

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Cultural Post-Adoption Services and Cigarette Smoking for Korean-American Transracial Adoptees

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Over the past several decades, American families have adopted thousands of children from outside of the United States. A large percentage of international adoptions come from South Korea (Selman, 2012). Transracial Korean-American adoptees must navigate circumstances unique to their situations as individuals with a birth culture and an adoptive culture that differ (Lee, 2003). Previous research has investigated outcomes related to psychological adjustment for this population (e.g. Benson, Sharma & Roehlkepartain, 1994; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007), or considered the role that constructive exposure to racial and ethnic experiences serves in the positive psychological development of transracial adoptees (Yoon, 2000). No prior study, however, has evaluated the impact that cultural resources provided by adoption agencies may have on substance usage in adulthood for this population. The present study analyzed self-report responses from adult adoptees

to examine an association between adoptee cultural post-adoption service utilization and substance usage represented by smoking in adulthood. In the data utilized for this study, cultural post-adoption resources included accessing cultural and historical information, networking with other adoptees, attending heritage camps, and traveling on heritage tours (Sacerdote, 2007). It was expected that transracial Korean-American adoptees whose families accessed cultural post-adoption services at higher rates would have lower reports of cigarette smoking behavior. A logistic regression model was used to consider the connection between use of cultural services and cigarette smoking. This study points to the potential beneficial effect that cultural post-adoption services may have on reducing activities detrimental to health in transracial Korean-American adoptees, and therefore warrants future consideration and research.

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Cultural Post-Adoption Services and Cigarette Smoking for Korean-American
Transracial Adoptees

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Christopher Partipilo, Author

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, families have adopted thousands of children from locations outside of the United States. The large population of international adoptees is evident by a 2005 report that identified 22,884 cases of international adoption by American parents in the year 2004 (U.S. Department of State, 2005). However, the prevalence of international adoption has decreased in recent years as evidenced by a total of 5,648 cases in the year 2015 (U.S. Department of State, 2015). Despite this decline, the population of international adoptees in the United States warrants consideration. Unfortunately, adoptees may be at an increased risk of suffering from adverse outcomes. Specifically, scholars have noted that adoptees have a greater prevalence of mental health issues in comparison to non-adopted individuals (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005).

International adoptees from South Korea represent a considerable portion of the adopted population from abroad. From 2003-2010, Korea sent 13,197 children to other nations for adoption with 77% received by the United States (Selman, 2012). While considerable research has been conducted regarding issues surrounding international adoption, such as attachment or academic outcomes, there remains a sizable gap in the literature pertaining to health and well-being outcomes for international adoptees of a different race than their adoptive parents. These individuals are identified as transracial adoptees due to the merging of racially different families (Silverman, 1993).

To date, research has failed to identify meaningful differences for how transracial adoptees of various races fare in comparison to same-race adoptees regarding health outcomes in later life (Feigelman, 2000; McRoy & Zurcher, 1984; Silverman, 1993; Simon, 1984). Investigations concerning the general adopted population found that transracial

adoptees were more likely than their racially matched counterparts to use substances during adolescence (Marshall, Marshall, & Heer, 1994). Moreover, one study found that transracially adopted adolescents had reduced measures of academic achievement and familial closeness when compared to non-adopted peers (Burrow, Tubman, & Finley, 2004).

The limited body of literature on outcomes for adoptees is further reduced when considering the more specific subpopulation of Korean-American adoptees whose families are classified as transracial. Previous studies have not explicitly considered the factors that facilitate health and wellbeing for transracial adoptees of different races (Lee, 2003). This study will focus on the Korean-American sub-population of transracial adoptees in order to consider the distinct experiences of this growing population. The current study examines the association between exposure to birth culture, the culture of the country where one was born, through post-adoption services during childhood and adolescence and cigarette smoking in adulthood for transracial Korean-American adoptees.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

It has been estimated that international adoptions make up approximately 85% of adoptions where the parents and children are of a different race (U.S. State Department, 2001). For the purposes of this thesis, the subject of international adoptees will be confined to transracial Korean-American adoptees. At present, American adoptees from Korea represent a considerable portion of the Korean-American population. One source estimated that nearly 110,000 Korean-Americans were adopted between 1955 and 2001 (Evan B.

Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002). Transracial Korean-American adoptees' experiences may differ greatly when compared to transracial adoptees from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. One reason for this may be the lack of opportunities for Korean-American adoptees to be exposed to and understand their birth culture. Although examples of diverse cultures are often visible in the media and society at large, this is not the case for Korean-Americans (Aoki & Mio, 2009). Further, access to opportunities to learn about and engage with Korean culture in the United States varies based on the geographic location of the adopted individual. For example, an adopted Korean-American growing up in Los Angeles, California may be exposed to a thriving Korean culture in comparison to a similar person raised in the Midwest area of the United States where such a subculture does not exist (Yu & Myers, 2007). As such, this population of transracial adoptees merits further consideration regarding their development.

History of Transracial Adoption of Korean-Americans

The gradual increase of international adoptions from Korea since 1955 is largely due to the lasting effects of the Korean War. While the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953 officially ended the war, there were thousands of children who had become orphaned by the war and others who had been fathered by American servicemen (Lee, 2003). Services were created as a result of the large increase in orphaned children. For example, Holt International Children's Services, founded by Harry and Bertha Holt provided a means to help bring orphaned Korean children to the United States (Sacerdote, 2007).

In the time since the Korean War, it is estimated that over one hundred thousand individuals have been adopted from Korea and placed with American families (Anderson,

2015). During the years immediately after 1955, the majority of children adopted from Korea were the biracial offspring of American soldiers due to cultural stigma (Lee, 2003). However, contemporary Korean adoptees are often placed with Holt International Children's Services and similar organizations due to their biological families' inability to afford care for them or having been born to unwed mothers, which is considered culturally unacceptable in Korea (Sacerdote, 2007). In 2003, Korean-American adoptees represented approximately ten percent of the overall Korean population living in the United States (Lee, 2003).

Health Outcomes and Substance Usage

Preceding research has investigated how Korean-American adoptees fare in terms of mental and physical health outcomes (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). In addition, there are some data examining levels of psychosomatic symptoms, psychological adjustment, and externalizing and internalizing behaviors, but there has been little emphasis placed on substance usage behavior such as smoking. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted that cigarette smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States (CDC, 2017). As such, this outcome merits consideration especially regarding what factors may reduce the prevalence of this adverse behavior.

Previous studies have found that Korean-American adoptees do not differ significantly in some measures of physical or mental health outcomes when compared to both adopted and non-adopted individuals native to the United States (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). Additional research has been conducted that may allow interested scholars to understand components of the experiences of transracial Korean-American

adoptees. For instance, discrimination due to racial and ethnic background has been documented as a common occurrence for Asian Americans (Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006). Lee and colleagues (2015) found that instances of discrimination were related to increased usage of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana in addition to externalizing behaviors and anxiety for transracial adopted Asian Americans.

However, these studies did not focus on the unique experiences of Korean-Americans whose adoptive parents were of a different race than their own. Previous studies that have made claims about health outcomes for Korean-American adoptees were meta-analyses of international adoptees consisting of small sample sizes of Korean-American adoptees (Lee, 2003). Although meta-analyses of international adoptees undoubtedly contribute to the understanding of health outcomes for transracial Korean-American adoptees, they do not provide concrete information for this specific group. Further inquiry is required to better understand how these individuals make sense of their birth and adoptive cultures and how this relates to indicators of physical and mental health such as cigarette smoking.

Cultural Socialization and Ethnic Identity Development

As transracial Korean-American adoptees become adults, they must navigate issues unique to their situation as individuals adopted from a foreign country by parents of a different race. Previous research has examined the cultural socialization practices of families in the broader transracial adoptee population (Langrehr, 2014), which varies widely from one family to the next. Cultural socialization is defined as the process of a

person learning about and understanding how race and ethnicity shapes his or her life (Lee, 2013). Regarding cultural socialization studies, one researcher noted, “An underlying assumption of the research is that healthy psychological development is contingent on positive racial and ethnic experiences” (Lee, 2003, p.6). As such, this study seeks to further explore this relationship.

Many families will opt to minimize the importance that race plays in the life and development of transracial adoptees, choosing to focus on egalitarian or “color-blind” socialization practices (Langrehr, 2014,). It has been suggested however, that families engaging in “color-blind” child rearing may actually be harming the psychological adjustment of their transracial son or daughter by failing to attend to an important aspect of his or her identity or recognize the realities of individuals of varying racial groups in the United States (Langrehr, 2014). The failure to prepare developing transracial adoptees for instances of prejudice and questions of identity may have lasting repercussions, as these individuals will not have been educated about potentially negative aspects of the transracial adoptive experience.

The development of ethnic identity has been posited as a driving factor in outcomes of mental and physical health. Ethnic identity for transracial adoptees has been described as “a feeling of connection with both one’s cultural past and one’s present adoptive heritage” (Huh, 2000, p.75). In the context of transracially adopted Korean-Americans, this means making sense of one’s place in the dominant American culture he or she was adopted into in addition to evaluating investment in the birth culture he or she was adopted from. Transracial adoptees may feel a varying sense of interest in learning about

how they came to be adopted and their country of origin (Brodzinsky, 2011). Many transracial Korean-American adoptees may feel a high level of comfort with their place as a member of the dominant American culture and have minimal interest in learning about the traditions and values of their birth country. This study will seek to consider the salience of cultural post-adoption services on cigarette smoking in adulthood.

Post-Adoption Services

Few studies have considered the role that adoptive families' utilization of post-adoption services following international and transracial adoption has on the development of adopted children. Furthermore, no study has drawn a connection between cultural post-adoption service usage and substance usage such as cigarette smoking during adulthood. Cultural post-adoption services include resources provided by adoption agencies intended as resources for both adoptive parents and adopted children. Such services often include: heritage camps, cultural and historical information, heritage tours, and networking opportunities to get to know other transracial adoptive families (Vidal de Haymes & Simon, 2003). Heritage camps are held during the summer months and allow adoptees from 9-15 years old to become familiar with their birth cultures and interact with counselors and peers from similar backgrounds. Cultural and historical information services are designed to educate the adoptee regarding the country-specific context that may have influenced the biological parent's decision about adoption. Heritage tours provide adoptees and their families with the opportunity to visit the adoptee's birth country in a guided manner. Finally, adoptees had the option of networking and interacting with other adopted

individuals experiencing similar circumstances (Sacerdote, 2007). It is assumed that exposure to any of these post-adoption services can lead to greater exploration of transracial adoptees' birth culture.

Cultural programs and services conducted by adoption agencies provide an opportunity to reach individuals who may be having difficulty understanding how to make sense of the interplay between birth and adoptive cultures. Previous research suggests that transracial Korean-American adoptees exposed to their birth culture have higher levels of ethnic identity. One study found that transracial Korean adoptee children demonstrated a positive relationship between exposure to Korean culture and perspective-taking ability (Lee & Quintana, 2005). Specifically, greater perspective-taking ability by participants indicated better understanding of the effect that their Korean-American status had on peer relations and identity (Lee & Quintana, 2005). Similarly, another investigation found that transracial Korean-American adoptees' participation in cultural activities, such as attending cultural heritage camps was positively related to stronger ethnic identity (Huh, 2000).

Data from The Survey of Holt Adoptees and Their Families (Sacerdote, 2007) was used in this study to provide information about how aware families and their adopted children were regarding services offered, whether or not families utilized these programs, and what prohibited them from accessing such resources. Further research can help to improve outreach and cultural post-adoption services for both transracial Korean-Americans as well as the larger transracial adoptee population. Research has been conducted that may allow interested scholars to understand components of the

experiences of transracial Korean-American adoptees. For instance, discrimination due to racial and ethnic background has been documented as a common occurrence for Asian Americans (Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006). However, no scholarly work has explicitly considered what factors may influence components of health and cigarette smoking for transracial Korean-American adoptees. The purpose of this study is to consider the effects of specific elements (i.e., exposure to birth culture through cultural post-adoption services) of the transracial Korean-American adoptee experience with identity formation on cigarette smoking in adulthood. The current study will use a secondary dataset (Sacerdote, 2007) to look at adolescent adoptees' utilization of cultural post-adoption services such as: traveling on heritage tours, networking with other transracial families, attending heritage camps, and accessing cultural and historical information. Reports of resource usage by adoptees will be compared to self-reports of cigarette smoking by the adoptees at ages 24-34 (Sacerdote, 2007). The goal of this study is to better understand how utilization of post-adoption services relates to cigarette smoking in adulthood.

Previous research conducted by Huh (2000) that made use of an ethnic identity framework found a positive relationship (i.e., standardized regression coefficient of .68 and adjusted r^2 of .47) between utilization of post-adoption services and levels of ethnic identity for transracial Korean adoptees. Lee suggested that increased levels of cultural awareness and ethnic identity would be related to more positive mental health (Lee, 2003). A 2015 study is one of the few projects that considered a relation between ethnic identity and substance usage for the transracial Korean-American adoptee community. This investigation considered three components of ethnic identity: cognition, affect, and

behavior. Cognition was measured through survey questions concerning whether or not participants had a clear sense of their ethnicity and its implications. Affect was evaluated through items regarding the positive feelings that adoptees had towards their ethnicity. Finally, the behavioral component was measured by the amount of participation in Korean cultural activities. Interestingly, this article noted increased substance usage for members of this population with higher levels of the behavioral component of ethnic identity (Lee et al. 2015). These studies indicate that accessing post-adoption services can be an important factor for the development of a positive ethnic identity and may be related to lower rates of cigarette smoking in adult transracial Korean-American adoptees. Overall, research concerning this group is limited and more work must be done to clarify how utilization of cultural post-adoption services relates to cigarette smoking in adulthood.

Theoretical Framework

Examination of the importance of ethnic identity has produced inconsistent findings and has primarily considered less-specific minority groups, yet several studies have consistently found that higher ethnic identity can serve as a protective factor against negative effects associated with racial discrimination (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008). Additional research has noted a positive correlation between ethnic identity and self-esteem as well as a negative correlation between ethnic identity and depressive symptoms for adolescents and adults from a minority background (Smith & Silva, 2011). A prior study also found a positive relationship between markers of ethnic identity and psychological adjustment for adolescent Korean adoptees (Yoon, 2004). Therefore, it is possible that

achieving an ethnic identity through post-adoption services can mitigate transracial adoptees from the negative effects of racial and ethnic discrimination that may elicit maladaptive adjustment.

There are few theoretical frameworks appropriate for understanding ethnic identity development in transracial Korean-Americans. One model created by Jean Phinney and informed by Erik Erikson's work concerning identity formation, highlights the importance of adolescence and proposes three stages of ethnic identity development. The first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, is distinguished by minimal investigation of one's ethnicity and acceptance of the values characteristic of the dominant culture. The second stage, ethnic identity search, involves the individual having experiences that prompt evaluation of the role of his or her ethnicity. The third stage, ethnic identity achievement, is characterized by confidence and acceptance of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1993).

Using Phinney's model of ethnic identity development as a theoretical framework, the current study anticipates that many transracial adoptees will have engaged in Erikson's ethnic identity search stage through their usage of cultural post-adoption services. The exploration of culture-focused resources is expected to provide a foundation for adoptees as they move into adulthood and the ethnic identity achievement stage of Phinney's model.

Some research does highlight a different perspective on the effects of ethnic identity on the health of transracial Korean-American adoptees (Lee, Lee, Hu, & Kim, 2015). In a study by Lee and colleagues (2015), transracial Korean-American adoptees with higher ethnic identity demonstrated greater levels of externalizing behaviors when exposed to discrimination as adolescents. Moreover, a positive relationship was identified between

ethnic identity and alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana usage when these individuals dealt with discrimination as adolescents (Lee, et al. 2015). Despite the difficulty reconciling the results of these studies, Hubinette (2004) suggested that Korean-American transracial adoptees create an identity that is distinct from both their birth culture and the dominant culture that they live in, which can be labeled the “third space” (Hubinette, 2004). Additional exploration of this population’s creation of and experiences in the “third space” may shed light on the differing experiences for these adoptees. The goal of the current study is to provide more information about how transracial Korean-American adoptees navigate the “third space” through cultural post-adoption services and the effects of this process on cigarette smoking in later life.

Ch. 3 Current Study

To date, no study has analyzed data drawn from transracial Korean-American adoptees in order to understand the relation between utilization of cultural post-adoption services and cigarette smoking. This study will compare survey responses regarding usage of post-adoption services (attending heritage camps and heritage tours, accessing cultural and historical information, and networking with other adoptive families) to self-reports of cigarette smoking in adulthood. The following research question and corresponding hypothesis based on Phinney’s theory of ethnic identity development will be addressed in this study:

1. *Is exposure to birth culture through utilization of cultural post-adoption services during childhood and adolescence for transracial Korean-American adoptees*

associated with levels of cigarette smoking in adulthood?

It is expected that increased use of cultural post-adoption services during childhood and adolescence by this population will be associated with decreased reports of cigarette smoking in adulthood. This hypothesis is based on previous research regarding utilization of post-adoption services and an association to increased levels of ethnic identity for transracial Korean adoptees (Huh, 2000). The expectation of this study is that a higher level of ethnic identity supported by utilization of post-adoption services and resources will be significantly related to decreased smoking. Analyzing the effect that post-adoption services have on substance usage in adulthood is a novel approach to considering the experiences of the transracial Korean-American adoptee population as it relates to ethnic identity.

Findings supporting the hypothesis of this study should align with Phinney's (1993) template for the development of ethnic identity. In this case, the adoptee utilizing cultural post-adoption services would be considered part of the ethnic identity search stage and reaching the ethnic identity achievement stage would be reflected by confidence in one's self and reduced cigarette smoking.

To answer the primary research question a number of covariates were also taken into account including: gender of adoptee, age at arrival in the United States, adoptee mother's highest level of education, highest grade completed by the adoptee, and the age of adoptee when the survey was completed. Previous research has demonstrated the efficacy of utilizing these factors as control variables in analytic models used for the study of transracial adoptees. For example, a study conducted by Westues and Cohen (1998) noted that male transracial adoptees living in Canada reported greater rates of identification with

Canadian culture over the culture they were adopted from compared to their female counterparts in the study. Moreover, Hjern and colleagues' (2002) investigation found that age of adoption was an important predictor for risk of mental health issues. In particular, these trends were most significant for international adoptees who were between 4 to 6 years of age when adopted. Thus, the present study included these variables in all analyses.

Chapter 4. Methods

Participants

The current study utilized a dataset called the Survey of Holt Adoptees and Their Families that was obtained from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan (Sacerdote, 2007). This project considered data collected by Dr. Bruce Sacerdote between 2004 and 2005 in collaboration with Holt International Children's Services. Families were eligible for participation in the study if they had adopted one or more children through Holt International's Korea Program between 1970-1980. In partnership with Holt International, the primary investigator obtained contact information for adoptive families in order to begin the recruitment process. Data from the Survey of Holt Adoptees and Their Families (Sacerdote, 2007) provided information about how aware families and their adopted children were of services offered, whether or not families utilized these programs, and what prohibited them from accessing such resources

The analyses for this study will be restricted to data concerning children adopted from Korea in which the adoptee provided information about cigarette smoking and

whether they utilized at least one cultural post-adoption service ($n=250$). For the adopted children in the sample the mean age was 29.63 years, 30% were male, and 18% ($n=45$) reported themselves as cigarette smokers. Descriptive statistics regarding the sample are shown in Table 1.

Procedures

In the Survey of Holt Adoptees and Their Families, 1,000 families were randomly chosen and contacted at the outset of the pilot phase of the study. In the subsequent stage of data collection 2,500 adoptive families were then randomly sampled via mailed surveys and offered a \$50 incentive for participation in the study. The first wave of mailed surveys was followed by a subsequent wave attempting to engage participants who did not originally respond. This resulted in survey data from 141 additional participants.

Questionnaires were distributed to adult adoptees ages 24-34 ($n=653$). The responses considered for this study will be confined to the cases where self-report data from the adult adoptee included information about cigarette smoking and at least one cultural post-adoption service during their upbringing ($n=250$).

Measures

Post-Adoption Services. Adult children responded to retrospective survey questions concerning the family's usage of post-adoption services during the adoptee's childhood and adolescence. Participants were presented with a table of resources provided by Holt International and asked to indicate the services they had utilized. Example services included: documentation services, confidential intermediary services, articles, books, and newsletters. For the purpose of this study, only data regarding post adoption services

related to cultural awareness was considered in the analyses. These items were classified as cultural and historical information, networking with other adoptive families, heritage camps, and heritage tours. "Yes" responses were coded as 1 and "No" values were coded as 0. If the respondent indicated that the family did not access these services, the participants were queried about their reasoning for not doing so. Possible responses for this particular question included: "unaware of service", "did not need", "cost too high", and "other: please specify". In this study, participant data were separated based on whether or not the families made use of any of the cultural post adoption services available to them. For this sample that originally comprised 250 individuals, missing non-response was prevalent for the items concerning usage of cultural services. Specifically, for the item regarding networking with other adoptees, 63.2% of participants indicated responded. 65.2% of subjects responded to the query concerning traveling on a heritage tour. 59.6% of the participants answered whether or not they had used cultural or historical information during upbringing. Finally, 67.6% of participants completed the item regarding taking part in a heritage camp. These descriptive statistics are located in table 2.

Smoking. Adult adoptees were questioned concerning whether or not they smoked cigarettes in 2004-2005 when the study was conducted. If the participant responded that he or she did not smoke cigarettes, the value was entered as 0. If the respondent indicated that he or she was a smoker, the response was coded as 1 and the participant was then asked how many cigarettes would be consumed in an average day. Adoptee responses to number of cigarettes consumed per day ranged from two and a half cigarettes to five packs, recorded as 5. In the sample of 250 transracial Korean-American adoptees, 18% ($n=45$)

indicated that they smoked cigarettes. For the purposes of this study, the variable of cigarette smoking was treated as a dichotomous variable and the continuous outcome for “yes” responses was not considered.

Covariates. As noted above, analyses included several covariates to test for associations between characteristics of the adoptee and substance usage in adulthood. Variables included in the models were: gender of adoptee, age at arrival in the United States, adoptee maternal years of education, highest grade completed by the adoptee, and the age of adoptee when the survey was completed. These demographic covariates are shown in Table 1.

Analytic Plan

Data analysis was conducted using Stata 14 (Stata Corp, 2014). Missing data were treated with full information maximum likelihood. Originally, correlations were investigated to identify the relations between the variables of interest. Although these descriptive statistics revealed associations that one would expect based on the hypothesis of this thesis, none of the correlations were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Then, a logistic regression approach was utilized to analyze the data.

Notably, regression models make several fundamental assumptions about the nature of the data they consider. These assumptions include reliability of measurement, linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity (Osborne & Waters, 2002). The assumption of reliability of measurement describes the confidence level that one can have regarding the authenticity of a relationship between variables. The assumption of linearity supposes a linear association between independent and dependent variables. Normality makes the

assumption of normal distribution in the disturbance term or random error in the model. Finally, homoscedasticity is defined as the presumption that the variance of errors is uniform for all stages of the independent variable (Osborne & Waters, 2002).

According to Bengtson and colleagues (2005), the logistic regression method has been utilized as a means of considering dependent variables that are restricted to a binary outcome. The analytic plan was developed so that the outcome of interest would specifically be focused on adoptee reports of cigarette smoking. This decision was made based on the idea that a binary outcome indicating any smoking is a more meaningful measure of health than a binary outcome indicating another variable such as drinking behavior during adulthood. While an individual older than the legal drinking age could certainly consume limited amounts of alcohol and maintain a positive health status, engaging in cigarette smoking of any quantity may be detrimental to one's health. Each of the logistic regression models were initially run with covariates including: gender of adoptee, age at arrival in the United States, maternal years of education, highest grade completed by the adoptee, and the age of adoptee when the survey was completed. Covariates that were not statistically significant in the logistic regression models were trimmed from subsequent analyses. Notably, adoptee highest grade completed was a statistically significant covariate in the logistic regression models conducted with individual services as predictors as well as the model with a composite variable for utilization of services.

Ch. 5 Results

Demographic characteristics for this sample are presented in Table 1. The sample of transracial Korean-American adoptees included in the analysis ($n=250$) was composed of 70% female respondents. These individuals had a mean age of arrival to the United States of 1.23 years (about 15 months) and were an average of 29.63 years old at time of survey completion. Participants had an average level of education of 15.18 years (some college). Finally, mean adoptive maternal education for respondents was 14.48 years (some college). Descriptive statistics regarding usage of cultural post-adoption services are located in Table 2. Overall utilization of cultural post-adoption services for this sample was low, with 68 out of 250 (27.2%) participants stating they had accessed one or more service. Many participants from the sample opted not to respond to items regarding cultural resources: 158 subjects (16.46%) noted whether or not they networked with other adoptees and 26 responded that they had used this resource; 163 individuals (12.88%) completed the survey item concerning traveling on a heritage tour with 21 reporting that they had done so; 149 participants indicated whether or not they had accessed cultural or historical information from the adoption agency, with 11 (7.88%) stating that they had used this service; 169 subjects responded to the question of attending a heritage camp, with 36 (21.3%) noting that they had done so. Finally, in the sample of 250 adult adoptee participants, 45 (18%) stated that they engaged in cigarette smoking.

A logistic regression approach was conducted to identify statistically significant relations between cultural post-adoption resources and substance consumption as a proxy for understanding adoptee health in adulthood. Results of the logistic regression analyses

are presented in Table 3. The original logistic regression models included adoptee gender, age at arrival, adopted mother's years of education, highest grade of education finished by the adoptee, and the age of adoptee at time of survey completion as control variables. Covariates that were determined to be non-significant were trimmed from succeeding models. A relation that reached statistical significance was identified when the composite variable for utilization of cultural post-adoption services was employed as the independent variable in the logistic regression model ($\beta = -.68, p = 0.05$). These results, shown in Table 3, suggested that usage of cultural post-adoption services represented by a composite variable was associated with decreased self-reports of cigarette smoking in adulthood. In other words, adoptees that reported engaging in any of the adoption services were less likely to smoke cigarettes in adulthood. Furthermore, odds ratios were produced using the logistic regression method to consider the change in odds of engaging in cigarette smoking for adoptees that used cultural post-adoption services. Again, the composite variable was the only predictor that reached statistical significance ($OR = .51, p = 0.05$). In this case, the odds ratio can be interpreted as meaning that individuals who accessed at least one cultural post-adoption service had .51 odds of smoking cigarettes when compared to adoptees that did not utilize one of the services. The results of the odds ratios are presented in Table 4.

Additional analyses, focused specifically on self-reports of cigarette smoking as the outcome of interest, did not produce significant connections with individual service predictors. Specifically, engaging in networking with other adoptive families, accessing cultural and historical information, attending heritage tours, and attending heritage camps

were not significantly associated with smoking in adulthood ($p>0.05$).

Ch. 6 Discussion

This study contributes to the body of literature regarding the positive development of transracial Korean-American adoptees using Phinney's model of ethnic identity development as a theoretical framework. The present study addressed a gap in the literature regarding this specific population of transracial adoptees by considering factors from an individual's upbringing and comparing them to self-reported outcomes in adulthood. In order to conduct this investigation, one research question was explored:

Is exposure to birth culture through utilization of cultural post-adoption services during childhood and adolescence for transracial Korean-American adoptees associated with levels of cigarette smoking in adulthood?

The hypothesis of this study was supported in that a statistically significant relation was identified between accessing cultural post-adoption services during adolescence and a reduced likelihood of reporting cigarette smoking in adulthood. The outcome of this logistic regression suggests that transracial Korean-American adoptees that made use of cultural post-adoption resources may have been affected positively as reflected by a decreased likelihood of cigarette smoking. This statistically significant relation shows that participants who accessed cultural post-adoption resources during childhood and adolescence may have reached the third stage of Phinney's model, ethnic identity

achievement, characterized by acceptance of one's identity and possibly represented by a reduced likelihood of cigarette smoking.

Despite the low utilization rates of cultural post-adoption services for this sample, there is reason for optimism regarding the potential impact of these resources on smoking behaviors during adulthood. Notably, the composition of the sample was largely female so the results of this study speak to the efficacy of providing resources for transracial Korean-American adoptees in order to promote positive developmental outcomes. In addition, one specific cultural post-adoption service did not prove to be more significant in relation to cigarette smoking than other resources. As such, adoption agencies should continue to provide a suite of services to adoptees so that they are able to access the resource that is most suitable for them.

Previous research had established associations between the access of cultural post-adoption services and stronger levels of ethnic identity (Huh, 2000), as well as the role of ethnic identity as a protective factor against negative experiences like discrimination (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2008; Smith & Silva, 2011). Using this preceding scholarship as a framework for understanding the analyses, it was expected that a significant negative association would be detected between utilization of cultural post-adoption services and cigarette smoking by the sample in this study. Specifically, it was hypothesized that greater familial employment of cultural post-adoption resources during childhood and adolescence would be predictive of decreased reports of cigarette smoking by the adoptees in adulthood. Using a composite variable that noted if adoptees had used one or more cultural post-adoption service, a statistically significant association was found with reduced

likelihood of engaging in cigarette smoking compared to adoptees that did not use one of the services.

Non-significant results may indicate that factors not measured in this study, such as parenting practices, have a stronger association with cigarette smoking for this group. For example, the relationship between development of ethnic identity and behaviors during adulthood may be partially explained by the manner that parents opt to converse about racial issues in the family as found by preceding studies (Anderson, 2015; Langrehr, 2014). Moreover, it is possible that the experiences connected to cultural post-adoption services were not as salient as originally hypothesized. Perhaps the transracial Korean-American adoptees that participated in this study were more comfortable assimilating into the dominant culture or decided to carve out a “third space” as identified by Hubinette’s (2004) work. Adoption agencies should consider means of providing services and information to adoptees concerning the development of the “third space” as this may be a recurrent theme for the transracial adoptee population. In addition, it is plausible that experiences associated with various cultural post-adoption services but not explicitly cultural in nature may have positively influenced the development of the participants in this study. For example, adoptees may have experiences with mentors or peers at heritage camps that have far-reaching implications for the future.

Of course, it is possible that characteristics of adoptive families in the study such as socio-economic status, parents’ education, and parenting practices may serve as protective factors against substance usage in adulthood for adoptees. These protective influences may enable the adoptee to overcome conflict stemming from the relationship between birth and

adoptive culture. Notably, preceding scholarship has documented relatively positive adjustment for international adoptees and posited that characteristics of the family buffer the adoptee from negative developmental outcomes (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005; Lee, 2003). Subsequent research should examine these factors in more depth to contribute to the knowledge base regarding transracial Korean-American adoptees.

Limitations and Future Directions

This thesis is limited by the nature of the dataset and the insufficient body of knowledge with respect to transracial Korean-American adoptees. Scholars still do not have a clear understanding of the mechanisms affecting developmental outcomes for this population. Additionally, the data analyzed for the current study does not include information for a host of variables that would contribute to the knowledge base about this population (e.g. ethnic identity, parenting practices, etc.). Nonresponse to large numbers of surveys and questions was problematic for the analyses of this study. The amount of survey items skipped may be attributable to the period of time between adoptees interacting with Holt International and its services during upbringing and their status as adults when the study was conducted. It must be noted that usage rates for cultural post-adoption services were relatively low. Only 27.2% of participants reported utilizing at least one cultural resource during upbringing. It is also important to note that the 18% rate of cigarette smoking for the adult adoptees in this sample was actually lower than the 20.9% nationwide prevalence in 2004 (CDC, 2004). In addition, the covariate for adoptee highest grade completed was consistently significant suggesting that more years of education were associated with reduced risk of cigarette smoking. This finding is consistent with recent

trends identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noting a negative relation between level of education and prevalence of cigarette smoking (CDC, 2017).

In addition, the sample was highly skewed regarding gender, as 70% of the participants were female and it is plausible that female transracial Korean-American adoptees have different substance usage behaviors in comparison to male transracial Korean-American adoptees. This assumption is based on data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stating that the self-reported rate of cigarette smoking in 2004 for American women was 18.5% in comparison to 23.4% for American men (CDC, 2004). The results of the current study can provide justification for the need to acquire additional information regarding the implementation and impact of cultural post-adoption services. Future studies must consider the adoptees' perception of these resources in addition to measuring whether or not these services were utilized. The statistically significant association found between usage of a cultural post-adoption services and cigarette smoking in adulthood warrants further investigation.

This finding may be evidence that the transracial Korean adoptees in this sample that made use of cultural post-adoption services benefited from these resources. Engagement with these programs may serve as particularly salient events that influence the development of strong ethnic identity and health decisions such as whether or not to engage in cigarette smoking. Subsequent research must investigate the factors influencing the decision-making process surrounding utilization of post-adoption services. Perhaps, cost and location are important variables that could be analyzed in a future project. In this study, the outcome variable of cigarette smoking is employed as a proxy for better

understanding the health status of the participants. Future research should seek to gain a more comprehensive awareness of how this population fares in terms of their health and what experiences during upbringing influenced these outcomes. Possible avenues of investigation might include: longitudinal studies, explicit questions concerning ethnic identity, and more variables regarding health in addition to cigarette smoking.

The results of this work speak to the importance of continuing to investigate these individuals and methods of assisting them. Moving forward, scholars should attempt to collect and analyze a comprehensive longitudinal body of data that will allow for more extensive understanding of developmental processes and outcomes for this population. Understanding how transracial Korean-American adoptees fare regarding mental and physical health requires considering factors internal to the person, such as ethnic identity, as well as external sources including parenting practices and discrimination. While the dataset used for this study does not contain measures of parenting practices and adoptee discrimination, the potential influence of these factors on the development of transracial Korean-American adoptees can be used to inform the associations analyzed in this thesis. Preceding examinations of this population revealed that parental attitudes toward racial and ethnic differences significantly affected mental health for the child (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994). For the individuals in Benson's study, parental denial or oversight of racial differences was positively correlated with mental health issues. Furthermore, Anderson's (2015) work sought to identify the ways that familial communication patterns influenced discussions of race and ethnicity in a transracial adoptive family. Future research will have to explore how parenting is associated with adjustment in later life for

this community. Specifically, research should contemplate how transracial Korean-American adoptees reconcile their birth and adoptive cultures and how this impacts outcomes of mental and physical health including substance usage in adulthood.

Conclusion

The current study used logistic regression models to consider the associations between the utilization of cultural post-adoption services by Korean-American adoptive families during the adoptee's upbringing, as well as the eventual outcomes of substance usage by the adoptee in adulthood. A significant negative association was found between usage of services and cigarette smoking when analyzed with a logistic regression approach and a sum score for utilization of services. This statistically significant relationship suggests that engaging with cultural post-adoption services during childhood and adolescence for transracial Korean-American adoptees was significantly related to lower cigarette usage in adulthood. Perhaps, these cultural resources influenced the development of ethnic identity in adoptees, which in turn was related to making positive health decisions like whether or not to engage in cigarette smoking. Significantly, the majority of the sample was female so adoption agencies should continue to provide a variety of cultural resources as a means of affecting positive development for females related to substance usage decisions in adulthood. Moreover, adoption agencies must consider ways to effectively engage male adoptees with resources in order to promote improved identity development and decision-making regarding substance usage. These findings provide support for continued investigation of the developmental experiences for Korean-American transracial adoptees.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample (*n*=250)

Continuous Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Arrival Age (Years)	1.23	0.56	1-5
Maternal Education (Years)	14.48	2.34	8-20
Adoptee Highest Grade Completed	15.18	2.07	10-21
Age at Completion of Survey (Years)	29.63	2.77	20-37
<hr/> <hr/>			
Categorical Variable	%		
Gender			
Males	30		
Females	70		

Table 2

Utilization of Services

Variable	% (Yes)	<i>n</i>
Networking w/ Adoptees	16.46	26
Heritage Tours	12.88	21
Cultural/Historical Info	7.38	11
Heritage Camps	21.30	36
Used One or More Service	27.20	68

Table 3

Logistic Regression Models

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Networking	-0.87	0.77
Heritage Tours	-0.48	0.12
Heritage Camps	-0.26	0.53
Cultural/Historical	-0.64	1.07
Info		
Used One or More Service (Composite)	-0.68*	0.34
Adoptee Highest Grade	-0.25**	0.09

†0>d ** 50>d *

Table 4

Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Models

Variable	OR	SE	CI (95%)
Networking	0.48	0.38	0.09-2.27
Heritage Tours	0.58	0.34	0.18-1.85
Heritage Camps	0.71	0.41	0.27-2.19
Cultural/Historical Info	0.53	0.57	0.06-4.30
Used One or More Service (Composite)	0.51*	0.18	0.25-0.99
Adoptee Highest Grade	0.77**	0.07	0.65-0.92

* p<.05 ** p<.01

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