

The Yin and Yang of Identity and Relationships: The Queer Korean Adoptee Experience



UNIVERSITY
OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™

School of Social Work

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Shawyn C. Lee, MSW, LGSW
School of Social Work

Introduction

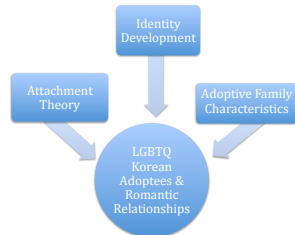
Overview & Brief Review of the Literature

- Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, over 250,000 Korean children have been transnationally adopted worldwide, with at least half adopted into the United States (Park Nelson, 2009).
- Eighty percent of children adopted from overseas began their lives in orphanages (Lancaster & Nelson, 2009).
- Prevalence of attachment disorders, cognitive delays, and behavioral deficits among post-institutional children many years after adoption (Glennen, 2002; Zeanah, 2000).
- The largest cohort of Korean adoptees (those born between 1969 – 1988) are now adults. There is a need for research looking specifically at the attachment styles and needs of adult adoptees (Finley, 1999).
- Adoptees are less likely to classify themselves as securely attached (Borders, Penny, & Portnoy, 2000; Feeney, Passmore, & Peterson, 2007).
- Attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety were both associated with negative LGB(TQ) identity variables (Wang, Schale, & Broz, 2010).
- Self-acceptance and same-sex orientation were significantly associated with attachment security variables (Elizur & Mintzer, 2003).

The goal of this study is to contribute to the growing body of research related to adoption – more specifically, international adoption from South Korea. While attachment research with respect to adopted individuals is continuing to emerge, there currently exists no published research on how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) identities may impact an adoptee's experience – even more specifically in terms of navigating romantic relationships.

Specific Aims

1. Provide insight into the unique attachment challenges adult LGBTQ identified Korean adoptees may face in terms of romantic relationship establishment and functioning compared to their heterosexual counterparts.
2. Demonstrate how other demographic and developmental factors such as geographic region where the adoptee grew up, the race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and socio-economic status of the adoptive parent(s), adoptive family environment, and enculturation of the adoptee affect, and perhaps even exacerbate, attachment issues for LGBTQ Korean adoptees.



The Study

Hypothesis:

LGBTQ Korean adoptees will score higher in anxious and avoidant attachment than their heterosexual Korean adoptee counterparts.

Research Questions

1. Do adult Korean adoptees that identify as LGBTQ score higher on measures of anxiety and avoidance with respect to romantic relationships than their heterosexual Korean adoptee counterparts?
2. What specific affects do LGBTQ identities have on the overall attachment process for Korean adoptees?
3. To what extent to adoptive family characteristics and dynamics affect LGBTQ Korean adoptees experiences in romantic relationships?

Design & Sample

- Cross-sectional survey design
- Data collected by way of non-probability snowball sampling
- National sample
- Adult heterosexual and LGBTQ Korean adoptees between the ages of 23 – 42

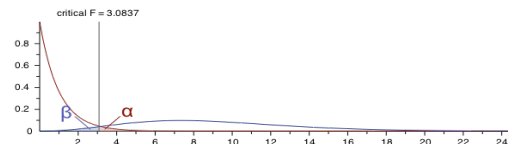
Measures

- Revised Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000; Sibley et al., 2005).
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) adapted to include Transgender and Queer identities.
- Blatant Racial Issues subscale of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville et al., 2000) adapted for adult adoptees.
- Demographic Information

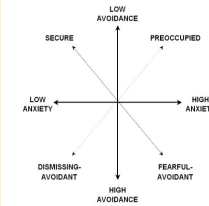
Statistical Analyses

G*Power power analysis for Linear Multiple Regression:

- $n = 107$ ($n_{\text{hetero}} = 107$ and $n_{\text{lgbtq}} = 107$)
- $\alpha = .05$
- Power = .95. The distribution plot is as follows:



Practice Implications



The two-dimensional model of individual differences in adult attachment (Bartholomew, 1990)

- Adoptees more likely to have sought psychological counseling at some point in their lives than their non-adoptee counterparts.
- Understand the psychological experiences and perspectives of LGBTQ Korean adoptees as they navigate romantic relationships.
- Gain an understanding of attachment theory as it relates to the intersection of adoptee & LGBTQ identities.
- Create a cumulative portrait of how the many facets and complexities involved with international adoption from Korea can impact the adoptee's experience in various kinds of relationships.
- Add to current research on best practices in terms of mental health and post adoption services to effectively meet the needs of LGBTQ Korean adoptees.

References

- Borders, L. D., Penny, J. M., & Portnoy, F. (2000). Adult adoptees and their friends: Current functioning and psychosocial well-being. *Family Relations, 49*(4), 407-418.
- Elizur, Y. & Mintzer, A. (2003). Gay males' intimate relationship quality: The roles of attachment security, gay identity, social support, and income. *Personal Relationships, 10*, 411-435.
- Feeney, J. A., Passmore, N. L., & Peterson, C. C. (2007). Adoption, attachment, and relationship concerns: A study of adult adoptees. *Personal Relationships, 14*, 129-147.
- Finley, G. E. (1999). Children of adoptive families. In W. K. Silverman & T. H. Ollendick (Eds.), *Developmental issues in the clinical treatment of children* (pp. 358-370). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Fraley, R. C., Weller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 350-365.
- Glennen, S. L. (2002). Language development and delay in internationally adopted infants and toddlers: A review. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 11*, 333-339.
- Lancaster, C. & Nelson, K. W. (2009). Where attachment meets acculturation: Three cases of international adoption. *The Family Journal, 17*(4), 302-311.
- Mohr, J. & Fassinger, R. (2000). Measuring dimensions of lesbian and gay male experience. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 33*, 66-90.
- Neville, H. A., Lilly, R. A., Duran, G., Lee, R. M., & Browne, V. (2000). Construction and initial validation of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47*(1), 59-70.
- Park Nelson, K. (2009). *Mapping multiple histories of Korean American transnational adoption*. US Korea Institute. Retrieved from http://uskoreainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/USKI_WP_0901.pdf
- Sibley, C. G., Fischer, R., & Liu, J. H. (2005). Reliability and validity of the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR-R) self-report measure of adult romantic attachment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*, 1524-1536.
- Wang, Chia-Chih, Schale, C. L., & Broz, K. K. (2010). Adult attachment: Lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity, and sexual attitudes of nonheterosexual individuals. *Journal of College Counseling, 13*(1), 31-49.
- Zeanah, C. H. (2000). Disturbances of attachment in young children adopted from institutions. *Development and Behavioral Pediatrics, 21*, 230-236.