think that rather than making [race] a big deal, we just made it a constant…a continual topic of conversation in our home. So that it is not something scary or

something weird or something that no one wants to talk about." Lastly, one mother created a "life book" for her daughter, in which she

> wrote a children's story with pictures about her birth family and where she was born. It is her book and we read it just like we read every other book. She brings it to me and she loves that and so we read and we're very open about, this is your birth family and this is your foster mom and she loves that story… And to say, you know what, I want her to feel that at the very beginning if she ever has any questions that she wants to talk about that we will be very open and I'll give her the best answer that I can. I'm actually going back to Haiti in April and I've had an opportunity to go out and visit her family and in the village she was born in… I feel it is my job to learn absolutely as much as I can, to glean as much as I can, so that when she is older and she has these questions, that I can do my best to say you know what? I've done everything that I could to learn as much as I could to answer your questions and I really hold out hope that they will help her to cope in her identity and are confident as she gets older and understanding. Adoption is a beautiful thing *and* it stems from tragedy.

Racial Identity Development

More than half (typical) of participants were not able to define terms or to clearly distinguish between race, culture, and ethnicity as they provide identity to their child. Almost all participants were unable to identify the nuances involved. For example, one interviewee stated that:

> You know what? I don't really know what to say. As far as culture goes, at this stage in her life she really, it's such a weird thing to say, but she is now just like any other kid. Just growing up in _____. I don't mean it to sound wrong, but she really is. Yes she

came from this place and it was difficult and all these things, but now at her development as a part of my family, she is just like any other kid.

Also typical among interviewees was the belief that racial identity development is of lesser importance when compared to other issues. This category provided some strong responses, and more time will be spent examining these responses. One mother stated: "I don't think that initially [racial identity development] is the most important thing. I think bonding and blending our family is first and most priority but I think it will become one of the most important things over time." Another mother: "attachment is much more important." Some interviewees are "kind of learning as we go, with them a little bit." Another response from an interviewee:

> Although I realize the significance of [racial identity development], and I do think it is significant, I think that as a family we have a much greater and broader understanding of ourselves apart from our race or ethnicity. But I think the greater, I think [son's] greater navigation through this will be… questions as he gets into school and is surrounded by all White children and we will have to figure out, okay, how do I fit in the midst of all of this? But I think the root of our self-identity is much greater than our race… I think our identity is from our identity in Christ… If we are rooted in Christ and in our family unity, then maybe some of those racial questions, I guess we have a greater confidence and so some of those aren't as big anymore.

A final response to my request for one interviewee to share her understanding of racial identity development: "Well, I guess I don't know. That's a hard question for me because I've never had to develop my identity. I was raised by White parents and I am White and I…grew up in a White society, and so I just, I just always identified that way."

Given these responses regarding the importance of racial identity development, it may not be surprising that it was also typical for interviewees to plan on responding reactively to racial identity development struggles on an as needed basis. For example:

I think when she gets here, there are going to be challenges that neither of us – either her or we – could have predicted… I think that I'm very aware that big challenges are ahead and I don't know what they are yet. And I don't exactly know how we are going to respond to them because we don't quite know where they're going to come from."

Of variant frequency, some interviewees acknowledged their low level of multicultural interactions will pose a challenge, with one mother commenting that

one of the biggest challenges is going to be that while [my daughter]… is going to be very comfortable in a White world, she's going to learn how to function well in a White world, she also has to learn how to function in a Black world in the United States. And that's going to be difficult to teach her because that's not who we are and even in our interactions with that world are limited so it's our challenge to increase our interactions with people who are of Black race here."

The final category within the domain of racial identity development is the variant response of interviewees commenting on their ability to identify the presence of racism and to share examples of racism. As an example:

Before I never would have thought about something being racist and like now that's always something that's in the back of my head. I feel hurt. I feel sad. I feel angry. I feel confused because I don't know if it's something to do with racism or if it's just that person is a jerk. I don't know – for me it's really confusing. I feel like if I was a Black momma maybe I would know, like it would be more obvious to me what was happening.

Like cuz I grew up in such a White privileged world that sometimes I just have to get hit

over the head to realize… I don't want to say that everything is motivated by racism and

I don't want to be one of those people who overreacts but I also don't want to under-

react.

Another mother recalled a time when her daughter was having a meltdown in the grocery story

and a stranger said "That's ok. I know someone who would buy her from you." She share

further that her White friends generally did not believe that to be a racist comment. Her Black

friends unanimously agreed that comment was clearly racist.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This final chapter contains the summary of the study, the conclusions that are drawn from

the study, the limitations present within the study, and recommendations for future work done in

this area of transracial adoptees racial identity development.

Summary

This study sought to provide a qualitative look into the knowledge and preparedness of

adoptive parents regarding the racial identity development of their transracially-adopted, Haitian-

born children. While significant differences were present among the twelve White, North

American, female interviewees, there were distinguishable patterns that emerged from the data

provided by the approximately twelve hours of interviews transcribed.

Interviewees appeared at ease, and eager to share their motivations for pursing adoption.

This "motivations" domain contained quite a bit of content, and provided a solid, connectable

foundations with the other domains identified. All but one interviewee expressed her personal or

spiritual "calling" to adoption, and that this calling (sometimes mandate) that she had been given

provided the broader purpose or motivation for adoption. More than half of interviewees reflected on both the unique needs of Haiti requiring the option of adoption from that country to be carefully considered, as well as the fact that the Haitian adoption program met their personal requirements and/or preferences for adoption. Less than half of interviewees were motivated by the overwhelming sense of love they had for Haiti, or due to significant prior connection to Haiti. Finally, and almost without notice, few interviewees were primarily motivated to adopt due to fertility issues.

Though not explicitly asked of interviewees, most commented on the perceptions or interpretations they had on how they believe other people to be viewing the transracial adoption dynamic in their family. Most interesting, while most participants believed others in their family, circle of friends, and community to be supportive and positive about their transracial adoption, four interviewees followed that belief with speculation that (and with examples of) most difficulties expressed towards their transracial adoption would come from the Black community.

Interviewees provided a wide variety of responses in regards to preparations and practices that are important for a healthy racial identity development to be established within their transracially adopted child. The one common theme among every interviewee was the recognition that there were practices or preparations they desire to do, and of which they view as very important, but of which they have not yet followed-through. None expressed satisfaction with their current practices and preparations; all acknowledged additional work to be done. More than half of participants indicated they were making good use of social capital of relevant websites, social media, books, and other resources. More interviewees commented on using these resources more than on engaging in the three primary needs reflected on by adult

transracial adoptees: (1) immersion experiences (a few commented on making living in a diverse

location a priority, and a few were intentional about developing relationships with Haitians and a

regular connection with Haiti); (2) maintaining open dialogue on issues of race, racism, and

culture (a few did comment on being intentional about nurturing an environment of open

dialogue); and (3) being taught "survival skills" (no interviewee mentioned this as a practice or

preparation in which they were actively engaged or intended to be actively engaged).

Finally, the final domain contained the content related specifically to racial identity

development. More than half of interviewees were not able to define and express the nuances

that differentiate between their child's racial, cultural, and ethnic identities. Three interviewees

provided informed definitions and descriptions of these terms. Most interviewees indicated that

their child's racial identity development was of lesser importance when they considered other

factors deserving of their attention, and most interviewees do not intend to proactively prepare

for the complexities of racial identity development.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

While qualitative study does not generally provide opportunity for hard conclusions to be

outlined, it does provide a rich description, in this case, of the perspectives and approaches that

White, North American, adoptive mothers take in regards to the racial identity development of

their transracially-adopted, Haitian-born children. The compelling call to adoption that these

mothers received appears to be the umbrella under which lesser important issues reside. They

are fulfilling their calling to provide a loving home for a child without a family, and in the case

of these mothers adopting from Haiti, that calling to parent a child in need is, in general, much

larger than the issue of racial identity development. While none of the interviewees would label

racial identity development as irrelevant, their general difficulty and discomfort in defining

related terminology, the reactive approach taken in responding to their child's racial identity development needs, their universal acknowledgement that they "should" do things that they are not currently doing and in some cases don't intend to do, and the confusion they expressed related to how others are perceiving their racially-mixed family, lead to the conclusion that adoptive parents are generally not tuned in to the needs of racial identity development that the literature indicates as vitally important. Further, we can conclude that these children may struggle to develop the "survival skills" necessary to address and respond to racism they will encounter, and may not have the words to articulate what they are thinking and how they are feeling about what it is like to be who they are, and in the situation that they are in. Most adoption agencies only encourage this neglect through the limited and insufficient training and recommendations they provide to families adopting transracially in the area of racial identity development.

When looking at the cultural competency piece (Vonk & Angaran, 2003) that is imperative in order to establish an environment for healthy racial identity development to exist, we do come to some discouraging conclusions. In terms of Racial Awareness, most adoptive parents had difficulty and discomfort in defining and discussing terms, and limited ability to engage in racial identity development discussion. Multicultural Planning was a stronger component, with parents desiring and actively incorporating Haitian culture. However, all parents acknowledged their awareness of aspects of multicultural planning that they "should" be doing, but have not yet included. Lastly, the adoptive parents in this study demonstrated limited ability to identify racism, had limited contact outside of the dominant culture, and even showed negative perceptions of the Black community. This all points to the conclusion that these

transracially adopted children may struggle in developing the survival skills necessary to cope with and appropriately confront racism when it arises.

The racial identity development models highlighted in this study provide a helpful language and foundation that is largely not tapped by adoptive parents of transracially adopted children. When considering the Sue and Sue (2003) model, it can be concluded that most adoptive parents would expect their children to comfortably reside in the conformity stage, and would likely experience discomfort and maybe dismay if and when their children show signs of moving to a different stage. Few parents appear to be providing the language and encouragement to prepare their children for movement beyond the conformity stage.

Additionally, most parents did not demonstrate much awareness of the concepts presented in the model of Ung, Harris O'Connor and Pillidge (2012). These parents would serve their children well by taking advantage of the concepts and explanations provided in this model. Based on the responses in the interview, most parents would struggle in understanding, explaining, and helping their children navigate through the five constructs offered within this model.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

This qualitative study adds a richness and depth to the discussion on the preparation of adoptive parents who transracially adopt. It is not, however, without its limitations. The greater degree of subjectivity and the absence of random sampling involved in a qualitative study leads to difficulty in establishing reliability and validity related to information gathering and interpretation. The consensual process of CQR does strengthen the internal validity. Caution related to the generalizability of findings should be taken given the limitations.

Due to the nature of the study and what participants may believe to be at stake, some participants may have hesitated to respond to the interview questions with complete honesty and forthrightness. Some participants may fear providing an answer that may reflect negatively on their adoption pursuit, and may attempt to respond with what they believe to be the "correct" or "desired" response.

Bias of the researcher may be introduced as a result of having reviewed the literature in advance. Additionally, the author's current involvement in a Haitian adoption has the potential to be a limitation. Offering protection against this, the development of a research team to assist in the coding, filing and interpretation of data has been invaluable. Further guards against this possibility would be to enlist the involvement of an outside auditor to review the coding, filing, and interpretation.

Recommendations

The literature indicates the importance of adoptive parents and adoption agencies giving great attention to the unique needs of the racial identity development of children adopted transracially. Such children would benefit greatly if agencies placed greater emphasis on the importance of training parents in this area. Parents who embrace these unique needs as profoundly important to their child's overall development and health would be far more proactive in preparing and informing themselves about the terminology involved and in understanding the process of racial identity development, in increasing their familiarity and comfort in discussions of race and culture providing their child with the best tools to be able to articulate their related thoughts and feelings, and in identifying racism and providing the survival skills their children will need when confronted with racism.

Further research is needed to explore the racial identity development as uniquely experienced by transracial adoptees. Additional research is need to determine how to best prepare families, adoption professionals, and therapists in this area, in order to provide a solid foundation for children transracially adopted and resources to which they can go when needed. Quantifying issues such as rural vs. urban environments, degree of diversity, educational levels and parenting styles of parents, number of racial identity development training hours, among others would all provide additional invaluable insight into how these conditions impact a child's developing racial identity.

Certainly, designing a longitudinal study using this present study as the foundation would be profoundly interesting and beneficial. As an example, exploring the parents' developing insights and reflections ten years after the child arrives home would be a worthwhile pursuit, as well as exploring racial identity development from the perspective of the child being raised within the environment of the current knowledge and perspectives of the adoptive parents in this present study.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

Primary Age and Education	Spouse's Age and Education	Interracial Experiences/ Exposure	Formal Pre-Placement Training	Formal Post-Placement Training	Agency-required hours	Country
31-35 Grad		Extensive	5	0	5	Canada
31-35 Bach	36-40 Grad	Limited	12	10	0	USA
41-45 Bach	46-50 Bach	Extensive	20	20	40	USA
31-35 Grad	41-45 Bach	Moderate	0	0	0	USA
46-50 Doc	41-45 Bach	Limited	0	n/a	0	USA
41-45 Bach	46-50 Tech	Limited	9	6	6	Canada
31-35 Tech	46-50 Tech	Limited	10	0	0	Canada
36-40 Tech	41-45 Tech	Lim-Mod	9	n/a	8	Canada
31-35 Grad	31-35 Grad	Limited	11	0	10	USA
41-45 Grad	46-50 Grad	Limited	25	0	10	USA
36-40 Bach	41-45 Bach	Limited	2	0	2	Canada
36-40 Doc	36-40 Bach	Lim-Mod	25	n/a	20	USA

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: A Qualitative Study of the Knowledge and Perceived
                            Preparedness of Adoptive Parents in the Racial Identity
                            Development of Their Haitian-Born Children

Principal Investigator: Kori Cherney

Research Team Contact: Kori Cherney: 608.732.7534 or kori.cherney@gmail.com

**Office of Sponsored
Program Contact:**   Kathryn Lomax, Director, 608.342.1456

This consent form describes the research study to help you decide if you want to participate.
This form provides important information about what you will be asked to do during the study,
about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your rights as a research subject.
   • If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should
     ask the research team for more information.
   • You should discuss your participation with anyone you choose such as family or friends
   • Do not agree to participate in this study unless the research team has answered your
     questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This is a qualitative research study. We are inviting you to participate in this research study
because as a White North American, you are transracially adopting, or have transracially
adopted, a Haitian-born child since 2008.

The purpose of this research study is to provide a qualitative look at the knowledge and the
perceived preparedness of adoptive parents in the racial identity development of their Haitian-
born children.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 10-15 people will participate in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study, your involvement will last for 60-90 minutes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study, a demographic questionnaire will first be sent to you. After you return this questionnaire, I will contact you via your preferred method of communication (phone, skype, or in-person) to conduct the interview. In the interview, you will be asked ten to fifteen in-depth and open-ended questions related to your transracial adoption experience. You are free to not respond to any question you would prefer not to answer.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

You may experience one or more of the risks indicated below from being in this study. In addition to these, there may be other unknown risks, or risks that we did not anticipate, associated with being in this study.

Some of the questions in the interview will inquire about your personal motives, knowledge, values and experiences related to your transracial adoption experience, and specifically of the racial identity development of your Haitian-born child. As a result, you may feel uncomfortable answering some of these questions.

Your interview will be recorded and transcribed for research purposes only. All recordings and transcriptions will be kept in the possession of the principal investigator, in password-protected files. While all precautions will be taken to guard the security of these files, it may be possible that your interview could be viewed by unauthorized persons.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

This study is intended to provide adoption providers and other professionals with data related to knowledge and preparedness of adoptive parents in the racial identity development of their Haitian-born children. This will provide trainers of adoptive parents with research upon which they can make available the best training, materials, and resources on racial identity development for parents, with the end goal of transracially adopted children being provided the best environment for optimal identity development.

There is no direct benefit to the participants in this study.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no financial costs to you for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THIS STUDY?

The University and this researcher are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

We will keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people such as those indicated below may become aware of your participation in this study and may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these could contain information that personally identifies you.

- Federal government regulatory agencies,
- The University of Wisconsin-Platteville Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies)

To help protect your confidentiality, all names and identifying information of participants will be changed in any reports or articles about this study. Only the principal investigator and the research team will have access to the file containing identifying information.

IS BEING IN THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to be in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise quality.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

We encourage you to ask questions. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact: Kori Cherney at 608.732.7534 or kori.cherney@gmail.com. If you have concerns about how you were treated in this study, please contact: Kathryn Lomax, Director, Office of Sponsored Programs (608.342.1456; lomax@uwplatt.edu).

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Prior to the phone interviews, each participant will be sent a questionnaire that will provide

necessary demographic information: name, location, where are you in the adoption process,

child's information (age at time of entering orphanage, age at time of coming to adoptive home),

etc.

1. Please begin by explaining what adoption means to you, and what was involved in
   making the decision to adopt.

2. Please tell me about your choice of Haiti as the birthplace of your adopted child.

3. Are there key Haitian historical or cultural issues you most want your child to know and
   appreciate, and if so, what are they?

4. How would you describe your child's racial, ethnic, and cultural identities?

5. How would you define "transracial adoption"? Does this describe our situation?

6. What are your general thoughts and experiences related to transracial adoptions?

7. What complexities do you believe to be involved in transracial adoption?

8. I have a few questions now that look specifically at racial identity development. It is a
   complex term, so could I have you share your initial thoughts on what is meant by "racial
   identity development"? (*Followed by interviewer providing a working definition and
   model where necessary.*)

9. What do you believe to be necessary in order for White parents to provide the best
   environment for healthy racial identity development in their adopted Haitian children?

10. Taking into consideration all issues related to adopting transracially, how would you rank
    the importance of intentionally preparing yourself to assist your child in their racial

identity development? Consider a 1 = no importance and a 10 = one of the most important issues for adoptive parents to prepare themselves for.

11. Describe what goes into a ranking of a _____.

12. What specific preparations or key experiences have you engaged in to learn about racial identity development of your adopted child?

13. Given that most people have some bias or preconceived notions within them, what personal biases of Haitian people or culture might you have that you want to pay attention to?

14. What other thoughts or comments or concerns do you have that relate to this issue of racial identity development of your child?