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

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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, 2000; Zeanah, 2000).
• The largest cohort of Korean adoptees (those born between 1986 – 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; Finley, Pasamon, & Peterson, 2007).
• Attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety were both associated with negative attachment security variables (Portnoy, 2002; Shoaf, 2009).
• Adult adoptees experiences in terms of mental health and post-adoption services to effectively meet the needs of LGBTQ Korean adoptees.

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 socioeconomic 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.

Hypothesis:

LGBTQ Korean adoptees will score higher in anxious and avoidant attachment than their heterosexual 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 do 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 for adult adoptees.
• Demographic Information

Statistical Analyses

G*Power power analysis for Linear Multiple Regression:

\[ n = 107 \] (power = .80, \( \alpha = .05 \))

Results

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 adoptive & 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


