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**“I’m not really sure, but I think”: Entrance stories from Chinese-Americans adopted  
between 1995-2005**

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“I’m not really sure, but I think”: Entrance stories from Chinese-Americans adopted  
between 1995-2005

A compelling narrative has the power to create internalized meanings and alter the craft and development of one’s very identity. For people who were adopted, narratives play an even more important role. Narratives are often all adoptees know about themselves and about the world around them.

In the words of communication scholar Fisher (1984), *narratives* are “symbolic actions— words and/or deeds— that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them.” Fisher proposes that human communication is both historical and situational and that it should be perceived “as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and inevitably as moral inducements” (p. 2).

Narratives are not necessarily for a single individual; communities of people, such as families, can share identities too. Within families, shared narratives may be used to create and strengthen their experiences, as well as develop their identity as a family. These narratives commonly include stories about carrying a child during pregnancy, the labor and birth of a child, and the first few hours of a child’s life, and they are often shared over and over “until they become part of the members’ identities... These narratives are the building blocks of one’s personal myth, or an individual’s story of identity and personal truth” (Kranstuber, 2001, p. 180).

In the greater society of America, dominant narratives have emerged; these dominant narratives, also known as *master narratives*, prescribe the normalized and assumed practices/ expectations for a family’s structure and identity (Kranstuber, 2001, p. 181). Genetics have generally grounded our society’s conception of family. Baxter (2014) states, “Notions of

inevitability and naturalness are accompanied by the assumption that a parent will have an inherent and unwavering love for a biological child.” In the master narrative, biological families are presumed the *priori*, “The presumption of biological ties as stable and immutable lends a sense of the inevitable and enduring family as a unit, or a unitary form of family” (Baxter, 2014, p. 254).

For families that are traditionally biological, any social and cultural assumptions about their families and biological births as a child’s entrance into their family only affirm their validity. However, for families that do not share these master narratives, they are often edged out of the cultural and social bounds of acceptable and their experiences are perceived as “nonnormative, less preferable, and generally inferior to biologically based families” (Baxter, 2012, p. 265). Baxter (2014) writes:

In contrast to biogenetic relations, adoptive ties are *a posteriori*, created through rational choice, negotiation, and contractual terms... Although most adoptions go through legal scrutiny, the commodification construction positions them as inferior to biological reproduction because they lack the presumed naturalness that characterizes the love felt by a “real” parent for a child. (p. 255)

While adoptees do not have traditional family narratives that can be shared with them, research has proven that all the same, family narratives are still psychologically pivotal in an adoptee’s development of their identity as an individual and a member of their family (Colaner, 2010, p. 237). In place of the common birth stories and to fulfill the gaping history of a birth story, families who have adopted will share *entrance narratives*, stories which adopted children are told to teach them what adoption is, what it means for them to be adopted, how they came to their family and how they fit into their families (Kranstuber, 2001, p. 180).

Studying entrance narratives exposes the numerous people who are involved in adoption, who each have their own perspective of the event. A study in 2012 compared the narrative coherence of online narratives told by *the adoption triad*, including the birth mother, the adoptive mother, and the adoptee (Baxter, p. 265). According to the standards set by Fisher's (1984) Narrative Paradigm, a coherent narrative is one which is "more 'true' to the way people and the world are" (p. 10). The results revealed that adoption stories overall, including but not limited to entrance narratives, are typically more incoherent than they are coherent, meaning the sample of triad members may struggle to be psychologically adjusting to the event of adoption (Baxter, 2012, p. 277-78).

Once the adoption has occurred, the ones who share the entrance narratives first are the adoptive parents, most commonly to the adopted children, but also to others including friends, family members, doctors, etc. Adoptive parents' versions of the entrance narrative are a pivotal perspective for research purposes as they often have the most cohesive version of the narrative regarding the sequence of events, orientation to those events, and how those events are related. This is likely because they most regularly tell the narrative out of the three triad members and they sometimes have the most legal knowledge and information about the adoption as well (Baxter 2012, p. 278).

When telling entrance narratives, adoptive parents must battle the assumptions that their family's experiences are less valid and less acceptable because they are different than the master narrative. Adoptive parents typically present four themes of discourse within their narratives: adoption as a valuable alternative to pregnancy, adoption as a worthwhile struggle guided by destiny and/or adoption as a smooth and predictable process, and adoption as communal kinning (Baxter, 2014, p. 258-259).

The adoptees themselves often note different themes when they share their adoption stories. Research on adoption narratives and childhood experiences of adopted children in both Sweden and the U.S. revealed that adoptees' sense of identity are "constrained by the pressure to construct a narrative of self that has its origins in biological connectedness to a mother" (Yngvesson, 2000, p. 91). Additionally, studies show that time and space are two significant themes in adoptees' language and narratives about their adoption (Lindgren, 2014, p. 539). Ultimately, what research in 2010 found is that adoptees, regardless of their race, nationality, and the type of adoption they were a part of, have complex and problematic experiences which affect the way they perceive themselves, their histories, and their families (Colaner, p. 237).

Significant research on adoption and adoption narratives have entered the communication field in the past twenty years, however, one primary notion Fisher (1984) suggests is that humans are inherently *homo narran*, or storytelling animals, and that "the ground for determining meaning, validity, reason, rationality, and truth must be a narrative context: history, culture, biography, and character" (Fisher p. 2, 3).

Especially in terms of adoption, history, culture, biography, and character do matter. There are multiple ways to adopt including but not limited to closed and open adoptions, domestically through the foster care system, independent agencies, adoption of relatives, and international adoption. Each type of adoption involves different legal requirements from the government(s) and involves different prior histories of the adopted child. This means different needs must be met based on each child's specific experiences (The Adoption Center).

Internationally adopted children are often the result of closed adoptions, meaning they are unable to access any records of their life before their adoption (Evans, 2000, p. 13). With regards to Chinese-American adoptions in the past twenty-five years, adoptees' knowledge of their

history is even more limited by the cultural, economic, and political context of the nation at the time of the adoption. The primary reason children—particularly girls—were given up for adoption in China is because they were abandoned or confiscated from their homes due to the government-sanctioned birth control policies including the One Child Policy (Evans, 2000, p. 24). The Gladney Center for Adoption (2018) reports a total of 78,257 Chinese children were adopted by America and over 87% were girls under the age of two when they were adopted (Travel.State.Gov.). Chinese-American adoptions of this era are almost all closed adoptions because it was illegal to abandon children in China during that time; therefore, parents who abandoned their children were not permitted to come forward and reclaim their children without legal repercussions. Once the child was delivered to a social welfare institute, they stayed for a required ninety days to be reclaimed before they were declared an orphan of the state and legally able to be put up for adoption. Chinese adoptees also have to consider the idea of human trafficking as a potential reason for their adoption. There were numerous trafficking routes throughout China that would find abandoned children and move them to different areas around the country to be traded to an orphanage and adopted internationally (Wang, 2019).

With regards to post-adoption, the majority of international Chinese-American adoptions are not just transnational and transcultural, but also transracial. Many Chinese children who were adopted became part of white, Christian homes. According to recent research published through Colorado State University, “approximately 85% of transracial adoptions are international adoptions... and in 2000, 95% of parents adopting internationally were White” (Fry, 2019).

The particular context of these adoptions makes a significant impact on research data in terms of identity development and the specific origin stories that were told from parents to children. Additionally, this population is coming into adulthood currently, so society will see a

rise in Chinese American adoptees in the work world, the medial world, and the psychological world. That being said, little research has been done on this very specific population of adoptees. With this, I pose the following research question to examine these narratives that have been internalized and shared by adoptees from this specific moment in history:

*RQ: What motifs are present in entrance narratives as told by adult adoptees who were adopted from China to the United States between the years of 1995-2005?*

## **Methods**

### **Sample Population**

Research was conducted on a small college campus with a total undergraduate student population of 2,495 (Messiah University). In turn, this meant the number of people who could fit the sample was already very limited.

The participants for the study were selected through a limited, criterion-based purposive process. With attention to the research question, the study sought women who were adopted from China to the United States between the years of 1995-2005. Considering the average gender ratio of girls to boys adopted from China to the United States between the years of 1999 and 2005 is 96.17%, the researcher sought to interview female adoptees as any male adoptees would have had different experiences (Travel.State.Gov., 2020). Eight female undergraduate students were identified as possible candidates for the sample population. Each adoptee was contacted via email. In addition to the initial email, one was additionally contacted via social media, and seven were separately asked via text message. Overall, seven adoptees participated in the study.

Adoptees who replied were proffered additional information regarding the study and its purpose so that they could give informed consent, as required by the IRB ethical guidelines.



Each participant was asked to sign an IRB-approved consent waiver to signify they gave the researcher informed consent to interview them and record the entirety of their interviews to be studied for research purposes. The waiver also emphasized that the participants were volunteers and could to withdraw from the study at any time. All participants were promised the utmost privacy and told all personal information would be removed and their names would be hidden should their stories be directly quoted in the findings. When adoptees were invited to participate, they were also asked if they knew other adoptees who would be interested in participating in the study so the study had a chance for snowball sampling, however no results yielding from this request.

Additionally, all of the women were adopted under the age of two years old by one or two white American parents. Four out of seven adoptees were adopted into families that already had other children. Two out of seven adoptees were adopted into families who had previously adopted a child.

### **Interview Protocol**

With Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval, each participant underwent a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Five out of the seven interviews were conducted in person as the researcher hypothesized that participants would be more comfortable and open in sharing when the meetings were in person. Two interviews were conducted over *Zoom* due to scheduling conflicts. The primary role of the researcher during the interviews was to ask questions for the adoptee to answer, and should anything be unclear or a necessary topic of the study not covered, they were also inclined to ask follow-up questions.

At the beginning of the interview, adoptees were reminded they were not under any obligation to answer a question should they feel uncomfortable, and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

During interviews, the adoptees were prompted to share concrete answers about when they were adopted, how old they were when they were adopted and where they were adopted from. Then the interviewer inquired that the participants share their entrance narratives, worded as an open-ended question to allow for adoptees to begin their story at what *they* identified as the beginning. If the adoptee did not cover pivotal aspects in the telling of their narratives such as major characters, the plot, and the context of their specific experiences, the interviewer prompted the adoptees to describe their story in more detail regarding the historical, cultural, biographical, and character contexts through a series of clarifying questions.

### **Data Analysis**

After interviews were conducted, the data went through a three-step process to organize and effectively examine the narratives. The first step was transcription, the second step was a complete thematic content analysis, and the third step was to develop a grounded theory from the results of the analysis.

All interviews were directly transcribed from the original recordings taken during interviews to type. This was initially completed by *Youtube's* "video transcript" application and then it was carefully revised and edited through listening-to-type by the researcher.

Once converted to type, the transcribed interviews were examined by the sentence for *codes*. A *code*, as defined by this study, indicates an underlying or explicitly-stated meaning derived from the adoptee's sentence. The codes were then organized by likeness, in search of

*sub-themes*. To be considered a *sub-theme*, the code needed to be (a) recurring, when differing word choice indicated the same idea or meaning; (b) repetition, or when keywords, sentences, or phrases were used repeatedly and explicitly; and (c) forcefulness, or when underlining, italicizing, bolding, or increasing size of the text are found. The current study used the same coding and thematic analysis process as Kranstuber and Kellas in their research on the relationship between adoption entrance narratives and adoptees' self-concept.

Sub-themes were then categorized once more into broader themes. These themes were then analyzed side-by-side in search of potential correlations to one another. Under the lens of the research question, research sought to understand the phenomena of how and why these themes existed. Finally, the data was concluded with attention to a theoretical answer to the question.

### Findings

Following transcribing and coding each interview, it became evident that the study did not reach data saturation. That being stated, a series of shared themes still emerged amongst the compilation and thematic analysis of the data. These most prominent themes included certainty/uncertainty, normalcy/uniqueness, parents as gatekeepers of the story, and presumptions about the pre-adoption past.

**Table 1: Themes in Chinese American adoptees' entrance narratives**

| Themes                                  | Number of Occurrences | Number of Participants (N=7) |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Certainty/Uncertainty                   | 559                   | 7                            |
| Normalcy/Uniqueness                     | 133                   | 7                            |
| Parents as Gatekeepers of the Narrative | 77                    | 7                            |

**Table 1: Themes in Chinese American adoptees' entrance narratives**

| <b>Themes</b>                                       | <b>Number of Occurrences</b> | <b>Number of Participants (N=7)</b> |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Presumptions about the Pre-Adoption Past            | 52                           | 6                                   |
| Faith/God/Divinity                                  | 34                           | 5                                   |
| Importance of Remembering/Knowing About Heritage    | 36                           | 3                                   |
| Gratitude to Birth Parents for a "Better Life"      | 19                           | 2                                   |
| Longing for Future Reconciliation with Birth Family | 42                           | 1                                   |

### **Certainty/Uncertainty**

The dialectic of certainty/uncertainty has roots in the publication of the Uncertainty Management Theory, however as Colaner and Kranstuber (2010) explained, "the adoptive experience is largely comprised of uncertainty" (p. 236). As referred to in the literature, knowledge regarding a Chinese adoptee's birth and early babyhood are not simply known by their birth parents, as non-adoptees experience, but also by their finders, the institute(s) they stayed at, local newspapers and officials, the Chinese government, the American government, the adoption agency, and the adoptive parents. By the time adoptive parents have access to their child's birth narrative, the story often has missing threads and unreliable sources. Therefore, the only experiences an adoptee can trust are the ones their own adoptive parents witnesses as truth. That being said, it makes sense that all of the adoptees in this study revealed a dialectical tension between certainty and uncertainty when sharing their entrance stories.

The theme of uncertainty was very easily revealed as the adoptees were interviewed. Oftentimes during the interview, adoptees would emphasize details of the story they were unclear about with repeated statements of “I’m not really sure, but I think.” While humans do often use filler words when they speak such as “like” and “um,” these specific words were closely analyzed in transcribed and auditory form to determine whether they were said as filler words or as indications of uncertainty. In one interview, an adoptee notably spoke eight terms of uncertainty when answering the question of when her family decided to adopt, saying, “*I don’t—I think it was 2002 or so because I believe it was around when my sister was 12 and she’s 12 years older than I am so yeah—it was around there—it might be within a year before or after so yeah.*” However, terms indicating uncertainty were not the noticeable ones— terms indicating certainty were also clearly noted in their statements.

Throughout the interviews, many adoptees adopted a habit where they say something indicating their lack of clarity regarding one topic of their story, before immediately following it up with a term that emphasized a detail they were *certain* about. In one interview, an adoptee shared:

*I don’t actually know the time correlation, but I was left by a police station at the front gate. I don’t know if I was in a basket or a box, but I was in some type of carrying thing.*

This specific coping mechanism coincides with the Uncertainty Management Theory, which notes that when humans experience a situation that causes uncertainty, they seek to reduce that uncertainty through communication with others (Colaner & Kranstuber, 2010, p. 239).

One of the other ways that certainty/uncertainty was revealed involved adoptees’ ways to seemingly “straddle the line” between certainty and uncertainty. Various adoptees took to using

the word “kind of” when they were uncertain about a detail in their entrance stories. It may be noted that they may have wielded the term as a way to soften the blow of uncertainty, however it could also be due to the human desire to please others with a clear and knowledgeable answer when asked.

### **Normalcy/Uniqueness**

The second-most identified theme that emerged during thematic analysis was a dialectic of normalcy versus uniqueness, which emerged in a few different ways during interviews. The first was in terms of the master narrative—birth narratives—versus the adoptees’ entrance stories. As previously noted, birth narratives are the master narrative within society, however as Chinese American adoptees do not often have access to theirs so they seek to fulfill that master narrative in a different way—the entrance story. This dialectic defines normalcy as the master narrative held by non-adoptees and uniqueness as an adoptee’s entrance story experience. To begin, two out of the seven adoptees were adopted by single mothers, therefore having no adoptive father at all. In one interview, an adoptee explained, “China was very open with their adoption policy so it gave the chance for single women who didn’t have kids to adopt.” The other adoptee summarized her experience by sharing, “obviously my mom doesn’t have a husband to do *that*... she just wanted to have a kid and felt that she was ready.” These statements are inherently nontraditional as they share details that are distinct from the traditional birth narrative. Therefore, they challenge the birth narrative by nature. Other adoptees identified how they were unaware of truths that are often taken for granted by non-adoptees such as the dates of their birth. With all this being said, adoptees also identified ways that they were the same as other babies, despite their unique circumstances. One noted, “We are not your traditional family,

but we are your traditional family in the sense that we will be together for forever and ever.” This dialectical tension of normalcy versus uniqueness was evident throughout the entirety of their stories as the adoptees sought to validate their experiences through constant comparison to those who were unadopted, followed by a statement explaining that while they were different, they were still the same and *here’s* why.

A different form of the dialectic that was present in the interviews included each adoptee sharing details which identified them as individuals and their entrance story as *theirs* rather than any other *adoptee’s*. The normalcy was in relation to a Chinese American adoptee’s experience and the uniqueness was how their own experience of adoption was different from every other adoptees’. This was the most prominent way in which adoptees incorporated this theme in their interviews. One adoptee repeatedly asserted that she was the oldest baby adopted from China in her “gotcha day group,” the travel group that included several parents coming to adopt their children from China at the same time. Another shared how when she met her mother and father for the first time, she was “the happiest baby there... all the other babies were crying and [she] was just laughing.” In these comments, both adoptees separated themselves as unique from other adoptees in the gotcha day group. That being said, all of the adoptees also identified ways in which their experiences were the same or similar to other adoptees too, whether those other adoptees were friends, family members, other adoptees from their gotcha day group, or the general Chinese adoption community. Some adoptees shared stories of meeting with their gotcha day groups annually or spending time around other Chinese American adoptees in their communities as they grew up. It was very nice to be surrounded by other Chinese American

adoptees, one woman shared, because “we all understand... [our stories are] not normal, but that’s not bad and we could all relate on experiencing what it is to be adopted as Chinese.”

The final way this diabetic tension revealed itself was in cultural differences. Normalcy was alluded to as American while uniqueness was being Chinese. One answer this was almost unanimously evident was to the question “what is the history of your name?” In the majority of Chinese adoptions, the babies are given names at the institute where they stayed before they were adopted, often an orphanage or social welfare institute. When asked to answer this question, six of the seven adoptees shared the history of both their *Chinese* and the *American* names with little to no prompting, sharing two unique narratives of how they received each name and in many cases, they took their Chinese names as a middle name. One woman noted:

You know in elementary and middle school, you’re just like, ‘I want a middle name that people can pronounce,’ but now I think it is important to me because it is where I came from. I don’t want to lose that even if it is sometimes inconvenient in that it’s not a typical middle name that people are obviously like, ‘oh yes, I know how to pronounce that.’

In this statement, it is clear that the cultural difference between Chinese names and English names is something this adoptee has had to reconcile, as she feels simultaneously the desire to fit in with others who have presumably English names, but also values the heritage of her Chinese name.

### **Parents as Gatekeepers of the Narrative**

The third theme that was repeatedly noted in the interviews was parents as the “gatekeepers” of the entrance narrative. This theme was often an extension of the certainty/



uncertainty dialectic. Following a statement of uncertainty, each of the seven referenced to their parents at least once during their interview. A reference to their parents could take two different forms. This first involved the adoptee reporting that they could obtain the knowledge from a(n adoptive) parent and report back to the interviewer at a later time when they were unsure of a detail regarding their entrance narrative. One of these such statements included, “If you want more information, I can definitely—like, I am probably going to talk to [my mom] later today and now I’m going to ask her those questions so yeah.”

A second way the theme manifested itself was when adoptees noted a thought, opinion, or fact that was referenced to their parents’ perspective of their narrative rather than one they had formulated themselves. In answering the question about what her name meant, one woman shared, “Someone told my mom that [my Chinese name] meant blue flower in China and so we’ve just kind of gone along with that.” Additionally, when discussing her early experiences post-adoption, another adoptee said, “I was understanding fine because my mom had said...” In both these instances, like so many others in the data, the adoptees relied on their adoptive parents’ experiences to fill in knowledge they were otherwise uncertain about. While unique in their manifestations, both of these types of statements revealed a lack of knowledge about the entrance story and a reliance upon the adoptive parents as a resource for that knowledge.

### **Presumptions about the Pre-Adoption Past**

The fourth and final prominent theme that emerged within the interviews was presumptions about the pre-adoption past. This theme, unlike the previous three, was not evident in all seven interviews, but rather was present in six of the seven. With regards to this theme, the adoptees made references to experiences they or their parents presumed they had before their

adoption. A presumption is notably a hypothesis founded on reasonable grounds and probably evidence.

Due to the long line of people, organizations, and systems that the adoptee meets before they are adopted, their experiences are virtually inaccessible as a whole. However, many adoptees presume they lived through certain experiences based on the mannerisms the adoptees portrayed in their day-to-day interactions following their adoptions, and physical markers that appeared on the adoptees' bodies. Some mannerisms that these women displayed as infants included an aversion to car seats (as she had likely never been in a car, much less a car seat prior to her adoption), a wide-eyed admiration for the outdoors (as she had probably not spent much time outside the social welfare institute before), and the ability to bond well with her adoptive parents (indicating forms of socialization prior to the time she was adopted).

In terms of physical markers, one adoptee shared stories of severe ear infections and bronchitis upon arriving in the United States. Another adoptee mentioned having to use a nebulizer for several years because they believe someone in the foster family she lived with in China was a heavy smoker and she was exposed to second-hand smoke. The same adoptee also described how she has a significant scar on her body indicating being strapped down to chairs when they were infants.

## **Discussion**

### **Implications of the Findings**

While the research did not reach complete data saturation, eight themes were present within the interviews with eight different Chinese American female adoptees. To directly respond to the original research question, common motifs present in Chinese American adoptees'

entrance stories include certainty/uncertainty, normalcy/uniqueness, parents as gatekeepers of the story, and presumptions about the pre-adoption past.

This data reveals that this sample of adoptees are aware that their experiences are different than those of the master narrative, and yet they generally accept that as a fact, rather than something negative. Instead, Chinese American adoptees generally compare themselves with other adoptees who have the same experiences, rather than non-adoptees. Within these comparisons, adoptees both seek the uniqueness and individuality of their own experiences while also pursuing camaraderie in their shared similarities and separateness from the master narrative.

Additionally, each of the seven adoptees at least mentioned, if not fully discussed, their knowledge of their abandonment and loss of their birth families. This detail is specific to the context of Chinese adoption during the 1990s and early 2000s. While some sought to find and reunite with their birth families, others appeared uninterested in learning more about their birth families. The overall theme was engulfed by a different theme— the presumptions that adoptees made about their life pre-adoption. Some adoptees attributed bravery and heroism to their birth parent(s) for allowing them to have a better life, while others appeared to carry a sense of loss and abandonment which manifested into a disinterest or apathy towards their birth families. Overall though, nearly all the adoptees did comment on presumptions they had made about their lives before adoption based on their infant and childhood mannerisms, as well as physical manifestations of what may have come before. This means that regardless of their interest in learning more about their birth families, nearly all the adoptees were seeking to reduce their uncertainty regarding their experiences before their adoption.

The Chinese American Adoption system during the late 1990s and early 2000s, as its basis, involved a not-knowing. Few Chinese American adoptees know anything about their birth and infant years. This specific notion can be easily summarized in Winterson's (2011) acclaimed memoir *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, in which it is penned:

Adopted children are self invented because we have to be; there is an absence, a void, a question mark at the very beginning of our lives. A crucial part of our story is gone, and violently, like a bomb in the womb. The baby explodes into an unknown world that is only knowable through some kind of story — of course that is how we all live, it's the narrative of our lives, but adoption drops you into the story after it has started. It's like reading a book with the first few pages missing. It's like arriving after curtain up. The feeling that something is missing never, ever leaves you — and it can't, and it shouldn't, because something *is* missing. (p. 5)

This all being shared, it is no surprise that certainty/uncertainty was the most evident amongst the interviews— with over 400 more occurrences than the second most prominent theme. Even in young adulthood, all seven Chinese American adoptees experienced uncertainty that comes from not knowing about their origins and not knowing anyone who can share that information with them. At best, adoptees can focus on what they *do* know in order to fill their desire to be similar to the master narrative and to be an individual themselves. This study complements research completed by Colaner and Kranstuber, who sought to find how adoptive families effectively manage uncertainty through their communication. It would be of interest to continue further research into how uncertainty affects the adoption triad— adoptee, the adoptive mother, and the birth mother— as well as how uncertainty plays into the structure of the adopted family

structure. Additionally, future researchers could consider the ways that narratives in general play into the makeup of an adoptive family as a nondominant form of the master narrative that a family must be composed of genetically-related people.

Each of the succeeding themes discussed after the first was essentially a result of the dialectical tension between certainty and uncertainty— normalcy/uniqueness, parents as gatekeepers of the narrative, and presumptions about the pre-adoption past. Normalcy/uniqueness has a strong resemblance to the Relational Dialectics Theory, which presents conventionality/uniqueness as a dialectic present in relationships amongst an external sphere (i.e. the way the couple exists within and around the community) (Wilkins, 2019). However, an entrance narrative clearly tells the story of an individual's identity and relationship to the world, rather than how a relationship is perceived by others. It would be interesting should future researchers consider how an adoptee's relationship with self mirrors and the relational dialectic between a couple and the world. How are they similar and how do they differ? Why are they so similar in this regard?

There were a variety of serious limitations in this study. The first is that the sample size was composed of all women. Boys and girls had very different experiences in Chinese society, as well as the adoption system in China so while the study purposely limited its sample to focus on the story of women, it cut out the stories of men. A second limitation is that the sample size was primarily composed of people attending a Christian university, meaning that most are at least familiar with, if not identifying as, Christians and statistically speaking, their families likely are too. It would be interesting for future researchers to consider other universities with a wider range of religions should they continue this research. In addition to limited religious beliefs on

campus, the university chosen was also a predominantly white institution, which limits the diversity on campus and potentially limits the number of people available for the sample and the number of people in the sample who have experienced different backgrounds. The final two evident limitations for the study are that all the adoptions occurred within the early 2000s (there were no adoptions in the late 1990s), and every participant in the study was adopted as a baby. It would be intriguing to see the way that the results shift for children who were adopted during a different time period or who were adopted later in life.

More future studies could consider comparing this research to preexisting studies of entrance narratives as told by other members of the adoption triad and by other sample populations of adoptees. Are the themes that adoptive parents present in their children's entrance stories similar to the ones that their children present? Also, how does having a sibling or family member previously adopted from China alter the themes that are present in an entrance narrative.

Finally, in each interview, the research asked the broad question of what was the story of each person's adoption, leaving it up to the adoptee to decide where in the story to start. It would be interesting to pursue research in how and adoptees decide where their entrance narrative begins/what counts to them as part of their story.

Overall, it can be concluded that adoptees find a lot of meaning in the stories they told and the entrance narrative is pivotal to their identities as people. Even with uncertainty as a prominent theme in their stories, the theme of certainty remains just as prominent and challenges an adoptee's uncertainty in their relationship with themselves, their families, and the world.

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