CONTESTING LIMINALITY:
A COUNTER ORAL HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICAN ADOPTED PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the direction of Xue Lan Rong)

Asian American transracial adoption is a phenomenon where an Asian child is adopted by non-Asian parents. There are an estimated five million adopted people in the United States affecting one out of every 25 U.S. families (Adoption Network, 2022). Nearly 60% of internationally adopted children were adopted from Asia and 95% of parents were White (Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002; Park, 2012). Additionally, Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial group rising to 22.4 million in 2019 and projected to surpass 46 million by 2060 (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Existing research on Asian American adopted people (AAAP) is largely outcome-based focusing almost exclusively on adoptive parents and adopted children (Raible, 2006). The problem is outcome-based studies fail to account for the lifelong negotiation of racial identity development in a historically racialized society. The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of two Asian American adopted people in relation to their racialized sociohistorical context and examine the ways in which the participants' build culture by contesting, interrogating, and undermining their liminal social locations. To accomplish this, I conducted oral history interviews. From these case studies, I constructed counter narratives underpinned by Critical Race Theory and Asian Critical Theory (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The findings indicate participant's unique experiences are sites of knowledge that when analyzed through frameworks that decenter Whiteness can go beyond the limits of a White and Asian

binary and reframe the exploration of social location to in between historically racialized norms and liberal notions of the U.S. democratic promise. This study has important implications for policy makers, teacher educators, and curriculum specialists on the necessity of contesting liminality for AAAPs and the frameworks that may best create new ways to accomplish it.

Keywords: liminality, contesting, Asian American adopted person, social location

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To Naomi, thank you for being the person I could relate to the most growing up. Thank you for all the conversations about being the two people that we are. You show a strength in the way you believe in people even when they are down that is unique and rare.

It is already tomorrow in Korea because of the time difference and so to my tomorrow family, the people I have never met but known 10,000 years. I hope I have made you proud, I hope I have fulfilled your dream for me. I have never stopped thinking about all of you and even if it is not in this lifetime, I will see all of you again. I will see you all tomorrow.

To the two people that mean the most to me; my wife Kim and my son Noble, as much as I have concerns about adoption, as much as I do feel the trials, tribulations, and traumas, I know

it was my destiny because this was my path to you. I love you both so much. I have always thought I need to go as far as I can with this opportunity this life has given me even if I never know how far that is. I am hoping that this is that far.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Lee's (2003) transracial adoptee paradox describes an area of identity that is midway between race and culture ("middleness existence") and hints at an investigation of adoptee identity within the larger context of global historical relations. However, this investigation never comes. Instead, Lee's study and other adoptee identity studies engage a more limited focus studying how well the adoptee "adjusts" or "assimilates" to a Eurocentric socialization. Ethnographic and autoethnographic adoptee identity studies get closer to a relational lens by investigating the negotiation of how adoptees develop a sense of self within society. However, "identity" construction that focuses strictly on developing the notion of "self" limits the scope of these investigations to a particular history of an individual, obscuring the possibility of relational historical connection to other marginalized subgroups. Historical adoptee identity studies do an effective job examining adoptee identity within a historical geo-political context. However, the scope of these studies examines adoptee identity in conversation with particular historical moments in particular geo-political contexts. This project does not aspire to produce generalizable results about all Asian American adopted people/person (AAAP), nor does it seek to provide a better historical account of Asian American transracial adoption. Instead, this dissertation approached the everyday Asian American Adopted People/Person (AAAP) experience to get at a contextual history of the present. Fundamentally, this project attended to the narratives of the intimacies, tribulations, stereotypes, microaggressions, inescapabilities, irreconcilabilities, negotiations, and contestations that has shaped their normative understanding of self. This dissertation was a process that examined participants as racialized members within a

liberal democratic society. Ultimately, I wanted to recast their everyday experiences as legacies of the past, to explore new possibilities of understanding their social location reframed as situated racialized historical subjects inscribed by historical condition.

Broadly, this dissertation engages a four-step process. (1) First, I asserted that identity constructs are insufficient frameworks for Asian American adopted people (AAAP) to investigate their social locations. (2) Second, I introduced the idea of "Alternative Frameworks" (Lowe, 2015) to reconfigure AAAP as racialized historical subjects bound by their global condition. (3) Third, I studied and observed the ways in which AAAP contest their liminality from an "Alternative" framework. (4) Lastly, I analyzed the participants (new) ways of knowing, thinking, and being in conversation with the struggles of other racialized groups of historical subjects.

The remaining portion of the introduction engages a reframing of AAAP away from identity constructs and outlines key assertions, terminology, framings, processes, and methodologies that investigate AAAP quotidian experience within a larger historical story of global comparative relations.

There are four foundational assertions that undergird the dissertation: 1) AAAP can fully achieve neither cultural "Asian" identity or Euro-Western (White) identity. Therefore, identity is an insufficient construct for evaluation. 2) AAAP "liminality" is located in the middle of "belonging" and not in the middle of race. 3) AAAP are situated historical subjects inscribed by their global condition, and the study of these individuals constitutes a chapter in a broader historical "process of racialization" necessary within the logics of U.S. society. 4) AAAP contest their liminality by interrogating, transgressing, undermining, theorizing, and refusing terms of dislocation, severance, and violence of lawful Asian transracial adoptions.

Lee's (2003) positioning of adoptees in the transracial adoptee paradox follows the analysis of other adoptee studies (e.g., *Too White to be Asian and Too Asian to be White*) that indicate adoptees can traverse within an Asian and White binary in their identities. However, as Kelly (2017) points out, race is not an accidental feature of identity but, rather, a structure that configures power through difference. Identity is conditional on situating self in society, where the self is the central fulcrum of negotiation. Although adoptees may be able to appropriate situational access to Whiteness and Asianness, identity is built on belonging through relatedness and meaning. Severing a person of color in a racialized society from their original cultural knowledge system, markers of ethnicity, language, history, and ancestry, serves as a barrier of belonging to either identity. Through identity constructs, AAAP can never be located at the center of their own stories. A familial socialized White identity is at odds with how society has historically situated the Asian body. Whiteness is only operational as an arm of their proximity to institutional Whiteness—family, community, formal education, and religion—and without access to Asian cultural knowledge systems, Asian identity belonging becomes limited to instances of Asian racialization which impose structures of Whiteness vis-à-vis historical identity labels or tropes.

The K-12 education system contributes to AAAP liminality by the way schools frame identity in social studies and history curriculum. Identity is a central tenant of knowledge in the K-12 school curriculum evidenced by individual identity development being listed as the first strand that makes up North Carolina's official K-12 framework for studying and analyzing social studies at each grade level (NCSCOS, 2003). Despite revisions in recent years, individual identity development remains central to the social studies framework enacted by curriculum that

seeks to build individual identity through national identity of liberal progress that acknowledges a racist past that has advanced into a post-racial multicultural democratic society.

Most recently in North Carolina, the topic of social studies standards and curriculum has become a controversial issue. While standards call for a curriculum of an American identity that acknowledges past systemic racism, discrimination, and marginalization, the North Carolina general assembly continues to work to pass North Carolina House Bill 324 which restricts classroom discussion about systemic racism. For AAAP this is uniquely problematic. Most people of color have direct access to communities of color who can provide an informal education on the contextual effects of racism on daily life for people of color in America. A unique albeit unintended impact of the legal process of transracial adoption is severing familial, cultural, and communicative ties with those who could have provided an informal contextual education on the racism that AAAP experience and the tools to combat it. Thus, a formal K-12 education that includes a conceptual understanding of the ways in which systemic racism is embedded within social institutions through laws, policies, regulations, rules, and procedures that lead to different outcomes based on race (Ray and Gibbons, 2021) is crucial to contesting liminality for AAAP. Understanding the notions and operations of systemic racism in their own lives is crucial to understanding what adoptive parents cannot; AAAP are situated historical subjects bound by their global condition. Ultimately, an identity that is framed in national terms and taught as a colorblind liberal progress narrative works to not see color. If AAAP's cannot see color, they cannot see themselves.

My dissertation aims to add to the lexicon of adoption studies in unique manner by explicitly moving away from the framings, tools, and modes of investigation that characterize "identity" studies and instead explore new possibilities of understanding AAAP self as a situated

racialized historical subject bound by their global condition. Working from "alternative frameworks" (Lowe, 2015), that connect the historical situatedness of the Asian, and the transracial adoptee with present day experiences of Asian American adopted participants, this study is an exploration of the history of the present of Asian American adopted people. Lowe coins the term a "history of the present" to describe an analytical technique that does not accept given categories and concepts as fixed or constant, but rather takes as its work the inquiry into how those categories became established as given and with what effects (Lowe, 2015). Framing the investigation from a foundation of the historical figure(s) of the Asian American and the adoptee not only opens a lever of critique of the notions that underpin "identity" but also isolates alternative methods by which AAAPs meet, congregate, story-tell, interrogate, and destabilize liberal humanist discourse through study of their modes of cultural production. As such, my interest in AAAP is not solely for the purposes of pursuing a singular cultural identity and not to fill a missing gap in Asian American or American history but, rather, to explore the new possibilities of exploring AAAP participant's everyday experiences within a rubric of racialized historical power.

Terms and Concepts

   Adoption Key Terms. Adoption is defined as the action or fact of legally taking another's child and bringing the child up as one's own (Merriam-Webster, 2020). A national reporting system for adoptions existed only between 1945 and 1975. Generally accepted estimates assert that there are about five million adoptees in the United States (University of Oregon Department of History, 2012). Adoptions are classified in different ways, with each type of classification highlighting different factors in the context of adoptee identity development and racial

formation. In the context of identity, adoption classifications based on country of origin and race are the focal point. Generally, there are three broad classifications in the adoption lexicon: 1) domestic adoption, 2) transnational/intercountry adoption, and 3) transracial adoption.

Domestic adoptions are those in which children are adopted in the same country where they are born. Transnational or intercountry adoptions involve sending a child from one country to another. Transracial adoptions are those in which the child is placed with a family whose race is different from their own. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as an adoption can fit into several categories, although not into all three categories. For example, domestic adoptions may involve a White child being adopted into a White family. However, domestic adoptions can also be transracial when a Black child is adopted by a White family. Each combination of categories presents unique challenges, both in the present and historically.

Identity Constructs. Personal identity is a social construction that works to establish a sense of permanence or "existence permanence" of an individual within society through a series of rules and mechanisms governed by society and enacted by individuals (Powers, 1973). Rather than focusing on what identity is, this project focuses on the assumptions, presuppositions, and framings that form its epistemology. Binary dichotomous thinking tied to material and symbolic power is foundational in the formation of the normative Euro-Western modernist "I" (individual and collective). One key exploration of this project is the ways in which Eurocentric identity constructs power by separating, excluding, and differentiating membership thereby establishing who counts and in which context. This project also situates Asian adopted people through the lens of the understanding that a central tenet of identity constructs is "one is what the other is not" (Urietta & Noblit, 2018). As I detailed through the rest of the project, vestiges of power

organized by race endure within the narration of the study participants oral history accounts. As Kelley (2017) asserts race is not an accidental feature of identity.

Asian American Adopted People (AAAP). I acknowledge that the term "Asian American transracial adoptee" (AATRA) is considered politically, culturally, and academically correct. However, this term was not chosen by Asian adopted people and carries with it historical and contemporary tropes distinguished within and by Eurocentric notions that underpin "identity" and its constructs. When referring to prior studies that refer to Asian American adopted people as AATRA, I continued to reference the group as the author did. However, as part of an effort to move beyond modern liberal identity constructs and as a reclamation project, I referred to the studied subgroup as Asian American adopted people (AAAP).

"Asian American" Identity. I recognize that the term Asian American was a self-defining in-group claim established in the late 1960's during the founding of the Asian American Political Alliance. I also acknowledge that the term was originally used to frame inaugurate a new inter-ethnic pan-Asian American political group. However, in this study participants used this term in concert with identity to contextualize a distinguishable difference between themselves and other Asians or groups of color. In this study, the term Asian American identity connotated a (misinformed) political separation that was used a racial/political wedge to differentiate power. To align with that usage, the term "Asian American" in this study will be used to distinguish difference from Asian or other racialized groups.

Asian/Asians. This term was used throughout the study by participants to differentiate political and cultural boundaries between AAAP participants and other Asians. The term was also used in the context of Whiteness as a power structure underpinning the Asian monolith

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stereotype and being unable to distinguish AAAP from those "Asian/Asians" who are culturally connected Asians.

Adoption Triad. This term is used to describe any of the adopted person, adoptive parents, or the birth family. Together these three parties make up the adoption triad.

Material Existence. To describe historically situated subjects inscribed by their historical global condition, the term "material existence" is used to connote and acknowledge the imposed categorical hierarchies of power that underpin AATRA identity constructs. This term encompasses the recognition and contestation of racial power formation in the undercurrents of scholarly inquiry.

Study Purpose

In her discussion about the merits of Asian American studies, Lowe suggests that we can study the history of Asian Americans as an additive to a national history or as an exceptional example in that story, or we can study the history of the Asian American experience as a set of critiques that question knowledge formation and are aimed at social transformation (Lowe, 2018). The "figure" of the Asian American has historically been instrumentalized as a racial intermediary to stabilize a social order that prizes capitalism and Whiteness (Lowe, 2018).

Studying Asian American adopted people as situated racialized historical subjects of the moment adds a chapter to the historical pattern of U.S. interests in different places in the world and the disenfranchisement of the people native to those places when they come to the U.S. In addition, Asian American adopted participants provided a unique window into the cultural costs of Whiteness since they are barred from belonging and participation in both White and Asian culture.

Broadly, the purpose of this study is threefold: 1) Considering that each of us has a personal history that is largely undocumented, my first aim was to explore the ways in which the oral history narratives of adopted people today tell a history of the present that connects vestiges of a racialized global subjectivity, identity, and disenfranchisement. 2) A second aim was to examine the ways in which the participants' build culture through contesting their social liminality by interrogating, transgressing, and undermining imposed American exceptionalist identity frameworks through their stories, songs, poems, and other imaginatives. These actions add to the index of methods of mobilizing the study of Asian Americans in ways that do not assimilate to Whiteness or aspire to be another unit of social reproduction through academic means. Guided by principles of social transformation, this project attempted not only to manifest knowledge but to interrogate how we know what we know and how we communicate that knowledge to others (Lowe, 2018). 3) Most importantly, the project aimed to connect the first two initiatives by transforming the participants' oral history narrations into counter narratives that offered biographical analysis of the individual experiences of the participants in relation to U.S. institutions in a sociohistorical context (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

To accomplish this, I moved away from western Eurocentric "identity" frameworks and worked towards Lowe's (2015) notion of "alternative" frameworks that repositioned participants as situated historical subjects who are inscribed by the patterns of their historical global condition. To answer my research questions, I conducted oral histories to gather data to capture the mechanisms, modes, repercussions, and contestations in which historical subjectivity and political situatedness operationalized in the daily lives of participants.

Alternative Frameworks

In *The Intimacies of the Four Continents*, Lowe (2015) writes, "only by defamiliarizing the object of the past and the established methods of apprehending that object do we make possible alternative forms of knowing, thinking, and being." Inspired by Lowe's work, in this study, "alternative frameworks" provided an exploratory conceptual foundation to investigate the stories and narratives of participants in conversation with the historical political figure of the international Asian adoptee. In this study, "alternative" frameworks situated participants' positionality as the central point within a structure of systematic power. Therefore, this exploratory study located the ways in which participants negotiated their present with a partial contextual knowledge of their past. The study framed participants' articulations as knowers situated individually as historically racialized subjects (Lowe, 2018). Investigating from these principles opened a new set of research observations, realizations, and critiques.

Oral Histories of the Present

Alternative framings prioritized historical subjectivity in conversation with contemporary instances of participants' "racialized experiences" providing a conceptual method of tracing a history of the present. Oral history is defined as information about a historical time or event told by the people who experienced it (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). As demonstrated in adoption identity studies, conclusions are reached in lockstep with the identity and knowledge system characteristics of the researcher. Oral history focuses on the role of those people who appear least significant (Hazarika, 2017). Oral history has gained significance with the increasing mistrust of the canon of official history. Methodologically, oral history functions not as a history of a race, nation, or a particular point in time, but instead recognizes and respects participants'

unique ability to articulate an intersectional systematic knowledge production of marginality (Portelli, 2017). As such, oral history is capable of analyzing the diversity of historical modes of oppression and their material consequences for real living people.

My project attempts to recast the past to get at a history of the present of participants as a constituent of a greater global relational tale of modes of oppression. An oral history of the present gave the me the means to collect observations of the ways in which participants lived, constructed, and embodied contestations of Marxist subjects, categories, and methods—adoption academic, adoption humanitarian, and adoption psychological—outside the bounds of their historical subjectivities. Consequently, an oral history of the present allowed me to frame, focus on, and research the following questions.

Research Questions

Question 1: How do Asian American adopted people contest their liminality? (i.e., how do they recognize, interrogate, transgress, and refuse terms of severance, dislocation, separation, and violence?)

Question 2: Through which mechanisms, modes, and repercussions, do participants' oral histories capture the enduring representation of the political situatedness of the historical figure of the Asian American adoptee?

Question 3: Based on the data from this study, what are the possible implications and impacts of a K-12 school curriculum that focuses on historical processes and patterns of power that are evident in students' quotidian experiences?

Study Rationale

Studying Asian American transracially adopted people allows scholars to study the nuanced ways in which historical power dynamics constructed absence through Eurocentric identity standards that govern(ed) "knowability" (Stets & Burke, 2009). Absence is a key factor in Asian American transracial adoption. In the context of AAAP and absence, many studies limit focus predominately on the absence of the immediate birth family. However, the birth family is simply the first link to the idea of lineage. Lineage or "line of age" provides an anchor which gives access to and constructs personal patterns of relatedness and meaning (heritage) that governs a sense of belonging that transcends time. Without the knowledge systems inherent in lineage, patterns of knowability are constructed by contradictory messages of a colorblind American egalitarian freedom juxtaposed by racialized experiences. Consequently, previous studies have shown a sense of identity liminality or middleness seems to be as far as identity constructs can take us. Ultimately, these studies tend to land on conclusions that each AAAP is a unique person with a unique identity.

While true, this type of conclusion forecloses the influence of historical patterns of power evident in AAAP's present experiences. A study reframing away from identity and its limitations aims to collect individual narratives and social histories of participants to explore how identity constructs may function as a vehicle that carries forward historical tropes represented in the racialized microaggressions, and stereotypes present in the daily lives of AAAP. Additionally, this study attempts to fill in gaps of historical knowledge left by an absence of access to lineage and the cultural knowledge systems that come with it. This study aimed to introduce participants to the historical notions underpinning the figure of the Asian American and the figure of the adoptee. By filling a knowledge gap absent in the frameworks of AAAP identity constructs this

study aimed to both recognize changes that occurred with the participants and observe the affect that the reframing of social location may have had on the participants. Most importantly, this study of attempted to uncover the multiplicity of ways in which participants contested their liminality.

Through this lens, researching the participants "middleness existence" described by the adoptee paradox (Lee, 2003), oral histories situated participants as present-day historical subjects who are inscribed by their collective historical condition. Studying the personal social histories of the participants in this manner opened the possibility of moving past Asian American transracial adoptee narratives and social histories as "Mestories" (Lowe, 2018). Framing Asian American transracial adoptee personal narratives within a larger story of global comparative relations gives educators a rare look at two cases that studied the breadth, depth, complexity, and intersectionality of race, gender, and class imbricated with foreign otherness. In this regard, using the adoptee paradox to glean observations from individual narratives about Asian American transracial adoption becomes a chapter (not a footnote) within a larger history of U.S. capitalism that primarily positions Asian Americans as racial intermediaries between White and Black. Analyzing participants oral histories through this lens allows educators to view the "middleness" inherent in the identity of Asian American adopted people as the enduring vehicle that carries the historical subjectivity of racialized "otherness"—race, gender, and class—that participants continue to have to negotiate every day. Centering Asian American transracial adoptee narratives to connect notions of power to the experiences of "existence middleness" can tell educators a lot about the overlapping logics of the Eurocentric identity constructs on which AAAPs are traditionally evaluated, the necessity for racialized control, and the boundaries of Whiteness.

This dissertation repositions the study of AATRA "existence middleness" away from the racial concepts of "too Asian to be White and too White to be Asian" toward the question of how to fully belong in the middle of a White and Asian social location while being barred from both. As such, race becomes a factor of belonging and meaning, where AATRA identity construction bars Asian American adopted people by phenotypical meanings from belonging as White and by cultural knowledge meanings from belonging as Asian. Ultimately, identity constructs are the vehicles that the means of disenfranchisement for Asian American transracial adoption, leaving educators and Asian American adopted people alike wondering if you are barred from belonging to either culture, what does that say about the ways (i.e., songs, letters, poems, stories, films) that Asian American adopted people contest liminality to manufacture (belonging) culture?

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by outlining the areas of scholarship that extend through the work of the dissertation. Following the research questions, this review speaks in conversation with three domains of scholarship central to the content of the dissertation. A fundamental assertation of the dissertation is that Asian American transracially adopted people occupy a historically situated liminal subjectivity that is understudied in relation to historical methods of power in the contexts of race, kinship, and political agency. The review follows by identifying assumptions, gaps, illusions, and confusions within extant literature to identify these limitations and move towards alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being.

Framing the Literature Review

To frame the review, I want to offer figure 1as a concept map to help think through this chapter. Principally, this chapter is about two different ways to construct "belonging." Both methods aim to construct belonging through a process of constructing relation through meaning. Each process seeks to match meaning and relation at the nexus of individual experiences and historical evidence. Matching history and experience to relation and meaning establishes belonging which functions as an anchoring mechanism of origin from which to know, think, and be.

Figure 1. Concept Map on "Belonging"

FIG 1: Principally, the literature review analyzes "Belonging." Figure one serves to provide a visual that illustrates a comparison between "Identity" as a construct and "Contesting" as a construct. Despite beginning with the same goals these two methods of constructing belonging diverge to create very different ways of knowing, thinking, and being. The legal process of closed transracial adoption severs (belonging) ties to a cultural knowledge system that matches meaning to ethnic relation. In addition, racialized experiences counter the meaning that constructs a liberal multicultural American identity highlighted by an ethos of post racial social equality. AAAP cannot match their meaning and relatedness to an absent personal history and quotidian experience. "Contesting" aims to remedy that through different means.

The more traditional construct of belonging for AAAP that this chapter addresses has been identity. Identity, which underpins Eurocentric notions is a specific theoretical construct organized in a manner where "self" functions as a unique individual within a liberal multicultural ethos—race, gender, class, and nation—of social equality. In identity the self is always at the center and negotiates relation through meaning using knowledge systems that come from contextual cultural groups and social institutions. Knowledge systems identify cultural markers that guide how the individual should know, think, and be. The unique individual cultural aspect of identity comes from a personal history or lineage. Lineage allows an individual to anchor to an origin that extends the idea of self vicariously through a history of culture, ethnicity, and ancestry. An individual constructs relation by establishing the meaning of personal historical markers that are corroborated by family lineage. Last name, stories songs, languages, and foods become personal identity markers that act like roots of a tree that determining cultural belonging to a country, language, food, and ancestry of origin.

The liberal multicultural socially equal contribution to identity ideology comes from the political deployment of identity as a national concept distributed to the individual. Social institutions position identity as a singular national progress narrative where differences are welcomed as strengths in a melting pot of diversity becoming one. In this case, relation is constructed through modes such as citizenship and meaning and corroborated through institutions such as families and schools.

Contesting liminality focuses on the same set of goals of establishing belonging but through a different process. Contesting liminality is framed as a group-oriented process that positions the individual as a part a situated historical group bound by their global condition

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(transracial adoption). Instead of locating self as the center of negotiation, self is located within a historically racialized power hierarchy.

The literature review details the limitations of liberal identity frameworks that have traditionally underpinned adoption studies that explore an AAAPs social location and shifts towards alternative frameworks that prize how participants contest their liminality as a racialized historical subject. This project aligns exploration to the argument that belonging cannot be established using identity constructs where relation does not match the social meaning that constructs it. Patterns of "racialized experiences" are reminders that AAAP exist outside the meaning parameters that establishes belonging as White and the absences of key ethnic cultural identifiers and knowledge communities place AAAP outside the meaning metrics that establish cultural belonging as Asian.

The contesting liminality may offer an alternative framework that aims to align meaning to relation. "Racialized experiences" are understood as present manifestations of a historical vestiges of global process that seeks to differentiate through race. The aim is to study the ways in which relation can be established through solidarity by matching AAAP "racialized experiences" to other marginalized groups experiencing similar patterns of historical oppression. Figure 1 represents an outline comparison of both thought processes of belonging.

Politically, it means something distinctly different to be Asian American, transracial, and adoptee than it means to be Asian American transracial adoptee. Identity is a complex socially constructed concept marked by self-understandings especially those with strong emotional resonances that are raced, gendered, and classed. The study of identity is the study of subject formation within a power system that dictates categories and processes of belonging to group and self (Urrietta & Noblit, 2018). Identity constructed as "Asian American transracial adoptee"

meticulously disavows particular historically built political realities that signify what it means to be separately Asian American, transracial, and adoptee. In so doing, Asian American transracial adoptee is categorically different and takes on new political meaning(s).

This illustrates the first issue that this review seeks to outline, and the proposed problem the project aims to address: the liberalized and political construction of individual Asian American transracial adoption identity frameworks obfuscate the separate historically racialized political positioning and erasure (legally and culturally) of—educational access (and love) to kinship, community knowledge actors, and cultural resources—in-group knowledge systems necessary to understand their everyday social location in the United States.

Micro and Macro Notions of Identity. To accomplish this, the review joins literature that connects notions of (micro) individual identity and AATRA identity by outlining identity theory within its traditional ideas and places it in conversation the "adoptee liminality paradox." Next, the review contrasts traditional liberal notions of identity with the (macro) geopolitical "figure of the adoptee" arguing that the historically constructed political situatedness of AAAP exists outside the limits of traditional identity theory. Instead, the review argues that notions of liberal identity frames discourse that carries political tropes and stereotypes that must be analyzed in conversation with everyday personal experiences of AAAP. The "figure of the adoptee" illustrates an implicit (macro) Asian American transracial adoptee national identity not often included within the way we think about and construct AATRA identity. Therefore, inserting the "figure of the adoptee" positions political situatedness as a factor of everyday personal experience within a larger global comparative relation story. To get at the macro picture, the review traces the influence of the Cold War to establish the ways in which *(a)* race, gender, and class are historically imbricated with foreign otherness creating *(b)* AATRA identity as an

enduring geopolitical construct within the history of U.S. industrial capitalism. Lastly, from a micro/macro framework of identity, I will delineate the limitations of identity theory for Asian American adopted people.

   Identity and Education. The second section of the review addresses the scholarships regarding the education of Asian American transracial adoptee identity to explore the historical context and ideological principles foundational to the contribution of AATRA identity frameworks to the "adoptee identity paradox" (Lee, 2003). Specifically, this section reviews the academic scholarship, policies, laws, and curriculum options that undergird AATRA identity development. Situating AATRA identity in conversation within the settings of school and family in which it is primarily developed allows for an examination of messy identity entanglements between knowing and unknowing, as well as how identity constructs are implicated in the epistemologies of institutional Whiteness. A review of the contextual intellectual history of racial, historical, and political contexts seeks to address major limitations of adoption "outcome" studies that prompted a competing branch of more Critical Adoption scholarship. Despite some of its own limitations, the review seeks to present Critical Adoption Studies as a foundation from which to build an academic reclamation project of resistance existence. As such, this section concludes by highlighting and contending with traditional and non-traditional extant critical adoption scholarship inclusive of adopted person's memoirs, narratives, and lived experiences that theorize and negotiate material existence in the middle.

   Defamiliarizing. Lastly, building from the scholarly limitations of racialized adoptee identity framework and extending the work of critical adoption studies the project aims to extend past a colorblind, liberalized, and political deployment of Asian American transracial adoptee identity as an additive/fragmented model of social divisions. Instead, the project explores

literature on "Defamiliarizing" (Lowe, 2015) through oral histories as a fundamental shift that does not envisage race, ethnicity, class, gender, or sexuality (intersectionality) as group characteristics, but as mutually mediated, yet distinctly organized, socio-cultural structures (Knapp, 1999). In this way alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being can now analyze socio-historical factors in conversation intersectional ones to explore an understanding where present Asian American adopted person existence meets at a nexus of race, ethnicity, gender, absence, erasure, sexuality, ancestry in conversation with legal conditions, property relations, organization of cultural knowledge production, and social positioning. A conceptual framework inspired by "Defamiliarizing" through an Asian Critical lens allows for an analysis foregrounding the intersectionality of self within the historical practices of colonialism. An inquiry framed by a material existence within a subject/object constellation of cognitive possibilities opens the pathway towards alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being in patterns of collectiveness over the supremacy of the individual which highlight differences.

  Critical Race Theory. Principles of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in conjunction with Asian Crit as a contextual lens of nuance can be used to re-envision alternative existence of Asian American adopted people as a political project of relationality at a nexus of race and power. "Defamiliarizing" opens a framework towards what Lowe (2015) writes is a past conditional temporality that suggests it is possible to conceive a past not as fixed or settled, not as inaugurating in the present temporality into which our present falls but as a configuration of multiple contingent possibilities all present, yet not inevitable. Subsequently, "Defamiliarizing" moves beyond individual identity frameworks allowing for a non-linear/non-comparative analysis on the "execution of power" past and present evaluating patterns of "process" over time, race, gender, and other factors. This allows Asian American adopted people to analyze their

personal experiences beyond the limitations of self (identity) to recognize and examine the mechanisms of how power is imposed on socially constructed categories (identity) such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status among others. Although nothing will ever replace the kinship, bond, political education, and love of a first family, by employing CRT and Asian Crit the review seeks to "Defamiliarize" to provide an alternative pathway of educational access to racialized and culture resources and new understandings that had been previously erased by the legal process of transracial adoption. Examining existence from these pieces of scholarship through these lenses allows for the first time an adopted person to go past the limitations of their singular lived experiences and put them in concert with a co-created education that analyzes power as a contextual history of the present.

In what follows, I respond to the outlined literature gap under review by addressing the problem, the project, and the alternative framework through three groups of extent literature: *(1)* (critical) identity and adoptee liminality scholarship that situates the problem; *(2)* identity education, adoption studies and critical adoption studies research that may point towards political agency as a project of personhood for Asian American adopted persons; and *(3)* Critical Race Theory as foundational examination that frames "Defamiliarizing" through Asian Critical (Asian Crit) lenses to create alternative frameworks that examine histories of racial struggle in the United States through the imposition of power in context to Asian/Asian Americans and Asian American transracially adopted people.

Limitations of Identity Theory

This part of the review examines identity theory as a socio-political construct in the context AATRAs. Specifically, I explore identity theory by examining the traditional principles,

processes, assumptions, and logics that have structured the field while arguing identity constructs are foundationally insufficient for Asian American adopted people to evaluate or negotiate their material existence. To begin, I will examine *(1)* the principles, processes, and assumptions that govern identity theory prioritizing the construction of a singular actor with agency within a present societal context. Next, I will explore *(2)* how identity constructs operationalize in the context of AATRAs by structuring identity into a present day "micro" individual identity and a "macro" historically situated political identity but disallows the inclusion of the latter. *(3)* Lastly, I will argue against the use of identity constructs for Asian American adopted people to negotiate material ontological existence. My argument stemming from the Transracial Adoptee paradox (Lee, 2003), is that *(a)* identity constructs in principle carry an inability to incorporate macro level global historical situatedness within a political power configuration. Thus, identity constructs fail to *(b)* center Asian American adopted people in their own individual identity and *(c)* place them in-between racial belonging but barred from two (certain) binding principles of identity. The latter two characteristics of AATRA identity place AATRA identity at odds with two foundational principles of identity theory.

      Principles. Centrally, personal identity is a social construction that works to establish existence permanence of an individual within society through a series of rules and mechanism governed by society and enacted by individuals (Powers, 1973). Identity theory works from a four-core premises. (1) Self is always at the center of identity where negotiations take place. (2) Identity = belonging which is negotiated by relatedness (sameness) through meaning. (3) Identity is relational and necessarily only conceived through difference. (4) Society shapes self which shapes social behavior (Mead, 1934). Therefore, an individual identity cannot exist apart from society. In identity theory, individuals occupy the center positioning of their material existence

and use groups to (in)form their social identity and shape their individual identity by establishing in-group/out-group knowledge systems through principles of relatedness, meaning, and belonging (Tajfel, 1970). From these roots, Stryker (2002) developed identity theory by theorizing a framework based on social symbolic interaction which gave causal priority to society on the grounds that individuals were enmeshed in social networks from origin and cannot survive outside of preexisting organized social relationships (Stets & Burke, 2009). From this understanding, identity (identity theory) is about establishing and maintaining existence permanence through social relations within society. "Relatedness" structures (social) belonging which is justified through patterns of meaning that creates the contextual knowledge systems of "knowability." In identity theory, relatedness, meaning, and belonging are the core principles, that must exist together at the same time to construct what Marcia (1980) calls an "achieved" identity.

 Identity Process. Situating individual identity within social groups allows exploration of identity (theory) on the premise that personal identity/individual identity cannot be separated from social identity. Society drives "relation" and "meaning," salience drives commitment, commitment drives "belonging." Thus, belonging enacted through actions of meaning toward related social groups is what is ultimately the aim of identity.

 According to Identity Theory, society is divided hierarchically into a social structure that includes networks in which people and identities that are embedded in larger bounded social institutions work to organize the hierarchy of various identities. Together these two networks of society drive relation through a sameness/difference binary and negotiate meaning. Larger institutions negotiate rules or "identity standards" (Stets & Burke, 2009) that are carried by networks of people in which the identity is embedded and then enacted by the individual.

Enacted interplay between the networks of people in which the identity is embedded and the individual creates an identifiably "knowable" person, subjectively organized by particular ways of knowing, thinking, being, and doing that are culturally and socially appropriate and recognizable to others within that social group. Verifying knowability through reciprocal characteristics and actions constitutes identity belonging (Stets & Burke, 2009).

Sometimes smaller networks augment institutional meanings that constitute belonging. This principle is indicative in the distinction between race and ethnicity. People look to smaller embedded networks (i.e., ethnicity or family) to understand the meanings of knowable personhood and alter their social behavior to match the meanings of contextual identity standards (Stets & Burke, 2009). Identity salience is driven by the importance that the social group has to the individual usually placing the familial unit as the most salient social group. Identity salience drives identity commitment governed by the explicit and implicit ties to that particular identity within a situational context.

Identity Assumptions. Although identity is socially constructed, I am not arguing that it is not "real" or that the framework does not work for some who are not Asian American adopted people. The task at hand is to reveal structural and operational assumptions that make it insufficient for establishing and maintaining self-permanence for Asian American adopted people. Detailing the process of how relatedness, meaning, and belonging operationalize together within identity constructs allows the review to explore some important assumptions within identity constructs.

Identity is constructed so that people establish a static sense of self permanence in society by belonging to social groups that are important to them. These groups are important to them because either the individual or the group has laid claim to them thereby establishing relatedness

through various markers of meaning. These markers of meaning distinguish the group from other groups.

Centrally, I have identified three assumptions that build on each other in the context of AATRA identity which drive its insufficiency. *(1)* In the context of AATRAs, identity is foundationally constructed through a narrow often conflated racial and ethnic framing. Asian American transracial adoptee establishes that the origin identity is formed from the constructs of race and the political category of adoptee. Many times, the origin identity is formed from ethnicity + race as a starting point like in Chinese American Transracial Adoptee. Transracial adoption is political category that connotates the fusion of White as an identity category vis a vis family into a person of color identity category. Relatedness is initially established and situated in notions of race, ethnicity, and family. The second central assumption presupposing identity frameworks is that *(2)* racial identity conflates with ethnic identity. For example, in the Handbook of Adoption: Implications for Researchers, Practitioners, and Families, Baden (2006) conceptualizes racial group categories for her model. As examples of racial groups, she lists, (a) Black, (b) White, (c) Korean, and (d) Native American (p.4). Racial identity is conflated with cultural (ethnic) identity misunderstanding that ethnic identity is a way in which to transgress the power dynamics of racial identity that carries the structural impositions of Whiteness. The case of AAAP draws a distinction of how we conceptualize the links between relation, meaning and belonging in that relation to race or ethnicity should not conflate with access to an in-group cultural knowledge system that establishes relation through a common meaning of cultural and familial identity markers signifying the belonging to an ethnicity. This distinction separates the effectiveness of identity constructs for AATRAs that make them conducive for most same race/same ethnicity bound non-adopted people.

Governing Identity Privilege. For clarity's sake, in this project "Whiteness" does not constitute individual adoptive parents in this context due to the historical breadth and depth of its systematicity. However, color possesses epistemic privilege (Moya, 2002). Constructing the mechanics of AATRA identity within a conflated notion of race to ethnicity positions identity as an agent of Whiteness. Whiteness frames away violent historical and political power dynamics of race and adoption processes by undergirding modern liberal notions of multiculturalism and diversity which celebrate integrated or assimilated ethnic adoptee identities leaving no room or means to interrogate them. Two distinctions emerge from this. First, for AATRAs there is an inherent distinction between "*what"* and "*who"* in identity constructs that does not exist in most identity constructs. Second, that distinction is controlled by Whiteness.

Although *what* someone is and *who* someone is are both structurally related, they do so through different logics. For racialized minorities race is a part of *what* a person is and is governed by outside power forces in a racialized hierarchical power structure. Race is a structure of power and functions as a modality through which class is lived (Hall, 2012). On the other hand, *who* a person is, is governed by historically informed socio-cultural in-group knowledge systems and personal experience. These enduring cultural moorings root cultural heritage to "who" someone is within a historical power system by creating a legacy or lineage of people to place based on historical social experience. Heritage is the contemporary action or agency of culture that binds individuals to communities through the passing of resources. Historical socio-cultural inheritance (knowledge & assets) of cultural society (ethnicity) creates the foundation for establishing and maintaining identity through meaning and belonging (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1995).

Self-permanence is established and maintained through enacting representations of meaning governed and verified by intrinsic socio-cultural knowledge systems. While power structures always impose marginalization through race, gender, and class minoritized social groups can engage in processes of contesting racial marginalization of Whiteness by developing intricate in-group knowledge systems that reclaim race by developing maintaining ethnic cultural markers of social belonging that create in-group distinction between race and ethnicity while staving off erasure. Identity constructs relatedness to a social group is a product of relatedness to that social group's in-group socio-cultural knowledge systems. As such, within an identity construct the *"what"* and the *"who"* are imbricated together to form a distinct racial and or ethnic identity.

   Identity Limitations. For AATRAs the "what" (race) exists distinct and inaccessible from the "who" (cultural community), so identity becomes built strictly from components of racial or ethnic labeling (what) imposed by historical power circumstances. Constructing an AATRA identity void of socio-cultural knowledge systems that inform and define racial and ethnic identity, AATRA identity is constructed from racial and ethnic notions situated to and within Whiteness. Adoptees become racially and ethnically related to Asian categorically through biosocial markers like phenotype and national origin. Relatedness exists only within out-group measures of Whiteness limiting identity discovery to who someone is strictly based on "what" someone is. While encouraged or pushed to develop racial and ethnic identity through exposure to cultural markers such as food, heritage camps, homeland tours, language classes, or history lessons, meaning and belonging becomes structured by outward facing structures of racial and ethnic identity where the social markers themselves replace the socio-cultural meaning of why they are social markers in the first place. Modern liberal Whiteness pushes racial and ethnic

identity discovery nested in a framework that renders it impossible to obtain. As a result, in

AATRA identity self is framed a liminal in-between; Too Asian to be White and too White to be

Asian (Hoffman & Pena, 2013)

Defamiliarizing Identity

Defamiliarizing aims to use the principles and components of a liberal identity

framework as a lens to analyze a contextual history of the present (Lowe, 2015). Doing so

repositions an overstudied Asian American Adoptee into an understudied Asian American

Adopted Person and opens new possibilities of knowing, thinking, and being. As I have

attempted to illustrate, the identity constructs (Stets & Burke) are the apparatus that form the

foundation of adoptee identity scholarship are epistemologically void of analysis of a global

historical racialized class system that has provided a foundation of the social groups that govern

its principles. By apparatus, I am referring to apparatus in a Foucauldian sense as a mode of

governance that is devoid of being. In this manner, identity as apparatus orients, disciplines, and

orders beings by "nature" as to assume their process of subjugation (Tutt, 2011). Adoptee

identity scholars that build from this framework around race and ethnicity so absent an analysis

of the historical power regime from which adoptees were created. Defamiliarizing (Lowe, 2015)

identity positions it as a requisite of power and contends with individual identity constructs in

those terms. Therefore, liberal identity and its principles provides a lens through which to

analyze AAAP in conversation with historically reified social regimes of power.

While adoption scholarship focuses primarily on how individual "adoptees" negotiate

their identity, defamiliarizing identity focuses on the historical power structure that governs its

groups and undergird its principles. Thus, an analysis of an Asian American Adopted person

seeks to uncover the mechanisms, modes, and processes through which social groups develop knowledge from seemingly fixed configurations of physical apparatus of self. Defamiliarizing repurposes the former and the latter as a lens for interpreting the ideological and material constitution of race, class, and adoptedness. To construct a history of the present, it is important to both analyze (1) understand some of the important characteristics of institutional power structures and (2) deconstruct contextually historical political subjectivities—Oriental, Asian, Asian American, and Adopted—that make up an Asian American Adopted person within a racialized power regime.

Power, Racism, and Identity.

Power. As Foucault explains, a power analysis must not assume the overall unity of domination as a given but rather power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organizations; as the process which transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another and the strategies in which they take effect (Foucault, 1990).

AAAP live and operate in a capitalistic society. Historically, such systems function on an unequal division of labor where one group (class) owns the means for production and other groups work as producers. Power is separated on the distinctions of who owns, who does not own, and who is eligible to be owned. In the U.S., saltwater slavery solidified race and class as operate as a system of co-fraternal operatives of meaning and power to mark difference and conceive class relationality. In this system, owners oppress non-owners and owned as a means of capital production. Therefore, people are oppressed not because of their race they are racialized

in order to make them eligible for oppression. In U.S. capitalism, "Race" is socially constructed to make class whose labor can be exploited. As such race and class continue to be so intertwined in U.S. capitalism that one is generally an expression of the other. This is captured well is Stuart Hall's (1978) notion that race is the modality through which class is lived.

Racism. Hall defined race as the modality of group domination and oppression that requires a public narrative (whether biological, sociological, anthropological, historical, or a combination of such) explaining how and why such domination and oppression is reasonable and justifiable (Pal Singh, 2015). Historically, in the U.S. class system, race has structured primary eligibility for oppression, but degree/variation of oppression was structured by organizing race into a power hierarchy. A power hierarchy created a justification for an owners need to oppress producers for the good of society. Race and class as modes of power created a dichotomy of opposites. White owners established neutrality (good) by racializing what is the furthest deviance (Black/bad) from neutrality. From these roots, White owners could organize a taxonomy of oppression based on specific sets of racialized norms tied to class. Imbricated operations of race, class, and power made Whiteness (good) a material property that is possible only through creating Anti-Blackness (bad). For White owners, a White/anti-Black racial power structure ensured a systematic longevity of capital ownership while the structural racism created the fiction of racialized essential differences needed to separate labor. The purpose of racism was to control the behavior of White people, not Black and Brown people. For them, guns and tanks are sufficient.

Identity. First, it is important to establish that without access to in-group cultural knowledge communities or cultural identity markers, identity operates apart from cultural meaning and is limited to a means of establishing a fixed racialized positioning within a power

structure. Identity is the apparatus through which racism transcends time. In Black Marxism, Robinson's (2005) central argument is that the fictions of race are so unstable that even being socialized to believe in them is not strong enough. There are points when the fiction of race is carried out materially revealing that there are no fixed ideologies or systems of White supremacy. Therefore, racism made and reified institutionally through discourse maintains an illusion of racialized essential character difference. From these roots, a discursive body of knowledge emerges imbricating social positioning, political subjectivity, and racial identification. Liberal identity constructs are deployed to frame, maintain, and historicize an institutionalized racial epistemology reified through media, art, and scientific scholarship. White supremacy through identity constructs materially sustains the illusion of static essential difference making timeless the set of norms that justify a body eligible or ineligible to oppress within a class structure.

Unsettling the liberal notion of a racialized identity disrupts "Asian (Korean/Chinese/Indian) American Transracial Adoptee" as fixed or settled and inaugurated into the temporality into which our present falls and opens a door to "Asian American Adopted Person" or just a person whose present is a configuration of multiple contingent possibilities all present, yet not inevitable. As Kelly (2017) posits, if we don't actually see the historical trajectory in the formation of identity, it makes it impossible to see class (rule) as anything other than a fixed categorical entity of racialized norms for which one has to strive.

AAAP and the Legacy of Identity

AAAP and Orientalism Identity. Orientalism is an offshoot of White supremacy that relies on the deployment of liberal identity constructs that define and make constant a racialized

other as a contingency of defining self. Orientalism did this geographically. Orient(al) means "East" giving credence that the origin of Asia was Europe. As Lohman (2021) explains, it was colonial practice to go into nations and represent the indigenous peoples and their cultures in pieces of art and stories they wrote and brought back to western audiences. In doing so, they eroded the cultural differences, nuances, and contexts within those nations to end up with an amorphas that did not actually represent anything real. Furthermore, the western narration of eastern stories and pieces of art anchored the discourse framing a body of knowledge that came to represent the "orient(al)" as a "naturally" exotic land of barbaric deviant lesser others that was steeped in mysticism and danger (Lohman, 2021).

As a result, "Orientalism" underpinned the system that allowed Europe to manage the "Orient(al)" politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, and imaginatively (Said, 1995) Most importantly, by imbricating race, geography (place), and essential characteristics, the "nature" of the orient(al), created the "nature" of the Occident(al) featuring opposing race, geography, and essential characteristics. Consequently, the occident(al) institutionalized a fictional East to define how the west understood itself.

Orientalism operated as a system of binaries that ascribed social norms to eastern bodies that necessarily contrasts western bodies. This framework of defining the other rested on deploying racialized liberal identity markers as a justification to colonize and civilize the "oriental." By teaching the ways (virtues and morals) the Occident could "save" the Orient(al) from themselves.

AAAP and Asian Identity. Asian identity is racialized. Vestiges of Orientalism are foundational in racialized Asian identity. The origin of the word Asia is Greek and means "East." The Asian body occupies an intermediary social class position in-between downward and

upward forces in the U.S. capital state. That downward social force is orientalism. As Kim (2020) analyzes, from the very moment Asians were constructed as a racial group they were understood to be not White. Prior adoption identity studies do identify "racialized experiences" illustrating that AAAP are not exempt from the downward force of orientalism on racialized Asians.

AAAP and Asian American Identity. Asian American identity is political. While Kim (2020) illustrates orientalism as a downward social force on the political Asian body, she is more concerned with anti-Blackness as an elevating social force that acts as structural advantage lifting Asians at the expense of Black people. Asian American identity was a self-defining political solidarity identity that carries national connotations of a pan-ethnic group that spent much of their American history barred from citizenship. However, Kim (2020) problematizes a solidarity focused Asian American political identity contending, that solidarity may distract Asian Americans from thinking about some of the discrepancies in power amongst Asians and in conversation with other historically marginalized groups. AAAPs bring a unique political positionality as racially invisible exceptional Asian Americans in the context of American race relations and government policies (Park-Nelson, 2016). This version of Asian American identity brings another perspective to what Asian American solidarity should include but may exacerbate, the distraction away from the power inconsistencies that situate Asian Americans apart from (structurally not in solidarity with) other groups of color.

AAAP and Transracial Adopted Identity. Transracial adopted identity is a racialized political liminal identity. Transracial adoption identity places adopted people in the middle of a White and Asian binary. However, transracial adoptive identity is paradoxical in that it places AAAP as ethnic minorities socialized as members of a dominant White culture (Lee, 2003).

Analyzing AAAP legacy identities through a power lens defamiliarizes belonging much differently than traditional adoption identity scholarship. Principally, society is reframed from conventional egalitarian notions to racialized members of a historical power structure.

Through this analytical lens, relatedness which negotiates sameness through meaning places relatedness/sameness in conversation with oppression. Therefore, self is reframed as a function of social group to White supremacy. In this manner, it is easier to understand that the insufficiency of liberal identity frameworks is ultimately because, AAAPs cannot exercise the liberty of self if self is only made possible as an arm of White supremacy.

The Enduring Paradox of AATRA Identity

In Adopted Territory, Eleana Kim details the liminal subjectivity of Korean American adoptees (KAAD) by teasing out the ways in which KAADs engage in a process of dis-identification with normative (western) categories of personhood—origins, birth, genealogy, blood, culture, race, and social belonging (Kim, 2010; Lowe, 1996). Although she attempts to stay within identity frameworks, by arguing an "identity by dis-identity," for Korean American adopted people, Kim is making the case that the principles in which Asian American transracial adoptee identity as currently constructed and deployed make it not sufficient.

The liberalized deployment of Asian American Transracial Adoptee Identity asks AATRA's to perform two simultaneous identities that inherently place them in the middle of both. Identity constructs ask that (1) AATRAs must at once be/perform separately the identity standards of Asian American, transracial, and adoptee in some contexts while (2) performing the standards of being "Asian American transracial adoptee" in other contexts. The impracticality of this identity deployment based on the fact that AATRAs are largely without access to the

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racialized familial and cultural kinship ties that provide access to the cultural and historical knowledge communities that understand the meaning of Asian American, transracial, adoptee from a cultural belonging standpoint.

Lee (2003) refers to this phenomenon as the transracial adoption paradox in which AATRAs are racial minorities in society, but they are perceived and treated by others, and sometimes themselves, as if they are members of the majority culture (i.e., racially White and ethnically European) due to their adoption into a White family (Lee, 2003). Across time and country of origin, many other adoptee identity studies focus on liminality highlighting findings of *"living Betwixed" "In-Between,"* and, *"Balancing Two Worlds."* Identity studies have consistently captured this same phenomenon of desperately trying to navigate the liminal identity that constructs AATRA political subjectivity (Goode, 2015; Hockersmith, 2020; Suda & Hartlep, 2016). Still other studies like, *Too Korean to be White and too White to be Korean* (Hoffman & Pena, 2013) and *Too White to be Indian and too Indian to be White* (Harness, 2018), use different qualitative methodologies (grounded theory and autoethnography) to address the feelings of impossibility, inauthenticity, ambivalence, and pressure to justify a paradox of existence that frames TRA "double consciousness" (Dubois, 2008) of navigating racialized experiences within dominant American cultural scripts (Hoffman & Pena, 2013; Harness, 2018).

Costs of Identity Construct Insufficiency. AATRA identity constructs carry enduring micro and macro costs for Asian American adopted people that suggests that viewing or theorizing self from these structures limits the possibilities of who Asian American adopted people have been, are, and can be.

From a micro perspective, identity structures relatedness, meaning, and belonging symbiotically to create a linear chain of self, measured from origin (time), and justified by

belonging. Even the body and mind theories of identity worked from those ideas. The body theory held that personal identity persisted over time because one occupied the same body throughout a lifetime (Perry, 1978). The memory theory posits that personal identity persists over time because one retains memories and each of these memories is connected to the one before it (Fuller, Stecker, & Wright, 2019). Memories verify identity and even extend identity by extending ideas of relatedness by measuring the family unit as a scientific biological concept like the framing in genealogy. As a result, biological means of evaluating relatedness are not only enduring in family genealogies and popular historical discourse, —blood is thicker than water— they structure a sense of legitimacy of material existence that is stripped by the institutional process (legal and practical) of intercountry adoption. This is evidenced by the first page of an adoption file (named social history) that characterizes the termination of parental rights and responsibilities through by checking the box labeled "illegitimate." For AATRAs, the ways in which "identity" structures these ideas and mechanisms of measurement presents costs. Memory theory suggests that the symbiotic connection between relatedness, meaning, and biology. In this manner, mechanisms of relatedness by genealogy or lineage limit belonging to an additive to a White structure.

Most importantly, the symbiotic connectedness suggests that identity is actually about the promises, obligations, and responsibilities of those who a person is beholden to with the parent/child relationship being the most important one as genealogy suggests. The factors of measurement in identity theory—commitment, attachment, salience, relatedness, meaning, and belonging—are measurements of beholdeness. As such, identity from a practical standpoint is operationalized in the terms of beholdeness. Self is acquired and verified by enacting the promises, obligations, and responsibilities of beholdeness.

Since the process of intercountry adoption racializes the adopted person (for example had the person been adopted they would not be known as Asian in Korea they would be known as Korean) and legally erases the promises, obligations, and responsibilities of beholdeness to and from the central entity (genealogical family and specifically mother/child relation) that identity constructs are built from, AATRA identity as an evaluative baseline of self in adoption studies are insufficient. After all, without belonging you just have longing.

(MACRO) Situating the Political "Figure of the Adoptee"

Contextual History of the Figure of the Adoptee. When we attempt to understand history and the knowledges that it possesses, we must consider that history itself, functions as a historical record with distinct and deliberate means to its epistemology. When we study history, we are not actually studying history but rather that which has been recorded as such. Thus, it is imperative to gain understanding that history is a raced, gendered, and classed process of recording the giving voice to one at the expense of silencing another, documented in different contexts at different times. It is also important to be reminded that normative history is built on the idea of teleological progress framing freedom in Europe as its origin and freedom in contemporary democratic states (U.S.) as its endpoint. As Chakrabarty (2000) observes, of the modern historical narrative, Europe remains the sovereign theoretical subject of all histories including the one's we call "Indian," "Kenyan," and so on. As Lowe (2015) reminds us, despotism is not the counterpoint to liberty but the very condition from which liberty emerges. Understanding freedom is understanding that its security comes at the hands of vanquishing it from others.

Every Asian American adopted person has their own personal and social history on which they build their identity. As a researcher it is important to honor this fact but also examine the macro level patterns that made possible each individual personal and social history. It is through these explorations that Asian American adopted people can begin to build the aspects of "sameness" that are so foundational to the concept of identity.

Central to identity theory is the idea that an individual identity is never positioned outside of the meaning society—in-groups and out-groups—places on it. Power dynamics construct historical meaning and define the characteristics of "knowability" for a group. Subsequently, individuals enact or perform their identity in line with socially defined characteristics of "knowability" for a group within a particular society.

The political identity layer of "adoptee" separates Asian American adopted people from Asian American people by dislocating Asian American adopted people from the in-group cultural capital—family, language, history—relationships that connect a cultural macro-level knowability to the micro-level enactments of an Asian American cultural or ethnic identity. AATRA identity is a racialized identity without the cultural or ethnic identity knowledge systems or markers to offset it as strictly racialized. Therefore, AATRA identity exists separately from Asian American cultural or ethnic identity but under the same historically imposed power dynamics. By positioning the history of adoption as the history of adoptee identity as a macro political category, educators can situate a version of AATRA identity imbricated within a larger global relation story that juxtaposed foreign otherness in the form of race, gender, class, and family to American exceptionalism to open new Asian markets to U.S. capitalism during the Cold War period.

Cold War Geopolitics. The Cold War was an ideological battle between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. (Soviets) that played out globally as a high stakes rivalry to shape international order post World War II. Nicknamed the Cold War because the two countries never exchanged military strikes, the U.S. feared the Soviets wanted to destroy democracy namely democratic institutions like capitalism. The Soviets feared that the Americans wanted to use money and power to take over control of Europe and Asia to destroy the Soviet communism system. The Cold War was less of a war and more of an era that lasted from post war 1945 to the early 1990's.

The world was divided into three parts. The first world or "free world" was the U.S., western Europe, and any place that embraced capitalism and a democratic form of government. The second world was the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, mostly Warsaw Pact nations, China, and Cuba. The third world was everyone else and was characterized as the economically and developmentally challenged. Neither the U.S. or the Soviets wanted any of these countries to stay neutral and the third world nations were to pick sides either capitalist or communist. This ideological battle waged to convince other nations to side with their respective sides. As the conflict continued, the Asia Pacific region became a key foreign policy battleground.

The conflict was fought on an international and domestic front. Internationally, the goal was to promote Cold War democratic internationalism of the free world (including free Asia) while containing communism (Cheng, 2013). Shifting geopolitical configurations that took hold after World War II led to the United States to focus much of its foreign policy attention on developments in Asia. Under President Truman during the early Cold War period the United States operated under the "Containment Doctrine" which was an agenda that allowed Communism to stay where it was, but it would not allow its spread. The U.S. was concerned

about the "Domino Effect" which was a theory that Asian countries needed to be propped up by U.S. military intervention or the whole of Asia would fall into communism. Communist led political movements in China, Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia prompted U.S. military intervention making the Asia Pacific region a key battle ground eventually prompting the armed conflicts of the Korean and Vietnam Wars (Baldoz, 2017).

Domestically, the goal was to promote the superiority of American democracy and American way of life. Up until this point of world history, there had been many geopolitical struggles between major world powers, but the Cold War brought on an unprecedented threat of nuclear war. Nationally, American unity was built from the idea that American democracy stood for the moral fortitude of our nation and the government stood for the protective force that would save the world. During this time America experienced a tangible sense of national unity built by a discourse that combined national security and American exceptionalism created in opposition to communism. It is important to understand that communism was genuinely threatening to the American populous and this was not simply an American propaganda machine. However, national security agencies pushed media outlets like Hollywood to produce films like the "Red Menace" and the CIA funded news broadcasts, concerts, and art exhibitions that enlisted examples of American freedom. In addition, America portrayed the Soviets as atheists and congress added the words "under God" to the pledge of allegiance to connect to the idea of moral dichotomy of good versus evil. On another front, in the name of national security the U.S. spent money on education, research in science and technology, and built our interstate highway system to create easy escape routes in the event of nuclear war. Anti-communist discourse and the actions it spurred accomplished a new way in which Americans conceptualized freedom. The government exists to ensure freedom from massive destruction. Although the U.S. government

had largely succeeded in creating the idea of unified country under American exceptionalism against the evils of communism, that was only half the challenge. In order to establish democratic capitalism in a "free" Asia the U.S. government would need the buy in of their domestic Asian nationals and Asian Americans. Once again, establishing a favorable discourse would take center stage.

To accomplish their foreign policy goals in Asia, establishing a positive outward facing discourse to Asian nations was the key. The challenge was negotiating a historical interplay between American democracy and an enduring racist national policy against Asian and Asian Americans. The Soviet Union made this more urgent through the uses of propaganda as a means to illustrate rampant systemic racism as an inherent feature of American democracy. As Cheng (2013) explains, Secretary of State and chair of the President's Committee on Civil Rights Dean Acheson understood that (an outward appearance) civil rights for all would be a defining idea. Publicly, Acheson echoed a committee concern that communist broadcasting of the mistreatment of Black and Asian people in the United States was hampering the nation's ability to build trust and cooperation with non-western countries. During his time at the helm, he asserted that American racism not only compromised the security of the U.S. but undercut the ability of the U.S. to be the leader of the "free world" (Cheng, 2013). Securing the "free countries" of Asia meant welcoming Asian anti-communist refugees and a establishing a positive insider discourse of American democracy led by domestic Asian national and Asian Americans living within that American democracy to their relatives in Asian countries.

Family, Adoption, Foreign Policy, and the Media. In identity theory, identity is constructed by society and enacted by the individual. Enacted interplay between society in which the identity is embedded and the individual creates an identifiable "knowable" person (Stets &

Burke, 2009). Subsequently, understanding AATRA identity as a Cold War geopolitical construct is important to understanding "identity" as an enduring actor with the agency that binds together the macro representations of American (western) benevolence, familial clean slate tabula rosa, and racialization at the nexus of foreign policy, historical tropes, and post-race racelessness framed in the personal and social histories of present day Asian American adopted people.

In *Cold War Orientalism,* Klien (2003) explains the relationship between the expansion of U.S. power into Asia between 1945 and 1961 and the simultaneous proliferation of popular American representations of Asia. She keys in on the idea of Orientalism which was a term coined by Edward Said to deconstruct the material reality imposed on the Asian body by the White gaze. Klien untangles the idea of Orientalism in different Asian and Asian American contexts within the history of U.S. capitalism to show that Orientalism is not the product of ignorance or lack of cultural knowledge. Instead, she delineates the imbricated ways in which Orientalism has historically been produced as knowledge by those in positions of power like government officials, religious organizations, and the media.

In chapter four of her book, Klien (2003) addresses a key macro level relationships that frame how Cold War geopolitics and American racism intersected with a burgeoning discourse of nuclear family national identity. Understanding AATRA identity through this lens offers an avenue of exploration of the adoption paradox (Lee, 2003) that positions AATRA identity racially (not culturally) in-between White and Asian. Examining macro-level historical anti-Asian tropes in conversation with "Asian transracial adoptee" as a product of Cold War geopolitical foreign policy gives a macro-level foundation of ideas that continue to frame "knowability" and "enactability" (Stets & Burke, 2009) of AATRA identity.

Family and National Identity. Post-World War II the traditional American nuclear family became a staple of how Americans identified. While many European and Asian nations had faced economic, agricultural, and industrial devastation, geographic position of fighting allowed the U.S. not only to escape devastation but to thrive. The war time industrial boom and post war baby boom saw Americans having the means to move from the city into the suburbs strengthening the idea of the American nuclear family as a fixture of American identity. Offering communism as an agency of family destruction the state juxtaposed that next to the idea of a White middle-class suburban nuclear American family which provided a framework of tangibility to represent what every day American freedom resembled.

Armed Conflict and Rekindled U.S. Racism. The communist victory of Mao Zedong spurred the exodus of Chinese refugees many of whom would migrate to the U.S. The migration of more Asian nationals and the loss of China provided the opportunity to aggressively pursue the Containment Doctrine by contrasting the freedoms offered in the U.S. with the "tyranny" represented by the communist way of life (Baldoz, 2017). The U.S. worked to establish successful incorporation of Asian Americans within the nations suburbs and workplaces to illustrate the benefits of the American way of life and as a show of goodwill toward "free countries" of Asia (Cheng, 2013). However, enduring anti-Asian tropes and sentiments were rekindled as the Korean and Vietnam wars had major impacts on the way Americans perceived Asia internationally and Asians domestically. Racialized depictions of Asians and the lack of the ability (or attempt) of American education systems ability to distinguish ideas of ethnicity and politics that were wrapped up in the battle between communism and democracy led to a strictly race driven discourse unable to separate North Korean from South Korean or Chinese from Vietnamese. These ideas eventually renewed the historical hostilities of an Asian face

characterizing disloyalty, unassimilateability, and ultimately an enemy race that threatened to destabilize global political order.

Pearl Buck and the Welcome House. Although during early post war period multi-racial and multi-national family creation through transracial adoption was on the rise the wartime depiction of ideas like the slogan, "a Jap is a Jap" and other Asian identity tropes (Ngai, 2004) led many adoption agencies to refuse to handle Asian or part Asian children. Just four years after the Enola Gay had dropped "Fatman" and "Little Boy" destroying Nagasaki and Hiroshima and less than a year before the Korean War, Pearl Buck opened the Welcome House which she proposed was part of a solution to the cold War foreign policy problems with Asia.

From a macro perspective, the foreign policy problem between the U.S. and Asia was due to a weak sense of political obligation to Asia dating back to the history of Asian immigration to the United States. Despite Asians and Asian Americans existing in America for well over a century, Americans did not feel bound to Asians because of the lack of ties between cultures, religions, and languages. In Buck's view, adoptable Asian children were "key children" who could facilitate American stake in foreign relations between the U.S. and Asia to prevent further losses of Asian nations to communism (Klien, 2003). Through transracial adoption and more specifically the figure of the adoptee, Buck cemented the solution of the problem of weak political obligation to Asia through the lens of family.

Framing foreign policy with Asia through the lens of a multicultural and multiracial family allowed the U.S. to create a two-pronged macro-level discourse. First, (1) foreign policy through family created an outward projection of a U.S. and Asian global family based on racial incorporation rather than historical policies of containment and monitoring. Second, (2) this

foreign policy strategy created an inward domestic ideology shift indicating American progress of overcoming historically ingrained racism.

Intercountry transracial adoption offered a new way to imagine U.S./Asian internationalism in terms of voluntary affiliation attempting to change the macro notion of family from biological bonds to bonds of choice through love and devotion. In this manner, transracial adoption during the Cold War foregrounded the idea that national alliance could be forged through intimate independent party alliance. The outward projection of the suburban middle class White nuclear family became representative of an outward framework to Asia where (the) Asian/Asia could become (White) American nation to nation vis a vis democracy and specifically capitalism.

Asian transracial adoption as U.S. aid in post war reconstruction efforts in Asia became justified through the discourse of the middle class White American family functioning as a mode of democratic selflessness toward a racialized foreign orphan. Ultimately, a key job of the Cold War adoptee was to be a focal point to create a macro level discourse that loving the Asian transracial child is loving the Asian nation complete with duty and political responsibility to and from it. From a foreign policy government perspective, dealing with another nation's most vulnerable population created a co-dependent moral relationship that worked to deter trade with communist China and opened new economic markets and military base rights in Asia.

Domestically, the media shaped a national discourse of American exceptionalism. While the media was portraying a fear-based discourse of Cold War U.S.S.R., they were also constructing discourse of American exceptionalism through Cold War Orientalism. Although there were many diverse examples from live news broadcasts of Harry Holt bringing eight adoptees to America to musicals like the South Pacific depicting Asian women as quiet and

submissive, Klien describes what a typical example looked like in the context of Asian transracial adoption. In chapter four she focuses on two advertisements (Appendices D & E) explaining that the strategy was to provoke the reader's anxiety about communism and then offer parenthood as a means to diffuse it (Klien, 2003). Like many other advertisements, these two were distributed by religious organizations.

The first features a young Asian man holding an emaciated naked Asian child on his lap. The title reads, *"This Picture is as DANGEROUS as it is PITIFUL"!* The advertisement goes on to paint the child as hopeless and if they should fall into the hands of communist propaganda they may "ignite the spark that will explode the hydrogen bomb" (Klien, 2003; CCF, 1954). The advertisement ends with a section on how they saved the boy in the picture and then gives an option to donate money. The other advertisement features a White presumably middle-class couple holding a naked sickly child and is titled, *"Am I My Brother's Keeper"?* This advertisement framed Asian countries as wastelands ending with "God sees not the coin but the heart that gives it" (Klien, 2003; CCF, 1954).

These advertisements give a lens at how religious organizations, media, and the government leaned on notions of Orientalism to paint a picture of the political figure of the adoptee domestically. In so doing, the White middle class American adoptive family was positioned as representative of an exceptional national democratic identity and the identity of the adoptee was positioned as beneficiary and representative of moral global humanitarianism. The figure of the adoptive family made possible only by the figure of the adoptee came to represent two enduring American identity concepts, (1) the everyday American fight against communism through love instead of violence and (2) Asian transracial adoption integration as a tipping point of progress toward a post racial society.

Analyzing the interconnectedness of American exceptionalism, racialized foreign

otherness through Orientalism, and Asian transracial adoption during the Cold War era not only

adds to the index of Asians in the U.S. as a product of war and militarism in Asia, but also

frames a new way to imagine a history of the present. The outward Asian foreign policy

perspective and the inward domestic projection keyed on notions of American exceptionalism

juxtaposed against foreign otherness at the intersection of race, class, and identity. Identity

theory holds that an individual's identity is never formed outside the conventions of the society

in which it functions. Analyzed as a geopolitical construct the racialized figure of the adoptee

stands to represent not an individual identity of an AATRA but the product or representation of

White humanitarianism, American national selflessness, and American democratic

exceptionalism within a structure of unequal social relations.

Micro Identity Limitations and Macro Understandings

Micro (Individual). While a micro perspective deals much more with identity from the

networks of people and identities embedded in those networks or in-groups, the macro

perspectives engage the larger bounded social structure of institutions and organizations that

negotiate and maintain identity from a hierarchical power standpoint (Stets & Burke, 2009).

From a macro perspective, a hardline focus on identity renders AATRA as permanently raced as

the starting point of identity where race (label) becomes the central building block. As Urietta

and Noblit (2018) suggests, the study of identity is the study of subject formation. Identity theory

proposes that identity is organized hierarchically by society (Stryker & Burke, 2000) according

to a societal starting point. In the context of identity, AATRA or Asian American transracial

adoptee identity has been arranged hierarchically in relation to Whiteness due to lack of

meaningful/belonging ethnic exposure. Therefore, AATRA identity constructs limits a view of self to a racial one between White and Asian or White and Chinese and so forth. Due to identity being relational and subsequently only conceivable through difference, identity or sameness is always structured in relation to what the "other" is not (Urietta & Noblit, 2018). By structuring identity with relational principles of sameness and trying to "adopt" difference into a model of sameness, self or material existence becomes situated between two differences (White and Asian). Nonetheless, the real cost is the result of situating between White and Asian thereby foreclosing relation of self from the rest of the racialized social power hierarchy that identity constructs underpin.

  Macro (Geopolitical). Institutionally, Asian transracial adoption was never about individual identity of the adoptee. Epistemologically, it was about building an outwardly projected exceptional American national identity. The figure of the Cold War adoptee is an enduring reminder that the societal lens imposed on contemporary Asian adopted people embody an enduring national schema. So, while individual adoptive families may view Asian American transracial adoption as a mutually beneficial practice based specifically on love, the "Orientalized" figure of the Cold War adoptee as beneficiary of American exceptionalism remains the political identity of AATRA. Many times, capturing the racialized experiences of contemporary Asian American adopted people through adoption studies captures this persistent notion. We are reminded that race is not an accidental feature of (Asian American) identity but the modality in which class is lived (Hall, 2012). As such, notions of "middleness" or "liminality" of adoptee identity organized around the notions of race will always leave Asian American adopted people in the middle, but not the middle of race. Identity is always structured through race because it is always structured through power. Asian American adopted people are

not White and never will be. They are not too White to be Asian. Race structures power through difference (Kelly, 2017). The socio-political historical subjectivity of "Asian" "American" "Transracial" and "Adoptee" ensures an AATRA identity will always be limited to a representative identity of proximity to White people or a White nation. As such, moving away from identity as a construct may allow Asian American adopted people to focus their negotiation of who they are by centrally locating themselves.

Contesting liminal precarity exists between notions of belonging not notions of race. Historically, the institution of Asian intercountry adoption was supposed to bind together Asia and America both nationally and individually. Yet, decades after the Cold War the racialized figure of the adoptee and the historically exclusionary discourse of the Asian in America continue to endure in the racialized experiences of AAAP. From these roots, this dissertation contends with the narratives, songs, books, stories, and the culture building practices through which participants contest their liminality while being barred from belonging to the race of their parents and the culture of their ancestors. AAAP identity's liminal racial positioning between White and Asian forecloses a historical analysis of self-situated within a racial hierarchy with Whiteness at the top and Blackness at the bottom. Analysis through this lens opens the possibility for AAAP to theorize and understand the ways in which Whiteness can work through Asian bodies to oppress other groups of color or protect Whites from other groups of color (Lowe, 2015). Education (formal K-12 and informal home) is the key to a macro geopolitical understanding of self.

(Contextual) Chinese Intercountry Adoption

One Child Policy. In the context of this study, it is important to understand the geopolitics of China's One Child Policy as an antecedent that paved the way for Chinese intercountry adoption. China's One Child Policy was a population control measure implemented by the Chinese government in 1979 to combat the rapidly growing population (Howden & Zhou, 2014). The Chinese government was concerned that growth rate of the population would put such a strain on the countries resources and infrastructure that China would not be in position for large scale economic growth like planned. The policy aimed to restrict the number of children to one child per couple. The One Child Policy had a significant impact dropping China's birth rate following its implementation. While the policy succeeded in slowing China's population it had several unintended consequences. In the context of Chinese intercountry adoption, many Chinese couples placed a higher priority on having a son leading to a gender imbalance. Many of the Chinese girls born over this period were put in orphanages and adopted out to other countries.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022), over 550,000 adoptions were registered from China to other countries from 1996-2021. Many of those adoptions were to the United States. Over a quarter of the babies adopted to the United States come from China and most of the adoptions were girls. The U.S. Department of State (2023) lists 82,658 total adoptions from China with 84.1% of them being girls. In addition, 80% of the transracial adoptions include White adoptive parents (Guida-Richards, 2021). While China's One Child Policy achieved its intended mission of curbing the population it unintendedly created the conditions for mass intercountry transracial adoption to western countries like the United States. Once in the U.S., transracially adopted people from China take on a new social location that is shaped by various institutional forces including schools.

Identity Education, The K-12 School, and Transracial Adoption

Critical to Asian American adopted people contesting liminality is establishing a contextual understanding of modern liberalism that undergirds both identity education in U.S. public schools and adoption identity education in the United States. To reaffirm, I argue against the notions and frameworks of some of the identity studies. However, I acknowledge that identity is the institutional lexicon through which education frames knowability of self. I speak in these terms to offer a germane context to argue against it.

To frame this section, AATRAs must build their individual identity in the middle of (a) familial and educational notions of their equality to Whites, (b) life experiences that contradict those notions, and (c) erasure of access to a cultural knowledge community that mediates experiences of color in a White society. From these roots, this portion reviews the literature on (1) modern liberalism, (2) K-12 social studies and history education.

Modern Liberalism and K-12 Schooling

The U.S. school as a site of political struggle exists in large part because of its devotion to building and maintaining a collective national identity of sameness, meritocracy, progress, and equality built on the principles of a modern liberal egalitarian democracy. Through a functionalist lens a crucial role of schools is to govern socialization. By going to school outside of the home, curriculum and informal relationships teach students the preferred norms and values of a societal (national) identity beyond what their parents teach them. For most students and teachers who are White middle class, a modern liberal national identity matches what they are taught within their family structure. On the other hand, for many people of color, a modern

liberal national identity creates an identity contradiction between notions of an equal American identity taught in schools, and a racially oppressed identity taught within racialized familial knowledge communities and racialized lived experiences. To counter this, the school uses curriculum as an actor of modern liberalism that Lowe (2015) argues, uses literary, cultural, and political narratives of progress and individual freedom that perform the important work of mediating modern liberalisms contradictions. To establish the political contingencies of a modern liberal curriculum next the review examines the ways in which the liberal school curriculum belies, blurs the lines of, and explains away the racialized histories of oppression.

AATRAs must build their individual identity in the middle of (a) familial and educational notions of their equality to Whites, (b) life experiences that contradict those notions, and (c) erasure of access to the cultural knowledge community that mediates experiences of color in a White society. It is important to situate that in the absence of a knowledge community of color and within a family structure in immediate proximity to Whiteness, social studies, and history education within the walls of a K-12 school must function to allow AATRAs to theorize meaning through alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being that are historical and racialized. Without such access alternative meanings of knowing, thinking, and being are off the table and replaced by identity liminality.

AATRA identity liminality occurs because of an internal irreconcilable conflict between the modern liberal messaging coming from an adopted person's most trusted institutions— family, religion, school—and a racialized lived experience that contradicts that messaging. Identity frameworks prioritize meaning that constructs an individual identity. Subsequently, identity is very personal and never arbitrary. Absent of a knowledge community that can support and help Asian American adopted people make sense of and articulate meaning identity

frameworks cannot move past racial labeling rendered by Whiteness to the cultural markers of meaning that negotiate an inclusive authentic ethnic identity. Theoretically, as professed through modern liberal philosophy education should become an adopted person's racialized knowledge community through which it would be possible to theorize through identity frameworks.

Modern Liberal Curriculum. Instead, K-12 social studies and history curriculum serves as a primary agent in developing a colorblind liberal American identity through schooling that ultimately becomes a lens through which personal identity is developed within a modern liberal national framework. As Mead (1934) writes about individual identity formation, society shapes self, shapes social behavior. If society is theoretically colorblind but ontologically colorful then people of color need a colored lens to offset the limitations of a black and White one. Nonetheless, school as an institution distributes the latter through forms of normalizing regulatory power through least repressive discourse in the form of "education" (Engelstein,1993; Foucault, 1977; 1990). In this regard power is not something tangible held but produced through discourse. Once established through discourse centers of power (institutions/schools) become anchor points where power and knowledge are joined together and go from localized power-knowledge centers to entire fields of study (Boudreault, 2012). This way schools offer an opportunity for political contestation from AATRAs but only within the framework of a modern liberalism serving the notions of Whiteness. As Ingles (2009) puts it, power announces "Truth" forged based on knowledge created, cemented, and reified by discourse (Inglis, 2009).

Through modern liberal curriculum identity becomes a technology of power that recreates, cements, and reifies racialized historical stereotypes through a process of modern subject production. An inclusive national identity is learned through a process of exclusion and recategorized based on phenotypical appearance (antiquated view of race). Even when students

learn about American culpability in the history lessons of Wounded Knee, Chinese Exclusion

Acts, or the Antebellum South, curricular discourse carefully frames who is American by

identifying who is not American based on race. Therefore, through schooling, a nation state can

enlist a modern liberal curriculum to resolve historical exclusion of groups of people as

"dangerous savage enemy," "immigrant intruder," or "chattel slave" even when accepting

culpability for their wrongful doings. Through subjectification, identity frameworks work as

agentic vehicles that tie specific historical identities (labels) to racialized groups and subject

them to the rules, politics, and norms set by the historical discourse of knowledge about those

identities (Thompson, 2016). The cost of such acts is transferred from the nation state to

students/people of color in the form of enduring historical racial epithets, microaggressions,

stereotypes, and a battle amongst each other for resources.

For AATRAs, an educational system that by its own modern liberal definition should

provide access to a supplemental racialized knowledge community instead acts as a regime of

power subjugating the self. As Foucault (1977;1990) writes, knowledge is not power but rather

power produces "Truths" through discourse about the world that come to seem obvious,

necessary, and self-evident forming part of a coherence of the social world and place the self

within it. Without access to "Truths" of color, AATRAs tie consciousness or self-knowledge that

is constructed through subjectification instead of ethnic cultural meaning can lead to

ambivalence or internalized racism. To specifically address North Carolina, the next subsection

analyzes the North Carolina Standard Course of Study to highlight the mediation tactics of

identity education.

North Carolina Schools and Modern Liberal Curriculum. To explicitly explore how the school as an institution uses modern liberal curriculum to mediate contradiction is to examine how social studies and history curriculum frames universality through national progress narratives. Lowe (2015) argues that modern humanism and therefore modern liberalism is structured by a modern economy of affirmation and forgetting where race is not only the categorical marker that historically separates the free from the unfree but also the trace of modern humanist forgetting. From a curriculum standpoint, national progress narratives frame all students as fundamentally American which replaces students of colors' racialized histories of oppression with notions of an egalitarian national identity.

An analysis of the North Carolina Social Studies Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS, 2021) seems to reveal a systematic curricular roadmap of how to mediate liberalisms contradictions. At the same time students are given the opportunity for political contestation through critique. Nevertheless, those critiques can only be given through the lens of a modern liberal national identity. Consequently, critiques of inequality, inequity, and racism are "heard" but reconciled through modern liberal (1) colorblind policy, (2) post racial, or (3) multicultural framings that fail to encompass how students of color experience the variety of realities of a racialized society.

Colorblind Policy. The NCSCOS which draws from the knowledge, skill, attitudes and competencies of the national social studies curriculum standards identifies citizenship education as the primary purpose of K-12 social studies (NCSCOS, 2021). Furthermore, individual identity development is listed as the first framework for studying and analyzing social studies at each grade. After learning that "authority figures influence the well-being of people through creating and enforcing rules (1.C & G 1.2) in 1st grade, students in 2nd grade learn that the definition of a

citizen is "the importance of law, order, and rules regarding any society or group of individuals (2.C & G.2.2.) Although a color-blind curriculum seems to the address a historical overview of the racialized nature of power dynamics, color-blind curriculum fails to capture the threads of realities of experiences people of color in the United States. In the previous example, of the 2nd grade standard of "law and order" is indicative of how the liberalized deployment curricular ideology fails to meet historical and contemporary realities of students of color.

Through a modern liberal lens, the idea of law and order is theoretically colorblind granting equal protection to all citizens of a society regardless of status. However, one of the distinct separations of modern liberal schools and the real world is school theorizes the sociological ideal and the world acts on the ontological. Moreover, if we look at the instances where law and order is used contextually in United States politics the phrase has always been imbricated with race and justice.

The first such instance was Goldwater using it against Johnson at the height of the Civil Rights movement. The phrase surfaced again during the G.H.W Bush campaign against Michael Dukakis highlighting the state furlough program through an ad that centered on Willie Horton, a Black man who had been furloughed and gone on to rape a White woman (Schwartzapfel, 2020). Most recently Donald Trump has tweeted and made law and order center points of his election campaign. In his Republican nomination acceptance speech, Trump mentioned "law and order" four times driving home the idea that state security issues particularly attacks against law enforcement from people of color (Black people) "threaten our very way of life." Trump later tried to brand Black people within the (White) American populous by using nativist and Islamophobic assertions that foreigners are the state safety concern (Clifton, 2016).

In the absence of a racialized school curriculum or an Asian American community that can teach about connections between "law and order" and the historical, present day, and personal instances of racial violence—Paige Acts, Chinese Exclusion Acts, Alien Land Acts, Executive Order 9068 Japanese Internment—AATRAs need to understand how historical and legal aspects of being "Asian" "American" trans "racial" adoptee (labels) colors present day lived experience.

Post Racial & Multicultural Curricular Framings. A modern liberal educational framework must address issues of race and oppression in order to adhere to its own ideals. However, this process is mediated by the framework(s) in which the analysis takes place. To continue modern liberal egalitarian American ideal notions for all while educating in today's classrooms of Black, Brown, and White students, American schools lean on a curriculum that is framed on post racial and multicultural notions. Analyzing through this lens works to foundationally develop the self within a post racial framework of a national identity that situates social mistakes within a national past that has progressed into a present day socially equally ethos.

Consequently, practices of systemic racism are framed as one-time historical occurrences of the past which our nation has learned from and subsequently any people of color in the classroom no longer must worry about. In contrast, when we come to points in history like Civil Rights or Japanese Internment reparations when people of color fought for the liberal ideals that they were denied, we move the interest convergence slider to the right to re-position Black and Asian students alongside White people to imagine our history as a racially equal fight/sacrifice for liberty, equality, and freedom for people of color.

In 4th grade North Carolina students learn about symbols and their historical significance to a community, state, or nation by studying that the Statue of the Confederate Soldier "is significant because it represents the confederacy and honors the lives of the southern men who fought for the Confederacy (NCSCOS Essential Standards, 2021). While (White, Black, and Brown) students learn about an antebellum past when everyone was courteous and mannerly in a time when gentlemen would ask ladies for the favor of a dance. They learn about how (White) "historical figures" and "heroes" are honored for their accomplishments (NCSCOS, 2021). They learn how we come together culturally around historical figures, holidays, and sports. Even our university mascots—Rebels, Volunteers, and Tar Heels— honor them. What is not taught is the history of the present. Do the "historical figures" and "heroes" maintain their status through an alternative framework that addresses that those statues and mascots represent colleges that largely refuse to admit Black people and football stadiums built from the fortunes made by buying and selling slaves?

A true equal egalitarian education might teach, (1) that statues like this one tie one's race with wonderful traditional family memories while linking to another one's racial historical violence and oppression. (2) The freedom of one individual or one people is directly tied to the oppression of another in both explicit and implicit ways. (3) If studying that the Statue of the Confederate Soldier is done in this manner it is becomes an important uniquely contextual educational experience for everyone, including AATRAs.

For AATRAs the Statue of the Confederate Soldier provides evidence of a racialized power structure and could function as an educational lever of critique that opens the possibility to analyze where Asians, Asian Americans, and adoptees fall past and present within a racialized power structure. It could function as an opportunity to explore, the Chinese Exclusion Acts, the

model minority myth, or the Harvard Admissions case in proximity to Blackness to examine how the Asian body/brain can be used to function as a conduit for Whiteness at the expense of Black and Brown. However, for AATRAs identity constructs place these sets of critiques outside the limits of possibility because the Statue of the Confederate Soldier will only be studied within a framework of Whiteness in a post racial or multicultural national identity framework. As Granger (2016) writes:

> No one is asking you to apologize for being White. No one is asking you to apologize for the sins of your ancestors. What we are asking is that you help dismantle the oppressive systems they built, that you still benefit from.

Connecting North Carolina Law and Modern Liberal Curriculum

Most explicitly, colorblind policy can be passed legislatively as a protection mechanism of Whiteness. The civil unrest in the wake of the murders of Black and Brown people by police across the country has given a rejuvenated rise to how our nation should grapple with racial injustice. In educational circles, this has meant a renewed focus on students or color and their racialized lived experiences. However, the North Carolina House and Senate has passed house bill 324 outlawing Critical Race Theory in the K-12 school system. Although this bill may die at the governor's desk, examining its contents attend to the limitations of an individual identity framework in the context of K-12 educational curriculum.

North Carolina house bill 324 (HB 324) is a tailor-made example of how the state can co-opt institutional power to mandate modern liberal (1) colorblind policy by imposing (2) post racial and (3) multicultural framings, that fail to encompass how students of color experience the realities of a racialized society. The name of NC House Bill 324 is "Ensuring Dignity and Non-Discrimination Schools (NCHB 324, 2021). The bill starts by "recognizing the equality and

rights of all persons" and "ensuring dignity and nondiscrimination in schools (NCHB 324, 2021). The bill seems to consist of two primary goals. The first is an (1) educational "shall not" section that prohibits analysis outside of a modern liberal framework. Specifically, outlawing any framework that analyzes race, gender, or oppression as a tool of power in American history and society. Among other ideas, the bill prohibits North Carolina educators to promote; (a) an individual solely by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, (b) a meritocracy is inherently racist or sexist, (c) an individual, solely by virtue of his or her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex, (d) any individual, solely by virtue of his or her race or sex, should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other forms of psychological distress. At the same time, the bill allows "impartial discussion or instruction of historical oppression of a particular group based on race, ethnicity, class, nationality, religion, or geographic area." In addition, the state promotes study of the "history of an ethnic group, as described in textbooks and instructional materials adopted in accordance "shall not" subsection c (NCHB 324, 2021).

The second action of the bill is a (2) reporting measure used to gatekeep the mediation modern liberal philosophy within North Carolina schools. This is evidenced by measures in subsection d, such as "public school units shall notify the Department of Public Instruction and make general information available on the public-school website, with detailed information available upon request about (a) providing instruction regarding concepts described in the "shall not" subsection, (b) contracting, hiring, or engaging with diversity trainers and other persons who have previously advocated for concepts described in the "shall not" subsection (NCHB 324, 2021).

Like the NCSCOS, house bill 324 uses familiar tactics within its strategy. First, HB 324 works strategically to use modern liberal philosophy to frame a cause-and-effect style connection that is not present to obscure racialized and gendered patterns of power in American history. For example, the bill prohibits teaching that a "meritocracy is inherently racist or sexist." This statement implicitly holds that there exists an inherent connection between the United States and a meritocracy. If the cause-and-effect assumption is removed, educators can understand and teach, that while it is true that a meritocracy is not inherently racist or sexist the United States does not ontologically operate within the framework of a meritocracy.

Secondly, HB 324 ties to racism, sexism, and oppression to the individual. In this sense, the bill acts as a modern liberal "American" style action of social promise to warn against explicit present tangible individual acts of racism, sexism, and oppression. (a) This gives the idea that schools do not tolerate any form of racism or sexism. However, many scholars of color maintain the enduring qualities of racial and gendered oppression are implicit and structural in nature.

The bill checks the race and racism box by mediating the education of race and racism without addressing the structural factors of power that turns race into racism. Furthermore, in the new controversial North Carolina Social Studies standards that will be implemented in the coming years allows the terms "racism, discrimination, and identity" but removed the terms, "systemic" from racism and discrimination and "gender" from identity (Walkenhorst, 2021). When the NCSCOS standards enlist the study of the topic of racism, by limiting the frame to the individual in the context of prohibiting racialized or gendered feelings of culpability or discomfort, (b) the bill mediates these teachings by implicitly promoting instruction within notions of a post racial and multicultural society that relegates issues of race to the past.

Liberalism and Adoption Identity Education Policy and Studies

The principles of modern liberalism factor heavily as foundational ideas on which AATRAs build their identity. This is because (1) modern liberal philosophy is foundational in both the adoption education that AATRAs receive within the family structure and the formal education they receive within their K-12 schools. (2) The foundational arm of adoptee identity research was built on an American liberal stance to purge society of its racist past by placing transracial adoption (TRA) in the context of racial integration on the strength of a critical mass of "research evidence" that claimed that such placements did no harm and were preferable to institutional care (Barn, 2013; Barth & Berry, 1989; Simon & Alstein, 1996). In many respects modern liberal ideas act as an epistemological enforcer on the ontology and of what AATRA is and can be. Under these terms an AATRA is never born they are always made.

The focus on this section is to first examine the framing of TRA identity research by exploring the literature that works to establish the parameters of Adoption Identity education. This includes provide background knowledge of the ideological modern liberal multicultural roots of adoption education by examining literature outlining (1) racially motivated adoption policy followed by *(2)* problematizing the framing of AATRA racial/ethnic identity in the literature to argue the framing of AATRA identity constructs are insufficient for Asian American adopted persons. (3) Next, the review addresses literature on two of the major sources AATRAs use to begin building their identity (adoptive parents and children's literature) by exploring racial/ethnic socialization attitudes through three distinct types of AATRA racial/ethnic identity studies and models and (4) examining how race, ethnicity, multiculturalism, and adoption education come together within a modern liberal framing through adoption children's literature.

(5) Last, the review examines the ways in which the previous four topics have influenced Asian American adopted people and how they have responded through Asian American adopted person authored scholarship.

Adoption Policy

The laws and policies surrounding intercountry adoption in this country (U.S.) have been generally structured to imitate biology, giving the adopted child a new birth certificate as if the child had been born to the adoptive parents, sealing off the birth parents as if they had never existed, and attempting to match adoptive parents and children with respect to looks, intellect, and religion (Bartholet, 1991).

International transracial adoption in the U.S. began in the 1950's and 1960's with adoption of post war Japanese and Korean orphans and continued similar patterns after the Vietnam war (Weil, 1984; Engel, Phillips & Dellacava, 2007). Additionally, in the 1950's and 1960's domestic transracial adoptions of Indigenous and Black children were also on the rise during a time when the civil rights movement brought increasing attention to the plight of minority children (Bartholet, 1991). This presented a juxtaposition involving White integrationist ideology forwarding domestic and international TRA alongside anti-miscegenation laws that prevented mixed marriages/relationships ultimately with the idea of preventing mixed families (Barn, 2013)

In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers put up a strong opposition of Black children being placed in White homes by asserting these placements as a form of "cultural genocide" and calling for its end (NABSW, 1972). This was followed by the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act which was federal legislation (as opposed to most adoption legislation

which was state legislation) consolidated group rights to indigenous children by defining

children as collective resources essential to tribal survival and still one of the few exceptions to

the rule of individualism in American law. In 1994, congress passed the Multi-Ethnic Placement

Act that made it illegal for agencies to refuse to place a child with parents of another race. Two

years later an amendment to the act eliminated race as a consideration of placement altogether

and made it punishable by withdrawal of federal funds to agencies (Barn, 2012). Evidenced by

inquiring into its past, the history of adoption policy in the U.S. has established race, modern

liberal politics, and adoption as three intimately tied concepts.

Following these same roots, in contemporary times another offshoot of adoption and race

scholarship has come to the forefront in the form of racial/ethnic adoptee identity research

through outcome-based racial/ethnic socialization studies that point to effects of adoption on

psychological well-being.

Racial/Ethnic Adoptee Identity Studies

Since schools do not formally instruct on adoption identity, adoptive parents ultimately

have foremost authority to facilitate their children's adoption identity education. Adoptive

parents tend to look to adoption professionals and agencies for education and guidance on how to

"do" culture rather than to members of their child's cultural or ethnic group (Jacobsen, 2008).

Much of the education that comes from adoption agencies and professionals is rooted in the

notions and techniques of psychology discourse that frames the social work field (Park-Nelson,

2016). Therefore, "doing" culture in this regard becomes synonymous with developing

racial/ethnic identity where culture functions as a stand-in for racial/ethnic identity and a

predominately White group of psychologists and social workers are known as the experts. Of course, this brings some long-standing challenges for AATRAs identity.

The first such issue to developing racial/ethnic identity is the very nature in which it is framed and evaluated by (1) confusing or conflating race and ethnicity in AATRA identity studies. The second issue involves using (2) racial recognition evaluative measures in the form of physical and phenotypical descriptors as an evaluation for feelings of racial identity. Lastly, AATRA identity studies may use (3) individual cultural experience to determine cultural or racial identity. Drawing from an earlier point, "power announces truth" but these truths become knowledge not on a set of facts but on what might be termed ways of knowing through discourse (Thompson, 2016). Discourses are about what can be said and through whom, but also about who can speak, when, and on what authority. They embody meaning and social relationships; they constitute both subjectivity and power relations; and are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. In addition, discourses are not about objects; they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention (Foucault, 2012).

Psychological studies on identity often conflate race and ethnicity in the literature by using these terms interchangeably or examining racial identity using measures of ethnic identity or vice versa (Lee, 2003). This causes confusion within the literature because race and ethnicity function ontologically as two distinct constructs. Although these concepts may overlap in certain contexts, ethnic identity refers to groups with shared self-identified knowledges including cultural values, beliefs, histories, and ancestry (Phinney, 1996). Racial identity comes from an idea that race is a socially constructed category created by dominant cultures and imposed in the form of racism on groups over time (Takaki, 2008; Adelmen & Cheng, 2003).

Evaluative scales and measures contribute to this phenomenon. Racial/Ethnic identity studies on AATRAs typically try to examine the extent to which TRAs use self-descriptors and are proud or comfortable with their race/ethnicity. An underlying assumption of the research is that the way adoptees negotiate the transracial adoptee paradox (Lee, 2003) is best evidenced in their racial/ethnic identity development holding that TRAs with positive and secure racial/ethnic identities will be psychologically well adjusted. However, the actual relationship between the racial and ethnic experiences of TRAs and their psychological adjustments is not directly addressed in these studies. Instead, evaluations usually draw from one of or a combination of the Clark Doll Test (1939), Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992), which offer subjective measures of racial preference, ad hoc self-report items, open-ended questions (Lee, 2003). As a result, there are leaps made in the scholarship discourse by TRA identity researchers evaluating from the models that become generally accepted discourse reified in the research literature.

Adoption and Racial/Ethnic Socialization Attitudes. Since race/ethnicity shows up quite frequently in AATRA identity literature, instead of counting the number of studies it may be more poignant to evaluate the effects of what has been crafted into what Rose called "psy" knowledge" (Rose, 2016) through discourse that results in adoptee liminality for Asian American adopted people. The following addresses examples of three types of AATRA identity studies that have become normative frameworks to study AATRA identity.

To illustrate the first type of AATRA identity study, I examine how studies that conflate race and ethnicity miss key distinctions that might have allowed study of race in the context of power and ethnicity in the context of in-group historical knowledge systems. In the *Impact of Racial-Ethnic Socialization Practices on International Transracial Adoptee Identity*

Development, Marcelli et. al (2020) studies adoptive parent's racial-ethnic socialization

strategies from the 14 AATRAs' perspective to explore how their parents' strategies impacted

their racial-ethnic socialization. "The researchers were particularly interested in how racial-

ethnic socialization would impact the participants' perception of their racial identity and well-

being (Marcelli et. al, 2020). It was clear that the researchers were interested in mechanisms of

power (race) and how these factored into shaping identity for TRAs. However, participant

responses such as, "growing up I feel like it's been this grey area where it was like physically, I

am one race but emotionally, mentally, I feel differently, and I don't know where I fit in" point

to responses framing characteristics of meaning and belonging associated with ethnicity. The

evaluative instrument used is a variation of the Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure augmented

from a quantitative study on how Asian parents ethnically and racially socialize their Asian

American children (Juang, 2016). A factor analysis was done on each domain item. However,

although the domains from both studies were the same (i.e., heritage and birth culture) the

variables with the largest factor loadings closest to 1 in the Asian parents' study were variables

connected to ethnicity that most White parents cannot perform or is highly uncharacteristic to

transracial adoptions (i.e., spoke regularly in Asian heritage language or lived in a community

with the same cultural background). In addition, the Juang (2016) study (Asian parents)

explicitly makes clear that the scale they are developing is designed to evaluate Asian American

families with Asian immigrant parents. The cultural differences between Asian and White

parents seem to make this measurement scale for AATRAs suspect at best and likely should not

have been simply extrapolated for use with AATRAs. Ultimately, it is clear the research focus

for this adoption study is on racial socialization, but the instrument was taken from a singular

race study that addressed ethnicity. Conflating race and ethnicity in this study failed to address

the results driven by ethnicity (connectedness to heritage, cultural meaning, belonging, etc.).

Juang's study shows a limitation of AATRA identity studies that attempt to study racialized

power concepts through identity frameworks that do not operate outside of ethnicity. The

NABSW framed it this way:

> The National Association of Black Social Workers has taken vehement stand against the placement of Black children in White homes for any reason. The socialization process for every child begins at birth and includes his cultural heritage as an important part of the process. In our society, the developmental needs of Black children are significantly different from White children. Black children are taught from an early age, highly sophisticated coping techniques to deal with racist practices perpetrated by individuals and institutions.

To understand the second type (frame) of AATRA identity study we explore how studies

measure racial identity through Simon and Alstein. Simon and Alstein are giants in the origins of

the intellectual history of transracial adoption scholarship. Their scholarship argued that race

does not (and should not) matter because the overall good of transracial adoption far exceeds the

harm of not doing anything (Myers, 2013).

One of their foundational and most enduring studies was born in opposition to the 1972

NABSW call that disparaged the transracial adoption of Black children into White homes.

Although not the first to study racial identity on transracial adoptees, *Adoption, Race, and*

Identity: From Infancy through Adolescence (1992) was a pivotal piece of scholarship that

framed the study of transracial adoptee identity in opposition to the NABSW claim that "only a

Black family can transmit the emotional and sensitive subtleties of perception and reaction

essential for a Black child's survival in a racist society" (NABSW, 1972). This longitudinal

study was crafted from research that interviewed adoptive parents, adoptees, and birth children in

1972, 1979, and 1982-1984. The interviews explored the questions raised by the NABSW of whether transracial adoption cuts off minority children from the cultural heritage and leaves them ill prepared to face the racism they are likely to encounter in society (London, 1993).

This study combined a mixed methods approach that highlighted quantitative and qualitative methods to measure racial identity. The study was made into a book in which Simon and Alstein argue for transracial adoption by concluding that they believe that the portrait that emerges is a positive, warm, integrated picture that shows parents and children who feel good about themselves and about their relationships with each other. (Simon & Alstein, 1992).

Nevertheless, if we examine the measurement scales, we can pinpoint limitations of the study racial identity and racial socialization. First, it is important to consider the study initially functioned as a response to the NABSW statement. Second the quantitative and qualitative techniques centered around administering the Clark's Doll test and asking questions about the White dolls vs. the dolls of color to see if adoptees could identify their own skin color and measure if they had positive or negative feelings about their racial background. Study results showed that transracially adopted children were very good at identifying their own skin color and didn't seem to have particularly negative feelings about their racial background (London et.al, 1993). From these results Simon and Alstein concluded that transracially adopted children had strong and positive racial identities.

Simon and Alstein's (1992) version of the Clark's Doll test simply measured if transracially adopted children can recognize that they had biological and phenotypical factors of people of color. Their interviews seemed to make a false association between the absence of negative feelings about their race or ethnicity and high self-esteem as opposed to the absence of negative feelings about their race or ethnicity because of lack of exposure to ethnic knowledge

systems. Most importantly, framing TRA racial identity through descriptors of self-awareness and self-esteem allows Simon and Alstein's to create results that address race without addressing systemic racism. I am not arguing that Simon and Alstein's findings are false, but limitations of the framing of AATRA identity in this study created an enduring foundation that built psychological "outcome" and "adjustment" studies that continue to evoke the power of "personal commitment" and love that can explain away adoptee issues of racial difference, alienation, and systemic racism that Asian American adopted people may face (Bartholet, 2006).

Lastly, we review the third type (frame) of adoptee identity study which uses individual cultural experiences to determine racial or cultural identity. In the previous example I used Simon and Alstein's three-decade longitudinal study that was influential in historically constructing a foundation of how to frame AATRA identity studies in the field and tangentially adoption education. Lastly, the review explores a more current study example that functions similarly but is now the most generally accepted psychological model to evaluate AATRA identity. It is important to assess generally accepted models from significant publications to understand the conceptual frameworks undergirding AATRA identity studies.

In the *Handbook of Adoption*, Baden, and Steward (2006) detail their Cultural-Racial Identity model. Born from the idea that "adoption as a controversial process, results from a lack of theory conceptualizing the unique experiences of transracial adoptees, especially their racial identity and cultural identity.". Baden and Stewards' model uses individual cultural experiences to measure racial, ethnic, or cultural identity to provide a guideline for observing and systematizing the study of transracial adoptee identity. The model uses three working definitions. Race/racial identity is defined as heritage within a group based on geography and physical characteristics manifested in traits transmitted via genetics such as skin color and facial features

(Hays, 2001). Ethnicity/ethnic identity works from dimensions of characteristics that are transmitted via socialization (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997) and to ancestry via shared biological history, values, customs, and individual and group identity (Hays, 2001). Culture/cultural identity operates from traditions, history, beliefs, practices, and values passed from generation to generation (Hays, 2001).

Baden, who is a transracial adoptee, makes the claim that the Cultural-Racial identity model is the first theoretical model to separate cultural identity and racial identity. The model has two cultural identity and racial identity dimensions that each fall along two axes. The cultural axis is determined by their levels of *knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort* with their (a) birth culture and (b) the culture of their parents' racial group. The racial axis is determined by (a) accurately identifying their own racial group, (b) comfort level with their racial group membership, (c) comfort level with people from their own racial group or parents' racial group (Baden & Steward, 2006).

Although the model is widely used in AATRA studies today the model is not without its inconsistencies. To begin, the model seems to work off the same conceptual principles that the authors claim to remedy. For example, Baden and Steward critique prior studies purporting that past adoptee racial identity studies tended to investigate only the racial group preferences and objective racial self-identification thereby conceptualizing racial identity as being the racial group to which the adoptees felt they belonged (Baden & Steward, 2006; McRoy et al., 1984; Shireman & Johnson, 1986). While this is true, the authors seem to repeat the same practice when describing that their racial identity axis is determined by adoptees (a) accurately identifying their own racial group, (b) their comfort level with their racial group membership, and their (c) comfort level with people from their own racial group or parents' racial group.

Secondly, the model is highly inconsistent regarding its distinction between (a) race, (b) ethnicity, and (c) culture. The model works from an idea that ethnicity can be problematic given the ease with which individuals may choose to use the term ethnicity as an excuse to focus the more familiar and less threatening concepts of culture and cultural activities as opposed to the very important sometimes uncomfortable and clearly socially constructed meanings that accompany race (Baden & Steward, 2006).

From the point of departure, there seems to be some confusion between the ideas of race and ethnicity. Although distinctions are being made in the model, they deviate from a sociological, anthropological, and political understandings that, ethnic identity refers to groups with shared self-identified knowledges including cultural values, beliefs, histories, and ancestry (Phinney, 1996). Racial identity comes from an idea that race is a socially constructed category created by dominant cultures and imposed in the form of racism on groups over time (Takaki, 2012; Adelmen & Cheng, 2003). Therefore, ethnicity works domain or arena where in-group members can claim, practice, and debate culture on their terms not as an excuse to ignore unavoidable racialized power structures.

In addition, assumptions the cultural and racial axes operate from warrant a closer look. The "culture and racial" axes work from a dual birth culture/race and parental culture/race system with culture defined by traditions, history, beliefs, practices, languages, and values passed on by the "particular society" to which the individual belongs and race defined by identifying with and comfort towards their own racial group (Baden & Steward, 2006). The authors use notions of ethnicity when referring to birth culture or birth race and notions of race (White culture as opposed to German) when referring to parent culture and parent race. The "particular society" that the adoptee is raised in is America which carry significant historically

racialized institutional power dynamics highlighted separation from culture of origin. This would indicate a significant lack of birth culture knowledge, awareness, and competence, which is supported by much of the adoptee identity scholarship including the adoptee paradox and adoptee racial isolation work (Lee, 2003; Park- Nelson, 2016). However, when this model is used on AATRAs, Baden and Steward (2000) report all cells including a high *knowledge, awareness, competence, and comfort* of their birth culture are detected. Rationales for high birth culture metrics involved exposure to birth culture. The examples that were used to describe these high birth culture metrics were curious because of the rarity in which they occur. Examples included, (1) African American adoptees where White adoptive family chose to live within an African American community setting or (2) adoptees that are racially or ethnically different but White passing (Baden & Steward, 1995). Possibly, more than any other limitation of this model for AATRAs, the authors suggest that TRAs with high knowledge, awareness, acceptance, and comfort with more than two cultures prohibits them from differentiating between the cultures with which they identify (Baden & Steward, 1995). Models that detail these types of notions and determinations provide evidence that a psychological racial/ethnic framing may act as a barrier for Asian American adopted people to be in relation to race as a power construct.

Each of these framing of racial/ethnic identity evidence the mechanisms and modes of how AATRA identity frameworks act as a barrier to alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being. Transracial adoption racial/ethnic identity socialization studies demonstrate a "web of racism" (Baron, 2015) where the issue is access to resources and multiple interlocking historical factors that pit communities of color against each other. Who would argue that a future or past generation is not an important resource to a community? The insistence of centering a White middle class normative standard in association with transracial adoptive identity frameworks

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excludes and belies the historic links between communities of color and AATRA alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being. As Baden published, any theory or model of identity begins with Erik Erikson (Baden & Steward, 2000). Therein lies the problem.

Park-Nelson (2016) summarizes racial/ethnic identity "adjustment" and "assimilation" studies well in her book *Invisible Asians*. She analyzed 17 studies including some of the studies that appear in this review. In her book she clarified the characteristics of adoption research both by what the studies tended to include and what they tended to leave out. She concluded that these types of studies tend to (1) center adoptive parents as queries are made to them about their adopted children. (2) The term "adjustment" is often coded language for racial, social, and cultural assimilation and regarded as an indicator of success. (3) Studies de-emphasized loss of kinship, ties and birth culture, and security. In what was absent from these studies, Park-Nelson notes that studies tended to (1) disregard reported issues by either not addressing them or categorizing them as separate from the transracial nature of their adoptions. She points out that (2) race queries were done on the basis of attitude and identity testing on individuals. Lastly, Park-Nelson reports that none of the studies addressed racial power imbalance with transracial adoptee identity structures (Park Nelson, 2016).

Adoption Children's Books

To synthesize the ways in which the legacy of racially motivated adoption policy influenced a modern liberal multicultural framing and socializing of AATRA identity we now turn to adoption children's literature. For decades, adoption children's literature has been a prolific source of adoption education. Recommended by agencies, social workers, and adoptive parents these books function to make natural an origin story that first recognizes and then

explains away the racialized complexity of a historically "visible foreignness" (Choi & Choi, 2003) to anchor adoptee identity in multicultural sense of love and belonging.

Picture books offer a unique educational medium because it is a form almost exclusively reserved for children (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003) but written, edited, published, and read by adults. Illustrations offer another layer of complexity that exists to aid in telling a story but also are inherently different from text and communicate different sources of information in different ways (Nodelman, 1998). From these roots, picture books are specific educational tools that craft a particular message through text and image that teaches an accepted or preferred form of TRA identity. Ironically, we can learn a lot about the limitations of a TRA identity education framed in Whiteness by analyzing patterns in these books.

As reviewed, the transracial adoptee paradox (Lee, 2003) firmly places Asian American adopted people in a racialized middle between White cultural knowledge and Asian phenotypical appearance (assumptions). AATRA identity research shows that this paradoxical existence is the chief concern in AATRA identity construction. In this section, I review picture book texts with an analysis lens adhering central focus to the ways in which the text and pictures do or do not address the adoptee liminality paradox as described by Lee.

Although not exhaustive, the picture books reviewed here are all published by large companies and show up on "most recommended" lists for teaching adopted children about their adoption. In addition, all these books have received at least a 4.5-star rating on Amazon. The first book, the *Coffee Can Kid* was published by the Child Welfare League of America and addresses the introspection many TRA adoptees quietly face during their childhood. *I Don't Have Your Eyes*, is written by an adoptive mother and adoption speaker on educational tools to introduce birth parents to the adopted person. The book addresses the power of love through celebrating

differences and similarities. *Chinese Eyes* provides an example of how explicit racist acts can be mediated by AATRAs with the guidance of adoptive parents to form a healthy AATRA identity.

Park (2009) lays out an inescapable reminder of middleness that adoption children's literature poignantly delineates. As the text tries to explain (away) differences the illustrations provide the constant inescapable reminder (Park, 2009). Park frames her discussion of adoptee liminality through the experience of mirrors. Nodelman and Reimer (2003) point out the pleasure of finding a mirror for oneself—of identifying with fictional characters—as one of the pleasures of children's literature (Park, 2009; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Nonetheless, Choi and Choi (2003) observe that in the context of TRA identity constructs, the mirror, or reflection therein, is a site for recognizing racial differences because of what it both signifies and denies to its onlooker; this denial can be as painful as it is blinding and enduring. In the *Coffee Can Kid*, Annie (protagonist) is being told her adoption story by her father with the use of three props (baby photograph, letter, coffee can). In the story, the letter and her baby picture have been put in the coffee can for storage. As her father tells the story through the letter and the baby picture, Annie is given a link to her past through her father's narrative that tells her that her birth mother was too young, poor, single so the "coffee can" kid couldn't stay with her. As an adopted person the most striking image is after her father is done telling her story she looks at the bottom of the coffee can at the image of her. The coffee can is transformed from a repository of origin to a mirror reflecting her young Asian face and black hair that sharply contrasts the way she has seen herself to this point in her life. She is seeing her birth mother through her in that coffee can and is wondering about the concept of "home" for the first time.

Generally, children's stories have a happy ending or some type of closure. Nodlelman and Reimer (2003) write that a typical story starts out in a happy setting in the security of a

comfortable home, leaves for a dangerous adventure, and then having learned the truth about the world, returns to the security of home (Park, 2009; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). For adopted people, concepts of home are split into two very real places (Choi & Choi, 2003). Therefore, the story of transracial adoption is very difficult to place within the pattern of children's books.

In *The Coffee Can Kid,* if we look past the multicultural modern liberal messages being sent, we can analyze a contradiction of "home" that never gets resolved. The text describes America as "home." Annie has a decidedly American name. When Annie's father tells her about her adoption story, the author uses the setting of an American home, and "father" connotates an idea of protection and trust within an ideal nuclear American family. The pictures describe Asia as "home." The cover of the book pictures Annie rather plainly with Asian features. Interestingly, she is in a red jumper which may distinguish race as opposed to pink which distinguishes gender. When Annie sees her reflection in the coffee can, the illustrator gives a view of beyond Annie's shoulder to the reader as to vividly portray Annie's Asian features before the text switches to talking about her birth mother. This central conflict of home never fully gets addressed and the scene moves on. If home is America and difference (race) is the adventure, then the author should address racism in a critical way or home can never be home. If home is the birth country and adoption is the adventure, then the adopted person is forever taken from their home. In other words, Children's picture books do not aim to solve the contradiction of home instead the tactic is to explain it away through modern liberal ideas of multiculturalism and celebrations of difference.

I Don't Have Your Eyes and *Chinese Eyes* are both stories that explicitly bring to the forefront physical features of TRAs that create difference between they and their families. Both books come recommended to adoptive parents and teachers on how to teach adoption identity in

home and school settings. *I Don't Have Your Eyes* does not actually specifically feature

AATRAs. Instead, this book goes through many racialized examples of adoptees hammering

home a point of modern liberal multicultural ideology through pictures and text. The book uses

alliteration (I don't have eyes…. but I have your way of looking at things) to signify a physical

difference and then counters this with describing parenting that has shaped ideological similarity.

Chinese Eyes does feature a Chinese AATRA protagonist who encounters a racist experience.

The book chronicles how her mother helps her through the experience to help her form her

AATRA identity. Kleeman (2017) offers a problematic review of the book from the perspective

of an adoptive parent and educator:

> When you adopt a child or you are adopted, you probably will not look alike. This book
> shows that it is what is on the inside that counts. If the child is loved and raised as part of
> the family they will have the same values as the parents, no matter the skin color, hair
> color, height, or shape of eyes." Classroom extension: (1) Have the students create a
> family tree, (2) Have student discussion on how we might make people feel different
> from others and how we can keep that from happening.

I Don't Have Your Eyes uses a broad strategy that aims to encompass all different

racialized types of TRAs. By casting a wide net, the text does not give names or origin countries

to any of the adoptees in the illustrations disrupting a central transracial adoption institutional

message that every adoptee is a valued individual. Although this book addresses physical

difference there is a clear message that it is physical difference in that context only. The

illustrations feature seven White adoptees and five adoptees of color. In addition, the book offers

the classic race without race colorblind transracial adoption story contradiction featuring a theme

that approaches race without a critical discussion that addresses it. "I don't have your knees, but I

have learned your way of giving thanks on mine." "I don't have your toes, but I have your way

of dancing through life." In these examples the pictures clearly indicate racialized difference, but the text situates a particular benevolent ignorance that is present in historical versions of humanitarian, religious, and colonial racialized adoption identity ideologies of the "figure of the adoptee." I highlighted this book in part because of the problematic classroom pedagogical uses in the review of the book. As an adoptive identity educational tool, the first suggestion is to create a family tree. This points to a deep disconnect between and a lack of understanding of adoptee liminality. Family trees, developmental timelines, and bringing in your baby photo can all very triggering assignments because genetic projects serve as reminders to adoptees that their biological history is absent, and they must choose between their birth country or American identity (Park-Taylor & Wing, 2019). Scott's (2015) review of Chinese Eyes highlights the color-blind framing the story takes on:

> Chinese Eyes tells the story of a young Korean adoptee who is insulted by one of her classmates for her race. He calls her "Chinese eyes," which confuses her because she is unsure of why this is an insult. Struggling with self-identity, her mother reassures her of her beauty and gives background of her origins, making sure she is proud of her Chinese eyes.

The strength of *Chinese Eyes* is that it directly addresses microaggressions that AATRA face. The book provides such a great opportunity to address issues of historical and systematic racism but falls short by failing to address the racism that Becky experiences alongside the racism that her Black friend Laura experiences. This book comes highly recommended as a teaching tool for 'positive" adoptee identity and really exemplifies how AATRA identity is structured in a modern liberal multicultural framework. In *Chinese Eyes*, Becky (protagonist) encounters an explicit racist microaggression when at school a White boy says to her, "Hey look!

There's little Chinese eyes!" She is upset the rest of the day but does not really understand why. The author has just operationalized the adoptee liminality paradox (Lee, 2003) and can address it head on. Instead, in a later scene when addressing it with her adoptive mother she says, "He was pretty close, wasn't he"? The illustrations show Becky and her mother sitting in front of a mirror comparing their eyes. This scene is striking because Becky's mother is attempting to explain away an instance of racism her daughter has faced by putting the burden of racism on Becky to understand why the White boy would use a microaggression toward her. In addition, the "pretty close" comment without the author critiquing ethnic differences between pan-Asian nations reinforces a White stereotypical Asian monolith idea that all Asians are the same.

The most influential miss is the scene following the school scene when Becky is playing with her best friend Laura after school. The text reveals that "sometimes kids call Laura ugly names" and the illustrations reveal that Laura is Black. This is an opportunity to have a cross-race discussion about instances of racism, systematic racism, and historical racist tropes. This would shift the conversation from a "racialized experience" adoptee identity framing to a systematic historical racism framing with White supremacy undergirding both "Chinese eyes" and "ugly names." Nonetheless, this discussion never happens in the book.

AATRA identity is framed in the school setting and by adoptive parents through books as a modern liberal multicultural AATRA Identity story but works as a historical vehicle to carry racialized stereotypes from the past to the present. Books like these used as an educational adoptee identity guide is what the National Association of Black Social Workers were referencing when they voiced, "only a black family can transmit the emotional and sensitive subtleties of perception and reaction essential for a black child's survival in a racist society" in their 1972 transracial adoption opposition statement (NABSW, 1972). These educational sources

do not give Asian American adopted people a framework or foundation on which to contest the liminality of their material existence.

Asian Adoptee Scholarship

Asian Americans have responded to the limitations of psychological identity frameworks and educational ideology that supports them with their own scholarship that in many ways differs greatly from the mostly colorblind educational and psychological frameworks that situate Asian American adopted people as an additive in the national story of Whiteness. Instead, adoptee authors are situating their scholarship in a variety of ways as members in a pan-Asian identity in conversation with other Asian American identities. Most notably, the following adoptee identity authored scholarship offers a guide on different ways to (1) contests adoptee liminality by featuring (2) sociological lenses that provide a (3) more critical analysis of race (4) in conversation with a racialized American history. Lastly, the review discusses the inescapable nature of adoptee identity frameworks even for adoptee authors.

Asian Adoptee Memoirs

Memoirs occupy an important place in Asian adopted people scholarship. Identity is structured through knowledge leading to meaning, not lack of knowledge and lack of meaning. Adoptee memoirs critique the result of lack of knowledge and lack of meaning. Many memoirs accomplish this by naming one of their "identities" and intricately piece by piece dismantling the notion of "success" in outcome studies through intimate sociological analysis of their personal experiences. Although these personal experiences are unique to the individual, collectively transracially adopted memoirs reveal a pattern that open a set of critiques in the way in which we

may improve the study of identities, across borders, cultures and boundaries at the nexus of ethnic literature, Asian American diaspora studies, immigration and education, racial privilege, racial marginalization, ethos of family, and traversing a life of middleness. Conversely, they may show why the study of identity is inadequate all together. Next, I review how identity plays in adopted person memoirs by analyzing through personal narrative the enduring effects and limitations of what "identity" allows transracially adopted people to be.

Perpetual Orphan Child vs. Chosen Foreign Child. One of the most written about implicit identities of AATRAs is a perception of being forever an orphan child. The myth of the perpetual orphan child renders transracial adoptees regardless of age, treated, spoken to (and for), and viewed as perpetually vulnerable and in need of protection (Owens, 2018). Again, this hints at the macro political identity of the "figure of the adoptee" that exists outside the bounds of notions identity constructs allow.

In *Discovering My Imposed Age and the Effects*, Transue-Woolston (2013) writes an essay about a presentation she gave in college about her own critical self-evaluation skills and self-awareness. She details the defining moment after revealing her adopted status a classmate comments how "incredibly cute" in a voice as if she was "speaking to a basket of month-old puppies." She realized that "being adopted gave me an imposed age" (Owens, 2018; Transue-Woolston, 2013).

Johnsen in *Korean Drop* (2015) critiques the seemingly innocuousness of the "chosen one" narrative. She explains how she built her identity in being a "lucky" girl. "Both adults and children alike took the care to remind me of the poverty and despair which existed abroad, and how privileged I was for getting to grow up in Norway." They would highlight that I was Norwegian, and not an immigrant like the Vietnamese refugees or the Pakistani guest worker

(Owens, 2018; Johnsen & Ja, 2014). She examines her own internalized racism developed over time within the Norwegian views toward foreigners and discusses her realization that she had internalized the idea that Norway was best, and any other upbringing would be inferior; for a long time, she believed those myths. It took her years to unpack the internalization of this Eurocentric ideology and to come to a place where she could speak against those ideals; at first, the idea of doing so felt like "a slap in the face" to her adoptive parents and her country: "So I carried my pain alone, wearing a mask for fear that I might destroy someone else's illusion" (Owens, 2018; Johnsen & Ja, 2015).

Both identities although fluid come to light with other people learning about an adoptee in the context of transracial adoption. Identity in this scenario functions as a form of power by imposing parameters through race and adoption. Both the "perpetual orphan child" and the "chosen" identities undergirded by a legal and ideological lexicon of "protecting" the child from dangers (including oneself). Therefore, adoptee's interests are served "best" based on a claim by another more resourced parent(s) who can step in for the failures of the first parent(s). In *Swinging the Balance of the Universe*, adopted person Jennifer Jue-Steuck writes, "the myth of the perpetual child renders many adopted people invisible in the realm of the everyday world. Maybe I could see you, if you could see me" (Jue Steuck, 2013).

Colorblind American vs. Color Conscious Asian American. For transracially adopted people identity struggles arise because an "All American" assimilation colorblind identity of modern liberal adoptee identity discourse clashes with the color conscious historically racialized identity descriptors carried by Whites and imposed on people of color in western society. Owens (2018) echoes many other adoptee researchers when she says this occurs because (1) the White-washing that occurs through naming and claiming of ownership by adoptive parents by way of

law, agency, and industry, (2) initial inward facing adoptive family protection that is removed once the adoptee is outward facing and re-identified as a racialized minority in society, and (3) the loss and inaccessibility of birth language and authentic birth culture that excludes adoptees from their birth communities and limits their connectedness with their American ethnic community (Owens, 2018).

In *All You Can Ever Know*, Nicole Chung describes this process in her Asian American adoptee experience when she describes her parents "not seeing her as Nicole a color, but Nicole their daughter." Her message is that although it may not matter a great deal to her parents it was going to matter a great deal to her and her future moving about in the world (Chung, 2018). Her hope is that we can normalize this process and understand that it does matter more than you will ever know.

In "*TSOHG*," Garbisch (2020) uses poetry as a medium of memoir. In his narrative analysis he describes a similar message to Chung as a rationale for writing the piece. He examines poetry as a *Documentation of Paradoxical Origins:* He writes*, "*This piece started as an attempt to document an experience that I had in Boston. It is representative of how I have utilized poetry and reflection to grind through who I actually am. This poem is the verb form of my process of settling my unsettled identity" (pg. 40). Unsettled identity is someone who has spent a great deal of time exploring their adoptee identity and is finding meaning of what it means to be adopted (Grotevant, 1997). The methodological message from Garbisch is that self-reflexive poetry is a means to conduct remembrance when you have no memory of an event.

Whether they appear in essay, book, poetry fashion memoirs transform the boundaries of what adopted people are or can be. They push limitations of identity frameworks and bring together personal experience with historical realities of identity imposed through racialized

markers. For all those memoirs do most importantly by articulating strength of survival and the limitations of "identity" memoirs hint at something beyond identity. Next, I review another form of "new wave" adoptee authored scholarship that pushes the limitations of identity frameworks but by staying within their logics shows us that there is still room to grow.

Asian Adoptee Authored Academic Literature

Contesting through Borderlands. In her dissertation, Ariel Ashlee dives into AATRA identity experiences through a border theory lens. She lands on what she calls "four assemblages" including *Neither Asian, Nor White, Both Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner, and Between Races* (Ashlee, 2019). She argues that while Asian American transracial adoption may be racially perceived as like—if not synonymous with—their Asian and Asian American peers in higher education, they understand their racialized experiences to be notably different (Ashlee, 2019). She eloquently details leaving home and "shedding" the identity thrust to her by the proximity she had to her White adoptive family concluding with messages to her participants stating, "your experience of living beyond the rigidity of existing racial categories, of occupying racial borderlands, and contemplating contradictions is expansive" (Ashlee, 2019). She ends with a question to educators. What would it take to consider transracial Asian American adoptees' racialized worldviews as insightful and innovative instead of incongruent or impudent? How might doing this enable us to revisit and perhaps revise our limited and limiting understanding of race and racial identity (Ashlee, 2019)?

Border Theory was born from the text Borderlands La Frontera (Anzuldua, 2007). In it Anzuldua remains fluid as a theme and does not adhere to any sense of separation or innocence. She artfully injects differences in language, syntax, prose, and structure to curate a thematic

borderland in which she places her writing. In the books beginnings she establishes that

borderlands both physically and psychologically with the visceral language of *una herida abierta*

or an open wound, where the third world grates against the first and bleeds and before a scab

forms it hemorrhages again like the lifeblood of two worlds merging from a third country: a

border culture (Anzulda, 2007).

Categorically apart from identity constructs, she intends Borderlands to be a piece of

utility, a tool in which to liberate mental, colonial, sexual, and Chicana ways of being. She

frames her piece not in opposition or rejection of the dichotomies of Eurocentric coloniality but

rather through a process of consciousness raising that transforms dichotomies into dualities

creating two halves of a whole that together form something more than the sum of its parts

(Anzuldua, 1987).

Border Theory is thinking in dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world into

dichotomies (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). However, this does not erase the fact that these

borders exist at the nexus of the historical and modern colonial system. Anzuldua analyzes

postcolonial and western notions through a powerful female deity to exemplify her form of La

Mestiza Consciousness border thinking. By using this a female deity to frame her La Mestiza

Consciousness in ways of thinking about coloniality and her ways of being Chicana, she

challenges the epistemology and hermeneutics dichotomy transforming it into a third perspective

or duality constituted of two opposing forces that when combined form a more powerful whole.

Anzuldua is clearly theorizing outside the bounds of identity frameworks.

Ashlee's conception of borderlands and more specifically La Mestiza Consciousness,

helps her arrive at a resituating of what it means to be an AATA away from Whiteness but

remaining in the foundational assumptions of identity constructs. This is the point at which we

diverge in our thinking. Neither Asian, nor White suggests that AATAs are free to choose identities outside of racialized structural forces identity frameworks impose. While Ashlee's construction of AAAP borderland identity is highly effective in providing a framework and language to reconfigure AAAP's social location there are a few drawbacks. Identity impositions of adoptee identity forgo an ethnic Korean or Chinese identity because identity carries an assumption to belonging through access—language, cultural knowledge community, kinship community—to meaning that defines an identity which is absent in transracial adoption. Ethnic identities are formed in collective solidarity while transracial adoptees are by their very nature individuals because the contexts they are brought into are specifically White (White adoptive parents/Whiteness). Furthermore, both Model Minority and Forever a Foreigner contrasts neither Asian nor White. That is to say, the ascribed norms of history do not allow for a racialized "neither nor" situation unless that person is White in the context of identity. To say otherwise would negate the racialized structure of colonial history that is referenced in both Model Minority and Forever a Foreigner. Trying to place Anzuldua's Borderland pedagogy within the framework of identity constructs still places race and Whiteness at the center of discovery as which seems to be an entirely different project than the cultural *La Mestiza Consciousness* project Anzuldua is writing about. This cultural (ethnic) knowledge system is what AAAP lack.

In *Borderlands*, Anzuldua (2007) is very careful to understand the nuances of a colonialized history with a myriad of race, gender, and social class oppression intersections as a baseline and uses *La Mestiza Consciousness* as a method of resistance critique in developing her third space. Anzuldua's acute consciousness of her Chicana roots is imperative in her development of *La Mestiza*. For AATAs to do the same through border theory they must know their roots in relation to anti-blackness. So, to attempt to answer Ashlee's questions of, what

would it take to consider transracial Asian American adoptees' racialized worldviews as insightful and innovative instead of incongruent or impudent and how might doing this enable us to revisit and perhaps revise our limited and limiting understanding of race and racial identity, we must look at ourselves like Anzuldua does, beyond the confines of identity and toward historically relational connectivity.

Sunah Layborn, Kim Park Nelson, and Kimberly Mckee are all adopted person scholars that focus on intersectional work that uses cross disciplinary methods to analyze theories in conversation with each other exploring larger themes across academic disciplines like sociology, history, geography, and anthropology. One common research principle that these scholars make foundational is that they study Asian American adopted people at the nexus of and in relation to historically imposed power frameworks of western racialized hierarchies.

Theoretical Perspectives

Critical Race Theory. Born out of the scholarship of legal system and now applied in many other fields, CRT was developed as a critique to colorblindness in Critical Legal Studies (Cabrera, 2018; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado,1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 2012). It has been increasingly applied in the field of education as a method of framing higher education scholarship (Cabrera, 2018; Ladson Billings, 1998; Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995; Harper, 2012). With each shift to new disciplines came a contextual overlapping of some and re-centering of other core tenants. The shift from Critical Legal Studies to Education saw a focus extending from—Racism as Normal, Interest Convergence, Social Construction of Race, Differential Racialization, Intersectionality, Unique Voices of Color, Permanence of Racism, and Whiteness as Property— naming what a colorblindness in society veils to how to address these

challenges—Intercentricity of Race and Racism, Challenge to the Dominant Ideology, Commitment to Social Justice, Centrality of Experiential Knowledge, Interdisciplinary Perspective—within the discipline of education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009).

Asian Crit. Although, the core tenants of CRT offer an important anchor in which to frame critique of White supremacy, like other paradigms, CRT focuses on the black/White binary which allows people to simplify a complex reality. The risk is that non-black minority groups not fitting into the dominant societies idea of race in America become marginalized, invisible, foreign, and un-American (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Thus, scholars began to push for an added understanding of race outside of the black/White binary to provide a frame for analysis extending the primary way in which we have come to understand race in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Asian Crit carries seven core tenants that function as a framework to critique White Supremacy upon which a map of AATA identity can be constructed. Each of them provides either a primary—(Re)constructive history, Transnational contexts, Strategic (Anti) Essentialism, Intersectionality— or secondary—Asianization, Story/Theory and Praxis, Social Justice— utility on which to build an analysis. The three sub-sections in the literature review—Asian American, Transracial, and Adoptee—conducts analysis through critical race notions of interest convergence and Whiteness as property to cast a reconstruction of history in a transnational context. Specifically, by mapping historical power relations between the relay of White, Asian, Black, and anti-Black the review explores areas of imbricated ongoing connectedness of historical notions of power and race adjacent to contemporary experiences of the Asian American transracially adopted person.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

Lemert (2016) writes, social theory is a basic survival skill. Approaching social theory in this manner is important because one of the goals of critical work is understanding the "emic" perspective of their participants and the way they theorize their social and cultural worlds (Urietta and Noblit, 2018). True, there are professional social theorists, usually academics. But this does not exclude the observation that social theory is something done necessarily, and often most effectively by people with no particular professional credential. When done well, it is a source of uncommon understanding for all (Lemert, 2016).

This dissertation drew connections through time and space to position an investigation of the material existence of Asian adopted people as a history of the present. The framing of the project recast Asian American adopted people beyond the principles of singularity that guide individual identity. The aim was to situate self as a historically racialized subject to get at the individual, intellectual, and political stakes of studying the material present of Asian adopted people through a lens of the past.

Lowe (2018) remarks, there is a way in which you can tell a story/history of U.S. capitalism through the lens of Asian Americans and the rationale of their global movements (immigration). Asians moving around to work in sugar cane plantations, build the railroads, and integrate into families as sons and daughters of White Americans are different chapters in a story of modernity. Through this lens Asian American adopted people represent a very specific episode in the (process of) race, racial formation, foreign otherness (orientalism), and the expansion of U.S. capitalism to new Asian markets. This study is qualitative and conducts oral

histories to build case studies to identify and explore alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being.

As such, educating and theorizing comes from the Asian adopted people (participants) and is trusted and respected as an origin source of knowledge. Observations will be conducted as a connective practice of historical method exploring the present experiences of Asian adopted people through a lens of past conditional temporality; a theory that holds it is possible to conceive the past not as fixed or settled, not as inaugurating the temporality into which our present falls, but as a configuration of multiple contingent possibilities all present yet not inevitable (Lowe, 2015).

Mapping the Study Process

To organize how this study was executed, I wanted to give a brief step by step guide to my study rationale and the methods I used. During the study process I carefully planned, executed, and analyzed the data.

While planning the study, (1) first I wanted to choose a foundational theoretical lens within a critical research paradigm from which to undergird the study and frame the analysis. I chose to underpin the study not within a single framework but within many thought disciplines including Critical Race theory, Asian Critical Theory, and Lowe's (2015) idea of Defamiliarizing. (2) Next, I chose to design the study as a qualitative case study because I wanted to understand the particularity and complexity of my participants lives by focusing on the breadth and depth of my participants experiences lived subjectivity in their contexts (Tomaszewski, Zarestky, & Gonzalez, 2020).

(3) To execute the study, I used a purposeful sampling technique to find Asian American transracially adopted young adults that were willing to serve as participants for the study. (4) After selecting two participants, to collect the data I conducted pre-interviews with each of them introducing myself, the goals of the research, research questions, and establishing background information to ground the interview guide. (5) Following that, I conducted semi-structured oral history interviews with each participant where they narrated their contextual experiences as Asian American adopted people in the context of their educational, familial, racial, and ethnic experiences. (6) Their post interviews covered their feelings about the interview process and asking "follow up" questions clarifying questions to the participants. (7) To ensure trustworthiness of the data, throughout the process I reread transcripts of both participants, conducted member checks, and engaged in analyst triangulation with other research colleagues in search of other possible perspectives on the data.

(8) Following the initial triangulation process, I utilized priori coding to pinpoint the ways in which these participants mirrored factors related to other studies in prior adoption literature. At the same time, I open coded through a process of chunking words and phrases that represented thoughts, feelings, and choices of the participants. (9) Lastly, I analyzed the codes thematically by generating, reviewing, and naming themes. The remainder of the methodology section builds on these steps to further detail the study process and rationale I have mapped out in this sub-section.

Foundational Theory and Analysis

Beginning with conceptual frames of analysis is important because the means and modes of analysis is what characterized this dissertation as different from many within the realm of

adoptee scholarship. It was not the singularity of addressing contemporary material existence of

Asian American adopted people nor was it the incorporation of nation-to-nation geopolitical

moments at the intersection of Asian American transracial adoption. This study was an attempt

to address contemporary material existence of Asian adopted people fundamentally as a

"process" of the ways in which vestiges of race, gender, and class are imbricated with (foreign)

otherness emerged in personal everyday experiences of participants.

Understanding social location as the contemporary product of a racialized politically

situated intermediary figure, this analysis aimed to measure the process of change puting into

relief seemingly disparate (racialized) histories that are quite interlocked. Analyzed from this

lens, the research charted participants' alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being beyond

the singularity of personal experience.

Seen through the lens of analysis, while there is no singular framework within which all

data was analyzed, there were theoretical principles, thought disciplines, and foundations that

guided study design, research questions, data collection, and measurement. Imagined as a

conceptual tree, (a) the traditions of critical race theory make up the trunk. The branches consist

of foundations from (b) the adoptee liminality paradox, (c) Asian critical theory, and (d) Lisa

Lowe's theory of "Defamiliarizing" (2015).

Critical Race Theory. Critical race theory (CRT) made up the trunk or the principal

theoretical position. As detailed in the literature review, CRT holds a centrality of race as an

endemic part of society that structures social life and order. The necessity of broad understanding

and critique of (modern) liberalism and its adjacent discourses of post-racialism, colorblindness,

intersectionality, and interest convergence (Harris, 1995; Bell, 1992) are fundamental

underpinnings of CRT related to Asian American adopted people. Oral histories provided a

stable of counter narratives that on one hand unearthed the scope and diversity of terms of separation, dislocation and violence while also interrogating, undermining, and refusing the conventions of liberalism.

Adoptee Liminality Paradox. As discussed in the literature review, the adoptee liminality paradox (Lee, 2003) has been the subject of much of identity research done in the field. The adoptee liminality paradox argues that adoptee identity lies in the middle of White and Asian sometimes occupying neither or both (Ashlee, 2019). The rationale for including it here is to use the framing of middleness but reconfigure the principles. Identity constructs necessarily place race as the deciding feature in identity and identity as the deciding framework of self.

Many studies situate adoptee identity in-between White and Asian but also occupying both. The principles of identity theory require that an individual must remain central to their own identity and must carry understanding and execute the markers of meaning to belong. Therefore, it is belonging that is the central essential of identity. In my literature review, I argued that Asian adopted people may phenotypically resemble Asian or acquire economic capital resembling White but at no time do Asian adopted people either have the familial connection to cultural knowledge systems or phenotypical representation to be Asian or White. Consequently, middleness or liminality is in-between belonging to neither not both. Belonging is a product of meaning defined by historically built cultural knowledge systems (not racial ones) that insulate groups from racially imposed ones. As the literature review argues, formal institutional systems like the educational system does not provide the essential teachings that inform the material meaning of what it is to be Asian or ethnic. That is the disenfranchisement of the identity middle that the next two theories address.

Asian Critical Theory. Occupying another branch from the trunk, Asian critical theory (Asian Crit) is grounded in the specific experiences, issues, and histories of Asian Americans which can stimulate a more nuanced and deeper inquiry into their experiences (Iftikar & Museus, 2019; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso et al., 2009). Anchoring analysis within this historical framework allowed the study to position participants in relation to Whiteness, Asianness, Blackness, and Anti-Blackness to analyze Asian adopted people within the historical index of Asian as a racial intermediary that destabilizes binaries that designate power. Analyzing the global historical condition of the Asian American adopted person allowed this study to compare historical power differentials as actions of power on various racialized social groups, in various social landscapes, at various times evident by the racialized experiences of Asian adopted people today.

Viewed as an aggregate whole, AATRA identity strategies disavow the separate histories of power forged by ontological configurations historically exercised on each social group. Asian crit allowed for a critique of American exceptionalist ideas that use racialized political figures like the Asian American adoptee for the primary interest of Whiteness. Using the political figure of the Asian adoptee to move past identity accesses current configuration allowing a possibility for a reconfigured new contingent reality. Disaggregated into Asian, Asian American, transracial, and adoptee analysis of a reconstructive history of power relation patterns became possible allowing for connections to be made between seemingly disparate people, times, and situations not bounded by race or nation but in terms capable of contesting contemporary issues and conditions of modern oppression.

Defamiliarizing. To put these theoretical framings into action, Lowe calls on a method of "Defamiliarizing" as a blank slate starting space to reposition how we know, think, and be. She

says, "only by defamiliarizing both the object of the past and the established methods for apprehending that object do we make possible alternative forms of knowing, thinking, and being (Lowe, 2015). Positioning away from the confines of adoptee identity constructs that center self only in relation to Whiteness and a racially other Asianness allows for ways of knowing, thinking, and being in connection with historical social groups rendered with no history, no place, and no situatedness in time (Robinson, 2005). In the study, "defamiliarizing" allowed participants to re-think themselves as situated historical subjects operating a world and connected by terms of disenfranchisement with other situated historical subjects. It was a framework that aimed to recognize and call out obscured imbricated connections that have been compartmentalized and studied separately as various social interests at specific points in history. Defamiliarizing lent a concept to frame participant self-analysis or theorizing beyond a simple equivalent binary and allowed for exploration of knowing, thinking, and being from a social location of an interlocutor of historical connection. Unearthing the connections of past created a means of solidarity in the present.

In this way it was much easier to excavate any a-symmetrical connection of how African slavery, Indigenous dispossession, and Asian American transracial adoption holds a-symmetrical procedural connections in that all three operate on historical conditions that rely on various degrees of legally displacing a person of color irrevocably from land, family, and culture at different stages of U.S. history.

Participant self, seen through "Defamiliarizing" not only allowed for participants to see their historical connection to their Asianness but also discover their historical connection to Blackness or anti-blackness through contemporary frameworks like the model minority myth or affirmative action. Focusing the labor of contestation and solidarity efforts became based on

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disenfranchisement and not solely on race providing the means to move past the idea of motivating people in relation to their own group's interests decentering Whiteness as the universalizing normative ideal. As Dubois famously stated, "the emancipation of men is the emancipation of labor, and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are Asian, Brown, and Black" (Dubois, 2013). Although alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being may occupy a different domain of emancipation in this study then Dubois dark proletariat working class was referring to, I argue that it is nonetheless emancipatory.

Study Design

Case Study. A case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 1993). Exploratory case studies are a conducive approach when research is being conducted on participants that are infrequently studied, few in numbers, or studied through a new lens. Asian American transracial adoption is a phenomenon and has been longed studied as such. However, this dissertation differed from many studies in the way I approached the phenomenon. Typical adoption studies approach through notions of psychological "adjustment" or "assimilation" within contemporary families in contemporary time frames. While an important aim, my approach to the phenomenon of Asian American transracial adoption focused on power dynamics and historical subjectivity that materializes in contemporary "racialized" experiences.

The "real-life context" is important to note because case studies prioritize going out to the people, event, or phenomenon with the understanding that these participants are operating in a wider society with agency, constraints, and power dynamics that are realized through conditions

of the phenomenon. Alternative adoption study methods often center around decontextualized experiments using frameworks that presuppose a Eurocentric identity lens (even if implicit). Case studies use multiple sources of evidence. Unlike most used in the qualitative field, my study will use oral histories to unearth stories, pictures, files, and documents as the pieces of evidence.

This project used a set of individual case studies to form a social group case study (Gibbs, 2016). Individual case studies center on the life of someone on the margins of society in some capacity or another. Social group case studies are used when you are studying a small group of people who are defined by their socio-historical position. As such, I used multiple individual case studies diachronically. This temporal variation allows a cross-case or within case comparison of individual cases against a historically situated backdrop. That is to say, the historical condition of the political figure of the Asian American adoptee stays constant and the alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being are measured diachronically before and after a framework switch from evaluating through modes of "identity" to modes of "Defamiliarizing" (Lowe, 2015).

Participants. In the following, I will present the contextual background and sociocultural histories of both participants in narrative fashion to outline each participant's experiences and influences that frame the ways in which they think and interact with the world around them. To protect anonymity, I used pseudonyms when describing both participants. To organize the discussion, I will address each participant's (a) background and (b) sociocultural history.

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Sara's Story: "My Own Situation"

Background. Sara is an AAAP college student who was adopted from China. She attends a public university in the southeastern United States. Sara grew up in a mid-sized city in the southeast where most recent census data indicates that the population of her hometown is about 167,000 people with 62.5% White, 8.3% Black, 18.6% Asian, and 7.2% reporting as Hispanic (American Community Survey, 2020). She spent all 13 of her educational years in a Christian affiliated private school prior to the university she currently attends.

Sociocultural History. Sara is driven by her immigrant mentality. She does not know much about her "hypothetical story that probably happened" adoption story besides that she was "found a store shelf with my umbilical cord still attached." That does not mean it does not affect her. This makes her an immigrant and that drives her. She still hears the voice in her head of "my little kid self" pushing her deep-down mission to "defy the odds." Sara has gone to her Episcopalian affiliated private school from pre-kindergarten all the way through graduating from high school. She credits that educational experience and her parent's premium on education in general for having the "great opportunities" she has now. Sara has assimilated very well and considers herself "Americanized." She is even a college English major now and thinks "that's so ironic." Her educational success has not come without complex contextual challenges that intersect at the nexus of family, race, ethnicity, and culture.

Sara never had any Asian American teachers growing up, but she did have one Asian teacher. It was in a beginner Mandarin class when she was eight that her parents signed her up for hoping that she would connect with her ethnic culture. She did not end up connecting with her ethnic culture or finishing the class. "All the other students were little White kids, and I

didn't want to feel any more isolated than I already felt." Unfortunately, that feeling of isolation and disconnectedness would follow her throughout her childhood. "Asian/Asians, like culturally Asian students, I never felt connected to in any way because a lot of them would speak Mandarin to each other and it's just like shoot, I'm lost because ever since I was able to talk, I've been speaking English. I was that kid who didn't even know how to speak their own language." Even within family interactions there are constant reminders to Sara of the complexity of her social location. "When I first met my cousin on my dad's side at a family reunion when I was little, I was holding this piece of paper and he was like is that your receipt? We're only two years apart so we've always been close but if that was anybody but him it would have been a problem."

Amy's Story: I'm a People Pleaser

Background. Amy is a young woman in her 20's who was adopted from China. Previously she attended a public university in the southeastern United States but has since unenrolled. Amy grew up in a small rural community in the southeast. Most recent census data indicates that the population of her hometown is about 3,500 people with 50.28% Black and 46.35% White with less than 1% reporting as Asian (American Community Survey, 2020).

Sociocultural History. Amy is a "people pleaser" who is always adjusting herself to what she feels other people's expectations are of her. She knows "pretty much next to nothing" about her origins and while she expresses that she may not have had a better life in China, she admits she "holds a little bit of resentment." There are a few memories for Amy. Sometimes she misses her nanny who took care of her at the adoption agency and was "heartbroken to see her go." Amy also wonders a lot about what could have been:

I know I was one of the smarter babies in that adoption agency. I was the first one to walk, push buttons, and was held to like a higher standard. It's really funny because I'm not that smart now. I just kind of belong with like the average people.

Amy attended private schools up until high school where she attended public school. She never saw herself represented in any of the curriculum and "to this day" has never had an Asian American teacher. Amy's school peers were almost exclusively White, and she always felt like her "top priority was being somebody that people liked." Although, her best friend is Asian and can relate much better to her, there are still many differences and Amy still feels like she "doesn't belong to either of them" and admitting "there is a lot of imposter syndrome there."

She categorizes education into "academic" and "life" bins. Amy "hated" school because it focused so heavily on the former. Amy always felt like her schooling reduced her to being defined "by a number and how well you can remember things." She felt her learning has been done through her experience and "what you are forced to go through." As such, Amy's education came from her life experience outside of the classroom.

Amy's interactions with her family and friends have provided the backdrop for her "life" education. It has been a "learning experience" to navigate what she can and cannot say around her "traditional" family. Around her friends, feels like she has "a million different personalities" because she learned that if she adjusted herself to act a certain way, "everybody felt comfortable, and I wouldn't get super anxious." She feels that her friends do not know who she genuinely is because she has "been pretending for so long." More importantly, Amy feels like she has "never really gotten the chance to kind of, experience life." Ultimately, Amy's educational experiences and social interactions have led her to feel that others "just have an expectation for me to follow and that just kind of destroyed my sense of purpose in this life."

Conceptual Framing and Measurement Techniques

Qualitative Studies. To frame this study in such a manner, it is necessary to move away from traditional quantitative adoptive identity studies that feature AATRA "adjustment" and "outcome." This lexicon of studies maintains a scope of "adjusting" or "assimilating" that lands within the long persistent teleological understandings universalizing a White normative identity ideal. Qualitative studies are meant to study a specific issue or phenomenon in a certain population or ethnic group within a particular context (Leung, 2015). When evaluating the quality of qualitative research, the three questions at stake are the notions of validity, reliability, and generalizability. In *Designing Qualitative Research,* Marshall and Rossman (2015) argue that validity, generalizability, and reliability are quantitative notions. Accordingly, the authors work to situate "qualitative equivalents" to measure research soundness.

Validity. Internal validity is the idea that you are measuring something that is tangible and really there. In line with Lowe's thinking the social world we inhabit is not one that is a given it is one created by multi-dimensional power dynamics. There is no external world in which we can compare things, we simply have the social world. The crux of studying specific issues or phenomenon involving specific populations is to understand the reality of that population or subset. So, qualitatively internal validity measures small "t" truth value within the reality of the participant subset. Oral histories provide a method or technique for gathering evidence of testimony of people's unique memories, experiences, and lifestyles (Fazzino, 2014).

Oral histories give alternative histories as they explain a specific phenomenon and its repercussions providing a way to think about or analyze historical situations within a broader context (Fazzino, 2014). For example, in The Mischling Experience in Oral History, Monteath (2008) studies the testimony of differently situated mixed race "Mischlings" in Nazi Germany

that survived the concentration camps. The oral history is the data collection of the testimony, but the study is tactics of coping and survival of management of the state at a particular moment in history. Like the previous example, in this project oral histories were a data collection method to analyze individual testimony and provided a different line of inquiry to study greater patterns of coping and survival from a subset of people managed and transferred by the state. As such, oral histories provided a different optic that may otherwise have been lost or vanquished.

 Generalizability. External validity or generalizability takes on the notion of applicability of transferability of participant truth values that can be collected and analyzed for pattern. It is important be careful not to generalize to a general population (i.e., normative White) because the participants are chosen based on (historical) condition. Therefore, in qualitative studies validity and generalizability is based much more on the condition of circumstance and whether people who have categorically similar condition of circumstance experience similar truth value. In this project I analyzed threads of similarity within the oral histories of participants that embody different ages, communities, educational experiences, familial, and socioeconomic histories.

 Reliability. Quantitatively, reliability is the notion that you get the same answer the next time around. Qualitatively, the object is not to replicate the responses or behaviors one instance to the next. Thus, Marshall and Rossman (2011) re-term quantitative reliability into qualitative notions of consistency and dependability. They offer that the qualitative consistency means using the same methods, techniques, participant subsets, and modes/topics of analysis through the entirety of the study. For example, even if the interview/ interview guide differs from participant to participant or interview to interview, qualitative reliability focuses more on whether the interview uses the same data collection methods and focuses on the same broad topics on which the researcher will conduct analysis. In this project, I used oral history throughout from a broader

lens in which to understand the participants (racialized) life experiences, coping mechanisms, and contestations through an operative lens positioning contemporary Asian American adopted people as situated historical subjects inscribed by their historical conditions.

Data Collection

To situate the data collection, it is important to understand that this study aimed to construct a history of the moment through a case study approach. Consequently, this study built two individual case studies through oral histories, interviews, observations, and documents. From a singular participant standpoint, the research charts changes in "knowing, thinking, and being" before and after introducing Lowe's (2015) "Defamiliarization framework. More broadly, the research contended with mapping obscured historical frameworks of contestation, discovery, and the process of social group disenfranchisement that endures, replicates, and administers through racial difference and othering.

Oral Histories. Data from interviews, documents, and observations was gathered through oral history methods. Oral histories are grounded in reflections on the past of an event or social phenomenon and seek to create and preserve historical documents for future researchers and members of the public (Oral History Association, 2009). Oral histories follow a general pattern that guides a three stage (1) pre-interview, (2) interview, and (3) post-interview analysis and preservation process.

Sequentially, in this study, my pre-interview stage began with formulating a series of central research questions which I used to theoretically frame topics of inquiry and interview questions. Next, I established establishes specific aims from the central questions to formulate general parameters for narrator selection. Following that I conducted background research on the

narrators (pre-interview) and used prior literature to research the larger context within the social

phenomenon through primary and secondary sources to operate as a guide that I used to create

the interview protocol (See Appendix C for Interview Protocol). The goal was to contextualize

the interview guide to the country of origin, childhood geographic location, and prior research as

much as possible.

The interview was conducted from the interview protocol which was theoretically guided

by central research questions. During the interview, I conducted observations to understand how

the participants processed their understanding of their contextual experiences to the

phenomenon. While inquiring about the narrator's life history, seeking a more nuanced

understanding, I presented artifacts that included childhood books that may have been read to

them. In addition, we talked about artifacts that they presented within their narrations. I asked

"follow up" questions, when necessary, that reframed the participant's context to the

phenomenon when the opportunity presented. To align with oral history methodology, during the

interview I worked to balance the objectives and follow up questions while allowing the narrator

free reign to tell their story (Oral History Association, 2009). The oral historian should work to

extend the inquiry beyond the specific focus of the project to create the groundwork for a broader

understanding of the event or social phenomenon for future researchers and community members

(Oral History Association, 2009).

Post oral history interview I transcribed the interviews and began the evaluation process.

Evaluating the research was done by analyzing the individual life history of the narrator in

conversation with the central research questions of the inquiry. In the context of this study,

analysis was conducted by positioning the participants' singular life history in conversation

within Asian American transracial intercountry adoption as a socio-historical phenomenon.

Following analysis, the research was organized into third person counter narratives (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) were developed, and the results were presented.

In the context of this project, Asian adopted people represent an understudied social phenomenon of contemporary "belonging" middleness. Both Asian and American societies value the idea(s) of lineage, ancestry, and culture based on biological relatedness so much that both have constructed academic fields (history) and tools (family trees) to solidify their importance. The counter to that social priority is Asian American transracial adoption through legal means. It must be recounted that Asians are adopted to White families not vice versa. Capturing daily encounters, acceptance, contestations, methods of refusal, and change offers a window into culture building void of traditionally essential tools and a point of connectivity to analyze historical methods and processes of disenfranchisement.

Interviews. Participant oral histories interviews were done in a semi-structured manner. Although my interview guide encompasses various specific questions, the interviews were informed based on topics that lend well to building a history of the present. Methodologically, interviews took on a "testimonio" feel. According to Lavine (2020), testimonio is a type of counternarrative that honors the lived experiences and knowledge of participants/narrators. Established within the field of Latino Critical theory, testimonios allowed participants and researcher to establish a dialogical relationship where the researcher and participants can engage together in co-constructing knowledge, exposing inequities within a larger context in the field of education (Lavine, 2020; Freire, 2000). Accordingly, this interview method accounted for the "follow up" questions and elicits the reader/consumer to see the different ways in which the narrator(s) and their communit(ies) have been or are being oppressed, disavowed, dislocated, or destroyed (Lavine; 2020, Zembylas, 2013). Proverbially breaking bread and co-constructing

knowledge vis a vis oral history is appropriate for this project because the researcher is also an Asian American adopted person.

Documents/Artifacts. When including documents as a key piece of research, it is important ensure their authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Gibbs, 2012). Over the course of data collection, children's literature, pieces of art, and tattoos were some of the documents/artifacts that both adhered to those four principles and addressed the ways of contesting or memorializing "absence." Subsequently, part of the oral history interviews took a deep dive into the personal meaning of these artifacts and how they may connect the personal to the greater socio-historical context.

Observations. The rationale behind oral history observations is to get at the meaning of why something is happening through method of discovering and understanding the world past and present of the (category of) people you are researching. Observations in this study were made on oral history interviews, artifacts, and directly on the participant. The last element of observation is on the researching during the process of co-constructing knowledge. In this vein, all observations were made overtly, and participants were made aware of the researcher's methods, modes, and rationale for observation in advance.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, the theoretical lens often determines the analytical approach (Gibbs, 2012). This project used oral histories to co-construct a history of the present and was analyzed through a critical historical lens. Data was analyzed and coded thematically and underpinned by a critical historical lens that situated contemporary participant experiences within a larger (racialized) global relational process. In turn, the project aimed to get at the

individual dichromatic changes in the participant and detect the ways in which a "history of the present" may have influenced those changes. Ultimately, I analyzed the effectiveness of this framing and how it may impact how further educational research could be conducted.

Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. It minimally organizes and describes data in detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study used both priori coding and open coding. Priori coding which was more deductive, and theory driven worked from themes established in prior adoption identity research to identify how closely study participants mirrored prior studies on adoptee identity regarding (a) if they felt in the middle of White and Asian, (b) different microaggressions, and (c) participant's educational experiences including factors like racial representation in teachers and curriculum. Open coding was inductive, and codes were subjective and interpretive. Using both methods resulted in themes that told a unique story about the data underpinned by four central concepts that both participants experienced in their daily lives.

Methodological Challenges and Triangulation Strategies

The conglomerate nature of combining different methods within a case study approach is designed to create exploratory flexibility and a depth of authenticity. However, Gibbs (2012) helps us understand that by nature case studies often raise questions of validity. He outlines unsubstantiated observations, small sample size, and overgeneralization as three methodological challenges to case studies.

Unsubstantiated Observations. This occurs when a researcher is observing things going on but is not quite sure what they are observing or how to code, evaluate, or analyze the

phenomenon. This usually happens when research is being conducted by a researcher outside of the phenomenon. In qualitative research, occupying a dual position as a researcher and group insider functions as an advantage both (1) giving the researcher a unique understanding of the phenomenon outside of a White normative gaze and (2) operates as a method of triangulation to contrast previous studies, theories, or framings.

Sample Size. Although small sample size may be a concern, the richness of participants' experiences along with the relative dearth of the AAAP population creates a natural diversity within the phenomenon of Asian American transracial adoption. Participants are different in almost every sense besides the phenomenon of Asian transracial adoption. Study participants come from different towns, school systems, higher education backgrounds, Asian regions of origin and ages. The triangulation idea here is to isolate the phenomenon of Asian transracial adoption in the U.S. and its effects against other studies where some of the previous elements are the same between participants.

Overgeneralizations. The other side of unsystematic summaries is overgeneralizing results. This study triangulates this idea uniquely by analyzing results against a common ideological backdrop of the (racialized) figure of the adoptee. It is important to understand in the context of this study that the aim is not to create a more accurate history but rather it is to connect the politics of the past to the participant's material experiences of the present (history of the present). The study did not aim to generalize among all members of the sub-group but rather to explore the breadth and depth of participant's daily experiences within the context of a historically racialized power dynamics. Unlike previous studies, I did not look for patterns to come specifically from participants' individual experiences alone but also the degree to which those individual experiences may be vestiges that thread historical processes of racialization in

the U.S. From a triangulation standpoint, I incorporated the figure of the adoptee to situate a theoretical framing that uses participants' individual daily experiences within to socio-historical framing, so data represents patterns of historical processes of disenfranchisement, contestation, and culture building more than generalizations of a particular sub-population at a specific moment in time.

Researcher Positionality. Creswell and Creswell (2018) articulate that the ways in which researchers design studies and the methods that they use are related to the researcher's philosophical world views. Creswell delineates four world views—Postpositivist, Constructivist, Transformative, and Pragmatic—that influence the ways in which each researcher plans, conducts, and analyzes their study. My own journey as an AAAP researcher has furthered my understanding as "self" existing as a historically situated subject. This new understanding continues to craft my world view through which I live and conduct my research. Aligning most closely to a "Transformative" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) world view which foregrounds deficiencies in the established norms. Research in that vein is change oriented and makes foundational critiques of underlying structures of society. In addition, I am an Asian American adopted person studying Asian American adopted people. Although many would consider me an insider researcher, I think that label limits the researcher to a dichotomy that does not adequately attend to the degrees of mobility and fluidity that this research encompassed. However, at times I was an insider. As an insider researcher (Greene, 2014) observations, insights, and engagement takes on a reflective or reflexive process that may not otherwise occur. Furthermore, there are research challenges and advantages to being a research insider.

Aguiler (1981) contends that critics of insider research argue that member knowledge is a result of "subjective involvement- a deterrent to objective perception and analysis (p.15). The

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perception is that insider researchers may be too familiar and narrow the research impeding

analysis (Aguiler,1981). Conversely, insider researchers bring a nuanced understanding of the

research environment and context (Bell, 2005). The researcher/participant interactions offer an

authenticity that is undergirded by a pre-existing understanding of the phenomenon and the

stereotypes, tropes, and trauma that may come with the phenomenon. To triangulate my

positionality, I engaged with two other researchers throughout the project about methodology,

study design, interview strategies, and analysis. Both researchers study different populations than

I do but use oral history methods for data collection and critical theory for analysis. One of these

researchers is an insider researcher and one is not in their respective fields of study. Both

researchers read, critiqued, and provided feedback throughout the research process.

Conclusion

Our current educational and political landscape makes necessary that students, educators,

and families especially those of color understand themselves as historically situated subjects

inscribed by their global conditions. Analyzing the ways in which Asian American adopted

people create culture by contesting their liminality through modes of interrogating, undermining,

memorializing, and conducting remembrance provides a window of constructing "self" beyond

the confines of Eurocentric identity frameworks and instead towards alternative ways of

knowing, thinking, and being. Framing this project as exploring a history of the present offers a

new lens by which to understand social location in a manner that unearths, revives, and

challenges the obscure connections with other historically disenfranchised social groups.

The major contributions of this project are to educators, researchers, and most

importantly, transracially adopted people. For educators and researchers this study provides a

new methodological framing in which to teach and explore social location and society for not only Asian transracially adopted people but possibly for many groups of (students) people—POC, women, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, people with language barriers, refugees, immigrants—as a product of a history of the present. For Asian adopted people this project provides a framework in which to understand not only their material existence but modes of solidarity within movements of other people of color in our present landscape. Lastly, this project values your position as a holder of knowledge who contributes to the ways in which you teach the world through the methods in which you contest your liminality, interrogate your presence of absence, transgress the conventions of modern liberalism, and theorize to survive.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Broadly, this chapter is organized into four sections. In the first section, I began with a brief introduction where I rationalized my framing of the study and oral history as my method of data collection. Next, I briefly discussed CRT and Asian Crit as theoretical underpinnings of my analysis methodology. Following that, I addressed my researcher positionality in conversation with standpoint theory framework.

The "themes" section used oral history excerpts to form counter narratives that identified and elaborated on the emergent findings that threaded through both participant oral history narratives. This section elaborates in more detail on the following four thematic findings followed by the telling of four counter narratives that best illustrated them. (1) Transracial intercountry adoption highlights a unique juxtaposed social positioning. (2) An approach to analysis that decenters Whiteness as the focal point opens new possibilities for AAAPs. (3) Participant's oral histories indicated that historically racialized societies are incommensurable with many of the liberal notions of the U.S. democratic promise. (4) AAAP can be unique sites of knowledge for educators and other AAAPs. The "analysis" section used the thematic findings to address the research questions. I concluded the section with a closing summary.

Introduction.

This project focused on understanding the emic perspective of the participants through the ways they theorize their daily social worlds and to explore new liberatory possibilities of public education. While each of these cases was unique, one of the primary aims of the study

was to explore the depth and the contexts of the similarities and differences of the participants. Oral history was an effective means for gathering information, but it was also a powerful social and historical tool. The most distinctive contribution of oral history has been to include within the historical record the experiences, perspectives, and theories of groups who might otherwise have been hidden from history (Perks & Thompson, 2015). This study positioned AAAPs as unique everyday knowledge producers and theorizers by attending to the nuances and complexities of transracial adoption as an additional social factor of intersectionality that is understudied. While some may consider the limited number of participants in this study a disadvantage, this study explored the nuance and complexity in a manner that more participants would have devalued. Focusing on contextualized, nuanced, and realistically complex narratives that challenge prevailing representations of AAAPs is best undertaken through an analytic framework that combines notions of CRT and Asian Crit.

CRT and Asian Crit. In this study, CRT and Asian Crit functioned as a method as well as an analytical framework. I analyzed the oral histories underpinning the tenants of CRT and Asian Crit to construct ways in which notions of historical unequal power relations affected the quotidian experiences of the participants. In addition, once the Oral history narrations were complete, I conducted follow up questions and scenarios framed through a CRT/Asian Crit lens to create a method of accessibility to understand their own history from an alternative viewpoint. As Mari Matsuda (1989) suggests:

> What is it that characterizes the new jurisprudence of people of color? First is a methodology grounded in the particulars of their social reality and experiences. This method is consciously both historical and revisionist, attempting to know history from the bottom. The desire to know history from the bottom has forced scholars to sources often ignored: journals, poems, oral histories, and stories from their own experiences of life in a hierarchically arranged world. (p. 4-5)

Under Matsuda's notions, embedding CRT/Asian Crit within the follow up questions and scenarios provided a method that connected oral history as a discipline to notions of CRT and Asian Crit through counter narratives. Participant's oral histories captured many instances of personal narrative recounting various forms of racism and sexism juxtaposed to their own analysis of a larger sociopolitical critique. From these roots, the "results" of this study feature my process of telling the participant's counter narratives as what Solorzano and Yosso (2002) describe as "other people's counter stories." This was built from the dialogical testimonio method. Building on that, "other people's" counter stories is the process in which the researcher tells these stories in third person revealing experiences and responses to racism and sexism. These types of counter narratives offer biographical analysis of the individual experiences of a person of color in relation to U.S. institutions in a sociohistorical context (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). From the standpoint of my dissertation research, this process involved "results" that came from themes underpinned by the tenants of CRT and or Asian Crit. Results are presented using excerpts from the participant's oral history narratives followed by a brief data analysis that was later expanded more in-depth in the "data analysis" portion where I answered the research questions. However, results are reached based on knowledge from data that is situated and contextual. As Beeson (2012) notes through his observations of Standpoint theory, the data is found at the intersection of the social positioning of the researched and the researcher.

Researcher Positionality. Standpoint theory emerged from the concern about unequal distribution of social power and authority in society (Harding, 1993). The fundamental idea is that each of our viewpoints is shaped not only by individual experience, but also by our social positioning. Therefore, the process of social and cultural construction is underpinned by unequal power relations that necessarily should become a key subject of deconstruction and analysis that

forefronts both the position of the subjects being studied and the perspective of the researcher as well (Beeson, 2012; Harding, 1993). My research "standpoint" is situated as follows:

I was born somewhere in South Korea in 1984. I was adopted and immigrated to the U.S. in 1985 and went to a wonderful family in Northeastern Minnesota. My town was small and predominately White. I had a great childhood. Despite that, at times I did experience microaggressions from community members and school mates. I found it surprising that despite being much older, a different gender, raised in a different state, and hailing from a different country of origin, many of the same microaggressions that I experienced were also experienced by the participants.

I became interested in studying intercountry adoption in the context of race and power dynamics when my son was born. Prior to that point I had never seen myself as anything besides White or a better way of puting it; unraced. Seeing my son for the first time was a peculiar feeling because I was unprepared for him to look Asian. I think this had just been conditioned into me subconsciously. From that point, I tried to reconnect with my birth family and learn more about "culture." After failing to reconnect, I became more interested in the experiences other AAAP had growing up and what those narratives could bring to the field of education.

In many aspects this project situated me as an insider researcher in this study. Being an AAAP means occupying a similar unique social situatedness. Such researcher subjectivity connects the researcher to the researched through a-symmetric subjective experiences. and plays a pivotal role in the processes by the particularity of subjective experiences. This connection seemed to play a role for participants. Sara told me that "100%, I definitely would have said no" to the study if I (the researcher) would not have been a fellow AAAP. Amy described it in this manner:

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I feel a lot more comfortable with someone like you. It's definitely just the fact that you can relate to me and that you've gone through such similar things. Even with my therapist, I can't really talk to her about these things. It's just crazy to think that people go through like the exact same thing as you and you may never cross paths unless something like this (study) happens. You know, maybe they handle it differently or maybe they handle it the same, but it is just crazy and also just really cool, and it makes me feel better that other people can relate to me.

There is no doubt that my similar situatedness as an AAAP added a focus on first-hand tacit or implicit knowledge about the cultural environment and the dynamics of interpersonal relations that are otherwise unreachable. The increased proximity provides an additional layer of breadth and depth that would otherwise be unavailable for exploration (Kirpitchenko & Volodor, 2014). However, an insider/outsider researcher dichotomy is too simplistic of a framing. The value and desirability of this study comes from the allure of individual, unique, and subjective quotidian experiences. As with all researchers, my similar social positioning influenced the research process and points of inspection, but I took care to recognize the need for operational distancing. As such, my researcher positionality took on multiple dimensions on a continuum with varying degrees of mobility that positioned me fluidly in the research. Understanding researcher positionality outside the confines of an insider/outsider dichotomy created counter narratives that featured a nuanced breadth and depth of knowledge from the participants' intersectional social position (Alcoff, 1991).

To create counter narratives Solorzano and Yosso (2002) suggests the researcher incorporate notions of theoretical sensitivity and cultural intuition as central aspects of crafting a counter narrative. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), theoretical sensitivity is a personal quality of the researcher that indicates an awareness of the subtleties of the meaning of the data.

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't (pp. 41-42). Bernal's (1998) theory of cultural intuition "extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory and points to the importance of the participant engaging in the analysis of data" (pp. 563-564).

Using theoretical sensitivity and cultural intuition, I created these counter narratives from excerpts of participant's (a) oral history data, (b) my own professional and personal experiences, and (c) existing literature on the topics. Using this process participant counter narratives were grounded in sociohistorical context and revealed the thematic personal experiences and responses to their social positions in their everyday lives. Before I identify and elaborate on the thematic findings that emerged, I want to clarify and rationalize the structure of the remainder of the chapter.

The themes are organized around particular personal experiences of the participants oral history testimonies. Both participants told many stories across many interviews that highlighted the juxtaposed lives that they live and how they negotiate their relations within them. The overall theme that came up was that both participants wanted to be understood. The most poignant example was when we talked about marriage and relationship partners. They both needed what Sara described as "just at least someone that understands" that they live life between what Amy describes as an everyday experience of" that saying, something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue." As such, the themes are organized by these four terms illustrated in more detail in the "Thematic Findings" section.

Each theme begins with a brief introduction followed by oral history excerpts that capture the identified theme in the personal experiences of the participants. In oral history fashion,

returning to the personal voice of society allows us to craft an understanding of cultural histories by the people who live them. As such the recording of the following themes and results allows us to better align official history with the reality of those who live it (Richardson, 2002). Each theme concludes with a "Findings" sub-section that provides clarity on researcher context regarding a rationale on coding and organizing the data.

The analysis sections follow the themes and is where I answer the research questions using the terms and patterns of the themes. This section starts by listing the research question and then identifying which theme(s) illustrate this best. Next, continuing Solorzano and Yasso's (2002) method of counter stories, I analyze the results using additional oral history excerpts and present data tables to answer the research questions by applying the thematic findings in conversation with the research questions. As I found there tended to be multiple themes that addressed single research questions. This process is followed three times to answer all research questions.

Thematic Findings

The following reoccurring themes were coded as experiences that were "something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue" to structure the through lines where the individual experiences of both participants intersected in their narrations. I present them here for the reader as an introductory framework to structure the patterns and chronology of the rest of the section. Following this, I elaborated on each theme through an oral history counter narrative that highlighted the thematic understanding most clearly.

1. ***Something Old: "Ain't No Culture Camp"*** This theme highlighted the juxtaposed social positioning that AAAPs occupy as a product of transracial adoption. The oral history narrations told a collective narration of life as a transracially AAAP whose unique circumstances on one hand frame sophisticated strategies that use Whiteness as property to gain a structural advantage but on the other hand critiqued Whiteness through counter stories of cost and incongruence. Furthermore, this theme highlighted incongruence at the intersection of notions of a "clean break" intercountry adoption and a legacy of racialized power regimes. This counter narrative illustrated the need to relocate the idea of liminal social positioning from traditional notions of between White and Asian to between liberal adoption rhetoric (Whiteness) and modern experiences of historically racialized societal norms (Asianness). The thematic findings of this section indicated that participant experience is permanent, inescapable, and framed within a racialized middle.

2. ***Something New: "Just Not Like an Everyday Thing"*** This theme worked along the contours of educational experience to explore the liberatory possibilities of education. "Something New" began with participant narrations that were framed in a liberal ideological belief but went on to counter that belief with later statements when participants were personally put into educational scenarios. Theme two illustrated the dearth of theoretical and practical educational methods and tools participants had to work with when thinking about how they related to the world around them. Moreover, "something new" represented the influence of "follow up" questions and scenarios framed to re-imagine their narrations within a framework that decentered Whiteness and analyzed their experiences in conversation with other groups of color. The switch in framing also provided "something new" evidenced by participants educational

"epiphanies" analyzing from a new perspective. Lastly, this theme may shed light on the implications and possibilities of making a K-12 curriculum that analyzes at intersection of historical processes of power and quotidian racialized experiences, "just like, an everyday thing."

3. ***Something Borrowed: "It Pays Off in the End"*** Step by Step to your Dream School One of the key themes woven into the oral histories of both participants was the limitation of Whiteness as a tangible property use even in a seemingly uniquely advantaged proximity to Whiteness. Despite designing and using strategic methods to situationally use Whiteness as property in some instances, both participants narrated stories where Whiteness ultimately fell short. This theme untangled the legacies and incongruencies of being racialized as Asian but socialized as White. Moreover, this theme touched on a hallmark incompatibility in regard to intercountry transracial adoption within a U.S. capital power regime by illustrating how personal proximity to (White) privilege and (White) social capital ultimately does not overcome historically structured co-fraternals like power and race.

4. ***Something Blue "Chapters, Stories [;] Keeping Going"*** This theme walked the line of direct and indirect costs of transracial adoption. Along with some traditional costs of adoption like resentment, abandonment, and isolation, this theme gave an intimate exemplar at how those costs can be accentuated for AAAP after and during life events where they experienced further loss. This powerful counter narration featured mental health as a focal point to illustrate the additional struggles AAAPs can have with(out) their forever family after they are adopted. Moreover, this theme reflected foreseen and unforeseen costs of transracial adoption and how AAAP negotiate those costs. Most

importantly, this narration tracked the process of navigating and contesting "Blue" moments of sadness, despair, and depression to make possible the agency to define self in addition to identifying the imposed structural factors that dictate her social location. "Something Blue" went in-depth to explore the methods and mediums AAAPs may use to contest their liminality.

Something Old: "Ain't No Culture Camp"

Sara doesn't "fear death." As an abandoned child she knows it could have gone one of two ways. "If you don't think about another person's reality, then you get too complacent; even if the other person is you." She was a founding in Guangzhou, China on a store shelf with her umbilical cord still attached, at least that is what her "hypothetical story that probably happened" states. Sara is well educated and intelligent with the ability to articulate phenomena that happens to her from a structural perspective. A tough young woman, she gets frustrated when her closest friends call her adoption "cool," shifting her daily life's complexity to novelty narrative of a situation that she calls "just is what it is." Sara carries a certain unapologetic bravado, her blunt wear it on her sleeve honesty highlights how she strategically moves through a life of juxtapositions. Navigating these juxtapositions every day is her "something old." During our interviews, the fluidity through which she used race, adoption, and proximity to Whiteness threaded a thematic needle that offered a look into the strategies of her success and the costs associated with the paradox of the boon and critique of Whiteness that remains inescapable in her life at different times and in different contexts. Sara gave examples of each:

> I mean honestly, I use it (proximity to Whiteness) to my advantage. Like we talked about before, I know how to play the game. As a minority you have to get really good at

anticipating what someone will assume about you or want to hear from you. You know, we have a role to play. I mean, when I'm going in for interviews, I know the demographic of who I am trying to convince that I am the best candidate for. I'm White before I'm not, you know. I mean, I speak perfect English, I am an English major and my name (is White). Do you use your middle name on things? I take mine out when I need to. When I go in for the interview and they figure out I'm Asian I play the diversity card better than an Asian/Asian. Sometimes I feel like we probably know more about being White than White people do. I mean, I just know that when I have to cater to White people, I cater to them, and I'm damn good at it.

To her credit, Sara is almost masterful at catering to White people (Whiteness). Although she strategically advantages that she is "Americanized and Whiteafied," there are costs at the intersection of adopted, White, Asian, woman, and immigrant, as her narration describes, those costs are as intimate as they are inescapable:

I have just always felt a sense of being in my situation and my situation is not the norm. It's isolating but sometimes I like being on my little island because I am safe from those assumptions or that uncomfortableness that comes from those questions. Part of my isolation or being on an island is self-directed because I need that time by myself in order to cope with my daily life.

Park-Taylor and Wing (2019) point out that adoption is implicitly racialized but the added layer of adoption in microaggressions challenges the authenticity of an adopted person's humanity by either over emphasizing a false dichotomy that assumes a certain connection between culture and race (Asianness) or taking a colorblind post racial perspective that race is not significant at all. As Sara narrates, it can come in a variety of ways from a variety of people:

You know, from Asians it's (microaggressions) much different. They ask more prying questions about ethnicity where White people are just more nonchalant nosey and have this expectation like I have to answer them. It comes off as curiosity and it almost masks

the shiness and invasiveness. But the Asian/Asians they are blunt and just go for it, and then there is my family.

My mom and I are pretty close, and we go to the nail salon together. I always have this impending fear that I'm going to get questioned about my race or if I have to go into my whole story, then explaining about my relation to my mom. We were getting our nails done in like Florida and the lady doing my nails asks me where I'm from. So, I was like I'm from Raleigh. I'm going to say where I'm from, I'm not going to say the answer in the back of my mind that I know she is looking for. After I said Raileigh, she literally laughed at me and then started talking Vietnamese or whatever it was to her little partner over there. So, then her partner asked, no, where are you really from? I wasn't going to do it but then it just came out of my mouth. I was like damn, why did I just give in to what they wanted when I didn't owe them anything.

After outlining the ranges in the ways White people differ from Asian people in how they levy microaggression in her experience, she elaborated on examples of microaggressions that she had experienced throughout her life organized intersectionally on ideas including race, gender, ancestry, culture, immigration, and language. She narrated a highly sophisticated intersectional critique of the incongruence of her social location. Her narration featured the cost of microaggressions and how the microaggressions operationalize through her experience at the intersection of immigration and education:

I mean, I definitely consider myself an immigrant just because again, I fall under that definition of migrating from another country into the US so under the definition, yeah, I'm an immigrant. I feel like a lot like my family does not see me as an immigrant. They just don't see that. That's where I feel like the familial difference definitely plays a role because if you have a child that is under the definition of immigrant, you better not say the things that you do say. It goes back to like that rose colored thing about the whole adoption saving thing is based on like the coming to America story where you get this opportunity thing, right? Like it almost, it doesn't, it won't make up for that loss, but it's like, well, at least I can play this immigrant story like play this character.

Like with the whole culture camp thing and Asian middle names somehow preserving heritage. That would make me an immigrant and it would also make me a first-gen student but somehow claiming that is cheating the system. I mean they (Asian birth parents) didn't go to college. Am I not still their daughter? You know, they're trying to just totally erase this piece of me that's connected to this. Like you're trying to say let's go to a culture camp after just totally wiping away the (culture). Like, if I can't be first

Gen, there ain't no culture camp either. You know, right? Can't do both. You know, if you're trying to take that part of me and totally erase it from all history, then you can't send me the culture camp because you also erased that. You can't keep my middle name because you also erased it. Who named me that in the first place? Not you. So, you're going to choose to keep my middle name and say whatever, but you're going to say I'm not an immigrant, I'm not first-Gen I'm not this, I'm not that. These are the things that actually make me match these other people you say that I am, but I'm really not like. I mean how am I cheating the system, the system cheated me. That's why I call it my situation.

Theme One Findings: Critiquing and Protecting Whiteness. Sara's narrations really underscore the inescapable structural juxtaposed middle that is unique to transracial AAAP. Her oral history gave great examples of how a life of personal experience has led to sophisticated intersectional theorizing of the many moving parts that can make up liminal social positionings in racialized societies. Sara's stories featured structural critiques that presented a theory to practice approach within her example of strategizing toward gaining a particular structural advantage by "finessing my way through the game." In addition, she illustrated the costs by focusing on the double standards of preserving heritage in clean break adoption in education. Although this section did not feature Amy's narrations, her oral history was told along similar contours that juxtaposed a need to critique and protect notions of White supremacy but was less geared towards strategizing the game, and instead was based on individual personal experiences that consistently underpinned the costs of subjugation by featuring stories of how she just "tried to be the person that everyone else wanted."

Both participants critiqued Whiteness through intimate counter narratives while protecting notions of White supremacy varied from short practical narrations to phrases, or simply word choices. While coding both transcripts I found a total of 123 words or phrases that were statements that ranged from directly protecting notions of White supremacy, avoiding race,

releasing others from responsibility of racism, participants disparaging themselves for not living

up to Whiteness, reifying racialized norms, and defining themselves opposite of people of color.

Most importantly, both critiques and protections illustrated that the liminal interplay that

undergirds participant AAAP's quotidian experiences are (a) permanent, (b) inescapable, and (c)

theorized within a White and Asian binary. These patterns formed the foundation of the next

theme.

Table 1. Interplay of Critique and Protection of Whiteness

Participant	Critique	[a]Protection	Tendencies
Amy	Better Life Adoption Principle	Race Avoidance (15)	Critiques: Individual based off personal experience
	Liberal Colorblindness	Point/Counter Point Statements (3)	Protections: Release of Responsibility Racism is not that bad people are just ignorant
	Clean break Adoption Assimilation	Defining Self Opposite of POC (5)	
		Self-Disparaging (7)	
		Reifying Racialized Stereotypes (5)	
		Reifying Colorblindness (2)	
Sara	Non-Immigrant Narrative	Defining Self Opposite of POC (42)	Critiques: Structural and sophisticated
	Race/Culture Conflation	Defending Institutions of Whiteness (20)	Protections: Pragmatic ways to get ahead
	The "Game" of Whiteness	Race Avoidance (15)	
		Self-Disparaging (5)	
		Reifying Racialized Stereotypes (4)	

Note. This table displays participant's paradoxical interplay between critiquing and protecting notions of Whiteness in their everyday experiences.

[a]Specific Note. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of times the oral history narrations specified a reference of that particular protection of Whiteness notated in the "Protection" column.

Something New: "Just Not Like an Everyday Thing"

Both Sara and Amy are self-proclaimed liberals. Over the course of their oral history interviews both participants demonstrated moments of understanding race and racism from a structural standpoint but had difficulty moving outside of their own experiential White and Asian binary in their analysis techniques. It became clear to me that they had a general dearth of theoretical knowledge to frame their analysis and had not engaged in many practical educational

thought activities that decentered White(ness) as the primary analytical starting point. The results were contradictory moments in different segments of their narrations where they seemed to subscribe to the very ideological processes that they critiqued. For example, both participants were in favor of the Black Lives Matter movement but in other parts of their narrations, Amy felt that race should not be used in admissions because, "it isn't fair to White people" and Sara felt that graduating from HBCUs wouldn't give you that "real world preparation."

Despite statements like these, both participants also displayed the general building blocks to understand more wholistically. When talking about Black Lives Matter, Amy thought it was important to sympathize not empathize because "we're not the same.

"We're not Black. We don't go through the same kind of discrimination that they do." Sara showed an even more nuanced understanding and was consistently able to integrate her understanding with personal experience. She exhibited that when she narrated:

> Oh my God. You know what? Speaking of like family and identity, like structure. My mom, I went home with my mom, and I had another conversation about race. She was like, why is it a problem when White people wear braids like cornrows? I was like, mom, the whole basis of it is that is not a hairstyle for White hair and that it is a protective hairstyle for black hair. Then she goes on about like saying how Vikings and stuff wore braids in their hair. I was just like mom; they did not wear cornrows. If you're going to take (cultural) things from people, I mean, the reason I don't like White people claiming that kind of stuff is nobody took anything from you. There's no other side to the coin.

As both participants got deeper into their oral histories there were more moments of contradiction between their liberal political messaging on topics like Black Lives Matter and statements, they would make that fail to recognize their differential racial societal positioning that Black Lives Matter foundationally critiques. As these instances would arise, I began using follow up questions and scenarios that introduced new ways of thinking theoretically and

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practically about themselves and their stories in conversation with other groups of color;

something that had happened infrequently in their previous educational experiences.

Amy did not like school. By her own admission she was not a good student. Amy

believes there is "academic education and life experience education." She characterizes academic

education as "being defined by a number and how well you can remember things." "I could

study for hours, and I would still forget and then my level of intelligence was defined by that."

The only class she took that was like sociology, ethnic studies, or American studies was

"probably American history." The other kind of education is based on what you were "willing to

put yourself through or what you had to go through." Over the course of her educational

narration, it became clear that she had just never experienced marrying the two. As a follow up,

we started with theory. I read her the following from Chicana studies:

> To live in the borderlands, means you are neither *hispania, india, negra, espanola, ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata,* **** ***** half-breed caught in the crossfire between camps carrying all five races on your back not knowing which side to turn to, run from; To live in the Borderlands means knowing that the india in you, betrayed for 500 years, is no longer speaking to you, that *Mexicanas* call you *Rajetas*, that denying the Anglo inside you is as bad as having denied the Indian and the black. People walk through you without even knowing you are there, and the wind steals your voice" (Anzuldua, 2007, p. 216).

I asked her if she could relate, "I don't think on the surface level, no not really." Then I read it

again with a focus that put Amy in relation to the theory. To live in the Borderlands, you are

neither Chinese, nor Asian, nor American, nor White. You are mestiza liminality or **** *****

half-breed, caught in the crossfire between camps in all four categories on your back not

knowing which side to turn to, run from; all four live on your shoulders. To live in the

Borderlands means knowing that the China in you, betrayed you 500 years, is no longer speaking

to you. The White people call you Asian. But you know, denying the Whiteness inside of you is as bad as denying the Chinese inside of you. People walk through you without even knowing you are there, and the wind steals your voice. After I augmented the context to her decentering Whiteness Amy had a much different take:

> I am feeling a lot of different things like realization, loneliness, sadness. Yeah, just because I have never gotten this deep into my identity before. I think that definitely knocked it into my head. This is just not like an everyday thing. It's just not something that I think about and yeah, that was so eye opening.

Sara and I targeted a more practical idea. Her narration about her college admissions process took us into the process of affirmative action where she did not think colleges and universities should use race as a factor in their admissions process:

> Well for instance, I didn't want my race to allow someone to make a generalization about me that because (they think) I am more racially or like socially Asian. I'm more White than Asian culturally but that's not what somebody is going to think. The trouble with affirmative action is it is there to increase diversity, right? The quota system was there to increase the amount of Asian and Black people and that was declared unconstitutional because you can't declare a certain number of seats for a certain race.

As Sara was talking through the example, she started changing her mind mid process. Building from a different viewpoint someone (college and university admissions departments) making racialized monolithic generalizations about her, she rationalized her change in thinking by saying:

> That's why I was automatically just like no (race should play a factor) it shouldn't play any type of role just because of what I've experienced and why I don't want it to play a

role, but the more I think about it…you don't want to be colorblind. You want to recognize that individuals have differences that can be so beneficial in different ways. I guess I would say not that it shouldn't be considered but it shouldn't be so categorical in the way they categorize like Asians score an average of 31 on the ACT versus…I guess it shouldn't be totally wiped off the table because that is how (institutions) we recognize difference.

Later in the conversation she put the puzzle together at the nexus of education, gender, systemic barriers, institutional intervention, and her own experience when she summarized her final thoughts on affirmative action:

I'm a minority and I feel like with all the systemic barriers that people of color have faced like its (affirmative action) the least that education, like educational leveling is like literally the least you can do. They intervene in women's bodily autonomy and after the structural and social damage the U.S. (slavery) has caused its (affirmative action) the bare minimum.

Theme Two Findings: Decentering Whiteness. Something new represents the reframing of self in relation to others using theory and practical means. Although both participants were liberal their ideology did not always line up to their practical choices. For example, both participants believed strongly in notions of diversity but thought that race should not figure into the college admissions practice. While Sara did change her mind after analyzing her thought process, these misconceptions underscore the need for theories and practical learning activities that decenter Whiteness. Results indicated that flipping the frame and exploring social location outside of the Asian and White binary gave participants another perspective in which to understand themselves and navigate the world around them. Analyzing from frameworks that are relational to other groups of color exemplifies a "defamiliarizing" method that Lowe (2015) argues makes possible alternative ways of knowing, thinking, and being. The above narrations

reflect the new ways of understanding or educational "epiphanies" that both participants arrived at using an alternative framework that de-centered Whiteness. These results shed light on the liberatory possibilities of education.

Throughout the oral history narrations, there were enough examples of misaligned ideological values to practices that I asked follow up questions to their oral histories framed outside of a White and Asian binary. The following table summarizes participant thinking when engaging with theories and practical thought exercises that decentered Whiteness. The follow up questions stem from oral history narrations where participants addressed their K-12, college admissions, and COVID-19 experiences. Throughout the follow up question process, the participants' socialization in Whiteness was evident. For example, despite showing many examples of her theoretical understanding of a history of systemic racism in the U.S., Sara still feels that "demographics matter" and would select a predominately White private school in a White neighborhood for her future children. In addition, Amy is a big proponent of the Black Lives Matter movement but still believes that factoring race into the college admissions process is "not fair to White people." This indicates that there is still a ways to go.

In contrast, the follow up thought exercises did reveal that both participants engage in both double consciousness and code switching regularly. For both participants it helped to simply be able to name their "everyday" process of thinking. After establishing the terminology, both participants continued to refer to it throughout the remainder of their oral histories. In addition, Amy was able to begin to understand that there is racialized differentiation even with double consciousness when analyzing how structural barriers of COVID-19 affect other groups of color compared to her. As the table indicates there may be educational implications to (a) naming and providing terms for everyday processes of thinking, (b) providing contextual thought

exercises using real world examples, and most importantly (c) exploring a structural understanding of self in context of racial differentiation compared with of other groups of color. Exploring self in conversation with other groups of color offers a lens of critique revealing limitations to the promises of Whiteness for AAAP foundational in the next theme.

Table 2. Thinking in Theories that Decenter Whiteness

Topic	Theory	Educational Epiphany	Analysis
COVID-19	Double Consciousness Differential Racism Anti-Blackness	Differential Racism happens structurally	COVID-19 provided a good example showing how structural racism differentiates. Amy's double consciousness was fixated on the Asian body as a disease. Examining COVID-19 through anti-Blackness focused on the disparity of Black access to health care in death rates.
College Admissions	Double Consciousness Differential Racism Anti-Blackness	Overturning Affirmative Action represents a way in which structural racism can work through Asians against other groups of color.	Sara reframed her understanding of race in college admissions from her own perspective of race being used to exclude Asians to a structural perspective through a lens of reparations.
Neighborhoods & Schools	Double Consciousness Differential Racism Anti-Blackness	Her children will be POC and will have different needs than White children	Amy reorganized her hierarchy of importance of the school she selected for her children around equity instead of college readiness & test scores

Note. This table indicates examples of how participants theorizing and thinking shifted by using theories that decentered notions of Whiteness.

Something Borrowed: "It Pays Off in the End" Step by Step to your Dream School

Sara is a junior in college "credit wise." She remembers being so excited to attend her dream school back when she was applying a couple years ago. It had been something she has been preparing for most of her life. She has "just always seen herself there" and her great grandfather on her dad's side even taught there. Education has always been foundational in Sara's life. Her parents already knew they didn't want her in the public school system. To this

day, Sara will always be grateful to them for the "premium they put on her education" and the social mobility opportunities that has afforded her. That didn't mean she didn't work hard:

> The voice I always hear in my head most is like my little kid self, pushing me. I call myself my own Asian parent, like, my own tiger mom. It has always been about what can I do next, for me. I don't know, it's sort of a deep down I have to defy the (immigrant) odds, I guess. Ever since 5th grade, it was like, I'm going to make straight A's so I can get into the best university. It was always this goal I had in my head, and it was like if you lock in and grind and not go out and stuff it pays off in the end. That (idea) came from my parents in terms of their situation. They are both MDs, but they worked hard because it wasn't easy for them either. I mean, that work ethic is in me. During our hour break midday, and then during our lunch period, I would just be banging out essays or assignments. That had a really detrimental toll on my mental health but in my mind, it was like, my mental health could be sacrificed if it gets me to where I want to go. She went on to detail her college application process further:
>
> Like, if I going to be honest, my essay was bad***. I put my heart and soul into that thing. I wrote about my general back story, and I used that essay to set myself apart from the Asian/Asians. I felt good about it too because all the admissions officers that would visit my high school would stress that the essay is the deciding factor for what makes you, you. I also had an in, you know my great grandfather who was the American ambassador to Egypt taught there. So, I was just really confident because I had the test scores, GPA, extra curriculars, class rigor, and then my interviews. My parents always stressed the importance of communicating with adults. So, my one-on-one alumni interviews, they were very interested in my story. So, when those rejection letters came in, I was literally just like f*** me. It made it seem like they don't give a f***. I felt so generalized, so overlooked, and not seen as an individual with a story. The failure of that goal I had tried to reach for so long and the college admissions process has just changed the way I look at things. You know it would make sense (to think) that since we are in-between…I mean like raised White and look Asian that we would be in the middle of them, but I really think the reality is that we are just in the Asian group. You know, we sort of barrow the White part sometimes. They want to make you a statistic. They don't want to see my story as different. They just want to put me in the Asian category. Before that whole (college admissions) process, I felt like if I just took certain steps, I would reach my goal, you know, I would get in (to her dream school).

Sara wants to go to law school after undergrad. She has a keen understanding of how society works from her own unique intersectional experiences, and she wants to bring that to law school with her. She is thankful for her undergraduate experience, especially that she will
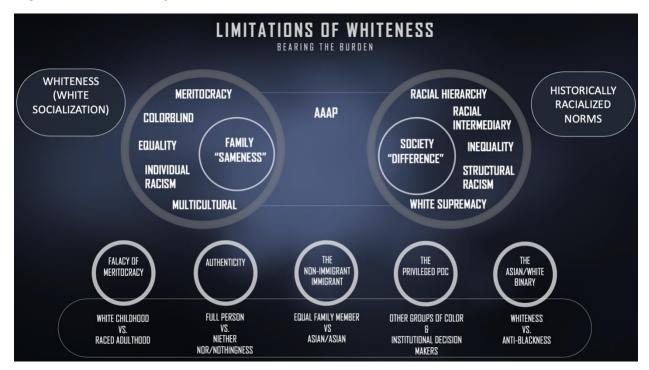
graduate debt free so she can "run it up in law school." Ultimately, Sara hopes to attend law school at her dream school, Georgetown University.

Theme Three Findings: The Limitations of AAAP Whiteness. Sara's counter narrative illustrates the limitation of Whiteness as property as a product of a discrepancy between liberal notions of multicultural equality, transracial adoption, and historically racialized norms. Sara's cautionary counter tale draws out the influence of the family locus and the power of colorblind ideologies that guide White socialization. The interplay within the transracial adoption family locus highlights the distinction between White as a (un)raced and Whiteness as a power mechanism. Sara's parents functioned as the primary working and ideological examples from which she built her initial value system. Sara's liberal framing of success as the replicatable process that her parents used combining work ethic, determination, and education (intellect) draws on notions of the myth of meritocracy which specifically work against people of color. Sara's narrative shows that in her experience as an AAAP (White) colorblind socialization uses the family locus to construct a value system for AAAPs to operate within that attempts to decouple the race and power phenomenon while also attempting to bestow privileges of Whiteness onto a racialized body. Her experience emphasizes a poignant contextual incongruence of her social location, illustrating personal experiences of the limitation of Whiteness and its affects.

Although not featured here, Amy's oral history followed a similar pattern but attended more to the affects. She framed limitations of Whiteness as a product of never being able to "appeal to everybody." Figure 2 represents the breadth and depth of the burden that has fallen on each participant. Both participants narrated the limitations of Whiteness by constructing themselves in the middle of binaries that featured the liberal social promises of Whiteness and

the historically racialized norms applied by Whiteness on the Asian body. Specifically, the middle of figure two contrasts the notions of Whiteness and historically racialized norms. The bottom of figure two represents sub-themes that threaded together narrations of daily experiences characterizing the limitations of Whiteness for participants. Participant one's college admissions story highlighted discrepancy between her childhood meritocracy blueprint that worked for her parents and her current racialized realities. The second thread focused on whether social authenticity was even possible. The third and fourth patterns illustrated the challenge of participants distinguishing themselves from other Asians in the eyes of their families, other groups of color, and institutional decision makers (like admissions committees). Lastly, participant narratives positioned themselves strictly within a White and Asian binary limiting the lens through which they perceive their social location as adjacent to Whiteness. Each sub-theme was present in both participants' oral histories and highlighted the different binaries that each participant must navigate in different contexts of their lives. Perhaps most notably, when analyzing the participant narrations of the limitations of Whiteness, liminality went from a proposition of a between race (White and Asian) to a proposition of power. Participant narrations illustrated that they were actually battling in the middle of a family that positioned the participant as deserving of placement and power of Whiteness in a society built on differentiating by race.

Figure 2. Limitations of Whiteness

LIMITATIONS OF WHITENESS
BEARING THE BURDEN

Ultimately, both participants just wish people could understand. The last theme highlights that notion with stories focused on "something blue" which emphasizing daily patterns of social isolation, microaggressions from friends, and mental health struggles.

Something Blue: Chapters, Stories [;] "Keeping Going"

It was early in the morning that day we met to do our first interview. We had never met each other, and I could tell she was a bit tired. As we started the interview, she was reserved. She was guarded in anticipation of talking to someone she had never met and letting them into the "privacy of (her) my story." Amy is in her 20's and she holds her family and best friend dear to heart, even if "everything hasn't been perfect." As we began going through the first interview, she was tough to crack until we began talking about her philosophy of tattoos:

I think my adoption is the primary reason as to why I am who I am, you know what I'm saying. The experiences I have gone through, and the traumatic moments have made me who I am today. Even if I have my mental struggles, I will get through it every single day. It (her tattoo) has that story (adoption story) in it, within the keeping going message that it represents.

Amy was 10 when her parents got divorced. She had just arrived home off the school bus when her dad was in his car getting ready to leave. "My Mom just looked back at me and said, we're getting a divorce. That's how I found out." Divorce holds a unique threat to adoptees because of the promise of unification into a forever family after the severance from a first family. Later in our interview, Amy twice reiterated the subconscious affect her parents' divorce has had on her first when she talked about "the little part of her that resents not being good enough and being given up for adoption and second when she mentioned "perfect bodies, perfect families, and married parents," as her stereotypical view of her White high school peers. Amy's life changed in other ways as well:

My Mom, I will always love her to death, but I think she is just emotionally incapable of a good mother to put it bluntly. After the divorce, she turned into someone I didn't even recognize. She just fell into this deep depressive episode. She was just sad and emotionally and physically incapable of taking care of my brother and me. When she fell into depression, I was left to take care of everything. I basically raised myself. I had to cook, and I had to make sure my mom was up in time to take us (she and her brother) to school. We had six dogs and three cats. It was just hectic, but I just had to make sure we were surviving. For those three years (10-13) life was just too hard. "I just never had a chance to emotionally take all of that in. I just never mentally grieved. You know, I have a lot of mental problems.

Amy's coping mechanism was to take on more and be busy so she would not have to think about her life. She also leaned on friends to get her through. She described her best friend and how much he means to her:

He was a year older than me, and we went to the same high school. I could talk to him about literally everything and he was just always there for you no matter what. It's crazy because I feel like that is how I wanted to be for him. You know, in high school he was just the best guy and going to college on a wrestling scholarship. He was just a very, very, successful person. So, when he chose to end his life due to a very, very unfortunate mental illness it was all very sudden. I'm sorry I am getting so emotional. He passed away in 2019 and I want to hear his voice again if I could. I just didn't get the chance to say anything. Amy reminded me, we don't really get over things, they just become a part of us.

Although her counter narrative highlights the variety of ways loss, resentment, and dislocation have repeated in her life post adoption, her story also features ways in which she has contested those social placements. Most importantly, her narrative illustrates her modes of contestation as her means of conducting remembrance, framing life purpose, and just simply surviving. As she puts it:

That's the reason why I got it. I survived and I won against myself. She looked down at her arm and then held it up for me to see. It's a semi-colon. It is a symbol that means you could have ended the chapter or even the story, but you didn't. You decided to keep going.

Theme Four Findings: Reclaiming Agency by Contesting Liminality. As Amy's narration illustrates, AAAP face feelings of sadness, loss, resentment, and dislocation that stem from their adoption into a transracial family. Sara narrated similar stories and both participants showcased the variety of ways they contest their liminal social locations. Participants contesting their liminality threaded several different patterns shown in the table II below. Art, language, and education featured as domains from which participants used tools to contest their social location between legacies of White adoption discourse and racialized social norms. For both participants

contestation served as a reminder of the function of power and a framework of agency and

reclamation that counters it. Juxtaposing legacies of institutional social locations and the modes

AAAPs use to contest them offers a possible outline in which to further explore contemporary

terms of historical power and the modes of interrogation, transgression, and refusal.

Table 3. Reclaiming Agency by Contesting Liminality

	Tool	Contestation	Strategy
Art	Tattoo	Clean Break Adoption	Reclaim: Agency/Voice/Visibility
		Clean Assimilation	Disrupt: Erasure/Separation
		Perpetual Orphan	
		Invisible Asian	
Language	Asian/Asian	Asian Monolith	Words/phrases that use Whiteness to stabilize identity as opposite of POC
	Whitewash	Social Proximity to color	Words/phrases that use anti-Blackness to stabilize identity as opposite of POC
	Whiteafied		
	Americanized		
	(non) illegal		
	(not) low income		
Education	Assignments	Perpetual Orphan	Formal Educational Tool
	Tattoos	Clean Break Adoption	Informal Educational Tool
			Reclaim: Agency/Voice/Visibility
			Disrupt: Erasure/Separation

Note. This table displays the strategies and tools that participants used to contest the varieties of microaggressions and stereotypes they experienced in their lived experience.

Analysis

My analysis was conducted underpinning notions of CRT and Asian Crit. The participants and their experiences functioned as a locus of knowledge from which to draw on. I analyzed the research questions looking for examples of structural notions of power or legacies of power that were evident in the participant's daily lives as described in their oral history narratives. Aligning to the four broad thematic findings, I drilled down into the relevant themes in each question by analyzing (1) the ways in which participants contest their social locations, (2) the mechanisms, modes, and repercussions of their social locations evident in their quotidian experiences, and (3) the educational implications of attending to notions of power in quotidian experience.

Research Question One. How do Asian American adopted people contest their liminality? (i.e., how do they recognize, interrogate, transgress, and refuse terms of severance, dislocation, separation, and violence?)

Contesting Liminality was featured heavily in themes one and four. There were many variations of formats, strategies, and focuses of contestation in participant's oral histories but they were threaded together by undergirding two concepts. First, contestation attempted to both aspire to Whiteness but also separate from Asianness in hopes to gain a structural advantage. Secondly, contestation was organized around the idea of seizing agency to make declarations about self. Both varieties of contestation highlight navigating through various legacies of a structurally racialized societal system.

Theme one illustrates the process of Whiteness working through notions of Orientalism in participant's lives. It details an interplay that features how AAAP strategically "game" plan to

negate Orientalism by using their proximity to Whiteness as a tool to gain a structural advantage. As Lemert (2018) asserts that social theory is a basic survival skill that is done necessarily and often by people with no particular professional credential. The tactical sophistication highlights the use of "static" and "strategic" privileges of Whiteness underscoring AAAPs experiences can function as a locus of knowledge from which to draw from. The observations and processes by AAAP in theme one display a lexicon of cultural code switching (Rincon & Hollis, 2020). informed by experiential instances of double consciousness (Dubois, 2008) in quotidian experience.

Theme Four highlights tattoos as a tool of contestation to underscore the use of creativity through art to contest liminality on their terms. Design and body placement capture a sense of agency for participants to target the audiences they choose with the messages they choose. The tattoo itself marks the permanence of their counter narratives. Participants made it clear that while each of their tattoos carry private symbolic messages for themselves, they have another important value. As such, theme four emphasizes the need for forms of art to operate as a versatile medium to critique, contest, educate others about, and negotiate their unique social position.

Both themes identify that contestations are as intersectional as what they are contesting. Both participants narrations recognize the inescapable nature of Orientalism within the daily battle in the middle of, outside of, recognized as, or irreconcilably different from White adoption rhetoric and racialized societal norms. Both themes highlighted pervasive elements of Asianization, Whiteness as property, transnational contexts, strategic anti-essentialism (Harris, 1993; Iftikar & Museus, 2018). Ultimately the participants narrated a social history illustrating

the importance of (re)claiming the agency to name themselves and understand themselves on their terms even if society will not.

Static, Strategic, and Possible Privilege. During our interviews it was clear that both participants navigated a contradictive middle space that Lee (2003) calls the transracial adoption paradox whereby a socialization process within a unique proximity to Whiteness leaves the adopted person unprepared for when they enter society perceived and treated as a racial minority. Although many prior studies have framed this middle position as one between race, the participants in this study articulated intersectional experiences at the nexus of many factors including race. Theme one outlined a complex fluid process and sophisticated strategies of contesting liminality that AAAP undertake as a mode of survival that is predicated on using proximity to Whiteness as a material property to gain a structural advantage. Sara describes that here:

> I mean honestly, I use it (proximity to Whiteness) to my advantage. Like we talked about before, I know how to play the game. As a minority you have to get really good at anticipating what someone will assume about you or want to hear from you. You know, we have a role to play.

Next, she touches on the double consciousness as her framework to determine how she would code switch in each situation. Lastly, Sara illustrates how she separates herself from other Asians touching on her knowledge that frames a sophisticated strategy:

> I mean, when I'm going in for interviews, I know the demographic of who I am trying to convince that I am the best candidate for. I'm White before I'm not, you know. I mean, I speak perfect English, I am an English major and my name (is White). Do you use your middle name on things? I take mine out when I need to. When I go in for the interview and they figure out I'm Asian I play the diversity card better than an Asian/Asian.

Theme one explores the unique tangible uses of White privilege as a material property hat adopted AAP can employ situationally. This process highlights the uses of social capital acquired through White socialization and how those properties can be strategically materialized to appear White but more importantly distinguish from Asian. "Static" privileges are institutionally driven or bestowed on AAAP. These include privileges acquired by legal means such as surname and family. They also include privileges that may happen because of those legal process such as White networks, easier path to citizenship. Static privileges are only made possible because of the dislocation from land, ancestry, heritage, etc. of origin. "Strategic" privileges are those that require agency or knowledge to put into action. These privileges consider racialized stereotypes (Asian monolith) and represent "strategic" maneuvers to distinguish from them. Strategic privileges include the agency to omit an "Asian" middle name and using a lack of foreign accent to appeal to measures of token diversity. "Possible or Varying" privileges are "positive stereotypes" that our dominant culture may widely assume about us after a face-to-face interaction. As Sara reiterates, "we have a role to play," possible privileges can be enacted whether true or not by the way AAAPs dress, carry themselves, and speak for example. The table below categorizes "static, strategic, and possible" privileges that are parlayed in proximity to Whiteness or away from Asianness.

Table 4. Navigating AAAP Privilege

Static Privilege	Strategic Privilege	Possible/Varying Privilege
First Names	Middle Names	Socio-economic status
Middle Names	No foreign accent	Citizenship
Surname	Understanding Token diversity	Educational Attainment
Immediate Family		Inheritance
Extended Family		
Path to Citizenship		

Note. This table identifies the different categories of unique privileges participants identified in their oral histories because of their specific social locations.

Sara's narration underscores the stakes of appealing to Whiteness by distinguishing from Asianness exposing the pervasive workings of Orientalism today. Analyzing her process individually highlights the complex methods she has developed to survive in a racially driven class system. More broadly, analysis of theme one is a working example of a notion that race, and class may operate as co-fraternal interlocking corollaries in a power structure. Static and strategic privileges illustrate the ways in which Whiteness as a tool of survival for one group of color (AAAP) can be weaponized against other groups of color within a class system. Sara's methods and strategies of survival emphasize that it is important to study race with class intersectionally threading the past with the present through processes and patterns of power. Intersectional exploration of people from social groups like Sara's allows study from the perspective that people may be oppressed not because of their race but racialized to be oppressed.

Reclaiming Agency and Purpose by Contesting Liminality. This theme emphasized that there are elements of sadness and irreconcilability that come with "clean break" intercountry adoption. Drawing an eerie parallel to Robinson's (2005) no history, no place, no situatedness in time, for AAAP the other side of "static and strategic" privileges in proximity to Whiteness

including White names, family ancestry, networks, and sponsor for citizenship is the dislocation from Asian family, geography, culture, language, norms, ancestry, and history. Therefore, the Asianization that is socially constructed through White supremacy (Museus & Iftikar, 2018) is incongruent with the foundational "clean break" idea of intercountry adoption.

On the surface it may seem like this is an impossible middle. Neither participant knew Mandarin, Chinese history, any information about their ancestry, or much about their own social history prior to their adoption but both narrated many instances of microagressive "racialized experiences." Although many AAAP do find themselves in the middle of former and the latter incongruencies, as Sara pointed out "it's about agency." Agency is the concept at work and art is the method through which both participants contested "clean break" adoption.

Both participants featured tattoos. Amy described her tattoo by saying, "we carry markings, and maybe we put more markings (tattoos) on ourselves. We carry, different things that really separate us from people who choose to immigrate over here. It's not a choice, right." Amy had one tattoo (that she was willing to show me) of a semi colon on the underside of her wrist that represents suicide survival. However, to Amy it represents more than that. "It (her tattoo) has that story (adoption story) in it, within the keeping going message that it represents." Sara has six tattoos that she began to get after the disappointment of the college admissions process where she first realized the limitation to the properties of Whiteness, she had grown accustomed to. Sara was willing to share three of them. The first tattoo is the Chinese character for strength which "it's just a part of me (strength) and I am part Chinese." Her second tattoo is a full shoulder piece commemorating her "gotcha day." The last one she showed me was a Chinese proverb outlined in bamboo that translated to adversity produces talent because "despite of what I don't know about my origins I can find my talents."

Perhaps the most interesting was Sara's rationale for where on her body she placed her tattoos, the target audience they were directed towards, and the versatility of the messages that they sent to those different audiences. The location of the tattoo on the body carried a specific purpose for both participants. Table 5 synthesizes the influence of tattoos in contesting liminality for both participants.

Table 5. Philosophy of Tattoos

	Tattoo	Explanation	Contestation
Public Facing	Chinese Proverb	This tattoo rebuts a lot of the static tropes of adopted people. The proverb marks a refusal that adoption represents an automatic upgrade in life circumstances with the adversity underscoring that there is no "clean break" in intercountry adoption. Finding her talents represents a notion of agency that breaks from an adopted person as a child. The bamboo outlining and message better represents her as an immigrant making their way in another country.	Perpetual Child Better Life Tropes AAAP as non-Immigrant Static Identity Notion of Adoptee Clean Break Adoption
Private Facing	Chinese Character for Strength	This one was very personal and represented that "I am part Chinese." It also dispelled the idea of a dichotomous Chinese worse life and American better life thought process.	Clean Break Adoption Better Life Tropes
Insider Facing	Gotcha Day	This tattoo is a reminder to both she and her family that she is not a "natural" family member and that means something. It represents the date which she became an immigrant and that as an immigrant there is no full assimilation to Whiteness. It also represents her immigrant status is its own "situation" distinguished from any idea of an Asian monolith.	AAAP as non-Immigrant Asian Monolith AAAP Assimilation Natural Family Member
Multi-Facing	Semi-Colon	She got the tattoo on the underside of her wrist as a private reminder to herself that she "survived and won against herself." In addition, she is able to show it to others and explain the meaning. The meaning was multifaceted. She explained it in terms of both suicide survival and a representation of her as an adopted person; good and bad.	Clean Break Adoption Better Life Perpetual Child

Note. This table displays how participants used tattoos in a variety of ways to contest their liminality and claim agency, conduct remembrance, and reclaim purpose amongst the structural unknowns within the context of Asian American transracial adoption.

Public Facing. Public facing messages were on a part of the body that the public could see. These pieces of art represent contestations that she may be willing to share or explain. The tattoos act as an entry point to her counter narrative that works to dispel dominant notions about their positionality. "If people didn't want to recognize what I would say to them, and they just wanted to make assumptions based off what I look like. (Tattoos represent) a part of me so, I mean, you're just going to have to see it whether you even understand what it means or not like, it's a permanent part of me, period." Tattoos offer a versatile manner to contest liminality by offering choice and agency for when and to whom the participants address their liminality in a public sphere. As Sara describes, "specifically when people ask about this (gotcha day tattoo), if I don't want to go into the whole spiel, I'll just say it's an important family date. That will usually just shut them up right there. If I were to potentially want to go down that avenue (contesting) It's an easy way."

Private Facing. All the tattoos the participants had were private facing. Amy captured this while tearing up, "It's a semi-colon. It is a symbol that means you could have ended the chapter or even the story, but you didn't. You decided to keep going." These tattoos were either hidden from view or carried multiple meanings. Amy's semi-colon tattoo is a widely recognized suicide survival symbol, but she also linked it to her adoption saying, "It (her tattoo) has that story (adoption story) in it, within the keeping going message that it represents."

Insider Facing. Insider tattoos send a message to members of the adoption triad. These tattoos where "I know my parents will see them." Sara uses her tattoos to garner agency to express herself through contestation even if her mother does not understand. "My mother has had a very negative reaction. She just sees it as like a mutilation of myself, but I wouldn't change anything about them. I still really, I recognize them as like part of me, things that represent parts

of me that I wasn't able to show to you." Her father has had a different reaction. "My dad, he doesn't have any tattoos or anything either. Before I started getting tattoos, he wouldn't have wanted me to. But now, he even says to me that I changed his opinion on tattoos because there is an underlying message."

The study participants really put on display the sophistication and creativity they use to contest their liminality. Furthermore, their contestations did not just target adoption and the messaging was not simply for one audience. The ways in which Sara described how she navigates her social position before and during interview situations points to a complex process of understanding, playing into, and contesting dominant racialized frameworks. Her experiential knowledge of "the game" has developed her own application of double consciousness (Dubois, 2008) informing a lexicon of cultural code switching (Rincon & Hollis, 2020) that she employs to use "static" and "strategic" Whiteness (as property) situationally to offset or plan for notions of orientalism. Participants uses of tattoos marks the importance of art as a mode of navigation, negotiation, and constatation of liminality. Each participants tattoos took on a complexity and versatility that was needed to reclaim the agency to recognize, interrogate, transgress, and refuse the terms of dominant White narratives of transracial adoption and Asianness.

Research Questions Two: Through which mechanisms, modes, and repercussions, do participants' oral histories capture the enduring representation of the political situatedness of the historical figure of the Asian American adoptee?

The complexity of Sara and Amy's narrations illustrated an intersectional social positioning that situates them as either or a combination of Asian, Asian American, and adopted. An analysis of representations of historical political situatedness in their everyday lives required

a more multifaceted reframing for analysis. Instead of framing Asian American adopted person or AAAP as one single historical entity, I examined the participant's oral histories for individual experiences that I coded separately as Asian, Asian American, or adopted. I also coded combined experiences that incorporated multiple facets of the three categories. To underpin the historical situatedness of each, I used tenants of CRT and Asian Crit to identify how the U.S. or west has historically framed and more importantly operationalized Asian, Asian American, and adopted.

For coding purposes "Asian" experiences were racialized experiences where the participant was othered or distinguished separate from Whiteness. I focused on experiences of Asianization and essentialist Orientalism. "Asian American" experiences were coded as those experiences that distinguished Asian from other racially minoritized groups. Asian American experiences indicated a differential experience between Asian and other racialized groups. "Adopted" experiences were racialized experiences that distinguished the participants from other Asian or Asian Americans based on their proximity to Whiteness and their severance from Asian cultural/ancestral factors.

All four themes were present when analyzing this question. The interplay of the "game" featured heavily in theme one resulted from AAAP having to negotiate mechanisms of Whiteness, anti-Blackness, and interest convergence that are ever-present in their daily lives. Theme one underpins the "game" as a legacy of power relations that make possible experiences of "Asian," "Asian American," and "adopted" as separate or intersectional experiences. Theme two specifically illustrated AAAPs in conversation with anti-Blackness highlighting a predilection to theorize experience strictly within a White and Asian binary. Theme two illustrated working examples of how to better understand "Asian" experiences as both and "Asian American" experiences. Theme three illustrates the limitation of Whiteness that is unique

to "adopted" situatedness. Theme three highlights that "adopted" is racialized and the "Asian" that separates AAAP from White societally is incongruent to the "adopted" situatedness as a multicultural equal member of a White family. Theme three details the repercussions of attempting extrapolate White familial equality with racialized societal norms. Theme four personalizes the repercussions of themes one through three highlighting the need to contest mechanisms, modes, and repercussions that capture the enduring representation of political situatedness of AAAP.

  Mechanisms. Mechanisms come from within a machine and control the motion or transmission of power. Participant oral histories threaded narratives of Whiteness, anti-Blackness, and interest convergence consistently. Their oral histories featured how the interplay of these mechanisms undergirded guide their understanding of their social positioning and their strategies of contestation.

Table 6. *Analyzing Mechanisms of Power in Participant's Daily Experiences*

	Mechanism	Microaggression	Stereotype	CRT/Asian Crit
Asian	Whiteness	"I only f*** with Asian girls	Orientalism: Exotic: Hyper sexualization	Asianization/Essentialism
	Whiteness	"I am my own Tiger mom."	[Reify] Model Minority	Asianization/Essentialism
Asian American	Anti-Blackness	"I would say it's kind of flattering, makes us look better."	Model Minority: Asian Monolith	Asianization/Essentialism/Differential Racism
Adopted	Whiteness	"I don't see you as Asian I see you as my daughter."	Orientalism: [Counter]: Forever Foreign/Unassimilable	Asianization/Interest Convergence
	Whiteness	"You speak such good English."	Orientalism: [Counter]: Forever Foreign/Unassimilable	Asianization
	Interest Convergence	"I bet you feel so lucky/You must feel so special."	White Saviorism	Transnational Context/Interest Convergence

Note. This table displays a critical analysis of ways mechanisms of structural power underpin participant's everyday life.

Modes. Participant narrations featured microaggressions and stereotypes as modes that described how Whiteness, anti-Blackness, and interest convergence moved for, against, and through participants in their daily lives. As Kim (2020) describes, Asian (American) is racialized within a meaning and power regime as in-between the elevating force of not Black (anti-Blackness) meeting the downward force of not White (Orientalism). While this held true for study participants, there was a distinction between Asian and Asian American.

Asianness was evident in experiences that featured the downward force of Orientalism. As Lohman (2021) asserts, Orientalism was a colonial practice where the west institutionalized "natural or essential" knowledge of the east as a lesser foreign exotic other to justify its colonization and management as a practice that would save the orient from themselves.

Orientalism situated Asian racialization in the participants' oral histories through two different patterns. The first was narrations of microaggressions from others that essentialized language assumptions, authenticity to familial Asianness, and exotic hyper sexualization. In addition, participants also reified Orientalism by characterizing themselves using terms like "tiger mom" or claiming benefit from carry exotic Asian qualities.

The Asian Americanness was situated within narrations of positive Asian stereotypes that would fail to address differential racial experiences. For participants, "Americanness" represented in stereotypes like the model minority myth presented a constant daily battle against the Asian monolith idea as they tried to distinguish themselves from "Asian/Asians" who they characterized as "culturally Asian." In contrast, participants declared themselves "Americanized" or "Whitified" because of the White socialization process akin to transracial adoption. Although participants focused their theorizing within a White and Asian binary, the key idea of Asian "Americanness" was the absence of theorizing relationality of themselves as Asian in

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conversation with other groups of color. Jared Sexton (2010) refers to this as people of color blindness which he characterizes by the inability to look at discrepancies of power and status amongst groups color. Kim (2020) argues that understanding people of color blindness as an Asian American is the only way to get at the specificity of anti-Blackness and how much that undergirds our political situatedness.

"Adoptedness" was evident in microaggressions undergirded by interest convergence that attempted to counter Asian stereotypes. These microaggressions and stereotypes featured "adopted" status as a tool of colorblindness to attempt to (un)race participants to distinguish them from Asianness and situate them as fortunate equal members of a post racial national family. Microaggressions were constructed in several different ways. Comments like "we don't see you as Asian, we see you as our daughter" racializes as Asian and indicates an acknowledgement of how the social positioning of Asian in the U.S., separates the adopted person from the White family. Similarly, microaggressions like, "do you really see me as White," accomplishes a similar message but applies a layer of guilt to AAAP that seek to understand their experiences as racialized. Additionally, statements like, "you must feel special to be adopted" infused an idea of White saviorism. Participant's narrations of adoption microaggressions and stereotypes situated "adoptee" as a racialized non-agentic who's personification is a constituent product of benevolence.

Repercussions. In my analysis I situated the historical figure of the Asian American adoptee as separate legacies of Asian, Asian American, and adopted to frame political situatedness for AAAP today. Separating these identifiers allows an analysis that can move past geopolitical circumstances in distinct time periods between sending (Asian) and receiving (U.S.) countries and focus on a process of understanding self and others within a meaning and power

regime that more accurately reflects the situation in which these study participants live today. Throughout their oral histories both participants narrations threaded two defining repercussions.

The first repercussion was a sense of inescapable liminality characterized by social isolation. As Sara describes, "I felt a sense of neitherness or nothingness which is what it is like growing up as the other. My parents had signed me up for this beginner Mandarin class and all the students were just these little White kids and I didn't want to feel more isolated than I already felt. Sometimes I liked being on my little island though, you know, safe from all the assumptions and uncomfortableness that comes with what I call my own situation." At the onset participant's oral histories seemed to mirror traditional Asian American adoptee identity studies that land on adoptees occupying a liminal identity described as too White to be Asian and too Asian to be White (Hoffman & Pena, 2013). However, when analyzing further through an Asian critical lens, the complexity of the participant's narrations shifted the focus to the undercurrent of a meaning and power regime that situated the mechanisms and modes that operationalized what it means to be Asian, Asian American, and adopted in the U.S. As a legacy of those three, liminality was framed intersectionally and historically at the nexus of White adoption rhetoric and racialized societal norms.

The second repercussion was an inability to theorize outside of an Asian and White binary. A key result of the participant narrations was that they exhibited a tension between being the subjects of racial violence and microaggressions while at the same time perpetrating a racial system that advantages Asian Americans in relation to other groups of color. Although their oral histories tight roped that tension, the inability to understand their experience in conversation with other groups of color forgoes the possibility to recognize how Whiteness and anti-Blackness can work through AAAP to structurally oppress other groups or advantage self.

Research Question Three: Based on the data from this study, what are the possible implications and impacts of a K-12 school curriculum that focuses on historical processes and patterns of power that are evident in students' quotidian experiences?

Theme Two featured "something new" for both participants who began looking at their experiences through a bottom-up anti-Blackness lens in addition to a top-down Whiteness lens in their oral histories. Both participants threaded experiences of being "raised White" and the false reality that accompanied their unique proximity to Whiteness that underpinned how they navigated a society that viewed them as Asian. Their narrations framed their experiences as instances of oppressive Whiteness. Narrations about their experiences with being labeled a model minority focused on being more than "just another Asian," while "invisibility" focused on validity of voice, and discussion on COVID-19 centered on Asians being affected the most. While these points are indeed valid, what became clear was that both participants framed their understanding of their social location within a White/Asian binary and always in relation to Whiteness This is in line with much of the scholarship in adoption studies which places AAAP in-between being "too White to be Asian and too Asian to be White (Hoffman & Pena, 2013). Clair Jean Kim (2020) argues analyzing by taking structural anti-Blackness into account reorients our understanding of racial group relationality within the U.S. racial order and what function Asians/Asian Americans play in sustaining and reproducing that order. Working from philosopher Lewis Gordon's "Be White but above all, don't be Black," Kim's lens of structural anti-Blackness draws on critical Black Studies that argues that the abjection or subordination of Black people (bodies) serves as the foundation for sociality (Kim, 2020). Employing this lens aided participants to "Defamiliarize" their experiences to think about the upward structural property advantages that not being Black may afford them. As a follow-up, we revisited our

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conversations on COVID-19 later in our interview. The following captures the liberatory

possibilities of public education through critical Black studies lens:

> I think it absolutely did (disproportionately affect communities of color), especially for the Asian people. So, I feel like a lot of people when COVID happened, they blamed every single Asian person in America. I mean just the biggest thing is that. Most of society here blamed Asia and China especially for creating the virus. So, it just didn't surprise me with like all the statistics about increased hate against Asians especially. I mean, yeah, if you're going into stores, like just yesterday I was going into the grocery store and I was just thinking as I was getting out of my car, like should I be wearing a mask right now or, you know, and there's a lot of people in that store too. And just again, I think that we covered this in our first interview. I just feel like all eyes are on me and with. That many people around me, I was just very, very insecure the entire time. Like you mentioned, COVID-19 disproportionately affects communities of color out of Asian, Black, LatinX, who does it affect the most? Asian American.

We then talked about her rationale of why Asian/Asian Americans were most

disproportionately affected. She identified four main reasons shown in the table below.

Table 7. Rationale for Asians as the Most Disproportionately Affected Racial Group by COVID-19

Media	*"So, media, yeah. Oh gosh. So, media just spread the racism through Politics, I think, is a big one."*
Leadership	*"Trump, Hate him. He's a carrot. Um. But yeah, I think, I think Trump had a huge part in that just because. He is very racist, and he is very. Discriminatory against all people of color, not just Asian Americans. And so. I think his followers just believed whatever he said. And so, I think politics just was a huge thing in that."*
Politics (Very Conservative People)	*"Just very, very conservative people that believe anything that the government really has to say. I feel like at the time, the government was very strongly receptive of the fact that Asia or China kind of like did this or Asia did this to our (U.S.A.) country. I don't think they like directly, obviously; I don't think they directly like said anything, but it is, it's pretty clear that the conservative people just followed that."*
Orientalism Stereotypes	*"I think it started from some bat in China. I think that people just started seeing every Asian American person has that. Somebody that. Could eat something weird or bring something weird into this country. It was racism from like those old stereotypes of Asian Americans. Like, they're forever foreign, right? Or like, you know. You know. They're diseased people."*

Next, I presented her with data that structures information through a structural anti-Blackness lens. The first four data tables showed a racial breakdown of "risk factors," "risk mitigation behaviors," "personal experience with COVID-19," and "perceived barriers to wearing a mask." Black people mitigated risk on par with other racial groups but were highest in the other three categories (Appendix E). The final data set showed COVID-19 mortality rates cases/deaths. The data showed that Black and White people contract COVID-19 at similar rates but that Black people have a 64% higher mortality rate. In addition, the data showed Asians have the lowest mortality rate of the comparison groups (Appendix F). After reading the data Amy had the following observations:

> Pretty surprising, I'm trying to find the one that shocked me the most. Asian people were pretty equal with White people in a lot of scenarios. Yeah, like COVID-19 experience by race/ethnicity. We were equal with White people with had COVID, known anyone with COVID, known anyone hospitalized and anyone who died. Which I've just kind of found funny because White people were giving us the most s*** for it. (For White and Black people) Infection rates are about the same but Black people had more (deaths). They might not have gone in because they didn't have the money either or access to the care.

I asked her before to rank the different races in terms of who was most disproportionately affected by race during the COVID-19 pandemic. After I showed her the data tables I asked her to reranked them and indicate the rationale for any changes. Amy offered the following ranking and rationale:

> It would change. Yeah, because looking at the chart with like. The risk of getting COVID, dying of COVID and running out of money black and Hispanic people especially had. Like the most risk of running out of money during the time so. I feel like that. Absolutely has to play a part in it because black and Hispanic people are known in this country for being more low income. So, I don't think that they had the chance to get

the care that they needed. And then with Native Americans again, the just the lack of support. And the lack of resources for them.

This captures the liberatory possibilities of public education through a critical Black studies lens. This lens situates Asian American adopted people in a more complex intermediary positioning between Whiteness and (anti) Blackness expanding beyond the White and Asian binary. Doing so, adds a perspective for AAAP in which they can being to theorize their social position relative to other groups of color. As the above analysis shows, Amy was able to do this with some scaffolding regarding COVID-19. Switching analytic frameworks repositioned race and COVID-19. Her factors of analysis changed from racist rhetoric to structural equity, access, and death. Amy changed the order in which she felt people were most disproportionately affected by race. The fact that she did not determine that Black people are most disproportionately affected indicates that there is more work to do but Amy's example does capture the possible implications and impacts of K-12 school curriculum that focuses on historical structural processes of power that are evident in her life. A K-12 curriculum framed in this manner allows AAAP to explore the structural discrepancies of racism among groups in the context of their experiences as the "model minority" or an "invisible Asian" as a factor of the distance away from Blackness in addition to proximity to Whiteness like demonstrated in the table below.

Table 8. Incorporating Structural Anti-Blackness into Modes of Analysis

In Proximity to Whiteness	Idea	Distance From Blackness	Idea	Concept
Asian Model Minority Myth	Asians are more than a monolith of exaggerated success stories	Black Lazy and Delinquent Minority Myth	Hard Working industrious and obeying the rules as essential Asian qualities positions Asians as successful and Black people as unsuccessful	Black failure and Asian success cannot be explained by inequities and racism
Invisible Asian	Asians have not been given a validity of voice and are ignored in the construction of our history and society	Hyper Visible Black	"Invisible" connotates quiet and non-problematic. This works as positive stereotype to for Asians but works as a counter stereotype to define Black. Invisible Asian is foundational in constructing hyper visible Black.	Invisible Asian's association with quiet and well-behaved forms the minority opposite of hyper-visible Black as loud and delinquent. Provides justification to manage and reproduce Black politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively.

Note. This table displays how theorizing and analysis of social location changes when incorporating structural anti-Blackness into modes of analysis in conversation with other groups of color.

Conclusion

Case studies are a qualitative design in which a researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative case studies the focus is on contextual study (Priya, 2020). De Vause (2001) posits that the "unit of analysis" in case study research can be an individual, family, household, community, organization, event, or even decision. This exploratory case study resulted in descriptive detail on the individual experiences of what it is like to be in the AAAP social group. I arrived at the study results by conducting cross-case and within case comparisons within a CRT/Asian Crit framework. Study results reflected four major themes that were present cross case and multiple times within each participant's case. Working from these themes to answer the research questions, after the analysis the case study revealed that (1) contesting liminal social positions is a necessary act of

agency, purpose, survival. (2) Whiteness, anti-Blackness, and interest convergence are mechanisms that operationalize through modes such as microaggressions and stereotypes that preserve legacies of power that situate AAAP not between White and Asian but rather an incongruency between historically racialized societal norms and liberal White adoption notions that attempt to undo them. (3) Reframing ways in which AAAP can understand themselves in relation to other groups of color has potentially substantial educational implications. Participant educational "epiphanies" in this study offer evidence of possibility of creating new ways of knowing, thinking, and being.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

This study revealed four themes. (1) Participants' oral histories highlights the juxtaposed social positioning that they occupy as a product of transracial adoption. (2) An approach that decenters Whiteness as the focal point opens new possibilities in the ways in which AAAP participants were able to theorize, conduct analysis, and critique their social location. (3) Participant's oral histories narrate the notion that historically racialized societies are incommensurable with many of the liberal notions of the U.S. democratic promise. (4) AAAP participants were sites of knowledge whose narratives highlight the intimate contours of indirect and direct costs of transracial intercountry adoption. These four themes were key analytical factors to understanding (a) the role contesting liminality plays for participants, (b) the legacies of racialized situatedness captured in the daily microaggressions and stereotypes that participants face, and (c) the liberatory possibilities that culturally relevant and responsive educational frameworks like Asian American studies, Chicana studies, and Critical Black studies provide.

This chapter explored the educational implications this research may have for AAAP as well as recommendations for teacher educators and K-12 curriculum based on the study findings. Structurally, the discussion section of the chapter is divided into five parts. First, I offered a summary of findings followed secondly by outlining three key educational implications. The study implications were presented thematically and considered findings in the context of existing literature. The final two sections included a discussion on study limitations and future research.

Educational Implications

Educational implications emerged from this study that addressed how AAAP navigate their lives from their unique liminal social locations. Based on the study findings three implications stood out the most. First the study implied that (1) contesting liminality is necessary mode of survival for participants and represents an important lever of transformation where AAAPs may be able to take control and agency of how they understand themselves. This study may offer strategies, frameworks, and curriculum to differentiate instruction to understand how to better meet the student's contextual experience. (2) Decentering Whiteness highlighted the importance of approach when framing contextual critique. By changing approach to include different frameworks, language, and techniques AAAPs can access the conceptual tools to execute a deeper more wholistic historical critique. This speaks to the need to expand the conceptual and pedagogical tool kit for a majority White female future educator labor force in a rapidly changing U.S. student demographic. (3) Lastly, the study carries implications for teacher preparation programs and educational curriculum that prioritizes studying "self" discovery fundamentally as a process that is "relational" to other groups of color, trains teachers to understand and execute a curriculum that may be more effective to expanding the possibilities in which AAAPs know, think, and be in relation to the downward oppressive force of Whiteness and the upward structural advantage created by anti-Blackness. The following offers further detail on each of these three key educational implications.

Implication 1: Agency to Contest Liminality

This study suggests that there are substantial educational implications to providing the environment, frameworks, and tools for AAAP to contest their liminal social locations on their

terms. Much of both participant's oral histories were underpinned by a sense that their lives, stories, and situatedness had been pre-determined by other people, organizations, and entities. Amy described it this way:

> Everybody likes to feel like they are in control of their lives. In adoption, you know, I didn't really choose any of this. I'm not saying I would be better off or anything, but I didn't choose any of this. Your story kind of gets told in a way. To your White family you're just another equal member. To other White people you're Asian and all that goes into that. To other Asians you're definitely not Asian. To yourself, you're just like nothing, or everything, or whatever they want you to be. You just don't have that sense that you are this clean slate that can be anything you want to be. And being able to be anything you want to be is such a big part of being American or whatever.

While much of both participants narrated oral histories that situated themselves as in a liminal position trapped between White and Asian, moments of contesting that positionality were highlights of this study that signaled a potential for AAAPs to know themselves and theorize beyond an Asian and White binary. Moments of contesting liminality captured an almost character like shift within the arc of their narrations. Narrations were reframed as modes of theorizing contextual experience within the greater society. Participants narrated with greater confidence and bravado while featuring different body language, and a variety of forms of expression. Contesting their liminality and therefore their situatedness brought an important liberatory sense of agency and purpose to their lives. Furthermore, the action of contesting liminality underscored the possibilities and limitations of participants ability to theorize their lives within a greater relational and historical power dynamic, albeit mostly still limited to contemporary examples within an Asian and White binary. From an educational research standpoint, this study indicates that moments of contestation potentially represent an important

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lever of transformation where AAAPs may be able to take control and agency of how they understand themselves.

Teacher Education Recommendations. This research suggests two important recommendations for teacher education. First, teacher education programs that introduce future educators to the concept of student "liminality" prepares future teachers to better meet the needs of a growing student body. Participants in this study consistently narrated the intersectionality of a liminal positioning that included race, nation, adoption, gender, immigration, and socioeconomic status. Their stories highlighted the breadth, depth, and omnipresence of the middle capturing how their whole lives were structured around navigating their social middle. Teacher education programs would do well to identify, name, and attend to the liminal positions of their own future educators to normalize integration of a social middle within teaching methods and strategies programmatically. My second recommendation is that teacher preparation programs attend to structural power discrepancies that different factors of liminality—race, gender, class, immigration, socioeconomics, national origin, and others—highlights in this study. Normalizing middleness within teacher education research bridges the experiences of future educators and their students while better preparing future teachers to attend to structural power discrepancies.

Curriculum Recommendations. This study indicated that contesting liminality provides the basis for three curriculum recommendations for teachers. Moments of contestation functioned as a baseline for what participants brought from their daily personal experience. As such, my first recommendation is to underpin curriculum that provides a learning environment, activities, discourse, and scaffolding techniques that capitalizes on contextualizing student's personal experience in relation to larger historical patterns. The changes in tone, body language,

and confidence when narrating moments of contestation hinted at contesting liminality as a practice of survival for participants. As Amy told me when I asked her why she was so open to telling me such private information when she contested her liminality, "I don't know, I guess nobody has ever really given me the space and I think that most people understand themselves and are a lot more comfortable with themselves than I am." Secondly, this study calls attention to variety of methods and modes that the participants used to contest their liminality. Therefore, a curriculum that features the arts as different tools to express contestations expands the modes in which students can establish notions of agency and purpose through contesting their liminality is my second recommendation. Additionally, participant narratives highlighted that contesting liminality was a liberatory process or tool that contextualized the complexity and versatility in the ways in which participants conducted remembrance, and established notions of agency, independence, and purpose in their lives. My third recommendation is that the curriculum prioritizes those goals.

Providing the environment, frameworks, and tools for AAAPs to contest their liminality stood out as in this study. Contesting liminality brought a sense of self through agency, independence, and purpose. However, the framework in which both participants contested their liminality led to the next educational implication of this study.

Implication 2: Decentering Whiteness

The second important educational implication of this study is that there is a need to decenter Whiteness in the way that AAAPs think about themselves within the world. Initially, both participants oral histories displayed a model of everyday thinking and theorizing that filtered liminal experiences between an Asian and White binary. Mirroring prior adoption

identity literature like "Too White to be Korean and Too Korean to be White," "Betwixed," and "In-Between," framing in this manner resulted illustrated the constraints that limited expressions of social understanding of self to a deficit perspective (Goode, 2015; Hockersmith, 2020; Suda & Hartlep, 2016). In this manner, narrations of navigating their social locations were grounded by a sense of responsibility to authenticate or justify themselves and their feelings. Even promising moments of contesting liminality were limited to contemporary power critiques. Moreover, an Asian and White binary foregoes access for AAAPs to analyze their experiences historically in conversation with other groups of color. This illustrated a theoretical paradox. Centering Whiteness as a framework of storytelling for participants was effective in offering contemporary critiques of how the downward force of Whiteness operationalizes in modern day orientalism through microaggressions and stereotypes but fell short at offering a means to address life experience within a more historical racialized power matrix. The Asian and White binary provided an optimal framework to illustrate the intersectionality and intimacies of contemporary experiences from the middle but did not provide a lens to critique the historical processes, patterns, and legacies that structure the Asian as a racialized intermediary despite that notion featuring so prominently in their oral history narratives.

This implies that decentering Whiteness as a mode of critique would introduce participants to an alternate liminal social position between White and Black. When participants centered Whiteness, they told a story of the history of themselves limited by the scope of their personal experience. However, as Lowe (2018) asserts, Asians have always been central actors in mediating racial formation and belonging. The figure of the Asian or Asian American destabilizes binaries—White/non-White, developed, under-developed—that designate power. Participant's narrations underscored that notion.

Decentering Whiteness as the focal point of analysis allows for a more thorough critique of the power structures that underpin the microaggressions and stereotypes the participants' oral histories narrate. In this manner, understanding participants personal experience adds AAAP to the historical collection of Asians occupying a social positioning between White and Black that is at times situated in close proximity to Whiteness (model minority or AAAP) and at other times situated in proximity to Blackness (Coolie). Sara's "own situation" and Amy's "always trying to be what other people want" transform a personal critique into a social critique that positions Asian intercountry transracial adoption within the greater global relational story of racial formation to the process of (the fringes of) belonging.

Educationally, this study shows that there is a way in which you can look at AAAP experiences as sets of individual stories that critique a single collection of intersectional social experiences between Asian and White. Conversely, there is a way in which you can study personal experiences of microaggressions, stereotypes, and limitations of Whiteness within a greater global relational story of racialization, belonging, and structural power. Decentering Whiteness opens the possibility of a more wholistic critique that situates contextual experience within patterns of historical power expanding a singular contemporary critique of power to counter narratives that thread legacies of structural modes of power from past to present. To move past the former and accomplish the latter here are my recommendations from the study.

Teacher Education Recommendations. This study outlines the need for a stronger culturally responsive and culturally relevant presence in teacher education. These oral histories underscored that future educators must be able to go beyond meeting their students in the middle. Teacher preparation programs must effectively move with the changing demographic of their student body and meet students in their context. Guided by this, my first recommendation is

teacher education programs provide better access and require higher nominal course completion of more courses from Asian American studies, Chicana studies, and Critical Black studies.

These disciplines meet the changing demographic of the national student body more wholistically by providing the theory and discourse that center the stories and histories of people of color as a focus of critique. My second recommendation is an argument in favor of cross listings for those courses. Representation was an important factor for both participants that effected the way in which they engaged with me and the content they explored. As Sara noted, "it's like my class right now on race. I value the readings that properly convey how it might feel as a minority to be isolated or have continuous assumptions placed on you. I think that part of the curriculum is very valuable especially here with most of my peers in that class being White. But when my (White female) professor is reading out loud like, I am Black, it just undoes everything that made that reading have value."

Curriculum Recommendations. This study implies that frameworks that center AAAP in conversation with themselves as people of color would alter the nature of critique. Additionally, participant's oral histories suggested that they know their personal experiences intimately but may not have the frameworks and language to effectively disseminate a critique. Fortunately, areas of study like Asian American studies, Asian Crit, Chicana studies, and Critical Black studies offer the frameworks and language to structure personal experiences as levers of social critique. As such, my first recommendation is that curriculum centers culturally responsive frameworks to investigate personal experience within the greater historical power dynamic. My second recommendation is that there is a curricular focus placed on establishing a contextual vocabulary lexicon to communicate the connection between an AAAP's personal experience and an intersectional process of historical power. Together, the goal of these curricular underpinnings

is to create and hone an effective means for AAAPs to theorize and disseminate their thinking to recast the past to get at their social location as a history of the present.

In addition to providing the language and frameworks to decenter Whiteness as a mode of critique, Asian American studies, Asian Crit, Chicana studies, and Critical Black studies may offer another important use leading to the third important educational implication of this study.

Implication 3: "Relationality"

While decentering Whiteness offers a vision to reimagine their liminality, relationality focuses on identifying the tools to complete the mission. One of the key understandings from this study was that participants had very limited familiarity analyzing their social experiences in conversation with other groups of color. However, when I asked follow up questions that offered them a framework and language in which to make their experiences "relational" to other groups of color from a structural power standpoint both participants indicated educational epiphanies. For example, augmenting a passage from Anzuldua's Borderland which put Amy's experience in conversation with Chicana studies "hit really close to home" and Dubois notion of "double consciousness" gave Sara language and a conceptual framework that she repeatedly used to anchor her narration of (her) "my unique situation."

This study implies that the role of the educator to understand and effectively disseminate culturally responsive concepts, frameworks, and language is vital to unlocking the liberatory possibilities of education. During this study, I functioned primarily as a researcher but at times as both a researcher and an educator. My follow up questions featured subject matter that participants narrated but structured in a manner that introduced theories and language from Asian American studies, Chicana studies, and Critical Black studies to focus participants thinking on

structural notions of race and power from a "bottom up" perspective (Matsuda, 1989). Amy's

narration of the effects of COVID-19 in her life went from an emphatic view of Asians being the

most disproportionately affected racial group to Black and indigenous people being the most

affected group after follow up questions targeting mortality rates per case versus increase reports

of instances of violence. She illustrated her educational epiphany like this:

> You know we are (the center of) our own story. We see things through our own eyes
> (experiences). So, if we are Asian, we see the effects on Asian Americans. We live them
> every day. So, when we see Trump talking it builds that story that COVID-19 affects
> Asians the most. I just tend to see the effects on me and my family. But this (follow up
> questions and data charts that I provided) helps me see it beyond myself. I mean, things
> affect me as an Asian at this level but look at who else this effects further down. I mean,
> it's just a different kind of effect. We have access to healthcare for the most part. We
> have higher incomes. They (other groups of color) don't and well they die at a higher rate
> because of it. The effects on me and on Asian Americans are still really important and
> they follow the past. I mean, look at the Asian people during the war (Japanese
> internment) and how they thought that they were unsafe just like people think Asians are
> now. I guess that's why I changed the order after this.

Teacher Education Recommendations. Building on a responsibility of teacher education

programs to prepare future educators with the theories, tools, and frameworks to educate students

in their contexts, four recommendations stand out from this study. All these recommendations

feature conceptual frameworks of teacher training based off the factors the study indicated were

important parts of when participants had their educational "epiphanies." First, teacher training

should reinforce a conceptual understanding that there exists structural discrepancies of power

and status among groups of color (Kim, 2020). My second recommendation is teacher training

should provide materials and strategies that aim that build a-symmetrical historical connections

and distinctions (Lowe, 2015) that makes relational students' political subjectivity to other

groups of color. Here is my example for an AAAP relational analysis working from Critical

Blackness writings from Smallwood's (2009):

> As the numbers of White adoptable children dwindle it is the supply of the considerable numbers of Asian babies for a very modest donation rate. The cheapness in donation for the babies are at the very root of what has caused such an improvement and growth of American families The adoption agencies plane nicknamed the "Asian Tiger" carries a full complement of children. However, some have their concerns. Some feel that their new condition of "adopted" replaces kinship and location as cultural media that binds a person to society. Does this commit the birth mother and child to a natal alienation "social death," dead kin no longer connected to their living community?
> The above piece is not an article from a newspaper about intercountry adoption but rather comes from paperwork from the Royal African Company which was a transatlantic slave company analyzed by Stephanie Smallwood in Saltwater Slavery.
> "The cheapness of the negro is at the very root of what caused such an improvement and growth of the plantation. Supplies of considerable numbers of negros for very modest rates" (Lowe, 2015; Smallwood, 2009). She notes that the operative unit of a slave ship was never individual people but a "full complement" of human cargo. This new condition of slave replaced kinship and location as cultural media that bound person to society (Lowe, 2015; Smallwood, 2009). When analyzing her book, she lands on the idea that natal alienation committed slaves to social death concluding that slaves were no longer able to "die honorably," were no longer "dead kin" connected with their community of living (Lowe, 2015; Smallwood, 2009).

My augmentation of Smallwood's writing is an educational exemplar using Critical

Black studies that targets natal death, social death, and dislocation as a-symmetrical connections

that fundamentally highlights process by distinguishing characteristics of a historical process of

racialized oppression and their limits. Social, cultural, and geographic dislocation were central to

both Asian American transracial adoption and Black slavery. However, so was the distinction of

human and non-human that highlight their differences in historical discrepancies of power. This

example supports the principles of another study example in which my follow-up questions

scaffolded an alternative Chicana framework that sparked one of Amy's transformations.

Curriculum Recommendations. This study advanced the importance of a culturally

responsive curriculum that can specifically address AAAPs. As a conceptual foundation, two

curriculum recommendations stand out. First, to meet the need of countering a reoccurring theme

of both participants oral histories outlining a myriad of costs realized as a product of a false

dichotomy that linked race and culture, an AAAP centric curriculum should move towards a

more complex understanding of diversity (Sanger & Gleason, 2020). The dearth of Asian

Americans in teacher preparation programs marks a need to highlight the intra-diversity within

Asian American students for future teachers who are not Asian American. Doing so positions

curriculum as a mode to situate AAAP daily experience contextually as an Asian American

ingroup member within a White and anti-Black historical social structure. Additionally,

participants oral histories indicated that coalition building against White supremacy with other

groups of color was important to them. However, they narrated an apathetic approach that

indicated a key misconception in framing that a culturally responsive curriculum could address.

As Kim (2020) laid out, in a person of color rubric a feeling of solidarity may act as a barrier to

understanding the discrepancies of power and status within that rubric. My second

recommendation is that curriculum focuses on AAAPs in relation to the specificity of racism in

an anti-Black structure. Curriculum that highlights structural power discrepancies amongst

groups of color may help AAAPs understand how power operationalizes by pressing down on

them through modes of oppression, works through them to oppress other groups of color, and

acts as a boon to achieve a greater proximity to resources.

Study Limitations

The aim of this study was to explore the breadth, depth, and intimacy of the personal experiences of two AAAP from their unique social location and on their terms. Framed as a post-colonial exploration, this study situated both participants as an individual locus of knowledge creation. Generalizability was never the goal. However, I acknowledge that some may feel that a lack of generalizability is a study limitation although I think those in that camp and myself pass like ships in the night. I do concede that two participants did drop out over the course of the study. A more concrete study limitation was the lack of a concrete intervention. While participant responses to the "follow-up" questions was a turning point in the research, formally constructing those follow-up questions into a tangible intervention activity does provide a method for a future direction of this research. In addition, this study did not address the possible educational implications for other transracially adopted groups. Another framing may have considered transracially adopted people from Africa, central America, Europe, and Asia. The study limitations played a key role framing future research.

Future Research

This research underscores a future research agenda that highlights two paths of need. One path addresses further educational research on AAAP. The other path explores educational liminality within groups of color.

This research highlighted a key constraint to the methods and modes in which research on/within the social location of AAAP is conducted. The study results indicate that participants' initial methods and modes of theorizing their personal experience centered Whiteness (even if the intentions are to critique it) and operated largely within an Asian and White binary. However,

culturally responsive and relevant "follow-up" questions offered a window to extend future research. In future research, my follow-up questions could be framed as teaching techniques that underpin an intervention that introduces an alternative frame that placed participants personal experiences in relation with other groups past and present political situatedness. In this study, the resulting educational "epiphanies" may ground a model of future research on AAAP social location discoveries within a White and anti-Black social construction. This path of future research should engage the researcher and participants in tangible interventions that target a greater breadth and depth of participants from metrics including gender, socioeconomic, familial status, geographic location, age, and student status to explore the thematic threads of self-discovery theorizing from a social location the structural power discrepancies amongst groups of color.

This study also outlined the intersectionality, extensiveness, depth, and omnipresence of liminality. The study results point to a society in which power organizes liminality. My second path of future research explores the ways in which liminality stretches across different groups of color. The aim of this path of future research is to thread thematic notions of liminality across groups of color and the qualities that may make it distinctive between groups of color. This path of future research could form an effective educational model informing ways in which teachers can use frameworks, pedagogies, strategies, and activities to contextualize student learning.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the ways in which AAAP participants personal experiences reflected any legacies of racialized subjectivity and disenfranchisement. Building from that foundation, the second aim was to examine the modes and methods in which

participants interrogate, transgress, and undermine their historical political subjectivities. Lastly, the project aimed to place their modes and methods of interrogation in conversation with other historically racialized groups whose histories and methods of interrogating are normally studied separately.

To accomplish this, I collected data through oral history interviews that captured participants personal experience told on their terms. Underpinned by an Asian Critical framework, my initial data analysis coded for themes that threaded participants' personal experiences as they pertained to legacies or notions of a historically structural racialized power hierarchy. I presented these themes by using Solorzano and Yosso (2002) third person counter narratives method which biographical analysis of the individual experiences of a person of color in relation to U.S. institutions in a sociohistorical context. I used the themes to complete the analysis on the research questions leading to the final results.

The study findings suggest that reframing approach may be key to expanding the ways in which AAAP can know, think, and be by exploring their social location story as personal histories within a greater global relational narrative. Findings propose considerable implications for teacher education and curriculum. Participant's educational "epiphanies" threaded a process that decentered Whiteness and interrogated the incommensurability of their experiences, experiences of other groups of color, and the liberal promise of democracy. Consequently, approaching self fundamentally as a process investigated through Asian American studies, Chicana studies, and Critical Black studies seemed to open previously unexplored methods and tools of analysis for participants. Teacher education programs that prioritize culturally relevant and responsive frameworks of teaching produce future educators that may be able to more

effectively facilitate curriculum that promotes deeper contextual and more rigorous investigation

of history, self, others, and society.

APPENDIX A - KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Adoption Key Terms. Adoption is defined as the action or fact of legally taking another's child and bringing the child up as one's own (Merriam-Webster, 2020). A national reporting system for adoptions existed only between 1945 and 1975. Generally accepted estimates assert that there are about five million adoptees in the United States (University of Oregon Department of History, 2012). Adoptions are classified in different ways, with each type of classification highlighting different factors in the context of adoptee identity development and racial formation. In the context of identity, adoption classifications based on country of origin and race are the focal point. Generally, there are three broad classifications in the adoption lexicon: 1) domestic adoption, 2) transnational/intercountry adoption, and 3) transracial adoption.

Domestic adoptions are those in which children are adopted in the same country where they are born. Transnational or intercountry adoptions involve sending a child from one country to another. Transracial adoptions are those in which the child is placed with a family whose race is different from their own. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as an adoption can fit into several categories, although not into all three categories. For example, domestic adoptions may involve a White child being adopted into a White family. However, domestic adoptions can also be transracial when a Black child is adopted by a White family. Each combination of categories presents unique challenges, both in the present and historically.

Identity Constructs. Personal identity is a social construction that works to establish a sense of permanence or "existence permanence" of an individual within society through a series of rules and mechanisms governed by society and enacted by individuals (Powers, 1973). Rather than focusing on what identity is, this project focuses on the assumptions, presuppositions, and

framings that form its foundations. Binary dichotomous thinking tied to material and symbolic power is foundational in the formation of the normative Euro-Western modernist "I" (individual and collective). One of this project's key explorations is the ways in which identity constructs power by separating, including by excluding, and by differentiating membership and establishing who counts. This project also situates Asian adopted people through the lens of the understanding that a central tenet of identity constructs is "one is what the other is not" (Urietta & Noblit, 2018). As will be detailed through the rest of this project, race endures as the historically common differentiating factor and, to restate Kelley's powerful observation, race is not an accidental feature of identity (Kelley, 2017).

Asian American Adopted People (AAAP). I acknowledge that the term "Asian American transracial adoptee" (AATRA) is considered politically, culturally, and academically correct. However, this term was not chosen by Asian adopted people and carries with it historical and contemporary tropes distinguished by identity and its constructs. When referring to studies that refer to Asian American adopted people as AATRA, I will continue to reference the group as the author did. However, as part of an effort to move beyond modern liberal identity constructs and to reclaim material existence beyond historical and contemporary tropes, throughout the project, I will refer to the studied subgroup as Asian American adopted people (AAAP).

Material Existence. To describe historically situated subjects inscribed by their historical global condition, the term "material existence" is used to connote and acknowledge the imposed categorical hierarchies of power that AATRA identity constructs out of self. This term

encompasses the recognition and contestation of racial power formation in the undercurrents of scholarly inquiry.
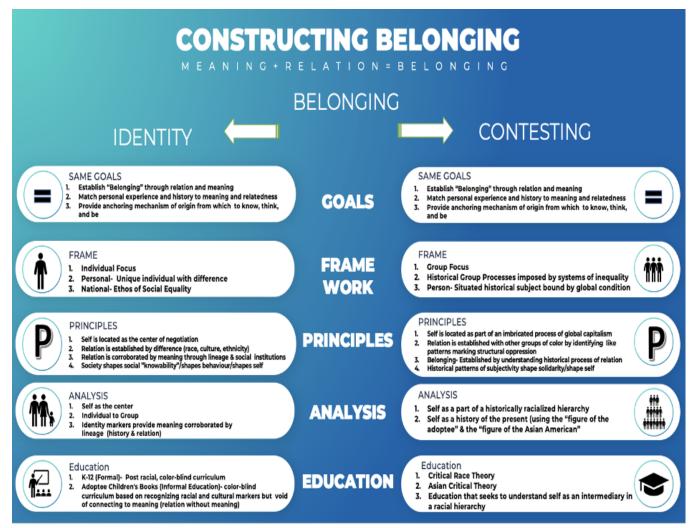
Historical Present. Lisa Lowe's analytical technique that reads history not as a fixed or constant and makes its project inquiry into the ways in which categories became established. Situating self in this manner allows for AAAP to integrate historical systems of power into their construction of self.

Knowledge Community of Color. Ethnic communities that share history, heritage, culture, and subjectivity. These communities offer and perform informal education that frames racial subjectivity through first-hand experience and the experiences of their community members. This informal education counters the idea of a liberal social ethos of equality disseminated by many American social institutions including schools. The absence of knowledge communities of color represents one of the defining rationales as to why identity constructs are insufficient for AAAPs.

"Psy" Knowledge. Refers to the process institutions used to epistomologize psychology. Rose argues that credentializing psychology as a discipline allowed for the production, dissemination, legitimation, naturalization, and utilization of "psychological truths" complete with social authorities, techniques, and subjects. AAAP became subjects of "psy" knowledge under the authority of psychological researchers who continue to conduct identity research through "psy" knowledge frameworks.

Contesting (Liminality). Framework that positions AAAP as situated historical subjects and conducts analysis of self in conversation with historical group processes that imposed systems of oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, through different mechanisms at different times in the history of American capitalism. An analysis through this educative alternative framework aims to structure belonging by drawing through lines of solidarity with other historically oppressed groups.

FIG 1: Principally, the literature review analyzes "Belonging." Figure one serves to provide a visual that illustrates a comparison between "Identity" as a construct and "Contesting" as a construct. Despite beginning with the same goals these two methods of constructing belonging diverge to create very different ways of knowing, thinking, and being. The legal process of closed transracial adoption severs (belonging) ties to a cultural knowledge system that matches meaning to ethnic relation. In addition, racialized experiences counter the meaning that constructs a liberal multicultural American identity highlighted by an ethos of post racial social equality. AAAP cannot match their meaning and relatedness to an absent personal history and quotidian experience. "Contesting" aims to remedy that through different means.

APPENDIX C - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How do Asian Americans transgress, undermine, and refuse the idea of the Asian American monolith in their daily lives?
2. What factors make up a history of the moment for these Asian Americans?
3. What is the role of culture and culture building practices when shaping who Asian Americans are on their terms?
4. What is the role of educative spaces (formal & informal) in understanding material existence?

Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3	Research Question 4
Demographics	*Racialized Experiences*	*Culture Building/Culture Sharing Practices*	*Asian American Education [Formal & Informal] (Representation)*
Interview Questions	**Interview Questions**	**Interview Questions**	**Interview Questions**
1) Tell me a little bit about your upbringing… a) State/Small town/large city b) Demographics of the area c) When you think of "the South" what comes to mind? d) Do you feel like you were brought up in the South? e) What does the term transracial mean to you? 2) If you could hear one person's voice right now, who would it be? 3) Tell me a little bit about what you know about "your story." a) Is it true… b) What kind of role does your adoption file play in your life?	1) How many of these questions have you heard? (20 questions) a) So, what are you anyway? b) What is the most messed up assumption that someone has had about you? 2) When were you growing up did you ever feel out of place? c) (More 20 Questions) d) Tell me about what you remember any discussions about race? e) Has anyone ever done or said anything racist to you? f) How do you encounter microaggressions? g) When people look at you, they see an Asian woman, do you feel like an Asian woman?	1) Tell me about the first time that you had an honest conversation about adoption where you felt totally comfortable talking about it a) What if anything did that mean to you? b) Is it more comfortable that it is me, another Asian adopted person that is interviewing you vs. someone who is not Asian and not adopted? 2) Immigration/Diaspora c) Describe to me how you would define the term immigrant. d) Do you consider yourself an immigrant? 3) Dating a) Most important qualities in a partner b) Personality/race/education level/religion/other c) When you say personality what does that mean? d) Have you ever had a partner that was a different race than you?	1. If you were to define the word education how what would you say? 2. Tell me a little bit about your high school a) What kind of student were you? b) Who was your favorite teacher? c) How long was it until you had an Asian teacher? d) What was curriculum like? (Did you ever see yourself in your curriculum) e) Did you ever have to do a family tree project? [Baby picture, Family history, culture day, autobiography] f) What was your favorite book? (TV series growing up)? g) Did your parents ever read you those adoption books? h) Did you know or meet up with any other Asian adoptees when you were growing up? (What was that like)? i) Why did you write your personal essay about your adoption for your college admission? 3. Tell me a little bit about the impact (good or bad) of your formal K-12 schooling. a) Teachers b) Peers c) curriculum 4. Tell me a little bit about why you chose your specific university.

c) Have you been back?
d) Do you plan on going back/How was it?
 	
4) Do you think about your birth family?
   a) What would you tell them if you could give them a message?
   b) Would you ever adopt a child?
 	
5) Do you have any suggestions for adoptive parents to help social development throughout childhood for adoptees?
 	
6) (Preface the adoption industry training goals) If you were to thank your parents for one thing and give them feedback for one thing, they may not have realized about you growing up what would you say?
	h) Double Consciousness
	i) Are you ever surprised when you see yourself in the mirror at all?
	
	3) Liminality can be described as a feeling of being caught in the middle or between two phenomenon or ideas.
	   j) Did you or do you feel caught between two identities/cultures?
	   k) Are there times you feel like you don't belong to either of them?
	   l) Did you ever feel like you were stuck on an island growing up?
	   m) Did you ever feel invisible?
	   n) Did you ever think about your race or other culture growing up?
	
	4) What does the term model minority?
	   a) Would you consider yourself a model minority?
	   b) When you think of Asian stereotypes are there any specific ones that you can think of?
	   c) Do any of them match you?
		4) Racial Solidarity	a) You wrote your admissions essay about your life as an adopted person, why did you write about that?
			b) What are you studying?
			c) Have you ever taken classes in Asian American Studies/sociology/humanities?
			d) If I taught a class in race, adoption, and society would you take it?

APPENDIX D - HISTORICAL WAR TIME ADOPTION ADVERTISEMENTS

"This Picture is as DANGEROUS as it is PITIFUL"

Note. This advertisement is from the Christian Children's Fund in 1954 and appeared in Klien's (2003) book "Cold War Orientalism."
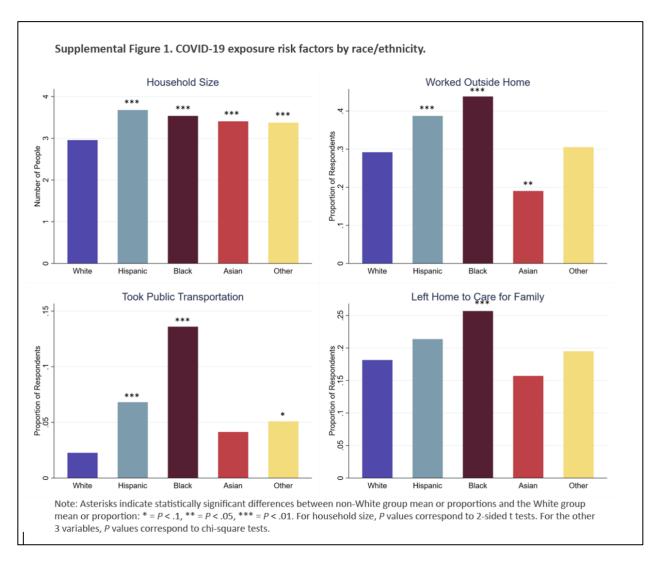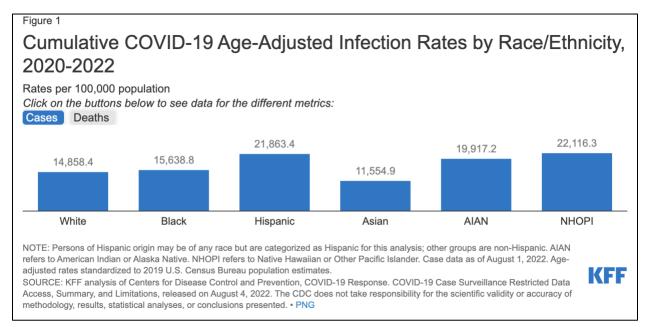
"Am I My Brother's Keeper"

Note. Note. This advertisement is from the Christian Children's Fund in 1954 and appeared in Klien's (2003) book "Cold War Orientalism."

APPENDIX F - EXPOSURE RISK FACTORS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Supplemental Figure 1. COVID-19 exposure risk factors by race/ethnicity.

Note: Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences between non-White group mean or proportions and the White group mean or proportion: * = $P < .1$, ** = $P < .05$, *** = $P < .01$. For household size, P values correspond to 2-sided t tests. For the other 3 variables, P values correspond to chi-square tests.
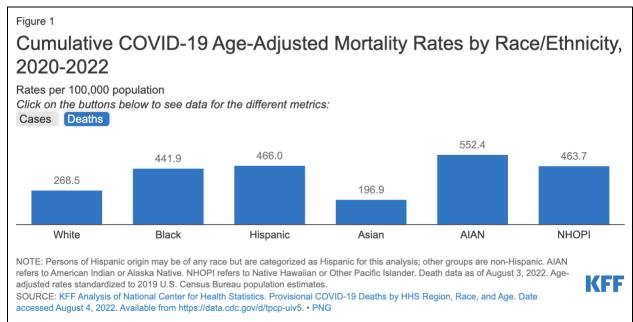
Note. This data comes from a study entitled Structural racism and the COVID-19 experience in the United States (Dickinson, K. L., Roberts, J. D., Banacos, N., Neuberger, L., Koebele, E., Blanch-Hartigan, D., & Shanahan, E. A., 2021)

APPENDIX G - CDC COVID-19 DATA ON INFECTION AND MORTALITY RATES

Note. This data comes from KFF analysis from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP, 2022).

Note. This data comes from KFF analysis from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP, 2022).

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