"Do You Know Your *Real* Parents?" And Other Adoption Microaggressions

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Abstract

Myths, fairy tales, films, books, and everyday communication contain images and stories of orphans and adoptees that convey societal discomfort and judgment about adoption (i.e., adoption stigma). In this paper, I apply the microaggression model to adoption-related experiences using the literature and theory on adoption stigma. Definitions for adoption-related microaggressions (microassaults, microinvalidations, and microinsults) and a fourth type of microaggression called microfictions (i.e., shared and hidden narratives that contribute to and define the secrecy in adoption) are introduced. Thirteen themes for adoption microaggressions and examples for each are proposed.

Keywords: adoption, microaggressions, stigma, adoptees, birth parents

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Adoption, orphan care, relinquishment, and foster care are highly visible family situations in the U.S. that affect a significant portion of the population. Data indicates that 64% of Americans report being affected by adoption (were adopted, adopted a child, relinquished a child for adoption, or had family or friends who were adopted) (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002). Estimates of orphans, adopted persons, adoptive parents, birth parents or first parents (see Stigma of Adoption), foster parents, and foster children, are difficult to determine worldwide. Within the U.S., recent Census data indicate that 1.4 million adoptees under age 18 lived in the U.S. in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) whereas thousands more have reached adulthood or aged out of the foster care system. All of these statistics merely reflect what has been clear for some time—adoption is now fairly commonplace and large portions of our society are affected by attitudes toward and judgments about adoption. A greater understanding of the often unconscious attitudes toward adoption, relinquishment, orphans, and adoption stakeholders (birth parents, adopted persons, and adoptive parents) is greatly needed to better serve this population and to understand the higher rates of mental health referrals (Miller et al., 2000) for those who are arguably most directly affected by negative judgments and attitudes—adopted persons.

The modern history of adoption reflects a practice generally viewed as a positive solution to problems experienced by unwed or impoverished birth parents (or first parents), orphaned or abandoned children, and childless or infertile couples. However, adoption is far more complex than this perspective implies. Along with a host of nuanced complexity regarding motivations, outcomes, and challenges, the stigma of adoption continues to exist. Literature from the past 25 years that identified the stigma of adoption defined the ways in which adoptive parents, birth parents, and adoptees have experienced the stigma as it is manifested in judgments, attitudes, behaviors, and prejudices (March, 1995; Miall, 1987, 1986; Wegar, 2000). Furthermore, oppression, stigma, and perceived discrimination have been linked to identity concerns, family stress, and

behavior problems for internationally adopted children and adolescents (Lee, 2010; Westhues & Cohen, 1998), indicating the need for improved understanding of adoption stigma.

This paper draws upon the literature on adoption-related stigma to create a new framework for conceptualizing the oppression experienced by the *adoption kinship network* (AKN) (birth parents, adoptive parents, adoptees, foster parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.). This new framework: (1) utilizes the construct of racial microaggressions, or the attitudes, judgments, slights, insults, and oppressive acts based on racial and ethnic differences that are communicated in everyday interactions (Sue et al., 2007), and (2) extends the application of microaggressions to the experience of adoption by proposing 13 hypothesized themes found in the discourse on adoption issues and in interactions around adoption. This conceptual framework will advance the theories of microaggressions and adoption stigma and will promote the development of research to name what has become commonplace but unarticulated phenomena. In this paper, conceptions of adoption microaggressions are defined and linked to the adoption stigma literature, examples of the proposed adoption microaggression themes are provided, and the intersection of racial microaggressions and adoption microaggressions is briefly explored via transracial adoption. The articulation and identification of adoption microaggressions and their potential to improve treatment strategies, research, and support for the AKN are discussed in the conclusion.

Adoption Scholarship and Adoption Stigma

Over the past 15 years, adoption scholarship has shifted the discourse on adoption to reflect a more critical lens toward common practices, attitudes, and beliefs in adoption. In particular the language used to understand adoption practice and the frame through which adoption is and has been practiced utilized theories, paradigms, and constructs from other disciplines and the social sciences to better articulate more critical analyses of adoption. The result of these critiques has led to more insightful observations about the political, social, and economic ramifications of adoption practice. Within this more recent wave of scholarship, adoption scholars have published several accounts of interviews with adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents that were utilized to underscore and illustrate the ramifications of international, transracial, and domestic adoptions (Dorow, 2006; Patton, 2000; Roberts, 2000; Simon & Roorda, 2000, 2007). The narratives contained within these qualitative research studies depict many of the themes of adoption stigma.

Dorow (2006) conducted an ethnographic study examining adoptions from China within the context of immigration history. In her interviews with more than 40 adoptive families, government officials, and orphanage representatives, she contextualized Chinese adoptions as being influenced by the racial, economic, social, and political factors that were illustrated in her data. For example, adoptive parents' comments on the desirability of Chinese children over children of color in U.S. foster care was framed as a byproduct of both the model minority stereotype as well as a remnant of a prevalent belief that birth parents in international adoptions will not attempt to reclaim or be present in the lives of adoptees. Dorow reported on the motivations, challenges, supports, and attitudes that the interviewees expressed about adoption from China and adoptive parents' own personal and familial experiences. Within these narratives, many examples of adoption stigma represented themes of rescuing orphans, colorblindness, racialization, and a host of other themes.

Similarly, Patton's (2000) ethnography of interviews with 22 adult transracial adoptees examined transracial adoption, racial identity, searching for birth roots, and adoption policy. Within these narratives, Patton uncovers compelling racial dynamics and historical adoption practice as they affected the placements and personal identities of transracially adopted adults. Simon and Roorda (2000, 2007) also published a series of interviews conducted with adult transracial adoptees and their white adoptive parents. All of these narratives contain direct quotes from adoptive parents, adoptees, and other stakeholders in adoption practice, and these quotes represent the judgments and attitudes within adoption that are manifested in the stigma of adoption. To best understand the ways in which adoption stigma is related to adoption microaggressions, adoption stigma must be defined and explored.

The Stigma of Adoption

Historically, the stigma of adoption has referred to the biased, judgmental attitudes toward adoption and adoption-related concerns. By definition, a stigma usually refers to a mark of disgrace due to certain circumstances (Stigma, 2010), and as described below, a body of literature exists that attests to the prevalence of adoption-related stigma. Goffman's (1963) seminal work on social stigma described stigma as a process of social discrimination that is based on deviations from societal norms. When individuals' social or physical traits tend to cause others discomfort, Goffman argues that individuals are motivated to manage their differentness by seeking to become as "normal" as possible. Other scholars have applied Goffman's theory to the adoption experience (e.g., Kline, Karel, & Chatterjee, 2006; March, 1995). According to Goffman (1963), stigma is expressed through interactions and is based in relationships of devaluation, yet those who are stigmatized (the AKN) learn the meaning and the degree of their discreditable traits through others' reactions to those traits (March, 1995).

Attitudes from others about adoption and adoptees' life choices are clearly present in the community. For example, adoptees are expected to search for their birth parents (March, 1995) to be considered complete or whole, are viewed as experiencing a trauma from which they may never fully "recover" (Verrier, 1993), and are regularly asked about the status of their desire and efforts to search for birth family (Kline et al., 2006). The stigma surrounding adoption also affects birth families. As the least understood and most stigmatized part of the AKN (Henney, French, Ayers-Lopez, McRoy, & Grotevant, 2011; Kline et al., 2006), birth parents face tremendous stigma beginning at conception (e.g., unwed, young, poor) and continuing throughout their post-relinquishment lives (Wiley & Baden, 2005). Attitudes toward birth parents have depicted birth mothers as either sexually promiscuous women who have made irresponsible decisions, as teens with few resources (Miall & March, 2003), or as impoverished women in foreign lands like Guatemala and China (Sweeney, 2012). Despite the improved attitudes toward single parenthood and "illegitimate" births, birth mothers still face judgment for "violations of the tenets of motherhood" (Henney et al., 2011, p. 621), particularly due to their perceived decisions to relinquish their children (Fisher, 2003). Birth fathers, on the other hand, are characterized as "troubled" and as "Don Juan" types who take advantage of girls and evade their responsibility by disappearing (Miall & March, 2005; Sachdev, 1991). Preferences for the language used to describe birth families have shifted over time and continues to evolve as efforts to destigmatize birth families grows. The common term "biological parents," which connotes ties only through genetics, shifted to "birth parents" in an effort to better recognize the birth ties that are held; however, recently scholars began using "first parents" to more fully recognize the primacy of the relationship that these parents have in the lives of their children. For the purposes of this paper, birth parents and first parents will be used interchangeably. These examples as well as the shift in language illustrate the far-reaching nature of adoption-related stigma.

Young (2012) captured the relief expressed by adoptive parents regarding the relative absence or invisibility of birth parents in international adoption. Some families expressed preferences for international adoption because birth parents are less likely to be found (e.g., in Chinese international adoptions) and because birth parents are not seen as integral to the selection process for adoptive families. Similarly, the stigma of foster care is frequently expressed in attitudes expressed suggesting that foster care lacks permanency and necessitates uncertainty. Young's study with Australian adoptive parents expressed a preference for international adoption over foster care through the perception that "foster children often came from disadvantaged backgrounds 'with a lot of baggage'" (p. 231).

Adoption stigma is also well-documented in popular literature on adoption as well as in newer forms of media including blogs, web forums, and online magazines. For example, Davidson (2006) posted a top ten list of questions NOT to ask adoptive parents as an "etiquette primer" to help others identify what those in the AKN would view as intrusive, annoying, or offensive—thus illustrating adoption microaggression themes. His list included: "Aren't you wonderful to adopt this child?...How much did you pay for your baby? Now that you've adopted, you'll probably get pregnant, don't you think?" (para. 2)

More recently, an adoptive parent (Kim Kelley-Wagner Images, ca. 2014) published a widely shared Facebook page composed of photos of her children who were adopted from China holding hand-written signs

containing "things said to or about [her] adopted daughters" (para. 1) regarding their adoption, race, ethnicity. The signs read, "why didn't her REAL family want her" (photo 4), or "it's so easy to get a baby over there, they just give them away" (photo 36). A recent blog (youshouldbegrateful, ca. 2014) documents a range of invalidating and hurtful comments made by adoptive parents toward adoptees such as, "if it wasn't for us, where would you be? A prostitute? Living on the streets?" (para. 24), or, "this is Lisa, she's our adopted grandchild; and this is Tammy, she's the blood grandchild" (said by an adoptive grandfather) (para. 29). These examples illustrate the far-reaching range of adoption stigma.

The messages that others send through their reactions and responses to members of the AKN can be sent through microaggressions. Although the concept of microaggressions has not yet been extended to adoption, microaggressions fittingly serve as the manifestation of adoption-related stigma. The mark or stigma projected onto the AKN as being somehow defective or deficient (as reflected in adoption attitudes) (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002) is acted upon and likely fuels the behaviors and views that are conveyed via microaggressions.

Microaggressions

The concept of microaggressions was coined and described by Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1978) to refer to the subtle forms of racism that were more evident in modern life. Sue et al. (2007) expanded on Pierce et al.'s (1978) definitions for microaggressions in their seminal work in which they brought microaggressions to the counseling and psychology disciplines. Microaggressions are defined as attitudes, judgments, prejudice, and racism that are communicated in subtle, overt, and sometimes aggressive ways in everyday life. In contrast to the traditional form of racism that references systems of advantage (macro-level) based on race (Tatum, 2003), microaggressions are forms of racism that are acted upon in small interactions (micro-level) between individuals or groups in subtle and often dismissive ways. Microaggressions are often committed unconsciously yet still send subtle but denigrating messages to the targets (Sue et al., 2007). Looks, gestures, tones, and actions that typically comprise microaggressions function to emphasize and create the subtle or "microinequities" that result from experiencing microaggressions. The types of microaggressions identified by Sue et al. (2007) include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations, and they depict the racial messages, comments, behaviors, or attitudes that are sent either in innocent, unintentional, ignorant, veiled ways, or in overt, aggressive, blatant ways. The racial microaggression model demonstrates the ways in which oppression can occur in subtle and seemingly innocuous comments and interactions, and it illustrates the ubiquitous nature of racial slights and judgments. Sue et al. (2007) also clearly stated that the intentionality of insults and slights does not matter; they proposed that microaggressions can be well-intentioned comments or sincere questions without conscious judgment that subtly minimize, devalue, or even inflate the abilities, accomplishments, and status of target groups and thereby further oppress those target groups.

With respect to adoption, a combination of misinformation, assumptions, stereotypes, judgmental outlooks, and biases culminate in actions, comments, or attitudes that communicate the pervasive nature of adoption stigma. However, frameworks for understanding both the ways in which adoption stigma is communicated and how those in the AKN experience it are needed to improve practice, support those impacted, and train clinicians, educators, and the general public. The construct of microaggressions, including microassualts, microinvalidations and microinsults, as well as a new construct (developed for the current framework of adoption microaggressions) called microfictions (the mistruths and stories created about adoption that deny or misrepresent real lived adoption experience), can be applied to communication about the practice of adoption, adoption status, adoptive parenting, being a birth parent, and being an adopted person, as well as other adoption-related concerns.

Typically, people initially gain exposure to the concept of adoption via fairytales, stories, films, and comments made by families and friends. For example, movies like *Stuart Little* (Wick, 1999) and *The Blind Side* (Netter, Johnson, & Kosove, 2009) are just a few examples of films with adoption or orphan themes. These films depict the narrative of adopted or orphaned children who were cared for by adoptive parents (portrayed as either rescuers or villains) but who ultimately sought reunion with their "real" parents. Introducing

audiences—especially children— to adoption and its complexities by using these kinds of images begins to form the "knowledge base," albeit often a misinformed one, upon which stigmatized responses and microaggressions can be formed. For example, stories or films may alternately promote or pathologize adoptees' and birth parents' decisions or desires to search for birth parents or birth children just as they may encourage or castigate the decision not to search for them, thereby fueling judgments made about how AKN members should respond to the adoption experience.

Adoption microaggressions can be defined as common slights, insults, and indignities that can occur almost daily that may be intentional or unintentional but that communicate adoption-related and biology-related judgments, slights, or criticisms about adoption, foster care, or relinquishing care for a child. Adoption microaggressions may be directed at the AKN and found within the environment via traditional media (news, television, film, radio), as well as social media (blogs, web forums, etc.). The categories of adoption microaggressions are derived from the racial microaggression categories of microassault, microinsults, and microinvalidations developed by Sue et al. (2007), but were defined around adoption-related concerns for the framework presented in this paper.

Microassault. An *adoption microassault* is an outward, often conscious, explicit attack that is verbal or nonverbal but that is intended to hurt the target through name-calling, avoidant or exclusionary behavior, or intentional oppressive actions. Teasing a peer at school for being adopted or calling an adoptee "illegitimate" or "bastard" are examples of adoption microassaults.

Microinvalidations. The subtlety of *adoption microinvalidations* can be challenging, yet this form of microaggression may be the most commonly experienced by the adoption AKN. An adoption microinvalidation occurs through communications—verbal and nonverbal— that exclude, deny, invalidate, or devalue the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiences of the AKN. When adoptees are asked if they know their "real parents," messages are sent that the authenticity of familial relationships formed through adoption is inferior and that biological relationships are primary. Conversely, adoptees or first families who search for each other may receive, or may even send, messages that interest in one's biological origins or biological kin is inconsequential and unnecessary.

Microinsults. *Adoption microinsults* refer to attitudes, messages, and other communications that contain subtle, rude, demeaning, or insensitive beliefs about adoption, foster care, relinquishment, and other adoption-related practices. Perpetrators of microinsults may be unaware of the snubs that they convey, yet within their communications lie hidden messages to AKN members.

Microfictions. Given the unique nature of the complex histories of individuals and families affected by adoption and foster care, a new form of microaggression called *adoption microfictions* was developed for this paper to address this complexity. Adoption occurs as a result of merging and mixing personal and collective histories and heritages to incorporate new family members and separate other family members (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996). However, in the process of adoption and relinquishment, those histories can be altered purposefully, or even accidentally, resulting in adoption stories and pasts that veil or withhold information from adoptees. These histories can also include inaccurate information that was shared to create a fictional story for adoption stakeholders. For example, generations of adult adoptees (both domestic and international) report being told their birth parents died in car accidents (Free, 2001-2002), thus classifying them as "true orphans" as opposed to "created orphans," and making them more adoptable or desirable. Adoptees from Korea and Taiwan depict instances of inaccuracies or outright fabrications on their social history reports in documentary films (e.g., Liem, 2000) further illustrating deceptions.

Microfictions also occur when adoptive parents fail to disclose the adoption status of their children and instead claim adopted children as their own by birth. In fact, a community of "late discovery adoptees," or adoptees who only learned that they were adopted when they were adults exists (Perls & Markham, 2000) and exemplifies the microfiction of hidden adoption status. When the practice of adoption is referred to as a "win-win situation" (i.e., a situation in which the mutual needs of couples wanting children and children needing families are met), but additional layers of adoption complexity (e.g., birth parent relinquishment, loss of history,

etc.) are not addressed, a microfiction can occur. In these cases, the losses that adoptees and adoptive parents may have faced are nullified, and fictional narratives that gloss over the pain, loss, and challenges in adoption are created. The pervasiveness of microfictions can also be seen through the existence of sealed birth records for those adopted through the closed adoption system. The replacement of birth parents' names with adoptive parents' names promotes the fictional narrative in which adopted children were "born to" their adoptive parents, thereby eradicating the existence (both real and figurative) of their true birth or first parents (Morgan, 2004). Microfictions can even be extended to describe the stories that birth parents are told about what happened to their birth children. As these examples demonstrate, the various forms of adoption microaggressions, including microfictions, cover the behaviors, attitudes, and interactions that covey covert and overt messages about adoption, family permanence, biological relatedness, gratitude, rescue, and a variety of other issues.**Adoption Microaggression Themes**

To develop this framework of adoption microaggressions, the adoption stigma literature and the racial microaggressions literature were utilized to hypothesize and conceptualize potential adoption microaggression themes. This conceptual framework was built by defining and developing each of the four microaggression types (microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations, and microfictions) within the context of adoption. This definitional process was based on the rich literature, both professional and popular, that documents the stigma of adoption. Within the various types of adoption microaggressions, hypothesized themes were identified drawing upon several sources: (1) the body of work documenting adoption stigma as identified above; (2) the professional and popular literature on adoption-related oppression; and (3) first-person accounts that document the lived experiences from the AKN as published in empirical, clinical, and anecdotal literature and in social media and internet-based sources. This conceptual framework did not involve qualitative inquiry. Rather, examples from the literature (scholarly articles and ethnographies), anthologies of narratives written by adoptees, social media content (e.g., blogs, web forums, Internet postings, and news articles), and the everyday talk surrounding adoption were culled for Table 1 to represent what is documented about adoption stigma and the discourse around it. Gathering accounts of lived experiences from personal narratives in the popular literature as well as from the Internet (e.g., blogs, web forums, news articles, etc.) resulted in a myriad of rich examples of the various adoption microaggressions. The use of the Internet as a source for research and scholarly endeavors has increasingly gained support (Clark, Spanierman, Reed, Soble, & Cabana, 2011; Hewson & Charlton, 2005), and blogs (or weblogs) have been recognized as containing attitudes and comments of increased candor given the reduced need for socially desirable responses due to anonymity. As seen in Table 1, sample adoption microaggressions are categorized into hypothesized themes that are commonly communicated to AKN members.

With respect to the specific themes in Table 1, the theme *biology is best/normative* is based upon the belief that biological ties are superior, more permanent, and more authentic than ties formed through adoption or foster care (Miall, 1987; Potter, 2013). This microinvalidation mirrors "adoptism" (Steinberg & Hall, 2000), which refers to a cultural belief that first families should be preserved and adoptive families are less permanent and connected. Adoptive parents reported their perceptions of the "primacy of blood ties" (p. 34) and the greater intensity of love from biological mothers over adoptive mothers toward their biological vs. adopted children (Miall, 1987). Even questions like, "Where is she from?" as said to a transracial adoptive parent communicate the expectations and values based on biology that exist in society. Each type of adoption microaggression can also be internalized. For example, Jones (2000) described birth mothers who "were concerned about birthmothers of the future. Some warned others not to relinquish under *any* circumstances, and urged them to consider relinquishment as the most 'unnatural' act a woman could perform, akin to murder" (p.279). This quote shows birthmothers themselves may act upon the stigma by committing microaggressions against other birthmothers.

The theme *bad seed adoptees*, a microinsult, is reflected in adoptive parents' reported experience that others view adopted children as "second rate" or "ruined" (Miall, 1987, p. 37). Adoptees are frequently depicted as "rejected" or "unwanted" children, attributing problems to deficits within the adopted people themselves.

Children in foster care are particularly vulnerable to being characterized as bad seeds and portrayed as children who are out of control, involved in criminal activities, or pregnant as teenagers (West, 1999). The existence of the "adopted child syndrome" (Kirschner, 1990; Wegar, 2000), a proposed psychological condition in adoptees that is purported to result in lying, manipulative behavior, shallow attachments, promiscuity, and other conduct-related behaviors, further send the message that adoptees are damaged due to having been relinquished and adopted (Hayes, 1993).

Grateful adoptees, a third theme, refers to the idea of adoptees as both lucky and privileged to have been adopted (Janus, 1997; Smit, 2002), with little recognition of the losses they experience. Comments may suggest that, due to their *bad seed adoptee* status, they were fortunate to be adopted into a presumed "good home" and should be grateful for that opportunity. For example, one of the signs portrayed by Kim Kelley-Wagner Images (ca. 2014) was, "she is lucky you came along, otherwise she would be dead on the street" (photo 10), and the blog youshouldbegrateful.com (ca. 2014) reported that an adoptee was told, "we adopted you and you haven't even thanked us for that" (para. 21). Another theme, *cultural limbo and invalidation of heritage*, is a microinvalidation that represents the challenges created by the intersection between racial and adoption microaggressions. TRAs (including most international adoptees) may be targeted because of their experiences of being between racial and cultural groups due to their adoption and thereby not feeling fully accepted by either birth or adoptive racial groups (Baden et al., 2012). Examples of this *cultural limbo* are: (1) being asked why they cannot speak the language of their ethnic group (a racial microaggression) and having to reveal adoptive status; (2) an adoptee being told he is "not really black" because he was adopted into a white family; and (3) going for a job interview and having the employer expect a white applicant because the adoptee's name doesn't "match" the adoptee's ethnic appearance.

First parents may be the least visible and least powerful of the adoption stakeholders, yet microaggressions targeting them exist. The stigma associated with the termination of parental rights and the role of "bad choices" made by birth parents were portrayed in a study by Sweeney (2012). Birth parents are specifically targeted in two themes: (1) *shameful birth/first parents*, in which birth parents are viewed as being of low character or unsuitable for parenthood (Henney et al., 2011; Kline et al., 2006; Kressierer & Bryant, 1996), and (2) *phantom birth/first parents*, in which first parents are forgotten or believed to be irrelevant after adoption placement (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996). Comments like, "What kind of woman gives up a child?", "How could his 'real' mother give away an adorable baby?" (Davidson, 2006, para. 3), or "when you adopt domestically…You are exposed to a completely different socio-economic class: people who live in subsidized housing, people who are on welfare, people who use abortion as birth control, people who visit food pantries, who are uneducated, [and] who make bad choices" (Sweeney, 2012, p. 30) are examples of the *shameful/inadequate birth/first parent* microinsult. The microinvalidation reflected in the theme *phantom birth/first parents* can be seen when birth mothers are instructed to "get on with their lives," or in comments like, "He gave up his rights. He abandoned his daughter. He's a 'bad dad.'" (Brewer, 2013, May 6, p. para. 25) The adoptive mother who says, "I can feel comfortable as an adoptive parent as long as I can make believe that birth parents do not exist" (Leon, 1998, para. 6), clearly reflects this theme.

Adoptive parents experience a different set of microaggressions. The microinvalidation, *pseudo/inadequate adoptive parents*, refers to the inadequacy and suspicion with which adoptive parents may be viewed due to presumptions of infertility and questions about their right and ability to parent (Kline et al., 2006; March, 1995; Wegar, 2000). For example, Miall's (1987) interviews with adoptive parents revealed perceptions of societal stigma related to their "involuntary childlessness" (p. 34) and doubts about "adoptive parents as REAL parents" (p. 37). Comments made to adoptive parents like, "Couldn't you have children of your own," only reinforce the message of inadequacy. Alternatively, adoptive parents may also be viewed as rescuing (unwanted children), caring, compassionate, and giving (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996; Zhang & Lee, 2011) as seen in the *altruistic rescuers* microinvalidation. Accolades like, "What a wonderful thing you did by adopting those children!" or "Do your kids know how lucky they were that you adopted them?" reinforce this theme.

Adoptions that cross cultural, ethnic, or national lines are also likely to trigger the microinsult of *cultural philanthropy*, which refers to American exceptionalism or cultural exceptionalism and is analogous to the belief that adopted people fare better in America when reared by Americans. Opinions expressed that children adopted into American homes are "better off" in the U.S. than they would be in their native countries, or statements to an adoptee like, "Your birth country was so poor and we thought you'd be better off here in America" reflect this theme. A different but related microinsult is evident in the *commerce in adoption* theme in which the adoption industry has poised adopted children as commodities and adoptive parents as purchasers (Potter, 2013; Suter & Ballard, 2009). Questions like, "How much did she cost?" as asked to an adoptive parent or fee schedules for adopting a white child versus a black child on an agency's website illustrate this theme.

The conception of *adoption is a win-win* is based on the belief that adoption is a solution for orphaned children and childless couples, yet it also fails to recognize the losses inherent in adoption (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996). The mythology around this theme is that adoption creates children for childless couples, parents for orphaned children, and a solution for unwanted pregnancies for birth parents. This may be a particularly subtle microaggression and fits within the microfiction category. Another microfiction, *love is enough*, is based on the belief that despite separations from birth parents and adoption-related trauma, biological relatedness does not matter so a "good home" and a "loving family" will resolve any problems. Narratives about adoption reflect this microfiction through fairytales, films, and novels. When problems in adoptive families arise, questions are asked about whether the children were "loved enough" or treated like "real family," which illustrates this stigma. Making a comment to prospective adoptive parents like, "Just love them and everything will be fine," reinforces the fiction. The third microfiction listed in Table 1 is *infantilizing adoptees and birth/first parents*, and it refers to the treatment of adoptees and birth parents as childlike or as children stuck in time without the maturity to parent or make adult decisions. For example, obvious infantilization occurs when adopted adults are mistakenly referred to as "adopted children" throughout their lives (Baden & Wiley, 2007), while a less overt infantilization occurs through the existence of sealed and altered birth records. The fictions created in these scenarios suggests that adoptees and birth parents are not capable of working out contact issues, and that closed adoption legalities will "protect" these adults from each other.

Transracial Adoption: The Intersection of Race and Adoption

Adoption microaggressions may also be more likely to be experienced within transracial adoptive families, including many international adoptive families, given the visible racial differences. Estimates suggest 40% of all adoptions are transracial ("Data reportedly show high rate of transracial/transethnic adoption," 2011, April) and 80-85% of international adoptions are transracial (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). The visibility of adoption within these families coupled with the fact that the vast majority of transracial adoptees (TRAs) are people of color makes transracial adoptive families more likely to experience both racial and adoption microaggressions. In the case of transracial and international adoption, messages about race may overlap or combine with messages about adoption, becoming oppressive.

The visibility of transracial and international adoption placements within families having multiple racial groups represented likely impacts the experiences, both qualitatively and quantitatively, of microaggressions for these families and individuals. Given that most transracial adoptees are people of color who were adopted by white parents (Baden, Treweeke, & Ahluwalia, 2012), they are more likely to experience racial microaggressions on a regular basis. These adoptees also experience adoption microaggressions, many of which may be triggered by the visible racial differences within their families. In essence, during childhood and adolescence, transracial adoptees' status as adoptees is conspicuous and may make their adoption a more prominent issue in their interactions than same-race adoptees (i.e., adopted by racially similar parents) who may have more ambiguous or even hidden adoption statuses. Moreover, many of the racial microaggressions experienced by transracial and international adoptees may be additionally challenging given that transracial adoptees may experience even more dissonance around their ethnic origins when they receive microinvalidations or microinsults about their race yet their lived cultural experiences do not match their ethnic origins. For example, an adopted person of both African and European heritage may be told by his peers at his

private high school of predominantly White students that his friends "don't even think of him as Black" (microinvalidation) because he "acts White like his parents" (microinsult) and they wonder aloud if he will look for his birth parents someday (microinvalidation). The messages sent by these comments suggest that Black people must behave in stereotypical ways to be accepted as "truly Black" and that adoptees' interest in searching for birth families is both appropriate for public discussion and expected as sign of healthy adoptee development.

Discussion

The literature on microaggressions has grown steadily since the re-introduction of the concept in 2007. The framework for describing microaggressions allows scholars and practitioners to better conceptualize, study, apply, and teach the construct of oppression, yet oppression based on adoption, foster care, or relinquishment status has received far less attention. This framework of adoption microaggressions provides a means for naming and defining the manifestation of adoption stigma through the use of the four types of microaggressions and the 13 themes introduced. The conceptual development of the adoption microaggressions, based on racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007) and the adoption stigma literature, used as its foundation the rich lived experiences of the AKN found in literature, commentaries, critiques, and observations about adoption and those living it.

Despite clear examples of each adoption microaggression theme, one example demonstrates multiple themes being communicated simultaneously in a single comment or action. Given that adoptive parents are viewed as damaged and thus unable to truly parent due to infertility (*pseudo-inadequate adoptive parents*), as rescuing and self-sacrificing (*altruistic rescuers*), and as less permanent and authentic families (*biology is best/normative*), a well-meaning individual might say, "Even though you have done so much for you kids by adopting them, you can't really understand the bond between a mother and a child until you have children of your own." This statement reinforces the message that adoptive parents rescued their children, adopted children aren't really "their own," and adoptive parents are less capable parents. Although all three characterizations have support in the literature, they are not mutually exclusive. Those who adopt due to infertility may be seen simultaneously as rescuing children and as inadequate due to infertility; however those who already have children by birth, and then adopt children internationally, may experience accolades for their rescue efforts and be spared from the expectations of inadequacy given their proof (children born to them) of fertility and authenticity as parents. Furthermore, the historical association between adoption as a charitable act along with the belief (often unconscious) that rearing children in wealthy, western nations like the U.S. is superior to rearing within birth countries (Hübinette, 2004) can lead to microaggressions fitting the *cultural philanthropy* theme.

In a story about Darryl McDaniels, a Hall of Fame rap star from the rap group Run DMC who learned of his adoption when he was 35 years old, a journalist wrote, "Then he got the luckiest break of his soon-to-be-celebrated life. His teenage mother delivered him and then promptly gave him up, which allowed a foster family to take him in and then adopt him" (Morris, 2013, para. 5). This quotation reflects multiple microaggressions including being lucky (*grateful adoptee*), having a birth mother who was both teenage and quick to relinquish him (*shameful birth/first parent*), and adoptive parents who rescued him (*altruistic rescuers*). The messages sent in this same article refer to children as "human capital that that could be saved and repurposed" (Morris, 2013, para. 17) and suggest that McDaniels was fortunate that his first mother relinquished him.

To prevent and avoid committing adoption microaggressions and to prepare the AKN (often the target group for these microaggressions) for dealing with adoption microaggressions, education, increased self-awareness, and commitment are needed. The subtle and often unconscious nature of biased attitudes held toward adoption make the prevention of adoption microaggressions particularly difficult. Many individuals, even those who have had some connection to adoption, may be unaware of the degree to which they hold preconceptions and stereotypes about what adoption is and how AKN members feel about and react to their experiences. Even AKN members may internalize their own oppression and use adoption microaggressions unintentionally towards each other (e.g., adoptive parent to adoptee or adoptees to peer adoptees).

Despite sincere efforts to increase sensitivity and avoid microaggressions, people may still inadvertently commit them. In most cases, adoption microaggressions are likely unintended. Even when these acts or attitudes are brought to awareness, resistance and debate may arise regarding whether they are reasonable, rather than products of bias or poor judgment. However, as found with other forms of microaggressions (racial, sexual orientation, etc.), the intentionality or unintentionality of the act, as well as the ability or inability to *prove* that a microaggression occurred, can be frustrating and may even cause psychological harm when microaggressions are unacknowledged or fail to be validated (Sue et al., 2007). Given the high referral rates for adopted persons to mental health treatment (Miller et al., 2000), understanding the impact and interplay of adoption and racial microaggressions is clearly important.

Future research on adoption microaggressions can begin to explore the prevalence and impact of adoption microaggressions. A number of factors may affect the prevalence of adoption microaggressions experienced by the AKN. First, although visible or conspicuous differences within an adoptive family prevent or at least limit the degree to which disclosures of adoption statuses are necessary, visible differences have been related to increased distress (Berg-Kelly & Eriksson, 1997) and may lead to more frequent incidences of both adoption and racial microaggressions. Second, although families in which adoption matching (Greenberg & Littlewood, 1995) occurred possess more self-efficacy regarding when or if to reveal adoption and birth status (e.g., same-race), microaggressions can still occur within these families and within the AKN (e.g., microfiction of late discovery adoptees). Third, whenever individuals reveal their status as AKN members or even when friends or extended family reveal the adoption-status of mutual friends, adoption microaggressions may be more likely to result. There are innumerable ways in which adoption microaggressions occur, from quips in blockbuster movies like *The Avengers* (Whedon, 2012) when Thor explains the high death toll exacted by his brother by saying, "he's adopted," to simple questions asked by close friends about adoption.

The introduction of the construct of microfictions provides another lens through which to view the practice of adoption in its various forms. Including microfictions in the rubric of microaggressions may be perceived as a criticism or challenge to adoption given the numerous ways in which truth, appearance, and authenticity intersect with the shrouds created in adoption. These shrouds can conceal, misrepresent, and disguise the relationships that connect the different arms of the AKN. However, microfictions also provide an accurate account of the current state of adoption, both as it is practiced and as it is positioned within society. That is, the layers of stigma and the nature of adoption that result in the AKN as targets of adoption microaggressions may likely compel adoptive families to conceal or misguide others regarding adoption status or birth family status to avoid further judgment and microaggressions. Perhaps the use of microfictions were developed to serve as protective factors or safeguards (e.g., so adopted children wouldn't be upset or birth parents' privacy would be upheld), but their impact has likely led to more difficulties than anticipated. The history and rhetoric of adoption reveals the unrealistic expectations that love would be enough for successful adoptive parenting, that birth parents searches would only occur as a result of inadequate parenting or problematic children, and that birth parents would be able to forget and move on (Baden & Wiley, 2007). Knowledge that the utopian adoption schema does not truly exist, however, has not prevented disappointment, distress, identity struggles, and other clinical issues from developing. The addition of microfictions allows researchers and clinicians to: (a) identify the subtle and unintentional actions and attitudes that create microfictions, (b) to achieve a better understanding and knowledge of these practices, and (c) to take steps toward developing policy, programs, and interventions to train the AKN and professionals and to support the AKN in coping with microaggressions.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Validation of this conceptual framework is a next step for researchers and clinicians, and can lead to improved training and educational models that prepare service providers in counseling, adoption, education, health care, and child welfare to improve services and create a more sensitive and appropriate climate for those impacted by adoption. Applying the construct of microaggressions to adoption and relinquishment experiences opens up a new area of research—one that can allow for empirical research beginning with studies exploring the

prevalence of adoption microaggressions, their impact on self-esteem, adjustment, identity formation, and a host of other outcomes. Research can then move toward understanding the various ways in which the AKN copes with adoption microaggressions, and how clinicians and other post-adoption services can best meet the needs of the AKN.

Given the fact that there are millions of people who comprise the AKN, and that adoptees typically present for mental health treatment at rates higher than non-adopted individuals (Miller et al., 2000), it is highly likely that all clinicians will, at some point, work with the AKN during their careers. As often occurs, members of the AKN find themselves educating their inquiring peers, strangers, physicians, and even therapists about adoption. Too often, AKN clients become frustrated with the responses they receive from clinicians, especially when they experience comments and reactions that reflect the adoption stigma. These adoption microaggressions can become oppressive, and can indicate a perspective that can be damaging to clients. Therapists may believe that they know enough about adoption to be effective in treating AKN clients. However, knowledge about adoption may be derived from myths and stereotypes discussed above rather than formalized training or even informed scholarship. Training therapists to become aware of the adoption microaggressions identified in this paper will further clinician's understanding of and sensitivity to the experiences of the AKN, thereby promoting empathy and discouraging judgment of what might be considered clients' normative reactions to the microaggressions. As Sue et al. (2007) noted in their observations about White therapists and racial microaggressions, therapists who work with AKN clients believe they are just, unbiased, and understand the dynamics of families formed by adoption. However, the invisibility of adoption stigma may be even more profound given the lack of formal attention adoption is given in clinical training and society as a whole (Sass & Henderson, 2000).

The recognition and validation of adoption microaggressions is critical to better grasp the lived experiences of AKN members. Increased understanding will facilitate improved pre-adoption placement practices and more effective post-adoption services, and will increase awareness of adoption sensitivity among community members (e.g., schoolteachers, physicians, etc.) and in a society that is, on the whole, rooted in a set of attitudes and beliefs based on a set of constructed normative ideals of what families *should* be.

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Table 1

Themes and Examples of Adoption Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggressions Toward Birth/First Parents [*Message*]	Microaggressions Toward Adoptive Parents [*Message*]	Microaggressions Toward Adoptees [*Message*]
Biology is Best/Normative **(Microinvalidation)** **Superiority of biological or blood ties for optimal family functioning. Adoption is also seen as temporary and the second or third choice for forming a family (March, 1995; Miall, 1986, 1987; Wegar, 2000).**	• "How could you give your child up? Your child is meant to be with you, not with strangers." [*Permanent loving families are only formed biologically.*]	• A man asks a white mom with her Asian daughter, "Do you have any children of your own?" (O'Keeffe, 2009). [*Adoptive relationships are not true or permanent.*] • "Oh, I could never love someone else's child" (Miall, 1987, p. 37). [*Adoptive parents can't truly love the children they adopt.*]	• "They said they could cut the [adopted] children off the list because they weren't really family anyway" (March, 1995, p. 653). [*Real families are related by blood.*] • "Is that your real brother?" (Patton, 2000, p. 103). [*Family is only real if they are biological.*]
Bad Seed Adoptees **(Microinsult)** **Adoptees are expected to have a myriad of deficits that indirectly explain the reasons for their relinquishment (Kirschner, 1990; March, 1995).**	• "Putting her up for adoption could destroy her life. You could be giving her to a stranger that could abuse her in anyway possible and end her up with life long problems, are you willing to do that to your own child?" (The Mildeye, 2014). [*Adoption causes adoptees to have problems.*]	• "Their background is more questionable. They are more likely to have the things that make them bad inside them" (Miall, 1996, p. 309). [*Adoptees are damaged.*] • "Sometimes people ask me if I am ever afraid of my adopted son. I say, 'No, are you ever afraid of your son?'" (Russell, 2000, p. 38). [*Adoptees are doomed to problems due to nature or nurture or both.*]	• "Adopted kids come from unstable backgrounds. Adopting is like playing with loaded dice" (Miall, 1996, p. 313). [*Most adoptees are pathological.*] • In a book the character seeks revenge on a peer. "Her top ten list of things to do includes telling him his eyes have turned orange, saying he smells funny, and informing him he's adopted" (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996, p. 405). [*Being adopted is pejorative.*]
Grateful Adoptees **(Microinvalidation)** **Children who have "questionable" backgrounds were unwanted, poor, and from dire circumstances, so they are lucky to be adopted (Janus, 1997; Smit, 2002).**	• "I've heard many adoptees say 'I want to find my birth mother so I can thank her for my wonderful life.' They think they'd be complimenting her--when in fact thanking her is heard as a terrible insult" (Dusky & Edwards, 2013, ¶ 21). [*"Thank god you didn't raise me. What kind of life would I have had?" (Dusky & Edwards, 2013, ¶ 21)*]	• "Your kids must feel so lucky that you adopted them." [*Adoptees should feel lucky and not have anger or sadness.*] • "How can your son treat you like that? Doesn't he know all the things you've done for him?" [*Adoptees should be thankful and should not have negative emotions about their adoption.*]	• "Adoption is like having all of your birth family die and getting a replacement family and being told by society how lucky you are that all of your family is dead but we gave you a new one" (Russell, 2000, p. 46). [*Adoptees are lucky to be given a second chance.*] • "You should be grateful that someone took you in" (N. Humphrey, 2006, para. 12). [*Adoptees should be grateful to be saved because they were unwanted.*]
Shameful/Inadequate Birth/First Parents **(Microinsult)** **Characterizations of birth/first parents as being of low character and unsuitable for parenthood**	• "Oh, the Chinese must hate their children" (Dorow, 2006, p. 182). [*Birth parents are cruel and rejecting.*] • "How could his 'real' mother give away an adorable baby?" (Davidson, 2006, para. 3).	• "How much do you know about her parents?" (Miall, 1987, p. 38). [*The adoptee's birth parents are likely undesirable.*] • They chose China because didn't want to worry about "the poor prenatal care, drugs,	• "I was adopted, but my mother (the one who raised me) claims I inherited my weird or strange qualities from my birth mother" (boarderline, 2009, January 14). [*Problems adoptees have are from birth/first parents,*

(Henney et al., 2011; Kline et al., 2006; Kressierer & Bryant, 1996).	[*Birth parents are bad people who make unrelatable decisions.*] • "So, did you not want your baby?" (Kilpatrick, n.d., para. 3). [*Birth/first mothers are not as good as other mothers.*]	and alcohol that characterized the birth mothers—implicitly black and/or poor—whose children were in the American public welfare system" (Dorow, 2006, p. 60)." [*Birth parents have major flaws to cope with.*]	*not adoptive parents.*] • "I told a girl that I was adopted. The next day she told me her mother said that she couldn't play with me anymore…her mother assumed that I was illegitimate." (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996, p. 403). [*Birth/first mothers are morally corrupt.*]
Phantom Birth/First Parents **(Microinvalidation)** **Birth/first parents' role in adoptions ended when they relinquished their children (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996).**	• "People told me that I would 'forget' about my baby and that my life could then go ahead as if I had never been pregnant" (Russell, 2000, p. 27). [*Birth/first parents have better lives if they just move on.*] • "We overheard someone near us whisper, 'I wonder where they got those children from?'...My mom, who is quite forceful, stood up and said, confidently, 'If you're wondering, we got these children from God.' (Simon & Roorda, 2000, p 90). [*Adoptees come from God, not from birth parents.*]	• "I can feel comfortable as an adoptive parent as long as I can make believe that birthparents do not exist." (Leon, 1998, para. 6) [*Birth parents should not be important in adoptive families.*] • "We felt more comfortable with China or Vietnam because they pretty much are not going to want to have the child back in a year" (Dorow, 2006, p. 60). [*Birth parents can be out of sight-out of mind in international adoption.*]	• "If you want to know about your biological parents, you will HURT US" (youshouldbegrateful, 2014). [*Adoptees should forget birth/first parents and be loyal to adoptive parents.*]
Pseudo/Inadequate Adoptive Parents **(Microinvalidation)** **For adoptive parents, presumptions and judgments of involuntary lack of biological children (Miall, 1987; Wegar, 2000) as defective and signs of possible inability to parent effectively (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996).**	• "Many people have told me that I don't have a right to search for my son. They say that I signed the papers 25 years ago and that I can't go back on my word now." (Russell, 2000, p. 123). [*Birth parents don't have the right to know or judge adoptive families.*	• "If …childlessness results from a decision not to have children, the couple may be viewed by others as 'selfish,' 'psychologically maladjusted,' 'sexually inadequate,' or emotionally immature.' …even if the couple is unable to have children, it may still be subject to criticism." (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996, p. 399). [*Adoptive parents are defective and must strive to "seem" natural.*] "You're not my real parents. They never would have treated me like this!" [*Adoptive parents don't have genuine parenting instincts.*]	• "Do you love your parents? They're not your *real* family. Do you want to find your *real* mother?" (Fish, 2006, p. 204). [*Adoptive parents must be defective or they wouldn't need to adopt.*] • "A friend and I got into an argument and she said, 'At least I know who my real mother is!'" (Russell, 2000, p. 68). [*Adoptive parents are not natural parents.*]
Altruistic Rescuers **(Microinsult)** **Adoptive parents rescue unwanted children and give them another chance. Raising someone else's child is unnatural but commendable (Kressierer & Bryant,**	• "We thought maybe the parents knew the baby would be better off in an adoptive family" (Dorow, 2006, p. 289). [*Adoptive parents are better parents than birth/first parents would be.*]	• "I think there's romanticism about saving a starving child on the other side of the planet" (Dorow, 2006, 55). [*Adoptees lives were saved by adoptive parents.*] • "It was so good of you to take her in" (Miall, 1987, p. 37). [*Adoptive parents are heroes to*	• "It's so nice of your parents to save you" (Kim Kelley-Wagner Images, ca. 2014, photo 9). [*Adoptive parents are do-gooders and were rescued.*] • "If we didn't adopt you you'd probably be a prostitute or working in the rice fields"

1996; Zhang & Lee, 2011).		*their unwanted children.*]	(youshouldbegrateful, 2014). [*Adoptees' fates would be terrible if they were not adopted.*]
***Cultural Philanthropy* (Microinsult)** **Attitudes that promote American or western exceptionalism. International adoptees are better off in America than they are in their birth countries.**	• "'Think of a better world for your child.' This statement, made by a local "finder" to a birthmother, has a familiar ring" (Roby & Matsumura, 2002, p. 25). [*Birth parents' homes and cultures are inferior to that of wealthy adopters'.*] • An adoptive couple said "their daughter was 'better off now than if she had stayed in the rice paddies with the three-toothed people'" (Dorow, 2006, p. 189). [*Being raised in a wealthy adoptive family is better than a poor first family.*]	• "You know, if you were born here, or even being able to come here young, you have so many opportunities. And to be able to give those opportunities to somebody else is really important" (Dorow, 2006, p. 61). [*Adoptees are better off for having been adopted.*] • "There were also a number of parents who spoke of 'getting girls out' of China in order to give them the education and value they deserved" (Dorow, 2006, p. 189). [*Adoptees' birth countries are inferior and American homes are best.*]	• "You were 'chosen.' 'Your parents really wanted you.' 'You're "special."'" America is the best country in the world. Everyone wants to come here" (Immigrant Adoptee, 2010, para. 1-2). [*Everyone including birth parents want to escape other countries to get a better (=wealthy American) life.*]
***Adoption Is A Win-Win Situation* (Microfiction)** **Attitudes that suggest that adoption is the solution to the social problem of orphaned children and childless couples (Kressierer & Bryant, 1996).**	• "The birth parents benefited from lack of responsibility of a child they did not want or could not care for. The adoptive parents benefited by having a child because they could not have any or wanted more children. Adoptees benefited by usually having a better home than if the birth parents had kept them" (Russell, 2000, p. 51). [*Birth parents were never supposed to raise their children and children are better off with adoptive parents.*]	• "I tell my child about the Red Thread Theory—that we were fated to be together and there's an invisible thread that linked us forever." [*Adoptees were meant to lose their birth families so they could be with their adoptive families.*]	• "My parents told me that I was chosen, that my birthmother decided on adoption because it was the best for me" (Russell, 2000, p. 26). [*Your being adopted was the best thing for everyone and you should not feel any sadness.*]
***Commerce in Adoption* (Microinsult)** **The adoption industry leads to the belief that adoptees are bought and adoptive parents are the purchasers (Dorow, 2006; Suter & Ballard, 2009).**	• "You can't afford to have this baby. You should give her up to people who can afford to give her the best of everything." [*Wealthy parents are better than poor parents.*] • "How much did you get for the baby?" (Kidnap, 2013). [*Birth parents sell their children for adoption.*]	• A joke caption for a digital camera: "Record every minute with the kid you just bought in China?" (Dorow, 2006, p. 251) [*Adoptees are commodities for sale.*] • "I couldn't believe people were actually advertising for babies in a national newspaper! The ads were soliciting pregnant women and offering wonderful homes for their babies via 1-800 numbers" (Russell, 2000, p. 174). [*Adoptive parents buy children.*]	• "The kids at school said that adopted kids were bought. They said that parents go to attorneys and give them money and come home with a baby." (Russell, 2000, p. 184). [*Adoption is about buying and selling children.*] • "'Well, I want my child to have this shape face or that shape eyes.' Or 'Oh, I don't want my child to have very dark skin'" (Dorow, 2006, pp. 91-92). [*Children can be "ordered" through adoption.*]

Cultural Limbo and Invalidation of Heritage (Microinvalidation) **Adoptees feel between races and cultures due to adoption. Feel they are not fully accepted in either birth or adoptive racial group (Baden et al., 2012; Jacobson & Smith,)**	• "I don't want her to have anything to do with that culture that threw her away… I think you ought to spend your time trying to raise your kids to be happy well-adjusted little citizens, not happy well-adjusted little Asian-American people perhaps with a focus on their Fukinese abstraction." (Dorow & Swiffen, 2009, p. 568). [*Adoptees should reject their birth culture and choose their adoptive culture instead.*]	• "To me a baby is a baby, and when we took care of these babies, it couldn't have mattered less what nationality or race they were" (Simon & Roorda, 2007, p. 90) [*Birth culture and ethnicity doesn't matter.*] • A parent said that, "she sometimes forgot her daughter was Chinese—'I think of her as looking like me!'" (Dorow, 2006, p. 234). [*Adoptees are not really members of their birth ethnic groups.*]	• "She finds other people force her to see herself as Black. And she feels that white people see her as Black and wish her to be Black. And Black people think she isn't Black enough." (Jacobson & Smith, 2013, p. 68). [*Transracial adoptees aren't truly part of either their own racial group nor their adoptive one.*] • "The racism was much more subtle, more along the lines of people saying, 'Well, you're not like them,' and me saying, 'Who do you mean by them?'" (Beazer, 2006, p. 225). [*Adoptees' birth racial/ethnic group is undesirable but she is an uncomfortable exception.*]
Love will Conquer All (Microfiction) **Love, a "good home," the "right values," and parents will overcome any problems in adoption because biology does not matter. Love is enough.**	• "'My childhood was great,' he said. 'I was loved. It was the right thing to do…giving me up.'" (Flatley, 1995, p. 50). [*Being raised by birth parents and biological relationships don't matter.*] • "Your mom put you up for adoption because she loved you so much that she wanted you to have two parents and a good home" (Lowe, Wittmeier, & Wittmeier, 2006, p. 28). [*Birth parents show their love by giving up their children for adoption.*]	• "We were pretty color-blind…In my experience, a child is like a flower, and you give him sunshine and rain but they are going to develop to be their own beautiful self" (Simon & Roorda, 2007, p. 173). [*Adoptees who come from "good homes" shouldn't have problems.*] • Transracial adoptive parents say, "All we have to do is love them" (Jacobsen & Smith, 2013, p. 57). [*Love is enough—race and adoption don't matter.*]	• A counselor tells a student to behave better because his adoptive parents are "good people." [*Adoptees who come from good homes shouldn't have problems.*] • "Somebody loved me and wanted me to be well taken care of because that person wasn't able to take care of me, and so I was adopted. My adoptive parents told me consistently that they loved me, but they didn't emphasize the fact that I was adopted." (Simon & Roorda, 2000, p. 235). [*Biology and birth origins do not matter, but love should be enough.*]
Infantilizing Adoptees and Birth Parents (Microfiction) **Adoptees are children forever (Baden & Wiley, 2007; Kimbell, 1995). Birth parents are childlike in their inability and/or readiness to effectively parent.**	• "To be a 'good girl' again, my parents said I'd have to do the 'right' thing and give up my baby" (Jones, 2000, p. 19). [*Birth parents are forever child-like and not capable of parenting.*]	• A friend advises an adoptive parent not to help her teenage daughter search for her birth parents because, "If you do that, you'll have to take care of all of them now. The poor birth parents and your kid." [*Birth parents and adoptees never grow up and adoptive parents have to stay in charge.*]	• "It's hard to start out with deception. My own birth certificate lies about who I am" (Russell, 2000, p. 28). [*Adoptees cannot be trusted with the truth about their origins.*] • Members of a panel of adult adoptees are referred to as adopted children. [*Adoptees are children forever.*]