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The Lived Experience of Adoption: Do Current Conceptualizations Reflect Changing Realities?

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ADOPTION: DO CURRENT
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A Dissertation Presented

by

QUADE YOO SONG FRENCH

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ADOPTION: DO CURRENT
CONCEPTUALIZATIONS REFLECT CHANGING REALITIES?

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DEDICATION

For Blake.

For my family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

mentees, and parents. The entire leadership team of AMP deserves significant recognition; my friends in the Rudd Adoption Research Program have contributed immensely to AMP, as has the wonderful team at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, without which AMP and this research project would not be possible. Also, many thanks to those funding organizations who believed in me and the mission of AMP: the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the Clinical Psychology Graduate Program at UMass Amherst, the Frank Beveridge Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the other adopted individuals who I have met over the years; mentors, scholars, and friends. You have all shown me that I am not alone in this journey, and that means more than you could ever know.

Thank you!!

ABSTRACT

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ADOPTION:

DO CURRENT CONCEPTUALIZATIONS REFLECT CHANGING REALITIES?

SEPTEMBER 2014

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The lived experiences of four adopted college undergraduates were documented through

a series of semi-structured interviews across a two-year period. Participants were

interviewed during their engagement as mentors in an adoption-specific mentoring

program (the Adoption Mentoring Program, AMP) in which they were each paired with

an adopted child from the community in one-to-one relationships. Importantly,

participation in the mentoring program offered mentors a chance to connect with same-

aged peers around issues of adoption research, theory, and experiences. Participation in

this program is viewed as a marked change in the social context of adoption experienced

by participants; this social change provided a unique opportunity to interview these

mentors over the course of their participation, and assess the degree to which their

experiences map onto current theoretical conceptualizations of adoption. Interviews

focused specifically on adopted emerging adults' understanding of the impact their

adoptive status has had on other aspects of self (e.g., racial identity) and adoptive family

relations (e.g., communication). Template analysis methodology facilitated the

identification of participants' changing attitudes and views about their life as adopted

persons. Extant concepts used in current adoption literature did indeed emerge as salient

for many of the participants (e.g., communication about adoption, identity development,

and racial identity); however, analyses of interviews revealed new aspects of the lived

experience of adoption not currently integrated into the field's knowledge base.

Implications of these emergent themes to future research and clinical practice with

adopted persons are discussed, as are the strengths, limitations, and future directions of

this research.

Keywords: adoption, identity, adoptive identity, transracial adoption, adoptive

family communication, social context

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"With whom can you talk about you adoption most openly and honestly?"

> *Jonathan: Um, well right now this is the most open and honest*
> *I've ever been.*

Capturing the sense of *the lived experience of adoption* – the lifelong intrapsychic and socio-contextual impact of having one's life legally joined to his or her adoptive family – has been an overarching goal of adoption research. For decades, researchers have explored the fundamental question of "How does the process of adoption impact a person for the rest of his or her life?" A leading conceptualization is that a person's understanding of the impact of adoption on a more global sense of self is constructed from acquired information and definitions of social processes of adoption, and a cognitive awareness of socially constructed meanings of what it "means" to be adopted; together, these dimensions are understood by the adopted person through processes of "meaning making" (Brodzinsky, 2011; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011; Leon, 2002).

However, these processes of meaning making and self-appraisal are not undertaken in isolation. In seeking "meaning" of their adoption, adopted persons must consider and integrate a host of dimensions of the adoptive experience that are continually shifting in dynamic relationships with each other, with context, and within a more global identity. In acknowledging the influence of context, attitudes and beliefs maintained by a person's societal context profoundly influence individual processes of self-appraisal (Hogg, 2003; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Understanding how adopted persons think about the institution of adoption, and what it

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means to be adopted, requires knowledge into what information is being presented to them via their social context.

Research in Adoption

Research to date has strengthened the field's understanding of the key ways being adopted – referred to here as a person's *adoptive status* - influences a range of aspects of self including: cognitive and behavioral development (Rutter, 2002); openness in adoption - defined by degrees of communication and interaction between members of the adoption triad (adopted persons, adoptive families, and birth family members) (Brodzinsky, 2005; Grotevant, McRoy, Wrobel, & Ayers-Lopez, 2013); and the impact of adoption on self-esteem and well-being (Beckett, Castle, Groothues, Hawking, Sonuga-Barke, Colvert, Kreppner, Stevens, & Rutter, 2008; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007; Von Korff, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2006).

Yet research on different aspects of the adoptive experience is often completed in isolation of other dimensions (e.g., a study on communication in adoptive families may not explicitly focus on race or ethnicity). Research methodologies that push for the reduction of variance so as to isolate the statistical significance of the target variables actively filter out the influence of contextual "noise." Yet, attempts to filter contextual noise in data would seem to eliminate a key component of the participant's lived experiences of adoption. This is particularly challenging given a growing understanding of the influence of social context on how a person makes sense of the impact of their adoption on the self (Brodzinsky, 2011; French, 2013; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011). This trend in adoption research toward the reduction of variance and attempts to control

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for the influence of context diminishes accuracy in the understanding of the more holistic lived experience of adoption (Neil, 2009; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010). As these variables are not experienced one at a time by adopted persons, what considerations must be made about potential threats to the internal validity of findings from research paradigms that seek to isolate variables from error?

The Role of the Social Context on Self-concept in Adopted Persons

Social environments are constructed. Norms, attitudes, expectations, and ways of life both define and are defined by members of that culture (Burawoy, 1998; Hogg, 2003). Social norms become the standard against which aspects of one's self and identity are judged according to how well they "fit" with the dominant group prototype (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Individuals seek acceptance within their culture through alignment with group prototypes. As the "social collectivity becomes self" (Turner & Onorato, 1999, p. 22), socially held attitudes and beliefs are internalized and come to define individual self-concept. In these ways, seemingly internal processes of identity and self-concept are actually highly influenced by the social context, and evolve through the intersection of self and context (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Grotevant, 1987; Hogg, 2003; Howard, 2000; James, 1893; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997).

Adoption and Social Context

National surveys suggest a generally positive attitude toward both the process and those involved (Evan B. Donaldson, 2002), yet adoption is perceived by many to be a non-traditional, "second best" method of family formation (Fisher, 2003). Asserted

within this stigmatized view, is the belief that the bonds formed among adoption triad members are less legitimate, permanent, or strong than those formed among biologically-related family members (Fisher, 2003; Miall, 1987).

There exists a strong adherence by many in the United States to the preeminence of blood ties in legitimizing familial connections, thereby positioning those socio-legal ties formed through child adoption as second best (Fisher, 2003; Leon, 2002; Wegar, 2000). Additionally, much of the stigma toward adoption stems from long-standing attitudes toward race, socio-economic status, and single parenting, that have shaped mainstream normative social attitudes toward adoption in the United States (Grotevant, Grant-Marsney, French, Musante, & Dolan, 2012; Leon, 2002; Wegar, 2000). In these ways, adopted persons exist within a social context that questions the legitimacy of their permanence within their adoptive families, and harbors negative preconceptions about who they are and will amount to as people (Evan B. Donaldson, 2002; Fisher, 2003).

As adopted individuals move through the world around them, their immediate local contexts - their sphere of influence and the world around them – may be defined by these negative attitudes and beliefs. While many adopted individuals may not experience overt stigmatization, microaggressions in the form of questions about "real parents" or why a person's "real parents didn't want them," effectively assert negative social views to the adopted person (Garber, 2013).

A Shift in the Social Context: the Adoption Mentoring Partnership

Just as a social context can reinforce negative stereotypes and attitudes toward adoption, being surrounded by positive and normalizing images and experiences of

adoption are thought to allow adopted persons to come to view their own adoption as a positive aspect of self (French, 2013; Kirk, 1964). The recognition of these connections was central to the development of the Adoption Mentoring Partnership (AMP). A community – university partnership, AMP matches adopted, college-student mentors with adopted, school-age children in the local community. The AMP program is developmental in nature, (Karcher, 2005), emphasizing the formation of a close and strong friendship between the mentor and child mentee. In forming this relationship early, the mentee is armed with an ally who experienced the challenges of adoption first hand. The mentor may become an empathic ear, a source of information and knowledge, and an emotional support as the mentee engages in the challenging process of forming a narrative about adoption.

Much of the research on the effects of mentoring focuses on the overt and covert benefits experienced by child mentees. Mentors are often not the focus of program evaluations despite their impressive commitment and contribution (Noll, 1997). Yet it is quite likely that mentors experience personal growth and gain from participation in their roles as material providers (e.g., resources, time) and emotional supports (Clinard & Ariav, 1998; Reich, 1995). This dearth of mentor research extends to emerging adult peer mentors, who are often younger than older adult mentors, and who may themselves be experiencing personal development and growth as a function of their developmental trajectories (see Karcher, 2005 for an example of just such a study).

A Focus on Mentors

In addition to receiving training and education on aspects of mentoring to allow them to better fulfil their roles as mentors, AMP mentors participated in mentor-only group meetings which included a focused study of adoption research and theory. The addition of these mentor group meetings augmented traditional training to meet the specialized needs of this adoption-focused mentoring program. In developing foundation of knowledge based on research and theory, AMP mentors would be better prepared to address any questions about adoption posed by their mentees.

The attitude toward adoption cultivated in these groups was markedly different than any other socio-contextual experience the participants had to date. Defined by education, understanding, and exploration, these groups drastically altered the emerging adult mentors' experience of adoption in a very new and very public setting. Evidenced by the quote that began this manuscript, AMP quickly became a forum for substantial personal growth for the young adult mentors around their understandings of adoption.

Research with AMP Mentors

In AMP, a large portion of the program of research focused on the impact of the mentoring experience on the emerging adult mentors themselves. A longitudinally designed study focused on capturing their experiences in the mentoring program over time through a combination of interviews and survey measures across a range of aspects of adoption including identity, race, ethnicity, communication about adoption, and self-esteem. These data are utilized in this study to further a discussion on the lived experiences of adopted persons over time.

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Summary

Though individual lines of research and theoretical development in adoption are robust, what is less clear are the ways that these oft studied dimensions intersect and interact to create one cohesive experience of adoption. To the extent that adoption research variables remain isolated and decontextualized, adoption theory will remain fractured and incomplete. This limits our capacity to present a comprehensive conceptualization of the lived experiences of adoption.

The impact of the social context on processes of self-concept in adopted persons has been suggested to be an indispensable, yet oft overlooked component of theoretical paradigms in adoptive identity research (French, 2013). The AMP program creates for the mentors an unprecedented social context around adoption. As evidenced by the participant's statement used to begin this manuscript, participation challenges mentors' existing narratives of self-concept around adoption, and is a catalyst for changing conceptualizations of the intersection of adoption and self. Together, these understandings inform the design of the current study, and adopted mentors' experiences will be used to contribute to a refinement and expansion of current conceptualizations of the lived experiences of adoption.

The Current Study

It is the explicit goal of this study to utilize the aggregated experiences of participants to inform a clearer understanding of key concepts and theory within the field of adoption research. Critically important to the success of this manuscript is the understanding that the focus of this study is not at the level of the participants, and that it

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is not the goal to track change within participants over time.   As participants have new experiences (including participation in AMP) and develop new ways of conceptualizing their own experiences as adopted persons, these collective experiences will be contrasted with current theory in adoption.

Attempts to quantify any of the data emergent from this study (e.g., the number of times a particular theme was mentioned, or the number of participants who experienced a similar challenge) detract from the stated goals of this study, which are to analyze at the theoretical and conceptual level, not at the level of the participants. Therefore, the manuscript will employ individual participants' statements to illustrate conceptual discussions of themes related to the adoptive experience, rather than as indicators of change over time at the individual level.

Using data from AMP mentors, this dissertation will expand upon current dominant theoretical positions in the field of adoption and present an enhanced conceptual model of the lived experience of adoption for transracially adopted persons. The following list reflects commonly identified aspects of the adoptive experience that are used by researchers, clinicians, adoptive parents, and importantly, adopted persons to better conceptualize what it means to be adopted:

A)   identity as an adopted person (e.g., Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011)

B)   thought processes and attitudes about one's status as an adopted person (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Brodzinsky, 2011)

C)   communication and openness within and between birth and adoptive families about adoption (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998)

D)   the formation of ethnic and racial identities in transracially adopted

persons (Baden & Steward, 2000; Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009)

E)   self-esteem (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007)

Using these theoretical positions as a starting point for inquiry, longitudinal interview data from transracially adopted mentors from the Adoption Mentoring Partnership provide a unique opportunity to observe emergent internal conceptualizations of the impact of adoption on adopted persons in response to a changing context of adoption across time. The following research aims will be addressed:

Aim Ia.   a) The first aim of the study is to determine the extent to which participants' lived experiences of adoption, in relation to their changing social context (AMP), map onto current theoretical conceptualizations of commonly researched aspects of adoption (identified in points A-E above).

Aim Ib.   b) Emerging from this examination of lived experiences and current theory, this study will focus on areas in which the data call for an expansion of existing theory. This study will look at ways in which participants' evolving understandings and conceptualizations inform the identification of areas for theoretical expansion within and beyond the five identified aspects of the lived experience of adoption.

Aim II. Understanding that the targeted aspects of adoption are not experienced in isolation, these data will next be used to inform an integrative conceptual model of the Lived Experiences of Adoption. In this proposed model, relationships between dimensions of the adoptive experience (A-E) will be highlighted.

A brief review of theory behind each identified dimension of the adoptive experience (A - E) will provide a foundation from which a discussion of the research methodology will follow. An integrated results and discussion section will proceed in two parts. The first section will connect findings back to the initial research aims through a comparison between data on lived experiences and current adoption theory. The first section will also review areas in which participants' changing perspectives inform new areas of theoretical expansion and development. Second, in an effort to provide a holistic conceptualization of findings in this effort, an enhanced conceptual model of the Lived Experience of Adoption will be presented. Finally, implications, and limitations for theory development and future research will be offered.

CHAPTER 2

ASPECTS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ADOPTION

<u>The Role of Context in Adoptive Identity Formation</u>

It is critical to emphasize at the outset, that intrapsychic processes of self and identity do not occur in a vacuum. Social environments are constructed. Norms, attitudes, expectations, and ways of life both define and are defined by members of that culture (Burawoy, 1998; Hogg, 2003). As such, developing a sense of self as an adopted person who also retains many other aspects of self such as race, gender, and sexuality, is a process highly influenced by the social context in which the adopted person lives (Brodzinsky, 2011; French, 2013; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Wegar, 2000).

Adoptive parents' own understandings of adoption, attitudes, and beliefs about adoption create the earliest social context of adoption for their children (Brodzinsky, 1987, 2011; Grotevant, 2000; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). As adoptive parents' attitudes and beliefs influence the context of the adoptive family system, this early context becomes the standard to which adopted children compare their own adoption narratives and identities as adopted individuals. Motivated by a desire to be accepted by and connected to one's groups, individuals seek to embody personal characteristics valued by those groups (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Socially valued personal characteristics, or prototypes, are spectrums of acceptable attributes of self that group members seek to align with and reflect in the most accurate way (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995; Hogg & Reid, 2006). This early context informs

young adopted persons about *how* they should view adoptive status, as desirable or undesirable, as a source of pride, or shame.

Adoption and Stigmatizing Social Contexts

As adopted persons interact with early social contexts (e.g., the adoptive family, hometown), they are exposed to various attitudes toward adoption. Views toward adoption are not always positive, and adoption may be framed in stigmatizing or shameful ways (March, 1995; Wegar, 2000). Faced with these social contexts, adopted persons may simultaneously internalize negative views that devalue adoption, and strive to emulate aspects of their racially dissimilar social context (French, 2013; Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009). Adopted individuals are not motivated to include adoptive status in processes of self-definition and identity to the extent that their social context holds negative views on adoption marked by shame or stigma (French, 2013).

However, should the social context around adoption change, and adoption be re-framed as less stigmatizing, the adopted person must reconcile new attitudes with previously internalized beliefs about adoption as an aspect of self (French, 2013; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). In these ways, the impacts of one's historical and current contexts are felt across all of the dimensions of the lived experience of adoption identified above (points A through E).

<u>Research Dimension A: Identity in Adopted Persons</u>

One of the primary research targets in the study of the lived experience of adoption is identity. Yet, identity as a construct is understood through a multitude of

lenses and frames, including but not limited to, theories of self-definition (Grotevant, 1997), cohesion and continuity (Moshman, 1998), multi-dimensionality (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007), the rejection and integration of various aspects of self (Cross, 1971), and more social psychological perspectives such as self-categorization (Hogg, 2003; Turner & Onorato, 1999). Such conceptual diversity warrants clarification of the construct for this manuscript. Therefore, the term "identity" will be used in this paper to reflect the conceptual product held by an individual about who they are as a person in context. Identity is understood to emerge from the intersection of intrapsychic and social forces and is comprised of the subjective valuation of various aspects of self, woven to form a single narrative of one's life (Grotevant, 1997; Hogg, 2003; Hogg & Reid, 2006; McAdams, 1988).

Narrative Identity in Adoption

One way individuals are thought to develop a meaningful sense of self is through a process by which lived experiences are interpreted and interwoven to form a cohesive narrative of self (McAdams, 1988). This approach has become a leading theoretical paradigm for understanding identity development in the field of adoption (Grotevant, 1997, 2000). Adopted persons are tasked with "making meaning" of the role adoption has played in their lives. As adopted individuals seek personal "meaning," they work to develop a richer, more comprehensive understanding of themselves as being adopted. A large part of a richer, and more comprehensive understanding of self, is the acknowledgement that identity is composed of multiple dimensions, not just one's adoptive status (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). Thoughts and feelings about the impact

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of adoption on one's life cannot be accurately considered without an awareness of the transactional relationships among context, adoptive status and other dimensions of self, such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity (Bandura, 1978; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011). In response to changing contexts, the processes of crafting an identity and seeking meaning are understood to unfold over a lifetime; the narrative of self is continually edited to accommodate new life experiences (Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000).

A rich and comprehensive self-narrative is conceptualized across a series of narrative qualities (Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011). Those emphasized in this research effort and discussed in detail below, are: depth of exploration of narrative; flexibility / inflexibility; and internal consistency / inconsistency. These elements are highlighted in this research due to their key role in providing an organized and structured application of theory to lived experiences.

Depth of Exploration of Narrative, Internal Consistency, Flexibility

Depth of exploration of a narrative reflects the effort undertaken by the adopted person to critically think about the impact adoption has had on his or her life and the intersections between adoptive status and other aspects of self (Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011). In these considerations of the role of adoption, *internal consistency* of one's self-narrative reflects the coherence and cohesiveness of that theory of self. Statements made within an internally consistent narrative support rather than contradict each other, and afford stability in self-concept across time and contexts (Wrobel, Kohler, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2003). Yet, changing social contexts present individuals with new information

and experiences that may contradict and challenge the coherence of the existing narrative. In this way, *Flexibility* is a key dimension of the narrative in that it reflects the degree to which an adopted person is able to integrate new perspectives and points of view about adoption and his or her adoption story in harmony with his or her existing narrative (Von Korff, Grotevant, & Friese, 2007). Rather than experiencing new views (e.g., those of the adoptive parent) as a direct threat to the stability of a personal narrative, Flexibility reflects the adopted person's ability to appreciate, and perhaps integrate this new perspective into his or her own. Faced with new experiences, adopted persons are thought to engage in exploration, by which he or she would process and reconcile these new experiences with the existing narrative (Marcia, 1980). Exploration is the final key dimension in focus in this research given its reflection of agency and effort by the adopted person to expand their existing narrative.

Rationale for Inclusion

Themes of identity development and meaning making are central to the concept of the lived experiences discussed in this study. How an adopted person makes meaning of his or her experiences is deeply connected to the sense of self that he or she will ultimately achieve (Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000. The three dimensions of identity presented above for inclusion in this study have been empirically supported (Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004; Grotevant, McRoy, Wrobel, & Ayers-Lopez, 2013; Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011) and found to indeed reflect dimensions of identity in adopted persons in previous populations. The dimensions of consistency, flexibility, and exploration represent areas of focus, but not separate stages

that an adopted person is expected to navigate through. Rather, as adopted persons have new experiences that challenge the narrative, they are expected to move back and forth between flexibility and inflexibility, consistency and inconsistency. As the individual matures and begins to craft a more stable narrative over time, these fluctuations may be reduced as they have formed a more consistent conceptualization of self as adopted.

Research Dimension B: Adoption Dynamics - Thought Processes Related to Adoptive Status

Adoption Dynamics is used to reflect the different ways in which adopted persons come to think about experiences related to adoption (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994). Viewed across three primary dimensions: positively, negatively, or being somehow preoccupied with the experience, adopted persons will interpret events and experiences based on internalized understandings of the meanings of adoption. A person's understanding of the impact one's status as an adopted person has on a more global identity is built from two components: 1) his or her foundational knowledge of adoption as a socio-legal process of family formation, and 2) an awareness of socially constructed attitudes of what it "means" to be adopted (Leon, 2002). Intrapsychic and social forces are implicated in this construction of "meaning of adoption," positioning adopted persons' earliest socialization to the concept of adoption as a key experience. In these early social contexts around adoption, attitudes and beliefs held by adoptive parents are transmitted – verbally and non-verbally – to their adopted children (Kirk, 1964). Through parent-child interactions, adopted children form conceptualizations of how they believe their parents see them as adopted persons, and importantly, how they as adopted

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persons should view themselves and their experiences related to adoption: as positive, negative, or with uncertainty.

Positive Affect, Negative Experience, Preoccupation

The dimensions of Positive Affect, Negative Experience, and Preoccupation reflect an initial conceptualization of the dynamic thought and appraisal processes of events by adopted persons (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994). Upon experiencing an event, thought, or interaction around adoption, adopted persons may feel *Positive Affect* toward the experience, or view the experience as *Negative*. The third dimension of dynamics, *Preoccupation*, reflects those experiences, topics, or individuals around which an adopted person is found to be thinking in great depth or intensity. The concept of Preoccupation reflects curiosity or a 'longing to know', but may or may not reflect any efforts to assuage this curiosity.

Rationale for Inclusion

Essential components of the lived experiences of adoption are the positive or negative valuations which adopted persons apply to events and experiences. In previous applications of the adoption dynamics constructs, nearly all adopted participants were found to endorse positive feelings surrounding their adoption, while not endorsing having negative experiences much at all (Wrobel, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2004). Yet the study referenced by Wrobel, Grotevant, and McRoy utilized a population of White, in-racially adopted persons from the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP). As a

contrast, research efforts with adopted persons of color in transracial adoptions highlight

many negative experiences at the intersection of adoption and race (Samuels, 2009).

Utilization of the Adoption Dynamics theoretical framework in this present study

offers an opportunity to test previous research done with these theoretical constructs of

positive affect, negative experience, and preoccupation. The participants in the present

study are all transracially adopted persons of color, whose experiences around race and

ethnicity may provide insight into the composition of the three dimensions of adoption

dynamics. Further, these constructs offer the ability to identify experiences which

adopted persons may subjectively experience differently from each other.

Research Dimension C: Communication and Openness in the Adoption Triad

The term openness is often used to reflect the presence of communication and

contact between the adopted person and his or her adoptive parents, the adopted person

and his or her birth parents, and the adoptive family and birth family systems (Grotevant,

Wrobel, Von Korff, Skinner, Newell, Friese, & McRoy, 2008). Together, the adopted

person, birth family, and adoptive family are referred to as the *adoption triad*. While

adaptive to emergent needs over time, dynamic communication and openness patterns

within each adoption triad are informed by beliefs about communication and contact

brought to the table by the adoptive parents and birth parents (and also facilitating agency

personnel) from the outset of the adoption (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000).

Again, recognition of the influence of the social context on the formation of attitudes and

beliefs about adoption is crucial.

Refined definitions of "openness" refer to both structural openness, in which members of the adoption triad (comprised of the adopted person, adoptive family, and birth family) may have physical contact such as visitations, and communication openness, in which there is some presence of communication about adoption within the adoptive family, but exclusive of contact with birth family members (Brodzinsky, 2006). The latter, communication openness, is conceptualized across three dimensions: intrapersonal, intrafamilial, and interfamilial (Brodzinsky, 2008). Degrees of communication openness vary greatly, yet research strongly suggests that openness in communication that meets the evolving needs of the members of the adoption triad (composed of the adopted person, birth parents, and adoptive parents) provide greater satisfaction and well-being (Brodzinsky, 2008; Kirk, 1964; Skinner-Drawz, Wrobel, Grotevant, & Von Korff, 2011; Von Korff, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2005).

Intrapersonal, Intrafamilial, Interfamilial, and Extrafamilial Communication Openness

The broad category of *intrapersonal* communication reflects those thoughts and internal dialogue produced by an adopted person about their lived experiences (Brodzinsky, 2006). This dimension retains a personal element in that this internal dialogue or self-talk may or may not be shared with others, yet ultimately remains influenced by context through the internalization of social attitudes and messages (French, 2013; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). Intrapersonal communication as a construct of research in adoption is not widely used, but is included here due to the parallels between this construct and the process of meaning making. As an adopted

person experiences and interprets events related to their adoption, associated

intrapersonal communication reflects the cognitive processes of making meaning.

Further support for the inclusion of intrapsychic communication, or self-talk, can be

found in the fields of clinical (Hupp, Reitman, & Jewell, 2008) and social psychology

(Markus, 1977; Oyserman & Markus, 1993), where self-talk is thought to be a product of,

and helps to maintain, schemas of the self and the world.

Intrafamilial communication reflects openness that takes place within each of the

birth family and the adoptive family systems, but does not reflect communication

between the two families (Brodzinsky, 2011). (Instead, *Interfamilial* is used to identify

communication between the adoptive and birth family systems.) Intrafamilial

communication may entail the sharing of stories or experiences among members of the

adoptive family, or conversations about pain and loss within the birth family. Generally,

a person's satisfaction with openness has been found to be a positive contributor to a host

of systemic and individual benefits including aspects of identity formation (Dunbar &

Grotevant, 2004; Skinner-Drawz, Wrobel, Grotevant, & Von Korff, 2011). As

conceptualized in this current study, the adopted person is positioned within the adoptive

family system; therefore, communication between the adopted person and his or her

adoptive parents and adopted siblings is considered intrafamilial.

An adapted interview originally used in the second wave of the longitudinal

MTARP study informed additional refinements within the larger constructs of

intrafamilial communication. This refinement is seen in the inclusion of four subthemes

(comfort; parent understands participant; ease in conversations (with that parent) about

adoption; and neutral communication) along dimensions of communication and

interpersonal relationships allow for a finer granularity of inquiry. These themes are understood to occur in two separate dyads: with his or her adoptive father and adoptive mother. *Comfort* reflects instances in which the adopted person felt supported and emotionally comforted by the adoptive parent in question. As a marker of the flexibility and perspective taking of the adoptive parent, *parent understands participant* reflects the degree to which the adopted person feels that the adoptive parent is making an effort to empathize with the adopted person's experience. Conversations in these dyads may be seen as easy or difficult, or the conversations may be viewed as relatively affectively neutral. Together, these characteristics of adoptive parent – adopted person communication offer a detailed view of intrafamilial communication.

    Extrafamilial communication is added here to reflect the impact of the social context and communication that may unfold between the adopted person and social others, such as peers, extended family, or strangers. Given the role of social attitudes in the formation of internalized attitudes toward adoption held by the adopted person (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000), identification of the nature of extrafamilial communication is critical.

Rationale for Inclusion

    Communication and dynamics of interpersonal relationships are critical to the study of adoption and the formation of a personal narrative of self as an adopted person (Brodzinsky, 2011; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). Inclusion of these themes and concepts is a necessary component of any study of adoption focusing on the lived experiences of adopted persons, as how an adopted person makes sense of these

experiences is informed the messages communicated to him or her throughout the lifespan. As these messages change, through new experiences and exposure to new contexts, the ability to track and conceptualize commensurate changes (or the lack thereof) in communication is critical.

Research Dimension D: Adoptive Status and the Formation of Racial and Ethnic Identities in Transracially Adopted Persons

The intersection of race, ethnicity, and identity development – particularly for transracially adopted persons - is heavily informed by the social context in which these aspects of self interact (Baden & Steward, 2000; Samuels, 2009). Adoptive parents have a significant role in aspects of cultural socialization, and preparing their transracially adopted child to address and cope with racial bias (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006). As adopted parents emit verbal and non-verbal messages about the importance and role of race and ethnicity in identity formation, these views will become the lenses through which the adopted person views his or her own race and ethnicity (French, 2013; Lee, 2003).

In many transracial adoptions, the adopting parents are White while the adopted person is of color (Grotevant & McDermott, 2014). Given the preeminence of social forces in setting standards for acceptance and belonging (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995) adopted persons of color may internalize a White racial identity, reflective of their psychological desire for connectedness to their White adoptive family (Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009). These challenges are initially captured in three dimensions of identification: *Ethnic Identification; Ethnic De-identification;* and *Exploration*.

Identification (or, its opposite, de-identification) with either or both the ethnic background of the adoptive parents or birth parents is seen here as a marker of affiliation. The inclusion of this subtheme is informed by substantive research and theoretical development on issues of ethnic identification (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999). Given findings in which transracially adopted persons may seek to align more closely with the racial and ethnic backgrounds of their adoptive parents, (Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009), these nuances of identity are critical in providing context for the narrative of identity. Included here are themes of *exploration*, which, in a similar fashion to previous discussions of exploration around identity in this manuscript (p. 13), reflect the degree to which adopted persons have considered the intersection of race and ethnicity with adoption, and perhaps, engaged in seeking out new experiences around race or ethnicity.

Rationale for Inclusion

In the search for 'clean' data, race and ethnicity are often variables that are controlled for and minimized. However, for transracially adopted individuals, these dimensions of self are inextricably linked to identity, connections to the adoptive and birth families, and to the social environment. Lee's (2003) concept of the "transracial adoption paradox" (Lee, 2003) captures challenges faced by transracially adopted persons in forming a racial identity. Recent work suggests that experiences around transracial adoption profoundly influence self-concept and the racial and ethnic identities formed by transracially adopted persons. Samuels (2009) found that in a group of African American adults who had been transracially adopted into White families, many of the adopted

adults spoke about internalizing a white racial identity, and acknowledging the impact

that not being connected to an African American social culture had on self-concept. In

seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the lived experience of adoption – in

transracially adopted participants – it is essential that their experiences of race and

ethnicity be fully integrated into this research effort.

Research Dimension E: Self-esteem and Adoptive Status

Self-esteem is critical to understanding the ways in which adopted persons view

adoption as a positive or negative attribute of self (French, 2013). A meta-analysis of the

extensive literature on self-esteem in adopted and nonadopted persons suggested no mean

differences (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). However, these conclusions may be limited

by the high variability of conceptualizations and research methodologies used to assess

self-esteem in adopted persons (French, 2013).

Conceptualized in two ways, a two-factor theory of self-esteem suggests that self-

esteem is comprised of both *self-liking*, seen as the "social value that we ascribe to

ourselves" (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001, p. 655), and *self-competence*, or the dimension of

self-esteem that is supported by feelings that one is agentic, capable, and efficacious

(Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). Together, these dimensions reflect that self-esteem may be

informed both by the intersection of self and social context (self-liking) and internal

beliefs and values (self-competence).

The two-factor theory of self-esteem was selected specifically for inclusion in this

study due to the nature of participants' roles as mentors in AMP. In their roles as

mentors, participants are required to be successful across a range of tasks and duties (e.g.,

consistent meetings with the mentee, scheduling, and acting as a positive role model).

From their performance across these responsibilities, mentors may experience

fluctuations across the dimension of self-competence. As mentors are also participating

in the mentor groups which provide them with new messages and education about issues

of adoption, and provides them with a new social context around adoption, participants

may also experience fluctuations in self-liking. This two-factor model provides

theoretical flexibility and nuance that may not be offered in one-dimensional models of

the construct.

In addition, concepts of self-worth are intimately linked to self-esteem (French,

2013). Self-worth, or a person's valuation of him or herself as a person, is seen to be a

key aspect of self-concept, and is conceptualized as having a strong connection with the

social context (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). To the degree that the social environment

values a particular aspect of self, an individual may be more or less inclined to integrate

that aspect into a larger identity (Turner & Onorato, 1999). The inclusion of concepts of

positive or negative self-worth provides depth in the ability of this research effort to

contrast the accuracy of multiple conceptualizations.

Rationale for Inclusion

Self-esteem is an elusive construct, yet it is a critical component of one's lived

experience. Self-esteem is intimately linked to how people interact with the world

around them and informs self-perceptions of ability, worth, and value. As adoption is an

intervention in the lives of the children adopted, significant effort has been expended in

the search for insight into the impact of adoption on the self-esteem of adopted

individuals (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Self-esteem research in adoption reflects

many theoretical conceptualizations, and as many different methods of measuring the

construct. Large-scale meta-analyses suggest no difference on levels of self-esteem

between adopted and non-adopted peers (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). However,

given the influence of the social construct in the formation of self-concept (Hogg, 2003),

the unique positioning of participants in this study, who straddle multiple racial, ethnic,

and familial worlds, may offer insight into the complexities of internal processes of self-

appraisal.

Linking Research Dimensions as Components of the Lived Experience of Adoption

　　　　　One's adoptive status is understood to be much more complex than simply the

socio-legal process in which a child's life is grafted onto an adoptive family system.

Embedded within the adoptive experience are aspects of race and ethnicity (Baden &

Steward, 2000; Lee, 2003), self-esteem (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007), and the

cognitive and affective understandings of the role of adoption on one's life (Benson,

Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Brodzinsky, 2011). Therefore, in seeking "meaning"

about the role of adoption in their lives, adopted persons must consider and integrate a

host of dimensions of the adoptive experience; dimensions which are continually

evolving in dynamic relationships with each other (Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011).

These processes of meaning making and self-appraisal are not undertaken in isolation.

The authorship of a personal narrative of adoption is heavily influenced by the social

context in which a person lives (French, 2013; Turner & Onorato, 1999; Wegar, 2000).

The attitudes and beliefs held by both the macro levels of the society and culture and

micro levels of the adoptive family profoundly influence individual processes of self-appraisal and self-concept within the adopted person (French, 2013; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Kirk, 1964; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; McAdams, 1988; Samuels, 2009).

Strong, yet largely independent lines of research into any one of these dimensions have predominated over the last decades of adoption research. The presentation of research dimensions above captures the dominant themes of this research, yet also highlights the separation between them. While the field has made significant advancements toward a better understanding of these themes, the task of integrating parceled theories into one comprehensive conceptualization of the lived experience of adoption remains.

Conceptualized as "the lifelong intrapsychic and socio-contextual impact of having one's life legally joined to his or her adoptive family," the *lived experience of adoption* (LEA) discussed in this manuscript is comprised of the five research dimensions (A – E) above. Rationale for their inclusion is found in the strength of the empirical evidence to support their inclusion, as well as the contribution of the individual theories to a comprehensive and coherent theory of LEA. This study was designed to integrate multiple dimensions of the lived experience of adoption to provide a more cohesive perspective on the impact of adoption on the lives of adopted persons. Qualitative data collection and analysis techniques will be presented that draw on the voices of adopted persons to verify, refine, and expand current theory in adoption.

Summary of the Literature

Adoption literature is robust and reflects significant theoretical development and empirical support across dimensions of identity, communication, race, ethnicity, and self-esteem. Yet there exists a disconnection between these domains of research. Some studies explicate connections between adoption and identity (Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011), while others seek to study the impact of varying levels of communication (Brodzinsky, 2011), while still other explore the impact of race and ethnicity on self-concept (Baden & Steward, 2000). Still, others have explored impact of a stigmatizing social context on adopted individuals' perceptions of self and the world around them (Garber, 2013; Leon, 2002; Samuels, 2009; Wegar, 2000). What is missing is a holistic conceptualization of how these aspects of self connect and are integrated in one lived experience.

To this end, this research project will first seek to corroborate theories that form the bedrock of adoption literature through an analysis of the aggregate experiences of adopted participants across a two year period in which they participated as mentors in AMP. This exploration of the lived experiences of adopted participants will also identify areas for new theoretical growth. Finally, a holistic theoretical model will be offered to illustrate the manner in which aspects of the lived experience of adoption are seen to intersect.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This dissertation seeks to uncover, in great detail, the intricacies of the lived experience of a group of adopted persons who have experienced a change to their typical social context as related to adoption, via their participation in AMP. This effort contrasts themes and experiences derived from this examination with current theory and knowledge. The research aims posed in this dissertation are best addressed through qualitative methods that facilitate a focus on uncovering a progression and development of theory rather than asking "which groups" or "how much difference." Qualitative methodology was selected to directly address the aims of this research with a critical focus on the *expansion of theory based* on the specific experiences of the participants.

To this end, participants and methods of collecting data will be discussed, followed by a presentation of the analytic approach selected to organize and understand emergent themes of the lived experience of adoption across time. Through the following methodology, participants' voices are used to advance an enhanced conceptual model of the lived experiences of adoption that unfold over time, in response to changing contexts.

Participants

Four young adults who participated as mentors in the Adoption Mentoring Partnership (AMP) participated in this study. AMP is an ongoing mentoring program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, in which undergraduate students who are adopted are matched in one-to-one relationships with a school-age child from the local

community who is also adopted. In addition to participating as mentors in one-on-one activities with their mentees, mentors participated in regular meetings in which they reviewed theory and research on issues of adoption, discussed literature, shared personal experiences and connected with each other. Participation in AMP is seen as a significant shift in the participants' social context. These mentors had not participated in a program such as AMP before, and many of them had never had experiences connecting with other adopted persons in this way; some noted that despite being in college for three years, they had yet to meet another adopted person before signing up for AMP. The cumulative impact of mentoring and group meeting activities presented mentors with new perspectives on adoption and presented mentors with new experiences to reconcile with their existing narratives.

Four college age mentors participated in the present study; three female participants and one male participant. All participants are transracially and transnationally adopted, and general information is presented along with pseudonyms for each participant (see Table 1). In addition to protecting the identities of the participants, the use of pseudonyms will also allow for a richer experience in reviewing transcript excerpts in the results and discussion sections. These four participants were selected for inclusion in this present study from among the broader group of AMP mentors for a number of carefully considered reasons. These four were the only transracially and transnationally adopted participants who were members of the original mentoring cohort, and therefore, participated in data collection over the course of two complete academic years. There were other mentor participants, but they either did not complete the data collection for the duration, or were not transracially or transnationally adopted. More

information on AMP can be reviewed in a manuscript detailing program development,

execution, and research (French, Grotevant, & Dolan, 2013).

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Participant (pseudonym)	Sex	Age at adoption	Country of origin	State of primary residence	Age at first interview
Paula	F	3.8 mos.	Peru	Massachusetts	19 yrs.
Jonathan	M	7.9 mos.	South Korea	New York	20 yrs.
Fernanda	F	2.9 mos.	Mexico	Massachusetts	20 yrs.
Claudia	F	3 – 4 years	Colombia	New Jersey	19 yrs.

All participants were recruited following university IRB approved protocol and given

complete disclosure as to the nature of the study. Their participation was not

compulsory, and a participant's standing and ability to participate in the larger mentoring

program was not affected in any way to the decision to participate in research. Consent

forms were reviewed and a discussion of the potential risks and benefits was conducted

with each participant before data collection.

Measures and Data Collection

The program of research for the AMP project was developed at the program's

inception in 2010. It was understood that a strong research component was a critical

aspect of AMP for many reasons. This was a unique program that offered a chance to

gain insight into many complex processes of social context, identity and self,

interpersonal relationships, and the impact of mentor relationships in adopted individuals.

As a result, a robust, longitudinal program of research was developed and implemented,

including a qualitative interview as well as a series of self-report survey instruments

targeting a range of dimensions including communication around adoption, race and ethnicity, as well as self-esteem. To address the research aims proposed in this dissertation, only the interview data were utilized.

Interview data were collected over the course of a mentor's participation in AMP using an adapted version of the Adoptive Identity Interview originally developed for the third wave (emerging adulthood) of the Minnesota / Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP). The interview focused on a range of aspects of the lived experience of adoption, including identity development as an adopted person; thoughts and feelings about adoption; communication about adoption between the adopted person and various members of their social environment; thoughts on patterns of, and attitudes toward openness within the adoption triad; the salience of race and ethnicity in both conversations with others and processes of identity development as a person of color (see Appendix A for the complete interview).

The interview was administered in an online chat format as per its original administration in the third wave of MTARP data collection. This interview consisted of the presentation of a question or a prompt to the participant, who then typed in his or her response.   This chat interview was conducted using the email program developed by Google.com, Gmail. Gmail has chat capabilities that allow for real-time, private, person-to-person text chatting, and was approved for use by the IRB protocol. Participants were asked to set up their own Gmail.com account using an assigned subject number as their username, and instructed not to include any of their personal information in setting up the account. The researcher conducting the interview also used a study-specific account created for the explicit purposes of data collection.

All participants were interviewed using the same protocol at two points in each academic year, for a total of four interviews over two academic years. The first interview occurred at the beginning of the fall semester, and the second interview of the academic year took place at the end of the spring semester. Included in this dissertation are the first and second interviews of the first academic year, and only the second interview of the second academic year (see Table 2). The first interview of the 2011 – 2012 academic years is not included in these analyses (see Table 2). It was believed that participants would be most impacted by their participation during the first year, the 2010 – 2011 academic years, reflecting their exposure to new ideas, beliefs, facts, and adoption experiences associated with the new social context of the AMP program. These new experiences were thought to potentially challenge longstanding beliefs about adoption held by the participants themselves. Participants may have worked to reconcile the discrepancies between their own understandings of adoption and the new ideas and experiences encountered within the first year of participation. In this way, data from the first and final interviews of the first year are very important.

Table 2
Timeline of Interview Administration

2010 – 2011 Academic Year		2011 – 2012 Academic Year	
First Interview: Fall '10	Final Interview: Spring '11	First Interview: Fall '11	Final Interview: Spring '12
Wave 1 included	Wave 2 included	not included	Wave 3 included

Template Analysis as a Method of Analyzing Data

To best address the research aims, template analysis was used to analyze these data (King, 2004; King, Carroll, Newton, & Dornan, 2002). Given the exploratory nature of this study, template analysis is a useful tool that permits exploration and the establishing of new perspectives while gaining strength from a foundation of existing knowledge and established literature. Template analysis is a form of transcription coding that is applied to qualitative data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; King, Carroll, Newton, & Dornan, 2002; King, 2004). The "template" simply refers to the physical list of codes and associated descriptions that are developed and continually evolve over the course of the data analysis process. As a set of practices that guide the critical analysis of qualitative data, template analysis is both structured in its initial approach while remaining flexible to emergent content.

Template analysis utilizes many time tested elements of qualitative analysis such as the formation of an a priori codebook and coding scheme (the template), audit trails, mechanisms for reaching consensus, summation and conceptualization, and interpretation (King, 2004). The "template" simply refers to the physical list of codes and their descriptions that is developed and continually evolved over the course of the data analysis process. In template analysis, codes are defined as textual markers that capture a theme reflective of the primary research aims (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). The template of codes is viewed as a tool that allows the researcher to better understand relationships between constructs within the data, and is therefore, well suited to meet the goals of this dissertation.

The *initial template* is a preliminary list of codes, reflective of themes anticipated to exist within the data. Informed by existing literature, the template reflects the current state of research and knowledge across the topics covered. This process is very similar to the formation of a codebook in other forms of qualitative analysis and to the formation of starting values in multivariate analyses. Yet, the initial template of codes and themes is not static. The initial template of codes is expected be revised throughout the coding process, expanded and collapsed in response to themes and connections between constructs that emerge across the three waves of interview data. As sources of data are analyzed, both the corroboration of existing codes and the identification of new themes refine the template across a series of waves of analysis and revision.

There is no limit to the number of codes developed, and valuable insights can be gained when codes are reflected in even a small minority of transcripts. However, researchers are cautioned to avoid creating too many codes as to complicate the picture and detract from the overarching goal of gaining clarity over a phenomenon (Gibbs, 2012). In further refining perspectives, a priori codes that are not found to be supported in later waves of data provide insight into areas of thematic conceptualization that may not be congruent with the lived experience. Researchers must be honest and vigilant in their review of the code and the data to ensure accuracy and to prevent redundancy. These guidelines highlight both the soundness and flexibility of the model, as the strength of prior research provides a foundation for analysis, and the process of template revision allows findings from the data to illuminate new perspectives. The template of codes is a tool that allows the researcher to better understand relations between constructs within the data, and is therefore well suited to meet the goals of this dissertation.

Template Analysis Relative to other Qualitative Approaches

Template analysis differs from grounded theory methodology in the development

of this a priori template of codes (King, 1998). This approach reflects a fundamentally

different philosophy toward qualitative research, as template analysis recognizes and

embraces the knowledge and insight of the researchers themselves, and the contributions

of prior literature (King, 2004). Other research paradigms such as grounded theory

reflect a realist perspective that assumes a "truth" hidden in data that can only be

discovered when researchers suspend expectation and prevent existing literatures,

knowledge, and experience from influencing outcomes (Lansisalmi, Peiro, & Kivimaki,

2004). This is seen as a challenging research position to maintain (King, 2004). Even the

most basic of all research begins with a research question, a presumption of some

outcome, and the development of a program of research to capture this target

phenomenon. Acknowledging the influence of prior knowledge on all phases of research,

from generation to interpretation, template analysis encourages researchers to develop a

priori codes for the themes they believe they will find.

Template analysis with Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software:

NVivo 10

Qualitative data analysis is becoming increasingly aided by the use of computer

assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS, King, 2004). One prominent

program is NVivo, currently in its 10th version; this research tool was used in this study.

CAQDAS, including NVivo 10 are useful in qualitative analysis for the organization and

streamlining of a template of codes, to manage the coding process itself, allowing for

collaboration in a research team, and generating novel forms of graphic output of the data (King, 2004). NVivo classifies codes or themes included on the template as "Nodes," though in this manuscript, nodes, codes, and themes are used interchangeably. What CAQDAS programs are not capable of, however, is the interpretation of the findings; a responsibility that still lies with the primary researcher.

Application of Template Analysis in this Research

Developing the Initial Template

Recall the following dimensions of the lived experience of adoption that are the core focus in this research:

A)   identity as an adopted person (e.g., Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011)

B)   thought processes and attitudes about one's status as an adopted person (Brodzinsky, 2011)

C)   communication and openness within and between birth and adoptive families about adoption (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998)

D)   the formation of ethnic and racial identities in transracially adopted persons (Baden & Steward, 2000; Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009)

E)   self-esteem (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007)

Guided by the research aims, dominant theory in the study of the lived experiences of adoption, and consultation with faculty researchers, the initial template was developed beginning with these five (A – E) themes. While graphically, the nodes are presented vertically, the nodes are organized hierarchically, with the broadest thematic level at the

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top, and the lower order subnodes listed under each broader theme and indented (see

Figure 1).

Two other higher order nodes, "Mentoring," with subnodes of "Giving Back,"

"Seeing self in mentee," and "Mentor Group Meetings," and "Early Context" were added

to the initial template through a process of revision. Aspects of mentoring were included

due to the prominence of mentoring in this research that theoretically changed

Nodes

Name
Adoptive Identity
Depth of Narrative
Flexibility
Inflexibility
Internal Consistency
Internal Inconsistency
Adoption Dynamics
Positive Affect
Negative Experience
Preoccupation
Why was I placed for adoption
Communication
Intrapersonal Communication
Intrafamilial Communication
Adoptive Parent 1
AP1 - Comfort
AP1 - Parent Understands Participant
AP1 - Parent Doesn't Understand Participant
AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
AP1 - Neutral Communication
Adoptive Parent 2
AP2 - Comfort
AP2 - Parent Understands Participant
AP2 - Parent Doesn't Understand Participant
AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption
AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption
AP2 - Neutral Communication
Adoptive Siblings
AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
AS - Neutral Communication
Interfamilial Communication
Extrafamilial

Name
Ethnic Identity
Ethnic Identification
Adoptive Parents
Birth Parents
Ethnic De-identification
Adoptive Parents
Birth Parents
Exploration
Self-Esteem
Self-liking
Self-competence
Positive self-worth
Negative self-worth
Mentoring
Giving Back
Seeing self in mentee
Mentor Group Meetings
Early Context
Racial Demographics
Socio-economic Demographics
Facts about Adoption
Gender
Sexual Orientation
Z - Potential New Node

Figure 1. Initial Template (IT) presented here in two columns.

participants' social context. Themes of early context were included to capture

demographic information about the participants' early environments which enabled those

early experiences to be contrasted with more recent contexts. Also added to the initial

template were four higher order themes included to provide greater organization, context,

and insight into the data being coded: "Facts about Adoption;" "Gender;" "Sexual

Orientation;" "Z – Partial New Node." "Facts about Adoption" were used to identify

those statements in which a detail or fact about the adoption story were revealed such as

the date of the person's adoption. This node allowed for increased organization and

labeling of types of information related to the person's adoption story. "Gender" was

added to allow for the identification of instances in which the participant may allude to

perceived connections between experiences and gender. "Sexual Orientation" was added

to also capture any instances in which the participant voiced perceived connections

between their experiences around adoption and his or her sexual orientation. Finally, "Z

– Partial New Node" was added to allow coders the opportunity to track participant'

statements that did not fit in any of the existing codes. This node captured the flexibility

of the template analysis approach, and also addressed one of the primary goals of this

dissertation – to identify areas for new thematic growth based on participant experiences

over time.

Defining the Codes

Consistency and accuracy in coding was essential, and reinforced through the

formation of explicit operational definitions for each code and subcode on the template.

As the core purpose of this dissertation was to test theory in adoption against the lived

experiences of adopted persons, the operational definitions for these codes were derived

from their respective literatures. Yet, as template analysis requires flexibility, these

codes and definitions remained adaptable to ensure that they most accurately captured

emergent themes in the data.

The Initial Template Codebook can be seen in its entirety in Appendix B, though

excerpts illustrating some of the higher order themes and subthemes are presented here to

provide a sense of the conceptualizations of the codes (see Table 3). Note the hierarchy

in which the broader themes such as "Communication" are on the left, and subthemes

such as "AP1 – Parent Understands Participant" are further to the right.

Coding Procedures

Coding was done by a team of three undergraduate research assistants (RAs)

supervised by the primary investigator (PI). The coding team met with the PI multiple

times per week for approximately six months. RAs received extensive training on

qualitative data analysis and how to successfully utilize NVivo 10 in the coding process

(see Table 4 and Figure 2).   Additionally, RAs received extensive exposure to current

literature, theory, and research on the themes of adoption to be in focus in this study.

RAs documented their responses to each of a series of articles, and engaged in rich

discussion of the themes and concepts prior to engaging in data analysis.

The initial template was used to guide coding in the first wave. Each transcript

was assigned to two RAs to allow for double independent coding. Coders were to review

each transcript line by line, statement by statement and either select the appropriate code

Table 3

Excerpts from the Initial Template Codebook

Higher Order Theme	Subtheme – Level 1	Subtheme - Level 2
Adoptive Identity This higher order node of adoptive identity reflects both developmental and narrative theories of self. The adopted person is thought to develop a narrative, or a story of one's self as an adopted person...	**Depth of exploration of a narrative** Depth of adoptive identity exploration refers to the degree to which participants reflect on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person… **Flexibility** Flexibility refers to the degree to which participants view issues as others might see them; perspective taking… from the points of view of the adoptive and birth parents and siblings…	
Communication The concept of adoption communication is hinged on the idea of openness in communication. This idea of the benefits of open channels of communication derives from the work of Kirk (1964) who was the first researcher to emphasize the importance of open communication within the adoptive family system…	**Intrafamilial Communication** Communication about adoption within the adoptive family group or within the birth family group (no cross-over). Intrafamilial communication may reflect sharing of information, stories, narratives, or also the discussion of complex emotions and feelings related to adoption…	**Adoptive Parent 1 (AP1) - Comfort** Reflects instances in which the adopted person felt that he or she was comforted during a conversation with his or her adoptive parent 1…
		AP1– Parent Understands Participant Reflects adopted person comments that he or she feels his or her adoptive parent 1 "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive parents' awareness of challenges, and adoptive parents' true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their children.

Table 4
Coding process in detail.

Stage of Analysis	Personnel	Tasks
I. Training	Entire coding team	1. Reviewed the coding template and operational definitions for the codes 2. Became familiar with NVivo 10 program and user interface 3. Selected one sample interview and coded as a group in NVivo using the initial template
II. Coding	Individual research assistant (RA) coding & coding team discussion	1. Transcripts from the first interviews (T1) for all participants were coded individually using the Initial Template 2. Discussions about discrepancies in coding within the same transcript focused on the rationale used by the coders to assign coded in the manner executed; sound reason informed any decisions about coding changes
III. Template revision	Primary investigator (PI), in consultation with faculty research adviser	1. The PI consulted with the faculty research adviser to arrive at final template edits. 2. Additions, changes, and deletions to the initial template that emerged as a result of Stage II – Coding were integrated into the Initial Template (IT) to create the Wave 1 Template (W1).
IV. Coding	RA coding, and team discussion	1. Transcripts from the second round of interviews (T2) for all participants were coded individually using the W1 Template. 2. Coding group discussion to arrive at suggested template changes proceeded as in Stage II.
V. Template revision	PI, in consultation with adviser	1. The template revision process proceeded in the same manner as in Stage III to produce the Wave 2 Template (W2).
VI. Coding	RA coding, and team discussion	1. Transcripts from the final round of interviews included in this dissertation (T3) were coded using the W2 Template. 2. Coding group discussion proceeded as previously.
VII. Template revision	PI, in consultation with adviser	1. The template revision process proceeded in the same manner as in Stage V to produce the Wave 3 Template (W3).
VIII. Interpretation of template evolution	PI, in consultation with adviser	1. Consideration of final themes as they evolved over time.
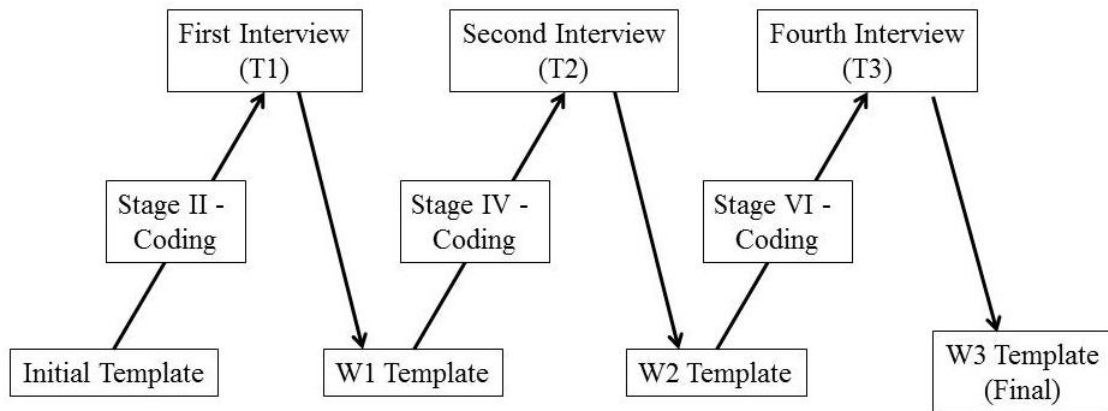
Figure 2. Graphic depiction of data analysis plan outlined in Table 4.
Note that the third interview is not included in these analyses.

listed in the Initial Template and Codebook, or use the "Z – Potential New Node" code

for those emergent themes that were not adequately captured in the existing template.

Following independent coding of each transcript in the first wave of transcripts, RAs met

as a group with the PI and reviewed coding to reach a consensus on every code noted by

the coders. RAs engaged in discussion and through dialogue, were required to justify

their coding decisions.

In those instances in which the two coders could not reach a consensus, the third

RA who did not code the transcript, followed along and acted as the arbitrator. Each of

the RAs with differing views would state their cases and rationale, relying on notes

taking during their independent coding session. The third RA would offer their views as

the deciding opinion on outcomes for coding. This process worked well, and the RAs

respected the decisions made by consensus.

The final codes were entered into NVivo for documentation and a list of template

changes emergent from the "Z – Potential New Node" code that had been agreed upon by

the RAs and the PI were later integrated into the next iteration of both the codebook and

the template. The PI consulted with his faculty advisor, a leader in the field of adoption

research to justify and assess the veracity of the proposed changes. Any

recommendations or changes from this consultation were incorporated into a final

revision of the template and the codebook for that wave. RAs and the PI reviewed the

changes and the new iteration of the template and codebook, and the process was

repeated in full for each successive wave of data; three waves of data produced the final

template and codebook.

Establishing Trustworthiness and Rigor in This Research

The direct transfer of quantitative concepts of "reliability" and "validity" (using

both quantitative parlance and definition) to qualitative research methodologies is a

questionable practice due to fundamental differences in research paradigms (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Reframed,

the need for methodological soundness has been conceptualized as *trustworthiness* in

qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004), and is comprised of the key

components of credibility, confirmability, and dependability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility

Credibility is a qualitative analog to internal validity (Guba, 1981), and while

discussions about the acceptability of analogues to validity continue (e.g., Hoepfl, 1997),

credibility remains a widely accepted construct (Shenton, 2004). First in establishing

credibility, is justifying the strength and appropriateness of the analytic approach

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). A methodology is credible to the extent that it is

supported through a review of previous sound applications in research and is an appropriate and acceptable form of inquiry given the research aims posed (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shenton, 2004).

The research aims in this study were focused on exploring the lived experiences of adopted persons with fine granularity. Their experiences were contrasted with current theory, and areas for theoretical and conceptual expansion were identified. In meeting these goals, a qualitative method of collecting and analyzing data was required. The interviews conducted were derived from established interview protocol utilized in numerous studies in which the experiences of adopted persons were documented in detail. Template analysis as an analytic approach draws strength from established qualitative methodologies such as gathering data through interview formats, thematic coding, iteration, and peer review (King, 2004; Shenton, 2004). Template analysis approaches permitted both the fine grain analysis of qualitative data while remaining flexible to emergent themes and data; this specifically met the needs of this study. This inclusion of established techniques contributed to the overall soundness and credibility of this dissertation.

Debriefing

This technique is a key element in establishing credibility of the method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is a process in which the primary investigator, who is immersed in the data and interpretation, consults with peers, advisers, and leaders in the field of inquiry (Shenton, 2004). Consultants provide alternative perspectives and may challenge the interpretations or views of the primary investigator, who must remain open to areas in

which his or her view may have narrowed. Engaging in frequent debriefing ensures continued objectivity to the research effort.

Debriefing was a key part of the entire research project at all levels of personnel, not limited to the primary investigator; this is seen as a significant strength to the methodology and audit trail, to be discussed at length later. From the outset, the primary investigator consulted with his research faculty adviser who is a leader in the field of adoption. In finalizing the research methodology and approach to analysis, the dissertation committee provided significant feedback and recommendations to strengthen the overall research project. The primary investigator continued consultation with the research faculty adviser throughout the process of data analysis and at each wave of template revision.

Additionally, RA coders regularly met with the PI multiple times per week to discuss outcomes of independent coding efforts. In these meetings, RAs often engaged in peer consultation with the other RAs, and consulted with the PI. This system of continuous discussion and collaboration permitted the recurrent inclusion of multiple perspectives in all stages of the analysis and contributed to the credibility of the study. The process of consultation and debriefing contributed to the overall *confirmability* of the study as well, which is the ability of the supporting documentation to reflect efforts for researcher objectivity in the research process (Shenton, 2004).

Researcher as a Data Collection Instrument

The interview was administered by the author of this dissertation, an advanced graduate student in a clinical psychology doctoral program, who had a large role in the

development and management of the adoption mentoring program. He had a large role in

both the selection of mentors for AMP, as well as a large support role in providing

didactic training around mentoring and adoption. This relationship may have impacted

both the responses produced through the interviews, in that participants may have been

more open due to their strong positive relationships with the interviewer; as such

participants' responses may have been different had the interviewer been a less familiar

person. On the other hand, some participants may have been less willing to disclose

personal information because of their ongoing connection with the author in various

capacities. Moreover, due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, different follow-

up queries to participants' statements would have resulted in different participants'

responses; this could have been influenced by both the graduate student's academic and

research background in the field of adoption, as well as the graduate student's clinical

training.

Position Statement

Critical to the concept of credibility is the positioning of the researcher as an

appropriate instrument of research (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Shenton, 2004). The

researcher must be well-versed and trained in the subject matter so as to be able to

effectively conceptualize and execute the research methodology, and appropriately

interpret the results of the inquiry (Patton, 1999; Shenton, 2004). Further, it is critical

that the views and position of the researcher be made explicit from the outset.

Positioning of this Researcher

I am a trans-racially adopted person, adopted from South Korea by White parents. My graduate academic career has been spent in the study of identity processes in adopted persons through research, clinical practice, and personal experience. I view early social context as a primary influence on an adopted person's conceptualization and valuation of his or her adoptive status. Early and continued acceptance or rejection of adoption as a valued aspect of self is seen to influence the degree to which a person seeks to integrate adoption into their broader self-narrative. Largely viewing identity from a multidimensional, narrative perspective, I conceptualize individuals at the intersection of many aspects of self that vary in salience in response to the demands of shifting social contexts. A person's status as an adopted person is one of those dimensions that may be conceptualized and integrated into a larger sense of self.

I was positioned as both the lead investigator on this research project as well as the coordinator of the mentoring program from which participants for this research were selected. In this way, I had contact with the participants in many ways. I was heavily involved in the recruitment of all participants in the mentoring program as well as working with the mentors in support of their mentor matches. I also ran the mentor group meetings; a component of the program that involved didactic instruction on the subject of adoption, as well as the facilitation of group discussion.

It is clear that I am heavily invested and embedded within this work. The research aims themselves emerged from the intersection of my own research interests and my participation in the development and execution of this mentoring program. Yet this naturalistic development of research aims out of lived experience is seen to buttress the

core of the research aims themselves: does current literature in adoption accurately reflect the lived experience of adopted persons? My knowledge of the field of adoption, and intimate knowledge of the context in which the data were generated positions me as fully capable and an appropriate investigator in the interpretation of the data. The lynchpin of success, however, is the strength of my continual consultation, and documentation of all manner of thoughts, processes, and actions taken by myself and other members of the research team to ensure transparency and trustworthiness.

Research Assistants as Instruments for Data Analysis

Just as it was important that the primary investigator reflect on his impact on the research study, it is important to briefly introduce the undergraduate research assistants (RAs) who contributed greatly to this current effort. The three RAs were all female and in their late teens or early twenties. The three RAs identified with varied ethnic and racial backgrounds; one identifies as Euro-American, a second as biracial (Puerto Rican and Irish), and the third as Portuguese-American. Two of the three were graduating seniors, while a third was in her third year in college. None of the RAs were themselves adopted, and for all, this was their first formal exposure to theories and research in adoption. However, one of the RAs was previously partnered with a young man who was transracially adopted along with his biological sister. In looking back on experiences in that relationship, this particular RA was able to access memories that gave context to the concepts the others could only read about.

It is impossible to fully knowhow this or other RA attributes impacted their coding efforts. However, as a part of the substantial effort to strengthen rigor and

credibility within this approach, RAs were required to complete process notes following

each of the initial readings prior to coding, as well as document their experiences

following each research group meeting; these are available upon request.

<center>**Dependability**</center>

Dependability in a qualitative research study is seen as the degree to which results

would be similar if the study through repetition of the study methodology (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Ensuring dependability often begins

with a ensuring the strength of the theoretical approach used as a guide, and

documentation of the decisions and procedures executed at all points of initial

conceptualization, participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, and interpretation

(Shenton, 2004). This documentation is referred to as an *audit trail* (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Shenton, 2004; Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Audit Trail

An audit trail is a fundamental tool for demonstrating trustworthiness in

qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail often consists of the data,

documentation of the analysis of data, process notes reflecting rationale for decisions,

position statements written by members of the research team outlining their own life

experiences, training, and views that influence research outcomes (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Transparency around the steps taken and decisions made at each step of the

research process allows the reader to trace the initial conceptualization, through

development and collection and analysis of data, to the interpretive statements made in

<center>50</center>

the manuscript. A quality audit trail ensures that the reader is never left with the question, "Well, how did they get there?" at the end of the paper. Inviting the reader to follow on the journey opens the process up and brings the reader into the work.

In this research project, the audit trail is extensive - far too large and complex to be included as in-line text here; however, it is available by request. Listed below are the key components of the audit trail to provide the reader with a sense of the magnitude of information collected throughout the research process (see Figure 3).

Planning & Development
- Development of AMP program of research
- Development of data analysis approach
  - justificationfor the use of template analysis
  - development of the coding protocol
- Training of the RA coding group, including:
  - development of RA training materials
  - development of materials for documenting ongoing coding efforts

Documentation of Process
- Maintenance of ongoing process notes by the PI, focusing on his experience in the coding process and also on coding group dynamics, strengths, and challenges
- Maintenance of ongoing process notes by each individual RA focused on their experiences in the coding process

Documentation of Interpretation
- Docuentation of proposed changes to the template following each wave of data analysis
- Documentation of counsultation with the research faculty advisor following each wave of analysis
- Documentation of the process of interpretation that is presented in the results and discussion section of this manuscript

Figure 3. Graphic depiction of key components of the audit trail.

Many of these elements are typically found in all credible research, as they reflect the processes of conceptualization, methodological development, analysis, and interpretation. An important piece of the audit trail in this study is the extensive documentation on the subjective experiences of the coders and the PI throughout the coding process. The PI documented each step of project development from the development of protocols for RA training, organizing a schedule for data analysis, documenting changes to the templates

and codebooks across successive waves, and outcomes of consultation. The PI also took copious notes during each of the RA group meetings to track aspects of the group dynamic, challenges in coding, and breakthroughs in template expansion. Some de-identified excerpts from the PI's group meeting notes reflect the comprehensiveness of the audit trial compiled for this research.

One of the RAs assigned transcripts is of a mentor who has two mothers in a same-sex relationship, so we discussed changing the codebook to "Parent 1" and "Parent 2." This will require identification of which parent is 1 and 2, and consistency throughout coding.

Group dynamics are positive, people are upbeat but RAs were concerned that they were letting me down by going slowly. I reassured them that they were doing a fantastic job, and the need to alter the data analysis plan was simply because I bit off more than I could chew.

This group meeting was cancelled due to the PI taking the time off following his internship match date. It was decided that he would not be able to focus as needed in the meeting due to his excitement.

We reviewed the new data analysis plan and set times for us to meet each week for the remainder of the semester. We will be meeting on Wednesday and Friday at our regular times, and we have committed to 3 hour meetings on Saturdays. There are 2 Saturday meeting times that RAs could not make so we agreed to make up those 6 hours in 2 meetings during finals week.

Great care was taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. This methodology, while complex, is best suited to analyze the current data to address the research aims posed here.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One goal of the study is to address the congruence between current theory in adoption and the lived experiences of adopted individuals as they participate in an adoption-specific mentoring program over a period of two academic years. Secondly, when current theory does not appear to map on to the lived experiences, participants' experiences are used to inform refinements to current theory and conceptualization. The data represent a unique opportunity for research in which the impact of a changing social context (participation in AMP) may be observed on nuances of the adoptive experience in real-time. This chapter combines results and discussion as they are seen as inextricably linked. "Outcomes" or "results" typical to traditional quantitative research are instead represented here through presentations of thematic evolution and associated participants' statements and quotes to illustrate thematic change and growth in response to changing experiences over time. Concurrent discussion is a necessary component in the final presentation of outcomes from this research to provide context for understanding.

The focus in this combined results and discussion section is on the thematic change observed relative to participants' experiences in a changed social context over time, rather than on the explicit experiences of the participants. Extracted through the interviews are participants' own vocalizations of their experiences and the meaning they have made from them; they contribute in the interviews, their "theories of self." Yet these experiences are highly individualized and expressed in idiosyncratic language and interpretation; these interviews, on their own, and in their raw form, are not useful in

contributing to theoretical knowledge and expansion. Addressing the goals outlined in the methods section places responsibility on this researcher, the research assistants, and faculty advisers to grasp current theory, and distil from the individual experiences, similarities and differences that may then contribute to a discussion of theory. In this way, participants' statements will be used to provide context for and examples of concepts and theory that are of primary focus in this manuscript.

Discussions on the presentation of results of template analysis methodology speak to the limitations of presenting each template theme and subtheme one by one (King, 2004). This style of comprehensive and linear presentation offers little insight into the connections between different themes as they change together over time, and is seen as a pitfall to be avoided (King, 2004). Rather, excerpts from participants' statements that both corroborate current adoption theory and reflect areas of thematic growth will be presented to advance a coherent and holistic understanding of the target constructs (King, 2004).

The methodology employed in this study ties together participants' experiences and advances in conceptual understanding so they move in tandem: as participants' experiences change, conceptualizations and theory captured in successive template revisions will also change. The templates themselves are not seen as a final product, but rather, as aids in the conceptualization of thematic evolution; as single cells of longer film reel. When reviewing changes across templates, quantification of evolving themes (e.g., frequency counts) is inappropriate as it invites interpretation of statistical significance and finality (King, 2004). More important in the interpretation of template outcomes is the identification of when and where and under what conditions changes

occur, and the relationships between different themes as they evolve. As such, this approach to analysis fits well with the goals of this research project in capturing emerging theoretical nuance relative to a changing environment over time.

Recall the initial research aims:

I.
   a) The first aim of the study is to determine the extent to which participants' lived experiences of adoption in relation to their changing social context (AMP), map onto current theoretical conceptualizations of commonly researched aspects of adoption (identified in points A-E above).

   b) Emerging from this examination of lived experiences and current theory, this study will focus on areas in which the data call for an expansion of existing theory. This study will look at ways in which participants' evolving understandings and conceptualizations inform the identification of areas for theoretical growth across aspects of the lived experience of adoption.

II. Understanding that the targeted aspects of adoption are not experienced in isolation, and acknowledging the relative segregation of theory and research variables in the field of adoption, these data will next be used to inform an integrative conceptual model of the Lived Experiences of Adoption. In this proposed model, relationships between dimensions of the adoptive experience (A-E) will be highlighted.

Informed by the research aims, the following sections will frame the discussion in this chapter:

- AMP as a Novel Component of Participants' Social Context around Adoption.

- Aim I: Mapping Experiences over Time and Expanding Theory. In addressing research aim Ia) congruence between theory and the lived experiences across each of the five core themes outlined in the literature review will be explored. Descriptive quotations and excerpts from the evolving templates over time will illustrate a specific focus on those instances in which findings appear to corroborate or challenge existing theory.   Novel concepts that emerge over the course of three waves of template analysis and revision will also be presented. In addressing research aim Ib) this section will conclude with a presentation of new areas of thematic growth not previously included on the initial template.

- Aim II: an Integrative Conceptual Model of the Lived Experience of Adoption. In addressing the second research aim, a conceptual model will be presented that links the core themes, and other aspects of the adoptive experience, in a comprehensive theoretical framework.

AMP as a Novel Component of Participants' Social Context around Adoption

A key position taken in this study is identifying AMP participation as a change in the social context of adoption. This theme in itself is complex, given the many ways "context" can be defined and conceptualized. Yet this flexibility in defining context highlights the massive potential for context, in whatever form, to impact the formation of

identity. This process of identity formation is conceptualized as "a dynamic tension between *something* considered core and *something* considered context to that core" (emphasis added, Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000, pp. 381). In this way, the mentoring program is very much a novelty in the social contexts of the participants at the time of their participation in this study.

Participants' statements gathered over the two years of interview transcripts reflect their acknowledgement of the impact that AMP had on their ability to connect with other adopted persons, and gain insights into themselves as adopted persons.

Fernanda: One positive would be this program I would have to say. I get to talk about adoption with people to actually understand what I'm saying.

Interviewer: Do you have any desire to search for members of your birth family in the future?

Jonathan: Yeah I would like to. When I called the agency I had the intentions of starting the process but I figured I should wait until after college
Interviewer: What motivated you to call at that time?

Jonathan: I think I had just been thinking about it pretty frequently. Maybe from the AMP class since that's really where most of my adoption related conversations happen

---

Interviewer: Please describe your most recent adoption related conversation with your parents.

Paula: theres not much to talk about because we havent talked about it much lately

but i think i just asked for details as a reminder about what happened, because sometimes the details get fuzzy

Interviewer: I see. Do you recall when this conversation took place? Even a ballpark figure?

Paula: like a few months ago i guess
Interviewer: Ok. What prompted this conversation?

Paula: probably the adoption mentoring class

Interviewer: Do you mean the mentoring group meetings?

Paula: yeah that

Paula: i really like the mentor meetings as well because they aid me in self reflection

---

Interviewer: Ok. With whom can you talk about your adoption most openly and honestly?

Jonathan: Probably the mentoring class.

Interviewer: What are the things you talk about?

Jonathan: I think most often we talk about how similar yet unique all of our stories are. That there is some type of connection even though we are all extremely different.

Interviewer: Why do you think the mentoring class is the place you feel most comfortable speaking about your adoption?

Jonathan: It seems like we quickly formed this bond and understanding because we've all been through it. They understand the things that I say and I understand the things they say. I think that for the majority of the time when one person says something about adoption or their story specifically at least one other group member agrees or has been in the same situation. [1]

It is understood that the relationship between "core and context" is transactional

in influence; the relationship is bidirectional, and individuals have the ability to impact

the environment around them just as strongly as the context impacts each person

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[1] Participants' quotes are included throughout this manuscript in their original form, as typed by the participants into the chat program. They are included unedited to capture a richness in their responses and presentation.

(Bandura, 1978; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). This idea is similar to Bandura's concept of "reciprocal determinism," in which he posited the mutually influential relationships among people, contexts, and behaviors. One potential impact of participation could be a change in how the mentors think about their adoption; that view is certainly supported here through the presentation of progressive changes in thought and the emergence of thematic areas of growth over time. Yet, as participants' views and thoughts about adoption change over time, they may engage their adoptive parents, peers, and the world around them in conversation and action differently than they had previously. This may in turn form a positive feedback loop in which a participant's new way of interacting with the world around them causes them to have new and different experiences related to adoption in addition to their participation in AMP. This consideration should be taken into account when considering the following presentation of the experiences of Paula, Jonathan, Fernanda, and Claudia.

Aim Ia: Mapping Experiences and Expanding Theory

Research Dimension A: Conceptualizations of Identity in Adopted Persons

Initial Definition and Conceptualization

Eriksonian themes (Erikson, 1980), concepts of multidimensional identity formation (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) and meaning making (Grotevant, 1997; McAdams, 1988), inform a view of identity captured in the Initial Template. Incorporating these three theoretical perspectives allows for the conceptualization of identity as the mental product held by an individual about who they are as a person, emergent from the intersection of intrapsychic and social forces. Template nodes – as are

the dimensions of a person's identity – are woven together to form a single narrative of one's life. Figure 4 depicts the initial template for themes associated with identity in adopted persons:
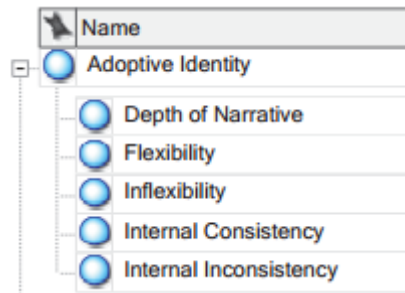
Figure 4. Themes of adoptive identity on the Initial Template.

Initial Themes Supported as Aspects of the Lived Experience of Adoption

Following coding analysis of the data, the themes included on the Initial Template informed by current adoption theory were indeed reflected in participants' interviews across all three waves of template revision. Presented below are examples of participants' statements used to draw this conclusion. The robustness of continued coding across the themes of: depth of exploration of identity, captured in a narrative; flexibility / inflexibility; and internal consistency / inconsistency suggest that these conceptualizations stand as strong and convincing elements of the adoption identity narrative.

At the time of the first interview, at the beginning of the 2010 academic year, participants had been a part of AMP for a short time, and some of them had not yet been matched with a child mentee. Participants had attended a handful of mentor group meetings and were beginning to increase their exposure to readings, ideas, and theories of

adoption. Using the Initial Template, examples of participants' statements coded in this

first wave of analysis do indeed reflect themes of depth, flexibility, and consistency, but

must be considered in relation to these early experiences in AMP.

Depth exploration of a narrative was defined in the Initial Template Codebook

(see Appendix B) as the "degree to which participants reflect on the meaning of adoption

or of being adopted, or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or

decision-making about what it means to be adopted." The following statements were

assessed by the coding team to reflect an element of seeking to make sense or meaning of

the impact their adoptive status has on their ability to attach and connect in interpersonal

relationships in general:

> *Paula: yes. I think I have abandonment issues and trust issues*
> *I'm not saying that only adopted people have those issues but it seems that*
> *the abandonment issues could be common in adopted people*

as impacting their consideration of connection to adoptive parents:

> *Jonathan: I still feel related to my adoptive parents 100% but just that my*
> *Korean last name is the same as my birth mother's makes me feel a little*
> *more connected to her. It's a really common name but it's just something*
> *we have in common besides DNA*

and acknowledging aspects of their personal history that are challenging to consider:

> *Fernanda: I guess what I really want to know is whether or not I look like*
> *her and if I'm like her personality wise too. I see all my friends say to each*
> *other oh you look just like your mom/dad or you have your mom's eye and*
> *dad's nose. I can't do that though because I look nothing like my parents,*
> *but I've always wondered if I look my birth parents.*

These elements reflect insight, careful consideration, and a desire to reach a stable

understanding of a complex aspect of self.

Additionally, participants' statements were found to reflect themes of Flexibility included on the Initial Template, and defined as participants' abilities to take the perspectives of others. The following statements are just one example of this concept of perspective taking, and depict a person who is attuned to the views of others that may differ from her own.

> *Claudia: I think [the topic of my birth mother is] a touchy subject because it sucks that my mom had to make that sacrifice in her life, I could not imagine such a thing as giving up a child, but she did it for the right reasons which makes her strong.*

> *Claudia: [conversations with my mom about adoption are] comfortable but still I have to keep in mind even though its comfortable [for me,] my mom does have feelings regardless if she shows them or not you know.*

The second interview (T2) took place at the end of that same academic year, and by then, participants had significantly more experience mentoring, and had attended regular, bi-weekly mentor group meetings. Their socio-contextual changes around the theme of adoption had remained a constant presence in their lives over the course of the academic year. The second interview was coded using the W1 Template, and participants' responses continued to reflect the original theories and conceptualizations supported in the Initial Template. Flexibility, or the ability for social perspective taking, was again reflected by Jonathan and Fernanda, below, who both address an acknowledgement of difference between their views and the views of their adoptive parents around the issues of race and the strength of bonds formed through adoption:

Interviewer: Do you have a desire to talk about issues surrounding race and ethnicity with your parents / family more than you currently do?

Jonathan: I don't really think so. I think mostly because we may view things different because we're from different racial and ethnic groups

Interviewer: Do you have an idea of where your views would differ from those of your parents?

Jonathan: Probably in the areas where minorities are still fighting for equality. While I know they feel that everyone should be equal, it's a little more important to me

---

Interviewer: Do you think she fully understands how these challenges that you face affect you?

Fernanda: No, sometimes when she says [that she does understand,] it seems like she's just trying to move on as quickly as possible from the comment.

Interviewer: What do you think about that?

Fernanda: I think shes just trying to avoid feeling awkward. I sometimes think it makes her feel insecure.

...

Fernanda: [My adoptive mother] can sometimes doubt how me and my brother feel about her. Even though we know shes our mother.

Interviewer: Do you mean she doubts the strength of the family bonds?

Fernanda: Yes

These views also reflect a complexity in consideration; Jonathan and Fernanda do not merely acknowledge difference, but offer interpretations and insights as to why they believe these differences exist.

By the time of the fourth interview, T3, (recall that participants' third interviews in the two year data collection protocol were not included in this study), participants had

been in AMP for two full and consecutive academic years. This interview was coded

using the W2 Template and participants' statements continued to reflect the original

constructs of: Depth, Flexibility, and Consistency. This statement by Paula captures the

theme of depth of exploration of a narrative:

> *Paula: in relationships i feel that i am more clingy and get attached more*
> *easily than a non-adopted person would i also feel that identity formation*
> *is harder for me than a non-adopted person*
> *and because of that i had a lower self esteem*

In Paula's statement above, note that she is again speaking to her own interpersonal

relational processes as she did in an excerpt presented previously from the first, T1

interview. Here, Paula describes her relational style in terms of "clinginess" and

attachment, noting that these processes may be different for her due to her adoptive

status. Here, she also states her belief that forming an identity is a more challenging

process for her as an adopted person, and draws connections between her adoption,

identity, and her self-esteem.

Emergent Themes Identify Areas for Potential Conceptual Expansion over Time

A significant area of thematic expansion not included in the initial template was

the concept of *acknowledgment of salience and perceived difference as related to one's*

adoptive status. Claudia's comments in the final T3 interview reflected her views on

impact of adoptive status on a more global sense of self, particularly around the

intersection of adoption, and concepts of race and ethnicity:

> *Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or*
> *challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't*
> *experience?*

Claudia: just finding your place in the world. It's hard to figure out your place in the world when you factor in adoption and then on top of that for me in particular being adopted in a multi-cultural family, it gets complex

Claudia: Another thing is finding people who are accepting of it who you want to surround yourself as in friends, relationships, etc. I have learned that there are a lot of narrow minded people who are not open to people who are different, and adoption is something that will make you stand out easily. (W3)

This theme of acknowledgement of difference is not new in the field of adoption (Kirk, 1964), and these findings support one of the earliest conceptualizations about the impact of adoption on the lived experience of adoption. Despite Kirk's early work, these views may not have been carried along with the tide of other adoption research focused on biological and behavioral outcomes that grew in prominence. The template was expanded to accommodate these emergent themes to produce the final template for themes of adoptive identity (see Figure 5).

Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't experience?

Paula: yes, lack of medical history. sometimes lack of culture and language is hard for me. if i hadnt been adopted id probably know spanish and feel a little more like i fit in a certain category instead of feeling like i dont fit

Interviewer: What do you mean by "instead of feeling like I don't fit"?
Paula: like how i was raised by white parents but im not white. its hard to fit me in a certain category

- Adoptive Identity - Making Meaning
  - Depth of narrative
    - Richness of narrative
    - Lack of richness of narrative
    - Intrapsychic processes of depth
    - Lack of intrapsychic processes of depth
  - Flexibility
  - Inflexibility
  - Internal consistency
  - Internal inconsistency
  - Preoccupation
  - Intrapersonal communication
  - Acknowledging salience
    - Salience of adoption
    - Salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin
    - Ranking Question
  - Minimizing or rejecting salience
    - Minimizing or rejecting salience of adoption
    - Minimizing or rejecting salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin
  - Acknowledging difference
    - Acknowledging difference as related to adoptive status
    - Acknowledging difference as related to ethnicity or culture of origin
      - Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents
      - Acknowledging ethnic difference from multicultural or multiracial parents
      - Acknowledging racial difference from adoptive parents
      - Since I was raised by white parents...
  - Minimizing or rejecting difference
    - Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to adoptive status
    - Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to race, ethnicity, or culture of origin
  - Acknowledging change in self over time
    - Awareness of change in self as related to adoption
    - Awareness of change in self as related to race or ethnicity
  - Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self over time
    - Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to adoption
    - Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to race or ethnicity
  - Valuing narrative independence and privacy
    - Valuing narrative independence
    - Valuing narrative privacy

Figure 5. Wave 3 Template – Adoptive Identity.

Yet participants also made statements that were in direct contrast to their acknowledgement of perceived difference, and at times, minimized the salience of the connections between adoption and their experience of life. Participants acknowledging both perception and rejection of difference reflect a great inconsistency and ambivalence in personal narratives around adoption. As examples, Claudia and Fernanda - who previously listed numerous difficulties that they had each attributed to their adoptive status - would later state that they did not think they experienced any challenges:

Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't experience?

Claudia: nope not at all. I only say so because I was blessed to grow up in a good family with support and opportunities

---

Following statements in which she recounted her experience of challenges such as why she doesn't speak fluent Spanish, not knowing her medical history, and having to field questions about the origins of her last name, Fernanda replies:

Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't experience?

Fernanda: No.

One final area of expansion to be noted here is the inclusion of two themes, *valuing narrative independence,* and *valuing narrative privacy.* Significant literature has been reviewed in this manuscript on the influence of the social context on the formation of identity in adopted persons (French, 2013; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Wegar, 2000); we see here two themes that reflect participant desires to be relieved of

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this influence over how they should think about their adoption. These phenomena are

captured sporadically, but are best captured in two statements, all voiced by Jonathan,

here in the first, T1 interview:

> *Interviewer: Do you think your adoptive parents currently know something about your adoption that they did not share with you?*
>
> *Jonathan: Umm I think that at this point in my life they have no reason to hide anything from me. I doubt they wouldn't tell me everything they know*
>
> *Interviewer: Right. Do you currently know something about your adoption or birth family that you have not shared with your adoptive parents?*
>
> *Jonathan: Yeah that I called my adoption agency last semester*
>
> *Interviewer: Ah. What did you find out from the adoption agency?*
>
> *Jonathan: Nothing too much. Just that my information is there and I have to order it if I want to*
>
> *Interviewer: I see. Do you plan on telling your parents that you called?*
>
> *Jonathan: Umm, maybe eventually*
>
> *Interviewer: Why do you think you aren't ready to share this information with them?*
>
> *Jonathan: Just because I know the process of going back to Korea isn't something you can do overnight and with school and study abroad, I doubt I will be able to go back anytime too soon. I guess I feel that there isn't a point to open something up that there's no point to.*
>
> *Interviewer: Is there someone else who you think you might tell before them?*
>
> *Jonathan: Well besides you haha, I don't really know who I can tell at the moment. I'd have to think about it I guess.*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you think you will do with this information then?*
>
> *Jonathan: Probably just keep it to myself*

Interviewer: Are you currently seeking more information about your adoption, other than having called the agency?

Jonathan: I haven't gone any further but I hope to eventually

Interviewer: What would you like to know?

Jonathan: Just where my birth parents are and if it's possible to even find them

Interviewer: What information do you know about your birth parents?

Jonathan: I don't know anything but their names. It was actually whited out on the papers but if you hold it up to the light you can still see the names. Oh, thats another thing I didn't tell my parents I saw

---

and in his second, T2 interview:

Interviewer: Can you please describe your most recent adoption related conversation with your parents.

Jonathan: I haven't really had any recent conversations about adoption with them

Interviewer: Ok. Then can you describe the last conversation you can remember having with your parents around adoption?

Jonathan: I think the last thing I remember is me just stating that I would like to go back to Korea at one point in the near future and the topic of my finding my birth parents came up very briefly.

Interviewer: Ah, do you recall roughly when this conversation took place?

Jonathan: Probably at the beginning of this year

Interviewer: Do you remember what prompted this conversation?

Jonathan: I think I randomly brought traveling to Korea up one day

Interviewer: I see. How comfortable were you during this particular conversation involving your desire to visit Korea and finding your birth parents?

> *Jonathan: It was a little awkward because my Dad told me he would like to come but I feel like it's something I should do on my own and I wasn't sure how to actually say that*
>
> *Interviewer: Why do you think he wanted to come with you?*
>
> *Jonathan: I just think he'd like to experience going back with me*
>
> *Interviewer: I see. Can you say a little more about the feeling you had that the trip is something you should do on your own?*
>
> *Jonathan: It just seems like something that I would like to experience by myself. It's obviously something really life changing and something that can only happen once so I think it should just be me and my birth parents.*
>
> *Interviewer: Have you thought about why it should just be you and your birth parents?*
>
> *Jonathan: I don't know the word I'm looking for but I feel that it would be more intimate or personal if it was just me and them*
>
> *Interviewer: You also mentioned that you were finding it difficult to express your feelings to your parents that you would prefer to take the trip alone. Can you talk more about why you found it difficult?*
>
> *Jonathan: I just don't want my parents to feel bad that I don't want them there with me at the time*

These statements reflect Jonathan's acknowledgment of the potential influence of his adoptive parents' views on his experience of various phenomena related to his adoption story, and his efforts to keep information to himself to afford him the space to process them independently. While these experiences reflect one participant in this study, the larger concepts may provide a new area for exploration in future research efforts.

Taken together, developments across the themes of Adoptive Identity offer support for existing theory through the corroboration of Depth of Exploration of a Narrative, Flexibility, and Inflexibility across the interviews. The template was expanded

to accommodate emergent themes of participants' considerations of the intersection between adoptive status and other aspects of self. In the cases of these transracially adopted participants, the connections between adoption and challenges related to race and ethnicity were prominent. Participants appeared ambivalent and often inconsistent in their acknowledgement or rejection of the potential salience of adoption in their lives.

Research Dimension B: Thought Processes and Attitudes about one's Status as an Adopted Person

Initial Definition and Conceptualization

The initial conceptualization of the thought processes related to adoption, or *Adoption Dynamics*, draws on the understanding that cognitive processes underpin processes of identity development, (Brodzinsky, 2011), and that adopted persons come to affectively view their experiences in different ways (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994). In this conceptualization, the specific thought processes included in the Adoption Dynamics ultimately give rise to a more global sense of self, or identity as an adopted person. Ways in which the adopted person thinks about his or her adoption in terms of viewing aspects of his or her adoption as positive or negative will ultimately impact the meaning that is derived and the adoption story that is created. Initial dimensions of Adoption Dynamics included: "Positive Affect," "Negative Experience," and "Preoccupation." The latter theme of "Preoccupation" had as a subnode, "Why was I placed for adoption?" which is a common question posed across decades of prior research (see Figure 6).
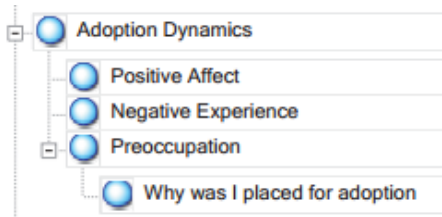
Figure 6. Themes of Adoption Dynamics on the Initial Template

Initial Themes Supported as Aspects of the Lived Experience of Adoption

Only two of the three themes included on the Initial Template, informed by current adoption theory, were reflected in participants' statements across all three waves of coding and template revision. The robustness of continued coding across the themes of *positive affect*, and *negative experience* suggest that these conceptualizations stand as strong and convincing elements of how adopted persons think of, and assess their experiences related to adoption. The construct of Preoccupation was found to be less supported as a dimension of Adoption Dynamics, and by the Wave 2 Template, had been positioned as an aspect of Adoptive Identity.

Using the Initial Template to code the first interview (T1), the three themes of positive affect, negative experience, and preoccupation were coded by the RA team. Positive affect, which reflects statements in which the adopted person subjectively values experiences, persons, or other aspects of adoption as positive, was captured in the following statements:

> *Jonathan: I've always said that it's great that I have a white family. It's almost like I get the best of both worlds. I have Italian, German, and Irish family so I can get to experience that side. And my myself being Korean I can identify with that side also. I can go eat at a Korean restaurant and fit in without looking different. I think this has made me a little more cultured and diverse, or even more aware of others backgrounds and social groups.*

Paula: I'm happy to be adopted because I have great parents and a lovable sister

---

Fernanda: One positive would be this [mentoring] program I would have to say. I get to talk about adoption with people to actually understand what I'm saying. Also I get me active in the community.

Negative experiences were also captured in the first interview:

Fernanda: It was back in May. My mom and I were at the mall getting our nails done and I went down to another story while my mom was finishing up. My mom was talking to the woman about me and tellng her I was her daughter. The woman goes to my mom "she doesn't look like you." My mom responded with something like I know she's prettier than me or something. Then when we left my mom goes to that was kind of nosy of her to say that. I just looked at my mom and go I guess. I told her that it happens to me a lot. I explained to her that people always ask me who I look at or they are surprised I have a French last name, but I don't look French. She seemed surprised by this. I told that at this point I'm used to it and while it gets annoying at times having to always explain it's just something I've gotten accustomed too.

Interviewer: We've talked about quite a few things, but I wonder if there might be something that we have skipped which you feel might be important to our understanding you and what you're all about. Is there anything you would like to add?

Fernanda: I guess just that I still struggle at time with my race at times and figuring out what it really means to me.

Interviewer: What were some of the comments or actions that you experienced personally?

Jonathan: It's hard to remember. Just that I don't [look] like my parents, or I'm not related to my parents.

Subthemes within the initial code of Negative Experiences began to emerge after the first

wave of coding, as the majority of participant experiences coded as negative reflected

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challenges in having the "legitimacy of family bonds questioned," and "having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents" (see Figure 7).

Preoccupation not supported as a Dimension of Adoption Dynamics

The coding of statements as reflective of Preoccupation resulted in the significant expansion of this theme. Preoccupation was being coded in such a way that different experiences and events that the participants were seen to be preoccupied about were being created as independent subthemes under Preoccupation by the time of the W1 Template revision (see Figure 7).

- Adoption Dynamics
  - Positive affect
  - Negative experience
    - Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned
    - Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents
  - Preoccupation
    - Why was I placed for adoption
    - Engaged in exploration based on preoccupation
    - Not engaged in exploration as a result of preoccupation
    - Whether I look like birth parents
    - Desire to meet birth mother
    - Desire to meet birth father
    - Desire to meet birth siblings
    - Birth family medical history
    - If hadn't been adopted...

Figure 7. Themes of Adoption Dynamics on W1 Template.

Following the Wave 1 template revision, significant conceptual changes in the theoretical basis of Adoption Dynamics emerged. In coding data, all three themes (Positive Affect, Negative Experience, and Preoccupation) were initially supported. Yet

as different participants came to view the same general experience differently, coding became cluttered and redundant. Further, the same participant could view the same event as differentially positive or negative, based on some changed internal valuation of the event either across time or context. Consider for example, the experience of considering reaching out in a birth parent search; one participant may view this as a positive, essential part of a process of identity, whereas another participant may view birth parent contact as a threat to his or her relationship with the adoptive parents. Yet given the coding scheme for the Initial Template and Wave 1, it would be necessary for the same event – consideration of birth parent contact – to be coded under both Positive Affect and Negative Experience.

Moreover, the concepts of "affect" and "experience" complicated and confused the coders in their application of the codes. The initial conceptualization of *Adoption Dynamics* was to reflect "thought processes and attitudes," and not a lengthy and redundant list of all positive or negative experiences. Combine this with the complexities of a theme such as "Preoccupation" which could contain both positive (e.g., being excited and thinking a great deal about a pending letter from birth parents) or negative (e.g., being anxious and thinking a great deal about a pending letter from birth parents) dimensions.

Increased nuance and complexity of participants' experiences between interview T2 and T3, as predicted, was captured in increasing template complexity. Yet as the goal of this research is to distill both a more complex, and a more coherent understanding of the lived experience of adoption, data suggest a new conceptualization of the lived experience of adoption. While a more significant theoretical model will be presented in

Section 2 of this chapter, the implications for the conceptualization of Adoption

Dynamics will be discussed here.

Emergent Themes Identify Areas for Potential Conceptual Expansion

In working to both streamline the template as well as the conceptualization of

Adoption Dynamics, the theory was revised to reflect a set of purely evaluative

statements; the subjective valuations applied to different events by adopted persons.

Preoccupation was removed, and replaced with *Ambivalent*, while *Positive Affect* and

Negative Experience were reconceptualized as *Viewed as positive*, and *Viewed as*

negative respectively (see Figure 8).
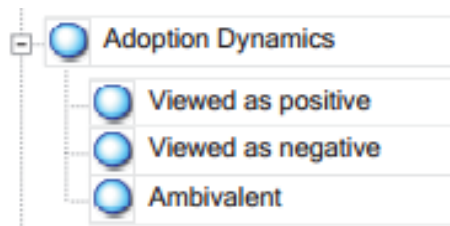
Figure 8. Template at Waves 2 and 3 reflecting new
conceptualization of Adoption Dynamics.

This change is impactful in many ways. Adoption Dynamics had been initially

operationalized as the thoughts and attitudes, and this new format, informed by data and

proposed here, is seen to more accurately capture the *thoughts and attitudes* about

experiences of adoption. These evaluative assessments are designed to be applied to

other more objectively identified events. *These thematic changes informed by*

participants' data effectively support the development of the theme of the "Lived

Experiences of Adoption" as a set of objective occurrences upon which layers of subjective valuation are added by participants.

The themes of *viewed as positive* or *negative* did not change as much in conceptualization; adopted persons may come to evaluate different experiences as positive or negative. Yet this refined conceptualization of the themes was not cluttered by myriad events being seen as either positive or negative. Moreover, this adaptation allowed the same single event experienced by a participant to be coded simultaneously as both positive and negative. Participants may identify specific aspects of an experience as positive or negative, reflecting perspective taking, and an increased capacity for analytic and complex assessment of experiences.

The addition of the *Ambivalence* code allowed for the identification of instances in which the participant may be less certain in discerning positive or negative aspects, but rather, demonstrate "a sense of general uncertainty on the part of the adopted person about how he or she feels about any aspect of the lived experience of adoption" (W3 Codebook, see Appendix J). The following excerpt was seen to capture the theme of Ambivalence well:

> *Interviewer: Please describe your most recent adoption related conversation with your parents.*
>
> *Jonathan: Uhh, hah it rarely ever comes up so this is pretty random but apparently there was some Korean guy on American Idol recently and my grandpa told my mom that he reminded him of me. She thought it was funny because he didn't look anything like me but when she told me it kind of produced a conversation about me not looking like anyone in the family/the misconception that all Asians look alike.*
>
> *Interviewer: What did you guys talk about in regards to your not looking physically similar to your family members?*

Jonathan: It was pretty brief but she just said stated that she knows I don't look like anyone in the family/that I'm Asian but that doesn't mean I look like all other Asians. I just laughed and then told her that people always think that/are confused when they see my last name and things like that. She just laughed and thought it was crazy
Interviewer: Had you had conversations with her in the past about physical differences between you and your family?

Jonathan: Not really about appearances but I remember once at a family gathering someone had said something about genes and I said that I was happy that I wouldn't inherit that cause I'm not blood related and I remember someone saying that in their eyes I was just as blood related as anyone else.

Interviewer: What do you think of their comment?

Jonathan: I mean, it's really nice and reassuring that I'm viewed as just as related as anyone else. I obviously also agree that I'm 100% part of the family but when it comes down to it I'm not really biologically related

---

This excerpt reflects a sense of uncertainty on the part of the participant about how they are choosing to view this experience. There is mention of laughter, but also the identification of challenging topics around belonging, biological versus social connections to family, and the beliefs about race and ethnicity held by Jonathan's white adoptive parents and extended family.

Changes informed by participants' data have resulted in a new conceptualization of Adoption Dynamics presented here. This new approach unifies the subthemes that comprise Adoption Dynamics in a way that reflects their shared contribution to a person's subjective valuation of events. Conceptualized in this way, Adoption Dynamics emerges as a powerful tool in the identification of complex experiences and equally nuanced meaning that adopted persons' extract from them.

Research Dimension C: Communication and Openness within and between Birth and Adoptive Families about Adoption

Initial Definition and Conceptualization

Theory on communication openness that identifies *Intrapersonal*, *Intrafamilial*, and *Interfamilial* (Brodzinsky, 2011) guided the development of Initial Template themes (see Figure 9). The noted addition of the dimension of *Extrafamilial* communication in this study is to acknowledge the profound influence of messages originating from the social context outside the family systems (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). Despite the inclusion of communication as an individual element of the adoptive experience, themes, patterns, challenges, and nuance of communication between the adopted person and his or her social context are woven throughout the entire dataset; the act of sharing verbal and non-verbal information with others is seen as a key component of the lived experiences of adoption.

Initial Themes Supported as Aspects of the Lived Experience of Adoption Over Time

The vast majority of subthemes included on the Initial Template reflecting aspects of communication were found in participants' transcripts across all three waves of coding analysis. The continued identification of these themes suggests that aspects of communication are strong components in the conceptualization of the adoptive experience adoption. Core themes included on the Initial Template captured participants' feelings of being understood, comforted, and perceptions of whether communication with

various family members was subjectively easy. These themes reflect the adopted

person's subjective experience of communication, rather than focusing on other details

about the communication patterns themselves (e.g., frequency, who initiates). The T1

interview was coded using the Initial Template, and the following statements were coded
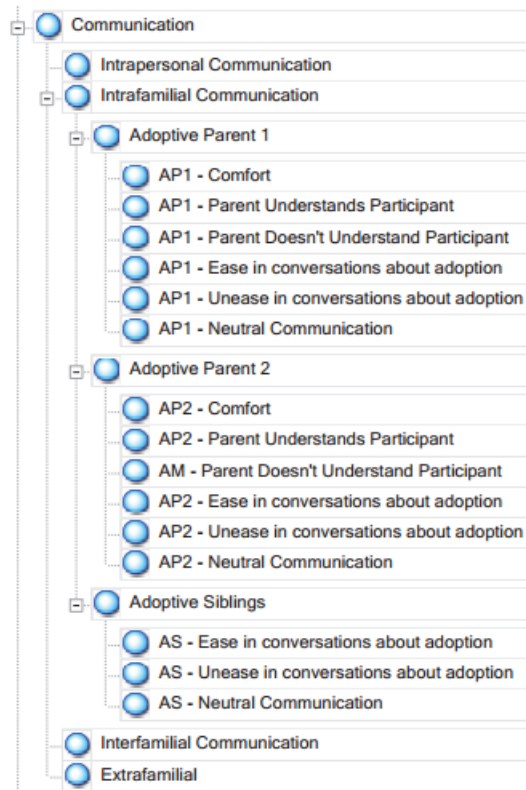
Figure 9. Themes of communication on the Initial Template.

to reflect participants' beliefs that their adoptive parent had a true understanding of the

subjective experience of the participant:

Parent understands participant:

> *Paula: yes, my mom brought up the abandonment issues recently when I was having a hard time with my boyfriend. Plus my mom knows me so well that it's probably hard for her not to notice challenges that I face. She knows when I'm upset*

Interviewer: Can you share a conversation that you've had with your family that was related to race / ethnicity that you found helpful?

Fernanda: The only conversations I could think of was my parents asking me if I want to embrace my culture more, and if I did they would find ways for me to do so. I think that was helpful for me because it made me feel comfortable in bring it up to them, but also knowing that it was okay with them for me to be different and embrace who I ethnically am.

Claudia: Although my mom and I have had a cnoversation where she did mention "Claudia you might later down the road in your life expeirence discrimination in your life because you are of hispanic descent, just because your skin color is darker than mine. I can only prepare you for the world as much as I can, I will not know how that feels but it can happen because of the work world we live in today."

Also found within the T1 interview were statements in which the participants speak to

their subjective experience of *ease in conversations about adoption*, or the feeling that

conversations with adoptive parents are comfortable and pleasant:

Interviewer: Right. Please describe your most recent adoption related conversation with your parents.

Jonathan: The last one I remember is asking the correct spelling of my Korean name. My mom gave my my folder with all my information and let me look through it. It wasnt a really big conversation. Sometimes my dad asks me if I would like to go back to Korea whenever it comes up but theyre usually short conversations

Interviewer: What prompted this conversation in which you wanted to know the correct spelling of your Korean name?

Jonathan: Haha I'm thinking of getting a tattoo of my name in the Korean symbols but I just wanted to see the actual spelling too

Interviewer: Most excellent. Why the Korean symbols?

Jonathan: Just because I think its more authentic and genuine. Also, Its something that everyone wouldnt know (unless they speak and read korean)

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> *Interviewer: How comfortable were you during this particular conversation with your parents?*
>
> *Jonathan: I was extremely comfortable. I was more worried about telling them I wanted a tattoo*

> *Fernanda: My mom always reminds me that it's still okay to ask questions. Even every now and then she will randomly ask me if I ever think about trying to find my birth mother, and that she will help find her if that's what I want to do.*

Additionally, participants were found to experience the opposite feeling in conversations with adoptive parents about adoption, in the *unease in conversations about adoption* theme*:*

> *Interviewer: With whom can you talk about your adoption most openly and honestly?*
>
> *Claudia: no one really, I mean I do talk to my mom about it but I dont like to because I feel it hurts her sometimes. I have talked to my best friends about it but not in depth because they will never understand.*

Here, Claudia was perceived by coders to explicitly reflect themes of uneasiness by stating that she doesn't enjoy speaking to her adoptive mother about adoption because of the perceived impact the topic has on her mother. Moreover, in providing another example, Claudia indicates that she doesn't speak to even her best friends in a manner that is fully in-depth or open because Claudia feels that her friends will "never understand" her own experiences.

Across the three waves of coding, the themes of the initial template held fast and were continually represented in successive waves. Despite Claudia's example above,

statements coded on the T1 interview reflected largely positive experiences and comfort

(even by Claudia herself):

> *Interviewer: And how comfortable were you during this particular conversation [about adoption issues]?*
>
> *Claudia: i was completely comfortable, always have been when it comes to talking about stuff with my parents because of the relationship we have*
> *Interviewer: How comfortable were you after this particular conversation?*
>
> *Claudia: The same as I was when coming into it*
>
> *Interviewer: Got it. How comfortable are your parents in conversations about adoption?*
>
> *Claudia: completely comfortable like I am, they never have a problem talking about it.*

> *Interviewer: How comfortable were you during this particular conversation [about adoption]?*
>
> *Paula: very comfortable. talking about adoption with my family is never uncomfortable*

> *Interviewer: I see. How comfortable are you in these conversations [about adoption] in general (meaning, not just this time)?*
>
> *Fernanda: When I have them with my parents or my brother I'm very comfortable.*

Everyone is comfortable, it seems. Yet, as participants increased their exposure to new

and different perspectives on adoption, their statements about communication with

adoptive parents began to reflect increasing complexity, perspective taking, and nuance

over the next two coding cycles:

Unease in conversations about adoption:

Interviewer: Some young adults feel comfortable with their status as an adopted person and comfortable with their understanding of the influence it plays in their life and their own identity; on the other hand, some feel unsettled about various aspects of being adopted, and are less sure of the influence their adoption has on their life and who they are.

Based on this statement, on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being very unsettled or uncertain, and 10 being very comfortable, and having a solid understanding of the influence of your adoption, what number would best represent you and your current level of understanding of your adoption?

Jonathan: probably an 8

Interviewer: Can you put that 8 into words? Are there some areas in which you are more comfortable as an adopted person, and others in which you are less comfortable?

Jonathan: I think that I am extremely comfortable with my adoption. I can openly talk about it and I accept and even like that I was adopted. The only reasons I didn't say 10 are because I'm not 100% comfortable talking about it with my parents and I am still learning/exploring further

---

Interviewer: How comfortable are these conversations?

Fernanda: They are usually very comfortable.

Interviewer: Have there ever been any that weren't?

Fernanda: Hmm not really. Sometimes when we talk about my birth mother

Interviewer: Ah, and how might you think those are more uncomfortable than other conversations about adoption?

Fernanda: I guess I don't want to hurt my moms feelings. I know how she can get, and she tends to need a lot of reassurance about things, so I don't want her to question how I feel about her as my mother.

Interviewer: Would you say that you personally experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted Mexican-American, that another Mexican-American living in America might not experience?

Fernanda: I guess just looking different from my family and not speaking spanish.

Interviewer: Do you think your mom is aware of these challenges regarding language and physical features that you face?
Fernanda: I would shes more aware of the physicals features more than the language.

Interviewer: Ah. What is her response?

Fernanda: Usually she just say I'm more beautiful than her.

Interviewer: Ah, and how does that comment strike you? There can be a big difference between awareness of challenges, and actually understanding what these challenges may mean for you. Do you think she fully understands how these challenges that you face affect you?

Fernanda: No, sometimes when she says it, it seems like she's just trying to move on as quickly as possible from the comment.

Interviewer: What do you think about that?

Fernanda: I think shes just trying to avoid feeling awkward. I sometimes think it makes her feel insecure.
Interviewer: While you may understand her response, do you feel like you'd benefit from additional conversation with her around those issues?

Fernanda: Yes. I think it would help her understand more about what I go through, and help her feel more secure about our bond.

Interviewer: Do you ever see yourself initiating a conversation like that in the future?

Fernanda: Ya, I do.

Parent doesn't understand participant:

Interviewer: Ok. Do you think your parents are aware of these challenges [around adoption] that you face?

Paula: yes aware, but they dont understand

Interviewer: And the reasons for that?

Paula: they havent experienced it

Interviewer: I see. What roadblocks can you think of that have prevented you from sharing your thoughts on these adoption related issues with your parents thus far?

Jonathan: I would say that it's probably because I don't see what sharing these thoughts would actually do. I can tell them things about challenges related to adoption but from there, there is no where to go since they wont truly understand.

Interviewer: Why do you believe they don't or won't be able to have a true understanding of how these challenges are affecting you?

Jonathan: Mostly because it's something that they've never personally had to deal with (at least from this side of it all).

Claudia: I mean of course my mom does not physically understand because she is not in my shoes as an adopted young adult, but my mom understands and is aware because we talk about and she tries to as much as she can which is all I can ask for.

Participants' statements reflected a keen perception of what they believed their adoptive parents' experience of communication around adoption was. Engaging in this perspective taking using both verbal and non-verbal communication, participants formed beliefs about their adoptive parents' attitudes toward adoption. These emergent themes in data informed significant conceptual changes evident in the W1, W2, and W3 template revisions. As participants engaged in AMP, they were regularly exposed to new ideas, theory, research, and perspectives about adoption. Already, participants identified the mentoring program as a positive aspect of their socio-cultural world of adoption, such as in Fernanda's statement above, but included here for emphasis: *"One positive would be*

this [mentoring] program I would have to say. I get to talk about adoption with people to

actually understand what I'm saying."

Emergent Themes Identify Areas for Potential Conceptual Expansion

Recall that communication themes on the initial template were seen to reflect the

impact of communication on the participant, (i.e., whether the participant felt comforted)

rather than more objective qualities of the communication itself (i.e., frequency of

communication). This focus highlighted key interpersonal dynamics in the adoptive

parent – participant relationship. Yet, it was also seen as important to gain a sense of

more objective elements of communication such as frequency, who initiated

communication, and also, the degree of openness or secrecy that characterized the

communication that took place. In accommodating the increased complexity of the data

around themes of communication, the act of communication itself became conceptualized

as an important, yet, incorporated dimension of the larger theme of Relational Dynamics

(see Figure 10).

Themes of communication are intimately linked to the quality and nature of the

relationships in question; how two people relate is informed by the communicative

patterns that exist; however, communication alone does not account for the sense of

connection that an adopted person has toward his or her adoptive parents. There exist

many more dimensions to a relationship formed through adoption, such as in a

participant's sense of the *strength of bond* they have with either adoptive parent. This

subtheme was added to reflect multiple dimensions of the parent - child relationship.

- Lived Experiences of Adoption
  - Relational dynamics
    - Adoptive family
      - AP1 - Participant Relationship
        - AP1 - Communication
          - AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
          - AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
          - AP1 - Initiation of communication about adoption
            - AP1 - Participant initiates communication
            - AP1 - AP1 initiates communication
        - AP1 - Participant's experience in relationship
          - AP1 - Strength of bond
          - AP1 - Weakness of bond
          - AP1 - Comfort
          - AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
          - AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
          - AP1 - Openness in communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Lack of openness in communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Parent understands participant
          - AP1 - Parent doesn't understand participant
          - AP1 - Participant desire for more communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Participant desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
          - AP1 - Participant does not express a desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
        - AP1 - Participant's perception of AP1 experience
          - AP1 - Intrapsychics
            - AP1 - Depth of narrative
            - AP1 - Flexibility
            - AP1 - Inflexibility
            - AP1 - Internal consistency
            - AP1 - Internal inconsistency
          - AP1 - Strength of bond (parent to child)
          - AP1 - Questioning strength of bond
          - AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
          - AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
          - AP1 - Demonstrates openness in communication
          - AP1 - Does not demonstrate openness in communication
          - AP1 - Desire for more communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Aware of challenges faced by participant
          - AP1 - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
          - AP1 - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
          - AP1 - Makes effort to understand
          - AP1 - Aware conversations are important; engages genuinely
          - AP1 - Aware conversations are important; engages as if forced or burdened
          - AP1 - Avoidance of topics of conversation
            - Birth parents
            - Race or ethnicity

Figure 10. Excerpt from Wave 3 – Relational Dynamics.

This subtheme is included first on the W1 Template and then on the successive template revisions. This theme of *strength of bond* is included in both relational directions, capturing the participants' sense of the connection to adoptive parents, and the participants' sense of the adoptive parents' connection to them.

As participants' statements came to reflect more and more their perception of the adoptive parent experience, it is clear that participants are assuming and predicting adoptive parents' attitudes from the verbal and non-verbal messages received from their parents. It is clear that categories classified as the participant's perception of adoptive parent experience, are just that - the views of the participants. (In this study, no data were collected from the adoptive parents themselves to corroborate these views, though it is understood that gathering data from multiple sources is very important in clarification of attitudes about transracial adoption within families (Dolan, 2013)).

Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study - to explicate the lived experiences of the adopted participants – it is appropriate to take the subjective view of participants as they create their own realities based on their interpretations of events and subsequent narratives. This identification of the Relational Dynamics of the parent - participant relationship is a significant development in the conceptualization of communication. While routine verbal and non-verbal communication are the methods by which messages are transmitted, the interpretive meaning that is made by the adopted person is what contributes to a sense of self and identity within the context of an adoptive family.

Research Dimension D: Adoptive Status and the Formation of Racial and Ethnic

Identities in Transracially Adopted Persons

<u>Initial Definition and Conceptualization</u>

The intersection of adoption, race, and ethnicity is highly influenced by the composition of the social context in which the adopted person lives. For transracially adopted individuals in particular, challenges of race and ethnicity can be central to other critical aspects of the lived experience of adoption such as feelings of connection to white adoptive parents, and feelings of belonging to cultural and racial groups of origin. Influenced by a desire to "belong" with their white adoptive family, many transracially adopted persons who do not have regular and ongoing exposure to their culture and racial groups of origin will begin to view themselves as racially white (Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009). This phenomenon reflects the power of the desire to connect. Initial themes included on the first iteration of the template (see Figure 11) reflected degrees to which adopted persons sought to identify with the ethnic background of their adoptive parents or birth parents, and to identify instances of exploration around ethnicity.
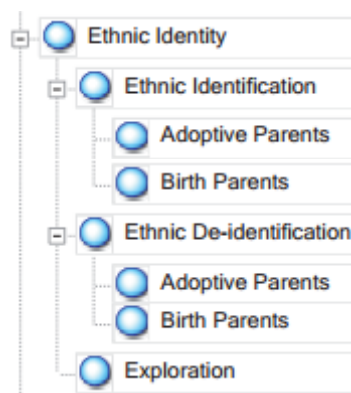

Figure 11. Themes of ethnicity on the Initial Template.

Initial Themes Supported as Aspects of the Lived Experience of Adoption

Participants' statements in the T1 interview revealed complex processes of identification, de-identification, and ambiguity around the intersection of race, ethnicity, and the adoption narrative. Paula's response captures many of the challenges voiced by the participants:

> *Paula: I identify as being born in Peru, but I'm an American. It's where I've lived for almost my entire life. But I was born in Peru and that is important to me. I guess I'm peruvian but I dont say it like that, I say "born in Peru"*
>
> *Interviewer: I wonder.... why do you think you are more comfortable making that distinction between "being Peruvian" and "being born in Peru"?*
>
> *Paula: probably because when I think of peruvians, I think of people who live in Peru.*
>
> *thats not me*
>
> *I don't even speak spanish fluently and I I've only been back once.*
>
> *also, maybe I'm trying to fit in better with people around me*
>
> *Interviewer: I see. Do you think about the concepts of "race" and "ethnicity" and "culture" often?*
>
> *Paula: i try not to*
>
> *i like being Paula*
>
> *i dont like being labeled by my skin color and where I was born*
>
> *Interviewer: Do you see the concepts of race and ethnicity as intimately connected to your adoption story?*
>
> *Paula: im not sure*
>
> *when i think of my adoption story, i think of the actual story. yah my mom went to peru to get me but i dont think of race as part of the story*
>
> *it's just "my mom went to get me and brought me home" and that's it*

These initial themes maintained strong support over the course of the three waves of interview analysis, and continued to show patterns of identification, de-identification, and ambivalence:

> *Fernanda: I would say [I identify most as] a mix between my [adoptive] parent's cultures and the dominant culture in the United States*
>
> *Interviewer: And what would you say your [adoptive] parents' cultures were?*
>
> *Fernanda: Italian and French*

> *Jonathan: I definitely identify with American culture because that's how I was brought up. But more and more I'm interested in Korean culture*

Emergent Themes Identify Areas for Potential Conceptual Expansion

As transcript coding progressed over time, and participants continued to have new experiences related to their new social context around adoption, participants' statements began to inform the development of new directions in thematic conceptualization. One key theme that emerged and was refined over the course of the W1 through W3 template revisions was the notion of *Belonging* (see Figure 12). Participants consistently spoke about feeling as though they were between worlds (Lee, 2003; March, 2000; Samuels, 2009); their biological connection to a culture and racial group of origin complicated by their lived social experiences embedded in the White American culture of their adoptive parents. Jonathan stated clearly:

> *It's a little frustrating. It kind of puts me in the middle and I don't know where I am.*
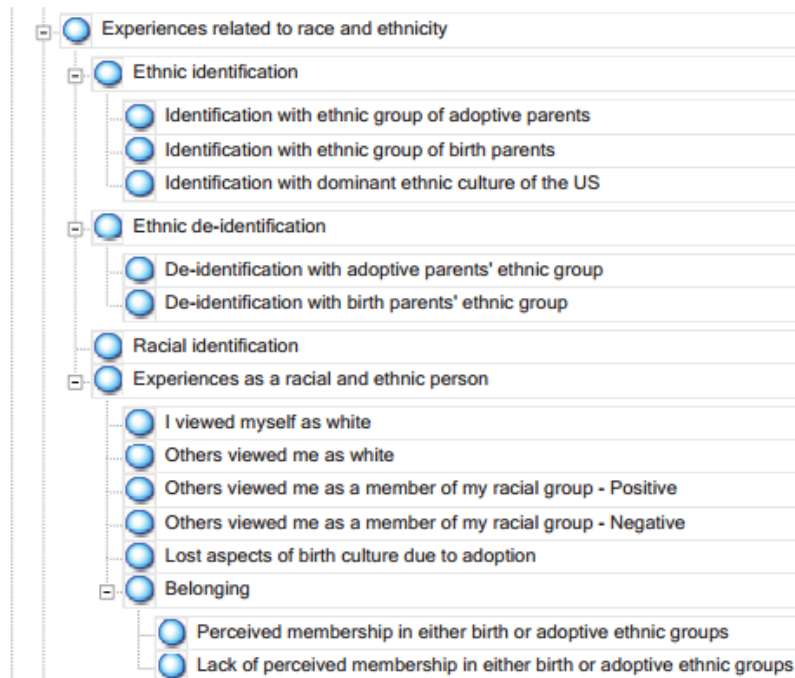
Figure 12. Themes of race and ethnicity on the W2 Template.

Many experiences recounted around the concept of *Belonging* were of instances in which

participants felt as though they didn't belong or meet the expectations of others:

> *Jonathan: Well some of the Koreans I know view me as Korean on the outside however because I don't speak Korean they view me as White. My friends of all other races form their opinions based on appearance so they just think of me as Asian.*

> *Fernanda: when people ask what am I, and when I tell them I'm Mexican they ask if I speak Spanish, and when I say no they always seem so surprised.*

> *Paula: At my other school, it was a predominantly white school I stuck out like a sore thumb and I hated it.*

> *I felt like i didn't belong. Although in high school, I guess it was hard for me to find a specific social group as well because I "act white" but I'm not white. I dont "act latina" so I didnt fit in with them either.*

Since I was raised by white parents I dont act how ppl expect me to because of my skin color.

It made me sad and I felt lonely. looking back now I can see it more clearly but at the time, I didnt notice, I just thought I was sad cuz I tend to be overemotional sometimes

---

Claudia: Speaking the language of your origin is part of who you are and your identity when you label yourself. Every time that I am amongst other hispanic people and tell that I am of colombian, the first thing they ask if do you speak Spanish, when I answer no they think thats crazy and in a sense a disgrace. Then i have to explain my story of being adopted and my parents are not spanish/dont speak spanish. I did not grow up around anyone spanish in terms of family so it was hard to keep the language.

Yet, Jonathan also acknowledged the positives that he experienced in being exposed to a more ethnically and racially diverse social environment since beginning college at a large, public university:

> *Jonathan: before I mostly identified with the white community that I was living in. I obviously was Asian and considered myself to be Asian but white was all I knew*
>
> *Interviewer: And how have your views shifted now?*
>
> *Jonathan: I identify as Korean American. I have many more Asian friends and acquaintances than I ever imagined I would have [since coming to college]. It's really different not being the only Asian in a whole group of friends*

> *Jonathan: But more and more I'm interested in Korean culture*
> *Interviewer: Can you talk a bit more about your newly found interest in Korean culture?*
>
> *Jonathan: I think that since going to UMass I've been exposed to more of it so it's just intrigued me a little more and I'm more willing to learn about it than when I didn't even know anything about it in the past*

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The concept of belonging and "fitting in" dominated participant discussions of race and ethnicity. While some participants, like Jonathan above, recounted positive experiences, all of the participants, including Jonathan, related predominantly negative experiences of not meeting the stereotyped expectations of others around language and knowledge of their culture of origin. Fernanda spoke of the challenging statements around race and ethnicity in terms of identity formation that came from members of her Italian-American adoptive family:

> *We were talking about something and I mentioned how I don't look like [my adoptive mother]. She goes "I forget your from Mexico and you don't look like me, I just think of you as Italian."*

> *I think we were talking about how much my mom and grandmother look alike and act alike that its scary...I think my mom said to me your next and I mentioned how I don't look like them*

Participants here have painted a picture of confusion and loss regarding their lived experiences of adoption as related to race and ethnicity. Feelings of being caught between two groups that may simultaneously accept or reject aspects of their identity in inconsistent ways make it difficult to form a coherent and consistent sense of self as an adopted person (Lee, 2003; Lee, 2008; Baden & Steward, 2000; Trenka, Oparah, & Shin 2006). As these data inform the expansion of the templates across time to include these challenges of belonging, qualitative studies such as Samuels' (2009), and this research effort may effectively draw attention to complex issues of self and identity for future areas of research.

Initial Definition and Conceptualization

Self-esteem was conceptualized in this study using the two-factor model of self-esteem (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001) that proposed a *self-liking*, and *self-competence* model. It was theorized that the two-factor model may more accurately capture a participant's fluctuating sense of self as a function of their relative success as a mentor (self-competence), or due to any positive senses of self they extracted from their experience in AMP, given the changing social valuation of adoptive status in this social context (self-liking). Additionally, concepts of self-worth have also been included on the Initial Template (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Themes of self-esteem and self-worth on the Initial Template.

Limited support for Self-esteem over all Waves of Coding

The majority of the coding across all self-esteem subthemes occurred after the first wave of coding, and while it is understood that frequency counts are limited in utility, self-esteem remained one of the least coded themes across the three waves of analysis. It is unclear why codes related to self-esteem were used so infrequently, when self-esteem is a highly researched aspect of the adoptive experience (e.g., Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Perhaps it is the case that the items included in the interview protocol

did not adequately or specifically address concepts of self-esteem, and instead, it was

believed that themes of self-esteem would inevitably emerge. Despite minimal coding

across these themes relative to other aspects of the lived experiences of adoption, a

number of key examples highlight areas in which participants' statements reveal

connections between their sense of self and their experiences of adoption.

Participants demonstrated considerable variability in responses, with many of

them producing statements within the same interview that reflected both positive and

negative binaries of self-worth, perceived competence, and self-liking. Areas in which

positive self-worth and self-competence were identified in participants' comments about

their participation in AMP:

> *Paula: I think its a great opportunity to help out other adopted kids. I am*
> *proud to talk about it with my friends and family. I think helping others is*
> *important but it's especially beneficial here because we are unique. Yes,*
> *adoption is very common now but it's not everyday that one*
> *meets another adopted person*

> *Claudia: I love working with kids. I want to make a difference in*
> *someones life regardless if its small or not.*

Additionally, participants' statements, like Paula's below, reflect acknowledgement, and

resiliency around issues of negative and positive self-worth:

> *Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or*
> *challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't*
> *experience?*

> *Paula: in relationships i feel that i am more clingy and get attached more*
> *easily than a non-adopted person would i also feel that identity formation*
> *is harder for me than a non-adopted person*
> *and because of that i had a lower self esteem*

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> *Interviewer: How do you see your adoption as contributing to how you attach to other people?*
>
> *Paula: i think bcause of the low self esteem. i became more dependent on others very quickly because i didnt think i cud do it alone like be alone rely on myself +but i dont feel that way anymore*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you see your adoption contributing to your previously low self-esteem?*
>
> *Paula: because i didnt fit anywhere. i felt like an outcast. i took my differences (being adopted, not speaking spanish but looking like i shud, etc) as negatives.*
>
> *Interviewer: You noted that you don't feel this way anymore... what has changed and how?*
>
> *Paula: i started seeing a counselor at the everywoman's center and after a while i started to realize im a lot stronger than i gave myself credit for. i appreciate my differences now. i am more confident in who i am*

In speaking about negative experiences and teasing related to her adoptive status and self-worth, Claudia notes:

> *People are always going to be ignorant and at the end of the day I know what i am.*

Despite these strong examples, self-esteem as a set of codes remained some of the least utilized throughout each template revision. Moreover, the themes were not expanded across the different template waves.

Conceptualizations on Limited Utilization of Self-esteem Codes

Historically, research on self-esteem in adoption is challenged by multiple conceptualizations and myriad instruments and techniques of measurement (French,

2013; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Despite these complexities, self-esteem remains

one of the premier research topics in all of psychology. As posited earlier in this

discussion of self-esteem, perhaps the items utilized in the interview used for this study

did not adequately or specifically target constructs of self-esteem. Yet, is it the case that

such an overarching concept such as self-esteem cannot be distilled as a component of the

lived experience of adoption as it is in this hierarchical model? Rather, is self-esteem

such a grand, overarching theme that the lived experiences of adoption are subsumed

under the broader integrative theme of self-esteem? One aspect of template analysis is

the concept of *integrative themes* (King, 2004). Integrative themes are those constructs

that may be a component of all other themes in the template (King, 2004). Examples of

integrative themes in past research using template analysis have been nebulous and

abstract concepts such as "stoicism" and "uncertainty" (King, Carroll, Newton, &

Dornan, 2002).

Self-esteem as an Integrative Theme for this Research

Data appear to support the identification of the construct of self-esteem in

adoption as an integrative theme, and a component of each of the lived experiences of

adoption. In this way, the self-esteem of an adopted person is impacted by all lived

experiences. This conceptualization is broad, yet conceptually and theoretically strong.

Self-esteem, existing in any conceptualized state (e.g., higher or lower, stable or unstable)

will be summarily impacted whether those lived experiences are seen as positive,

negative, or neutral; a person's sense of self will respond to any new experience.

This new conceptualization of self-esteem in adopted persons positions self-esteem as an overarching construct that is both impacted and, likely impacts how adopted persons make meaning of their experiences. In this way, future research in any aspect of adoption may consider addressing potential impacts of research outcomes on the self-esteem of adopted persons.

Aim Ib. New Themes for Future Research in Adoption

Roadblocks and Facilitators

In as early as the first wave of coding, participants' statements reflected a continued identification of beliefs, other persons, or circumstances that were believed to impact participant efforts to explore the impact of adoption on their sense of self. Elements of the lived experience of adoption were coded as Roadblocks, which mirror emergent concepts of "internal and external barriers to exploration," (Wrobel, Grotevant, Samek, & Von Korff, 2013), and "gatekeepers" (Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999). The concept of "Facilitators" was also coded, reflecting the work of Wrobel, Grotevant, Samek, and Von Korff and the concept of "cultural brokers," proposed by Cooper, Denner, and Lopez. In this manuscript, Roadblocks are seen to capture the sense of difficulty and impediments felt by adopted persons across many areas of the lived experience of adoption, such as roadblocks in communication with others, roadblocks in exploring birth family contacts, or roadblocks in seeking greater connection to birth culture or race. In addition to the identification of roadblocks, a corollary node was developed to capture those facilitators that the participant may have identified that they

found helpful in their process of exploration (Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999; Wrobel, Grotevant, Samek, & Von Korff, 2013).

Interestingly, many more Roadblocks were identified over the course of three waves of analysis than were Facilitators. This discrepancy is reflected in the template hierarchy, as the variety and abundance of identified Roadblocks necessitated the formation of three primary forms of roadblocks: intrapsychic; interpersonal; logistical; whereas there were no such divisions for facilitators. Each of the three primary roadblocks was further organized into subthemes informed by participants' statements. Summaries of the concepts as they were conceptualized in the final template are seen in Table 5 below.

Further exploration of both Roadblocks and Facilitators may contribute to a deeper understanding of individual and systemic variation in exploration, birth parent contact, and exploration by adopted persons into their individual histories. Continued exploration into adopted persons' perception of roadblocks and facilitators may also contribute to the study of motivation around exploration in adoption, which has often been framed as curiosity (e.g., Wrobel & Dillon, 2009).

Experiences of Adoption Stigma

Another key theme emergent in participants' statements that was not included in the initial template was the acknowledgements of experiences of stigma related to adoption. Curiously, these open admissions remained largely unconnected to participants' statements of their overall sense of self as an adopted person. In other words, participants were able to recount numerous experiences in which they felt that

Table 5

Primary Roadblocks and subthemes.

Primary Roadblocks	Codebook definitions	Subthemes
Intrapsychic	Internal thoughts and feelings that may prevent or delay further exploration of aspects of adoption	- Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents - Fear of how his or her view of self would change following meeting
Interpersonal	Relationships with, or consideration of the reactions / emotions of others that may prevent exploration of aspects of adoption	- Participant worried about how adoptive parents would feel about their exploration - Adoptive parents withholding information or discouraging contact - Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration - Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive, ethnic or racial groups
Logistical	Procedural or systemic elements (e.g., limited information in the adoption file; adoption agency has since closed) that inhibit further exploration of aspects of adoption	- Challenging system to navigate - Lack of knowledge of culture of origin - Birth parent(s) deceased - Discriminatory LGBTQ adoptive parent rights

they were stigmatized or treated differently due to their adoptive status, but largely

denied experiencing negative events when asked later in the interviews (emphasis added):

> *Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't experience?*
>
> *Jonathan: Besides the general attitudes that most people have towards adoption and the way people unintentionally talk/question about adoptive families, **I don't think that I personally experience any difficulties**.*

Interviewer: What are your experiences with the "general attitudes"?

Jonathan: I don't think I really have experienced too much of the negative stigma or attitudes, I just know that it does exist. I think the extent of my experiences are just the standard questions like "why did they give you up?" and "do you ever want to find your real parents?"

Interviewer: What is like for you to be asked those questions?

Jonathan: I've gotten used to them now and I don't really think people mean any harm by them but just don't really understand that it's not really the correct way of addressing things.

Interviewer: What does it tell you about people when they ask questions like that?

Jonathan: It tells me that overall, people don't know about adoption. I think that a lot of what people do know or accept is what they see in media, which is often the most general or basic ways of thinking about it. Movies, tv, and advertisements don't show the correct way of talking/thinking about these things like they do for other issues like race, sexual orientation, or other differences.

Interviewer: I see. Have you ever experienced any discrimination (i.e.: derogatory comments, teasing) as a result of your adoptive status?

*Jonathan: **Once someone told me that I'm not really related to/a part of my family**.*

In the statement above, the participant is making a very informed and astute observation about the general lack of public education about issues of adoption, including commonly portrayed negative stereotypes in the media, but does not seem to readily connect his being told that he is "not really related to/a part of [his] family" when responding to the first inquiry about his experiences of stigma. Yet this phenomenon in which a lack of connection is made between

noted participant experiences of stigma, and a general appraisal of their lived

experiences around adoption as being devoid of such discrimination, is quite

common. All participants, through the course of their interviews, made reference

to experiences of stigma related to adoption, but did not see (or permit) these

experiences to inform an assessment of their general adoption experiences as

being negative. Other examples of acknowledged stigmatizing experiences are:

> *Paula: [a negative experience] not meeting cultural expectations of others based on my outward appearance*
>
> *Interviewer: What are those negative interactions like for you?*
>
> *Paula: uncomfortable sometimes but then i explain that im adopted ... its more that i didnt like not fitting into what they thought of me from my outward appearance*

> *Fernanda: One negative experience is having to deal with my last name. My last name is [nationally] french, but I don't look french. So recently working at the bank with my name plate I have been getting a lot of question about my name and nationality. Some people are nice about it, others are very blunt and you can tell it makes them unsure about what to think about me. I never let it bother me.*

> *Interviewer: Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't experience?*
>
> *Claudia: just finding your place in the world. It's hard to figure out your place in the world when you factor in adoption and then on top of that for me in particular being adopted in a multi-cultural family, it gets complex*
>
> *Claudia: Another thing is finding people who are accepting of it who you want to surround yourself as in friends, relationships, etc. I have learned that there are a lot of narrow minded people who are not open to people who are different, and adoption is something that will make you stand out easily.*

Yet ultimately, each of the participants stated they did not believe they were the victims of untoward adoption stigma. One conceptualization of this phenomenon follows the same path as the approach to self-esteem; all transracial adopted persons in this study experienced stigma, thereby positioning adoption stigma as an integrative theme woven through every experience related to adoption. This is an appealing direction for conceptualization. Participants noted many instances in which they experienced teasing, confusion, or discrimination from others due to the fact that participants demonstrated some form of difference, or did not meet stereotyped expectations. Participants also demonstrated considerable ambivalence about their experiences, often downplaying the potential impact of those experiences on their more global assessment of their adoptive experiences.

Participants' efforts to downplay or minimize experiences coded as stigmatizing by this team were numerous, and garnered the development of a separate category of *responses to adoption stigma*. This category (see Figure 14) reflects different ways in which participants were found to manage the impact of stigmatizing or negative experiences or comments. The efforts span a wide range of cognitive, relational, and emotional processes:

Figure 14. Responses to adoption stigma.

Further research would be needed to determine where these participants learned these strategies of coping with these experiences. Recalling the statement made by Claudia earlier, in which her mother actively warned Claudia of possible discrimination based on race and ethnicity, it may be that some of these strategies listed here were imparted through processes of socialization (Grotevant & McDermott, 2014). Yet, perhaps adoption stigma is a pervasive aspect of the lived experience of adoption, akin to the concept of birth privilege (French, 2013). If so, combating adoption stigma would be a skill that many adopted persons would learn through experience. Future research should focus on the potentially far reaching impact of adoption stigma on many if not all aspects of the lived experience of adopted persons.

Summary of Aim 1 Findings

The goal of the first aim in this study was to address whether participants' lived experiences of adoption in relation to their changing social context (AMP), mapped onto current theoretical conceptualizations of commonly researched aspects of adoption. Five themes, selected for their prominence and empirical support in the literature as being cornerstones of the adoptive experience, were selected as an initial guide to qualitatively explore longitudinal interviews with adopted college-students. The participants in this study were concurrently participating in an adoption-specific mentoring program, which was seen to inject a new dimension of adoption into the regular social context of a large, public university setting.

In large part, dominant themes in adoption research have been resoundingly reflected in participants' own experiences, suggesting that the foundational theories in

adoption research do indeed reflect the lived experiences of adoption. Identity, dynamic processes of thought, interpersonal relationships and communication, concepts of race and ethnicity (note here that the participants were all persons of color), and self-esteem are key aspects of the participants' own experiences.

While individual theories of adoption are supported in this study, so is the understanding that a clean division between themes and theories does not reflect the lived experience of adoption. Critically, this research effort has made clear that these dimensions of the adoptive experience *do not* occur in isolation, but intersect in complex ways. Participants' statements reflect simultaneous consideration of multiple themes as they seek to make sense of their world. To this end, themes of communication with adoptive parents are noted in which the content of their conversation is race and ethnicity. Participants acknowledge the impact of the social environment on them in terms of both adoption and stigma, and race and ethnicity. Issues of identity are reflective of many aspects of communication, self-esteem, race, and ethnicity. Theories in adoption, while supported in this experienced as one, complex, and often confusing lived experience of adoption.

Concepts also emerged over the three waves of interview analysis that had not been included on the initial template, but that reflect newer areas of current research, such as the idea of Roadblocks and Facilitators (Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999; Wrobel, Grotevant, Samek, & Von Korff, 2013), and work on transracial identity development (Baden & Steward, 2000; Lee, 2003; Samuels, 2009). That additional findings from this current research methodology are supported by other empirical and theoretical works

from leaders in the adoption field suggests that template analysis is a viable option for exploring and expanding current theory in adoption.

Communication and Relational Dynamics

One aspect of the analyses in this first section focusing on Aim 1 is the prominence of relational dynamics and communication. Messages about adoption, race, culture, and identity were communicated by adoptive parents and socio-cultural contexts of youth, to participants over their lifetimes; later, messages were communicated to the mentors in AMP over the years of their participation; still later, messages were communicated to the participants by the types of questions included in this interview; and still later, participants communicated messages to generate these data. As data informed the evolution of themes and concepts, communication became subsumed under the larger concept of relational dynamics between the Initial Template and W1; this began a seismic shift in template structure, and ultimately, the conceptual approach to the Lived Experiences of Adoption. A host of structural changes cascaded from the identification of communication and interpersonal relationships in adoption as more rote experiences that are then subjectively evaluated by the adopted person. Doing so allowed for the development of a new holistic and conceptual approach that incorporates all of the initial and emergent template themes into one unified conceptualization of the adoptive experience.

Aim II: an Integrative Conceptual Model of the Lived Experience of Adoption

Informed by the emergent data, the following proposed model of the Lived

Experience of Adoption (LEA) addresses the second research aim.   There have been

significant advancements within various dimensions of the adoptive experience to date;

these dimensions have been highlighted in this manuscript. Yet the integration of these

dimensions has been less in focus. An understanding of the manner in which these

different dimensions intersect and interact to form a cohesive lived experience is less

clear. The lack of a comprehensive understanding perpetuates an understanding of

adopted persons as a set of variables; the human element of their experience of all

dimensions of self as adopted is obscured.

Interactions between participants' cognitive, affective, and meaning making

processes are woven together in this model to form a comprehensive approach to

understanding adoption. This is offered as a unique and unprecedented model of the way

adopted persons may experience and integrate adoption. This model links changing

social contexts and experiences (Leon, 2002; March, 1995; Wegar, 2000), to substantial

theoretical and research efforts around complex processes of appraisal, interpretation, and

identity formation (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Brodzinsky, 2011;

Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011).

Phases of the LEA Model

In Figure 15, any and all experiences, ranging from communication about

adoption, roadblocks or facilitators, to stigma and discrimination, are positioned as the

first step in this model (point A, Figure 15). These experiences are the content that is

then assessed by the adopted person through a dynamic process of subjective valuation. Ultimately, the adopted person develops a view of their experiences as being some combination of positive, or negative, or as viewed with ambivalence (point B) (Benson, Sharma, Roehlkepartain, 1994).   This process of valuation reflects the first stage of meaning making that is a core part of adoptive identity theory (Grotevant, 2011). The flexibility at this stage in which adopted persons may assign positive, negative, or ambivalent views to their experiences accommodates findings that different adopted persons may view the same general experience (e.g., communication with adopted parents about adoption) differently; some may view this as positive, others may view communication as negative, while others may be unsure. The flexibility of the model's structure at this stage is directly reflective of participant experiences captured in this study.

The dynamic process of assessing experiences informs the meaning that will be extracted, and will ultimately mediate the impact of various experiences on the formation of identity. Utilizing these experiences and subjective valuations, the adopted person seeks to make meaning of his or her experiences and reactions to inform a larger, more comprehensive narrative identity and self-concept (point C). This narrative of self is understood across a range of descriptive dimensions (depth, flexibility, and consistency) (Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011). Yet as some experiences may be more impactful or salient to that individual at different times, some experiences and responses may become areas of preoccupation for the individual (Benson, Sharma, Roehlkepartain, 1994). These points of preoccupation may occupy a larger part of the narrative should they come to
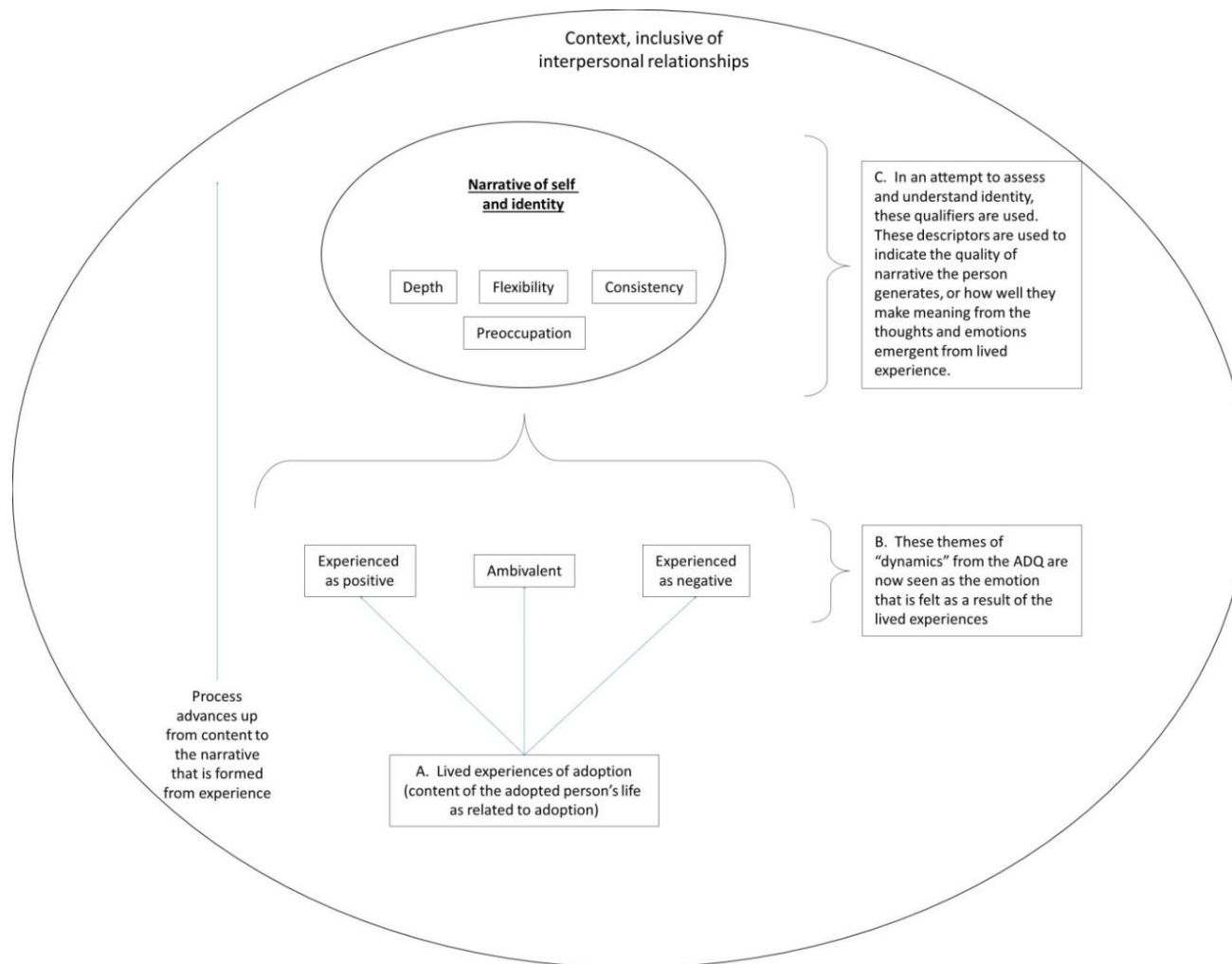
Figure 15. Diagram of the conceptual framework of the Lived Experience of Adoption. Progressing up from the bottom, events in an adopted person's life (A) are subjectively valuated as positive, negative, or regarded with ambivalence (B). These subjective valuations of experiences inform the narrative of self and identity that is developed (C), replete with varying degrees of narrative depth, flexibility, consistency, and possibly preoccupation with varying aspects of self. This process takes place within each person's social context, which itself is inclusive of interpersonal relationships that may influence each element of the model.

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dominate the person's sense of self as an adopted person. This stage reflects the process

of extracting meaning from events and from the way events are experienced (as positive,

negative, or with ambivalence). The meaning making process as positioned here is a

buffer between the events and the self, or framed another way, as a buffer between

context and identity.

The Role of Context

This entire process - from having the experiences, to evaluating them, to making

meaning out of the experiences – takes place within a social context. Discussed

previously, social context will dictate what sort of adoption experiences a person has

(Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Wegar, 2000). Moreover, the social

consciousness and values that define a particular social context will be internalized as

both thoughts and thought processes (Brodzinsky, 2011; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Turner

& Onorato, 2001). In these ways, context exerts great influence on every aspect of this

model, from point A to point C.

Context in the LEA model is reflective of both current and historical

environments; early environments around adoption are impactful on cognitive, affective,

and meaning making processes just as much, if not more, than the current context

(Brodzinsky, 2011; Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000; Trenka, Oparah, & Shin,

2006). Novel contexts and new experiences provide alternative perspectives that may

challenge the adopted person's earlier experiences that push him or her to reconcile this

new information with an old narrative (French, 2013; Grotevant, 1997). In this way, the

entire LEA model can be conceptualized as continually occurring at every new contextual

moment in time, throughout the lifetime of the adopted person. This point is especially critical given the centrality of "change over time" as a key component of this particular research effort.

Aim II: Summary

This theoretical model is a critical first step toward integrating oft separate theories on adoption. By merging research efforts, more comprehensive views of the experiential, affective, and cognitive components of adopted persons are integrated into one holistic lived experience of adoption. Challenging the variable-driven approach common in adoption research, the second research aim of this study advances the expressed goal of developing a theoretical framework reflective of how prominent domains of research in adoption intersect in vivo. This model draws strength in that its formation is derived from participants' experiences that emerged and evolved over the course of their participation in AMP.

This model is presented as a work in progress, rather than a finished product. As the lived experiences of adopted individuals are continually in flux, this model must be adapted to reflect both long-standing and emergent theory and data. This comprehensive framework of thematic interaction, complex aspects of identity, context, appraisal, and experiences is woven in broad terms and with a wide lens to provide merely a starting point for further, more nuanced work. Future studies should look to test this model, and compare it to other models of identity formation, drawing on established literature in clinical, developmental, and social psychology.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS, STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Implications for Future Research

This study sought to explicate *the lived experience of adoption*, defined earlier as the "lifelong intrapsychic and socio-contextual impact of having one's life legally joined to his or her adoptive family" (p. 1). Addressing the question of whether current conceptualizations reflected the continually changing realities of adopted persons, this research effort also sought to personalize the adoptive experience in a manner that informed theory and research. Data largely supported themes within the five initial research domains, yet, as analysis continued, emergent themes offered many new avenues for future inquiry in both methodology and theoretical conceptualization.

Research on Identity in Adopted Persons

This study reveals complex processes in which adoption as an aspect of self is experienced, contained, and managed. Template growth reflecting behaviors of acknowledgement and minimization of salience support both long-standing (Kirk, 1964) and more recent efforts (French, 2013) to address both the contextual and internal management of adoptive status. Moreover, findings in this research highlight key intersections between identity, race, ethnicity, and dynamic relationships with adoptive parents. Future research efforts should employ a methodology and approach to assessment of these constructs that is mindful of the multiple dimensions and intersections. This particular finding may support future application of qualitative and

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mixed methods techniques, as it remains to be seen whether quantitative methodologies accurately capture nuanced interactions between aspects of self.

These findings also suggest that continued conceptualization and methodological assessment of identity as a purely intrapsychic construct is not appropriate. Interpersonal relationships between the adoptive parents and the participants were a major area of focus within the larger theme of identity. Given this acknowledgement of the impact of the social context – replete with interpersonal relationships – on the formation of identity in adoption, future research should explore specific relational elements of divergent contexts that may differentially impact processes of identity formation in adopted persons.

Finally, the themes of narrative privacy and independence that emerged in this research contribute to the domain of research and writing on the continued infantilization of adopted persons, who are often referred to as the "adopted child" through adulthood (Hoopes, 1990). Together, these themes reflect perpetuated social beliefs about adopted persons as forever children in need of parenting, while highlighting desires of the adopted person to craft his or her own narrative and experience. Issues of autonomy and identity are intimately linked (Erikson, 1980), and future research explicating links between them may prove fruitful in learning more about the processes of adoptive identity development over time, in relation to interpersonal relationships and context.

Research on Communication

Informed by these data, future studies on communication within the adoption triad should conceptualize "communication" as but one part of the larger dimension of

"Relational Dynamics." Researchers should be mindful that while studying frequency and content of spoken dialogue between adoptive parents and their adopted children is important, doing so may not fully capture the complexities of the interpersonal relationships adopted persons have with each adoptive parent. Adopted individuals in this study engaged in perspective taking to craft complex interpretations and understandings of their adoptive parents' insecurities, strengths, and limitations around issues of adoption. This is a direct reflection of the process of Flexibility, which was one of the key elements of adoptive identity included in this study. Moreover, participants were often found to adapt their own dialogue and behavior to accommodate what they perceived to be their parents' discomfort. Whether the perspectives of the adopted persons accurately reflected the adoptive parents' personally held views can only be determined through direct interviews with the adoptive parents (Dolan, 2013).

The theoretical restructuring of communication as a component of Relational Dynamics informed the core change in the template, to reflect distinct experiences, subjective evaluations of those experiences, and efforts to make meaning and form an identity around aspects of adoption. Researchers should consider this conceptualization, and employ research methodologies sensitive to perceptions of both the adopted person's internal world and the adopted person's conceptualization of the world around them.

The Impact of Social Context on Processes of Thought and Identity Formation in Adopted Persons

Notably, the social context of AMP was identified as a significant element of participants' experiences. Statements included in this manuscript reflect the newfound

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ability of these adopted emerging adults to connect with others who shared in their experiences, and open up new lines of communication about adoption issues that had either lain dormant since childhood, or had never formed. The issue of whether AMP existed as a novel "context" depends on the definition of "context." Yet, given the conceptualization of context in this study - as whatever composition of surroundings the adopted person is in at the time (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000) - AMP is indeed identified as a new component in the ever-changing social context experienced by these participants. Future studies should examine the impact of even a small network or community of adopted persons in contributing to their exposure to, and formation of self-concept as an adopted person.

Considerations of Strengths and Limitations

This research effort is but one step toward the integration of a wealth of knowledge. Using the voices of the adopted, this study captured aspects of the lived experiences of the participants to corroborate and expand current theory and understandings of what it is like to be adopted. Only a selection of the themes that emerged throughout the coding process are included here (see Appendices B – J for a comprehensive view of the themes that emerged in the data and coded); the themes included here were chosen given the research aims posted in this manuscript. The wealth of data should be further explored for additional insights and contributions to the literature.   Given the complexities of the methodology employed, a number of considerations should inform future research efforts along these lines.

Participants

The adopted individuals in this research effort demonstrated unmatched dedication and commitment to both the mentoring program and this research effort. They offered thoughtful responses and are commended for their openness to sharing, what for many, is a very private and intimate process of negotiation, uncertainty, and exploration. As emerging adults, participants were in a key age group for processes of identity formation (Arnett, 2000). This may have contributed to the openness with which participants engaged in this research experience. Yet, this also begs the question of whether the same experiences in AMP and the same study conducted with both older and younger adopted persons would have yielded the same result.

Participants for this study were recruited from a self-selected group of college undergraduate students who volunteered to participate in an adoption-focused cross-age peer mentoring program. In this way, participants were acknowledging their status as adopted persons from the outset, and, by virtue of consenting to participate in the mentoring program, understood their participation would include exposure to theory and concepts related to adoption and adoptive identity. In this way, participants may have been more receptive to new perspectives and at a point in their lives when at least a part of them wanted to engage in exploration. Future studies would consider executing the same interview with participants who were not simultaneously participating in a self-selected adoption-focused program which may have contributed to the depth of exploration and consideration of adoption themes observed in these data.

AMP as but one Component of Participants' Lived Experiences

It is clear that participation in AMP did not solely comprise the daily experiences of the mentor participants. Mentors continued to attend classes, engage with peers, and expand their knowledge base through ongoing courses. Yet, life is not limited to the campus culture, and each participant brings the dynamics of life at home to his or her experience on campus. The totality of these experiences, in conjunction with the influence of the AMP program represents the social context in which these mentors participated in this research. As structured in this study, the ability to isolate the influence of participation in AMP on emerging participants' views on adoption, outside of the influence of their other life experiences, is limited.

As noted earlier, the overall program of research executed at the outset of the AMP program was extensive; these data included in this current manuscript are but a portion of the larger scope. One component of the larger program of research was the collection of qualitative interview data from a comparison group of adopted undergraduate students who were not participating in AMP. These qualitative data were collected using the same interview schedule as described in this current study. Future studies could address the aforementioned limitations around sources of influence on changing participant experiences through the comparison of mentor and non-mentor interview data. Doing so would allow for a more focused discussion of the more direct role of AMP participation outside of general developmental themes in understanding adoption.

Components of Race and Ethnicity in this Study

This study intentionally used data from four, trans-racially, and trans-nationally adopted individuals. Their perspectives offered insight into the complexities of the intersection between identity and status as a person of color, yet the inclusion of this group of participants should not be taken to reflect a view that only persons of color experience race. It is posited here that the results would be very similar for those whose adoptions were not so phenotypically apparent, as many of the prominent findings in this study reflected the impact of dynamic parent-young adult relationships and perspective taking that may be found in in-racial adoptions. Future studies should seek to expand on these current findings with additional participants from many cultural and racial backgrounds, including expanding the study to those individuals adopted through step-parent or extended family adoption. There are many different types of adoptions besides international arrangements, such as adoptions out of foster care, and private, domestic adoptions.

Interview Protocol and Administration

The semi-structured interview was adapted from the interview protocol developed for Wave 3 of the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project. The theoretical foundation for this interview is grounded in narrative theories of identity (McAdams, 1988; Grotevant, 1997). Use of a different interview protocol employing a differing theoretical conceptualization of identity development in adopted persons would necessarily produce different thematic outcomes. Future research may seek to compare

differing identity theories through the use of different or more theoretically neutral measures.

Methodology: Template Analysis and Coding

Template analysis is not currently a widely used approach to exploring qualitative data in the field of psychology. Yet as the trend toward the integration of qualitative and mixed methods into traditionally quantitative studies of adoption continues (Grotevant & McDermott, 2014; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010), template analysis is a promising tool. However, as the template analysis approach acknowledges the value and challenges inherent in the researcher's own wealth of knowledge on the subject at hand, it is critical that coding and template revision be executed by a team of independent coders with frequent checks for inter-rater reliability. Doing so can help strengthen the overall objectivity of the analysis and coding decisions, though all progress should be well documented in a cohesive audit trail to allow for an independent review of the research effort.

Researcher Reflexivity

In undertaking a qualitative inquiry of this nature, it is critical that the primary researcher engage in a process of self-reflection. Doing so allows him or her to consider the impact of the researcher on the program (as done previously in the Method section), and to also consider the impact that the program has had on the researcher; this process is known in qualitative research as reflexivity (King, 2004; Krefting, 1991).

One role that I had not fully anticipated was in becoming a mentor to the mentors; a parallel process unfolded as I engaged with the mentors while they engaged with their mentees. It remains to be seen how the formation of these relationships between me and the mentors impacted their experience of self-exploration, and their willingness to disclose personal information in the interviews; had the interviews been conducted by a different interviewer, results may have been different, and the mentors may not have felt comfortable disclosing as much information. Traditionally, there is a great emphasis in research for the investigator to remain as objective as possible, and to keep a great distance from participants and data for fear of contaminating or otherwise influencing their collection. However, given the personal nature of this inquiry, asking individuals to discuss and disclose intimate thoughts and feelings about adoption as they form, a safe, secure, and personal relationship with the investigator may be a necessary aspect of this research. The quality of the relationship may be a key factor in gaining privileged access to more accurate data.

Concluding Remarks

My participation in the development of the AMP program and the subsequent study of the impact on the mentor participants has been the hallmark experience of my graduate career. As much as this was a novel experience for the mentor participants, this was a new experience for me as well. I was consistently impressed by the mentors' courage and willingness to not only engage with the challenging process of self-exploration, but to share these experiences with me, and ultimately, the field of adoption research.

This research effort offers much to the field of adoption in two key areas: the theoretical conceptualizations of aspects of the lived experiences of adopted persons, and in adoption research methodology. In terms of conceptualization of adoption, this study highlights the intersection between the social context and the self. While this idea is not new to the field, this study showcases the complexity with which verbal and non-verbal messages from interpersonal relationships are interpreted and integrated by the adopted person. Participants' experiences reflect a process of seeking meaning from their experiences. This process is not only internal, but reflects a high degree of perspective taking as well. In taking the perspectives of their adoptive parents, adopted persons adapt their own thoughts and behaviors to meet the needs of the adoptive parents. This is a potentially rich shift in how the field conceptualizes relationships between adoptive parents and adopted persons. While the majority of the focus of parent child relationships is in the parents meeting the needs of the adopted children, this study draws attention to the reciprocal – that adopted children are also meeting the needs of the adoptive parents. This is a new area of focus that gives agency and autonomy to adopted individuals, such that adoption is no longer an experience that "happens to" adopted persons, but that adopted individuals contribute to their experience of adoption and to the experiences of their adoptive parents as well.

Methodologically, the application of template analysis in this study presents other researchers in adoption the opportunity to be exposed to a less familiar method of qualitative inquiry. As applied in this study, template analysis gains traction as a method of inquiry as it supports existing theory and uncovers new directions for future research. Additionally, this study offers a review of the application of computer assisted qualitative

data analysis software (NVivo 10) to address theories and concepts in the field of adoption.

This study captured the lived experiences of four, transracially adopted college students over a period of two years. These adopted individuals experienced a change in their social worlds through their participation in an adoption-specific mentoring program which exposed them to new ideas, literature, and social interactions around adoption. Qualitative analysis of their experiences both support and expand current theory and conceptualizations about what it is to be adopted. Directly informed by data, a new theoretical framework integrating complex aspects of the adoptive experience has been presented that draws strength from its foundation in empirical research and literature in the field of adoption. The entirety of this research effort, and every decision made was to ensure research aims were addressed, methodological rigor maintained, and that the integrity of the participants' voices was maintained.

APPENDIX A

ADOPTION INTERVIEW

Adoption Interview

Adapted from YAI - MTARP Wave 3

Introduction:

Hello, thanks for taking the time to answer a few questions I have for you. This should take about 2 - 2.5 hours to finish.

At the top right hand corner of this chat window, you'll see three icons. If you click on the middle one (the arrow) it will allow you to "pop out" the chat window and make it bigger; this will make it easier for us to see each other's responses.

Let me know when you've done that.

In this interview we're going to talk about your adoption story.

Just remember that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, since I just want to hear about your experiences. I would just like you to answer them as honestly and as openly as you can.

When chatting online it is sometimes difficult to tell when someone has completed a thought. I will use an asterisk () when I have completed a question or a series of questions.

When you have completed your response to a question, please use an asterisk () also, so that I'll know you've finished.

Don't worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

And finally, you can take as long as you need to answer each question thoughtfully. Don't worry about the time it takes at all, since all I really care about is that you answer the questions honestly, and thoughtfully.   As you read in the consent forms that you signed, all of the information that you provide here will be confidential also, so no identifiable information will be released to anyone outside of this project.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

> → If yes, answer the questions you feel that you are confident about answering
> correctly, otherwise:

That's a great question, unfortunately, I don't know the answer. I'll be
sure to pass your question on to someone who can and have them
get back to you as soon as possible.

→ If no: *Great.*

What is your date of birth?

And the date of your adoption? (i.e.: when you came home)

Your place of birth?

And finally, what city did you grow up in?

Great, please start by telling me your adoption story.

I'm particularly interested in why you were placed for adoption, why your parents
chose adoption as a way to build a family, and how you were told about being
adopted.

→ Probe: *Why were you **placed** for adoption?*
→ Probe: *Why did your parents **choose** adoption?*
→ Probe: *How were you **told** about your adoption?*

Please describe your most recent adoption related conversation with your parents.

→ Probe: ***What*** *did you talk about?*

a. *When did this conversation take place?*
b. *What prompted this conversation?*
c. *How comfortable were you during this particular conversation?*
d. *How comfortable were you after this particular conversation?*

How comfortable are you in these conversations in general?

Who generally initiates conversations about adoption?

How comfortable are your parents in conversations about adoption?

Do you think your adoptive parents currently know something about your
adoption that they did not share with you?

→ If yes:
    a.*What do you think they know?*

b.Why do you think they're keeping this information from you?

Do you currently know something about your adoption or birth family that you have not shared with your adoptive parents?

→ If yes:
   a.What is it that you know?
   b.Do you plan on sharing this information with them?
      →If yes:
         When?
      → If no:
         a. Why do you think you won't share this information with them?
         b. Is there someone else who you think you might tell?
            → If yes: *Who?*
            → If no: *What do you think you will do with this information then?*

Is your adoption open, closed, or a mix of these, in terms of contact with members of your birth family?

What information do you know about your birth family?

Have you made contact with any member of your birth family?

→ If yes:
   a. *Who?*
   b. *How was that experience for you?*
   c. *How did you go about making contact with them?*

→ If no: *Do you have any desire to search for members of your birth family in the future?*

      → If yes:
         a. *Who would you wish to contact?*
         b.*What would you hope to gain?*
      → If no:
         a. *Why do you feel you don't want to search for members of your birth family in the future?*
         b. *Do you think your feelings on this issue will ever change?*
            → If yes: *What do you think may trigger a change in stance for you?*

Are you currently seeking more information about your adoption?

→ If yes: *What would you like to know?*

With whom can you talk about your adoption most openly and honestly?

a. *What are the things you talk about?*
b. *Are there certain topics that are more difficult to talk about with ____?*

Would you say that you currently experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted person that a non-adopted person doesn't experience?

→ If no: *Have you ever experienced any discrimination (i.e.: derogatory comments, teasing) as a*
        result of your adoptive status?

→ If yes:
  a. *What are some of these difficulties or challenges you face?*
  b. *Do you think your parents are aware of these challenges that you face?*

    → If yes:
    There can be a big difference between awareness of challenges, and actually understanding what these challenges may mean for you. Do you think your parents fully understand how these challenges that you face affect you?

        → If yes: *How do you think they came to understand so well?*

        → If no: *Why do you believe they don't have a true understanding of how these*
            challenges are affecting you?

            What do you think their level of understanding really is?

    → If no:

      a. *Have you ever tried to talk to them about the challenges you're facing?*
        → If yes: *What was the response you received from your parents?*

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→ If no:
   a. *What roadblocks can you think of that have prevented you from sharing your thoughts on these issues with your parents thus far?*
   b. *Do you have a desire to bring these issues up in a discussion with them in the future?*
      → If yes: *How do you imagine this conversation will go?*
      → If no: *Is there someone else you would feel more comfortable talking about these particular issues with other than your parents?*

Adoptees have many different experiences related to their adoption; some positive, and some negative. Examples of positive experiences in which adoption played a role could be a return trip to a country of origin, or participating in adoption social groups, while an example of a negative experience in which adoption played a role, could be not meeting cultural expectations of others based on your outward appearance. Looking back, can you identify one instance in which your adoption was central to a positive experience, and one example in which you had a negative experience related to your adoption?

Some young adults feel comfortable with their status as an adopted person and comfortable with their understanding of the influence it plays in their life and their own identity; on the other hand, some feel unsettled about various aspects of being adopted, and are less sure of the influence their adoption has on their life and who they are.

Based on this statement, on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being very unsettled or uncertain, and 10 being very comfortable, and having a solid understanding of the influence of your adoption, what number would best represent you and your current level of understanding of your adoption?

Can you put that ## into words? Are there some areas in which you are more comfortable as an adopted person, and others in which you are less comfortable?

Race & Ethnicity

How do you identify in regards to race and ethnicity?

_____

Do you view your adoption as trans-racial?

Adopted people have differing levels of exposure to their culture of origin. Would you say that the culture you identify with most reflects more of your culture of origin, more of your adoptive parents' culture, more of the dominant culture in the United States, or a mixture of these?

_____

Do you think about the concepts of "race" and "ethnicity" and "culture" often?

→ If yes: *What are some of the thoughts you've had about race and ethnicity?*

→ *If no*: *Do you see the concepts of race and ethnicity as intimately connected to your adoption story?*

→ If yes: *What are the connections that you see so far?*

Are race, ethnicity, and culture, common topics of conversation in your family?

→ If yes:
   a. *Can you share a conversation that you've had with your family that was related to race / ethnicity that you found helpful?*
   b. *Can you now share a conversation that you've had with your family, related to race / ethnicity that was not helpful for you?*

→ If no:
   a. *Do you have a desire to talk about issues surrounding race and ethnicity with your parents / family more than you currently do?*
      If Yes: *What do you think are the barriers that are preventing these conversations about race / ethnicity from happening?*

Would you say that you personally experience difficulties or challenges as an adopted (insert race), that a non-adopted (insert race) living in America might not experience?

→ If yes:
  a. *What are some of these difficulties or challenges you face?*
  b. *Why do you think your personal experience as a / an (insert race) is different from someone else's?*
  c. *Do you think your parents are aware of these challenges that you face?*

  → If yes:
    There can be a big difference between awareness of challenges, and actually understanding what these challenges may mean for you. Do you think your parents fully understand how these challenges that you face affect you?

    → If yes: *How do you think they came to understand so well?*
    → If no: *What do you think their level of understanding really is?*

  → If no:
    a. *Why do you believe they don't have a true understanding of how these challenges are affecting you?*

    b. *Have you ever tried to talk to them about the challenges you're facing?*

      → If yes: *What was the response you received from your parents?*

      → If no:
        a. *What roadblocks can you think of that have prevented you from sharing your thoughts on these issues with your parents thus far?*

        b. *Do you have a desire to bring these issues up in a discussion with them in the future?*
          → If yes: *How do you imagine this conversation will go?*

As we begin to wrap up this interview, what are some words of advice you could give to adoptive parents that could help them as they work to raise their adopted children?

FOR MENTOR GROUP ONLY

What are your perceptions of the mentoring program so far? Please feel free to talk about both positives and negatives.

What are some your thoughts and feelings about your role as a mentor so far?

We've talked about quite a few things, but I wonder if there might be something that we have skipped which you feel might be important to our understanding you and what you're all about. Is there anything you would like to add?

I'm going to give you a few links to the surveys which I'd like you to complete right after we're done with the interview portion. Also, please complete them in the order that I give them to you. It might be easier to open each link in its own window so you don't lose the links once you close this chat box.

1. https://spreadsheets0.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFA2V0c0TVhiQkFPN3k0Qk9RaUFydlE6MQ
2. https://spreadsheets0.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFJDUE1rWGt6QXdaaUswUW5xZXRRbEE6MQ
3. https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dGpyS0Njak51czZiOXdHTlB4MzI0c2c6MQ
4. https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?ui=2&pli=1&formkey=dHVURjBzUlZ0WmtGQWZIVFBGYWJaNlE6MQ#gid=0

5. https://spreadsheets2.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dFVNMVo0Y0RCSDZ3c0ZyMFBXWlNVdVE6MQ

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTIVE CODEBOOK – INITIAL TEMPLATE

The following is a descriptive codebook of the higher and lower order codes that comprise the template. This codebook will be continually revised and updated at the end of each wave of analysis. Previous versions of the codebook will be retained and new files saved to ensure the ability to compare and contrast between codebooks longitudinally, and to track changes in emergent or receding codes over time.

Higher order codes are page justified to the far left and underlined and in bold. Second order codes are indented and listed below, while third order codes are indented and listed below the second orders. Definitions as well as the title of the codes are presented.

Adoptive Identity

This higher order node of adoptive identity reflects both developmental and narrative theories of self. The adopted person is thought to develop a narrative, or a story of one's self as an adopted person. This narrative is shaped by the "meaning" that an adopted person assigns to his or her adoptive status. In this way, adopted persons are thought to consider and integrate (to varying degrees) their status as an adopted person, and consider the impact that adoptive status may have on other aspects of self.

Adoptive identity is understood to be dynamic, influenced by the person's experiences within a social context. The early narrative is heavily influenced by the adoptive parents, though later on, the adopted person may seek a greater degree of authorship over his or her adoption story. In this way, the narrative is understood to change over time. Three core components are thought to contribute to a narrative identity: identity exploration, which represents process by which identity changes and evolves, and internal consistency and flexibility, which reflect the coherence and of the narrative.

> **Depth of exploration of a narrative**
> Depth of adoptive identity exploration refers to the degree to which participants reflect on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person.
>
> Examples can include instances in which the adopted person comments on differences between past and present attitudes and views of adoption or the adoption story, exploring the connections between one's status as an adopted person and other aspects of self (e.g., seeking a greater understanding of the impact of adoption on one's life). Comments may also reflect the adopted person seeking information about any aspect of the adoption process, birth parents, or even adoptive family history.
>
> In addition to these elements are comments made about the process by which an adopted person achieves depth in the narrative. This may reflect thought processes, decision making processes, or challenging presupposed positions and views of the adoption.

> **Flexibility**
> Flexibility refers to the degree to which participants view issues as others might see them; perspective taking.
>
> Flexibility is seen in a participant who considers the challenges of adoption as experienced from not only his or her perspective, but also from the points of view of the adoptive and birth parents and siblings.

➢ **Inflexibility**
Inflexibility can be coded for those instances in which the adopted person demonstrates an inability to see the adoption process from multiple points of view.

➢ **Internal consistency**
Internal consistency reflects a coherent and cohesive narrative in which statements made are supported, rather than contradicted, by later statements or examples. Essentially, the individual must demonstrate an effort to make statements about his or her adoption or views on adoption in general, and support those statements throughout the narrative.

Examples of internal consistency might be the adopted person making a statement in which he or she expresses a belief that making contact with birth family is important to identity development. Later, when asked about his or her experiences with contact, he or she may again reiterate that making contact with birth parents was one of the most influential moments in shaping who he or she is as a person. Note the consistency in beliefs and lived examples.

➢ **Internal inconsistency**
Reflects sections of the narrative which contradict previously stated attitudes, beliefs, or views on adoption or the adoption story.

Adoption Dynamics
Adoption dynamics is a theme used for statements made that are related to how the adopted person experiences adoption, and how he or she thinks about adoption. Any time the participant makes a statement that reflects how he or she thinks about his or her adoption, you would search for the appropriate sub-node to capture the theme.

➢ **Positive Affect**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The PA scale reflects positive feelings that the adopted person has about his or her adoption. Included are statements such as "I think my parents are happy that they adopted me" and "I'm glad my parents adopted me."

➢ **Negative Experience**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The NE scale is used to reflect statements made in which the adopted person indicates that they experienced something about his or her adoptive experience as negative. Included are statements such as "My parents told me I should be thankful that they adopted me," and "My parents tell me they can give me back if they want to." Be sure not to allow your own subjective valuation of statements to influence your coding process. This theme captures the participant's subjective perception of a negative event.

> **Preoccupation**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The PRE scale reflects statements made that indicate the adopted person thinks, or is thinking about his or her adoption. Included are statements such as "It bothers me I may have brothers and sisters I don't know," and "I wish I knew more about my medical history." The theme of "preoccupation" and a "longing to know: or "curiosity" are prominent feelings here.

❖ **Why was I placed for adoption**
This node reflect preoccupation with the specific question of "Why?." Many adopted persons want to know the reasons they were placed for adoption; this node captures that very specific topic of preoccupied thoughts.

Communication

The concept of adoption communication is hinged on the idea of openness in communication. This idea of the benefits of open channels of communication derives from the work of Kirk (1964) who was the first researcher to emphasize the importance of open communication within the adoptive family system.

Openness in communication is thought to be comprised of multiple levels (Brodzinsky, 2005):

> **Intrapersonal Communication**
Reflects internal dialogue within the adopted person (e.g., thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and fears) about adoption or one's adoptive status.

> **Intrafamilial Communication**
Communication about adoption within the adoptive family group or within the birth family group (no cross-over). Intrafamilial communication may reflect sharing of information, stories, narratives, or also the discussion of complex emotions and feelings related to adoption. In this definition and this version of the template, the adopted person is positioned within the adoptive family. Therefore, communication between the adopted person and his or her adoptive parents / adoptive siblings is considered intrafamilial.

❖ **Adoptive Parent 1 (AP1)**
Intrafamilial communication with the adoptive parent 1.
• **AP1 – Comfort**
Reflects instances in which the adopted person felt that he or she was comforted during a conversation with his or her adoptive parent 1.

Example: "I was really upset when I came home from school after a classmate made fun of me for being

adopted. My dad sat with me for a while and told me things would be alright."

- **AP1– Parent Understands Participant**
  Reflects adopted person comments that he or she feels his or her adoptive parent 1 "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive parents' awareness of challenges, and adoptive parents' true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their children.

- **AP1– Parent Doesn't Understand Participant**
  Reflects participant feelings that his or her adoptive parent 1 does not "understand" the participant's point of view, true feelings, or true experience. The adoptive parent 1 may be aware of the challenges, but may not "understand."

  Example: "I told my dad about the bullies at school who made fun of me for being adopted… I really feel as though he understood because he was bullied in school for being overweight."

- **AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption**
  The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but comfort with the other person taking part in the conversation.

- **AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption**
  The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but discomfort with engaging the other person in a conversation about adoption.

- **AP1 – Neutral Communication**
  This node is used to identify references to communication with AP1 that do not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AP1 so frequency of communication is not lost.

❖ **Adoptive Parent 2 (AP2)**
  Intrafamilial communication with the adoptive parent 2.

  - **AP2 – Comfort**
    Reflects instances in which the adopted person felt that he or she was comforted during a conversation with his or her adoptive parent 2.

    Example: "I was really upset when I came home from school after a classmate made fun of me for being adopted. My mom sat with me for a while and told me things would be alright."

  - **AP2 – Parent Understands Participant**
    Reflects adopted person comments that he or she feels his or her adoptive parent 2 "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive parents' awareness of challenges, and adoptive parents' true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their children.

    Example: "I told my mom about the bullies at school who made fun of me for being adopted… I really feel as though she understood because she was bullied in school for her sexual orientation."

  - **AP2 - Parent Doesn't Understand Participant**
    Reflects participant feelings that his or her adoptive parent 2 does not "understand" the participant's point of view, true feelings, or true experience. The adoptive parent 2 may be aware of the challenges, but may not "understand."

  - **AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption**
    The participant feels that conversations with AP2 are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but comfort with the other person taking part in the conversation.

  - **AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption**
    The participant feels that conversations with AP2 are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but discomfort with

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engaging the other person in a conversation about adoption.

- **AP2 – Neutral Communication**
  This node is used to identify references to communication with AP2 that do not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AP2 so frequency of communication is not lost.

  ❖ **Adoptive Siblings (AS)**
  Reflects communication between the adopted person and adoptive siblings.

  - **AS - Ease in conversations about adoption**
    The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but comfort with the other person taking part in the conversation.

  - **AS - Unease in conversations about adoption**
    The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but discomfort with engaging the other person in a conversation about adoption.

  - **AS – Neutral Communication**
    This node is used to identify references to communication with AS that do not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AS so frequency of communication is not lost.

➢ **Interfamilial Communication**
Reflects mentions of communication between the adoptive family and birth families. Includes communication between the adopted person and his or her birth family members.

➢ **Extrafamilial Communication**
This node represents conversations about adoption that occur with individuals outside of either adoptive or birth family spheres. This may include friends or significant others that the individual participates in conversations about adoption with.

Ethnic Identity

The definition of ethnic identity used in this research draws heavily from the work of Phinney (1992) and Roberts et al., (1999). Ethnic identity is an important aspect of self that must be reconciled and, to varying degrees, integrated into a more global sense of self. Specifically, ethnic identity can be conceptualized as operating in two ways: 1) exploration into a particular ethnicity (e.g., factual and experiential exploration; exploration into the meaning of that ethnic identity to that individual); and 2) the degree of commitment to a particular ethnic group and to the integration of characteristics of this ethnic group into one's larger sense of self. In this way, ethnicity is conceptualized much in the same way as other dimensions of self in a multidimensional identity model, as yet another aspect of self to be considered and integrated into one's tapestry of self.

> **Ethnic Identification (EI)**
> Feelings of affirmation and belonging to a particular ethnic group. Statements in which the participant voices feeling connected to a particular ethnicity.

> > ❖ **EI - Adoptive Parents' Ethnicity**
> > Statements in which the adopted participant voices a felt connection and sense of belonging or commitment to the ethnic culture and identity of his or her adoptive parents.

> > ❖ **EI - Birth Parents' Ethnicity**
> > When the participant voices a felt connection, sense of belonging, and commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

> **Ethnic De-identification**
> When the individual makes comments that voice a rejecting stance toward an ethnic group or culture.

> > ❖ **EDI - Adoptive Parents' Ethnicity**
> > When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her adoptive parents.
> > ❖ **EDI - Birth Parents' Ethnicity**
> > When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

> **Exploration**
> Comments made in which the participant discusses behavior geared toward thinking more about (curiosity), learning more about, or becoming more involved in his or her stated ethnic group.

> This sub-node reflects statements in which the participant is somehow involved or seeks to be involved with his or her ethnic group, but does not necessarily reflect

the subjective feelings of belonging or acceptance felt by the participant; those feelings would fall under the ethnic identification sub-node.

Self-esteem
This node reflects comments made about how the participant views him or herself as a person and the subjective valuation of him or herself. Self-esteem in this research project is derived from the conceptualization of self-esteem developed by Tafarodi & Swann (2001), who developed a two-factor model of self-esteem: self-liking, and self-competence.

➢ **Self-liking**
Self-liking is one factor of Tafarodi & Swann's (2001) two factor theory of self-esteem. This self-liking sub-node will be used to identify statements in which the participant reveals his or her self-valuation as good or bad as related to his or her adoptive status. This term has a very social component, such that views on self-liking (viewing self as good or bad) can be imparted by the social worlds around the target individual.

An example would be a statement in which the adopted person states that she would never be able to emotionally connect with others and meet the needs of others due to her experience with adoption.

➢ **Self-competence**
The self-competence sub-node will be used to identify statements that reflect the participant's view of him or herself as efficacious, and able to bring about change as a function of his or her power and agency.

➢ **Positive self-worth**
This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as positive. Self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a positive self-regard or self-concept.

➢ **Negative self-worth**
This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as negative. Negative self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a low or negative self-regard or self-concept, leaving the individual with a sense of self as "less than" others.

Mentoring
Reflects comments made about mentoring and the connection between the mentoring experience and his or her adoptive experience.

> **Giving Back**
> This sub-node is used to capture sentiments of "giving back" as a reason for mentoring or as a benefit obtained as a result. This theme can be coded if there are explicit or implicit references to this theme.

> **Seeing Self in Mentee**
> This sub-node under mentoring reflects comments made in which the mentor may "see him or herself" in the mentee. The mentor may be reminded of themselves as a child when thinking of his or her mentee. Connections made to the adoptive experience of either the mentor or the mentee may be a part of this theme.

> **Mentor Group Meetings**
> This sub-node reflects comments made about the perception or impact of the mentor group meetings (MGM).

Early Context
Context refers to mentions of the participant's hometown.

> **Racial Demographics**
> Participant comments on the racial makeup of his or her hometown (e.g., "a predominantly White town," "an ethnically diverse town").

> **Socio-economic Demographics**
> Participant mentions the socio-economic status of either his or her own family or the hometown.

Facts about Adoption
Statements made that reflect some knowledge or process to acquire knowledge about his or her adoption. Coding under this category reflects the participant simply presenting factual information about his or her adoption, and DOES NOT reflect any attempts to integrate these facts into a meaningful adoption narrative or story.

Examples include recalling the date or time of birth, adoption, location of birth, information about the adoption such as how many biological siblings he or she may have. For example, "I was born in San Diego, California on March 31, 1992" is a stand-alone statement that isn't integrated into a larger, cohesive sense of self that would be present in a statement coded for depth of narrative. Note how the previous example differs from the following that also reflects integration and depth:

"I was born in San Diego, California, on March 31, 1992, which is interesting because my adopted mother was in San Diego at that exact same time on a business trip." Note the meaning in the second statement.

Gender
Statements made about the connection between gender and the participant's experience of adoption.

Sexual Orientation
This code will be used to identify statements in which the adopted person sees connections between his or her sexual orientation and adoptive status or adoptive experience.
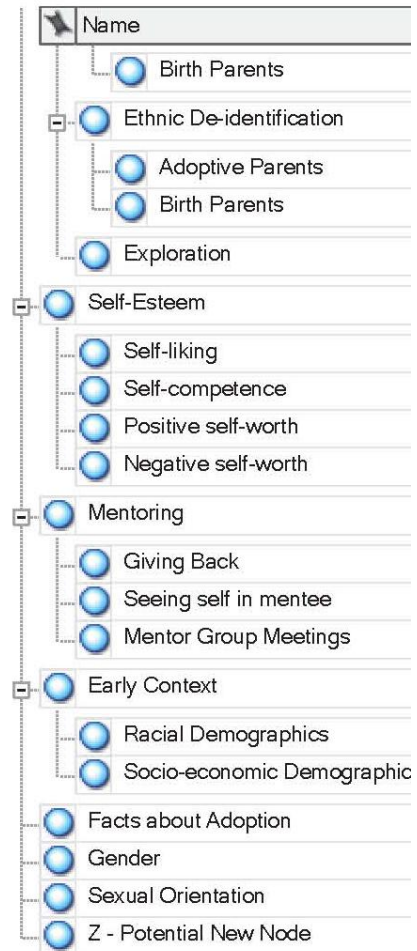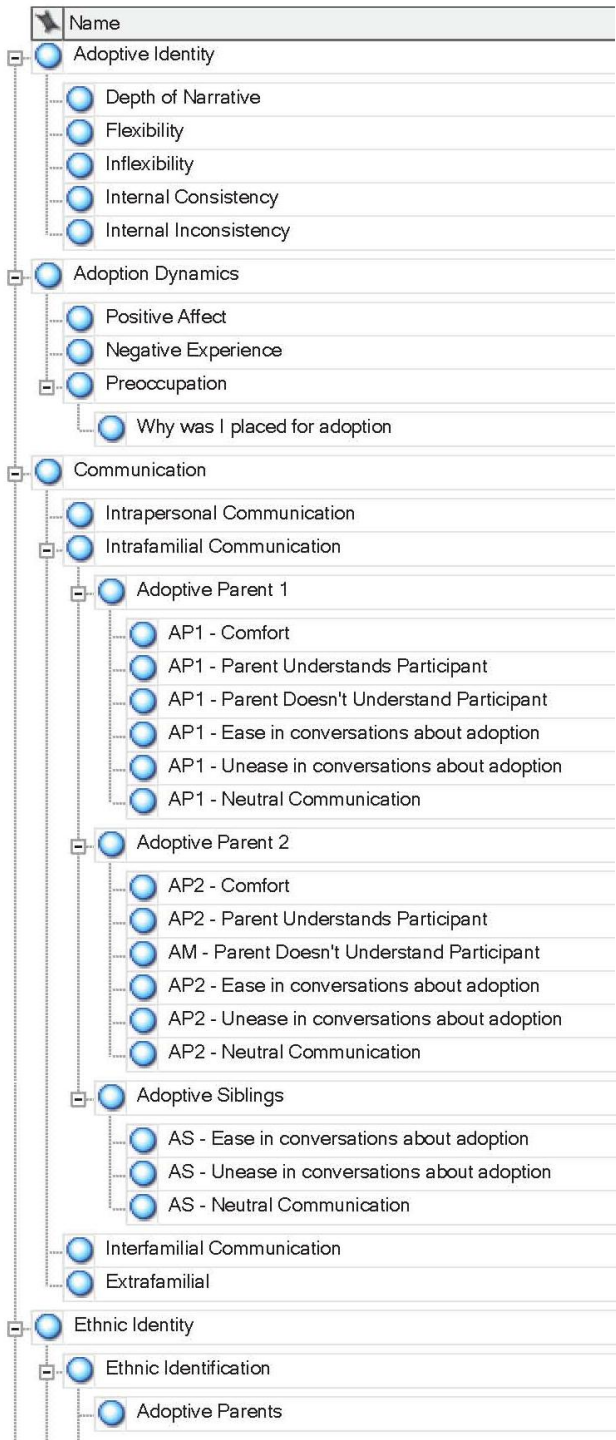
Z – Potential New Node
This node will be used when coders feel that a section of text reflects a new theme not currently captured in a sub-node within this iteration of the template. This node begins with "Z -" to keep it at the bottom of the alphabetically structured node list in NVivo for easy reference.

APPENDIX C

INITIAL TEMPLATE

Name
- Adoptive Identity
  - Depth of Narrative
  - Flexibility
  - Inflexibility
  - Internal Consistency
  - Internal Inconsistency
- Adoption Dynamics
  - Positive Affect
  - Negative Experience
  - Preoccupation
    - Why was I placed for adoption
- Communication
  - Intrapersonal Communication
  - Intrafamilial Communication
    - Adoptive Parent 1
      - AP1 - Comfort
      - AP1 - Parent Understands Participant
      - AP1 - Parent Doesn't Understand Participant
      - AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
      - AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
      - AP1 - Neutral Communication
    - Adoptive Parent 2
      - AP2 - Comfort
      - AP2 - Parent Understands Participant
      - AM - Parent Doesn't Understand Participant
      - AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption
      - AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption
      - AP2 - Neutral Communication
    - Adoptive Siblings
      - AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
      - AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
      - AS - Neutral Communication
  - Interfamilial Communication
  - Extrafamilial
- Ethnic Identity
  - Ethnic Identification
    - Adoptive Parents

Name
- Birth Parents
- Ethnic De-identification
  - Adoptive Parents
  - Birth Parents
- Exploration
- Self-Esteem
  - Self-liking
  - Self-competence
  - Positive self-worth
  - Negative self-worth
- Mentoring
  - Giving Back
  - Seeing self in mentee
  - Mentor Group Meetings
- Early Context
  - Racial Demographics
  - Socio-economic Demographic
- Facts about Adoption
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Z - Potential New Node

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APPENDIX D

WAVE 1 TEMPLATE

Name
○ Adoptive Identity
○ Depth of narrative
○ Richness of narrative
○ Lack of richness of narrative
○ Intrapsychic processes of depth
○ Flexibility
○ Inflexibility
○ Internal consistency
○ Internal inconsistency
○ Intrapersonal communication
○ Consideration of the influence of adoption
○ Minimizing salience of adoption
○ Acknowledging salience of adoption
○ Ranking Question
○ Ranking Question - 1
○ Ranking Question - 2
○ Ranking Question - 3
○ Ranking Question - 4
○ Ranking Question - 5
○ Ranking Question - 6
○ Ranking Question - 7
○ Ranking Question - 8
○ Ranking Question - 9
○ Ranking Question - 10
○ Adoption Dynamics
○ Positive affect
○ Negative experience
○ Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned
○ Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents
○ Preoccupation
○ Why was I placed for adoption
○ Engaged in exploration based on preoccupation
○ Not engaged in exploration as a result of preoccupation
○ Whether I look like birth parents
○ Desire to meet birth mother
○ Desire to meet birth father
○ Desire to meet birth siblings
○ Birth family medical history
○ If hadn't been adopted...

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Name
- Relational Dynamics
  - Adoptive Family
    - AP1 - Participant Relationship
      - AP1 - Strength of bond
      - AP1 - Communication
        - AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption
        - AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
        - AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
        - AP1 - Initiation of communication about adoption
          - AP1 - Participant initiates communication
          - AP1 - AP1 initiates communication
      - AP1 - Participant's experience in relationship
        - AP1 - Comfort
        - AP1 - Parent understands participant
        - AP1 - Parent doesn't understand participant
        - AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
        - AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
        - AP1 - Participant desire for more communication
        - AP1 - Openness in communication about adoption
        - AP1 - Lack of openness in communication about adoption
      - AP1 - Participant's perception of AP1 experience
        - AP1 - Intrapsychics
          - AP1 - Depth of narrative
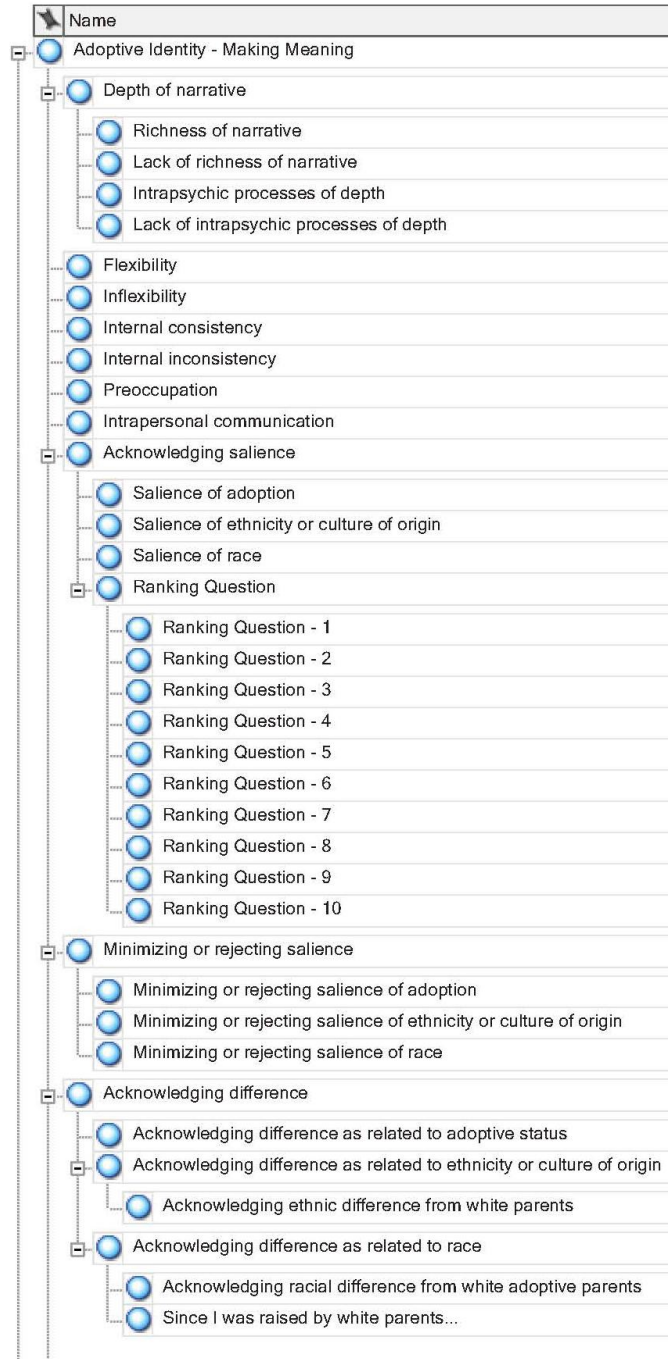   - AP1 - Flexibility
          - AP1 - Inflexibility
          - AP1 - Internal consistency
          - AP1 - Internal inconsistency
        - AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
        - AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
        - AP1 - Desire for more communication about adoption
        - AP1 - Aware of challenges faced by participant
        - AP1 - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
        - AP1 - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
    - AP2 - Participant Relationship
      - AP2 - Strength of bond
      - AP2 - Communication
        - AP2 - Presence of communication about adoption
        - AP2 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity

- AP2 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
- AP2 - Initiation of communication about adoption
  - AP2 - Participant initiates communication
  - AP2 - AP2 initiates communication
- AP2 - Participant's experience in relationship
  - AP2 - Comfort
  - AP2 - Parent understands participant
  - AP2 - Parent doesn't understand participant
  - AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AP2 - Participant desire for more communication
  - AP2 - Openness in communication about adoption
  - AP2 - Lack of openness in communication about adoption
- AP2 - Participant's perception of AP2 experience
  - AP2 - Intrapsychics
    - AP2 - Depth of narrative
    - AP2 - Flexibility
    - AP2 - Inflexibility
    - AP2 - Internal consistency
    - AP2 - Internal inconsistency
  - AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AP2 - Desire for more communication about adoption
  - AP2 - Aware of challenges faced by participant
  - AP2 - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
  - AP2 - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
- AS - Participant Relationship
  - AS - Strength of bond
  - AS - Communication
    - AS - Presence of communication about adoption
    - AS - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
  - AS - Participant's experience in relationship
    - AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
    - AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
    - AS - AS understands participant
    - AS - AS doesn't understand participant
  - AS - Participant's perception of AS experience
    - AS - Intrapsychics

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- AS - Depth of narrative
- AS - Flexibility
- AS - Inflexibility
- AS - Internal consistency
- AS - Internal inconsistency
- AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
- AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
- AS - Desire for more communication about adoption
- AS - Aware of challenges faced by participant
- AS - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
- AS - Anticipates participant will experience challenges

Adoption Triad Dynamics
- Interfamilial Communication

Extrafamilial Dynamics
- Participant ease of communication about adoption with Extras
- Participant unease in communication about adoption with Extras
- Participant openness in communication about adoption with Extras
- Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with Extras
- Extras understand participant
- Extras do not understand participant

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic Identification
- Adoptive Parents
- Birth Parents
- Dominant culture of the US

Ethnic De-identification
- Adoptive Parents
- Birth Parents

Exploration
Ethnic identity preoccupation
Since I was raised by white parents...
Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents
Lost aspects of birth culture due to adoption
Belonging
- Lack of perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups
- Desire to feel connected to or aligned with culture of origin
- Does not care about a sense of belonging to culture of origin

Consideration of the influence of ethnicity on sense of self

	Name
	Minimizing salience of ethnic identity as related to sense of self
	Acknowledging salience of ethnicity as related to sense of self

Racial Identity
- Others viewed me as white
- I viewed myself as white
- Acknowledging racial difference from adoptive parents
- Others viewed me as a member of my racial group - Positive
- Others viewed me as a member of my racial group - Negative

Roadblocks
- **Intrapsychic Roadblocks**
  - Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents
  - Fear of how his or her view of self would change following exploration
  - Difficulty in finding right words to express self
- **Interpersonal Roadblocks**
  - Participant worried about how making contact would make APs feel
  - APs withholding information or discouraging contact
  - Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration
  - Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive ethnic or racial groups
- **Logistical Roadblocks**
  - Lack of knowledge
  - Challenging system to navigate
  - Perceived lack of information in adoption file

Facilitators

Self-Esteem
- Self-liking
- Self-competence
- Positive self-worth
- Negative self-worth

Mentoring
- Giving Back
- Seeing self in mentee
- Mentor Group Meetings
- Positive feelings of self as a result of being a mentor
- Wish they had this opportunity when they were younger
- Preoccupation with fulfilling mentor role
- First participation in an adoption-focused social group
- Participation in AMP induces change in self

Early Context

Name
⬤ Racial Demographics
⬤ Socio-economic Demographics
⊟ ⬤ Socialization
⬤ Had majority white friends
⬤ Facts about Adoption
⬤ Gender
⬤ Sexual Orientation
⊟ ⬤ Advice to Adoptive Parents
⬤ Communication
⬤ Supportive of emotional journey
⊟ ⬤ Birth Parents and family
⬤ Desire to ask questions about birth family and origins natural
⬤ Support desires for contact
⬤ Be sensitive to child's personal development and capacities
⬤ Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers
⬤ Z - Potential New Node

APPENDIX E

WAVE 2 TEMPLATE

Name
Adoptive Identity - Making Meaning

- Adoptive Identity - Making Meaning
  - Depth of narrative
    - Richness of narrative
    - Lack of richness of narrative
    - Intrapsychic processes of depth
    - Lack of intrapsychic processes of depth
  - Flexibility
  - Inflexibility
  - Internal consistency
  - Internal inconsistency
  - Preoccupation
  - Intrapersonal communication
  - Acknowledging salience
    - Salience of adoption
    - Salience of ethnicity or culture of origin
    - Salience of race
    - Ranking Question
      - Ranking Question - 1
      - Ranking Question - 2
      - Ranking Question - 3
      - Ranking Question - 4
      - Ranking Question - 5
      - Ranking Question - 6
      - Ranking Question - 7
      - Ranking Question - 8
      - Ranking Question - 9
      - Ranking Question - 10
  - Minimizing or rejecting salience
    - Minimizing or rejecting salience of adoption
    - Minimizing or rejecting salience of ethnicity or culture of origin
    - Minimizing or rejecting salience of race
  - Acknowledging difference
    - Acknowledging difference as related to adoptive status
    - Acknowledging difference as related to ethnicity or culture of origin
      - Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents
    - Acknowledging difference as related to race
      - Acknowledging racial difference from white adoptive parents
      - Since I was raised by white parents...

Name
○ Minimizing or rejecting difference
○ Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to adoptive status
○ Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to ethnicity or culture of origin
○ Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to race
○ Acknowledging change in self
○ Awareness of change in self as related to adoption
○ Awareness of change in self as related to ethnicity or race
○ Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self
○ Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to adoption
○ Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to ethnicity or race
○ Valuing narrative independence and privacy
○ Valuing narrative independence
○ Valuing narrative privacy
○ Adoption Dynamics
○ Viewed as positive
○ Viewed as negative
○ Ambivalent
○ Lived Experiences of Adoption
○ Relational dynamics
○ Adoptive family
○ AP1 - Participant Relationship
○ AP1 - Communication
○ AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption
○ AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
○ AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
○ AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
○ AP1 - Initiation of communication about adoption
○ AP1 - Participant initiates communication
○ AP1 - AP1 initiates communication
○ AP1 - Participant's experience in relationship
○ AP1 - Strength of bond
○ AP1 - Comfort
○ AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
○ AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
○ AP1 - Openness in communication about adoption
○ AP1 - Lack of openness in communication about adoption

- AP1 - Parent understands participant
- AP1 - Parent doesn't understand participant
- AP1 - Participant desire for more communication about adoption
- AP1 - Participant desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
- AP1 - Participant does not express a desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
- AP1 - Participant's perception of AP1 experience
  - AP1 - Intrapsychics
    - AP1 - Depth of narrative
    - AP1 - Flexibility
    - AP1 - Inflexibility
    - AP1 - Internal consistency
    - AP1 - Internal inconsistency
  - AP1 - Strength of bond (parent to child)
  - AP1 - Questioning strength of bond
  - AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AP1 - Demonstrates openness in communication
  - AP1 - Does not demonstrate openness in communication
  - AP1 - Desire for more communication about adoption
  - AP1 - Aware of challenges faced by participant
  - AP1 - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
  - AP1 - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
  - AP1 - Makes effort to understand
  - AP1 - Avoidance of topics of conversation
    - Birth parents
    - Race or ethnicity
- AP2 - Participant Relationship
  - AP2 - Communication
    - AP2 - Presence of communication about adoption
    - AP2 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
    - AP2 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
    - AP2 - Lack of frequency of communciation about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
    - AP2 - Initiation of communication about adoption
      - AP2 - Participant initiates communication
      - AP2 - AP2 initiates communication
  - AP2 - Participant's experience in relationship
    - AP2 - Strength of bond
    - AP2 - Comfort

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- AS - AS doesn't understand participant
- AS - Participant's perception of AS experience
  - AS - Intrapsychics
    - AS - Depth of narrative
    - AS - Flexibility
    - AS - Inflexibility
    - AS - Internal consistency
    - AS - Internal inconsistency
  - AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AS - Desire for more communication about adoption
  - AS - Aware of challenges faced by participant
  - AS - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
  - AS - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
- Adoption triad dynamics
  - Interfamilial Communication
- Extrafamilial dynamics
  - Presence of communication about adoption with Extras
  - Lack of communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant ease of communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant unease in communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant openness in communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with Extras
  - Extras understand participant
  - Extras do not understand participant
  - Acknowledgement that they speak differently about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Presence of communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Lack of communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Participant ease of communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Participant unease in communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Participant openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Particiant lack of openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Adopted extras understand participant
    - Adopted extras do not understand participant
- Experiences related to adoption
  - Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned
  - Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents
  - Experiences of adoption stigma

Name

- ○ Responses to adoption stigma
  - ○ Laughing it off
  - ○ Ignoring the statement
  - ○ Educating others
  - ○ Using adoption or adoptive staus as a response, rationale, or justification
- ○ Experiences related to race and ethnicity
  - ○ Ethnic identification
    - ○ Identification with ethnic group of adoptive parents
    - ○ Identification with ethnic group of birth parents
    - ○ Identification with dominant ethnic culture of the US
  - ○ Ethnic de-identification
    - ○ De-identification with adoptive parents' ethnic group
    - ○ De-identification with birth parents' ethnic group
  - ○ Racial identification
  - ○ Experiences as a racial and ethnic person
    - ○ I viewed myself as white
    - ○ Others viewed me as white
    - ○ Others viewed me as a member of my racial group - Positive
    - ○ Others viewed me as a member of my racial group - Negative
    - ○ Lost aspects of birth culture due to adoption
    - ○ Belonging
      - ○ Perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups
      - ○ Lack of perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups
- ○ Experience of fantasies or desires
  - ○ Fantasies or desires as related to adoption
    - ○ Birth mother
      - ○ Desire to meet birth mother but no action taken
      - ○ Despite action taken, additional contact or connection desired
    - ○ Birth father
      - ○ Desire to meet birth father but no action taken
      - ○ Despite action taken, additional contact or connection desired
    - ○ Desire to meet birth siblings but no action taken
    - ○ If hadn't been adopted...
  - ○ Fantasies or desires as related to race and or ethnicity
    - ○ Desire to feel connected to or aligned with culture of origin
      - ○ Desire to travel to country of origin

Name
○ Despite action taken, greater connection with racial or ethnic group desired
○ Does not desire to or care to connect or belong with culture of origin

○ Experiences of context
  ○ Early context
    ○ Racial Demographics
    ○ Socio-economic Demographics
    ○ Socialization
      ○ Had majority white friends
    ○ Contextual attitudes toward adoption
      ○ Negative views
      ○ Positive views
  ○ Current context
    ○ Racial demographics
    ○ Socio-economic demographics
    ○ Socialization
      ○ Had majority white friends
    ○ Contextual attitudes toward adoption
      ○ Negative views
      ○ Positive views

○ Aspects of the adoption narrative
  ○ Facts about Adoption
  ○ Information gaps
    ○ Why was I placed for adoption
    ○ Whether I look like birth parents or what do birth parents look like
    ○ Birth family medical history
    ○ Birth family social history and personalities

○ Exploration
  ○ Birth parents and family
    ○ Has made contact with members of birth family
    ○ Has not made contact with members of birth family
  ○ Ethnic group or racial group
    ○ Have sought contact or engagement
      ○ Traveled to country of origin
    ○ Have not sought contact or engagement
    ○ Considerations of ethnicity and race

- Name
  - Motivation
    - To satisfy curiosity
    - To strengthen identity or sense of self
  - Experiences of roadblocks
    - Intrapsychic Roadblocks
      - Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents
      - Fear of how his or her view of self would change following exploration
        - Exploration into adoption
        - Exploration into race or ethnicity
      - Difficulty in finding right words to express self
    - Interpersonal Roadblocks
      - Participant worried about how APs would feel
      - APs withholding information or discouraging contact
      - Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration
      - Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive ethnic or racial groups
    - Logistical Roadblocks
      - Lack of knowledge of culture of origin
      - Challenging system to navigate
      - Perceived lack of information
      - Birth parent(s) deceased
      - Discriminatory LGBTQ adoptive parent rights
  - Experiences of facilitators
    - Efforts by second parent to legally adopt child in same sex parented couples
  - Experiences of mentoring
    - Mentor Group Meetings
    - Intrapsychic
      - Views program as positive
      - Positive feelings of self as a result of being a mentor
      - First participation in an adoption-focused social group
      - Wish they had this opportunity when they were younger
      - Seeing self in mentee
      - Participation in AMP induces change in self
    - Interpersonal
      - Giving Back
      - Positive feelings about mentee
      - Strength of bond with mentee

Name
⊟ ○ Challenges
○ Scheduling and logistical challenges
○ Preoccupation with fulfilling mentor role
⊟ ○ Advice to Adoptive Parents
○ Communication
○ Supportive of emotional journey
⊟ ○ Birth parents and family
○ Desire to ask questions about birth family and origins natural
○ Support desires for contact
○ Be sensitive to child's personal development and capacities
⊟ ○ Provide access
○ Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers
○ Provide access to other adopted individuals
⊟ ○ Self-Esteem
○ Self-liking
○ Self-competence
○ Positive self-worth
○ Negative self-worth
○ Gender
○ Sexual Orientation
○ Z - Potential New Node

APPENDIX F

WAVE 3 TEMPLATE

Name
Adoptive Identity - Making Meaning
Depth of narrative
Richness of narrative
Lack of richness of narrative
Intrapsychic processes of depth
Lack of intrapsychic processes of depth
Flexibility
Inflexibility
Internal consistency
Internal inconsistency
Preoccupation
Intrapersonal communication
Acknowledging salience
Salience of adoption
Salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin
Ranking Question
Ranking Question - 1
Ranking Question - 2
Ranking Question - 3
Ranking Question - 4
Ranking Question - 5
Ranking Question - 6
Ranking Question - 7
Ranking Question - 8
Ranking Question - 9
Ranking Question - 10
Minimizing or rejecting salience
Minimizing or rejecting salience of adoption
Minimizing or rejecting salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin
Acknowledging difference
Acknowledging difference as related to adoptive status
Acknowledging difference as related to ethnicity or culture of origin
Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents
Acknowledging ethnic difference from multicultural or multiracial parents
Acknowledging racial difference from adoptive parents
Since I was raised by white parents...
Minimizing or rejecting difference
Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to adoptive status

Name
⦿ Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to race, ethnicity, or culture of origin

⊟ ⦿ Acknowledging change in self over time
- ⦿ Awareness of change in self as related to adoption
- ⦿ Awareness of change in self as related to race or ethnicity

⊟ ⦿ Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self over time
- ⦿ Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to adoption
- ⦿ Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to race or ethnicity

⊟ ⦿ Valuing narrative independence and privacy
- ⦿ Valuing narrative independence
- ⦿ Valuing narrative privacy

⊟ ⦿ Adoption Dynamics
- ⦿ Viewed as positive
- ⦿ Viewed as negative
- ⦿ Ambivalent

⊟ ⦿ Lived Experiences of Adoption
⊟ ⦿ Relational dynamics
⊟ ⦿ Adoptive family
⊟ ⦿ AP1 - Participant Relationship
⊟ ⦿ AP1 - Communication
- ⦿ AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
- ⦿ AP1 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
⊟ ⦿ AP1 - Initiation of communication about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Participant initiates communication
- ⦿ AP1 - AP1 initiates communication

⊟ ⦿ AP1 - Participant's experience in relationship
- ⦿ AP1 - Strength of bond
- ⦿ AP1 - Weakness of bond
- ⦿ AP1 - Comfort
- ⦿ AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Openness in communication about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Lack of openness in communication about adoption
- ⦿ AP1 - Parent understands participant
- ⦿ AP1 - Parent doesn't understand participant
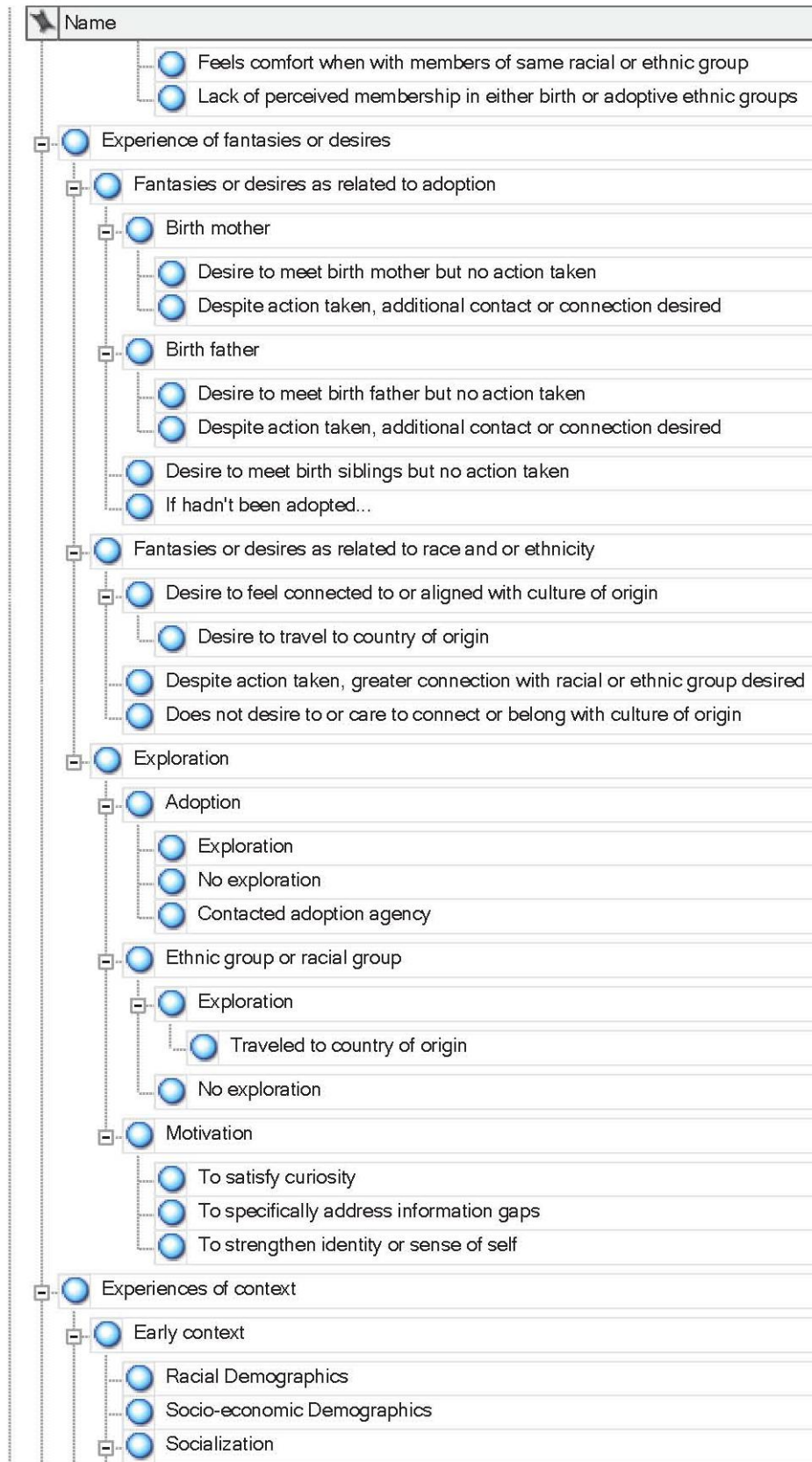- ⦿ AP1 - Participant desire for more communication about adoption

Name
○ AP1 - Participant desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
○ AP1 - Participant does not express a desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
○ AP1 - Participant's perception of AP1 experience
○ AP1 - Intrapsychics
○ AP1 - Depth of narrative
○ AP1 - Flexibility
○ AP1 - Inflexibility
○ AP1 - Internal consistency
○ AP1 - Internal inconsistency
○ AP1 - Strength of bond (parent to child)
○ AP1 - Questioning strength of bond
○ AP1 - Ease in conversations about adoption
○ AP1 - Unease in conversations about adoption
○ AP1 - Demonstrates openness in communication
○ AP1 - Does not demonstrate openness in communication
○ AP1 - Desire for more communication about adoption
○ AP1 - Aware of challenges faced by participant
○ AP1 - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
○ AP1 - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
○ AP1 - Makes effort to understand
○ AP1 - Aware conversations are important; engages genuinely
○ AP1 - Aware conversations are important; engages as if forced or burdened
○ AP1 - Avoidance of topics of conversation
○ Birth parents
○ Race or ethnicity
○ AP2 - Participant Relationship
○ AP2 - Communication
○ AP2 - Presence of communication about adoption
○ AP2 - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
○ AP2 - Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
○ AP2 - Lack of frequency of communciation about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity
○ AP2 - Initiation of communication about adoption
○ AP2 - Participant initiates communication
○ AP2 - AP2 initiates communication
○ AP2 - Participant's experience in relationship
○ AP2 - Strength of bond
○ AP2 - Weakness of bond
○ AP2 - Comfort

- AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption
- AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption
- AP2 - Openness in communication about adoption
- AP2 - Lack of openness in communication about adoption
- AP2 - Parent understands participant
- AP2 - Parent doesn't understand participant
- AP2 - Participant desire for more communication about adoption
- AP2 - Participant desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
- AP2 - Participant does not express a desire for more communication about race and ethnicity
- AP2 - Participant's perception of AP2 experience
  - AP2 - Intrapsychics
    - AP2 - Depth of narrative
    - AP2 - Flexibility
    - AP2 - Inflexibility
    - AP2 - Internal consistency
    - AP2 - Internal inconsistency
  - AP2 - Strength of bond (parent to child)
  - AP2 - Questioning strength of bond
  - AP2 - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AP2 - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AP2 - Demonstrates openness in communication
  - AP2 - Does not demonstrate openness in communication
  - AP2 - Desire for more communication about adoption
  - AP2 - Aware of challenges faced by participant
  - AP2 - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
  - AP2 - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
  - AP2 - Makes effort to understand
  - AP2 - Aware conversations are important; engages genuinely
  - AP2 - Aware conversations are important; engages as if forced or burdened
  - AP2 - Avoidance of topics of conversation
    - Birth parents
    - Race or ethnicity
- AS - Participant Relationship
  - AS - Communication
    - AS - Presence of communication about adoption
    - AS - Lack of frequency of communication about adoption
    - AS - Initiation of communication about adoption
      - AS - Participant initiates communication
      - AS - AS initiates communication

- AS - Participant's experience in relationship
  - AS - Strength of bond
  - AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AS - AS understands participant
  - AS - AS doesn't understand participant
- AS - Participant's perception of AS experience
  - AS - Intrapsychics
    - AS - Depth of narrative
    - AS - Flexibility
    - AS - Inflexibility
    - AS - Internal consistency
    - AS - Internal inconsistency
  - AS - Ease in conversations about adoption
  - AS - Unease in conversations about adoption
  - AS - Desire for more communication about adoption
  - AS - Aware of challenges faced by participant
  - AS - Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience
  - AS - Anticipates participant will experience challenges
- Extended adoptive family dynamics (EAF)
  - EAF - Presence of communication about adoption
  - EAF members reaffirm strength of familial connection with participant
  - Participant feels comforted in conversations about adoption with EAF
- Adoption triad dynamics
  - Interfamilial Communication
- Extrafamilial dynamics
  - Presence of communication about adoption with Extras
  - Lack of communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant ease of communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant unease in communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant openness in communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with Extras
  - Participant ease in communication about race and ethnicity with Extras
  - Extras understand participant
  - Extras do not understand participant
  - Acknowledgement that they speak differently about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Presence of communication about adoption with adopted Extras
    - Lack of communication about adoption with adopted Extras

- Participant ease of communication about adoption with adopted Extras
- Participant unease in communication about adoption with adopted Extras
- Participant openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras
- Particiant lack of openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras
- Adopted extras understand participant
- Adopted extras do not understand participant

Experiences related to adoption
- Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned
- Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents
- Experiences of adoption stigma
- Responses to adoption stigma
  - Laughing it off
  - Ignoring the statement
  - Educating others
  - Using adoption or adoptive staus as a response, rationale, or justification
  - Excusing negative comments as harmless or unintentional

Experiences related to race and ethnicity
- Ethnic identification
  - Identification with ethnic group of adoptive parents
  - Identification with ethnic group of birth parents
  - Identification with dominant ethnic culture of the US
- Ethnic de-identification
  - De-identification with adoptive parents' ethnic group
  - De-identification with birth parents' ethnic group
- Racial identification
- Experiences as a racial and ethnic person
  - Viewed expereince as racially or ethnically stigmatizing or discriminatory
  - I viewed myself as white
  - Others viewed me as white
  - Others viewed me as a member of my racial group - Positive
  - Others viewed me as a member of my racial group - Negative
  - Others do not afford me full membership in my racial or ethnic group
  - Insensitive or stigmatizing comments related to race, ethnicity, culture of origin made to participant
    - Comments made by grandfather
    - Comments made by adoptive mother
  - Lost aspects of birth culture due to adoption
  - Belonging
    - Perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups

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Name

- Feels comfort when with members of same racial or ethnic group
- Lack of perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups

- Experience of fantasies or desires
  - Fantasies or desires as related to adoption
    - Birth mother
      - Desire to meet birth mother but no action taken
      - Despite action taken, additional contact or connection desired
    - Birth father
      - Desire to meet birth father but no action taken
      - Despite action taken, additional contact or connection desired
    - Desire to meet birth siblings but no action taken
    - If hadn't been adopted...
  - Fantasies or desires as related to race and or ethnicity
    - Desire to feel connected to or aligned with culture of origin
      - Desire to travel to country of origin
    - Despite action taken, greater connection with racial or ethnic group desired
    - Does not desire to or care to connect or belong with culture of origin
  - Exploration
    - Adoption
      - Exploration
      - No exploration
      - Contacted adoption agency
    - Ethnic group or racial group
      - Exploration
        - Traveled to country of origin
      - No exploration
    - Motivation
      - To satisfy curiosity
      - To specifically address information gaps
      - To strengthen identity or sense of self
- Experiences of context
  - Early context
    - Racial Demographics
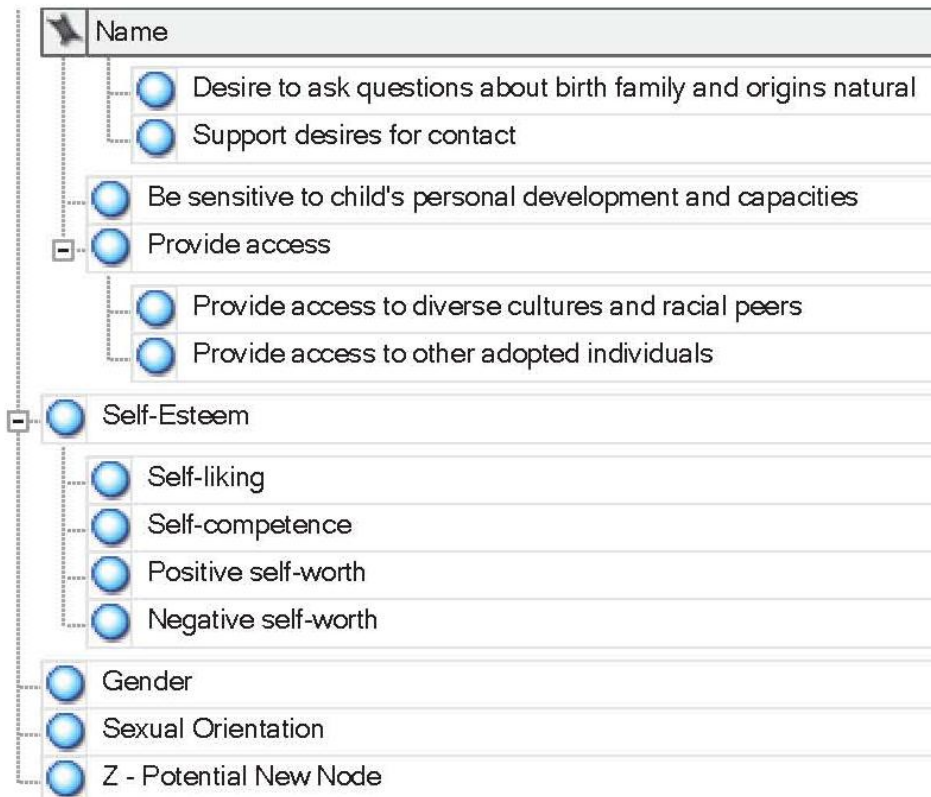   - Socio-economic Demographics
    - Socialization

- Had majority white friends
  - Early context and adoption
    - Negative views
    - Positive views
    - Lack of education or awareness about adoption
  - Early context, race, and ethnicity
    - Lack of education about race and ethnicity
- Current context
  - Racial demographics
  - Socio-economic demographics
  - Socialization
    - Had majority white friends
  - Current context and adoption
    - Negative views
    - Positive views
    - Lack of education or awareness about adoption
  - Current context, race, and ethnicity
    - Lack of education about race and ethnicity
    - Participant has more racially or ethnically diverse friend group relative to early context
- Aspects of the adoption narrative
  - Facts about Adoption
  - Information gaps
    - Early adoption narrative or adoption story
    - Why was I placed for adoption
    - Whether I look like birth parents or what do birth parents look like
    - Birth family medical history
    - Birth family social history and personalities
- Experiences of roadblocks
  - Intrapsychic Roadblocks
    - Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents
    - Fear of how his or her view of self would change following exploration
      - Exploration into adoption
      - Exploration into race or ethnicity
    - Difficulty in finding right words to express self
  - Interpersonal Roadblocks

- Participant worried about how APs would feel
- APs withholding information or discouraging contact
- Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration
- Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive ethnic or racial groups
  - Logistical Roadblocks
    - Phase of life
    - Lack of knowledge of culture of origin
    - Challenging system to navigate
    - Perceived lack of information
    - Birth parent(s) deceased
    - Discriminatory LGBTQ adoptive parent rights
- Experiences of facilitators
  - Efforts by second parent to legally adopt child in same sex parented couples
  - Seeking therapy
  - APs provide access to other transracially adopted persons or peers
  - Found information in adoption file
- Experiences of mentoring
  - Mentor Group Meetings
  - Intrapsychic
    - Views program as positive
    - Wants to be or is planning on continuing role as a mentor in the future
    - Positive feelings of self as a result of being a mentor
    - First participation in an adoption-focused social group
    - Wish they had this opportunity when they were younger
    - Seeing self in mentee
    - Participation in AMP induces change in self
  - Interpersonal
    - Giving Back
    - Positive feelings about mentee
    - Strength of bond with mentee
    - Considers mentee as sibling
  - Challenges
    - Scheduling and logistical challenges
    - Preoccupation with fulfilling mentor role
- Advice to Adoptive Parents
  - Communication
  - Supportive of emotional journey
  - Birth parents and family

Name
○ Desire to ask questions about birth family and origins natural
○ Support desires for contact
○ Be sensitive to child's personal development and capacities
○ Provide access
○ Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers
○ Provide access to other adopted individuals
○ Self-Esteem
○ Self-liking
○ Self-competence
○ Positive self-worth
○ Negative self-worth
○ Gender
○ Sexual Orientation
○ Z - Potential New Node

APPENDIX G

DESCRIPTIVE CODEBOOK – WAVE 1

The following is a descriptive codebook of the higher and lower order codes that comprise the template. This codebook will be continually revised and updated at the end of each wave of analysis. Previous versions of the codebook will be retained and new files saved to ensure the ability to compare and contrast between codebooks longitudinally, and to track changes in emergent or receding codes over time.

Higher order codes are page justified to the far left and underlined and in bold. Second order codes are indented and listed below, while third order codes are indented and listed below the second orders. Definitions as well as the title of the codes are presented.

Adoptive Identity

This higher order node of adoptive identity reflects both developmental and narrative theories of self. The adopted person is thought to develop a narrative, or a story of one's self as an adopted person. This narrative is shaped by the "meaning" that an adopted person assigns to his or her adoptive status. In this way, adopted persons are thought to consider and integrate (to varying degrees) their status as an adopted person, and consider the impact that adoptive status may have on other aspects of self.

Adoptive identity is understood to be dynamic, influenced by the person's experiences within a social context. The early narrative is heavily influenced by the adoptive parents, though later on, the adopted person may seek a greater degree of authorship over his or her adoption story. In this way, the narrative is understood to change over time.

Three core components are thought to contribute to a narrative identity: identity exploration, which represents process by which identity changes and evolves, and internal consistency and flexibility, which reflect the coherence and of the narrative.

> ➢ **Depth of exploration of a narrative**
> Depth of adoptive identity exploration refers to the degree to which participants reflect on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person.
>
> Examples can include instances in which the adopted person comments on differences between past and present attitudes and views of adoption or the adoption story, exploring the connections between one's status as an adopted person and other aspects of self (e.g., seeking a greater understanding of the impact of adoption on one's life). Comments may also reflect the adopted person seeking information about any aspect of the adoption process, birth parents, or even adoptive family history.
>
> In addition to these elements are comments made about the process by which an adopted person achieves depth in the narrative. This may reflect thought processes, decision making processes, or challenging presupposed positions and views of the adoption.
>
>> ❖ **Richness of narrative**
>> This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows for the identification of a section of narrative that is especially rich and detailed. This subnode of depth reflects the qualitative depth rather than the processes by which one achieves depth of narrative.
>>
>> ❖ **Lack of richness of narrative**
>> This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows for the identification of a section of narrative that is relatively sparse in

detail. The "lack of richness" is a counterpoint to the "Richness" subnode, allowing coders to distinguish between qualitatively rich or limited narratives.

❖ **Intrapsychic processes of depth**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture the thoughts, feelings, and mechanics of achieving depth of a narrative. Examples may be participants referencing arduous thought processes and ruminations, or exploration and consideration of their own feelings related to adoption. This subnode more reflects the themes captured in the MTARP definition of depth and exploration.

➢ **Flexibility**
Flexibility refers to the degree to which participants view issues as others might see them; perspective taking.

Flexibility is seen in a participant who considers the challenges of adoption as experienced from not only his or her perspective, but also from the points of view of the adoptive and birth parents and siblings.

➢ **Inflexibility**
Inflexibility can be coded for those instances in which the adopted person demonstrates an inability to see the adoption process from multiple points of view.

➢ **Internal consistency**
Internal consistency reflects a coherent and cohesive narrative in which statements made are supported, rather than contradicted, by later statements or examples. Essentially, the individual must demonstrate an effort to make statements about his or her adoption or views on adoption in general, and support those statements throughout the narrative.

Examples of internal consistency might be the adopted person making a statement in which he or she expresses a belief that making contact with birth family is important to identity development. Later, when asked about his or her experiences with contact, he or she may again reiterate that making contact with birth parents was one of the most influential moments in shaping who he or she is as a person. Note the consistency in beliefs and lived examples.

➢ **Internal inconsistency**
Reflects sections of the narrative which contradict previously stated attitudes, beliefs, or views on adoption or the adoption story.

➢ **Intrapersonal communication**
Reflects internal dialogue within the adopted person (e.g., thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and fears) about adoption or one's adoptive status.

➢ **Consideration of the influence of adoption**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, indicates portions of the transcript in which participants acknowledge the degree of connection between adoption and other dimensions of self, as well as to a more global sense of self or identity.

❖ **Minimizing the salience of adoption**
This subnode of Consideration of influence was created following Wave 1 of coding. It allows coders to designate comments in which the participant may diminish or devalue the connection between adoption history and a larger sense of self or identity.

❖ **Acknowledging the salience of adoption**
This subnode, a counterpoint to Minimizing salience was created following Wave 1 of coding. This subnode allows coders to indicate when participants acknowledge the impact that their adoptive status has on their self-concept or identity.

❖ **Ranking Question**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, is linked to a specific question on the interview schedule in which participants were asked how they would rate their level of understanding of the impact of their adoption on their larger sense of self. Participants responded with a number between 1 and 10, and then followed up their numerical ranking with a description of what that number meant to them. The following numerical subnodes allow for a specific indication of the number given in response.

- **Ranking Question 1 – 10 subnodes**

Adoption Dynamics

Adoption dynamics is a theme used for statements made that are related to how the adopted person experiences adoption, and how he or she thinks about adoption. Any time the participant makes a statement that reflects how he or she thinks about his or her adoption, you would search for the appropriate sub-node to capture the theme.

➢ **Positive Affect**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The PA scale reflects positive feelings that the adopted person has about his or her adoption. Included are statements such as "I think my parents are happy that they adopted me" and "I'm glad my parents adopted me."

➢ **Negative Experience**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The NE scale is used to reflect statements made in which the adopted person indicates that they experienced something

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about his or her adoptive experience as negative. Included are statements such as "My parents told me I should be thankful that they adopted me," and "My parents tell me they can give me back if they want to." Be sure not to allow your own subjective valuation of statements to influence your coding process. This theme captures the participant's subjective perception of a negative event.

❖ **Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to identify content of negative experiences. This subnode is used to indicate when participants indicate having their adoptive family bonds questioned through statements or questions using, among others, the term "real parents."

❖ **Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to indicate content of negative experiences. This subnode reflects participants having to use adoption as an explanation or reason for the physical and racial differences between themselves and their adoptive parents.

➢ **Preoccupation**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The PRE scale reflects statements made that indicate the adopted person thinks, or is thinking about his or her adoption. Included are statements such as "It bothers me I may have brothers and sisters I don't know," and "I wish I knew more about my medical history." The theme of "preoccupation" and a "longing to know: or "curiosity" are prominent feelings here.

❖ **Why was I placed for adoption**
This node reflect preoccupation with the specific question of "Why?" Many adopted persons want to know the reasons they were placed for adoption; this node captures that very specific topic of preoccupied thoughts.

❖ **Engaged in exploration based on preoccupation**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, is relatively valence-free, indicating whether the participant has taken steps to gather more information or make contact with members of the birth family as a result of preoccupation.

❖ **Not engaged in exploration as a result of preoccupation**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, is a counterpoint to the subnode of Engaged in exploration. This

subnode allows for the identification of participants not taking action despite preoccupying thoughts.

❖ **Whether I look like birth parents**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, the participant acknowledging that he or she thinks about whether they physically resemble birth parents.

❖ **Desire to meet birth mother**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, preoccupation with meeting the birth mother specifically.

❖ **Desire to meet birth father**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, preoccupying thoughts are of meeting the birth father specifically.

❖ **Desire to meet birth siblings**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, preoccupying thoughts are of meeting birth siblings specifically.

❖ **Birth family medical history**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, preoccupying thoughts are about one's birth family medical history and the impact of not knowing this information.

❖ **If I hadn't been adopted…**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this instance, participant thoughts about what his or her life would have been like had they not been adopted. While not currently split, prior MTARP data reveal two potential directions of thought: a) what life would have been like if they were bio-children of their adoptive parents; and b) what life would have been like had they remained with bio parents and not adopted.

Relational Dynamics

This higher order node, created following Wave 1 coding, houses all aspects of the interpersonal relationships between members of the adoptive family, between birth and adoptive families, and between the participant and external others outside of either family. Aspects of the interpersonal relationships include concepts such as attachment, closeness, and communication that are all seen as components of how people relate to one another.

➢ **Adoptive Family**
The adoptive family is a subnode that houses subnodes relating to the dynamics between members of the adoptive family (AP1, AP2, AS).

❖ **AP1 – Participant Relationship**
This subnode houses aspects of the participant's relationship with AP1. Following Wave 1 coding, this subnode allows coders to capture more relational dimensions including attachment and perceived closeness, in addition to communication.

• **AP1 – Strength of bond**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with AP1. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

• **AP1 – Communication**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, allows coders to capture qualifiers of communication between AP1 and the participant. Qualifiers are seen as descriptors of the nature of communication (e.g., frequency, initiation) rather than content or how the various parties feel before, during, or after communication occurs. This subnode can be thought of as more "quantitative" aspects of communication.

→ **AP1 – Presence of communication about adoption**
This node is used to identify references to communication with AP1 that do not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AP1 so frequency of communication is not lost.

→ **AP1 – Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity**
This subnode allows for the identification of communication between AP1 and the participant in which the concepts of race, ethnicity, and / or culture as they relate to adoption are discussed.

→ **AP1 – Lack of frequency of communication about adoption**
This subnode allows for the identification of a noted lack of frequency of communication about adoption between the participant and AP1.

→ **AP1 – Initiation of communication about adoption**
This subnode allows for the indication of who, between AP1 and the participant, generally or most often starts conversations about adoption. If both parties are said to bring it up equally well, then both subnodes contained in this node will be coded.

✓ **AP1 – Participant initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AP1 and the participant in which the participant generally initiates communication about adoption.

✓ **AP1 – AP1 initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AP1 and the participant in which AP1 generally initiates communication about adoption.

- **AP1 – Participant's experience in relationship**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, is designed to capture many aspects of the participant's experience of his or her relationship with AP1. The subnodes housed within this node reflect the participant's subjective experience, how he or she feels

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as a part of this relationship, and their perceptions of the connection with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Comfort**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective valuation of AP1's ability to emotionally, physically, or otherwise provide support and comfort in the participant's challenges with adoption. Example: "I was really upset when I came home from school after a classmate made fun of me for being adopted. My dad sat with me for a while and told me things would be alright."

→ **AP1 – Parent understands participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AP1 "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive parents' awareness of challenges, and adoptive parents' true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their children. This node does not reflect AP1's actual understanding; simply whether the participant FEELS that AP1 understands him or her.

→ **AP1 – Parent doesn't understand participant**
Reflects participant feelings that AP1 does not "understand" the participant's point of view, true feelings, or true experience. AP1 may be aware of the challenges, but may not "understand." Also, this does not indicate whether AP1 actually understands the participant or not, simply whether the participant FEELS that AP1 does not understand the participant's experience.

→ **AP1 – Ease in conversations about adoption**
The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with AP1 about adoption.

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→ **AP1 – Unease in conversations about adoption**
The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging AP1 in a conversation about adoption.

→ **AP1 – Participant desire for more communication**
This subnode captures participant feelings about current levels of communication with AP1, and the participant's desire for increased communication. This is positioned here under relational dynamics rather than Communication, as this placement allows for the capture of personal feeling and longing, rather than the actual state of communication, which could be coded with the "Lack of frequency" code.

→ **AP1 – Openness in communication about adoption**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and AP1 in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption. This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and AP1 about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Lack of openness in communication about adoption**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and AP1 in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with AP1. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with AP1.

- **AP1 – Participant's perception of AP1 experience**
  This subnode captures the participant's subjective perception of aspects of AP1's experience of adoption across a series of subnodes. These subnodes, while seen to capture a perspective AP1, must be viewed as merely the participant's sense of how AP1 experiences aspects of self and adoption.

  → **AP1 – Intrapsychics**
    This subnode captures the participant's experience of AP1 across the subnodes that are also seen in Adoptive Identity. Positioned here, the subnodes are used to capture participant attitudes toward AP1 consistency/inconsistency, flexibility/inflexibility, and depth of narrative. Participants may reveal these thoughts directly, or they may emerge to the coders who notice discrepancies in the participant's recounting of AP1 statements or actions.

      ✓ **AP1 – Internal inconsistency**
        This subnode reflects instances in which AP1 demonstrates inconsistency in the narrative they tell, attitudes and beliefs they hold, inconsistencies in actions or comments, or inconsistencies in the adoption story AP1 retells. This inconsistency may be identified by the participant explicitly, or may be identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit comment by the participant.

      ✓ **AP1 – Internal consistency**
        This subnode is used to identify points in AP1 narrative, attitudes, behaviors, or adoption story that are consistent across time as identified by either the participant in the transcript directly, or by the coders who notice emergent consistent patterns in the participant's recounting of AP1.

      ✓ **AP1 – Inflexibility**

This subnode is a counterpoint to AP1 Flexibility and identifies points in which AP1 demonstrates an inability to see the adoption story from the perspective of others or to adapt his or her own views on adoption. Inflexibility may be explicitly identified by the participant or identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AP1 – Flexibility**
This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AP1 demonstrates an ability to see the adoption story from multiple perspectives other than his or her own, and is able to adapt his or her narrative. This subnode may be coded following explicit identification by the participant, or may also be identified by the coders even in the absence of explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AP1 – Depth of narrative**
This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AP1 is thought demonstrate reflection on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or of the meaning of being an adoptive parent. It is also used to identify instances in which they are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person (from the perspective of the child) or an adoptive parent.

→ **AP1 – Ease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AP1 ease and comfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode

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is used to provide depth of understanding into how AP1 is experienced by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Unease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AP1 uneasiness and discomfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AP1 is experienced by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 desires more communication with the participant about adoption. This may be reflected in direct statements in which AP1 is portrayed as attempting to engage the participant in conversation.

→ **AP1 – Aware of challenges faced by participant**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AP1 – Awareness that the don't understand participant's lived experience**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AP1 – Anticipates participant will experience challenges**
This subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant indicates AP1 anticipated that the participant would experience challenges related to adoption, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these. Evidence may emerge in AP1 engaging the participant in conversations

about how to handle racial discrimination, and /
or questions about adoption.

❖ **AP2 – Participant Relationship**
There is a complete set of subnodes for the AP2 – Participant
relationship that is a duplicate of the AP1 – Participant nodes;
simply substitute AP2 for AP1 in the node description.

❖ **AS – Participant Relationship**
This subnode houses aspects of the participant's relationship with
AS. Following Wave 1 coding, this subnode allows coders to
capture more relational dimensions including attachment and
perceived closeness, in addition to communication.

- **AS – Strength of bond**
  This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding,
  reflects the participant's perception of the strength of
  the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with
  AS. This subnode is used to capture themes of
  attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the
  relationship.

- **AS – Communication**
  This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, allows
  coders to capture qualifiers of communication between
  AS and the participant. Qualifiers are seen as
  descriptors of the nature of communication (e.g.,
  frequency, initiation) rather than content or how the
  various parties feel before, during, or after
  communication occurs. This subnode can be thought of
  as more "quantitative" aspects of communication.

  → **AS – Presence of communication about
  adoption**
  This node is used to identify references to
  communication with AS that does not reflect a
  particular valence. This allows for the noting of
  times when the adopted person and AS so
  frequency of communication is not lost.

  → **AS – Lack of frequency of communication
  about adoption**
  This subnode allows for the identification of a
  noted lack of frequency of communication about
  adoption between the participant and AS.

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- **AS – Participant's experience in relationship**
  This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, is designed to capture many aspects of the participant's experience of his or her relationship with AS. The subnodes housed within this node reflect the participant's subjective experience, how he or she feels as a part of this relationship, and their perceptions of the connection with AS.

  - → **AS – Ease in conversations about adoption**
    The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with AS about adoption.

  - → **AS – Unease in conversations about adoption**
    The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging AS in a conversation about adoption.

  - → **AS – AS understands participant**
    Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AS "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive siblings' awareness of challenges, and their true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their brother or sister. This node does not reflect AS's actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that AS understands him or her.

  - → **AS – AS doesn't understand participant**
    Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AS does not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive siblings' awareness of challenges, and their true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their

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brother or sister. This node does not reflect AS's actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that AS understands him or her.

- **AS – Participant's perception of AS experience**
  This subnode captures the participant's subjective perception of aspects of AS' experience of adoption across a series of subnodes. These subnodes, while seen to capture a perspective AS, must be viewed as merely the participant's sense of how AS experiences aspects of self and adoption.

  → **AS – Intrapsychics**
    This subnode captures the participant's experience of AS across the subnodes that are also seen in Adoptive Identity. Positioned here, the subnodes are used to capture participant attitudes toward AS consistency/inconsistency, flexibility/inflexibility, and depth of narrative. Participants may reveal these thoughts directly, or they may emerge to the coders who notice discrepancies in the participant's recounting of AS statements or actions.

    ✓ **AS – Depth of narrative**
      This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AS is thought demonstrate reflection on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or of the meaning of being the sibling of an adopted person.

    ✓ **AS – Flexibility**
      This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AS demonstrates an ability to see the adoption story from multiple perspectives other than his or her own, and is able to adapt his or her narrative. This subnode may be coded following explicit identification by the participant, or may also be identified by the coders

even in the absence of explicit identification by the participant.

- ✓ **AS – Inflexibility**
This subnode is a counterpoint to AS Flexibility and identifies points in which AS demonstrates an inability to see the adoption story from the perspective of others or to adapt his or her own views on adoption. Inflexibility may be explicitly identified by the participant or identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit identification by the participant.

- ✓ **AS – Internal consistency**
This subnode is used to identify points in AS narrative, attitudes, behaviors, or adoption story that are consistent across time as identified by either the participant in the transcript directly, or by the coders who notice emergent consistent patterns in the participant's recounting of AS.

- ✓ **AS – Internal inconsistency**
This subnode reflects instances in which AS demonstrates inconsistency in the narrative they tell, attitudes and beliefs they hold, inconsistencies in actions or comments, or inconsistencies in the adoption story AS retells. This inconsistency may be identified by the participant explicitly, or may be identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit comment by the participant.

→ **AS – Ease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AS ease and comfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is

used to provide depth of understanding into how AS is experienced by the participant.

→ **AS – Unease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AS uneasiness and discomfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AS is experienced by the participant.

→ **AS – Desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode reflects a participant's perception that AS desires more communication with the participant about adoption. This may be reflected in direct statements in which AS is portrayed as attempting to engage the participant in conversation.

→ **AS – Aware of challenges faced by participant**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception AS is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AS – Awareness that the don't understand participant's lived experience**
This subnode captures participant perceptions that AS is aware that he or she does not fully understand the lived experience of the participant. This may be due to AS awareness that since he or she is not adopted, they may never fully understand what the experience of adoption is like for the participant.

→ **AS – Anticipates participant will experience challenges**
This subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant indicates AS anticipated that the participant would experience challenges related to adoption, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these. Evidence may emerge in AS engaging the participant in conversations

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about how to handle racial discrimination, and / or questions about adoption.

➢ **Adoptive Triad Dynamics**
This subnode is used to capture relational dynamics between members of birth and adoptive families. Interfamilial interaction between any member of the birth family and adoptive family is captured here.

❖ **Interfamilial communication**
Reflects mentions of communication between the adoptive family and birth families. Includes communication between the adopted person and his or her birth family members.

➢ **Extrafamilial Dynamics**
This node represents conversations about adoption that occur with individuals outside of either adoptive or birth family spheres. This may include friends or significant others that the individual participates in conversations about adoption with.

❖ **Participant ease of communication about adoption with Extras**
The participant feels that conversations with Extras are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with Extras about adoption.

❖ **Participant unease in communication about adoption with Extras**
The participant feels that conversations with Extras are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging Extras in a conversation about adoption.

❖ **Participant openness in communication about adoption with Extras**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and Extras in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption. This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and Extras about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with Extras.

❖ **Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with Extras**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and Extras in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his

or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with Extras. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with Extras.

❖ **Extras understand participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels the Extras "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

❖ **Extras do not understand participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels Extras do not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

Ethnic Identity
The definition of ethnic identity used in this research draws heavily from the work of Phinney (1992) and Roberts et al., (1999). Ethnic identity is an important aspect of self that must be reconciled and, to varying degrees, integrated into a more global sense of self. Specifically, ethnic identity can be conceptualized as operating in two ways: 1) exploration into a particular ethnicity (e.g., factual and experiential exploration; exploration into the meaning of that ethnic identity to that individual); and 2) the degree of commitment to a particular ethnic group and to the integration of characteristics of this ethnic group into one's larger sense of self. In this way, ethnicity is conceptualized much in the same way as other dimensions of self in a multidimensional identity model, as yet another aspect of self to be considered and integrated into one's tapestry of self.

➢ **Ethnic Identification**
Feelings of affirmation and belonging to a particular ethnic group. Statements in which the participant voices feeling connected to a particular ethnicity.

❖ **Adoptive Parents' Ethnicity**
Statements in which the adopted participant voices a felt connection and sense of belonging or commitment to the ethnic culture and identity of his or her adoptive parents.

❖ **Birth Parents' Ethnicity**
When the participant voices a felt connection, sense of belonging, and commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

❖ **Dominant culture of the US**
This subnode is included to mirror the prompt in the interview that gives participants the option of indicating their ethnic identification as linked to the dominant culture of the US. This "dominant culture" is seen as reflecting cultural and social values of mainstream America.

➢ **Ethnic De-identification**
When the individual makes comments that voice a rejecting stance toward an ethnic group or culture.

❖ **Adoptive Parents' Ethnicity**
When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her adoptive parents.

❖ **Birth Parents' Ethnicity**
When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

➢ **Exploration**
Comments made in which the participant discusses behavior geared toward thinking more about (curiosity), learning more about, or becoming more involved in his or her stated ethnic group.

This sub-node reflects statements in which the participant is somehow involved or seeks to be involved with his or her ethnic group, but does not necessarily reflect the subjective feelings of belonging or acceptance felt by the participant; those feelings would fall under the ethnic identification sub-node.

➢ **Ethnic identity preoccupation**
The addition of the Preoccupation subnode here closely mirrors the Preoccupation subnode of Adoption Dynamics, however, in this instance, the subnode references thoughts or concerns related specifically to ethnic identity rather than adoption. In the cases of TRA, these concepts may not be clearly delineated, yet many participants acknowledge thinking a great deal about ethnic identity while feeling confident in their understanding of more adoption related aspects of self such as parent-child bonds.

➢ **Since I was raised by white parents...**
This subnode is to capture the participants stated or alluded to sense of belonging

or connectedness (or lack thereof) to his or her birth culture as a result of being adopted. Reflecting themes in Samuels (2009), this code is used to capture the participant's awareness that their current sense of belonging or ability to function within a particular culture is a result of being raised by white parents.

➢ **Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents**
This subnode reflects the participant making their awareness of ethnic difference from his or her adoptive parents known.

➢ **Lost aspects of birth culture due to adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's acknowledgement that due to one's TRA, he or she has lost specific aspects of self related to his or her culture of origin. An example would be a participant being fluent in the language of his or her birth culture at the time of adoption, but losing the ability to speak this language over time following adoption.

➢ **Belonging**
This subnode allows coders to capture participant statements that reflect degrees of feeling like he or she "belongs" within either birth or adoptive cultural and ethnic groups.

   ❖ **Lack of perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups**
   This subnode is to capture feelings of "I felt like I didn't belong in either group" expressed by the participant; "either group" reflects both birth and adoptive ethnic groups. This is used to capture sentiments of "Somewhere Between" cultures and may reflect those similar feelings held by multiracial or biracial individuals.
   ❖ **Desire to feel connected to or aligned with culture of origin**
   This subnode is used to identify statements in which the participant expresses a desire to feel more connected with his or her culture of origin.

   ❖ **Does not care about a sense of belonging to culture of origin**
   When the participant states that he or she does not feel like they are aligned with or belong with either ethnic group, in addition to stating that they do not care whether they feel this way or not.

➢ **Consideration of the influence of ethnicity on sense of self**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, identifies portions of the transcript in which participants acknowledge the degree of connection between ethnic identity and other dimensions of self, as well as to a more global sense of self or identity.

❖ **Minimizing salience of ethnic identity as related to sense of self**
This subnode, included after Wave 1 coding, allows coders to capture participant statements that he or she does not think ethnic identity or connectedness with either culture of origin or adoptive culture is intimately connected to his or her sense of self as a person.

❖ **Acknowledging salience of ethnicity as related to sense of self**
This subnode, a counterpoint to Minimizing salience was created following Wave 1 of coding. This subnode allows coders to indicate when participants acknowledge the impact that their ethnicity has on their self-concept or identity.

Racial Identity
This new higher order node captures references to race. The creation of this node is a clear reference to the positioning of race as fundamentally different from ethnicity, as a person may hold separate racial and ethnic identities; the former being more biological, the latter being contextually and experientially influenced.

➢ **Others viewed me as white**
This subnode captures an "outside in" perspective in which members of the social context viewed the participant as racially White, despite physically being a member of another racial group.

➢ **I viewed myself as white**
This subnode captures an "inside out" perspective in which the participant acknowledges an intrapsychic mentation of themselves as white. This may be reflected in direct statements such as the person not recognizing themselves or being surprised by their reflection in the mirror. Themes of depersonalization may be found here.

➢ **Acknowledging racial difference from adoptive parents**
This subnode reflects the participant making their awareness of racial difference from his or her adoptive parents known. This subnode pulls from themes espoused by Kirk (1964) in the acceptance or rejection of difference between the adoptive parents and adopted child.

➢ **Others viewed me as a member of my racial group – Positive**
This subnode reflects instances in which participants felt that their membership in the cultural group of origin was validated. These experiences may be positive for the person at least initially, as some participants may felt comfort in "passing" as a member of their culture of origin.

➢ **Others viewed me as a member of my racial group – Negative**
This subnode reflects instances in which others ascribed racial group membership

and also applied stereotyped expectations of culture to the participant resulting in negative feelings within the participant. The participant may or may not have had to then explain why they did not meet those applied stereotypes using adoption as the reason. An example would be a person seeing a participant of Latin descent and introducing themselves in Spanish, assuming they spoke it.

Roadblocks

This higher order node is seen as a potential integrative theme. Roadblocks are seen to capture the sense of difficulty and impediments felt by adopted persons across many areas of the lived experience of adoption, such as roadblocks in communication with others, roadblocks in exploring birth family contacts, or roadblocks in seeking greater connection to birth culture or race. Roadblocks themselves can be felt in three primary forms: intrapsychic; interpersonal; logistical.

➢ **Intrapsychic Roadblocks**
   These roadblocks are those that exist within the participant's own mind and may be a product of both psychological and social influences. These may manifest as emotions, thoughts, or perceptions of difficulty.

   ❖ **Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents**
      Reflects participant views that their own unknown emotional response to potential meetings with birth family members as a deterrent to making contact.

   ❖ **Fear of how his or her view of self would change following exploration**
      Participant considers the unknown changes to how one views the self, following newfound access to more information about one's early and familial histories as a barrier to exploration. Some participants may feel that they would like to have a stronger sense of self as a person before they seek information that may further disrupt or make more difficult, the process of identity development.

   ❖ **Difficulty in finding right words to express self**
      Participants may feel that a hindrance to further exploration or consideration is the lack of vocabulary to allow them to express themselves to a level they feel is appropriate. Semantic deficits may be perceived in emotion or adoption terminology.

➢ **Interpersonal Roadblocks**
   These roadblocks exist as thoughts and considerations by the participant but are directly related to how they feel others contribute to perceived roadblocks.

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❖ **Participant worried about how making contact would make APs feel**
Participants may not seek communication about adoption in general, or contact with birth family members for fear of how their adoptive family members would feel. These perceptions may or may not be founded in reality, but may nonetheless exist as a deterrent to the adopted person.

❖ **APs withholding information or discouraging contact**
Participants may state that they are aware that their adoptive parents are not sharing information about the adoption. Participants may be aware of an adoption file that was not shared with them, or may be taught, directly or indirectly, that adoption is not an appropriate topic of conversation within that family system.

❖ **Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration**
Participants may feel that they do not have anyone who supports their desire for exploration. This may or may not be founded in reality. The adopted person may feel that his or her adoptive parents do not understand them, and therefore, cannot possibly support them in their journey.

❖ **Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive ethnic or racial groups**
Participant my fear rejection from various racial or ethnic groups that prevents them from seeking increased alignment or membership.

➢ **Logistical Roadblocks**
These roadblocks are characterized by the adopted person indicating challenges in exploration stemming from organizational, systemic, financial, cultural, or informational deficits.

❖ **Lack of knowledge**
Participants may feel that their lack of knowledge about the culture of origin, including not knowing the language of their culture of origin, is a hindrance to feeling connected. Participants may feel that this lack of knowledge prevents them from feeling like a member of the group (inside out) and also from being perceived as a member of that group (outside in). This is a logistical rather than interpersonal roadblock due to the aspect of learning and experience.

❖ **Challenging system to navigate**
Participants do not feel they can navigate the paperwork and various post-adoption and reunification systems in place to

effectively seek information.

❖ **Perceived lack of information in adoption file**
Participants do not feel that there is enough information (e.g., names of birth parents or family; information on birthplace) in their birth records to effectively search. Additionally, participants may feel that while information is listed in their file, that the information is inaccurate or incorrect for some reason.

<u>**Facilitators**</u>
Drawing on the concept of "barriers and facilitators" (Wrobel, Grotevant, & Samek, in press), this higher order node represents references in the transcript to identified aspects of the participant's lived experience (e.g., events, meetings, experiences, people) that they see as helping to make connections with adoption, explore, or gain further insight. This higher order node is seen as a counterpoint to Roadblocks.

<u>**Self-esteem**</u>
This node reflects comments made about how the participant views him or herself as a person and the subjective valuation of him or herself. Self-esteem in this research project is derived from the conceptualization of self-esteem developed by Tafarodi & Swann (2001), who developed a two-factor model of self-esteem: self-liking, and self-competence.

➢ **Self-liking**
Self-liking is one factor of Tafarodi & Swann's (2001) two factor theory of self-esteem. This self-liking sub-node will be used to identify statements in which the participant reveals his or her self-valuation as good or bad as related to his or her adoptive status. This term has a very social component, such that views on self-liking (viewing self as good or bad) can be imparted by the social worlds around the target individual.

An example would be a statement in which the adopted person states that she would never be able to emotionally connect with others and meet the needs of others due to her experience with adoption.

➢ **Self-competence**
The self-competence sub-node will be used to identify statements that reflect the participant's view of him or herself as efficacious, and able to bring about change as a function of his or her power and agency.

➢ **Positive self-worth**
This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as positive. Self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a positive self-regard or self-concept.

➢ **Negative self-worth**
This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as negative. Negative self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a low or negative self-regard or self-concept, leaving the individual with a sense of self as "less than" others.

Mentoring
Reflects comments made about mentoring and the connection between the mentoring experience and his or her adoptive experience.

➢ **Giving Back**
This sub-node is used to capture sentiments of "giving back" as a reason for mentoring or as a benefit obtained as a result. This theme can be coded if there are explicit or implicit references to this theme.

➢ **Seeing Self in Mentee**
This sub-node under mentoring reflects comments made in which the mentor may "see him or herself" in the mentee. The mentor may be reminded of themselves as a child when thinking of his or her mentee. Connections made to the adoptive experience of either the mentor or the mentee may be a part of this theme.

➢ **Mentor Group Meetings**
This sub-node reflects comments made about the perception or impact of the mentor group meetings (MGM).

➢ **Positive feelings of self as a result of being a mentor**
Connects sense of self-esteem or self-worth as being strengthened directly by role as a mentor. Differs from other self-esteem node in that this specifically identifies mentoring as the source.

➢ **Wish they had this opportunity when they were younger**
This subnode is included to capture statements in which the participant expresses feelings of longing for this experience when they were younger.

➢ **Preoccupation with fulfilling mentor role**
Reflects participant concerns and worries of doing a good job as a mentor. The worries can be about logistics and keeping the mentee safe, to worries about how they will connect with someone younger. Themes of nervousness about the responsibility and status as a role model are strong here.

➢ **First participation in an adoption-focused social group**
Captures mentor statements that participation in AMP represents their first experience in an adoption –focused social group. This was seen as an important factor to track as these individuals are already emerging adults.

➢ **Participation in AMP induces change in self**
This node is used to capture participant comments that they feel participation in AMP has changed how they think about and feel about adoption, and their own sense of self as an adopted person.

Early Context
Context refers to mentions of the participant's hometown, early social groups, and the adoptive family system, as the early context individuals are in greatly influence larger themes under study here.

➢ **Racial Demographics**
Participant comments on the racial makeup of his or her hometown (e.g., "a predominantly White town," "an ethnically diverse town").

➢ **Socio-economic Demographics**
Participant mentions the socio-economic status of either his or her own family or the hometown.

➢ **Socialization**
New subnode to document the characteristics of the friend groups that the participant belonged to, separate from a more general identification of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of their larger region or hometown.

❖ **Had majority white friends**
This subnode indicates that the participant's primary social groups growing up were comprised of a white racial group.

Facts about Adoption
Statements made that reflect some knowledge or process to acquire knowledge about his or her adoption. Coding under this category reflects the participant simply presenting factual information about his or her adoption, and DOES NOT reflect any attempts to integrate these facts into a meaningful adoption narrative or story.

Examples include recalling the date or time of birth, adoption, location of birth, information about the adoption such as how many biological siblings he or she may have. For example, "I was born in San Diego, California on March 31, 1992" is a stand-alone statement that isn't integrated into a larger, cohesive sense of self that would be present in a statement coded for depth of narrative. Note how the previous example differs from the following that also reflects integration and depth:
 "I was born in San Diego, California, on March 31, 1992, which is interesting because my adopted mother was in San Diego at that exact same time on a business trip." Note the meaning in the second statement.

Gender
Statements made about the connection between gender and the participant's experience of adoption.

Sexual Orientation
This code will be used to identify statements in which the adopted person sees connections between his or her sexual orientation and adoptive status or adoptive experience.

Advice to Adoptive Parents
This higher order node was generated in response to a particular prompt in the interview schedule when participants were asked to provide advice for future and current adoptive parents in how to best address some of the challenges their children may be facing and how best to support those adopted individuals. Participants provided very direct and specific points of advice, and it was desired to have a structured way of capturing these themes, many of which the adopted persons referenced in their own stories.

> **Communication**
> It is important for adoptive parents to be communicative and open with their child about all aspects of adoption. It is critical for adoptive parents to know that their child's interest in communication about adoption does not reflect their lack of connection or love to the AP; on the contrary, open, honest, supportive, and sincere communication will only serve to strengthen parent-child relationships.

> **Supportive of emotional journey**
> Despite feeling like they may not fully understand their child's lived experience of adoption, the adoptive parents must be supportive of their child's experience and journey.

> **Birth Parents and family**
> Adoptive parents must support their child's desire to explore thoughts and feelings about birth parents and birth family members. Adoptive parents must also work with their children to seek contact if the child desires it. Adoptive parents must know that their child's questions about birth parents and their origins are normal and natural and that the child's interest in birth parents is not reflective of his or her strength of bond to the adoptive parents.

> ❖ **Desire to ask questions about birth family and origins natural**
> Subnode to identify specific statements in which participants believe it is important for adoptive parents to know that a desire to know about one's past is normal and should be expected.
> ❖ **Support desires for contact**
> Subnode to identify when participants state that it is important for adoptive parents to support their child's desire for contact and to facilitate this meeting if possible and safe.

➢ **Be sensitive to child's personal development and capacities**
To indicate participant statements that adoptive parents must be keen observers of their child's desires and wishes and must provide both engagement and distance when appropriate in terms of conversations and action about adoption. Adoptive parents should be adept at "reading" their children and sensing the child's emotional state and readiness.

➢ **Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers**
Parents are responsible for shaping the racial and ethnic context in which their child of color lives. Parents must provide diverse experiences and peoples for their children.

Z – Potential New Node
This node will be used when coders feel that a section of text reflects a new theme not currently captured in a sub-node within this iteration of the template. This node begins with "Z -" to keep it at the bottom of the alphabetically structured node list in NVivo for easy reference.

APPENDIX H

DESCRIPTIVE CODEBOOK – WAVE 2

The following is a descriptive codebook of the higher and lower order codes that comprise the template. This codebook will be continually revised and updated at the end of each wave of analysis. Previous versions of the codebook will be retained and new files saved to ensure the ability to compare and contrast between codebooks longitudinally, and to track changes in emergent or receding codes over time.

Higher order codes are page justified to the far left and underlined and in bold. Second order codes are indented and listed below, while third order codes are indented and listed below the second orders. Definitions as well as the title of the codes are presented.

<u>Adoptive Identity</u>
This higher order node of adoptive identity reflects both developmental and narrative theories of self. The adopted person is thought to develop a narrative, or a story of one's self as an adopted person. This narrative is shaped by the "meaning" that an adopted person assigns to his or her adoptive status. In this way, adopted persons are thought to consider and integrate (to varying degrees) their status as an adopted person, and consider the impact that adoptive status may have on other aspects of self.

Adoptive identity is understood to be dynamic, influenced by the person's experiences within a social context. The early narrative is heavily influenced by the adoptive parents, though later on, the adopted person may seek a greater degree of authorship over his or her adoption story. In this way, the narrative is understood to change over time.

Three core components are thought to contribute to a narrative identity: identity exploration, which represents process by which identity changes and evolves, and internal consistency and flexibility, which reflect the coherence and of the narrative.

➢ **Depth of narrative**
   Depth of adoptive identity exploration refers to the degree to which participants reflect on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person.

   Examples can include instances in which the adopted person comments on differences between past and present attitudes and views of adoption or the adoption story, exploring the connections between one's status as an adopted person and other aspects of self (e.g., seeking a greater understanding of the impact of adoption on one's life). Comments may also reflect the adopted person seeking information about any aspect of the adoption process, birth parents, or even adoptive family history.

   In addition to these elements are comments made about the process by which an adopted person achieves depth in the narrative. This may reflect thought processes, decision making processes, or challenging presupposed positions and views of the adoption.

❖ **Richness of narrative**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows for the identification of a section of narrative that is especially rich and detailed. This subnode of depth reflects the qualitative depth rather than the processes by which one achieves depth of narrative.

❖ **Lack of richness of narrative**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows for the identification of a section of narrative that is relatively sparse in detail. The "lack of richness" is a counterpoint to the "Richness" subnode, allowing coders to distinguish between qualitatively rich or limited narratives.

❖ **Intrapsychic processes of depth**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture the thoughts, feelings, and mechanics of achieving depth of a narrative. Examples may be participants referencing arduous thought processes and ruminations, or exploration and consideration of their own feelings related to adoption. This subnode more reflects the themes captured in the MTARP definition of depth and exploration.

❖ **Lack of intrapsychic processes of depth**
This is a counterpoint to the previous subnode reflecting a perceived lack of consideration, thoughts, or mechanics of achieving a depth of narrative. May be reflected in statements about having not thought about a subject or not feeling that it matters.

➢ **Flexibility**
Flexibility refers to the degree to which participants view issues as others might see them; perspective taking. Flexibility is seen in a participant who considers the challenges of adoption as experienced from not only his or her perspective, but also from the points of view of the adoptive and birth parents and siblings.

➢ **Inflexibility**
Inflexibility can be coded for those instances in which the adopted person demonstrates an inability to see the adoption process from multiple points of view.

➢ **Internal consistency**

Internal consistency reflects a coherent and cohesive narrative in which statements made are supported, rather than contradicted, by later statements or examples. Essentially, the individual must demonstrate an effort to make statements about his or her adoption or views on adoption in general, and support those statements throughout the narrative.

Examples of internal consistency might be the adopted person making a statement in which he or she expresses a belief that making contact with birth family is important to identity development. Later, when asked about his or her experiences with contact, he or she may again reiterate that making contact with birth parents was one of the most influential moments in shaping who he or she is as a person. Note the consistency in beliefs and lived examples.

➢ **Internal inconsistency**
Reflects sections of the narrative which contradict previously stated attitudes, beliefs, or views on adoption or the adoption story.

➢ **Preoccupation**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The PRE scale reflects statements made that indicate the adopted person thinks, or is thinking about his or her adoption. Included are statements such as "It bothers me I may have brothers and sisters I don't know," and "I wish I knew more about my medical history." The theme of "preoccupation" and a "longing to know: or "curiosity" are prominent feelings here.

➢ **Intrapersonal communication**
Reflects internal dialogue within the adopted person (e.g., thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and fears) about adoption or one's adoptive status.

➢ **Acknowledging salience**
This subnode of Adoptive Identity allows for the labeling of instances in which the participant acknowledges salience of adoptive status or ethnicity or race as relevant to his or her sense of self as an adopted person. These are not new subnodes but reflect the structural shift in which AI captures efforts at making meaning.

❖ **Salience of adoption**
When the adopted person acknowledges the salience of his or her adoptive status directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Salience of ethnicity or culture of origin**
When the adopted person acknowledges the salience of his or her ethnicity or culture of origin directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as a transracially adopted person.

❖ **Salience of race**
When the adopted person acknowledges the salience of his or her race directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as a transracially adopted person and/or a person of color generally.

❖ **Ranking Question**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, is linked to a specific question on the interview schedule in which participants were asked how they would rate their level of understanding of the impact of their adoption on their larger sense of self. Participants responded with a number between 1 and 10, and then followed up their numerical ranking with a description of what that number meant to them. The following numerical subnodes allow for a specific indication of the number given in response.

- **Ranking Question 1 – 10 subnodes**

➢ **Minimizing or rejecting salience**
This subnode of AI is a contrasting node to Acknowledging salience and is used when the participant directly acknowledges the lack of salience, importance, or impact of adoptive status, ethnicity, or race as relevant to his or her sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting salience of adoption**
   When the adopted person rejects the salience of adoptive status has on his or her sense of self as a person either directly or indirectly

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting salience of ethnicity or culture of origin**
   When the adopted person rejects the salience of ethnicity or culture of origin on his or her sense of self as a person either directly or indirectly.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting salience of race**
   When the adopted person rejects the salience of race as related to his or her sense of self as a person either directly or indirectly.

➢ **Acknowledging difference**
This subnode is used to identify statements in which the adopted person acknowledges either a specific instance or a more general feeling of difference between him or herself and others based on adoptive status, ethnicity, and /or race. These feelings of difference may be associated with other nodes that capture instances in which a person may not feel as connected to others (e.g., between racial groups). While those nodes are used to capture the experience, these acknowledgment nodes reflect meaning making and the integration of experience and self.

This subnode is placed here to reflect the processes of depth of thinking associated with achieving an awareness of difference.

❖ **Acknowledging difference as related to adoptive status**
   When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her adoptive status directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Acknowledging difference as related to ethnicity or culture of origin** When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her ethnicity or culture of origin.

• **Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents**
   This subnode reflects the participant making their awareness of ethnic difference from his or her adoptive parents known.

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❖ **Acknowledging difference as related to race**
   When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her race.

   • **Acknowledging racial difference from adoptive parents**
      This subnode reflects the participant making their awareness of racial difference from his or her adoptive parents known. This subnode pulls from themes espoused by Kirk (1964) in the acceptance or rejection of difference between the adoptive parents and adopted child.

   • **Since I was raised by white parents...**
      This subnode is to capture the participants stated or alluded to sense of belonging or connectedness (or lack thereof) to his or her birth culture as a result of being adopted. Reflecting themes in Samuels (2009), this code is used to capture the participant's awareness that their current sense of belonging or ability to function within a particular culture is a result of being raised by white parents.

➢ **Minimizing or rejecting difference**
   This subnode is a counterpoint to the Acknowledging Difference subnode. This node identifies statements in which the adopted person rejects a felt sense of difference from others. This lack of perceived difference may be associated with experiences, thoughts, or a more general belief not tied to a particular experience in which the adopted person rejects the notion that his or her experience of life is different from others.

   ❖ **Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to adoptive status**
      When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her adoptive status directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as an adopted person.

   ❖ **Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to ethnicity or culture of origin**
      When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her ethnicity or culture of origin.

   ❖ **Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to race**
      When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her race.

- ➢ **Acknowledging change in self over time**
  This subnode identifies statements in which the adopted person acknowledges a felt or understood change in his or her sense of self as an adopted person and a person of color over time. This may also reflect an acknowledgement of changing views, attitudes, and /or beliefs about adoption over time even without explicit connection made between these changing attitudes and views and a sense of self.

    - ❖ **Awareness of change in self as related to adoption**
      This subnode captures statements in which it is acknowledged that perspectives on adoption have changed over time. These changed views may or may not be directly connected to a sense of self having changed.

    - ❖ **Awareness of change in self as related to race and / or ethnicity**
      This subnode captures statements in which it is acknowledged that perspectives on race and / or ethnicity have changed over time. These changed views may or may not be directly connected to a sense of self having changed.

- ➢ **Rejecting notion of change in self over time**
  This subnode reflects statements in which the participant remarks that they do not feel his or her sense of self as a transracially adopted person, nor their views have changed over time.

    - ❖ **Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to adoption**
      This subnode captures statements in which the adopted person does not feel that perspectives on adoption, or sense of self as an adopted person have changed over time.
    - ❖ **Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to race and / or ethnicity**
      This subnode captures statements in which the adopted person does not feel that perspectives on race and / or ethnicity, or sense of self as a racial or ethnic person have changed over time.

- ➢ **Valuing narrative independence and privacy**
  These subnodes reflect statements in which the participant is perceived to have, or explicitly references, feelings in which he or she has achieved or seeks independence, autonomy, or privacy in the formation of the adoption story.

❖ **Valuing narrative independence**
This concept of narrative independence has a developmental psychology connection and ties to Erikson's identity theory. This subnode captures a participant's desire to craft an identity outside of the parent-child relationship and beyond the ascribed narrative of the adoptive parents.

❖ **Valuing narrative privacy**
An additional division of nodes occurs when participants make statements in which they seek, desire, or appreciate privacy of their narrative, often in interactions with others including parents and extrafamilial individuals. This differs conceptually from other codes reflecting lack of openness in that this code captures active decisions not to share despite the other person(s) being a safe, secure, or trusting social partner. Conversely, codes reflecting lack of openness in communication may reflect a general state of relationship as being defined by a lack of sharing.

Adoption Dynamics
Now seen to capture the subjective valuation and perception of the participant of the multitude of experiences that he or she undergoes. Adoption Dynamics captures the affectual processing that the person does – or, the Valuation – that takes place within the Experience → Valuation model. This format now also allows for the streamlining of the template through the qualification of a range of experiences as positive, negative, or ambivalent feelings about a range of experiences without cluttering the template with combinations of experiences and valence.

Also included is the concept of preoccupation which is a holdover from the previous two templates. Preoccupation is restructured here to capture the essence of being preoccupied or ruminating. Note that the experiences previously associated with the Preoccupation node have been repositioned with Adoptive Experiences.

The subnodes included here are not new, but reflect a significant shift in structure and organization from the previous templates. (See rationale for W2 Template shift in separate appendix.)

➢ **Viewed as positive**
This subnode is a restructuring of the Positive Affect node from the first two templates. This node allows coders to capture the participant's explicit or implied positive feelings, valuation, attitude, or interpretation of experiences they have.

- ➤ **Viewed as negative**

  This subnode is a modification of the Negative Experiences subnode from the previous two templates. The previous Negative Experience subnode contained two experiences: legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned; having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents. Following the restructure, those two subnodes (legitimacy, and explaining difference) are now classified as experiences, while the affectual experience is captured here.

- ➤ **Ambivalent**

  This subnode is used to identify participant statements in which ambiguity is detected by the coders. Ambiguity in this sense reflects feelings of both positivity and negativity, and/or a sense of general uncertainty on the part of the adopted person about how he or she feels about any aspect of the lived experience of adoption.

Lived Experiences of Adoption (LEA)

This higher order node reflects a major change in the structure, organization, and theoretical positioning of this template. This higher order node captures the Experiences of the Experiences → Valuation model of adoptive identity processes. LEA are experiences; experiences as defined here are any moment in time in which the participant cognitively or physically encounters anything. Inclusive of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and contextual encounters, LEA reflect: new thoughts, considerations, desires, and wishes made and had by the adopted person; interactions with others including all interpersonal relationships and associated qualities such as frequency, felt comfort or perceived understanding, and any experiences connected to the social and environmental context in which this person lives. The lived experience of adoption is the lived experience of life.

- ➤ **Relational Dynamics**

  This higher order node, created following Wave 1 coding, houses all aspects of the interpersonal relationships between members of the adoptive family, between birth and adoptive families, and between the participant and external others outside of either family. Aspects of the interpersonal relationships include concepts such as attachment, closeness, and communication that are all seen as components of how people relate to one another.

  - ❖ **Adoptive Family**

    The adoptive family is a subnode that houses subnodes relating to the dynamics between members of the adoptive family (AP1, AP2, AS).

- **AP1 – Participant Relationship**
  This subnode houses aspects of the participant's relationship with AP1. Following Wave 1 coding, this subnode allows coders to capture more relational dimensions including attachment and perceived closeness, in addition to communication.

  - **AP1 – Communication**
    This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, allows coders to capture qualifiers of communication between AP1 and the participant. Qualifiers are seen as descriptors of the nature of communication (e.g., frequency, initiation) rather than content or how the various parties feel before, during, or after communication occurs. This subnode can be thought of as more "quantitative" aspects of communication.

    → **AP1 – Presence of communication about adoption**
    This node is used to identify references to communication with AP1 that do not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AP1 so frequency of communication is not lost.

    → **AP1 – Lack of frequency of communication about adoption**
    This subnode allows for the identification of a noted lack of frequency of communication about adoption between the participant and AP1.

    → **AP1 – Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity**
    This subnode allows for the identification of communication between AP1 and the participant in which the concepts of race, ethnicity, and / or culture as they relate to adoption are discussed.

    → **Lack of frequency of communication about adoption as related to race, ethnicity, culture**
    This subnode allows coders to indicate when there are infrequent or an absence of communications about the connections between adoption, race, and ethnicity.

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$\rightarrow$ **AP1 – Initiation of communication about adoption**
This subnode allows for the indication of who, between AP1 and the participant, generally or most often starts conversations about adoption. If both parties are said to bring it up equally well, then both subnodes contained in this node will be coded.

    ✓ **AP1 – Participant initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AP1 and the participant in which the participant generally initiates communication about adoption.

    ✓ **AP1 – AP1 initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AP1 and the participant in which AP1 generally initiates communication about adoption.

- **AP1 – Participant's experience in relationship**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, is designed to capture many aspects of the participant's experience of his or her relationship with AP1. The subnodes housed within this node reflect the participant's subjective experience, how he or she feels as a part of this relationship, and their perceptions of the connection with AP1.

    $\rightarrow$ **AP1 – Strength of bond**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with AP1. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

    $\rightarrow$ **AP1 – Comfort**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective valuation of AP1's ability to emotionally, physically, or otherwise provide support and comfort in the participant's challenges with adoption. Example: "I was really upset when I came home from school after a classmate

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made fun of me for being adopted. My dad sat with me for a while and told me things would be alright."

→ **AP1 – Ease in conversations about adoption**
The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with AP1 about adoption.

→ **AP1 – Unease in conversations about adoption**
The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging AP1 in a conversation about adoption.

→ **AP1 – Openness in communication about adoption**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and AP1 in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption.   This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and AP1 about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Lack of openness in communication about adoption**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and AP1 in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with AP1.   This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Parent understands participant**

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Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AP1 "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive parents' awareness of challenges, and adoptive parents' true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their children. This node does not reflect AP1's actual understanding; simply whether the participant FEELS that AP1 understands him or her.

→ **AP1 – Parent doesn't understand participant**
Reflects participant feelings that AP1 does not "understand" the participant's point of view, true feelings, or true experience. AP1 may be aware of the challenges, but may not "understand." Also, this does not indicate whether AP1 actually understands the participant or not, simply whether the participant FEELS that AP1 does not understand the participant's experience.

→ **AP1 – Participant desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode captures participant feelings about current levels of communication with AP1, and the participant's desire for increased communication about adoption. This is positioned here under relational dynamics rather than Communication, as this placement allows for the capture of personal feeling and longing, rather than the actual state of communication, which could be coded with the "Lack of frequency" code.

→ **AP1 - Participant desires more communication about race and ethnicity**
This subnode allows for the coding of instances in which the participant expresses sentiments that he or she wishes for more communication with either AP about ethnicity

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→ **Participant does not express a desire for more communication about race and ethnicity**
This subnode allows for the coding of instances in which the participant expresses feelings that they do not wish for increased communication with AP about ethnicity. Note, no reason for this is coded here, but may reflect the participant feeling as though current levels of communication are sufficient. This may also be double coded with lack of frequency to capture nuance.

- **AP1 – Participant's perception of AP1 experience**
This subnode captures the participant's subjective perception of aspects of AP1's experience of adoption across a series of subnodes. These subnodes, while seen to capture a perspective AP1, must be viewed as merely the participant's sense of how AP1 experiences aspects of self and adoption.

→ **AP1 – Intrapsychics**
This subnode captures the participant's experience of AP1 across the subnodes that are also seen in Adoptive Identity. Positioned here, the subnodes are used to capture participant attitudes toward AP1 consistency/inconsistency, flexibility/inflexibility, and depth of narrative. Participants may reveal these thoughts directly, or they may emerge to the coders who notice discrepancies in the participant's recounting of AP1 statements or actions.

✓ **AP1 – Depth of narrative**
This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AP1 is thought demonstrate reflection on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or of the meaning of being an adoptive parent. It is also used to identify instances in which they are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person (from the perspective of the child) or an adoptive parent.

✓ **AP1 – Flexibility**

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This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AP1 demonstrates an ability to see the adoption story from multiple perspectives other than his or her own, and is able to adapt his or her narrative. This subnode may be coded following explicit identification by the participant, or may also be identified by the coders even in the absence of explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AP1 – Inflexibility**
This subnode is a counterpoint to AP1 Flexibility and identifies points in which AP1 demonstrates an inability to see the adoption story from the perspective of others or to adapt his or her own views on adoption. Inflexibility may be explicitly identified by the participant or identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AP1 – Internal consistency**
This subnode is used to identify points in AP1 narrative, attitudes, behaviors, or adoption story that are consistent across time as identified by either the participant in the transcript directly, or by the coders who notice emergent consistent patterns in the participant's recounting of AP1.

✓ **AP1 – Internal inconsistency**
This subnode reflects instances in which AP1 demonstrates inconsistency in the narrative they tell, attitudes and beliefs they hold, inconsistencies in actions or comments, or inconsistencies in the adoption story AP1 retells. This inconsistency may be identified by the participant explicitly, or may be identified by the

coders even in the absence of an explicit comment by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Strength of bond (parent to participant)**
To reflect the participant's perception of the AP strength of bond toward them

→ **AP1 - Questioning strength of bond**
To reflect the participant's perception that the AP questions or doubts the strength of the parent-child relationship. This may emerge in tandem with topics of meeting birth parents in which the AP may feel threatened.

→ **AP1 – Ease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AP1 ease and comfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AP1 is experienced by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Unease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AP1 uneasiness and discomfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AP1 is experienced by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Demonstrates openness in communication**
This is used to identify instances in which the participant perceives AP to be "open" in communication.

→ **AP1 – Does not demonstrate openness in communication**
This subnode is a counterpoint to the previous subnode. Here, the participant does not feel that his or her AP is either being open in

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communication or is demonstrating a willingness to be open in communication

→ **AP1 – Desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 desires more communication with the participant about adoption. This may be reflected in direct statements in which AP1 is portrayed as attempting to engage the participant in conversation.

→ **AP1 – Aware of challenges faced by participant**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AP1 – Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AP1 – Anticipates participant will experience challenges**
This subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant indicates AP1 anticipated that the participant would experience challenges related to adoption, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these. Evidence may emerge in AP1 engaging the participant in conversations about how to handle racial discrimination, and / or questions about adoption.

→ **AP1 - Makes effort to understand or learn about the lived experience of the participant**

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This subnode is used to indicate when participants feel that their AP demonstrates effort to better understand and connect with them around their own lived experiences as an adopted person. May be double coded with strength of bond in either direction.

→ **AP1 - Avoidance of topics of conversation**
This is used to code participants' sense that the AP is avoidant of engaging in conversation about the following topics. No reason for this avoidance is coded here, but associated double codes may be AP questioning the strength of bond.

- **Birth Parents**
- **Race and / or ethnicity**

- **AP2 – Participant Relationship**
There is a complete set of subnodes for the AP2 – Participant relationship that is a duplicate of the AP1 – Participant nodes; simply substitute AP2 for AP1 in the node description.

- **AS – Participant Relationship**
This subnode houses aspects of the participant's relationship with AS. Following Wave 1 coding, this subnode allows coders to capture more relational dimensions including attachment and perceived closeness, in addition to communication.

  - **AS – Communication**
  This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, allows coders to capture qualifiers of communication between AS and the participant. Qualifiers are seen as descriptors of the nature of communication (e.g., frequency, initiation) rather than content or how the various parties feel before, during, or after communication occurs. This subnode can be thought of as more "quantitative" aspects of communication.

    → **AS – Presence of communication about adoption**

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This node is used to identify references to communication with AS that does not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AS so frequency of communication is not lost.

→ **AS – Lack of frequency of communication about adoption**
This subnode allows for the identification of a noted lack of frequency of communication about adoption between the participant and AS.

- **AS – Participant's experience in relationship**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, is designed to capture many aspects of the participant's experience of his or her relationship with AS. The subnodes housed within this node reflect the participant's subjective experience, how he or she feels as a part of this relationship, and their perceptions of the connection with AS.

  - **AS – Strength of bond**
  This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with AS. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

  → **AS – Ease in conversations about adoption**
  The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with AS about adoption.

  → **AS – Unease in conversations about adoption**
  The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the

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participant's felt discomfort with engaging AS in a conversation about adoption.

> → **AS – AS understands participant**
> Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AS "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive siblings' awareness of challenges, and their true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their brother or sister. This node does not reflect AS's actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that AS understands him or her.

> → **AS – AS doesn't understand participant**
> Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AS does not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive siblings' awareness of challenges, and their true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their brother or sister. This node does not reflect AS's actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that AS understands him or her.

- **AS – Participant's perception of AS experience**
  This subnode captures the participant's subjective perception of aspects of AS' experience of adoption across a series of subnodes. These subnodes, while seen to capture a perspective AS, must be viewed as merely the participant's sense of how AS experiences aspects of self and adoption.

  > → **AS – Intrapsychics**
  > This subnode captures the participant's experience of AS across the subnodes that are also seen in Adoptive Identity. Positioned here, the subnodes are used to capture participant attitudes toward AS consistency/inconsistency, flexibility/inflexibility, and depth of narrative. Participants may reveal these thoughts directly, or they may

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emerge to the coders who notice discrepancies in the participant's recounting of AS statements or actions.

- ✓ **AS – Depth of narrative**
  This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AS is thought demonstrate reflection on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or of the meaning of being the sibling of an adopted person.

- ✓ **AS – Flexibility**
  This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AS demonstrates an ability to see the adoption story from multiple perspectives other than his or her own, and is able to adapt his or her narrative. This subnode may be coded following explicit identification by the participant, or may also be identified by the coders even in the absence of explicit identification by the participant.

- ✓ **AS – Inflexibility**
  This subnode is a counterpoint to AS Flexibility and identifies points in which AS demonstrates an inability to see the adoption story from the perspective of others or to adapt his or her own views on adoption. Inflexibility may be explicitly identified by the participant or identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit identification by the participant.

- ✓ **AS – Internal consistency**
  This subnode is used to identify points in AS narrative, attitudes, behaviors, or adoption story that are consistent across time as identified by either the participant in the transcript directly, or by the coders

who notice emergent consistent patterns in the participant's recounting of AS.

✓ **AS – Internal inconsistency**
This subnode reflects instances in which AS demonstrates inconsistency in the narrative they tell, attitudes and beliefs they hold, inconsistencies in actions or comments, or inconsistencies in the adoption story AS retells. This inconsistency may be identified by the participant explicitly, or may be identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit comment by the participant.

→ **AS – Ease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AS ease and comfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AS is experienced by the participant.

→ **AS – Unease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AS uneasiness and discomfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AS is experienced by the participant.

→ **AS – Desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode reflects a participant's perception that AS desires more communication with the participant about adoption. This may be reflected in direct statements in which AS is portrayed as attempting to engage the participant in conversation.

→ **AS – Aware of challenges faced by participant**

Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception AS is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AS – Awareness that the don't understand participant's lived experience**
This subnode captures participant perceptions that AS is aware that he or she does not fully understand the lived experience of the participant. This may be due to AS awareness that since he or she is not adopted, they may never fully understand what the experience of adoption is like for the participant.

→ **AS – Anticipates participant will experience challenges**
This subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant indicates AS anticipated that the participant would experience challenges related to adoption, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these. Evidence may emerge in AS engaging the participant in conversations about how to handle racial discrimination, and / or questions about adoption.

❖ **Adoptive Triad Dynamics**
This subnode is used to capture relational dynamics between members of birth and adoptive families. Interfamilial interaction between any member of the birth family and adoptive family is captured here.

- **Interfamilial communication**
Reflects mentions of communication between the adoptive family and birth families. Includes communication between the adopted person and his or her birth family members.

❖ **Extrafamilial Dynamics**
This node represents conversations about adoption that occur with individuals outside of either adoptive or birth family spheres. This may include friends or significant others that the individual participates in conversations about adoption with.

❖ **Presence of communication about adoption with Extras**
   This allows for the identification about instances in which conversation about adoption with Extras is noted to happen. Consider frequency and occurrence rather than valuation here.

❖ **Lack of communication about adoption with Extras**
   A counterpoint to the previous subnode.

❖ **Participant ease of communication about adoption with Extras**
   The participant feels that conversations with Extras are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with Extras about adoption.

❖ **Participant unease in communication about adoption with Extras**
   The participant feels that conversations with Extras are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging Extras in a conversation about adoption.

❖ **Participant openness in communication about adoption with Extras**
   This subnode captures communication between the participant and Extras in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption. This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and Extras about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with Extras.

❖ **Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with Extras**
   This subnode captures communication between the participant and Extras in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with Extras. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with Extras.

❖ **Extras understand participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels the Extras "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

❖ **Extras do not understand participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels Extras do not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

❖ **Acknowledge that they speak differently with other adopted Extras**
This subnode allows for the identification of sentiments expressed by the participant that he or she indeed speaks differently about any of the lived experiences of adoption with other adopted persons than they do with non-adopted persons.

● **Presence of communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
This allows for the identification about instances in which conversation about adoption with adopted Extras is noted to happen. Consider frequency and occurrence rather than valuation here.

● **Lack of communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
A counterpoint to the previous subnode.

● **Participant ease of communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
The participant feels that conversations with adopted Extras are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with Extras about adoption.

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- **Participant unease in communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
  The participant feels that conversations with adopted Extras are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging Extras in a conversation about adoption.

- **Participant openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
  This subnode captures communication between the participant and adopted Extras in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption. This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and Extras about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with Extras.

- **Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
  This subnode captures communication between the participant and adopted Extras in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with Extras. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with Extras.

- **Adopted Extras understand participant**
  Reflects participant comments that he or she feels the adopted Extras "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

- **Adopted Extras do not understand participant**
  Reflects participant comments that he or she feels adopted Extras do not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons.

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This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

➢ **Experiences related to adoption**
While any experiences that participants have may technically be classified as experiences related to adoption, this node is used to identify those in which adoption is a primary focus.

❖ **Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to identify content of negative experiences. This subnode is used to indicate when participants indicate having their adoptive family bonds questioned through statements or questions using, among others, the term "real parents."

❖ **Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to indicate content of negative experiences. This subnode reflects participants having to use adoption as an explanation or reason for the physical and racial differences between themselves and their adoptive parents.

❖ **Experiences of adoption stigma**
Stigma is seen here as a feeling of discrimination or difference that emerges within the adopted person. This experience of stigma may be as a result of either interpersonal or socio-contextual events or situations.

❖ **Reponses to adoption stigma**
This subnode allows for the identification of a range of defenses and responses participants have developed over time to manage the impact of statements, comments, actions, or beliefs expressed by others about any aspect of the lived experience of adoption as stigmatizing. These responses may be doubly yet differentially coded with subjective valuations of the event across participants:

• **Laughing it off**
Participants may simply laugh off comments made by others in jest or in seriousness

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- **Ignoring the statement**
  Participants may simply not acknowledge the comment was made either by stating that they are not dignifying the statement with a response or by more covertly failing to respond

- **Educating others**
  Participants may use the opportunity to challenge inaccurate or negative stereotypes or views of adoption.

- **Using adoption or adoptive status as a response, rationale, or justification**
  Participants may use their adoptive status as justification and to explain away their current situation or state.

➢ <u>**Experiences related to race and ethnicity**</u>
Here, the previously independent higher order nodes of race and ethnicity are now condensed into one node. While in reality, these constructs are very independent, they are so often conflated by the participants that they are required to be collapsed here. This may reflect the lack of depth of understanding of the concepts of race and ethnicity in general by the participants and others in the participants' spheres. However, due to the transracial status of these participants' adoptions, the conflation of race and ethnicity may be less indicative of a general lack of understanding and more a reflection of the reality in which their race is tied to a culture of origin. Below is the restructured new node, with many holdovers from the previous template:

❖ **Ethnic identification**
  Reflects actions taken to align with a specific ethnic group.

- **Identification with ethnic group of adoptive parents**
  Statements in which the adopted participant voices a felt connection and sense of belonging or commitment to the ethnic culture and identity of his or her adoptive parents.

- **Identification with ethnic group of birth parents**
  When the participant voices a felt connection, sense of belonging, and commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

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- **Identification with dominant ethnic culture of the US**
  This subnode is included to mirror the prompt in the interview that gives participants the option of indicating their ethnic identification as linked to the dominant culture of the US. This "dominant culture" is seen as reflecting cultural and social values of mainstream America.

- ❖ **Ethnic de-identification**
  Reflects actions taken to minimize connection between self and a specific ethnic group

  - **De-identification with adoptive parents' ethnic group**
    When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her adoptive parents.

  - **De-identification with birth parents' ethnic group**
    When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

- ❖ **Racial identification**
  Reflects actions taken to align with a specific racial group. When the participant voices a felt connection or identifies self with racial group

- ❖ **Experiences of self as a racial and ethnic person**
  This subnode is used to identify other instances or experiences in which race or ethnicity is a primary focus.

  - **I viewed myself as white**
    This subnode captures an "inside out" perspective in which the participant acknowledges an intrapsychic mentation of themselves as white. This may be reflected in direct statements such as the person not recognizing themselves or being surprised by their reflection in the mirror. Themes of depersonalization may be found here.

- **Others viewed me as white**
  This subnode captures an "outside in" perspective in which members of the social context viewed the participant as racially White, despite physically being a member of another racial group.

- **Others viewed me as a member of my racial group – Positive**
  This subnode reflects instances in which participants felt that their membership in the cultural group of origin was validated. These experiences may be positive for the person at least initially, as some participants may felt comfort in "passing" as a member of their culture of origin.

- **Others viewed me as a member of my racial group – Negative**
  This subnode reflects instances in which others ascribed racial group membership and also applied stereotyped expectations of culture to the participant resulting in negative feelings within the participant. The participant may or may not have had to then explain why they did not meet those applied stereotypes using adoption as the reason. An example would be a person seeing a participant of Latin descent and introducing themselves in Spanish, assuming they spoke it.

- **Lost aspects of birth culture due to adoption**
  This subnode reflects the participant's acknowledgement that due to one's TRA, he or she has lost specific aspects of self related to his or her culture of origin. An example would be a participant being fluent in the language of his or her birth culture at the time of adoption, but losing the ability to speak this language over time following adoption.

- **Belonging**
  This subnode allows coders to capture participant statements that reflect degrees of feeling like he or she "belongs" within either birth or adoptive cultural and ethnic groups.

    → **Perceived membership in ethnic group of country of origin**
      This subnode is to capture feelings of in which the participant feels as though they "belong" or are a member of their ethnic group of their country of origin. This perceived membership may be felt in a diverse ways and may or may not be confirmed or reciprocated externally.

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$\rightarrow$ **Lack of perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups**
This subnode is to capture feelings of "I felt like I didn't belong in either group" expressed by the participant; "either group" reflects both birth and adoptive ethnic groups. This is used to capture sentiments of "Somewhere Between" cultures and may reflect those similar feelings held by multiracial or biracial individuals.

➢ **Experience of fantasies or desires**
This subnode is used to capture instances in which participants discuss wondering about hypothetical situations or events. While not actually having happened, these fantasies are positioned here with experiences to capture the experience of having a fantasy, and that this experience may itself generate other feelings and emotions as one considers that he or she may have these desires or wishes. Many of the subnodes were previously categorized under Adoption Dynamics - Preoccupation. They are shifted here in accordance with the Experiences $\rightarrow$ Valuations model and allow for the framing of these intrapsychic experiences to also be subject to positive or negative valuation or feelings of ambiguity, and for these intrapsychic experiences to also exert influence on the participant's sense of self or the formation of self and narrative. Also, coders may now identify these thoughts without being forced to also ascribe a state of preoccupation about them. Aspects of adoption, race, and ethnicity are conflated here as it is unclear from the transcripts at this time whether meeting birth parents is seen separately from a desire to also connect with culture or race of origins

❖ **Fantasies or desires as related to adoption**

• **Birth mother**
A holdover from the previous Preoccupation template, this positioning captures a participant's mentioning that he or she has a desire to meet the birth mother.

$\rightarrow$ **Desire to meet birth mother but no action taken**
A modified holdover

$\rightarrow$ **Despite action taken to meet birth mother, more connection desired**
A new node that allows for the indication that action has been taken but that more contact or communication beyond what is attained is desired

- **Birth father**
  A holdover from the previous Preoccupation template.

  - → **Desire to meet birth father but no action taken**
    A modified holdover

  - → **Despite action taken to meet birth father, more connection desired**
    A new node that allows for the indication that action has been taken but that more contact or communication beyond what is attained is desired

- **Desire to meet birth siblings but no action taken**
  A holdover from the previous Preoccupation template.

- **If I hadn't been adopted…**

❖ **Fantasies or desires as related to race and / or ethnicity**
- **Desire to feel connected to or aligned with culture of origin or racial group**

  - → **Desire to travel to country of origin**

- **Despite action taken to connection with culture of origin or racial group, greater connection desired**

- **Does not desire or care to connect or belong with culture of origin**

➢ **Experiences of context**
Context refers to mentions of the participant's hometown, early social groups, and the adoptive family system, as well as current contexts. Here, experiences of both early and current contexts can be identified as well as attitudes and views held within those contexts:

❖ **Early context**

- **Racial demographics**
  Participant comments on the racial makeup of his or her hometown (e.g., "a predominantly White town," "an ethnically diverse town").

- **Socio-economic demographics**
  Participant mentions the socio-economic status of either his or her own family or the hometown.

- **Socialization**
  New subnode to document the characteristics of the friend groups that the participant belonged to, separate from a more general identification of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of their larger region or hometown.

  → **Had majority white friends**
  This subnode indicates that the participant's primary social groups growing up were comprised of a white racial group.

- **Contextual attitudes toward adoption**
  This new node allows coders to capture references to the contextually held attitudes of the early context toward adoption. Note that these may differ from the views of the participant, who may ascribe variable valuations to these contextual views:

  → **Negative views**
  Negative views reflect many of the themes captured in adoption stigma and microaggression literature, including views of adoption as second best, adopted persons as deficient or deviant, and views that bonds formed through adoption are suspect. Also reflects views of adoption as odd, weird, or not normal.

$\rightarrow$ **Positive views**

Positive views may portray adoption and adopted persons as a legitimate method of family formation and as not deviant, deficient, or second best, respectively. Adoption may be viewed as normalized or common.

❖ **Current context**

- **Racial demographics**

  Participant comments on the racial makeup of his or her hometown (e.g., "a predominantly White town," "an ethnically diverse town").

- **Socio-economic demographics**

  Participant mentions the socio-economic status of either his or her own family or the hometown.

- **Socialization**

  New subnode to document the characteristics of the friend groups that the participant belonged to, separate from a more general identification of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of their larger region or hometown.

  $\rightarrow$ **Had majority white friends**

  This subnode indicates that the participant's primary social groups growing up were comprised of a white racial group.

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→ **Positive views**
Positive views may portray adoption and adopted persons as a legitimate method of family formation and as not deviant, deficient, or second best, respectively. Adoption may be viewed as normalized or common.

➢ **Aspects of the adoption narrative**
This new subnode contains information about the adoption narrative that had either been ascribed or discovered. Facts about adoption is a holdover from the previous two templates and is used to identify instances in which the participant reveals details about his or her adoption narrative that were a part of a "typical adoption story," such as date of adoption, orphanage setting, birth family details, adoptive family story of travelling to country of origin.

❖ **Facts about adoption**
Statements made that reflect some knowledge or process to acquire knowledge about his or her adoption. Coding under this category reflects the participant simply presenting factual information about his or her adoption, and DOES NOT reflect any attempts to integrate these facts into a meaningful adoption narrative or story.

Examples include recalling the date or time of birth, adoption, location of birth, information about the adoption such as how many biological siblings he or she may have. For example, "I was born in San Diego, California on March 31, 1992" is a stand-alone statement that isn't integrated into a larger, cohesive sense of self that would be present in a statement coded for depth of narrative. Note how the previous example differs from the following that also reflects integration and depth:

"I was born in San Diego, California, on March 31, 1992, which is interesting because my adopted mother was in San Diego at that exact same time on a business trip." Note the meaning in the second statement.

❖ **Information gaps**

❖ **Why was I placed for adoption**
This node reflect preoccupation with the specific question of "Why?." Many adopted persons want to know the reasons they were placed for adoption; this node captures that very specific topic of preoccupied thoughts.

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❖ **Whether I look like birth parents / what do birth parents look like?**
   This is also a holdover with the addition of "what do birth parents look like" to allow coders to capture instances in which the participant may reference wondering what parents look like without specific reference that they are wondering if they appear physically similar to them.

❖ **Birth family medical history**
   This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, preoccupying thoughts are about one's birth family medical history and the impact of not knowing this information.

❖ **Birth family social history and personalities**
   In addition to birth family medical history, this new subnode allows coders to reference participant statements in which information is desired about their birth family social history and what they are / were like as people.

➢ **<u>Exploration</u>**
This new higher order node is used to capture action taken in seeking new information, new experiences, contact, or communication with either elements of the birth history, culture of origin, or racial group. Also included here is the acknowledgment or identification of motivating factors

❖ **Birth parents and birth family**
   - **Has made contact with members of birth family**

   - **Has not made contact with members of birth family**

❖ **Ethnic or racial groups**
   - **Have sought contact or engagement**

      → **Traveled to country of origin**

   - **Have not sought contact or engagement**

❖ **Motivation**
- **To satisfy "curiosity"**
Statements made in which the participant implicates "curiosity" as a motivating factor to exploration

- **To strengthen identity or sense of self**
Statements made in which the participant references a desire to strengthen a sense of self

➢ **Experience of roadblocks**
This higher order node is seen as a potential integrative theme. Roadblocks are seen to capture the sense of difficulty and impediments felt by adopted persons across many areas of the lived experience of adoption, such as roadblocks in communication with others, roadblocks in exploring birth family contacts, or roadblocks in seeking greater connection to birth culture or race. Roadblocks themselves can be felt in three primary forms: intrapsychic; interpersonal; logistical.

❖ **Intrapsychic Roadblocks**
These roadblocks are those that exist within the participant's own mind and may be a product of both psychological and social influences. These may manifest as emotions, thoughts, or perceptions of difficulty.

- **Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents**
Reflects participant views that their own unknown emotional response to potential meetings with birth family members as a deterrent to making contact.

- **Fear of how his or her view of self would change following exploration**
Participant considers the unknown changes to how one views the self, following newfound access to more information about one's early and familial histories as a barrier to exploration. Some participants may feel that they would like to have a stronger sense of self as a person before they seek information that may further disrupt or make more difficult, the process of identity development.

→ **Exploration into adoption**
→ **Exploration into race or ethnicity**

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- **Difficulty in finding right words to express self**
  Participants may feel that a hindrance to further exploration or consideration is the lack of vocabulary to allow them to express themselves to a level they feel is appropriate. Semantic deficits may be perceived in emotion or adoption terminology.

❖ **Interpersonal Roadblocks**
These roadblocks exist as thoughts and considerations by the participant but are directly related to how they feel others contribute to perceived roadblocks.

- **Participant worried about how making contact would make APs feel**
  Participants may not seek communication about adoption in general, or contact with birth family members for fear of how their adoptive family members would feel. Participants may also feel that AP feelings about birth parents prevent engagement in conversation. These perceptions may or may not be founded in reality, but may nonetheless exist as a deterrent to the adopted person.

- **APs withholding information or discouraging contact**
  Participants may state that they are aware that their adoptive parents are not sharing information about the adoption. Participants may be aware of an adoption file that was not shared with them, or may be taught, directly or indirectly, that adoption is not an appropriate topic of conversation within that family system.

- **Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration**
  Participants may feel that they do not have anyone who supports their desire for exploration. This may or may not be founded in reality. The adopted person may feel that his or her adoptive parents do not understand them, and therefore, cannot possibly support them in their journey.

- **Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive ethnic or racial groups**
  Participant my fear rejection from various racial or ethnic groups that prevents them from seeking increased alignment or membership.

❖ **Logistical Roadblocks**
These roadblocks are characterized by the adopted person indicating challenges in exploration stemming from organizational, systemic, financial, cultural, or informational deficits.

- **Lack of knowledge of culture of origin**
  Participants may feel that their lack of knowledge about the culture of origin, including not knowing the language of their culture of origin, is a hindrance to feeling connected. Participants may feel that this lack of knowledge prevents them from feeling like a member of the group (inside out) and also from being perceived as a member of that group (outside in). This is a logistical rather than interpersonal roadblock due to the aspect of learning and experience.

- **Challenging system to navigate**
  Participants do not feel they can navigate the paperwork and various post-adoption and reunification systems in place to effectively seek information.

- **Perceived lack of information**
  Participants do not feel that there is enough information (e.g., names of birth parents or family; information on birthplace) in their birth records or adoption story to effectively search. Additionally, participants may feel that while information is listed in their file, that the information is inaccurate or incorrect for some reason.

- **Birth parent(s) deceased**
  Knowledge of or sense that birth parent(s) is / are deceased

- **Discriminatory LGBTQ parent rights to adoption**
  Inability of same sex couples to both adopt a child leads to one primary parent being the legal guardian of that adopted child. This may have impacts on the feeling of connectedness with the non-adoptive, non-custodial parent.

➢ **Experience of facilitators**
Drawing on the concept of "barriers and facilitators" (Wrobel, Grotevant, & Samek, in press), this higher order node represents references in the transcript to identified aspects of the participant's lived experience (e.g., events, meetings, experiences, people) that they see as helping to make connections with adoption, explore, or gain further insight. This higher order node is seen as a counterpoint to Roadblocks.

❖ **Efforts to legally reinforce adoptive parent-child relationship (e.g., same sex parent second parent adoption)**
Reflects instances in which the second parent is able to legally adopt the adopted person reinforces and strengthens the felt connection and bond between the participant and this second parent.

➢ **Experience of mentoring**
Reflects comments made about mentoring and the connection between the mentoring experience and his or her adoptive experience.

❖ **Mentor Group Meetings**
This sub-node reflects comments made about the perception or impact of the mentor group meetings (MGM).

❖ **Intrapsychic**
• **Views program as positive**

• **Positive feelings of self as a result of being a mentor**
Connects sense of self-esteem or self-worth as being strengthened directly by role as a mentor. Differs from other self-esteem node in that this specifically identifies mentoring as the source.

• **First participation in an adoption-focused social group**
Captures mentor statements that participation in AMP represents their first experience in an adoption –focused social group. This was seen as an important factor to track as these individuals are already emerging adults.

- **Wish they had this opportunity when they were younger**
  This subnode is included to capture statements in which the participant expresses feelings of longing for this experience when they were younger.
- **Seeing Self in Mentee**
  This sub-node under mentoring reflects comments made in which the mentor may "see him or herself" in the mentee. The mentor may be reminded of themselves as a child when thinking of his or her mentee. Connections made to the adoptive experience of either the mentor or the mentee may be a part of this theme.

- **Participation in AMP induces change in self**
  This node is used to capture participant comments that they feel participation in AMP has changed how they think about and feel about adoption, and their own sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Interpersonal**
- **Giving Back**
  This sub-node is used to capture sentiments of "giving back" as a reason for mentoring or as a benefit obtained as a result. This theme can be coded if there are explicit or implicit references to this theme.

- **Positive feelings about mentee**
  This is used to indicate statements made by the participant about positive feelings, regard, or sentiment about the mentee
- **Strength of bond with mentee**
  This subnode reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with the mentee. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

❖ **Challenges**
This subnode is used to identify noted challenges or difficulties associated with the mentoring program:

- **Scheduling / logistical challenges**
  Reflects difficulties experienced as a function of mechanics of the program rather than

relational or content-based difficulties

- **Preoccupation with fulfilling mentor role**
  Reflects participant concerns and worries of doing a good job as a mentor. The worries can be about logistics and keeping the mentee safe, to worries about how they will connect with someone younger. Themes of nervousness about the responsibility and status as a role model are strong here.

Advice to Adoptive Parents

This higher order node was generated in response to a particular prompt in the interview schedule when participants were asked to provide advice for future and current adoptive parents in how to best address some of the challenges their children may be facing and how best to support those adopted individuals. Participants provided very direct and specific points of advice, and it was desired to have a structured way of capturing these themes, many of which the adopted persons referenced in their own stories.

- ➢ **Communication**
  It is important for adoptive parents to be communicative and open with their child about all aspects of adoption. It is critical for adoptive parents to know that their child's interest in communication about adoption does not reflect their lack of connection or love to the AP; on the contrary, open, honest, supportive, and sincere communication will only serve to strengthen parent-child relationships.

- ➢ **Supportive of emotional journey**
  Despite feeling like they may not fully understand their child's lived experience of adoption, the adoptive parents must be supportive of their child's experience and journey.

- ➢ **Birth parents and family**
  Adoptive parents must support their child's desire to explore thoughts and feelings about birth parents and birth family members. Adoptive parents must also work with their children to seek contact if the child desires it. Adoptive parents must know that their child's questions about birth parents and their origins are normal and natural and that the child's interest in birth parents is not reflective of his or her strength of bond to the adoptive parents.

- ❖ **Desire to ask questions about birth family and origins natural**
  Subnode to identify specific statements in which participants believe it is important for adoptive parents to know that a desire to know about one's past is normal and should be expected.

- ❖ **Support desires for contact**
  Subnode to identify when participants state that it is important for adoptive parents to support their child's desire for contact and to facilitate this meeting if possible and safe.

➢ **Be sensitive to child's personal development and capacities**
To indicate participant statements that adoptive parents must be keen observers of their child's desires and wishes and must provide both engagement and distance when appropriate in terms of conversations and action about adoption. Adoptive parents should be adept at "reading" their children and sensing the child's emotional state and readiness.

➢ **Provide access**
This node was previously listed as "Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers" but is now structured as a higher order node more inclusive of other areas or experiences in which adoptive parents are the gatekeepers:

- ❖ **Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers**

- ❖ **Provide access to other adopted individuals**
  In this subnode, participants acknowledge that providing access to other adopted person to develop a sense of connectedness is important to the overall development of sense of self in adopted persons

Self-esteem

This node reflects comments made about how the participant views him or herself as a person and the subjective valuation of him or herself. Self-esteem in this research project is derived from the conceptualization of self-esteem developed by Tafarodi & Swann (2001), who developed a two-factor model of self-esteem: self-liking, and self-competence.

➢ **Self-liking**
Self-liking is one factor of Tafarodi & Swann's (2001) two factor theory of self-esteem. This self-liking sub-node will be used to identify statements in which the participant reveals his or her self-valuation as good or bad as related to his

or her adoptive status. This term has a very social component, such that views on self-liking (viewing self as good or bad) can be imparted by the social worlds around the target individual.

An example would be a statement in which the adopted person states that she would never be able to emotionally connect with others and meet the needs of others due to her experience with adoption.

➢ **Self-competence**
The self-competence sub-node will be used to identify statements that reflect the participant's view of him or herself as efficacious, and able to bring about change as a function of his or her power and agency.

➢ **Positive self-worth**
This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as positive. Self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a positive self-regard or self-concept.

➢ **Negative self-worth**
This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as negative. Negative self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a low or negative self-regard or self-concept, leaving the individual with a sense of self as "less than" others.

Gender
Statements made about the connection between gender and the participant's experience of adoption.

Sexual Orientation
This code will be used to identify statements in which the adopted person sees connections between his or her sexual orientation and adoptive status or adoptive experience.

Z – Potential New Node
This node will be used when coders feel that a section of text reflects a new theme not currently captured in a sub-node within this iteration of the template. This node begins with "Z -" to keep it at the bottom of the alphabetically structured node list in NVivo for easy reference.

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTIVE CODEBOOK – WAVE 3

The following is a descriptive codebook of the higher and lower order codes that comprise the template. This version of the codebook follows the third and final wave of coding and analysis. Previous versions of the codebook have been retained and new files saved to ensure the ability to compare and contrast between codebooks longitudinally, and to track changes in emergent or receding codes over time.

Higher order codes are page justified to the far left and underlined and in bold. Second order codes are indented and listed below, while third order codes are indented and listed below the second orders, etc. Definitions as well as the title of the codes are presented.

<u>Adoptive Identity</u>

This higher order node of adoptive identity reflects both developmental and narrative theories of self. The adopted person is thought to develop a narrative, or a story of one's self as an adopted person. This narrative is shaped by the "meaning" that an adopted person assigns to his or her adoptive status. In this way, adopted persons are thought to consider and integrate (to varying degrees) their status as an adopted person, and consider the impact that adoptive status may have on other aspects of self.

Adoptive identity is understood to be dynamic, influenced by the person's experiences within a social context. The early narrative is heavily influenced by the adoptive parents, though later on, the adopted person may seek a greater degree of authorship over his or her adoption story. In this way, the narrative is understood to change over time.

Three core components are thought to contribute to a narrative identity: identity exploration, which represents process by which identity changes and evolves, and internal consistency and flexibility, which reflect the coherence and of the narrative.

➤ **Depth of exploration of a narrative**

Depth of adoptive identity exploration refers to the degree to which participants reflect on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person.

Examples can include instances in which the adopted person comments on differences between past and present attitudes and views of adoption or the adoption story, exploring the connections between one's status as an adopted person and other aspects of self (e.g., seeking a greater understanding of the impact of adoption on one's life). Comments may also reflect the adopted person seeking information about any aspect of the adoption process, birth parents, or even adoptive family history.

In addition to these elements are comments made about the process by which an adopted person achieves depth in the narrative. This may reflect thought processes, decision making processes, or challenging presupposed positions and views of the adoption.

❖ **Richness of narrative**

This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows for the identification of a section of narrative that is especially rich and detailed. This subnode of depth reflects the qualitative depth rather than the processes by which one achieves depth of narrative.

❖ **Lack of richness of narrative**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows for the identification of a section of narrative that is relatively sparse in detail. The "lack of richness" is a counterpoint to the "Richness" subnode, allowing coders to distinguish between qualitatively rich or limited narratives.

❖ **Intrapsychic processes of depth**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture the thoughts, feelings, and mechanics of achieving depth of a narrative. Examples may be participants referencing arduous thought processes and ruminations, or exploration and consideration of their own feelings related to adoption. This subnode more reflects the themes captured in the MTARP definition of depth and exploration.

❖ **Lack of intrapsychic processes of depth**
This is a counterpoint to the previous subnode reflecting a perceived lack of consideration, thoughts, or mechanics of achieving a depth of narrative. May be reflected in statements about having not thought about a subject or not feeling that it matters.

➢ **Flexibility**
Flexibility refers to the degree to which participants view issues as others might see them; perspective taking. Flexibility is seen in a participant who considers the challenges of adoption as experienced from not only his or her perspective, but also from the points of view of the adoptive and birth parents and siblings.

➢ **Inflexibility**
Inflexibility can be coded for those instances in which the adopted person demonstrates an inability to see the adoption process from multiple points of view.

➢ **Internal consistency**
Internal consistency reflects a coherent and cohesive narrative in which statements made are supported, rather than contradicted, by later statements or examples. Essentially, the individual must demonstrate an effort to make

statements about his or her adoption or views on adoption in general, and support those statements throughout the narrative.

Examples of internal consistency might be the adopted person making a statement in which he or she expresses a belief that making contact with birth family is important to identity development. Later, when asked about his or her experiences with contact, he or she may again reiterate that making contact with birth parents was one of the most influential moments in shaping who he or she is as a person. Note the consistency in beliefs and lived examples.

➢ **Internal inconsistency**
Reflects sections of the narrative which contradict previously stated attitudes, beliefs, or views on adoption or the adoption story.

➢ **Preoccupation**
A sub-node of Adoption Dynamics. The PRE scale reflects statements made that indicate the adopted person thinks, or is thinking about his or her adoption. Included are statements such as "It bothers me I may have brothers and sisters I don't know," and "I wish I knew more about my medical history." The theme of "preoccupation" and a "longing to know: or "curiosity" are prominent feelings here.

➢ **Intrapersonal communication**
Reflects internal dialogue within the adopted person (e.g., thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and fears) about adoption or one's adoptive status.

➢ **Acknowledging salience**
This subnode of Adoptive Identity allows for the labeling of instances in which the participant acknowledges salience of adoptive status or ethnicity or race as relevant to his or her sense of self as an adopted person. These are not new subnodes but reflect the structural shift in which AI captures efforts at making meaning.

❖ **Salience of adoption**
When the adopted person acknowledges the salience of his or her adoptive status directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin**
When the adopted person acknowledges the salience of his or her race, ethnicity, or culture of origin directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as a transracially adopted person.

❖ **Ranking Question**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, is linked to a specific question on the interview schedule in which participants were asked how they would rate their level of understanding of the impact of their adoption on their larger sense of self. Participants responded with a number between 1 and 10, and then followed up their numerical ranking with a description of what that number meant to them. The following numerical subnodes allow for a specific indication of the number given in response.

- **Ranking Question 1 – 10 subnodes**

➢ **Minimizing or rejecting salience**
This subnode of AI is a contrasting node to Acknowledging salience and is used when the participant directly acknowledges the lack of salience, importance, or impact of adoptive status, ethnicity, or race as relevant to his or her sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting salience of adoption**
When the adopted person rejects the salience of adoptive status has on his or her sense of self as a person either directly or indirectly

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin**
When the adopted person rejects the salience of race, ethnicity, or culture of origin on his or her sense of self as a person either directly or indirectly.

➢ **Acknowledging difference**
This subnode is used to identify statements in which the adopted person acknowledges either a specific instance or a more general feeling of difference between him or herself and others based on adoptive status, ethnicity, and /or race.

These feelings of difference may be associated with other nodes that capture instances in which a person may not feel as connected to others (e.g., between racial groups). While those nodes are used to capture the experience, these acknowledgment nodes reflect meaning making and the integration of experience and self.

This subnode is placed here to reflect the processes of depth of thinking associated with achieving an awareness of difference.

❖ **Acknowledging difference as related to adoptive status**
When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her adoptive status directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Acknowledging difference as related to race, ethnicity, or culture of origin**
When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her race, ethnicity, or culture of origin.

- **Acknowledging ethnic difference from white parents**
This subnode reflects the participant making their awareness of ethnic difference from his or her adoptive parents known.

- **Acknowledging ethnic difference from multicultural or multiracial parents**
This is to capture those cases in which adoptive parents are not white, yet ethnic differences between the adopted person and his or her parents are acknowledged

- **Acknowledging racial difference from adoptive parents**
This subnode reflects the participant making their awareness of racial difference from his or her adoptive parents known. This subnode pulls from themes espoused by Kirk (1964) in the acceptance or rejection of difference between the adoptive parents and adopted child.

- **Since I was raised by white parents...**
This subnode is to capture the participants stated or alluded to sense of belonging or connectedness (or lack thereof) to his or her birth culture as a result of being adopted. Reflecting themes in Samuels (2009), this code is used to capture the participant's awareness

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that their current sense of belonging or ability to function within a particular culture is a result of being raised by white parents.

➤ **Minimizing or rejecting difference**
This subnode is a counterpoint to the Acknowledging Difference subnode. This node identifies statements in which the adopted person rejects a felt sense of difference from others. This lack of perceived difference may be associated with experiences, thoughts, or a more general belief not tied to a particular experience in which the adopted person rejects the notion that his or her experience of life is different from others.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to adoptive status**
When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her adoptive status directly, or if they acknowledge an experience or subjective valuation that is viewed as salient to one's sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting difference as related to race, ethnicity, or culture of origin**
When the adopted person acknowledges a feeling of difference as related to his or her race, ethnicity, or culture of origin.

➤ **Acknowledging change in self over time**
This subnode identifies statements in which the adopted person acknowledges a felt or understood change in his or her sense of self as an adopted person and a person of color over time. This may also reflect an acknowledgement of changing views, attitudes, and /or beliefs about adoption over time even without explicit connection made between these changing attitudes and views and a sense of self.

❖ **Awareness of change in self as related to adoption**
This subnode captures statements in which it is acknowledged that perspectives on adoption have changed over time. These changed views may or may not be directly connected to a sense of self having changed.

❖ **Awareness of change in self as related to race and / or ethnicity**
This subnode captures statements in which it is acknowledged that perspectives on race and / or ethnicity have changed over time. These changed views may or may not be directly connected to a sense of self having changed.

➢ **Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self over time**

This subnode reflects statements in which the participant remarks that they do not feel his or her sense of self as a transracially adopted person, nor their views have changed over time.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to adoption**

This subnode captures statements in which the adopted person does not feel that perspectives on adoption, or sense of self as an adopted person have changed over time.

❖ **Minimizing or rejecting notion of change in self as related to race and / or ethnicity**

This subnode captures statements in which the adopted person does not feel that perspectives on race and / or ethnicity, or sense of self as a racial or ethnic person have changed over time.

➢ **Valuing narrative independence and privacy**

These subnodes reflect statements in which the participant is perceived to have, or explicitly references, feelings in which he or she has achieved or seeks independence, autonomy, or privacy in the formation of the adoption story.

❖ **Valuing narrative independence**

This concept of narrative independence has a developmental psychology connection and ties to Erikson's identity theory. This subnode captures a participant's desire to craft an identity outside of the parent-child relationship and beyond the ascribed narrative of the adoptive parents.

❖ **Valuing narrative privacy**

An additional division of nodes occurs when participants make statements in which they seek, desire, or appreciate privacy of their narrative, often in interactions with others including parents and extrafamilial individuals. This differs conceptually from other codes reflecting lack of openness in that this code captures active decisions not to share despite the other person(s) being a safe, secure, or trusting social partner. Conversely, codes reflecting lack of openness in communication may reflect a general state of relationship as being defined by a lack of sharing.

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Adoption Dynamics

Now seen to capture the subjective valuation and perception of the participant of the multitude of experiences that he or she undergoes. Adoption Dynamics captures the affectual processing that the person does – or, the Valuation – that takes place within the Experience → Valuation model. This format now also allows for the streamlining of the template through the qualification of a range of experiences as positive, negative, or ambivalent feelings about a range of experiences without cluttering the template with combinations of experiences and valence.

Also included is the concept of preoccupation which is a holdover from the previous two templates. Preoccupation is restructured here to capture the essence of being preoccupied or ruminating. Note that the experiences previously associated with the Preoccupation node have been repositioned with Adoptive Experiences.

The subnodes included here are not new, but reflect a significant shift in structure and organization from the previous templates. (See rationale for W2 Template shift in separate appendix.)

➢ **Viewed as positive**
This subnode is a restructuring of the Positive Affect node from the first two templates. This node allows coders to capture the participant's explicit or implied positive feelings, valuation, attitude, or interpretation of experiences they have.

➢ **Viewed as negative**
This subnode is a modification of the Negative Experiences subnode from the previous two templates. The previous Negative Experience subnode contained two experiences: legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned; having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents. Following the restructure, those two subnodes (legitimacy, and explaining difference) are now classified as experiences, while the affectual experience is captured here.

➢ **Ambivalent**
This subnode is used to identify participant statements in which ambiguity is detected by the coders. Ambiguity in this sense reflects feelings of both positivity and negativity, and/or a sense of general uncertainty on the part of the adopted person about how he or she feels about any aspect of the lived experience of adoption.

<u>Lived Experiences of Adoption (LEA)</u>

This higher order node reflects a major change in the structure, organization, and theoretical positioning of this template. This higher order node captures the Experiences of the Experiences → Valuation model of adoptive identity processes. LEA are experiences; experiences as defined here are any moment in time in which the participant cognitively or physically encounters anything. Inclusive of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and contextual encounters, LEA reflect: new thoughts, considerations, desires, and wishes made and had by the adopted person; interactions with others including all interpersonal relationships and associated qualities such as frequency, felt comfort or perceived understanding, and any experiences connected to the social and environmental context in which this person lives. The lived experience of adoption is the lived experience of life.

➢ **<u>Relational Dynamics</u>**

This higher order node, created following Wave 1 coding, houses all aspects of the interpersonal relationships between members of the adoptive family, between birth and adoptive families, and between the participant and external others outside of either family. Aspects of the interpersonal relationships include concepts such as attachment, closeness, and communication that are all seen as components of how people relate to one another.

❖ **Adoptive Family**

The adoptive family is a subnode that houses subnodes relating to the dynamics between members of the adoptive family (AP1, AP2, AS).

• **AP1 – Participant Relationship**

This subnode houses aspects of the participant's relationship with AP1. Following Wave 1 coding, this subnode allows coders to capture more relational dimensions including attachment and perceived closeness, in addition to communication.

▪ **AP1 – Communication**

This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, allows coders to capture qualifiers of communication between AP1 and the participant. Qualifiers are seen as descriptors of the nature of communication (e.g., frequency, initiation) rather than content or how the various parties feel before, during, or after communication occurs. This subnode can be thought of as more "quantitative" aspects of communication.

→ **AP1 – Presence of communication about adoption**
This node is used to identify references to communication with AP1 that do not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AP1 so frequency of communication is not lost.

→ **AP1 – Lack of frequency of communication about adoption**
This subnode allows for the identification of a noted lack of frequency of communication about adoption between the participant and AP1.

→ **AP1 – Presence of communication about adoption as related to race, culture, or ethnicity**
This subnode allows for the identification of communication between AP1 and the participant in which the concepts of race, ethnicity, and / or culture as they relate to adoption are discussed.

→ **Lack of frequency of communication about adoption as related to race, ethnicity, culture**
This subnode allows coders to indicate when there are infrequent or an absence of communications about the connections between adoption, race, and ethnicity.

→ **AP1 – Initiation of communication about adoption**
This subnode allows for the indication of who, between AP1 and the participant, generally or most often starts conversations about adoption. If both parties are said to bring it up equally well, then both subnodes contained in this node will be coded.

✓ **AP1 – Participant initiates communication**

This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AP1 and the participant in which the participant generally initiates communication about adoption.

✓ **AP1 – AP1 initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AP1 and the participant in which AP1 generally initiates communication about adoption.

- **AP1 – Participant's experience in relationship**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, is designed to capture many aspects of the participant's experience of his or her relationship with AP1. The subnodes housed within this node reflect the participant's subjective experience, how he or she feels as a part of this relationship, and their perceptions of the connection with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Strength of bond**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with AP1. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

→ **AP1 – Weakness of bond**
This subnode captures participant sentiments of a lack of connection or attachment with this particular adoptive parent.

→ **AP1 – Comfort**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective valuation of AP1's ability to emotionally, physically, or otherwise provide support and comfort in the participant's challenges with adoption. Example: "I was really upset when I came home from school after a classmate made fun of me for being adopted. My dad sat with me for a while and told me things would be alright."

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→ **AP1 – Ease in conversations about adoption**
The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with AP1 about adoption.

→ **AP1 – Unease in conversations about adoption**
The participant feels that conversations with AP1 are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging AP1 in a conversation about adoption.

→ **AP1 – Openness in communication about adoption**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and AP1 in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption. This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and AP1 about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Lack of openness in communication about adoption**
This subnode captures communication between the participant and AP1 in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with AP1. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with AP1.

→ **AP1 – Parent understands participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AP1 "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity

interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive parents' awareness of challenges, and adoptive parents' true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their children. This node does not reflect AP1's actual understanding; simply whether the participant FEELS that AP1 understands him or her.

→ **AP1 – Parent doesn't understand participant**
Reflects participant feelings that AP1 does not "understand" the participant's point of view, true feelings, or true experience. AP1 may be aware of the challenges, but may not "understand." Also, this does not indicate whether AP1 actually understands the participant or not, simply whether the participant FEELS that AP1 does not understand the participant's experience.

→ **AP1 – Participant desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode captures participant feelings about current levels of communication with AP1, and the participant's desire for increased communication about adoption. This is positioned here under relational dynamics rather than Communication, as this placement allows for the capture of personal feeling and longing, rather than the actual state of communication, which could be coded with the "Lack of frequency" code.

→ **AP1 - Participant desires more communication about race and ethnicity**
This subnode allows for the coding of instances in which the participant expresses sentiments that he or she wishes for more communication with either AP about ethnicity

→ **Participant does not express a desire for more communication about race and ethnicity**
This subnode allows for the coding of instances in which the participant expresses feelings that they do not wish for increased

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communication with AP about ethnicity.   Note, no reason for this is coded here, but may reflect the participant feeling as though current levels of communication are sufficient. This may also be double coded with lack of frequency to capture nuance.

- **AP1 – Participant's perception of AP1 experience**
This subnode captures the participant's subjective perception of aspects of AP1's experience of adoption across a series of subnodes. These subnodes, while seen to capture a perspective AP1, must be viewed as merely the participant's sense of how AP1 experiences aspects of self and adoption.

  → **AP1 – Intrapsychics**
  This subnode captures the participant's experience of AP1 across the subnodes that are also seen in Adoptive Identity. Positioned here, the subnodes are used to capture participant attitudes toward AP1 consistency/inconsistency, flexibility/inflexibility, and depth of narrative. Participants may reveal these thoughts directly, or they may emerge to the coders who notice discrepancies in the participant's recounting of AP1 statements or actions.

    ✓ **AP1 – Depth of narrative**
    This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AP1 is thought demonstrate reflection on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or of the meaning of being an adoptive parent. It is also used to identify instances in which they are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making about what it means to be an adopted person (from the perspective of the child) or an adoptive parent.

    ✓ **AP1 – Flexibility**
    This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AP1 demonstrates an ability to see the adoption story from multiple perspectives other than his

or her own, and is able to adapt his or her narrative. This subnode may be coded following explicit identification by the participant, or may also be identified by the coders even in the absence of explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AP1 – Inflexibility**
This subnode is a counterpoint to AP1 Flexibility and identifies points in which AP1 demonstrates an inability to see the adoption story from the perspective of others or to adapt his or her own views on adoption. Inflexibility may be explicitly identified by the participant or identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AP1 – Internal consistency**
This subnode is used to identify points in AP1 narrative, attitudes, behaviors, or adoption story that are consistent across time as identified by either the participant in the transcript directly, or by the coders who notice emergent consistent patterns in the participant's recounting of AP1.

✓ **AP1 – Internal inconsistency**
This subnode reflects instances in which AP1 demonstrates inconsistency in the narrative they tell, attitudes and beliefs they hold, inconsistencies in actions or comments, or inconsistencies in the adoption story AP1 retells. This inconsistency may be identified by the participant explicitly, or may be identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit comment by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Strength of bond (parent to participant)**
To reflect the participant's perception of the AP strength of bond toward them

→ **AP1 - Questioning strength of bond**
To reflect the participant's perception that the AP questions or doubts the strength of the parent-child relationship. This may emerge in tandem with topics of meeting birth parents in which the AP may feel threatened.

→ **AP1 – Ease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AP1 ease and comfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AP1 is experienced by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Unease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AP1 uneasiness and discomfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AP1 is experienced by the participant.

→ **AP1 – Demonstrates openness in communication**
This is used to identify instances in which the participant perceives AP to be "open" in communication.

→ **AP1 – Does not demonstrate openness in communication**
This subnode is a counterpoint to the previous subnode. Here, the participant does not feel that his or her AP is either being open in communication or is demonstrating a willingness to be open in communication

→ **AP1 – Desire for more communication about adoption**

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This subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 desires more communication with the participant about adoption. This may be reflected in direct statements in which AP1 is portrayed as attempting to engage the participant in conversation.

→ **AP1 – Aware of challenges faced by participant**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AP1 – Awareness that they don't understand participant's lived experience**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception that AP1 is aware of the challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AP1 – Anticipates participant will experience challenges**
This subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant indicates AP1 anticipated that the participant would experience challenges related to adoption, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these. Evidence may emerge in AP1 engaging the participant in conversations about how to handle racial discrimination, and / or questions about adoption.

→ **AP1 - Makes effort to understand or learn about the lived experience of the participant**
This subnode is used to indicate when participants feel that their AP demonstrates effort to better understand and connect with them around their own lived experiences as an adopted person. May be double coded with strength of bond in either direction.

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→ **AP1 – Aware that conversations about adoption are important, and AP engages in them genuinely**
This subnode is used to reflect the participant's perception that the AP understands that having conversations about adoption is important for the healthy development of his or her child across a range of aspects of self – including, but not limited to identity development and self-esteem

→ **AP1 – Aware that conversations about adoption are important, but AP engages in them as if forced or burdened**
To reflect the participant's perception that the AP understands conversations about adoption are important, but the participant perceives, that for whatever reasons, the AP does not engage in these conversations in a manner that expresses to the participant that the AP is enjoying the conversation or is pleased to be a part of them.

→ **AP1 - Avoidance of topics of conversation**
This is used to code participants' sense that the AP is avoidant of engaging in conversation about the following topics. No reason for this avoidance is coded here, but associated double codes may be AP questioning the strength of bond.

- **Birth Parents**
- **Race and / or ethnicity**

- **AP2 – Participant Relationship**
There is a complete set of subnodes for the AP2 – Participant relationship that is a duplicate of the AP1 – Participant nodes; simply substitute AP2 for AP1 in the node description.

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- **AS – Participant Relationship**
  This subnode houses aspects of the participant's relationship with AS. Following Wave 1 coding, this subnode allows coders to capture more relational dimensions including attachment and perceived closeness, in addition to communication.

  - **AS – Communication**
    This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, allows coders to capture qualifiers of communication between AS and the participant. Qualifiers are seen as descriptors of the nature of communication (e.g., frequency, initiation) rather than content or how the various parties feel before, during, or after communication occurs. This subnode can be thought of as more "quantitative" aspects of communication.

    → **AS – Presence of communication about adoption**
      This node is used to identify references to communication with AS that does not reflect a particular valence. This allows for the noting of times when the adopted person and AS so frequency of communication is not lost.

    → **AS – Lack of frequency of communication about adoption**
      This subnode allows for the identification of a noted lack of frequency of communication about adoption between the participant and AS.

    → **AS – Initiation of communication about adoption**
      This subnode allows for the indication of who, between AS and the participant, generally or most often starts conversations about adoption. If both parties are said to bring it up equally well, then both subnodes contained in this node will be coded.

✓ **AS – Participant initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AS and the participant in which the participant generally initiates communication about adoption.

✓ **AS – AS initiates communication**
This subnode is used to indicate a relationship between AS and the participant in which AS generally initiates communication about adoption.

- **AS – Participant's experience in relationship**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, is designed to capture many aspects of the participant's experience of his or her relationship with AS. The subnodes housed within this node reflect the participant's subjective experience, how he or she feels as a part of this relationship, and their perceptions of the connection with AS.

  - **AS – Strength of bond**
  This subnode, created following Wave 1 coding, reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with AS. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

  → **AS – Ease in conversations about adoption**
  The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with AS about adoption.

  → **AS – Unease in conversations about adoption**
  The participant feels that conversations with AS are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics.

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This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging AS in a conversation about adoption.

→ **AS – AS understands participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AS "understands" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive siblings' awareness of challenges, and their true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their brother or sister. This node does not reflect AS's actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that AS understands him or her.

→ **AS – AS doesn't understand participant**
Reflects participant comments that he or she feels AS does not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between adoptive siblings' awareness of challenges, and their true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on their brother or sister. This node does not reflect AS's actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that AS understands him or her.

- **AS – Participant's perception of AS experience**
This subnode captures the participant's subjective perception of aspects of AS' experience of adoption across a series of subnodes. These subnodes, while seen to capture a perspective AS, must be viewed as merely the participant's sense of how AS experiences aspects of self and adoption.

→ **AS – Intrapsychics**
This subnode captures the participant's experience of AS across the subnodes that are also seen in Adoptive Identity. Positioned here, the subnodes are used to capture participant attitudes toward AS consistency/inconsistency, flexibility/inflexibility, and depth of

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narrative. Participants may reveal these thoughts directly, or they may emerge to the coders who notice discrepancies in the participant's recounting of AS statements or actions.

✓ **AS – Depth of narrative**
This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AS is thought demonstrate reflection on the meaning of adoption or of being adopted, or of the meaning of being the sibling of an adopted person.

✓ **AS – Flexibility**
This subnode allows for the identification of instances in which AS demonstrates an ability to see the adoption story from multiple perspectives other than his or her own, and is able to adapt his or her narrative. This subnode may be coded following explicit identification by the participant, or may also be identified by the coders even in the absence of explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AS – Inflexibility**
This subnode is a counterpoint to AS Flexibility and identifies points in which AS demonstrates an inability to see the adoption story from the perspective of others or to adapt his or her own views on adoption. Inflexibility may be explicitly identified by the participant or identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit identification by the participant.

✓ **AS – Internal consistency**
This subnode is used to identify points in AS narrative, attitudes, behaviors, or adoption story that are consistent across time as identified by either the participant in the transcript directly, or by the coders

who notice emergent consistent patterns in the participant's recounting of AS.

✓ **AS – Internal inconsistency**
This subnode reflects instances in which AS demonstrates inconsistency in the narrative they tell, attitudes and beliefs they hold, inconsistencies in actions or comments, or inconsistencies in the adoption story AS retells. This inconsistency may be identified by the participant explicitly, or may be identified by the coders even in the absence of an explicit comment by the participant.

→ **AS – Ease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AS ease and comfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AS is experienced by the participant.

→ **AS – Unease in conversations about adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's subjective perception of AS uneasiness and discomfort in conversations about adoption. This subnode is used to provide depth of understanding into how AS is experienced by the participant.

→ **AS – Desire for more communication about adoption**
This subnode reflects a participant's perception that AS desires more communication with the participant about adoption. This may be reflected in direct statements in which AS is portrayed as attempting to engage the participant in conversation.

→ **AS – Aware of challenges faced by participant**
Highlighting the difference between understanding and awareness, this subnode reflects a participant's perception AS is aware of the

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challenges. This does not presume that with awareness comes understanding.

→ **AS – Awareness that the don't understand participant's lived experience**
This subnode captures participant perceptions that AS is aware that he or she does not fully understand the lived experience of the participant. This may be due to AS awareness that since he or she is not adopted, they may never fully understand what the experience of adoption is like for the participant.

→ **AS – Anticipates participant will experience challenges**
This subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant indicates AS anticipated that the participant would experience challenges related to adoption, race, ethnicity, or any combination of these. Evidence may emerge in AS engaging the participant in conversations about how to handle racial discrimination, and / or questions about adoption.

- **Extended Adoptive Family Dynamics (EAF)**
This subnode captures interactions and relational dynamics between the adopted person and members of his or her extended adoptive family. The "extended adoptive family" refers to any member outside parent-sibling constellation (e.g., grandparents, aunts, cousins), though it is fully understood that the boundaries and memberships of "family" are diffuse and diverse.

  - **Presence of communication with EAF members**
  This subnode is used to acknowledge communication between the participant and any EAF member.

  - **EAF members reaffirm strength of familial connection with participant**
  This subnode reflects the participant's perception that members of his or her EAF make comments or show actions to reassure or show to the participant that he or

she is viewed as a member of the family regardless of adoptive status or lack of genetic connection to the family.

- **Participant feels comforted in conversations about adoption with EAF members**
  This subnode is used to reflect the participant's feeling of being comforted ad supported in conversations about adoption with members of the extended adoptive family. This may or may not be double coded with the previous code about the reaffirmation of bonds.

❖ **Adoptive Triad Dynamics**
This subnode is used to capture relational dynamics between members of birth and adoptive families. Interfamilial interaction between any member of the birth family and adoptive family is captured here.

- **Interfamilial communication**
  Reflects mentions of communication between the adoptive family and birth families. Includes communication between the adopted person and his or her birth family members.

❖ **Extrafamilial Dynamics**
This node represents conversations about adoption that occur with individuals outside of either adoptive or birth family spheres. This may include friends or significant others that the individual participates in conversations about adoption with.

- **Presence of communication about adoption with Extras**
  This allows for the identification about instances in which conversation about adoption with Extras is noted to happen. Consider frequency and occurrence rather than valuation here.

- **Lack of communication about adoption with Extras**
  A counterpoint to the previous subnode.

- **Participant ease of communication about adoption with Extras**
  The participant feels that conversations with Extras are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with Extras about adoption.

- **Participant unease in communication about adoption with Extras**
  The participant feels that conversations with Extras are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging Extras in a conversation about adoption.

- **Participant openness in communication about adoption with Extras**
  This subnode captures communication between the participant and Extras in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption. This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and Extras about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with Extras.

- **Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with Extras**
  This subnode captures communication between the participant and Extras in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with Extras. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with Extras.

- **Participant ease in communication about race and ethnicity with Extras**
  This subnode is used to capture participant feelings in conversations about race and ethnicity with Extras.

- **Extras understand participant**
  Reflects participant comments that he or she feels the Extras "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

- **Extras do not understand participant**
  Reflects participant comments that he or she feels Extras do not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

- **Acknowledge that they speak differently with other adopted Extras**
  This subnode allows for the identification of sentiments expressed by the participant that he or she indeed speaks differently about any of the lived experiences of adoption with other adopted persons than they do with non-adopted persons.

  - **Presence of communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
    This allows for the identification about instances in which conversation about adoption with adopted Extras is noted to happen. Consider frequency and occurrence rather than valuation here.

  - **Lack of communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
    A counterpoint to the previous subnode.

  - **Participant ease of communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
    The participant feels that conversations with adopted Extras are relatively comfortable and pleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect the comfort with the topic itself, but the participant's comfort communicating with Extras about adoption.

- **Participant unease in communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
  The participant feels that conversations with adopted Extras are relatively uncomfortable and unpleasant in terms of the interpersonal dynamics. This node does not reflect discomfort with the topic itself, but the participant's felt discomfort with engaging Extras in a conversation about adoption.

- **Participant openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
  This subnode captures communication between the participant and adopted Extras in which the participant feels they are willing to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption.   This code is used to capture both instances of meaningful conversation between the participant and Extras about adoption, as well as participant feelings about how open communication is with Extras.

- **Participant lack of openness in communication about adoption with adopted Extras**
  This subnode captures communication between the participant and adopted Extras in which the participant feels they are unwilling to share his or her thoughts and feelings about adoption with Extras. This code is used to capture both instances of restricting the communication of participant thoughts and feelings, as well as participant feelings about the lack of open communication is with Extras.

- **Adopted Extras understand participant**
  Reflects participant comments that he or she feels the adopted Extras "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

- **Adopted Extras do not understand participant**
  Reflects participant comments that he or she feels adopted Extras do not "understand" the participant. This item is derived from the Adoptive Identity interview in which the distinction is made between awareness of challenges, and a

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true understanding of the impact adoptive status may have on adopted persons. This node does not reflect Extras' actual understanding, simply whether the participant FEELS that Extras understand him or her.

➢ **Experiences related to adoption**
While any experiences that participants have may technically be classified as experiences related to adoption, this node is used to identify those in which adoption is a primary focus.

❖ **Legitimacy of adoptive family bonds questioned**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to identify content of negative experiences. This subnode is used to indicate when participants indicate having their adoptive family bonds questioned through statements or questions using, among others, the term "real parents."

❖ **Having to explain why they look different from adoptive parents**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to indicate content of negative experiences. This subnode reflects participants having to use adoption as an explanation or reason for the physical and racial differences between themselves and their adoptive parents.

❖ **Experiences of adoption stigma**
Stigma is seen here as a feeling of discrimination or difference that emerges within the adopted person. This experience of stigma may be as a result of either interpersonal or socio-contextual events or situations.

❖ **Reponses to experienced adoption stigma**
This subnode allows for the identification of a range of defenses and responses participants have developed over time to manage the impact of statements, comments, actions, or beliefs expressed by others about any aspect of the lived experience of adoption as stigmatizing. These responses may be doubly yet differentially coded with subjective valuations of the event across participants:

- **Laughing it off**
Participants may simply laugh off comments made by others in jest or in seriousness

- **Ignoring the statement**

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Participants may simply not acknowledge the comment was made either by stating that they are not dignifying the statement with a response or by more covertly failing to respond

- **Educating others**
  Participants may use the opportunity to challenge inaccurate or negative stereotypes or views of adoption.

- **Using adoption or adoptive status as a response, rationale, or justification**
  Participants may use their adoptive status as justification and to explain away their current situation or state.

- **Excusing negative or stigmatizing comments from others / dismissing negative comments from others as harmless, meaningless, or unintentional**
  This subnode allows coders to capture participants' responses, to what are judged to be potentially stigmatizing or negative comments, that minimize or dismiss the statement from others as unimportant or minor.

➢ **Experiences related to race and ethnicity**
Here, the previously independent higher order nodes of race and ethnicity are now condensed into one node. While in reality, these constructs are very independent, they are so often conflated by the participants that they are required to be collapsed here. This may reflect the lack of depth of understanding of the concepts of race and ethnicity in general by the participants and others in the participants' spheres. However, due to the transracial status of these participants' adoptions, the conflation of race and ethnicity may be less indicative of a general lack of understanding and more a reflection of the reality in which their race is tied to a culture of origin. Below is the restructured new node, with many holdovers from the previous template:

❖ **Ethnic identification**
  Reflects actions taken to align with a specific ethnic group.

- **Identification with ethnic group of adoptive parents**
  Statements in which the adopted participant voices a felt connection and sense of belonging or commitment to the ethnic culture and identity of his or her adoptive parents.

- **Identification with ethnic group of birth parents**

When the participant voices a felt connection, sense of belonging, and commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

- **Identification with dominant ethnic culture of the US**
  This subnode is included to mirror the prompt in the interview that gives participants the option of indicating their ethnic identification as linked to the dominant culture of the US. This "dominant culture" is seen as reflecting cultural and social values of mainstream America.

❖ **Ethnic de-identification**
Reflects actions taken to minimize connection between self and a specific ethnic group

- **De-identification with adoptive parents' ethnic group**
  When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her adoptive parents.

- **De-identification with birth parents' ethnic group**
  When the participant voices a felt rejection, lack of a sense of belonging, and lack of commitment to the ethnic culture of his or her birth parents.

❖ **Racial identification**
Reflects actions taken to align with a specific racial group. When the participant voices a felt connection or identifies self with racial group

❖ **Experiences of self as a racial and ethnic person**
This subnode is used to identify other instances or experiences in which race or ethnicity is a primary focus

- **Viewed experience as racially or ethnically stigmatizing, discriminatory, or a form of microaggression**
  It is not accurate to assume that all experiences of self as a racial or ethnic person would be negative; even those experiences that others may see as negative. Therefore, this section is

not classified more specifically as experiences related to stigma or the experience of microaggressions. To capture any negative sentiment, this subnode is added as a qualifier that may be double coded on any experience listed below. This allows coders to more accurately capture the participant's perceived stigma, or the absence of participant sentiments of discrimination.

- **I viewed myself as white**
  This subnode captures an "inside out" perspective in which the participant acknowledges an intrapsychic mentation of themselves as white. This may be reflected in direct statements such as the person not recognizing themselves or being surprised by their reflection in the mirror. Themes of depersonalization may be found here.

- **Others viewed me as white**
  This subnode captures an "outside in" perspective in which members of the social context viewed the participant as racially White, despite physically being a member of another racial group.

- **Others viewed me as a member of my racial group – Positive**
  This subnode reflects instances in which participants felt that their membership in the cultural group of origin was validated. These experiences may be positive for the person at least initially, as some participants may felt comfort in "passing" as a member of their culture of origin.

- **Others viewed me as a member of my racial group – Negative**
  This subnode reflects instances in which others ascribed racial group membership and also applied stereotyped expectations of culture to the participant resulting in negative feelings within the participant. The participant may or may not have had to then explain why they did not meet those applied stereotypes using adoption as the reason. An example would be a person seeing a participant of Latin descent and introducing themselves in Spanish, assuming they spoke it.

- **Others do not afford me full membership in my racial or ethnic group**
  This subnode is used to capture participant sentiments that he or she is not seen as a "full

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member" or a "legitimate" member of his or her racial or ethnic group of origin (e.g., "You're not a *real* Korean").

- **Insensitive or stigmatizing comments related to race, ethnicity, or culture of the participant**
This subnode is to specifically identify comments that the participant deemed insensitive or stigmatizing.

    - **Comments made by grandfather**
    This identifies comments made by the participant's grandfather

    - **Comments made by adoptive mother**
    This identifies comments made by the participant's adoptive mother

- **Lost aspects of birth culture due to adoption**
This subnode reflects the participant's acknowledgement that due to one's TRA, he or she has lost specific aspects of self related to his or her culture of origin. An example would be a participant being fluent in the language of his or her birth culture at the time of adoption, but losing the ability to speak this language over time following adoption.

- **Belonging**
This subnode allows coders to capture participant statements that reflect degrees of feeling like he or she "belongs" within either birth or adoptive cultural and ethnic groups.

    → **Perceived membership in ethnic group of country of origin**
    This subnode is to capture feelings of in which the participant feels as though they "belong" or are a member of their ethnic group of their country of origin. This perceived membership may be felt in a diverse ways and may or may not be confirmed or reciprocated externally.

    → **Feels comfort when with members of the same racial or ethnic group**
    This subnode marks instances when the participant acknowledges feeling more a

greater sense of comfort and a different feeling of connectedness when with members of the same racial or ethnic group

→ **Lack of perceived membership in either birth or adoptive ethnic groups**
This subnode is to capture feelings of "I felt like I didn't belong in either group" expressed by the participant; "either group" reflects both birth and adoptive ethnic groups. This is used to capture sentiments of "Somewhere Between" cultures and may reflect those similar feelings held by multiracial or biracial individuals.

➢ **Experience of fantasies or desires**
Fantasies are positioned here as "experiences" to capture the experience of having a fantasy, and that this experience may itself generate other feelings and emotions as one considers that he or she may have these desires or wishes. Many of the subnodes here were previously categorized under Adoption Dynamics - Preoccupation. They are shifted here in accordance with the Experiences → Valuations model and allow for the framing of these intrapsychic experiences to also be subject to positive or negative valuation or feelings of ambiguity, and for these intrapsychic experiences to also exert influence on the participant's sense of self or the formation of self and narrative. Also, coders may now identify these thoughts without being forced to also ascribe a state of preoccupation about them.

In addition to Fantasies, Exploration is positioned under this higher order node. Conceptualized as action or a lack of action taken on fantasies that the participant may have, fantasies and exploration / action are seen as connected by motivation. Conceptualized together, the participant may have fantasies about some aspect of adoption, race, or ethnicity, and then be motivated or lack motivation to explore. In this model, all aspects of this process are captured here.

❖ **Fantasies or desires as related to adoption**
Fantasies and desires related to adoption, either about a particular person or of the adoption processes, are listed here. Note the designation on whether action has been taken or not.

• **Birth mother**
A holdover from the previous Preoccupation template, this positioning captures a participant's mentioning that he or she has a desire to meet the birth mother.

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→ **Desire to meet birth mother but no action taken**
A modified holdover

→ **Despite action taken to meet birth mother, more connection desired**
A new node that allows for the indication that action has been taken but that more contact or communication beyond what is attained is desired. This would be double coded with subnodes for Exploration (below) to indicate that the participant has indeed taken action based on fantasies, but that despite this exploration, more fantasies or desires remain.

- **Birth father**
A holdover from the previous Preoccupation template, this positioning captures a participant's mentioning that he or she has a desire to meet the birth father.

  → **Desire to meet birth father but no action taken**
  Same description as for birth mother
  → **Despite action taken to meet birth father, more connection desired**
  Same description as the same node under birth mother

- **Desire to meet birth siblings but no action taken**
This subnode indicates the desire to meet birth siblings. In this sample, none of the participants had taken action to meet birth siblings; therefore, there is not a follow up node about desires beyond action already taken.

- **If I hadn't been adopted…**
This subnode captures a participant's fantasies about what his or her life may have been had they not been adopted. When invoked by the participants, this theme reflected their thoughts and feelings about what their lives would have been had they remained in their birth countries; imagery of poverty and a lack of access to resources. In conversations with the senior research adviser on the issue, it was acknowledged that in prior research, some adopted persons described fantasies about had they not been adopted, but in these, they were the biological children of their adoptive parents. While intriguing, none of the participants referenced this theme in fantasies about having not been adopted.

❖ **Fantasies or desires as related to race and / or ethnicity**
Fantasies or desires about internalization or access to his or her racial or ethnic group

- **Desire to feel connected to or aligned with culture of origin or racial group**
This subnode is used to identify statements in which the participant expresses a desire to feel more connected with or aligned with his or her culture of origin than he or she currently is.

  → **Desire to travel to country of origin**
  In the theme of connecting with a culture of origin or racial group, this subnode is used to identify instances in which the participant specifically references returning to his or her country of origin as a means to connect.

- **Despite action taken to connection with culture of origin or racial group, greater connection desired**
This subnode reflects a desire to connect beyond past or current levels achieved through exploration. An example may be a desire to join student groups despite having traveled to the country of origin. This may reflect an ongoing need to connect beyond available opportunities.

- **Does not desire or care to connect or belong with culture of origin or racial group**
This reflects participant sentiments that they do not wish to connect more with a culture of origin or racial group. Statements coded here may or may not also reflect participant beliefs that connecting with the culture of origin is not important or necessary to the formation of self-concept as an adopted person.

❖ <u>**Exploration**</u>
Positioned here, this higher order node and subnodes reflect action taken in response to fantasies. This node is used to capture action taken in seeking new information, new experiences, contact, or communication with either elements of the birth history, culture of origin, or racial group. Also included here is the acknowledgment or identification of motivating factors, which are seen as the bridge between fantasies and action taken; in this way, motivation moves individuals from thoughts to action.

- **Adoption**
Reflects action taken to explore aspects of adoption

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- o **Exploration**
  Have sought contact with members of the birth family

- o **No exploration**
  Have not sought contact with members of birth family

- o **Contacted adoption agency**

- **Ethnic or racial groups**
  Reflects action taken to explore in the area of ethnic or racial groups

  - o **Exploration**
    Have sought contact or engagement with ethnic or racial groups

    - → **Traveled to country of origin**
      Action taken to connect with ethnic or racial groups in the form of returning to the country of origin

  - o **No exploration**
    Have not sought contact or engagement

- **Motivation**
  The concept of motivation in adoption exploration is dominated by theories on curiosity. While the theoretical strength of this characterization is up for debate (French, 2013), participants referenced the term "curious" or "curiosity" in their discussion of motivation. However, there was also mention of motivation stemming from a desire to strength a sense of self or identity as well.

- o **To satisfy "curiosity"**
  Statements made in which the participant implicates "curiosity" as a motivating factor to exploration. This subnode is used to reflect a more general motivation to search for whatever information may be available.

- o **To specifically address information gaps**
  This subnode is used to indicate a motivation to specifically seek answers to information gaps. Information gaps are seen as specific elements of the adoption story that the individual has a desire to fill. This is seen as a more guided and directed search for specific information than the more general motivation to satisfy "curiosity"
- o **To strengthen identity or sense of self**
  Statements made in which the participant references a desire to strengthen a sense of self

➢ **Experiences of context**
Context refers to mentions of the participant's hometown, early social groups, and the adoptive family system, as well as current contexts. Here, experiences of both early and current contexts can be identified as well as attitudes and views held within those contexts:

❖ **Early context**
- **Racial demographics**
  Participant comments on the racial makeup of his or her hometown (e.g., "a predominantly White town," "an ethnically diverse town").

- **Socio-economic demographics**
  Participant mentions the socio-economic status of either his or her own family or the hometown.

- **Socialization**

  New subnode to document the characteristics of the friend groups that the participant belonged to, separate from a more general identification of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of their larger region or hometown.

  → **Had majority white friends**

  This subnode indicates that the participant's primary social groups growing up were comprised of a white racial group.

- **Early context & adoption**

  This node reflects the manner in which the participant's context handles and approaches issues of adoption. Attitudes, behaviors, valuations, and attitudes toward adoption and about adopted persons may be coded here. Note that the manner in which context intersects with adoption may differ from the conceptualization of the participant, who may ascribe variable valuations to these contextual views:

  → **Negative views**

  Negative views reflect many of the themes captured in adoption stigma and microaggression literature, including views of adoption as second best, adopted persons as deficient or deviant, and views that bonds formed through adoption are suspect. Also reflects views of adoption as odd, weird, or not normal.

  → **Positive views**

  Positive views may portray adoption and adopted persons as a legitimate method of family formation and as not deviant, deficient, or second best, respectively. Adoption may be viewed as normalized or common.

  → **Lack of education or awareness about adoption**

  This subnode reflects participant statements that they perceive the social context to be ill informed about issues related to adoption or as lacking in knowledge about the impact adoption may have on the lives of members of the adoption triad.

- **Early context, and race and ethnicity**
  This node reflects the manner in which the participant's context handles and approaches issues of race and ethnicity. Attitudes, behaviors, valuations, and attitudes toward race and ethnicity, and about persons of color may be coded here. Note that the ways in which context intersects with race and ethnicity may differ from the conceptualization of the participant, who may ascribe variable valuations to these contextual views:

  → **Lack of education about race and ethnicity**
  This subnode is used to identify participant sentiments that his or her early context lacked awareness or education about the issues of race and / or ethnicity, including, but not limited to beliefs about colorblindness and the lack of importance of racial difference.

- ❖ **Current context**
  - **Racial demographics**
    Participant comments on the racial makeup of his or her hometown (e.g., "a predominantly White town," "an ethnically diverse town").

  - **Socio-economic demographics**
    Participant mentions the socio-economic status of either his or her own family or the hometown.

  - **Socialization**
    New subnode to document the characteristics of the friend groups that the participant belonged to, separate from a more general identification of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of their larger region or hometown.

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    → **Negative views**
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    → **Lack of education or awareness about adoption**
      This subnode reflects participant statements that they perceive the social context to be ill informed about issues related to adoption or as lacking in knowledge about the impact adoption may have on the lives of members of the adoption triad.

- **Current context, and race and ethnicity**
  This node reflects the manner in which the participant's current context handles and approaches issues of race and ethnicity. Attitudes, behaviors, valuations, and attitudes toward race and ethnicity, and about persons of color may be coded here. Note that the ways in which context intersects with race and ethnicity may differ from the conceptualization of the participant, who may ascribe variable valuations to these contextual views:

    → **Lack of education about race and ethnicity**
      This subnode is used to identify participant sentiments that his or her early context lacked awareness or education about the issues of race and / or ethnicity,

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including, but not limited to beliefs about colorblindness and the lack of importance of racial difference.

→ **Participant has more racially or ethnically diverse friend group relative to early context**
This statement reflects the participant's changing social groups. While this node does not specifically reflect whether ethnically diverse social groups were actively or passively / consciously or unconsciously selected by the participant, this subnode can be coded with Exploration and Motivation subnodes to capture this information.

➢ **Aspects of the adoption narrative**
This new subnode contains information about the adoption narrative that had either been ascribed or discovered. Facts about adoption is a holdover from the previous two templates and is used to identify instances in which the participant reveals details about his or her adoption narrative that were a part of a "typical adoption story," such as date of adoption, orphanage setting, birth family details, adoptive family story of travelling to country of origin.

❖ **Facts about adoption**
Statements made that reflect some knowledge or process to acquire knowledge about his or her adoption. Coding under this category reflects the participant simply presenting factual information about his or her adoption, and DOES NOT reflect any attempts to integrate these facts into a meaningful adoption narrative or story.

Examples include recalling the date or time of birth, adoption, location of birth, information about the adoption such as how many biological siblings he or she may have. For example, "I was born in San Diego, California on March 31, 1992" is a stand-alone statement that isn't integrated into a larger, cohesive sense of self that would be present in a statement coded for depth of narrative. Note how the previous example differs from the following that also reflects integration and depth:

"I was born in San Diego, California, on March 31, 1992, which is interesting because my adopted mother was in San Diego at that exact same time on a business trip." Note the meaning in the second statement.

❖ **Information gaps**
Information gaps reflect elements of the adoption narrative that the participant does not possess.

- **Early adoption narrative / adoption story**
This subnode is used to indicate when the participant has a very limited or non-existent recollection of any element of his or her adoption story. In distinguishing this code from a lack of depth or richness, statements made by the participant in which responses to questions about details of the adoption story are "I don't know" would be coded here, while minimal details provided (e.g., "my parents adopted me on June 5th, and that's all I know") may be coded as lack of depth. This node reflects a profound paucity of detail or information about the adoption.

- **Why was I placed for adoption**
This node reflect preoccupation with the specific question of "Why?." Many adopted persons want to know the reasons they were placed for adoption; this node captures that very specific topic of preoccupied thoughts.

- **Whether I look like birth parents / what do birth parents look like?**
This is also a holdover with the addition of "what do birth parents look like" to allow coders to capture instances in which the participant may reference wondering what parents look like without specific reference that they are wondering if they appear physically similar to them.

- **Birth family medical history**
This subnode, created following Wave 1 of coding, allows coders to capture content of preoccupying thoughts. In this case, preoccupying thoughts are about one's birth family medical history and the impact of not knowing this information.

- **Birth family social history and personalities**
In addition to birth family medical history, this new subnode allows coders to reference participant statements in which information is desired about their birth family social history and what they are / were like as people.

➢ **Experience of roadblocks**
This higher order node is seen as a potential integrative theme. Roadblocks are seen to capture the sense of difficulty and impediments felt by adopted persons across many areas of the lived experience of adoption, such as roadblocks in communication with others, roadblocks in exploring birth family contacts, or roadblocks in seeking greater connection to birth culture or race. Roadblocks themselves can be felt in three primary forms: intrapsychic; interpersonal; logistical.

❖ **Intrapsychic Roadblocks**
These roadblocks are those that exist within the participant's own mind and may be a product of both psychological and social influences. These may manifest as emotions, thoughts, or perceptions of difficulty.

- **Fear of how he or she would react emotionally in meeting birth parents**
Reflects participant views that their own unknown emotional response to potential meetings with birth family members as a deterrent to making contact.

- **Fear of how his or her view of self would change following exploration**
Participant considers the unknown changes to how one views the self, following newfound access to more information about one's early and familial histories as a barrier to exploration. Some participants may feel that they would like to have a stronger sense of self as a person before they seek information that may further disrupt or make more difficult, the process of identity development.

  → **Exploration into adoption**
  → **Exploration into race or ethnicity**

- **Difficulty in finding right words to express self**
Participants may feel that a hindrance to further exploration or consideration is the lack of vocabulary to allow them to express themselves to a level they feel is appropriate. Semantic deficits may be perceived in emotion or adoption terminology.

❖ **Interpersonal Roadblocks**
These roadblocks exist as thoughts and considerations by the participant but are directly related to how

they feel others contribute to perceived roadblocks.

- **Participant worried about how making contact would make APs feel**
  Participants may not seek communication about adoption in general, or contact with birth family members for fear of how their adoptive family members would feel. Participants may also feel that AP feelings about birth parents prevent engagement in conversation. These perceptions may or may not be founded in reality, but may nonetheless exist as a deterrent to the adopted person.

- **APs withholding information or discouraging contact**
  Participants may state that they are aware that their adoptive parents are not sharing information about the adoption. Participants may be aware of an adoption file that was not shared with them, or may be taught, directly or indirectly, that adoption is not an appropriate topic of conversation within that family system.

- **Participant feels they do not have an ally in exploration**
  Participants may feel that they do not have anyone who supports their desire for exploration. This may or may not be founded in reality. The adopted person may feel that his or her adoptive parents do not understand them, and therefore, cannot possibly support them in their journey.

- **Fear of lack of acceptance by members of either birth or adoptive ethnic or racial groups**
  Participant my fear rejection from various racial or ethnic groups that prevents them from seeking increased alignment or membership.

❖ **Logistical Roadblocks**
These roadblocks are characterized by the adopted person indicating challenges in exploration stemming from organizational, systemic, financial, cultural, or informational deficits.

- **Phase of life**
  This subnode indicates when the participant feel that action is / has not been taken due to feelings that his or her life stage or "phase of life" (e.g., college) does not allow for

exploration, makes it inconvenient, or otherwise impinges on taking action or exploration.

- **Lack of knowledge of culture of origin**
  Participants may feel that their lack of knowledge about the culture of origin, including not knowing the language of their culture of origin, is a hindrance to feeling connected. Participants may feel that this lack of knowledge prevents them from feeling like a member of the group (inside out) and also from being perceived as a member of that group (outside in). This is a logistical rather than interpersonal roadblock due to the aspect of learning and experience.

- **Challenging system to navigate**
  Participants do not feel they can navigate the paperwork and various post-adoption and reunification systems in place to effectively seek information.

- **Perceived lack of information**
  Participants do not feel that there is enough information (e.g., names of birth parents or family; information on birthplace) in their birth records or adoption story to effectively search. Additionally, participants may feel that while information is listed in their file, that the information is inaccurate or incorrect for some reason.

- **Birth parent(s) deceased**
  Knowledge of or sense that birth parent(s) is / are deceased

- **Discriminatory LGBTQ parent rights to adoption**
  Inability of same sex couples to both adopt a child leads to one primary parent being the legal guardian of that adopted child. This may have impacts on the feeling of connectedness with the non-adoptive, non-custodial parent.

➢ **Experience of facilitators**
  Drawing on the concept of "barriers and facilitators" (Wrobel, Grotevant, & Samek, in press), this higher order node represents references in the transcript to identified aspects of the participant's lived experience (e.g., events, meetings, experiences, people) that they see as helping to make connections with adoption, explore, or gain further insight. This higher order node is seen as a counterpoint to Roadblocks.

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❖ **Efforts to legally reinforce adoptive parent-child relationship (e.g., same sex parent second parent adoption)**
Reflects instances in which the second parent is able to legally adopt the adopted person reinforces and strengthens the felt connection and bond between the participant and this second parent.

❖ **Seeking therapy**
For some participants, they may seek therapy to address some of their thoughts and feelings concerning aspect of the LEA. These participants may feel that seeking therapy has facilitated their understanding of the impact adoption has had and may continue to have in their lives.

❖ **APs provide access to other transracially adopted persons**
In line with the recommendation to adoptive parents, some participants may acknowledge that their APs sought out other transracially adopted persons for them to get to know and associate with as they grew up. Some of these other TRA were identified as important persons and peers by participants.

❖ **Found information in adoption file**
This specific node is seen as a product of exploration, yet is placed here because the file may have been found accidentally or information provided through the efforts of another (e.g., a friend contacting the agency, adoptive parents providing access to information, birth parents contacting the participant). Regardless of the means, the outcome may be the same as personal exploration, as the participant is then moved to contend with and reconcile new information with a preexisting adoption narrative.

➢ **Experience of mentoring**
Reflects comments made about mentoring and the connection between the mentoring experience and his or her adoptive experience.

❖ **Mentor Group Meetings**
This sub-node reflects comments made about the perception or impact of the mentor group meetings (MGM).

❖ **Intrapsychic**
• **Views program as positive**
This is used to indicate when participants view the mentoring program as a positive

contribution to society, their own lives, and /or the lives of the mentees.

- **Wants to be or is planning on continuing role as a mentor in the future.**
  This subnode is seen as important to identify, as it suggests mentors feel positively enough about the program to commit time and effort to it into the next academic year.

- **Positive feelings of self as a result of being a mentor**
  Connects sense of self-esteem or self-worth as being strengthened directly by role as a mentor. Differs from other self-esteem node in that this specifically identifies mentoring as the source.

- **First participation in an adoption-focused social group**
  Captures mentor statements that participation in AMP represents their first experience in an adoption –focused social group. This was seen as an important factor to track as these individuals are already emerging adults.

- **Wish they had this opportunity when they were younger**
  This subnode is included to capture statements in which the participant expresses feelings of longing for this experience when they were younger.

- **Seeing Self in Mentee**
  This sub-node under mentoring reflects comments made in which the mentor may "see him or herself" in the mentee. The mentor may be reminded of themselves as a child when thinking of his or her mentee. Connections made to the adoptive experience of either the mentor or the mentee may be a part of this theme.

- **Participation in AMP induces change in self**
  This node is used to capture participant comments that they feel participation in AMP has changed how they think about and feel about adoption, and their own sense of self as an adopted person.

❖ **Interpersonal**

- **Giving Back**
  This sub-node is used to capture sentiments of "giving back" as a reason for mentoring or as a benefit obtained as a result. This theme can be coded if there are explicit or implicit references to this theme.

- **Positive feelings about mentee**
  This is used to indicate statements made by the participant about positive feelings, regard, or sentiment about the mentee

- **Strength of bond with mentee**
  This subnode reflects the participant's perception of the strength of the interpersonal relationship they feel they have with the mentee. This subnode is used to capture themes of attachment, trust, openness, sense of security in the relationship.

- **Considers mentee as sibling**
  This was an intriguing find across many transcripts, as the mentors came to see mentees as siblings. Fully aware of the absence of genetic or familial connection to these children, nonetheless, the mentors felt a unique and special connection that they described as mirroring a sibling relationship.

❖ **Challenges**
This subnode is used to identify noted challenges or difficulties associated with the mentoring program:

- **Scheduling / logistical challenges**
  Reflects difficulties experienced as a function of mechanics of the program rather than relational or content-based difficulties

- **Preoccupation with fulfilling mentor role**
  Reflects participant concerns and worries of doing a good job as a mentor. The worries can be about logistics and keeping the mentee safe, to worries about how they will connect with someone younger. Themes of nervousness about the responsibility and status as a role model are strong here.

<u>**Advice to Adoptive Parents**</u>

This higher order node was generated in response to a particular prompt in the interview schedule when participants were asked to provide advice for future and current adoptive parents in how to best address some of the challenges their children may be facing and how best to support those adopted individuals. Participants provided very direct and specific points of advice, and it was desired to have a structured way of capturing these themes, many of which the adopted persons referenced in their own stories.

> **Communication**
> It is important for adoptive parents to be communicative and open with their child about all aspects of adoption. It is critical for adoptive parents to know that their child's interest in communication about adoption does not reflect their lack of connection or love to the AP; on the contrary, open, honest, supportive, and sincere communication will only serve to strengthen parent-child relationships.

> **Supportive of emotional journey**
> Despite feeling like they may not fully understand their child's lived experience of adoption, the adoptive parents must be supportive of their child's experience and journey.

> **Birth parents and family**
> Adoptive parents must support their child's desire to explore thoughts and feelings about birth parents and birth family members. Adoptive parents must also work with their children to seek contact if the child desires it. Adoptive parents must know that their child's questions about birth parents and their origins are normal and natural and that the child's interest in birth parents is not reflective of his or her strength of bond to the adoptive parents.

>> ❖ **Desire to ask questions about birth family and origins natural**
>> Subnode to identify specific statements in which participants believe it is important for adoptive parents to know that a desire to know about one's past is normal and should be expected.

>> ❖ **Support desires for contact**
>> Subnode to identify when participants state that it is important for adoptive parents to support their child's desire for contact and to facilitate this meeting if possible and safe.

> **Be sensitive to child's personal development and capacities**
> To indicate participant statements that adoptive parents must be keen observers of their child's desires and wishes and

must provide both engagement and distance when appropriate in terms of conversations and action about adoption. Adoptive parents should be adept at "reading" their children and sensing the child's emotional state and readiness.

➢ **Provide access**

This node was previously listed as "Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers" but is now structured as a higher order node more inclusive of other areas or experiences in which adoptive parents are the gatekeepers:

❖ **Provide access to diverse cultures and racial peers**

❖ **Provide access to other adopted individuals**
In this subnode, participants acknowledge that providing access to other adopted person to develop a sense of connectedness is important to the overall development of sense of self in adopted persons

Self-esteem

This node reflects comments made about how the participant views him or herself as a person and the subjective valuation of him or herself. Self-esteem in this research project is derived from the conceptualization of self-esteem developed by Tafarodi & Swann (2001), who developed a two-factor model of self-esteem: self-liking, and self-competence.

➢ **Self-liking**

Self-liking is one factor of Tafarodi & Swann's (2001) two factor theory of self-esteem. This self-liking sub-node will be used to identify statements in which the participant reveals his or her self-valuation as good or bad as related to his or her adoptive status. This term has a very social component, such that views on self-liking (viewing self as good or bad) can be imparted by the social worlds around the target individual.

An example would be a statement in which the adopted person states that she would never be able to emotionally connect with others and meet the needs of others due to her experience with adoption.

➢ **Self-competence**

The self-competence sub-node will be used to identify statements that reflect the participant's view of him or herself as efficacious, and able to bring about change as a function of his or her power and agency.

- ➢ **Positive self-worth**

  This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as positive. Self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a positive self-regard or self-concept.

- ➢ **Negative self-worth**

  This node under self-esteem was developed to capture the individual's perceived self-worth as negative. Negative self-worth is seen as a subjective valuation of one's self as a person, and includes themes generally associated with a low or negative self-regard or self-concept, leaving the individual with a sense of self as "less than" others.

Gender

Statements made about the connection between gender and the participant's experience of adoption.

Sexual Orientation

This code will be used to identify statements in which the adopted person sees connections between his or her sexual orientation and adoptive status or adoptive experience.

Z – Potential New Node

This node will be used when coders feel that a section of text reflects a new theme not currently captured in a sub-node within this iteration of the template. This node begins with "Z -" to keep it at the bottom of the alphabetically structured node list in NVivo for easy reference.

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