CHILDREN ADOPTED FROM CHINA: CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES, PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP, AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Children Adopted from China: Cultural Socialization Practices, Parent-Child Relationship, and Social-Emotional Behaviour

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Transracial adoption places the child with a family of a different ethnicity than their own. In the current study we qualitatively examine concerns associated with transracial adoption and investigate the relation between parent-child relationships and child social-emotional problems. Twenty-two adopted girls from China, 20 nonadopted Caucasian girls, and 23 nonadopted Chinese-Canadian girls, between 10-14 years, and their mothers were included. Thematic content analysis of interviews with adoptive mothers revealed that the transracial adoption experience had positive, negative, and neutral aspects. This included the parent-child relationship, the adopted child's view of their physical appearance, and the incorporation of cultural elements into the home. Quantitative analyses revealed no significant differences between the three groups on measures of parent-child relationship quality and child social-emotional functioning, which confirmed findings from the qualitative analysis. In the entire sample there were significant negative relations between quality of parent-child relationship and social-emotional functioning. These results suggest that early age of adoption may help decrease the likelihood of problematic parent-child relationships and social-emotional functioning in adopted children. It would be important to re-examine this question during adolescence when racial identity forms.

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Overview

Adoption allows prospective parents to build a family despite difficulties with infertility or other reasons that may prevent biological parenting, but domestic adoption can be a lengthy process (Terry et al., 2001). This led to an increasing popularity in international adoptions (Harf et al., 2013), particularly from China. However, adopting a child from a different ethnic background (transracial adoption; Baxter, 2006) can pose difficulties for the adopting parents, who are raising the child outside the child's cultural context (Park, 2012), and for adopted children as they look visibly different from their family members (Baden et al., 2012). Children who grow up in homes where their ethnic identity is unacknowledged tend to develop an unhealthy attitude towards their own cultural background, which may contribute to issues with self-image and identity (e.g., having negative opinions of the self; Kallgren & Caudill, 1993). Another factor that is critical and influential to the child's development, as well as predictive of self-worth in adolescence and mental health outcomes is the parent-child relationship (McAdams et al., 2017). As such, this relationship could impact the success of the adoption, which itself is a risk factor for later psychological problems (Elovainio et al., 2018).

The goal of the current study is twofold. The first is to qualitatively examine interviews conducted with Caucasian parents who have adopted Chinese children to examine unique concerns associated with transracial adoption. The second goal is to examine the parent-child relationship and the association with child social-emotional behaviour in three groups of children: 1) Chinese children adopted into Caucasian homes,

2) nonadopted Caucasian children, and 3) nonadopted Chinese children.

Adoption and International Adoption

Adoption involves a child's legal separation from their biological family and legal placement into a new family. Adoption allows individuals to build families regardless of barriers that may prevent biological parenting (Terry et al., 2001). According to the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada (2021), there are currently 63,000 children living in some form of government care after being removed from their family home for different reasons (e.g., neglect, abuse, etc.). Of the 63,000 children currently in care, 30,000 are eligible for permanent adoption. Though there are children available for domestic adoption, in 2016-2017 only 767 adoptions went through Ontario Children's Aid Societies (CAS; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2018). In comparison, 2,127 children were adopted internationally in all of Canada in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Furthermore, the number of Canadian children placed into adoptive homes domestically was approximately 5,367 in 1981 but by 1990 this number had decreased by 47.3% (Sobol & Daly, 1994). These statistics demonstrate a decline in domestic adoptions and suggest that potential parents are exploring adoption internationally.

International adoption is defined as the legal adoption of children born in a foreign country (Harf et al., 2013). Worldwide, international adoption can involve approximately 29,000 children per year from 100 different countries (Selman, 2009). Selman (2012) noted that between 1998 and 2004, there was a 42% increase in intercountry adoptions though these numbers declined between 2004 and 2010, where the estimated annual global numbers of children adopted internationally dropped from 45,000 to 29,000. The most common countries involved in intercountry adoptions include

China, Russia, Guatemala, and Ethiopia (Selman, 2009). Terry et al. (2001) suggest that the popularity of international adoptions was due to four main factors: 1) the lack of infants available for adoption, 2) the lengthy adoption process for domestic adoptions, 3) open adoptions, and 4) restrictions depending on parent characteristics.

First, most prospective parents want to adopt a child who is very young instead of one who is older. According to the president of the Adoption Council of Canada, most children available for adoption are usually over the age of six. However, parents are reportedly interested in adopting infants because they believe they will have fewer issues with a child who is younger (Balcom, 2006). For example, prospective parents are often worried that they will have a difficult time forming attachments to an older child in comparison to an infant. This initial parent-child attachment is important as early security in the parent-child relationship promotes strong interpersonal skills in childhood and adolescence which can minimize internalizing behaviour problems (e.g., acting socially withdrawn; van der Voort et al., 2014).

Second, the process for domestic adoption can be lengthy. In Ontario, families who are interested in adopting must first complete a government-mandated adoption home-study and an adoption training program (Adoption Council of Ontario, 2020). An adoption home-study involves an assessment of the family or individual who is looking to adopt and includes an application, home safety checklists, family background questionnaires, medical reports, clearances from police and child welfare services, and references. This home-study can take 4-6 months and must be completed by a children's aid or ministry approved worker. Once completed, this home-study is valid for up to two years (Adoption Council of Ontario, 2020). The adoption training program is a nine-

module course that provides prospective parents with the requirements and responsibilities that go into parenting an adopted child (Adoption Council of Ontario, 2020). This course covers topics such as: the adoption process, adoption laws, child welfare systems, attachment and loss, identity formation, the importance of cultural and ethnic awareness and more (Adoption Council of Ontario, 2020). After the family has completed the home-study and adoption training program they can be matched with a child, but this can take years (Adoption Council of Ontario, 2020).

The third factor that dissuades families from domestic adoptions is their reluctance to take part in open adoptions. In open adoptions, adoptive children maintain contact with their biological family. The idea of open adoptions was first introduced in 2011 when Bill 179 (*Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act*) removed access orders as a legal barrier to adoption. Prior to Bill 179, if a child in government care had biological parents or guardians with an access order, which allowed them to see the child without having custody, the child was not eligible to be adopted (Family Law Education for Women, 2020). Though open adoptions can benefit the child, many prospective parents are reluctant to engage in this type of adoption (Terry et al., 2001). In particular, adoptive parents worry that this type of adoption may challenge their parental authority as well as their image of creating a family (MacDonald & McSherry, 2011). Additionally, open adoptions may disrupt the day-to-day life of adoptive parents. For example, they may have to take time off to attend scheduled appointments with the child's birth parents or alter special family occasions (e.g., birthday celebrations) to accommodate the birth parents (MacDonald & McSherry, 2011).

The last factor that influences the popularity of international adoptions is that

certain characteristics of the prospective parents can result in restrictions when trying to adopt a child. Depending on the state/country, it may be harder for same-sex couples, single parent households, and older couples to adopt. For these reasons, many couples in North America often opt for international adoption with adoption of children from China being most popular (Selman, 2012).

Adoption of Children from China

Children adopted from China are unique in comparison to other international adoptees because they were abandoned due to China's one-child policy (Cohen & Farnia, 2011a), which ended in 2016 (due to the significant decrease of birth rates in China; Pletcher, 2010). However, China is still recovering from the consequences of this policy in terms of their overall reduction in both fertility and birth rates. For example, though the policy came to an end, many families were still hesitant to have more than one child due to financial reasons and lack of childcare (Pletcher, 2010). An additional consequence of China's previous one-child policy was the impact on China's overall ratio of males to females. Traditionally in Chinese culture, the male children would carry on the family name. Thus, there was a large influx of female infants being abandoned during this time as male infants were more desirable (Pletcher, 2010). This led to more orphanages being built in order to accommodate the large influx of abandoned children.

Although China's orphanages are said to have better conditions in comparison to orphanages in other parts of the world, there are still factors that could negatively impact a child's physical and psychological development. Past research on the conditions of Chinese orphanages has shown that there are issues that arise due to the overall lack of funding (e.g., overcrowding; Cohen et al., 2008). For example, a Chinese orphanage in

Wuhan housed children ages 2 to 5 in one room with over 30 cribs that often held two infants at a time (Johnson, 1993). In addition, only one or two attendants would be assigned per room to care for the children, which led to an inadequate amount of attention or care for each individual child. Thus, while the orphanage could supply food and clothing for each child, food often lacked nutritional value leading to underweight infants (Cohen et al., 2008) and infants who became sick were often neglected (Johnson, 1993). Despite these conditions, China is still one of the top countries for international adoptions in North America. For example, in 2005, adoptions from China accounted for 53% of international adoptions in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016).

China was not always the leading country for international adoption, however. Prior to 1992 the Chinese government did not allow foreigners to adopt their children unless they were of Chinese descent but in 1993 China created the China Adoption Organization department which was responsible for the coordination of adoption of Chinese children by foreigners (Gordon, 1997). To start the adoption process, the China Adoption Organization had to receive a completed application from the parents via their adoption agency, which included parent proof of age, marital status, occupation, financial status, and a police record check (Gordon, 1997). After this was completed, prospective parents were matched with a child who was available for adoption and sent a portfolio that included the child's name, photograph, and approximate birth date. If the family chose to accept the adoption, the next step was for the family to travel to China for two weeks to complete the adoption process.

Once in China, the prospective parents (accompanied by a translator) would attend an informal meeting with a public official from the provincial capital for an

interview. This interview serves as the final assessment of the prospective parents' motives and desires for adopting a child from China. During this interview parents promise that they will always provide for the child and prioritize the child's well-being. After the interview the parents sign an adoption agreement and are taken to meet their new baby (Gordon, 1997). Before leaving China, the parents must donate to the child's orphanage. This donation could range from 3000 to 4000 US dollars. This is an additional cost that is expected of the families (Andrew, 2007). Potential adoptive parents are made aware of these stipulations by the adoption agency prior to their trip to China (Andrew, 2007). This process is generally more expensive than domestic adoptions, and as a result, most adoptive families have a significantly higher socioeconomic status in comparison to nonadoptive families and also tend to have a higher education (Tan et al., 2020). For example, among American families who adopted children from China, it was found that over half of the adoptive mothers had a graduate-level education and that over half of the adoptive families had a total household income of $90,000 per year, or higher (Tan et al., 2020). In addition, most adoptive parents tend to be Caucasian. For example, over 64,000 Chinese children were adopted by Caucasian American families between 1999 and 2010 (U.S. Department of State, 2010 as cited in Park, 2012) and 53% of Caucasian parents who adopt from overseas, adopt children from China (Ishizawa et al., 2006). This type of international adoption is also known as transracial adoption.

Transracial Adoptions

Transracial adoptions place the adoptive child into a family who is of a different ethnicity from the child's birth parents (Park, 2012), thereby creating a multiracial family (Baxter, 2006). Though international transracial adoption allows prospective parents to

start a family, it is important to note that unique difficulties may arise during this process. In particular, adopting a child from a different ethnic background can pose problems for both the adopted child and for the adoptive parents. The adopted child may question why their physical appearance differs from that of their adoptive parents and the parents may struggle with raising a child outside the child's cultural context (Park, 2012). Thus, transracial adoptions are especially unique as parents face challenges that may not occur in adoptions where both the adopted child and parent are from the same ethnic background. Transracial adoptions have been criticized by adoption professionals because they question whether the adoptive parents are able to support the child in a way that would allow them to develop a positive ethnic identity (e.g., expose them to elements of their birth culture so they develop a relationship with their ethnic background; Morrison, 2004). In transracial adoptions, identity formation, particularly ethnic identity, is critical since children are able to recognize ethnic differences at a very young age (Baxter, 2006). This creates an additional challenge for both the adoptive parents and the adopted child. The adoptive parents must navigate their adoptive child's ethnic identity development without having any experience to guide them since their ethnic identity formation would be very different. This lack of experience could affect the adopted child's connection to their culture and their ethnic identity development.

Transracial Adoption and Ethnic Identity

Godon et al. (2014) showed that most adult transracial adoptees in their study felt a sense of ethnic isolation and experience difficulties forming their ethnic identity. This sense of racial isolation while growing up was due to the lack of diversity in their neighbourhoods and communities. As a result, the transracial adoptees sought safe haven

in diverse groups when they got older (e.g., almost all participants chose to attend college or live in an area that was more diverse). Participants also described that they often had to deal with assumptions and norms that highlighted the gap between their birth culture identity and their adoptive identity. For example, one adult participant explained that they did not fit in with their Caucasian friends because they were visibly different from them, but also did not fit in with their Asian friends due to their lack of cultural knowledge and inability to speak the language. This left them feeling isolated from both groups.

Similar results have been reported by Reynolds et al. (2021) who examined the experiences of adult transracial adoptees from China raised in the United States by Caucasian parents. Semi-structured interviews revealed that participants often found it necessary to disclose their adoption status to others to avoid assumptions that they were literate in Chinese culture or language. Related to this were participant experiences with both racial and adoption microaggressions. For example, many participants explained that it was common for their lived experience as an Asian person to be denied (e.g., “oh, but you are not really Asian because you were raised by White parents”), which often left them feeling humiliated. Additionally, adult transracial adoptees often felt unprepared when it came to facing racism when they were growing up and that they would often hide these experiences from their Caucasian parents because of their parent’s defensive reactions (e.g., “no that didn’t really happen”). This led participants to seek solace and support from other Chinese adoptees who they felt a more intimate bond with due to their shared ethnic background and non-traditional family. Participants also noted that their exposure to, and experiences with, Asian American culture felt less authentic when they were accompanied by their adoptive parents since their parents were not of Asian descent

(Reynolds et al., 2021). These results indicate that parents can play a key role in helping their transracially adopted child develop their ethnic identity but may find it difficult because of lack of familiarity with the child's home culture and customs (Park, 2012).

Transracial Adoption and Cultural Socialization

Transracial adoptions can pose difficulties for the adopting parents as they may find it difficult to raise their adopted child in a way that incorporates elements and customs from their child's birth country. Research has shown that parents who adopt children from different cultural backgrounds tend to take one of two approaches when it comes to raising a child of a different ethnicity: a racially dissonant approach or a racially aware approach (Kallgren & Caudill, 1993).

A racially dissonant approach can be categorized by the family's lack of acknowledgement and acceptance of their adopted child's ethnic background. This can be demonstrated by the family living in communities that are primarily Caucasian and sending their adopted child to schools that lack diversity (Kallgren & Caudill, 1993). These families often have little or no contact with any individuals who are of the same cultural background as their transracially adopted child (Bebiroglu & Pinderhughes, 2012). This is exacerbated by adoption agencies, which may not provide the resources that adoptive parents need when adopting a child internationally (e.g., support groups). In fact, Kallgren and Caudill (1993) surveyed seven different adoption agencies and found that only two agencies provided cultural awareness training programs and accessibility to literature that covered key issues that might arise during transracial adoptions. Additionally, only 60% of agencies encouraged transracially adoptive parents to live in an ethnically diverse neighborhood and send their child to a diverse school. Research has

shown that children who grow up in homes where their ethnic identity is not acknowledged tend to develop an unhealthy attitude towards their own cultural background and this may contribute to issues with their self-image (e.g., having negative opinions of the self; Kallgren & Caudill, 1993).

A racially aware approach is taken by parents who acknowledge and are sensitive to their adopted child's cultural background. This can be demonstrated by living in a racially diverse neighborhood and enrolling the adopted child in a school that is more multicultural. This means that the adoptees as well as their adoptive family become familiarized, as well as actively involved, with the adopted child's birth culture (e.g., partaking in cultural events; Kallgren & Caudill, 1993). Research has shown that over time, adoptive parents shift from using the adoption agency as a support system to a more organic type of support system (e.g., a group of friends). This indicates that adoption agencies can play an important role in the early stages of adoption when families have a limited support network. However, over time the family may meet other families through the adoption agency (e.g., at events) and begin creating personal support group that are more naturally integrated into their lives (Bebiroglu & Pinderhughes, 2012). Transracially adopted children who are raised in a racially aware household are more likely to form a positive ethnic identity and develop good self-esteem (Kallgren & Caudill, 1993). Identifying with, and feeling a connection to, one's ethnic group is crucial for positive self-esteem and mental health in adolescence, whereas rejecting one's ethnic background can lead to maladaptive behaviours and self-estrangement (Yoon, 2000).

However, transracial adoptive parents vary in the degree to which they incorporate their adopted child's culture and heritage in the home. Rojeweski (2005)

found a large portion of Caucasian parents who adopted Chinese children (40.5%) indicated that they would only occasionally (e.g., once every other month) celebrate Chinese holidays or festivities. A third of the parents said that they celebrated Chinese cultural events only once or twice a year. In fact, the majority of parents reported that their child seldom had contact with Chinese social events. This is concerning since past research has shown that social integration between Chinese adoptees and other Chinese children (or adults) is important in promoting a positive sense of self and ethnicity in the adopted child (Rojewski, 2005). In support of this point are findings by Feigelman (2000). He found that transracially adopted children who grew up in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods experienced more discomfort about their appearance than those who lived in diverse neighborhoods. Additionally, adoptees who experienced more discomfort regarding their appearance were more likely to have adjustment difficulties (e.g., emotional and behavioural problems; Feigelman, 2000).

As past research has shown, cultural socialization is important for transracial adoptees in term of their ethnic identity and self-esteem. Though parents might make an effort to engage their children in cultural socialization activities (e.g., martial arts), it is important to understand whether different types of cultural socialization activities foster different degrees of cultural pride in transracial adoptees. This was examined by Zhang and Pinderhughes (2019) who interviewed 47 Caucasian transracial adoptive families, including those who had adopted children from China, to examine the types of cultural socialization activities that families engaged in. Using a cultural socialization activity scale that ranged from 1 (resistance to cultural socialization) to 5 (enthusiastic engagement in culture keeping, e.g., family language lessons to learn Chinese dialects,

living in a diverse community), each family was given an overall cultural socialization activity score. Zhang and Pinderhughes found that no family received a cultural socialization score of 4 or 5 (i.e., putting substantial or total effort into cultural socialization). In fact, 68% of families made superficial attempts to incorporate culture. However, when families did incorporate cultural socialization, in comparison to skill-oriented activities (e.g., martial arts lessons), relationship-oriented activities (e.g., Big Sister program or Chinese playgroup) were viewed more positively by parents because they felt these activities had a deeper impact on adoptees.

Although, parents appear cognizant of the importance of culture keeping, their execution and selection of cultural activities often lack depth in terms of cultural socialization (Zhang & Pinderhughes, 2019). This is consistent with research by Chen et al. (2017), which showed that parents often lacked knowledge and familiarity with the types of activities that are best when it comes to promoting cultural pride. This is problematic as adoptees who receive parental support in terms of cultural socialization are more likely to have greater self-esteem and thus have more positive well-being and less psychological distress in comparison to adoptees whose parents do not show this type of support (Yoon, 2004). Thus, it is important to examine parent perspectives to understand how they acknowledge the cultural identity of their transracial family.

Transracial Adoptions and Parent Perspectives

Friedlander et al. (2000) interviewed transracial adoptive parents and found that they wanted to identify or describe the family as multicultural and promote ethnic pride (e.g., promoting diversity in their child's school, attending support group functions that celebrate their child's culture, etc.). Additionally, parents revealed that they worried

about racism and discussed instances where their child was teased for having “Chinese eyes”. However, the way that parents educated their children about their ethnic identity differed considerably. For example, some parents described using support groups to help their child cope with any racism they experienced whereas others avoided discussions surrounding ethnicity or avoided the use of ethnic identity labels (e.g., instead of referring to the child as “Chinese” they refer to the family as “American”).

Similarly, Chen et al. (2017) used semi-structured interviews to examine how Euro-American parents addressed challenges that were commonly associated with the socialization of adopted children from China. Parents were asked how they supported their adopted child’s ethnic identity and about the challenges and barriers their child faced. Qualitative analysis of the interviews resulted in three main themes regarding ethnic socialization: 1) supporting the child as an Asian American individual outside the family (e.g., supporting Chinese heritage, connecting with Asian role models, helping challenge racism), 2) supporting child as adopted within the context of the Euro-American family (e.g., openly discussing child as adopted, creating adoptive peer group, protecting child from insensitive comments about being adopted), and 3) supporting their child as a Euro-American (e.g., connecting child with American peers, addressing tensions the child may experience between their ethnic and mainstream identity).

Overall, these findings indicate that transracial adoptive parents vary in how they support their child’s ethnic identity but also indicate the ways in which the parents could play an important role in supporting the development of their child’s ethnic identity. This demonstrates the importance of the parent-child relationship, which has been shown to impact a child’s social emotional-functioning as they transition into adolescence

(McAdams et al., 2017). Given this, it is important to examine the parent-child relationship in families with adopted children.

Parent-Child Relationships in Families with Adopted Children

The parent-child relationship is viewed as the child's first important relationship and for this reason it is proposed to be essential for the child's well-being and development later in life (Harkness & Blom, 2008). Most of the research examining parent-child relationships in adopted infants focuses on attachment (the enduring emotional bond between child and caregiver) since attachment and the parent-child relationship are closely related. Research shows that age of adoption and length of time spent in an orphanage can influence the formation of the parent-child bond and the degree of attachment security (Monique van Londen et al., 2020; Chisholm, 1998). Secure attachment is believed to occur when the caregiver responds to the child in situations of distress in a consistently comforting way, which allows the child to recognize the caregiver as a safe base through which they can explore (Benoit, 2004). In contrast, an insecure attachment is characterized by lack of confidence in the caregiver due to inconsistent and negative responses to the child's distress (Brumariu & Kerns, 2010).

Research in adoption shows that the earlier a child is adopted and placed in their adoptive home, the more likely it is that the child will form a more secure attachment (Chisholm, 1998) and the less risk there is that the child will form insecure attachments with their adoptive parents (Monique van Londen et al., 2020). These findings indicate early and consistent access to a primary caregiver can influence the quality of the parent-child relationship (Joyce, 2012) and later social-emotional functioning (Cohen & Farnia, 2011a). With respect to child social-emotional functioning, VanTieghem et al. (2017)

found that greater perceived security in the parent-child relationship by adopted adolescent children who were previously institutionalized in some sort of government care prior to adoption was associated with lower levels of internalizing behaviours.

Given that the nature of the parent-child relationship evolves over the course of development, it is important to examine parent-child relationships in adopted children into adolescence. Van der Voort et al. (2014) followed 160 infants until they were 14 years old. These infants from Sri Lanka, South Korea, and Colombia were adopted by Caucasian families (middle to upper-class backgrounds). Van der Voort et al. found that more sensitive parenting in infancy and middle childhood predicted less inhibited behaviour in adolescence. Additionally, more maternal sensitivity in middle childhood predicted less anxious-depressed behaviour in adolescence. Van der Voort et al. suggested that early security in the parent-child relationship is protective and promotes strong interpersonal skills in childhood and adolescence that can minimize internalizing behaviour problems. At the same time, they proposed that early security in the parent-child relationship promotes a transactional process between the child and parent so that withdrawn behaviour in middle childhood increases sensitive parenting. Overall, this research shows the importance of examining the quality of the parent-child relationship in adoptive families as this may be a protective factor for child social-emotional functioning especially as they progress through adolescence.

Parent-Child Relationships and Social-Emotional Behaviour in Adopted Children

A close, affectionate parent-child relationship has been shown to have a positive effect on adolescent self-worth (McAdams et al., 2017) and overall mental health, whereas a negative parent child-relationship has been linked to depression and anxiety

(Li et al., 2020). In general, research suggests that adopted children do not differ from their nonadopted peers in terms of general social-emotional behaviour (Canzi et al., 2017). However, longitudinal research shows that over time children who are adopted tend to show an increase in internalizing behaviours in comparison to their nonadopted peers (Cohen & Farnia, 2011b; Tan, 2011). Consistent with past longitudinal research (e.g., Tan, 2009; Tan & Marfo, 2006), Cohen and Farnia (2011b) found that initially, infants adopted from China had similar social-emotional functioning as their nonadopted peers. However, over the course of two years, they noted that adopted children showed a significant increase in internalizing behaviours, specifically emotional reactivity, as rated by their mothers. Emotionally reactive children tend to be disturbed by change, panic easily, shift between different moods quickly (e.g., from happy to sad), be ill-tempered, and also dislike meeting new people (Cohen & Farnia, 2011b). Though Cohen and Farnia found that the symptoms of emotional reactivity were not in the clinical range, they suggested that this increase in emotional reactivity could be due to early physical and social deprivations experienced by the adopted children during their time at the orphanage. Additionally, contextual factors such as parental stress could play a role. These findings are in line with past research as other longitudinal studies showed an increase in internalizing behaviours in Chinese adoptees, particularly from preschool to elementary school (Tan, 2011; Tan & Marfo, 2006).

Similarly, Tan (2011) found that behavioural adjustment scores of three cohorts of girls (preschool, transition from preschool to school, school-age) adopted from China increased over two years; especially in preschool and transition children and specifically for internalizing problems (e.g., anxious or depressive behaviours). Tan suggested that

the learning setting could explain the increase in internalizing behaviour in preschool children because the preschool setting has similarities to the orphanages the children had been in (e.g., large number of children, eating and napping in a group setting, caregivers who are nonrelatives). In comparison, the significant increase in internalizing behavior in girls in the transition cohort was suggested to be due to the increasing understanding of the meaning and implication of being adopted. Additionally, Tan found that girls who were adopted at 12 months or older were more likely to show externalizing problems at both time points than those who were adopted before 12 months.

These findings indicate that adopted children may be at risk for social-emotional problems as they get older. During middle childhood, adoptees may become increasingly aware of the discrimination and stigma that they may face for looking different than their parents and for being a visible minority. Thus, these challenges coupled alongside other normative developmental changes (e.g., puberty) can be a source of great stress in middle childhood and may impact the child's sense of identity and self-esteem (Reinoso et al., 2013). Additionally, as children move into adolescence, they increasingly consider factors surrounding their adoption (e.g., abandonment at a young age), as well as self-identity such as cultural pride and knowledge. These are unique stressors faced by children who are adopted transracially could affect identity and social-emotional functioning. Specifically, this could impact the child's psychological adjustment in terms of their self-esteem, relationship with others, et cetera.

The Current Study

There are two main goals for the current study. The first is to qualitatively analyze interviews conducted with Caucasian parents who adopted children from China regarding

challenges associated with transracial adoption. The literature in transracial adoption tends to examine children adopted from ethnic backgrounds other than China (e.g., Korean adoptees), which does not necessarily generalize to other ethnic backgrounds. In general, the adoption research focuses on parent-child attachment in infancy, with little research investigating parent-child relationships and child social-emotional functioning in older children. Additionally, few studies include a comparison group of families with the same ethnic background as the adopted child to account for potential cultural differences Thus, the second goal of the study is to examine the association between parent-child relationship and child social-emotional behaviour in three groups of children: 1) Chinese children adopted into Caucasian homes, 2) nonadopted Caucasian children, and 3) nonadopted Chinese children. The last two groups act as comparison groups.

Based on the research reviewed above, it is hypothesized that nonadoptive Caucasian and Chinese families will score higher in terms of perceived quality of the parent-child relationship and their children will show fewer social-emotional problems compared to the transracially adopted children. It is also hypothesized that perceived quality of the parent-child relationship will predict social-emotional problems in children.

Method

The current study is part of a larger longitudinal project examining the health and development of children adopted from China. The sample from the initial study (Cohen et al., 2002) included 70 girls adopted from China and 43 nonadopted Caucasian-Canadian girls, matched for age and demographic characteristics, who were the comparison group. On average, both the adopted and nonadopted girls were 13-months old at the time of initial study. Of the 70 Chinese girls who were adopted from China, 84% of them

received orphanage care only, 16% received both orphanage care and foster care, and one child only received foster care (Cohen & Farnia, 2011a). Adoptive families in the initial study consisted of parents who were significantly older and married (97%) in comparison to the nonadoptive families, which consisted of more single mothers (38%). However, both samples of adoptive and nonadoptive families had similar language (English speaking) and education (university educated) backgrounds.

All the families from the initial study were contacted to see if they were interested in participating in the follow-up study being conducted 10-years after the initial one took place. Since this study focuses on transracial adoption, in the adoptive group from the original study, only Caucasian families were included. Thus, of the original participants, 22 adoptive and 20 nonadoptive families agreed to participate in the follow-up study. Nonadoptive, Chinese Canadian families were recruited through two Chinese online forums (51.ca and rola.com), one heritage language program (Georges Vanier International Language Program), and one Chinese dance school (Manling Dance). Through this process, 23 Chinese Canadian families agreed to participate in the study. This sample was added to function as a second comparison group to account for possible individual differences that may be related to ethnicity and culture.

Participants

All 22 adopted Chinese girls (Adopted group) had been adopted by Canadian English-speaking families. The girls ranged in age from 10 to 14 years (M = 11.83, SD = 1.14). The 20 nonadopted Caucasian-Canadian girls from English speaking families (Nonadopted Caucasian group) ranged in age from 10 to 11 years (M = 10.55, SD = .51). The 23 girls in the nonadopted Chinese-Canadian sample (Nonadopted Chinese-Canadian

group) ranged in age from 10 to 13 years (M = 10.78, SD = .80). These families all reported speaking both English and a Chinese dialect (e.g., Mandarin or Cantonese) in the home and most of these children also attended Chinese school lessons on the weekend where students learn more about Chinese culture, language, and customs.

Procedure

Families were scheduled for a one-day appointment at the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, now known as the Sickkids Centre for Community Health, that lasted approximately 5-8 hours depending on the length of breaks, the lunch break, and each individual interview (with the child and parent). Questionnaires were completed by the mothers and interviews were conducted with the mother. Measures not relevant for the current study were also administered individually to the child.

Measures

Interview with Adoptive Parents

The interview took approximately 1-2 hours and, for the purposes of the current study, the following sections were included: 1) parenting experiences and relationship with child (three questions) and 2) adoption experiences and dealing with issues of race (four questions). The three questions from the parenting experiences section examined experiences and feelings regarding their adopted child, and the four questions from the adoption experiences section examined parent perceptions of the adopted child's feelings about being adopted, as well as cultural socialization practices. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and double-checked for accuracy.

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship

The quality of the parent-child relationship was measured with the *Parenting*

Relationship Questionnaire (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006), which assesses aspects of the parent-child relationships that are important for a child's social and emotional development (e.g., self-esteem, self-confidence). The questionnaire contains 71 items answered on a 4-point Likert-type scale: never, sometimes, often, and very much. The items are separated into seven different scales: attachment, communication, discipline practices, involvement, parenting confidence, satisfaction with school, and relational frustration. The attachment scale looks at the affective, cognitive, and behavioural relationship between the parent and their child; this can be shown in different ways such as relational closeness and empathy. Communication reflects the quality of information that is shared between the parent and the child, and the parent's ability to listen to the child and create a bond of trust. The discipline practices scale assesses consistency of enforcement of household rules and the involvement scale assesses the extent to which the parent and child spend time together. Parenting confidence reflects confidence when engaging in different parenting practices and decision making regarding their child. The satisfaction with school scale measures overall satisfaction with their child's schooling and whether it meets the child's educational and emotional needs. Finally, the relational frustration scale measures level of parental stress during common parenting situations.

The questionnaire provides a T-score and percentile based on the child's age and the parent's gender. For the attachment, involvement, parenting confidence, satisfaction with school, communication, and discipline practices scales lower scores represent more problems with the parent-child relationship. However, the opposite is true for the relational frustration scale. For the current study two of the seven scales, which reflect qualities of the parent-child relationship, were used: attachment and involvement. The

Parenting Relationship questionnaire demonstrates good internal consistency (coefficient alpha .82 to .87) and reliability (.72 to .81) and good validity when compared to other parent-child relationship instruments (Rubinic & Schwickwrath, 2010).

Child Temperament and Self-Regulation

Child temperament and self-regulation was measured with the *Early Adolescent Temperament Questionnaire-Revised Parent Report Form* (Rothbart & Ellis, 2001), which measures reactivity and temperament in children and adolescents aged 9-15 years and its relation to social-emotional functioning. The questionnaire contains 62 items, answered using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = almost never true to 5 = almost always true), that are separated into 11 temperament scales and two behavioural scales that measure aggression and depressive mood. Only the *affiliation* temperament scale (which focuses on the desire to be close to others, e.g., "I enjoy exchanging hugs with people I like") was used for the current study. The other temperament scales focus on non-relationship constructs such as attention and different emotions (e.g., fear, frustration, pleasure) or behavioural scales that are redundant with the Child Behavior Checklist. The *affiliation* temperament scale was specifically selected because it reflects how affectionate the parent perceives their child to be, which is relevant for the parent-child relationship. The questionnaire shows good test-retest reliability (.50 to .79; Muris & Meesters, 2009) and concurrent validity (-.56; Demirpence & Putnam, 2020).

Child Social-Emotional Functioning

The child's social-emotional functioning was measured with the *Child Behaviour Checklist – Parent Report Form* (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001), which is a parent-rated questionnaire that includes 113 items answered on a 3-point scale (0 = absent, 1 = occurs

sometimes, 2 = occurs often). This checklist is made up of eight syndrome scales (anxious/depressed, depressed, somatic complaints, thought problems, attention problems, rule-breaking behaviour, and aggressive behaviour), which are grouped into internalizing and externalizing behaviours. Six DSM-oriented scales are also included: affective problems, anxiety problems, somatic problems, ADHD, oppositional defiant problems, and conduct problems, as well as three competence scales (activities, social relations, school) and a total competence score). The checklist provides T-scores for each scale, as well as an internalizing, externalizing, and total problem T-score based on sex and age norms. For the current study, social emotional functioning was measured with the internalizing, externalizing, and total problem scores.

Test-retest reliability is high (.89) and correlations for inter-parent reliability ranges from .65 to .75 (Lande et al., 2009). Construct validity was good (.59 and .88) when compared to *Conners Parent Questionnaire* (Conners, 1973) and the *Revised Behaviour Problem Checklist* (Quay, 1983), respectively.

Results

Data Screening

All statistical analyses and data screening were conducted using SPSS Statistics version 28. Prior to any statistical analyses, variables were examined for normality, skewness, and kurtosis. All variables showed approximately normal distributions and skewness and kurtosis values in the acceptable range. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance indicated no violations for any of the variables.

Sample Characteristics

The Adopted group had a mean age of 11.82 years, the Nonadopted Caucasian

group had a mean age of 10.55 years, and the Nonadopted Chinese group had a mean age of 10.78 (see Table 1 for means, standard deviations, and range). The Adopted group was significantly older than the two nonadopted groups, who did not differ from each other (see Table 1). The average number of siblings across the three groups was not significantly different from each other (ranged from 0 to 4, see Table 1).

Mothers of the Adopted group had a mean age of 52.82 years and were significantly older than mothers of the two nonadopted groups, who did not differ from each other (see Table 1). This is consistent with past research that shows parents who adopt children are generally older in comparison to those with biological children (Terry et al., 2001). With respect to mother's education, 81.80% of mothers in the Adopted group, 85.00% of mothers in the Nonadopted Caucasian group, and 82.60% of the Nonadopted Chinese-Canadian group had completed a university Bachelor's degree or higher. There were no significant differences between the three groups with respect to mother's level of education (X^2 (2) = .08, p = .96). Mother's marital status varied across the three groups. In the Adopted group, 68.20% were married compared to 95.00% in the Nonadopted Caucasian group and 95.70% in the Nonadopted Chinese group. This is consistent with statistics on adoption which suggest that many adopting families include single parent households (usually mothers; Terry et al., 2001). With respect to the ethnic background of the mothers of the Adopted group, 90.90% were of Western European descent, 4.50% were Eastern European, and 4.50% were Jewish.

In terms of household income, 59.10% of the families in the Adopted group, 75.00% of the Nonadopted Caucasian families, and 78.30% of the Nonadopted Chinese-Canadian families reported a total household income of $100k or more. A chi square test

for independence showed no significant difference between groups with respect to income (X^2 (6) = 3.78, p = .71), which indicates that the participants across the three different groups were from similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

	Adopted n = 22 *M* (*SD)*	Nonadopted Caucasian n = 20 *M* (*SD)*	Nonadopted Chinese-Canadian n = 23 *M* (*SD)*	*F*	*p*	η^2
Child Age (range in years)	11.82^1 (1.14) (10-14)	10.55^2 (.51) (10-11)	10.78^2 (.80) (10-13)	13.18	.001	.30
Siblings (range)	.86 (.99) (0-4)	1.15 (.59) (0-2)	.78 (.42) (0-1)	1.56	.22	.05
Mother Age (range in years)	52.81^1 (4.23) (43-58)	45.90^2 (4.90) (39-54)	42.52^2 (2.35) (39-48)	40.02	.001	.56

Note: Means with different superscripts are significantly different from each other.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Parents who Adopted Children from China

Interviews conducted with mothers who adopted children from China, were analyzed using Braun and Clark's model of thematic analysis (Howitt, 2016). The first step involved reviewing the transcripts to become familiar with the content. Within the parent interview there were two sections (parent experiences and adoption experiences) that were qualitatively analyzed. This included: three questions from the parenting experiences section (parent experiences and feelings regarding their adopted child) and four questions from the adoption experiences section (e.g., the adoptive parents' thoughts on how their child feels about being adopted, family cultural socialization practices).

Once familiar with the transcripts, the initial codes were created and applied to different sections of the transcripts. Specifically, each sentence or groups of sentences were given a single description word (e.g., a code). Then, a code manual was created for each section of the parent interview. This manual was used to keep track of all the codes (Appendix A). This code manual was independently reviewed by a second coder with a sample of interviews. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. This was done to ensure the codes were representative of the participant data. Once the code manual was finalized, the transcripts were re-coded using the finalized version of the code manual. Next, all codes were organized into overarching themes and subthemes. Quotes were pulled from the transcript documents and organized by section and by theme. These were then amalgamated to ensure that each theme was representative of the entire participant sample (e.g., if multiple participants said something similar, the quote would be denoted as being from all participants).

Reflexivity

In qualitative research it is important to consider reflexivity as researchers consider the pre-conceived assumptions they may hold prior to coding qualitative data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Though researcher bias and preconceptions cannot be eliminated, they can be accounted for using the process of reflexivity. In the current study, detailed notes were taken during data coding to document all decisions, interpretation, and reflections. Reflections regarding pre-conceptions or influences on the data were jointly discussed with the primary investigator, as well as any discrepancies over codes and themes. The latter was done to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Qualitative Results: Parents who Adopted Children from China

Once thematic content analysis was complete, all codes were organized into different themes and subthemes. This was done for each individual question (Appendix A). Included for analysis were three questions from the parenting experiences and relationship with the child section, which examined experiences and feelings regarding their child, and four questions from the adoption experiences and dealing with issues of race section. This section examined the adopted child's feelings about being adopted, as well as cultural socialization practices.

Parenting Experiences and Relationship with the Child

The first part of the parent interview addressed parenting experiences. There were three questions that were qualitatively examined: 1) have there been any negative experiences with (child's name) during these years, 2) at what times do you feel closest to (child's name)? Tell me about them, and 3) are there times you feel distant from (child's name)? Tell me about them.

When mothers were asked if there had been any negative experiences with their adopted child, responses were organized into three main themes: nothing negative, conflict, and parenting experiences. The second question, about times the parent felt closest to their adopted child, led to themes of time together and getting along. Lastly, when parents were asked if there were times they felt distant from their adopted child, three main themes emerged: growing up, parent-child relationship, and busy life.

Question 1: Negative Experiences with Child? Thematic content analysis of adoptive mothers' responses regarding negative experiences with their adopted child led to three main themes: nothing negative, parent-child conflict, and parenting experiences.

Nothing Negative. Mothers did not identify any negative experiences associated

with their adopted child joining their family and discussed how their adopted child was a good kid. For example, one parent noted: “I don’t think there’s been anything that negative, she’s a good kid” (P140). This sentiment of the adopted child being a “good kid” was echoed by other parents and demonstrates that these adoptive parents had no overall negative associations or experiences with their adopted child. In particular, these parents seem to focus on the ways in which their adopted child is good.

Parent-Child Conflict. Mothers reported conflicts between them and their adopted child in situations where the child had temper tantrums or when they had disagreements. One participant discussed:

> “When she lashed out at me when we came home and she didn’t want me to tuck her in and she got really mad and she lost her temper and she goes ‘STOP IT’ to me. And I've never seen her that angry and that was alarming to me” (P142)

Another mother discussed how her adopted child would “wake up in a foul mood and do everything she could to annoy people” (P173). These adoptive mothers reported negative experiences with their adopted child, specifically when it comes to conflict (e.g., temper tantrums) during their interactions.

Parenting Experiences. The third theme reflects mothers reporting negative experiences that had to do with the parents themselves rather than their adopted child. For example, parents discussed the ways in which they felt like they were not able to handle a situation or how they no longer had any time to themselves. One mother discussed:

> “I didn’t know what or how to deal with it […] when she was young she would not get in her car seat and it was a struggle […] so it’s those kind of frustrations like surely I should be able to handle this and I can’t do it”. (P107)

This adoptive mother describes a negative experience in which they felt frustrated with themselves because they felt they should be able to handle it. Another noted:

> "I didn't think I would be giving up so much of my personal time it's only in the last year where I have started to take maybe a day or two a month where it's just me and not her. And I didn't think it was going to take this long" (P137)

This idea of not having enough time to themselves was echoed by other parents and shows negative experiences that are associated with their own experience as parents (e.g., feeling frustrated with themselves, feeling like they have no time alone).

Question 2: Times you Feel Close? One main theme was evident in the responses to this question: time together. This described instances where the adoptive mother reported feeling close to their adopted child when they would spend time together. The theme of time together was further broken down into two subthemes: physical closeness and one-on-one time.

Physical Closeness. Mothers talked about times when they felt close to their adopted child as instances when they were physically close to each other (e.g., cuddling on the couch, holding hands). One participant reported, "she'll sometimes come randomly and sit on my lap and we'll sit and watch TV or chat, that kind of thing" (P115). This idea of physical closeness was also described by other participants. Additionally, mothers described feeling close to their adopted children when they were walking, and their child would hold their hand or times they were sitting on the couch and their child would curl up beside them. These instances showcase moments of physical closeness as times when parents feel close to their adopted child emotionally.

One-on-One Time. Mothers reported feeling close to their adopted child when

they had moments alone with their child, away from any distractions, or during instances where they could have a conversation with their adopted child and get a glimpse into their world. For example, one mother discussed, “probably when she gets home from school every day because that’s when we have our one-on-one time and talk about her day […] when it’s just the two of us no other distractions.” (P126) This idea was echoed by other mothers and demonstrates the ways in which simple activities allowed parents to feel close to their adopted child. Other parents described moments where they were able to do a shared activity with their adopted child as times that they felt close to them. For example, one parent reported, “she likes that we both like to read, we have that connection. She likes when we go skiing, she likes for us to ski together.” (P120) Thus parents felt close to their adopted child knowing they had shared interests.

Question 3: Times you Feel Distant? Four main themes were reflected in parent responses to the question of whether they ever felt distant from their adopted child: growing up, parent-child relationship, busy life, and never felt distant.

Growing Up. Mothers discussed the ways in which their child was growing up (e.g., becoming more of an adult) as leading to feelings of distance. This resulted in two subthemes: not feeling needed and time away from parent. Not feeling needed was characterized by instances where the parent no longer felt as if their adopted child needed them. For example, “she’s growing up of course, when she doesn’t need us anymore […] I feel it now every morning because I don’t take her to school.” (P171) This sentiment was echoed by other parents.

Time away from parent, the second subtheme, reflects instances where the mother reported that their adopted child was purposefully choosing to spend time apart from

them to engage in other activities (e.g., be on their phone or be with their friends). One participant noted, “well when she locks herself in the room and plays video games and puts her headphones on. She just sort of disappears.” (P165) and another reported, “when she's with her friends […] they don’t really want to talk to you that much when they’re there.” (P163) These quotes demonstrate that parents feel distant from their adopted child when they choose time away from their parents.

Parent-Child Relationship. Mothers felt distant from their adopted child due to behaviours associated with the parent-child relationship, which led to two subthemes: 1) parent-child conflict and 2) adopted child withdrawing from the relationship. Mothers reported feeling distant from their adopted child when they had disagreements or arguments with each other, for example, one participant said, “when I get frustrated with her when she’s being really uncooperative.” (P151) This example highlights how conflict within the parent-child relationship had parents feeling distant to their adopted child. Mothers also felt distant from their adopted child when their child was withdrawing from their relationship and not sharing their thoughts when something was wrong. For example, one mother reported, sometimes I’ll know she's holding something in […] and nothing I can do can make her tell me”. (P154) Mothers felt that when their adopted child was not willing to discuss something with them, this created a sense of distance.

Busy Life. Mothers also reported feeling distant from their adopted child because the child was busy (e.g., extracurriculars) or the parent was busy (e.g., work hours) and this resulted in them not having enough time to spend together. For example, one participant reported that when they got busy with their own life, they felt as if they were neglecting their adopted child. Another participant discussed feeling distant because their

adopted child was very busy with extracurriculars. These instances demonstrate the ways in which the busy life of the parent or the child can lead to feelings of distance as they are not able to spend quality time together.

Never Felt Distant. There were also mothers who believed that there were no instances when they felt distant from their adopted child. This was characterized by the participant stating that there were no times that they feel distant from their child or that they could not come up with any instances when they ever felt distant from them. For example, one participant noted, "I don't think I've ever felt distant from them." (P155) This sentiment was shared among four other adoptive mothers.

Adoption Experiences and Dealing with Issues of Race

The second part of the parent interview addressed adoption experiences and dealing with issues of race. In this section, adoptive mothers were asked about the adopted child's feelings about being adopted and issues surrounding race and cultural socialization practices. There were four questions that were qualitatively examined: 1) sometimes adopted children go through a period when they are upset about issues related to their adoption. Has this happened with (child's name), 2) has (child's name) ever expressed the wish not to look Chinese, 3) families vary in terms of whether they incorporate Chinese culture and language into their family lives. What decisions have you made in this regard? Has (child's name) made any decisions in this regard, and lastly 4) have you ever travelled, or do you plan to travel to China with (child's name)?

Question 1: Issues Related to Adoption?

Mothers were asked to discuss whether their adopted child goes through periods where they are upset about issues related to their adoption. Thematic content analysis of

the transcripts showed two main themes: child's reaction and birth mother.

Child's Reaction. This first theme captured instances where mothers would describe their child's reaction to issues related to their adoption and was broken down into three main subthemes: positive response, negative response, and neutral response. The first subtheme was characterized by parent reports describing their child as having a positive outlook on issues related to their adoption. For example, the participant would describe times where their child expressed understanding about the fact that their birth parents had to give them up or understanding that it had nothing to do with them as a person. One participant noted:

> "She really believes it wasn't about her […] like I say to her, like, "Do you ever think about your birth parents […] she'll say "no, not really 'cause, you know, they had to do it" […] like she just doesn't believe it was about her". (P103)

Another participant described: "I might […] say, "I think your mum in China is thinking about you right now," and she's been very okay like she accepts, "yeah there's another person in the other side of the world somewhere. (P152)

The second subtheme reflected mothers reports that their child had negative feelings regarding their adoption. This included feelings of frustration, sadness, and anger over not knowing their birth family. For example, one mother described: "I think, when she was about six or seven […] she was sad and […] she said at one point, 'but you don't understand mummy'. (P111) Another mother reported that their child said, "we can visit your mum but we can never visit mine" (P137). Some mothers also discussed how their adopted child felt misunderstood or how their adopted child would feel sad because they did not know their birth family. These participants would describe the types of questions

their child would ask (e.g., how could someone give up a baby). Another mother discussed an instance where she reassured her adopted daughter that she would never abandon her to which her daughter responded, “Why not? My first mom did”. (P142) These responses demonstrate an awareness on the part of the child that they were given up.

Finally, the last subtheme reflected mothers’ responses that described their adopted child as having neutral feelings about their adoption. For example, one participant reported: “no, she didn’t really have a period where she was upset about it”. (P120) This sentiment was echoed by a few other participants who said that their child had no interest or issues regarding their adoption.

Birth Mother. This last theme describes instances where adoptive mothers report the different ways in which their adopted child would talk about their birth mother. For example, one mother noted that when her daughter was younger, she “would refer to her birth mother in kind of an abstract way. She had some sort of fantasy about her.” (P117) Other mothers discussed how their child would often refer to their birth mother as dead. These examples demonstrate the different ways that adoptive mothers talked about how their adopted children would discuss their birth mother with their adoptive family.

Question 2: Expressed the Desire to not Look Chinese?

Thematic content analysis led to the emergence of three main themes regarding expressed desires on the part of the adopted child to not look Chinese: dissatisfaction with appearance and satisfaction with appearance.

Dissatisfaction with Appearance. Mothers reported that their adopted child expressed dissatisfaction with their looks and led to two subthemes: desire to have

Anglo-European features and typical complaints. The first subtheme was characterized by mothers reporting that their adopted child wanted to have Anglo-European features (e.g., blonde hair, blue eyes, no mono-lid). This also includes the desire to look more like their adoptive family (e.g., Caucasian). For example, one participant shared how their daughter said: "I don't like my skin looking so dark, I don't look at all like you and daddy right now." (P173) Other mothers share how their daughter wanted curly hair simply in order to look more like her adoptive mother. Some parents reported that their adopted child directly expressed wanting to look Anglo-European. One mothers discusses:

> "When she was little she really liked my blue eyes and really wanted my blue eyes now she wants makeup because she wants her eyes to have this sort of indent […] she wants to have Caucasian eyes and not beautiful Chinese eyes." (P136)

Other mothers discussed similar ideas; that their adopted child wanted blonde hair, blue eyes, and white skin. Another parent reported how her daughter "hates her eyes and her nose […] she doesn't want to be Chinese". (P165) The parent interviews demonstrate that according to adoptive mothers, their adopted children notice the physical difference between themselves and their family.

The second subtheme reflects descriptions by mothers that their adopted child complained about their looks, but the complaints were not about looking Chinese, instead they were complaints that any child might have (e.g., wanting longer hair or to be taller, disliking wearing glasses). For example, one mother described that her daughter, "hates glasses. She doesn't want to wear her glasses because she thinks it makes her look ugly." (P140) This sentiment was echoed in other participant interviews where they talked about

how their daughter wanted thicker hair or did not like their eyebrows.

Satisfaction with Appearance. This theme describes mothers reporting that their adopted child seemed satisfied with their appearance. Participants said that their adopted child was proud of how they looked and happy/satisfied with their features (e.g., loving their hair, loving their eyes, proud of being Chinese). For example, one participant noted, "she loves her eyes, she's very happy with her looks." (P111) and another one said, "she's pretty proud of her looks." (P142) Though these sentiments were only shared by two participants, they reflect the ways in which adoptive mothers perceive that their adopted child feels proud about their appearance and do not express any desire to not look Chinese.

Question 3: Cultural Socialization Practices

Mothers were asked to discuss the ways in which they incorporated Chinese cultural elements and language into their home. Thematic content analysis led to the emergence of five main themes: decreasing exposure, limited exposure, immersed in Chinese culture, Chinese Canadian identity, and no cultural socialization activities.

Decreasing Exposure. Mothers discussed that they incorporated Chinese culture into their home in the past, but that this decreased over time because they felt their adopted child may not be making connections to their culture and was no longer interested. For example, one participant said:

> "We do our best to observe the two big holidays […] although I have to admit that over the last couple of years it's been a little less […] The kids are more interested […] in making sure we have a Christmas tree." (P151)

Another participant noted:

> "Had all kinds of great ambitions for how much culture and language would be included in our home but our kids were just resistant they just were not all that interested, we had them in a Chinese playgroup, they liked the play part but not the Chinese part." (P149)

The reports from adoptive mothers indicate that some adoptive families tried to engage in cultural socialization activities in the beginning but that this exposure decreased over time due to lack of interest in the adopted child. This demonstrates the ways in which exposure to cultural elements decreased over time in these families.

Limited Exposure. Some adoptive mothers reported taking their child to Chinese restaurants or having Chinese food, which would be considered activities that other Canadian families might engage in. For example, participant would discuss going out for Chinese food, having dim sum, or eating Peking duck. This also included families who celebrated Chinese New Year. For example, one parent noted that, "every year still we give them a red envelope on Chinese New Year and we'd go out to dinner on Chinese New Year." (P103) This sentiment of only celebrating Chinese New Year was echoed by other participants and demonstrates limited cultural socialization activities.

Immersed in Chinese Culture. Some adoptive mothers reported incorporating Chinese culture into their home and being strongly dedicated to involving their child in as many cultural activities as possible. For example, one adoptive mother discussed her children being enrolled in Mandarin classes and said:

> "the kids kind of give me a hard time about some of that, but I really kind of push for it and I'm willing to look at different schools to make sure they're with friends and to make sure it's a more positive experience, I really want them to have this

> language […] but they always have Chinese new year, harvest noon festival…they always have Asian clothes in their cupboard especially for these festivals, we do have some Asian CD's and they dance to Asian music so they're exposed to the music. We have a lot of Asian food and I've learned to cook things now." (P154)

Another mother described how their child takes Mandarin lessons and plays the Guzheng (a Chinese instrument) and that they visit China every summer for a month. These participants appear dedicated to incorporating as many elements of Chinese culture in their homes as possible so that their adopted children could be immersed in their culture.

Chinese Canadian Identity. One adoptive mother expressed that their family is blended, meaning that it is a mix of different ethnicities and that they work to incorporate that into their family life. The parent said:

> "We do acknowledge that we are a Chinese Canadian family […] I have German background, so there's little cultural things we do in Christmas that are German, I say the same thing, this is what I did because my relatives did it […] then this is the Chinese part we bring in together" (P152).

Though this sentiment was only shared by one participant, this quote demonstrates how this family worked to blend the different ethnic identities, the family culture and the adopted child's birth culture, within their household.

No Cultural Socialization Activities. One adoptive mother reported not incorporating Chinese cultural socialization practices (e.g., not celebrating Chinese holidays). Specifically, the participant noted: "in terms of the Chinese culture, no. We acknowledge it, but we don't celebrate the culture." (P142) Though this was voiced by

one parent, it demonstrates that this adoptive family chose not to incorporate cultural socialization activities into their home.

Question 4: Travelled Back to China?

Adoptive mothers were asked whether they had travelled back to China with their child and if not, whether they had plans to travel back to China one day. Thematic content analysis revealed two main themes: travelled back and have not travelled back.

Travelled Back. Of the 21 adoptive families, nearly half of them (i.e., 10) indicated that they had already travelled back to China with their adopted children. Additionally, several participants indicated that they would travel back to China again with one parent noting: "I'd go again in a heartbeat, if I just had the money." (P114) Other participants reported that they had been to China multiple times with one parent mentioning that they had been to China three times already and another vacationed in China every summer for a month at a time. These quotes demonstrate that many of adoptive families not only have travelled back to China with their adoptive children but are also eager to travel back again.

Not Travelled Back. The rest of the participants reported that they had not been back to China with their adopted child. Three subthemes emerged: financial reasons, child not interested, and finding the right time. Some parents reported wanting to travel back to China but that it was a financial burden and expensive trip to take with a child. One participant explained: "no […] it's expensive […] it's something we'd like to do but we haven't made the effort yet." (P171) This sentiment was echoed by three other participants who said that this would be something they would have to save up for due to the expense.

The second subtheme reflects mothers reporting that their adopted child expressed no interest in returning to China. For example, one parent explained: “we bring it up almost yearly and say ‘you know we’d be happy to go back to China if that’s what you want to do but she doesn’t have any ambition to do that.” (P142) Similarly, another participant discussed how her adopted kids “wanted to go back to Disney World. I said what about China or Vietnam? They were like, mmm, no, not right now, no, not interested.” (P173) These quotes show that according to the adoptive mother, their child appears disinterested in this type of trip. Furthermore, this is used to guide the parents’ decision regarding the type of trips they take.

The last subtheme describes mothers reporting that their family wants to go back to China but they are having a difficult time working it into their schedule and their child’s schedule. For example, one participant said: “no we haven’t no […] she doesn’t travel well she screams of boredom after five minutes in the car.” (P117) Another participant discussed: “we almost went this past summer, but backed out because we were concerned about the heat and the summer in China.” (P136) These quotes indicate that these adoptive mothers are not finding a time that will work for everyone to visit China.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship

Since child and mother’s age was significantly different between the three groups a Pearson’s correlational analysis was conducted between child’s age and mother’s age and the measures of the quality of parent-child relationship (parent-child attachment, parent-child involvement, and affiliation). The results showed that child’s age and

mother's age was not significantly correlated to any of the measures. As a result, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, which revealed that there were no significant differences between the three groups on parent-child attachment, parent-child involvement, and affiliation, which is defined as the child's desire for warmth and closeness (see Table 2).

Child Social-Emotional Functioning

Since child and mother's age was significantly different between the three groups a Pearson's correlational analysis was conducted between child and mother's age and the child social-emotional functioning scores (internalizing problems, externalizing

Table 2

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship

	Adopted *n* = 22 *M* (*SD*)	Nonadopted Caucasian *n* = 20 *M* (*SD*)	Nonadopted Chinese-Canadian *n* = 22 *M* (*SD*)	*F*	*p*	η^2
Parent-child Attachment	51.55 (8.24)	48.10 (7.96)	49.08 (9.06)	1.06	.35	.03
Parent-child Involvement	51.27 (6.15)	51.00 (7.81)	50.08 (8.68)	.87	.43	.03
Affiliation	52.01 (8.39)	52.12 (9.75)	47.49 (9.16)	1.83	.17	.06

problems, total behaviour problems). The results showed that child's age and mother's age were not statistically related to the any of the scores. As a result, an ANOVA was conducted, which showed no significant differences between groups on child internalizing, externalizing, and total behaviour problems (see Table 3).

Table 3

Child Social-Emotional Functioning

	Adopted $n = 22$ *M* (*SD*)	Nonadopted Caucasian $n = 20$ *M* (*SD*)	Nonadopted Chinese-Canadian $n = 21$ *M* (*SD*)	*F*	*p*	η^2
Internalizing Problems	52.82 (8.05)	51.40 (9.66)	50.52 (10.29)	.33	.72	.01
Externalizing Problems	44.41 (8.37)	48.35 (10.31)	46.81 (10.53)	.88	.42	.03
Total Behaviour Problems	48.05 (9.86)	48.20 (10.59)	47.67 (11.20)	.01	.99	.00

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship and Child Social-Emotional Functioning

Pearson's correlational analyses were run for the entire sample since there were no group differences in quality of parent-child relationship or child social-emotional functioning. Results showed that parent-child attachment, parent-child involvement, and affiliation all had significant negative relations with externalizing problems and total behaviour problems. However, affiliation was the only measure that also showed a significant negative relation with internalizing problems (see Table 4).

Table 4
Correlations between Quality of Parent-Child Relationship and Child Social-Emotional Functioning (n = 73)

	Internalizing Problems	Externalizing Problems	Total Behaviour Problems
Parent-child Attachment	-.12	-.29*	-.24*
Parent-child Involvement	-.22	-.31**	-.29*
Affiliation	-.25*	-.33**	-.35**

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Discussion

The first goal of the present study is to examine qualitatively the unique challenges associated with transracial adoption of Chinese children into Caucasian homes (e.g., implementing cultural socialization practices into the home). The second goal is to examine the perceived quality of parent-child relationships and child social-emotional function between families with children adopted from China, nonadopted Caucasian children, and nonadopted Chinese-Canadian children. We hypothesized that nonadoptive Caucasian and Chinese families would report better parent-child relationships and fewer social-emotional problems in their children compared to the transracial adoptive families, however, this is not supported. The second hypothesis, perceived quality of the parent-child relationship will predict social-emotional problems in children, is supported. This is particularly true for externalizing behaviour and total behaviour problems.

Parent Experiences and Relationship with a Transracially Adopted Child

In the current study, adoptive mothers were asked three questions regarding their parenting experiences and parent-child relationship: negative experiences with their adopted child, times parents felt close with their adopted child, and times parents felt distant to their adopted child. Thematic content analysis revealed that in general most negative experiences associated with their adopted child arose from parent-child conflict or times where the parent felt frustrated (e.g., regarding their parenting abilities, their lack of alone time). Mothers describe feeling closest to their adopted child when they spend time together (e.g., physical closeness, one on one time). Lastly, when asked to speak about times parents felt distant from their adopted child, mothers discuss times where they feel like their child is growing up, when there is conflict in the parent-child relationship, and when life gets busy. However, some mothers stated that there are never

times they feel distant from their adopted child. Taken collectively, these findings indicate typical relationships between the adoptive mothers and their child that include both negative and positive aspects. Despite the unique challenges and stressors faced by adoptive parents (e.g., creating an open environment to discuss issues related to adoption, coping with their child's adoption grief), these findings indicate that adoptive families have parent-child relationships that demonstrate a secure and close relationship with their adopted child. This closeness between the parent and child is important (especially closeness to mothers) as it may buffer the impact of stressful life events (Ge et al., 2009).

Adoption Experience

Thematic content analysis was conducted on mothers' responses regarding the adoption experience, specifically if their adopted child went through a period of time where they were upset about their adoption. As expected, mothers report a range of responses including positive statements (e.g., understanding that their birth mother had to give them up for adoption), negative statements (e.g., being upset that they can never visit their biological mother), and neutral statements (e.g., no period of upset). Additionally, some mothers also discuss how their adopted child will talk about their birth mother (e.g., that their birth mother was dead). This is line with previous adoption research, which shows that adopted children often feel confused or angry about being given up and may fabricate stories about their birth mother or idealize their biological parents (Bimmel et al., 2003). A surprising theme that emerged from participant responses was a positive response; according to the parents, their adopted child did not appear to be confused or angry about their adoption. It is also possible that these adopted children did not feel comfortable expressing negative feelings to their adoptive parents or they may have

negative reactions regarding their adoption later in their adolescence.

Dealing with Issues of Race

Physical Appearance

Thematic content analysis of responses to the question of whether the adopted child ever expressed the desire to not look Chinese, revealed two main themes: dissatisfaction with appearance and satisfaction with appearance. Dissatisfaction with appearance included a desire for Anglo-European features (e.g., wanting curly hair like their adoptive mom, wanting blonde hair, blue eyes, and white skin) and typical complaints (e.g., not liking their glasses). Research on transracial adoptions suggest that the physical dissimilarity between the transracially adopted child and the adoptive family may create feelings in transracial adoptees that they do not belong and may explain why adoptive children desire Anglo-European features (Bimmer et al., 2003). If adoptive families live in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood, then the adopted child may feel singled out in terms of their physical appearance. This can complicate the child's ethnic identity development because they may experience a desire to conform and belong while also avoiding their own ethnic identity and cultural heritage (Lee et al., 2010).

Some mothers discuss their adopted child voicing typical complaints when talking about their appearance (e.g., wanting to be taller). These findings make sense given the developmental age of the sample (e.g., middle childhood to early adolescence) as it is during this time period that girls become aware of their self-image and how others perceive them. Lastly, a portion of mothers express that their child is satisfied with the way they look (e.g., proud). This finding could be explained by past research which suggests that adopted children had normative levels of overall self-esteem especially if

they had been adopted before their first birthday (Juffer & van Ijzendoorn, 2002), which is the case for the current study sample of adopted children.

Incorporation of Cultural Elements in the Home

The next set of questions addressed the incorporation of cultural elements. Thematic content analysis of these questions led to several themes: decreasing exposure (e.g., incorporated elements of Chinese culture but this decreased over the years), limited exposure (e.g., Chinese food and Chinese holidays), immersed in Chinese culture (e.g., strong dedication to incorporating culture through multiple avenues), Chinese and Canadian identity (e.g., family as having a blended identity), and no cultural socialization activities (e.g., not celebrating any Chinese culture).

These findings indicate that adoptive mothers seem aware of the importance of culture keeping, however, their incorporation of cultural elements into the home often lacks depth, which is most likely the result of an overall lack of cultural knowledge (Zhang & Pinderhughes, 2019). Overall, most of the adoptive mothers in the current study do not incorporate many cultural socialization activities for their children. This is particularly concerning as research indicates that adoptees who grow up in homes where their ethnic identity is not embraced may develop negative attitudes towards their birth culture. In turn this could contribute to the child developing issues with their own self-image (e.g., disliking themselves; Kallgren & Caudill, 1993). The adoptive mothers' lack of knowledge regarding cultural socialization activities could be due to a lack of diversity in the family's support system (Park, 2012). It is important for transracial adoptive families to associate with individuals who are of the same ethnic background as the adopted child. This increases the probability that adoptive parents will support their

child's bicultural ethnic identity and may help adoptive parents familiarize themselves with important elements of the Chinese culture. This is especially important as adoptees whose parents are supportive of cultural socialization activities have been shown to have greater self-esteem, more positive well-being, and less psychological distress (Yoon, 2004).

Visiting China

The last question in this section asked whether families had revisited China with their adopted child. Thematic content analysis of the parent interviews reveal that the families have either travelled back to China or have not been able to for different reasons (e.g., financial burden, child not interested, and finding the right time). Of the families who had revisited China, it was interesting that some of the adoptive mothers express wanting to go back, while others visit regularly (e.g., every summer). It is possible that adoptive parents become interested in their adopted child's history and thus are motivated to take return trips to China (Ponte et al., 2010). Volkman (2003) suggested that the adoptive parents feel a sort of kinship to China as a country and return to their child's orphanages as a way to get closer to their children's past life. However, not all participants in the current study are able to travel back to China. Some mothers indicate that they were unable to travel back to China for different reasons (e.g., financial burden), but these mothers did indicate that this was something they hoped to do one day. This is important as these return trips are considered an important stage in the adoptee lifecycle as it allows adoptees the opportunity to re-acculturate and connect to their birth country and may impact their sense of belonging and identity (Reynolds et al., 2016). Additionally, it is important for adoptive parents to show interest in returning to their

adopted child's birth country as parents who show interest are often more open to discussing adoption-related issues in comparison to adoptive parents who have no interest in revisiting China.

The Parent-Child Relationship

It was hypothesized that children in the adopted group would score lower on measures of parent-child relationship quality (e.g., attachment, involvement, and affiliation) in comparison to the nonadopted groups (i.e., nonadopted Caucasian group and nonadopted Chinese-Canadian group). However, there is no significant difference between the three groups. This lack of differences between the groups is consistent with our thematic content analysis of the parent interviews, which reveal that adoptive parents in the current study report feelings and experiences characteristic of a typical parent-child relationship (Loehlin et al., 2010). Past research indicates that age of adoption and time spent in an orphanage is related to the formation of secure relationships between adopted children and their parents (Monique van Londen et al., 2020; Chisholm, 1998). In the current study, children (who are now 10-14 years of age) were adopted from China did not spend much time in an orphanage since they were adopted at around 1 year (Cohen & Farnia, 2011a). The adoption literature suggests that adoption at a young age makes it more likely that parent-child relationships are comparable to nonadopted children. Findings from the current study also indicate that the age of adoption and time spent in an orphanage may be related to the quality of the parent-child relationship as adopted children progress into early adolescence.

It is possible that the lack of differences between the three groups in the current study can be partially explained by the small sample size and use of the self-report

measures to assess the quality of the parent-child relationship. Compared to the other two groups, adoptive mothers may have felt more pressure to provide desirable answers. Research has shown that parents who adopt children feel pressure to appear like the perfect family due to a societal bias that adoptive parenting is second best to biological parenting (Weistra & Luke, 2017). This research highlights the pressure that adoptive parents may experience, which could result in adoptive parents having a tendency toward socially desirable responses. Additional research is needed, with larger samples, that assesses the quality of the parent-child relationship through observation or other objective measures that reduce social desirability bias.

Child Social-Emotional Functioning and the Parent-Child Relationship

It was hypothesized that in comparison to the nonadopted groups, children in the adopted group would be rated as having more social-emotional difficulties. However, the results from the current study did not reveal any significant differences between the three groups. This is not consistent with longitudinal research that shows a decrease in behavioural adjustment with age in girls adopted from China as infants, particularly those girls who were 8-10 years old. However, another study that followed adopted children from infancy to adolescence showed that maternal sensitivity was a protective factor for internalizing behaviour problems in adolescents (van der Voort et al., 2014). It is possible that adoptive mothers in the current study demonstrate care, continuity, and stability for their adopted child which helped to decrease the likelihood of social-emotional problems in general. Additional research is needed that investigates the relation between maternal sensitivity and social-emotional problems in adopted children, particularly in adolescence, a developmental period where rates of certain psychological disorders

increase. For example, the average age of onset for anxiety (Arnett, 2000) and social anxiety (Dobinson et al., 2020; Mesa, et al., 2011) is mid-adolescence and prevalence rates for depression rise dramatically in mid- to late-adolescence (Hankin et al., 2015).

Related to the idea of maternal sensitivity is quality of the parent-child relationship, which could also be a protective factor for child social-emotional functioning. In the current study we find that higher scores for parental involvement and attachment were significantly related to lower scores for externalizing and total behaviour problems. Similarly, higher scores for parental affiliation (warmth and closeness between parent and child) were correlated to lower scores for internalizing, externalizing, and total problem behaviour. Thus, it is possible that the lack of significant differences between the three groups with regards to child social-emotional functioning reflect parent-child relationships in the adoptive families that are comparable to those found in nonadopted families. Findings from the thematic content analysis of interviews conducted with adoptive mothers, further reaffirms this idea. In the current study, the relationship between the adoptive mothers and their adopted child appears typical (e.g., both positive and negative aspects) despite the unique challenges and stressors faced by adoptive parents. This could explain why the children in the adopted group scored similarly to children in the other two nonadopted groups on measures of social-emotional functioning.

It should be noted that all but one of the adopted children in the current study are under the age of 14 and research indicates that the onset of racial identity formation typically occurs during mid-adolescence, around the age of 16 (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2018). Thus, it is possible that the adopted children in the current sample may not be

considering the differences between their ethnic identity and that of their adoptive parents. For example, thematic content analysis of the parent interviews reveal that according to adoptive mothers, some of the adopted children are satisfied with, and took pride in, their appearance. Additionally, the interviews also reveal that many of the adoptive families in the current study do not incorporate many elements of Chinese culture into the home, with one mother expressing that they do not celebrate Chinese culture whatsoever. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to suggest that the adopted children in the current study are only beginning to explore their ethnic identity. Potential difficulties in child social-emotional behaviour may appear as the adopted children move in mid- and late-adolescence, a time when they are constructing their identity. The fact that they do not look the same as their parents and have no familial ties with individuals who look like them may result in feelings of isolation as they know little about their biological family or their culture (Kallgren & Caudill, 1993). Additionally, since the majority of the adoptive families in the current sample do not incorporate much Chinese culture into the home the child may experience confusion regarding ethnic identity, which can lead to low levels of self-esteem and negative attitudes towards the self and their race (Kallgren & Caudill, 1993; Yoon, 2000).

Children in the adopted group were placed with their adoptive families by their first birthday. Given this information, these findings make sense, as early and consistent access to a primary caregiver can influence the quality of the parent-child relationship, which can in turn impact later child social-emotional functioning (Monique van Londen, Juffer, & van Ijzendoorn, 2020).

Summary

Overall, the qualitative findings from this study reveal that mothers of adopted children discuss experiences and feelings, both negative and positive, that are comparable to the typical parent-child relationship in nonadoptive families. This idea is further supported by the quantitative findings which reveal no significant differences between the three groups (adopted, nonadopted Caucasian, and nonadopted Chinese-Canadian) on measures of parent-child relationship quality or child social-emotional functioning. Instead, significant relations are found between quality of parent-child relationship and social-emotional functioning in the overall sample. This reaffirms the importance of the parent-child relationship with respect to social-emotional problems in children.

However, issues specific to transracial adoption are also demonstrated in the thematic content analysis of parent interviews where some mothers describe that their adopted child is dissatisfied with their appearance and express a desire to have Anglo-European features. In addition, parent interviews reveal that most adoptive families in the current study are not providing many cultural socialization activities for their adopted children. This is problematic as it may lead to future problems for the adoptive child, such as confusion over their ethnic identity and low levels of self-esteem.

It should be acknowledged that the current sample consists of families who are of a higher socioeconomic status, which may impact the generalizability of the results. At the same time, parents who adopt internationally tend to be more financially stable given the high costs associated with the international adoption process. Additionally, the diversity of the neighborhoods within which the families reside is unknown. Thus, it is possible that this could affect the incorporation of cultural elements in the home. If families live in less diverse neighborhood, they may have more difficulty exposing their

adopted child to cultural elements. Despite these limitations, the current study represents one of the few studies that has followed adopted children into early adolescence and included a comparison group of families with the same ethnic background as the adopted children (Chinese-Canadian). Given the findings, it is important that more studies are conducted with transracially adopted children, particularly as they progress into adolescence, a time when formation of ethnic identity occurs. Factors such as the incorporation (or lack of incorporation) of cultural elements from the adopted child's birth country into the adoptive home need to be considered as they play an important role in the formation of ethnic identity. Given that transracial adoption has become commonplace in society, it is important to understand the factors that will promote positive family relations and positive ethnic identity formation for the adopted child.

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Appendix A

Parenting experiences and relationship with child

Question 1: Have there been any negative experiences with (child's name) during these years?

Code	Description
Nothing negative	No negative experiences associated with the adopted child joining their family; adopted kid described as being a good kid
Parent-Child Conflict	Any type of conflict between parent and child; child having temper tantrums and situations where parents felt like they were butting heads with their child
Negative parenting experiences	Parenting experiences that were described as negative (e.g., parents reported frustration in not being able to handle a situation or not knowing how to deal with it or having no time alone)

Question 2: At what times do you feel closest to her? Tell me about them

Code	Description
Time Together • Physical closeness • One on one time	Parent and child spending time together. This led to two subthemes: • Physical closeness –times they were physically close to their child; cuddling on the couch, holding hands, etc. • One on one – Moments alone, being away from distractions, in their own world, just talking, sharing something between the two of them, activities together, something they both enjoy (e.g., playing scrabble).

Question 3: Are there times when you feel distant from her? Tell me about them

Code	Description
Growing up • Not feeling needed • Time away from parent	Parents discussed ways in which their child was growing and change (e.g., becoming more of an adult), which led to feelings of distance. Two subthemes: • Not feeling needed – parent no longer felt needed by their child • Time away from parent – child wanting to spend more time with their friends (e.g., talking on the phone, hanging out with their friends) and not really wanting to be around their parents as much; instances where the child would spend time in their room playing video games or being on their phone/tablet

Parent-child relationship • Conflict • Withdrawing	Different instances in the parent-child relationship that led to parent feeling distant from their child. Two subthemes: • Conflict –Feeling distant from child during disagreements or when their child would act out • Withdrawing – times when it felt like their child had something they wanted to say or express but just did not know how to; times child would keep to themselves.
Busy life	Parent or child being busy and not having enough time to spend together (e.g., extracurriculars, busy with work, etc.)
Never felt distant	No times parent felt distant from their child; not being able to come up with any instances where parent ever felt distant from child

Adoption experiences and dealing with issues of race

Question 1 – Sometimes adopted children go through a period when they are upset about issues related to their adoption. Has this happened with (child's name)?

Code	Description
Child's reaction • Positive response • Negative response • Neutral response	Child's reaction to their adoption. Three main subthemes: • Positive response – Positive outlook on issues related to their adoption; e.g., child understanding their birth parents had to give them up; had nothing to do with them as a person. • Negative response –Frustrations, feelings of sadness and anger over not knowing their family, not having the answers, fear of being abandoned again, and not feeling understood by their adoptive parents (e.g., "you can visit your mom, but I can never visit mine"). • Neutral – Child not being upset about issues related to their adoption
Birth Mother	Instances where child would discuss their birth mother in abstract ways or refer to their birth mother as being dead.

Question 2 – Has (child's name) ever expressed the wish not to look Chinese?

Code	Description
Dissatisfaction with appearance • Desire to have Anglo-European features • Typical complaints	Child expressing dissatisfaction with their physical appearance; two subthemes: • Desire to have Anglo-European features–child wanting to look more like their adoptive parents and the desire to have Anglo-European features (e.g., wanting blonde hair, blue eyes, not liking their mono-lid etc.) • Typical complaints –child complaining about their looks but not having anything to do with looking Chinese (e.g., wanting their hair to be longer, wanting to be taller, disliking wearing glasses, etc.)

Satisfaction with appearance • Pride • Uncertainty	Child not expressing a desire to not look Chinese and led to two subthemes: • Pride –child being proud of how they looked and happy/satisfied with their features (e.g., loving their hair, loving their eyes, proud of being Chinese) • Uncertainty – child never expressing the desire to not look Chinese or mentioning it to their parents

Question 3 – Families vary in terms of whether they incorporate Chinese culture and language into their family lives. What decisions have you made in this regard? Has (child's name) made any decisions in this regard?

Code	Description
Decreasing exposure	Incorporated Chinese culture into their home in the past, but then less involved, e.g., parents still celebrated certain Chinese holidays (e.g., Chinese New Year) but that they do not go all out as they used to in the past; parents became less involved because they thought child may not be making connections to their culture
Limited exposure	Limited exposure, but well-known elements of Chinese culture (e.g., eating Chinese food, going to Mandarin the restaurant; that would be considered popular or mainstream activities that other Canadian families engage in (e.g., eating Chinese food). Or celebrating Chinese holidays (e.g., Chinese New Year, harvest moon, etc.)
Immersed in Chinese Culture	Family incorporated Chinese culture into home (e.g., child taking Chinese dance classes, learning Mandarin, taking trips to Chinatown, belonging to different Chinese adoption groups, revisiting China, etc.); represented parents who were strongly dedicated to incorporating Chinese culture into the home by involving their child in as many activities as possible.
Chinese and Canadian Identity	Participant expressing that their family is blended, meaning it is a mix of different ethnicities and they work to incorporate that into their family life
No cultural socialization activities	Parents not incorporating cultural socialization practices or Chinese elements into the home or because the child was not interested, e.g., some parents explained that their child had no interest in Chinese culture (e.g., enjoying a Chinese New Year event but only because they liked the auction, not caring about what the holiday actually meant). This was also described as child having a strong dislike for Chinese cultural activities (e.g., hating Mandarin classes, no interest in going to China, etc.)

Question 4 – Have you ever travelled, or do you plan to travel to China with (child's name)?

Code	Description
Yes, travelled back	Family revisited China with their adopted child; some parents described their desire to go back to China, while others mentioned that they had made multiple visits.
Has not travelled back • Financial reasons • Child not interested • Finding the right time	Family had not been back to China with their child; wo subthemes: • Financial reasons –parents wanted to travel back to China but it was a large financial burden and an expensive trip to make • Child not interested – child expressed no interest in returning to China for a visit • Finding the right time – family wanted to go back to China but having a difficult time working it into their schedule and their child's schedule (e.g., the child is too young they might not appreciate it, march break is too short, etc.)