CHOICE MATTERS: HOW EUROPEAN AMERICAN PARENTS WITH CHINESE

ADOPTEES SELECT PICTUREBOOKS ABOUT CHINA AND CHINESE CULTURE

by

XIAOLI HONG

(Under the Direction of Bob Fecho)

ABSTRACT

In transracial adoption research, the practice of using books to help international adoptees connect to their birth cultures was interpreted by adult adoptees as their parents' reluctance to engage in practices that demand more integration of the parents and the families into adoptees' birth cultures (McGinnis, Smith, Ryan, & Howard, 2009). Yet, reading books about the adoptees' birth cultures was the most frequent activity adoptive parents performed to establish birth culture ties for their adoptees (Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010). Thus, this study aimed to understand why reading books received distinct evaluations from adoptive parents and adoptees.

Drawing on Bakhtin's dialogical theory (1981; 1984; 1986), this qualitative case study investigated European American parents' rationales for selecting picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to read with their adoptees, given the fact that one third of the international adoptees in the U.S. are from China (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Through using picturebooks with four European American families, I examined parent's book selection process, their book selection rationales, and issues surrounding that selection. Primary data sources

included initial and final interviews with parents and open-ended book selection interviews with parents. The data sources were analyzed using inductive and deductive thematic analysis.

These parents' book selection rationales demonstrated that they tended to choose books that have a positive representation of China with universal themes that they could relate to and that aligned with their interests and personal lives. Moreover, parents' inclination to emphasize connections, family bonding, and universal themes all indicated that parents were more willing to reside in their comfort zones than visibly establish Chineseness in their families. The implications of the study are that European American parents with Chinese adoptees need to engage more with Chinese culture in books and be willing to challenge their own cultural identities in order to allow those books to play a larger and more effective role in their efforts to foster birth culture connections for their adoptees.

INDEX WORDS: Transracial Adoption, Cross-Cultural Understanding, Bakhtin, Case Study, Dialogical Research, Cultural Socialization Practices, Chinese Adoptees; European American Parents; Reading; Picturebooks

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XIAOLI HONG

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XIAOLI HONG

Major Professor:	Bob Fecho
Committee:	Jennifer Graff
	Denise Davila

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

To all the people who have pushed me to think hard and deep.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"My fear is that I don't know much about Chinese culture myself, and I am not sure whether the
things we are doing now will help them in the future."

-- One parent's words in an online documentary

Uncertainty and a bit of frustration seem to be appropriate words to describe the feelings

in this parent's words, as she talked in an online documentary about all the activities she and her

partner had been doing to help her two adopted Chinese daughters to connect to their birth

culture. These parents take their two daughters to Chinese restaurants, celebrate Chinese holidays

at home, collect Chinese artifacts to display at their house, and establish relationships with

families of Asian heritage. But still, the parent quoted above is unsure about herself because, as a

middle class European American woman, she knows little about Chinese culture and how to help

her two daughters establish a birth culture connection. The parent's voice probably speaks much

to the concerns of thousands of American parents, who have adopted children from China and

who, for a variety of reasons, have made a commitment to help their children learn Chinese

culture.

Unlike adoption from Korea which started in the 1950s after the Korea War, the adoption

of Chinese children in the U.S. began in the 1990s, and the number of adopted Chinese children

has grown significantly since then. China has become the top country of origin for inter-country

adoptions in recent years (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Moreover, compared to parents who

adopted children from countries such as Korea, Ethiopia, or Russia, a strong commitment to

acknowledging their child's birth cultural heritage has been recognized as a defining characteristic of most parents with children adopted from China (Tessler, Gramache, & Liu, 1999; Rojewski, 2005). Constant support from active adoption organizations, such as Families with Children from China, advice from various agencies, and the Chinese Government's mandate, which requires China adopters to help Chinese adoptees attain an appreciation of Chinese culture (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001) all encourage adoptive parents to at least engage in some activities that assist their Chinese adoptees in understanding Chinese culture. Reading books, cooking Chinese foods, attending culture camps, celebrating Chinese holidays and interacting with people with Chinese heritage (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Vonk, Lee & Crolley-Simic, 2010) are the activities parents often use for that purpose.

While most adoptive parents and adoption groups recognize its importance, less agreement exists about the right amount of attention to, or the best ways to acknowledge Chinese cultural heritage. Although adoption organizations often set up informal cultural activities for China adoptive families and suggest cultural resources for parents to practice at home, adoptive parents receive little help in how to engage in those cultural practices, and there are few organizations and experts offering advice and directions. Adoptive parents are often left in uncertainty and confusion about how to promote Chinese culture in meaningful ways for their adoptees (Jacobson, 2008). As a result, research reported that many parents' interest in undertaking Chinese culture activities diminishes with time and that parents do not show a growth in their knowledge about China and Chinese culture comparable with their child's age (Rojewski, 2005). What activities adoptive parents use for cultivating birth culture learning and how they engage in the activities with their adoptees is a topic worth researching.

Considering the fact that most of the adoptive parents with Chinese adoptees are middle class European Americans (Gao, 2008), who do not know much about the complexity of Chinese culture with the variety of a huge country and a long history, I wonder what aspects of China are generally taught to Chinese adoptees; how parents communicate values, beliefs, and customs in Chinese culture to their adoptees; and to what extent adoptees understand these messages. Moreover, current research on adoptive parents' efforts to help their adoptees foster an appreciation of their birth culture has been mostly conducted through quantitative studies and often focuses on the categories of cultural activities adoptive parents engage in with their adoptees and the frequency with which those activities are performed. Little research has been done to explore parents' practice in a more in-depth manner to learn about the thoughts, emotions and voices of parents and children when they are engaged in a certain activity. Qualitative studies, which are good at illuminating nuanced meanings and complexities (Merriam, 2009), can be used to offer a more holistic picture of white adoptive parents' rationales for choosing and using certain activities.

Given the fact that reading books—adoption books and books about the adoptees' birth culture—was the most frequent activity parents used to establish birth culture ties for their adoptees (Vonk, et al, 2010), investigating parents' choice and use of books about China provides a medium to understand the way adoptive parents help their adoptees learn about China and Chinese culture. Therefore, using picturebooks about China and Chinese culture as a starting point, I conducted a case study to investigate European American parents' rationales for selecting picturebooks about China and Chinese culture for their Chinese adoptees and the issues around parents' book selections.

In this chapter, I discuss the rationale for this study, drawing from my personal experiences as a person living between two cultures and the eagerness to understand culture as a result of those experiences. I also describe the background of the project, and based on that, state my research problem, provide my research questions and explain the significance of the study. As the chapter comes to a close, I outline the theoretical framework that shaped the groundwork of this study.

The Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study came from my experience of studying in the U.S. as a Chinese student and, consequently, my passion for understanding how people understand and construct the meaning of culture in a society. In particular, I'm interested in how the opposing forces of globalization and localization are becoming increasingly tangible in people's lives.

In 2011, I came to the U.S. for my Ph.D. study. Never before in my life had I been so aware of my Chinese identity. Prior to my coming to the U.S., I only considered myself as a Chinese student who was going to see the world outside China and who is the only daughter of my loving parents. Then everything changed. I became very conscious of my Chineseness when people asked me what things were like in China, when they wondered how I liked certain aspects of the U.S., and when I explained things that were happening in China. In a small college town in the Southern U.S., I have been able to see the forces of globalization and localization at play as I have constantly re-examined my understanding of U.S. culture and explained my newly constructed understanding of China and Chinese culture to my parents on the other side of the world using Skype.

Often, I have felt frustrated and helpless when I struggled to adapt to certain aspects of U.S. Culture. For example, coming from a country without much talk about race and racism, I

had little knowledge of these two concepts or background information when my American

classmates engaged in active discussions of how to help students cope with racism in schools.

Moreover, I also had to face situations in which people connected me with overgeneralized

characteristics of Asians. I experienced what my advisor called wobble—tensional moments that

nudge people toward change and uncertainties (Fecho, 2011). Through grappling with different

positions for balance, I managed to find a place where I was able to modify my understanding of

China and understand the racial aspect of the U.S. better.

My personal experience has encouraged me to look at people's ways of positioning

themselves within different cultures in a globalizing society, and families with children from

China are a site where a "cacophony of voices" (Lysaker & Lysaker, 2002, p. 210) are expressed

by parents as to how much Chinese culture American parents should bring to their families.

Some parents choose to do only a few activities related to Chinese culture in fear that the

differences revealed through cultural activities will harm the family bonding they work so hard

to establish Some parents choose to engage in as many activities as possible to cultivate their

adoptees' pride in Chinese culture (Vonk et al, 2010). Parents' different attitudes toward Chinese

culture and their choice of activities indicate their attempts to find their niche between American

and Chinese culture.

As adoptive parents bring Chinese culture into their houses through tangible products,

such as books, foods, and celebrations, I was struck by two thoughts. According to Banks and

Banks (2013), "the essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools or other tangible cultural

elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them" (p. 8). How do

adoptive parents perform those cultural activities? What do they say when they show books

about China to their Chinese adoptees or take them to see dragon dances during Chinese New

Year celebrations? Second, culture can be thought of as a construction—it constructs us, and we construct it (Banks & Banks, 2013). What kind of Chinese culture do American parents construct for their children? Given the fact that American parents are living an age in which they are surrounded by media coverage of China and exposed to various views on China from different groups of people, what are parents' understanding and construction of Chinese culture?

I was particularly interested in looking at how European American parents construct Chineseness for their Chinese adoptees. By the term Chineseness, I mean being Chinese as both a cultural and racial identity, and the Chineseness stands out as cultural and racial differences within the American context. Thus, how European American parents construct Chineseness for their adoptees often reflect parents' understanding of the broader racial, class and ethnic positions of their children in their families and in American society. Would parents emphasize certain elements of Chineseness and ignore others? How would parents approach and represent Chineseness in their families?

With these questions in mind and my personal connection to Chinese adoptees as a Chinese student living in the U.S., I used picturebooks about China and Chinese culture with four European American families to see what kind of cultural elements European American parents take from those books, their rationales for selecting picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to use with their adoptees, and the issues around parents' book selections. I created the study in hopes of giving me and the parents of adopted Chinese children a better understanding of learning about another culture.

Contextualizing the Study

This study was positioned within the big picture of transracial adoption as a controversial practice and scholars' burgeoning interest in adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices for

their international adoptees. It also arose from the research evidence that reading books, as a frequent practice performed by adoptive parents, received distinct judgment from parents and adult adoptees in terms of the value books possess in helping transracial adoptees connect to their birth cultures.

Transracial Adoption as a Controversial Practice

The term *transracial adoption* refers to parents of one ethnicity adopting children of a different race/ethnicity, culture or minority group (Vonk, 2001). In modern western societies, this practice largely involves the placement of minority ethnic children in white adoptive families. In the U.S., transracial adoption began, in a large way, in the 1950s with the adoption of Japanese and Korean children orphaned as a result of the Second World War and the Korean War (Wei, 1984). With the emergence of international transracial adoption, domestic transracial adoption also became evident from the late 1950s involving the placement of Native American and later African American children in mostly white adoptive families. Since then, transracial adoption has been employed by American parents as an additional option of building a family.

However, transracial adoption has been a controversial practice from the time of its appearance, and the debates surrounding the appropriateness of transracial adoption and the outcomes for transracial adoptees has not waned over the years. Significantly, in 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) called for an end to the placement of African American children in European American families, asserting that it constituted a form of cultural genocide. The Native American Community also voiced its opposition by the introduction of the Indian Welfare Act of 1978, which allowed tribes exclusive jurisdiction in decisions about children's family placement. On the other hand, there is research evidence indicating that the placement of minority ethnic children in white families causes no harm and is

preferable to institutional care (Barth & Berry, 1988; Simon & Altstein, 1996; Bartholet, 2007).

Adoption professionals also argue about whether white parents need to acquire cross-cultural

competence in order to successfully help their adoptees construct healthy identities (Grow &

Shapiro, 1974; McRoy & Zucher, 1983; Simon and Alstein, 2002).

Despite the ongoing controversy over the practice, the number of transracial adoptions

has been growing fast, particularly international adoptions. Statistics show that over the past

forty years, almost half a million children from overseas have been adopted by parents in the U.S.

(McGinnis et al, 2009). Of this number, the vast majority have been adopted by European

American parents, and the adoptions are principally from Asian countries—mainly China and

Korea, with the rest coming from Latin America, Eastern Europe and, most recently, Africa

(Selma, 2009).

The large numbers of Asian children have attracted increasing attention from scholars in

terms of how European American parents help their adoptees understand their adoption status

and construct a positive racial and ethnic identity. Moreover, in contrast to the color-blind

approach that is often found to be used in European American families with African American

and Hispanic adoptees (McRoy, Zurcher, Lauderdale & Anderson, 1984), research showed

parents with Asian children are more involved in helping their adoptees connect with their birth

culture through various cultural socialization practices.

Adoptive Parents' Cultural Socialization Practices

Cultural socialization practices refer to "the ways parents communicate or transmit

cultural values and beliefs, customs and behaviors to the child and the extent to which the child

internalizes these messages" (Lee, 2003, p. 715). In transracial adoption, cultural socialization

refers to adoptive parents' transmission of the child's birth culture values to their children. In,

racial/ethnic socialization practices refers to the ways parents help their adoptees address physical difference and group membership based on their adoptees' race and ethnicity (Jonston, Swim, Saltman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007).

Research on adoptive parents' socialization practices reported that parents tend to prefer cultural socialization practices over racial and ethnic socialization practices. More is known about parents' efforts towards cultural socialization through diverse activities (e.g., Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008), such as reading books, listening to music and attending ethnic dance concerts and movies, celebrating holidays, preparing and eating cultural meals, and attending culture camps. Some parents enroll the child in their birth language classes and take them to visit their birth countries. However, many of the existing studies on white parents' cultural socialization practices with their adoptees used quantitative methods—mostly questionnaires and web surveys—to report what activities parents have engaged in and the frequencies with which parents have performed those activities. These methods lack the personal voice of adoptive parents and overlook the influence of contextual factors that shape parents' responses. Qualitative studies are needed to offer a more holistic picture of white adoptive parents' rationales for choosing certain activities and the way cultures are understood and constructed during the process.

Focusing on Books as a Cultural Socialization Practice

Within the macro picture of transracial adoption and parents' cultural socialization practices, I designed a case study to investigate how European American parents select picturebooks about China and Chinese culture with the intent of helping their Chinese adoptees establish birth cultures ties. The reason for focusing on books is two-fold.

First, reading books seems to be a contentious activity in terms of its ability to help transracial adoptees appreciate their birth culture. On the one hand, reading books has almost been the most frequent activity transracially adoptive parents use to establish birth culture ties for their adoptees. According to Vonk et al., (2010), reading books is the top activity parents do at home, followed by preparing ethnic foods and choosing multicultural entertainment, whereas the least frequent activity is having people from the birth culture to work as caregivers and role models. The idea that reading books can facilitate the formation of family bonds makes it a regular activity parents would like to use.

On the other hand, adoptive parents and transracial adoptees hold different opinions of books' value in their family lives. While most parents supported the use of reading books at home, many adult adoptees deemed books to be less important and useful than real interaction with people (McGinnis et al., 2009). Reading books becomes a practice that implies adoptive parents' reluctance to engage in practices that demand more integration into adoptees' birth culture and more discussion of racial and ethnic issues. Thus, the conflicting attitudes between adoptive parents and adoptees toward books prompt the questions: What kind of books about China do European American parents choose, for what purposes do they use the books and how do they use the books?

Second, due to the limitation of surveys and questionnaire in previous studies, it is difficult for researchers to know what kind of books American parents share with their Chinese adoptees because parents are only able to choose yes or no to answer questions like this: "Has your family read books to your child about his/her racial or ethnic or cultural group or heritage?" (Vonk et al, 2010). In this question, American parents might choose yes if they have read books about adopted children from China at their houses; however, such books do not help Chinese

adoptees much in connecting to their Chinese culture because those books focus on the adoption story instead of aspects of China or Chinese culture. Therefore, investigating adoptive parents' rationales for using certain books for certain purposes will explain, to some extent, why books are considered less valuable by some adult transracial adoptees than real interaction with people from their birth culture.

Purpose and the Research Question

In this case study, I introduced picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to four European American families who have Chinese adoptees aged between 6 and 9 years old. Through semi-structured individual interviews with the European American parents, I intended to examine how they choose picturebooks about China and Chinese culture with the intent of helping their Chinese adoptees foster birth culture ties as a cultural socialization practice. I focused on one research question: *What processes and rationales for selection do European American parents of children adopted from China use when choosing picturebooks about China and Chinese culture with the intent of helping their children establish birth culture ties, and what issues occur around that selection?*

Significance of the Study

I consider the study significant first because of the large numbers of Chinese children adopted into U.S. families. According to the U.S. Department of State (2012), between 2009 and 2012, American parents adopted 41,789 children from other countries, and one third of them were from China. Compared to parents who adopted from other countries such as Korea, Ethiopia or Russia, most parents with Chinese adoptees hold beliefs about the importance of maintaining some degree of connection with their Chinese adoptees' cultural heritage, and books

are found to be a source they frequently use for that purpose (e.g., Rojewski, 2005; Vonk et. al, 2010).

By exploring how European American parents with Chinese adoptees choose picturebooks about China and Chinese culture, this study can offer guidance to parents who have Chinese adoptees and parents who are considering adopting from China in terms of how to select and use books in a way that better helps their adoptees appreciate their cultural heritage. The research can also benefit other American parents who have adoptees from other countries and have not been able to get help from organizations like those established for Chinese adoptees.

Second, European American parents' involvement in the whole process of reading and talking through picturebooks about China as well as reflecting on their rationales can help them later in using books to foster their adoptees' birth culture ties. Vonk, Lee and Crolley-Simic (2010) argued that transracial adoptive parents are uniquely challenged to assist their adoptees in understanding their heritage culture because they themselves are not members of the child's racial and ethnic group. With this consideration, Vonk (2001) proposed the concept of cultural competence to advocate the need for adoptive parents to learn more about their adoptees' heritage culture. This study will facilitate parents' knowledge of Chinese culture and knowledge of how to use those books to assist their adoptees in appreciating their cultural heritage.

Third, the study can sensitize teachers to the concept of adoption and encourage them to discuss the topic with students and parents. Currently, teachers readily acknowledge that children in their classrooms come from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, religion and ethnicity; however, diverse family structures in the U.S. today are often overlooked in curriculum (Meese, 2012). Through reading the study, teachers can know more about families formed through adoption, provide children with more accurate information when they raise questions about

adoption and guide children to show understanding and respect for children who live with their adopted parents.

Finally, by reading European American parents' rationales for choosing picturebooks about China and Chinese culture, teachers grow their awareness of terms like *culture* and *diversity* as well as the use of multicultural children's literature in classrooms. Studies have shown reading multicultural literature can promote students' appreciation of racial and ethnic groups other than their own (Benson, 1995). European American parents' views of picturebooks about China can add a new dimension for teachers to consider when they guide students to read multicultural children's literature about China and discuss topics of culture and diversity with students.

Overall, I designed this study in hopes of benefiting European American parents with Chinese adoptees, as well as teachers and other educators. My intent was to observe what happens to adoptive parents' understanding and experience of Chinese culture when they select picturebooks. However, I primarily intended to explore and discuss the issues around parents' book selections and the way they transact with children's books about China and Chinese culture. Educators will hopefully use the information to think more about working with transracially adoptive families and using multicultural and global children's literature in their classrooms for building global awareness and intercultural understanding.

Theoretical Framework

I used Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical theory as the theoretical framework of my study. Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary scholar and philosopher, established a socially grounded view of language which deemed language as social-historical, living and imbued with the dialogues of different speakers who appropriate the language. His dialogical view of language

enables me to construct a dialogical view of the world and an understanding of reading as a practice in which the author, the text, the reader all as subjects with ideological consciousness and speaking toward cultural practices in the past, present and future. In this section, I explain in detail how Bakhtin's theories guided my study and my understanding of reading as a dialogical and sociocultural practice.

Bakhtin's Dialogical Theory

Bakhtin's conceptualization of language as inherently dialogical stands at the core of his dialogical theory and distinguishes his theory from other theories which see language as a symbol, a signifier, or using Bakhtin's (1981) words "a dead, thing-like shell" (p. 355). Bakhtin's dialogical view of language comes from his belief that language is shot through the intentions of people who use the language, thus endowing language with voices that are able to express concrete opinions and world views. Because language is used by different people at different contexts, the voices and views in language become enmeshed with each other, and their interaction makes language alive and developing. Therefore, the language we hear or speak is never individual, but social and saturated with voices.

To display the complexity of the dialogues happening among different voices in language, Bakhtin described the process of a word directing to its object with lively and "graphic" (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007, p. 555) metaphors and images. First, when a word tries to relate to its object, it enters a "dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words" (p. 276) that already envelops and occupies the object. In other words, when a word tries to establish a relationship with an object or reality, it needs to, at the same time, decide how to cope with the entanglement of thoughts, views and judgments already bestowed upon the object by people who previously have used it. The word needs to exhibit an attitude, or an intentionality when it

associates itself with the object—"harmonizing with some of the elements in this environment and striking a dissonance with others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 277). Therefore, any word that comes out from a person's mouth can, to some extent, indicate this person's stance among various social belief systems, even as it transacts with other social belief systems.

Second, the word is oriented toward "a future answer-word" (p. 280) and structures itself with the anticipation of a response from the answering word. According to this idea, whenever we say something, we have the audience in mind, expect a response, and hope to penetrate their understandings through our words. Thus, for any word we say, it is born in our considerations of past thoughts occupying the object to which the word tries to relate and future response to the word—in a dialogue between past, present and future. To go a little bit further, what we say and what we mean is always tentative due to different historical contexts and different audience at a certain moment.

The "microworld of the word" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 127) illustrated above is the foundation on which Bakhtin based his assertion that any word/language/discourse is inherently dialogical. The microworld is also where tensions appear as a striking feature in the process when a word tries to relate to its object. A word needs to experience tensions with other alien voices in the object before sounding itself. Bakhtin further pointed out this tension can be boiled down to the struggle between two forces, the centripetal forces which try to pull the word toward dominant social discourse and the centrifugal forces which encourage the word to retain its individualized voice. It is the "tug of war" (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007, p. 561) between the two forces that makes the word dynamic and developing. Because these two forces are constantly present in language, examining the words people use can direct us to see the battle inside people's mind between their own beliefs and dominant social discourses.

The core notion of dialogism in Bakhtin's theories equipped me with a dialogical view of our world, which was extended to my understanding of qualitative research. It also prompted me to look at reading differently as well as other key concepts in reading-- meaning, response, and context, which are closely interwoven around the notion of dialogism. Because my study mainly involved parents in selecting and responding to picturebooks about China and Chinese culture as a way to support their adoptees' connections to Chinese culture, it is necessary to discuss how Bakhtin's theory can be applied in terms of reading and understanding other cultures.

Bakhtin's Dialogical Theory and Reading

If we apply the *microworld of the word* above to reading, a text will become the object we try to relate to through our words, and it is already laden with historical contexts and responses from previous readers. At the same time, we ourselves bring our own social beliefs at the moment we read the text. Therefore, reading a text will involve a process of how we use our social beliefs to negotiate with the text as well as the attendant historical contexts and reader responses in the text. Reading thereby is an essentially dialogical activity, with "the text in dialogue with prior and future texts, and readers bring into the dialogue "their storehouse of prior narratives from personal experience, including previous readings" (Smagorinsky, 2001, p. 141).

Just as the word needs to sort through the intricacies among various points of views within the object, readers also go through the process of mediating between their own sociocultural values, produced by their cultural models (Beach, 2000), and various social languages and beliefs in the text. It is a process of "selectively assimilating the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 337) and happens in a contact zone formed in readers' consciousness. Readers might select some contents in a text that align well with their cultural models, resist some that conflict with their cultural models or re-process some that require to be filtered through readers'

views before merging with their cultural models. Thus, when European American parents read and explained their rationales for choosing picturebooks about China, there were ongoing and complex dialogues happening between parents' cultural models and those portrayed in the picturebooks.

Bakhtin's descriptions of *microworld of the word* also emphasized the word's orientation toward "a future answer word" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280). Therefore, the response of readers is important, because it shows readers' regard for audience at a certain historical moment. What's more, the concept of response, in Bakhtin's theories, is inextricably connected with his concept of understanding. Bakhtin believes "understanding comes to fruition only in the response" (1981, p. 282) and distinguishes an active reader from a passive reader in terms of whether he/she has a "responsive understanding" (p. 281). Hence, this study aimed to elicit as many responses from European American parents to make transparent their views on picturebooks about China and to promote their understanding of Chinese culture.

The concept of context, in Bakhtin's theories, is also integral in my understanding of reading. Bakhtin (1986) used the word *utterance* to refer to the written or spoken language in use. For him, utterances—our language used at a certain historical moment, has a unique temporal and spatial dimension that makes it "unrepeatable and historically unique" (p. 126). Hence, readers' responses to texts are unrepeatable at a certain historical moment, and thereby their idea of the meaning of the text is tentative and will vary in different contexts. Given this consideration, I took into account the role of context in parents' responses and book choices. Did they choose a book for using in a specific context, like bedtime reading, or holiday celebrations?

Bakhtin's Dialogical Theory and Contact Zones

Bakhtin (1981) argued language is always beset by centripetal forces which are intent on verbal and ideological unification and centralization and centrifugal forces which work toward individualization and decentralization. Specifically, the centripetal and centrifugal forces are embodied by the tug of war between authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses among various world views. Whereas authoritative discourses centripetally pull one toward given and acknowledged social pronouncements, internally persuasive discourses centrifugally resist that tendency and tug one toward words that one finds persuasive and allows to shape his/her world view. These two discourses might merge well in a person's consciousness. However, most of the times, they make our ideological world "contradiction-laden and tension-filled" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). That's where "zones of contact" (p. 345) come in as space where we can navigate the two embattled discourses for achieving our ideological consciousness.

Many other scholars have similar ideas where people construct space to confront the conflicting forces between authorities and their individual life. Gutierrez (1995) proposed the construction of a third space that promotes an "authentic interaction and heteroglossia" (p. 446) between people's home culture and more formalized institutional forces. Goffman (1961) used the word *underlife* to describe a zone where people employ various strategies to distance themselves from dominant institutions. However, Bakhtin differs from them in enabling us to capture the undercurrents and trajectories of people's ideological consciousness through his exploration of the internal dialogism of language. His tracing of the life path of words works as a magnifying glass for us to see how people make decisions about contradictory forces in contact zones. In other words, we can see people's ideological development by following the language they use.

It is also in contact zones that we can see how people's different cultural identities come to interact with each other and with other cultures that might hold distinct world values. Tensions are unavoidable in this process, and how people deal with the tensions will largely impact people's sense of self and world views. People can choose to sidestep the tensions and leave their own world views unchanged. They can also choose to confront the tensions and seriously think about those cultural beliefs that unsettle, challenge and even refute their world views. Bakhtin (1986) made the argument that "What in me is given only through the other" (p. 146). It is only through interacting and dialoguing with the other can we have a better idea of ourselves. It is through living and embracing the tensions that people grow their understanding of themselves and the world.

When adoptive parents read picturebooks about China, they were put into contact zones to experience tensions between many different cultures, both local and global. The discrepancies between American and Chinese cultures might cause confusions and anxieties. Moreover, other cultures and discourses might also mingle and transact with each other, complicating the whole process. Media reports about China, social discourse about race, local discussions about China can influence parents' choices about disliking a book and picking certain elements from books to discuss with their adoptees. Thus, the picturebooks I used provided a contact zone for parents to engage with different cultures and see how cultures transact and shape each other.

Summary

Building on Bakhtin's dialogical theory, I conducted a qualitative case study of investigating European American parents' rationales for selecting picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to help their Chinese adoptees foster birth culture connections. This study was contextualized within the big picture of transracial adoption as a controversial practice and arose

from the intention of delving into the reasons why parents and adult adoptees had distinct opinions of the values of books in helping fostering birth culture ties. Through this study, I hoped to increase adoptive parents' understanding of Chinese culture and benefit other transracial adoptive parents in terms of connecting to another culture and performing cultural socialization practices in a more effective way. Considering the study involved European American parents in transacting with children's books about China and Chinese culture, this study also can add to our understanding of how teachers can promote students' engagement and transactions with multicultural and global children's literature when global understanding is important in our current society in which globalization and localization are involved in continuous exchanges and negotiations. The next chapter offers a literature review of the transracial adoption research in order to better focus and position my study within the macro picture.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"International adoption is a give and take, and the question on the table is whether that take

could be near robbery. Is my life one giant cultural appropriation? Have I been burgled of my

true identity?"

--A Chinese adoptee's blog post

The above words came from a Chinese adoptee's blog post about her response to a recent

article in the New York Times entitled "Why a Generation of Adoptees is Returning to South

Korea." The article describes an interesting phenomenon: hundreds of South Korea adoptees

have returned, or have decided to return, to South Korea and live as a Korean. Many of them

condemn international adoption for stripping them of their native culture and subjecting them to

identity struggle and racial discrimination in white-centered societies. In response to that, the 20-

year-old Chinese adoptee who responded to the article found it difficult to disagree with their

statements and thought her life, to some extent, to be "one big lie."

I was a little surprised to read her post because, compared to parents who adopt from

Korea, most American parents who have Chinese adoptees are more or less involved in some

activities to help their children establish birth culture ties and construct positive identities

(Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Rojewski, 2005). I also wondered what she means by "true identity"

and how she thinks about her current identity living in the U.S. As a Chinese studying abroad, I

always found my Chineseness more visible in the U.S. than I was in China, so would living in

China offer her a true identity, and do people own an identity that can be described as "true" as

opposed to a "false" identity? I was further disturbed by some people's comments below the post, criticizing her for being ungrateful and advising people "not to adopt outside of your country and out of your race." Apparently, the people who made the comments felt those international adoptees were selfish in not appreciating their adoptive parents' efforts to bring them up; but making such comments did not seem to help understand the issue why the girl would come up with such harsh thoughts.

The girl's post, the replies underneath, and my thoughts triggered by her post point to the controversy surrounding transracial adoption, a practice that has been questioned and criticized ever since its beginning in the 1950s. The appropriateness of transracial adoption, adoptive parents' abilities to raise a transracial adoptee, and the identity development of transracial adoptees are some of the issues in the transracial adoption field. To better understand my study in relation to issues and controversies surrounding transracial adoption, I placed my study in the context of transracial adoption research with a literature review on it.

Creswell (2013) discussed the varied use of literature review in qualitative research: it may be fully reviewed and used to inform the questions actually asked, it may be reviewed later in the process of research, or it may be used solely to help document the importance of the research problem. My literature review in this chapter serves two purposes: 1) positioning my study within the macro picture of transracial adoption and 2) focusing my study and research design based on a review of studies on transracial adoption.

In this chapter, I provide a literature review of transracial adoption research to guide my study. This chapter is made up of four sections. The first section introduces the history of and debates surrounding transracial adoption in order to demonstrate how transracial adoption research has developed along with and around those debates. The second section provides a

review of transracial adoption research and particularly a review of research on parents' cultural and racial/ethnic socialization practices for their adoptees' identity development. The third section offers more background information about China's inter-country adoption policy and a review of research on China adoptive families' cultural socialization practices. The last section discusses the position of my study within the big picture of transracial adoption research and how my study will contribute to the growing body of research on parents' cultural socialization practices.

The History of and Debates Surrounding Transracial Adoption

The term *transracial adoption* refers to parents of one ethnicity adopting children of a different race/ethnicity, culture or minority group (Vonk, 2001). Over the past four decades, more than half a million children have been adopted transracially by families in the U.S., both internationally and domestically (McGinnis et al, 2009), and they have been largely placed in white families of European descent. Along with the practice of transracial adoption came the controversy of whether white adoptive parents can help their transracial adoptees develop a positive racial and ethnic identity, given research findings that transracial adoptees are more likely to struggle with racial and ethnic issues than same-race adoptees (Benson, Sharma, & Roehlkepartain, 1994). In this section, I provide a history of transracial adoption and the debates surrounding this practice. Although researchers investigating transracial adoption usually discuss domestic transracial adoption and international transracial adoption separately, I include both in this review because the development of these two practices is closely connected.

The History of Transracial Adoption

Transracial adoption began with international adoptions in the 1950s and 1960s with the adoption of Japanese and Korean children orphaned as a result of the Second World War and the

Korean War (Engel, Phillips & Dellacava, 2007). The Vietnam War resulted in a further increase

of this phenomenon. With the emergence of international transracial adoption in the late 1950s,

domestic transracial adoption also began to increase, involving the placement of Native

American and later African American children in predominantly European American families.

However, beginning in the 1960s, domestic transracial adoption was met with strong

opposition. In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) called for an

end to the practice of placing African American children into European American families,

comparing it to a form of cultural genocide. The Native American community also voiced their

resistance by announcing the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, which allowed tribes exclusive

right in deciding on the placement of Native American children. The result was a significant

decline of such placement, though the practice persisted in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly

when it was supported by legislation in the form of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act in 1994,

which made it illegal for agencies to refuse to settle a child into families of another racial

background (Barn, 2013).

Meanwhile, the number of international transracial adoption dramatically increased due

to several factors, such as the decline in the availability of white infants, the poverty of

developing countries and the controversy over adopting African American children into white

families (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008). International transracial adoption becomes increasingly

an acceptable option of building a family in the U.S. (Rojewski, Shaprio, & Shaprio., 2000).

Currently, 85% of American transracial adoptions are international adoptions (Lee, 2003), with

most children from Asian countries, mainly from China and Korea, as well as a large number of

children from Ethiopia, Ukraine, Russia and Guatemala. Compared to the surge of international

adoptions, domestic transracial adoption have doubled for Hispanic children but have only

marginally increased, from 14.2 per cent to 16.9 per cent, for African American children (Hansen & Simon, 2004).

Debates Surrounding Transracial Adoption

While the opposition to transracial adoption reached a pitch in the 1972 event, the debates surrounding it have not waned over the years. One debate is about the appropriateness of transracial adoption per se for adoptees. On the one hand, research points to the negative outcomes of transracial adoption, both domestic and international, in terms of adverse effects on children's perception and construction of their cultural, ethnic and racial identities (Andujo 1988; Hollingsworth 1997; Samuels 2009). Lee (2003) used the term *transracial adoption paradox* to describe the conflicting experiences of transracial adoptees in shifting between mainstream U.S. culture and their own heritage culture. Moreover, many studies found that white parents, although willing to help their adoptees establish birth culture ties, often adopted a color-blind approach to racial difference between their adoptees and themselves, leaving the adoptees navigating racism in society on their own (Shiao, Tuan, & Rienzi, 2004; Vonk et al., 2010).

On the other hand, transracial adoption is supported by other scholars who maintain that the negative effects on racial identity orientation are outweighed by the benefits of family bonding and love for transracial adoptees (Bartholet, 2007; Simon and Roorda, 2009). Furthermore, a large number of studies showed that transracial adoptees did not differ much from same-race adoptees and non-adopted children in terms of self-esteem and social adjustment (Bagley, 1993; Benson et al, 1994). Thus, contradictory research continues to put transracial adoption under scrutiny. However, it is important to point out that both proponents and adversaries agree that transracial adoption should be a last resort, and that white adoptive parents

must acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills to help children develop a positive racial/ethnic identity (Simon & Altstein 1996; Samuels, 2009).

Given the fact that many studies revealed the correlation between parents' attitudes towards the race and birth culture of their adoptees and a positive attitude on the part of the child towards his or her heritage, another debate has focused on whether white parents need to acquire cross-cultural competence in order to successfully help their adoptees form a birth culture connection and an appreciation of their identities (Grow & Shapiro, 1974; McRoy & Zucher, 1983; Simon & Alstein, 2002).

Early in the history of transracial adoption, parents were advised to adopt a "color-blind" approach to raising their children. Thus, adoptees have been found to identify more with their adoptive parents' ethnic group than with their own (Gonzalez, 1990). Yet, it has been strongly suggested now that parents need to help their children form a positive racial identity and thus must develop cross-cultural competence to provide a bridge from the family's culture to the child's birth culture using a variety of socialization practices.

In particular, Vonk (2001) specified the concept of cultural competence as including three constructs—racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills, which correspondingly require parents to equip themselves with knowledge of their child's birth culture and to engage in various socialization practices to assist their adoptees in understanding their identities and coping with racism and other issues in their future life. Vonk's elaboration of the concept of cultural competence led to the emergence of studies on parents' socialization practices with their adoptees at home, whereas previous research has focused more on adoptees' identity development and adjustment issues.

As more and more adoptive parents acknowledge the importance of undertaking various socialization practices to help their adoptees establish birth culture ties and address racial and ethnic differences from their parents, another debate has arisen about the type of activities and the intensity of exposure needed in parents' socialization practices. There is no consensus as to whether, how, and how much parents should be engaged in a certain activity or socialization practice, and research results often collided with each other. For example, McRoy et al. (1984) and Ladner (1977) underscored the need for families with transracial adoptees to live in an interracial setting where children have the opportunities to sustain close contact with people of their birth culture. Yet, other scholars suggested that even families living in homogeneous areas can foster a positive sense of ethnic pride in their children through a variety of activities (Simon & Altstein, 1992; Simon & Altstein, 2002). The discrepancies among studies can cause parents confusions about what they should do and how they should perform to promote their adoptees' understanding of their cultural and ethnic heritage. This explains, to some extent, the phenomenon that parents are committed to socialization practices for their children through different activities and with different frequencies (Vonk et. al., 2010). Moreover, current studies have indicated that adoptees did not show a closer attachment to or an appreciation of their birth culture in the long run despite their parents' efforts to incorporate various activities related to their children's birth culture at home, which made the value of those activities even more uncertain.

Overall, there are three main debates surrounding transracial adoption: the appropriateness of transracial adoption per se, the need for transracial adoptees to attain cross-cultural competence to raise their adoptees, and the type of activities and the intensity of exposure needed in parents' socialization practices. The three main debates justify the large

amount of research that investigates different aspects of transracial adoption in the past four decades. In fact, the research on transracial adoption basically follows the paths of the three main debates surrounding transracial adoption. In the next two sections, I provide a panoramic picture of research on transracial adoption and a review of research on parents' socialization practices, which is more relevant to my study.

A Panoramic Picture of Research on Transracial Adoption

Research on transracial adoption seems to express researchers' responses to the debates surrounding transracial adoption. Early research on transracial adoption began as a response to the social and political transracial adoption in the 1960s and 1970s, and the research was expanded to include international adoptees later (Lee, 2003). Many of the early studies occurred between the 1970s and the 1980s in the fields of social work and sociology and looked at the adjustment and self-esteem of African American children (Grow & Shaprio, 1974), American Indian children (Fanshel, 1972), and Korean children (Kim, 1977) adopted into European American families. Most of the studies, using questionnaires and surveys with large samples of data, came to the conclusion that those transracial adoptees were not psychologically harmed by placements into transracial families, and there were no difference in the level of self-esteem or social adjustment between transracial children and in-racial children. However, those studies were questioned in terms of their sampling methodology and over-reliance on statistics (Alexander & Curtis, 1996).

Beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present, more studies have appeared in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, which focused on 1) the psychological problems and adjustment of transracial adoptees; and 2) the racial and ethnic issues faced by transracial adoptees. The first area, also called *outcome studies*, has continued to compare transracial

adoptees with either in-race adoptees or non-adoptees in terms of psychological adjustment and behavioral patterns. The studies in this area reinforced many of the findings in early transracial adoption research, yet also complicated previous findings by indicating a higher risk of psychological problems for transracial adoptees due to other factors such as age at adoption, birth country of origin, pre-adoption experiences and adoptive family conditions (Benson et al., 1994; Cederblad, Hooks, & Mercke, 1999; Sharma, McGue, & Benson, 1996).

The second area, also called *racial/ethnicity studies*, usually investigates transracial adoptees' racial and ethnic identity development and the extent to which transracial adoptees are comfortable with their identities. Transracial adoptees' racial/ethnic identity were measured in various ways in these studies (Lee, 2003), and many studies showed that transracial adoptees had lower racial/ethnicity than in-race adoptees and were highly acculturated to the majority culture (Hollinsworth, 1997). However, most of the studies used quantitative methods to measure transracial adoptees' identity development; hence, there are few studies that can provide people with an insight into those adoptees' personal experience of identity development.

Compared to the large numbers of studies in the disciplines of psychology and sociology that assess transracial adoptees' emotional, behavioral and academic development, the amount of research on white adoptive parents' socialization practices for their adoptees is relatively small. However, researchers in recent years have put more emphasis on how transracial adoptive parents socialize their adoptees into certain culture values, beliefs and behaviors at home. Cultural socialization outcome studies and cultural socialization process studies represent researchers' attempts to understand parents' attitudes and efforts toward their adoptees' racial and ethnic identity development and the correlation between their endeavors and their adoptees' identity development (Lee, 2003).

Moreover, given parents' differentiated strategies for addressing their adoptees' birth culture heritage, ethnic identity and racial difference, the traditional views of cultural socialization have been modified and refined into cultural socialization practices, and racial/ethnic socialization practices. Although *culture* is a complex and broad term that often includes race and ethnicity, the distinction enables researchers to investigate separately the way transracial adoptive parents approach their adoptees' birth culture and racial/ethnic identity issues. Moreover, this distinction is supported by Vonk's (2001) conceptual model of cross-cultural competence, in which the three constructs—racial awareness, multicultural planning, and survival skills—provide a similar lens for looking at parents' cultural and racial/ethnic socialization practices separately. In the next section, I offer a more detailed review of research on parents' cultural and racial/ethnic socialization practices, because those studies are more relevant to my study compared to studies on adoptee's psychological problems and behavior patterns.

A Review of Research on Parents' Socialization Practices

Parents' cultural socialization and racial/ethnic socialization practices refer to parents' differentiated focus on certain aspects of their adoptees' identities**.** Specifically, cultural socialization practices relate to transracial adoptive parents' attempts at forming birth culture connections for their adoptees, and racial/ethnic socialization practices relate to the ways parents help their adoptees address physical difference and group membership based on their adoptees' race and ethnicity (Jonston, Swim, Saltman, Deater-Deckard, & Petrill, 2007). Research has shown that parents have been more involved in cultural socialization practices, which still stay on the surface level of connecting to their adoptees' heritage culture, than in racial/ethnic socialization practices, which require more efforts from the parents' side to deal with

complicated topics of racism and identity constructions (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2011). I will

review parents' socialization practices based on these two categories. It is important to note that

most of the research studies located in this review investigated international adoptees, given the

fact that 85% of transracial adoptees are internationally adopted (Lee, 2003).

Adoptive Parents' Cultural Socialization Practices

Transracial adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices appear to exist on a

continuum, from no contact with people from the child's birth culture to practices that require

greater integration with the birth culture (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2008; Simon & Alstein, 1987).

Many activities are involved in the cultural socialization process, such as reading books,

listening to ethnic music, attending ethnic dance concerts and movies, celebrating holidays,

preparing cultural meals, and attending culture camps. Some parents enroll the child class in their

birth culture language and take them to visit their birth countries.

Interestingly, adoptive parents, transracial adoptees and researchers have different

opinions of the value of the activities parents use during the cultural socialization process.

Parents give the highest value scores to having birth culture artifacts at home and knowing about

birth culture history. They attach mid-level importance to celebrating holidays, acquiring basic

language skills, retaining the child's name and gaining appreciation for cultural norms. The least

important activities for them are adherence to cultural norms, values and attitudes of the child's

birth culture and observing a religion prevalent in the home country (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2000).

Researchers assigned those activities different levels in terms of their capacity to

socialize the adoptees into their birth culture. Books and multimedia texts were considered by

researchers as having little contact with the birth culture. Celebrating holidays, eating ethnic

foods, and attending cultural camps were considered more useful than books and multimedia

texts in offering more positive experience of the birth culture. Finally, having someone from the birth culture as role models and living in communities where there is a large population of the child's birth culture were considered most useful and integrative forms to acquaint adoptees with their birth culture (Vonk et al., 2010). Moreover, based on the frequency of activities utilized by parents, the activities parents perform on a regular basis are those that are deemed by researchers as having little or no contact with birth culture, such as reading racial/ethnic books and preparing ethnic foods. Therefore, researchers came to the conclusion that the most commonly utilized practices require the least amount of integration from parents into the adoptees' birth culture, which might not help the adoptees much in learning about their birth culture.

The researchers' argument seemed to be confirmed by results from interviews with adult adoptees about their parents' cultural socialization practices. A recent study of adult Korean adoptees (McGinnis et al., 2009) suggested that transracial adoptees appeared to appreciate their parents' efforts toward cultural socialization, but they also pointed out shortcomings in their parents' efforts, especially related to helping adoptees understand racial politics and dynamics in the United States. Moreover, they felt often alienated when parents put too much emphasis on promoting their birth culture without taking part in the learning process. The adult adoptees further indicated that "lived" experience, such as having role models of their own race/ethnicity in their lives and attending diverse schools, was most helpful toward positive racial identity development.

Transracial adult adoptees also expressed their understanding of the values of several activities during parents' cultural socialization. Attending heritage camps, regarded by parents as an opportunity to provide positive influence on adoptees' views on their birth cultures and a place to connect with more adoptive families like theirs, is considered by adoptees as inadequate

at addressing racial differences and prejudices (Randolph & Holtzman, 2010). Adoptees made the suggestion that heritage camps need to consider explicitly addressing racial and ethnic issues, including the challenges of minority status, which transnational adoptees often face.

Reading books is another activity that particularly reflects the gap between parents' efforts and adoptees' experiences. Transracial adoptees seem to think books are less important and useful than real interaction with people. For example, one adoptee in Crolley-Simic and Vonk's (2002) study expressed the idea that "books, for instance, help but it is just not the same as sitting down with real live people and getting to know them"(p. 308). Interestingly, books have almost been the most frequent activities parents use to introduce birth culture knowledge to their adoptees. According to Vonk et al. (2010), reading books is the top activity parents do at home, followed by preparing ethnic foods and choosing multicultural entertainment, whereas the least often done activity is having people from the birth culture to work as caregivers and role models. It explains, to some extent, researchers' argument that parents do some superficial introduction of adoptees' birth culture without touching upon the core values of the birth culture.

Factors that impact parents' choice of activities. Apart from studies that investigate what cultural socialization practices parents engage in, researchers also examined the factors that impact parents' choice of activities and the purpose of parents' cultural socialization for their adoptees. The adoptees' ethnic origins seem to be a key factor that influences parents' choice of activities and how many activities they use. Research shows parents who adopt from Asian countries accorded greater importance to and participated more frequently in cultural activities with their children than parents who adopted from Europe (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Vonk et al., 2010). While many parents who adopt from Asia mentioned using cultural socialization to

help their adoptees face racism, parents who adopt from Europe did not touch upon the racism issue when discussing their cultural socialization practices.

Age is another important factor affecting parents' choice of cultural association practices. Scroggs and Heitfield's (2001) study documented parents' choice of activities at their adoptees' different age levels. For children below age 2, parents are active in exposing their adoptees to aspects of their birth culture through music, artifacts and toys from the birth culture. For children between the ages of 3 and 5, reading books to children about their birth culture becomes one of the top activities on a monthly basis. For children between the ages of 6 and 9, reading books, eating foods and listening to music stayed roughly the same, yet enrolling their adoptees in language classes becomes the priority. And for children with an age beyond 9 years old, adoptive parents are eager to send their adoptees to attend cultural camps for increasing their contact with birth culture and people from their birth culture groups.

Aside from the age factor, parents have also explained other factors that contribute to their choice of activities. Parents like activities that can facilitate the formation of family bonding. Therefore, book reading is often a common activity they would like to use. Yet, parents are also aware of the consequences of over-emphasizing the difference when participating in the activities. In Fong and Wang's (2001) study of parents' attitudes toward their adoptees' birth culture, parents tried to achieve a balance between offering opportunities to their adoptees for learning about their birth culture and over-doing the cultural input. This study results are in alignment with previous scholars' conceptual framework (Kirk, 1984; Brodzinsky, 1987; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001) about the way adoptive parents resolve the difference between themselves and their adopted children, which stays on a continuum from rejecting differences to

stressing the differences. Acknowledging the difference without over-doing it is a balanced approach many parents choose to adopt.

Purpose of parents' cultural socialization practices. Research reported that parents highlighted different reasons for involving their families in cultural socialization practices (Scorggs & Heitfield, 2001; Fong & Wang, 2001; Volkmann, 2003; Rojewski, 2005). Many parents mentioned the purpose as helping their adoptees cultivate a sense of pride in their birth culture, thus increasing their adoptees' self-esteem. Some hoped the activities would facilitate their adoptees' future interactions with people who shared the same cultural heritage. Some considered it important to give their adoptees future options in their relationship with the birth culture. Other reasons to incorporate birth culture practices at home include helping their adoptees cope with racism in future and trying to minimize their adoptees' feelings of loss due to the adoption status. Yet, it is important to point out although there are studies that investigate parents' purposes for general cultural socialization practices, few studies has been conducted about the motivation for parents to choose a certain specific activity.

Summary of parents' cultural socialization practices. Despite the research results that show many families are committed to cultural socialization practices in various activities and at different levels, transracial adoptees and researchers hold similar opinions that adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices contribute little to helping adoptees cope with racism and integrate birth culture into their lives. Therefore, it is important to study parents' rationales and motivations for choosing certain activities as well as the way they practice those activities. In fact, research results have indicated children's and parents' interest in cultural socialization practices diminish with time, which calls for further studies to probe into the way parents perform certain activities.

Moreover, although there are many studies that examine parents' cultural socialization practices, most of them are quantitative studies, lacking the personal voice and contextual dimension in parents' cultural socialization process. The questionnaires and surveys used with parents only showed parents' preference for certain activities and the frequency of participation in those activities. Qualitative studies, which are good at uncovering nuanced meanings and complexities in people's daily life, are needed to scrutinize adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices.

Racial/ Ethnic Socialization Practices

The notion of racial/ethnic socialization (RES) has emerged in the U.S. as an important theoretical framework to understand the processes at work in raising children of color to develop a healthy racial/ethnic identity and be associated with psychological well-being (Vonk, 2001; Lee, Grotevant, Hellerstedt, & Gunnar, 2006; Vonk et al., 2010). In the field of transracial adoption, research has shown parents seem to be reluctant to talk about their racial awareness and be engaged in racial/ethnic socialization practices compared to fact that almost all transracial adoptive parents would do at least some cultural socialization practices.

Parents' attitudes toward issues of race. Early research from the 1980s suggested that white adoptive parents immersed their Latino and African American adoptees primarily within the white environment and paid little attention to racial differences between parents and adoptees. McRoy and Zurcher (1983), for example, observed that European American parents of African American children who did not perceive racial differences and racism as salient issues were less likely to live in racially integrated neighborhoods and to make an effort at teaching their adopted child about what it means to grow up as Black in the United States.

Most recent research, which increasingly focused on international adoptive families with children from Korea and China, has noticed that parents undertake racial and ethnic socialization practices very differently based on their perception of their adoptees' racial identities. For example, in Crolley-Simic and Vonk's (2013) study of transracial adoptive parents' racial and ethnic socialization practices, they noted that parents who dismissed the topic of race in their families rarely attend to their adoptees' racial and ethnic socialization but still organize a few cultural socialization practices, such as cultural camps, to make their adoptees feel that they are not different from other people. Parents who are ambiguous about their racial attitudes choose to involve some aspects of their adoptees' birth culture into their daily life, yet do not go much beyond that. Parents who believe in the importance of racial equality and diversity actively talk with their children about racism and how to challenge the racial hierarchy in current society. Barn's (2013) study has located similar findings, though Barn used different categories— humanitarianism, ambivalence and transculturalism—to explain the difference.

In other words, parents who deny or are unaware of the prevalence and pernicious consequences of racism and discrimination in society are less likely to believe in the value and importance of racial and ethnic socialization. Consequently, the more white adoptive parents understand and appreciate diversity, the higher the possibility is that they will carry out racial and ethnic socialization practices with their children, which is also mediated through family and community networks and societal discourses on race, power, and hierarchy (Barn, 2013)

Parents' choice of racial and ethnic socialization practices. To date no studies have solely focused on what parents do to prepare their children to cope with racism; however, there are a few studies that look at parents' efforts to help their adoptees understand their racial and ethnic identity (McGinnis et al.,2009 ; Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2012). Because promoting

knowledge about birth culture will inextricably connect to cultivating understanding of one's ethnic identity, many of the activities used in cultural socialization practices are also used in racial and ethnic socialization practices, but often with different purposes.

Books are used for racial and ethnic socialization practices. Transracial adoptive parents use books to cultivate their adoptees' ethnic pride. For example, in Smith, Juarez and Jacobson's (2011) study, one of the white adoptive parents liked to use books with his African American adoptees, particularly books about famous African American people to inspire them to work hard and get rid of social stereotypes of Black people. However, the researchers questioned the parent's intention and voiced the opinion that his emphasis on working hard for success without talking about the racial inequality in society was actually a white-centered idea and would not help his adoptee develop a positive identity.

Apart from the common use of books, cultural camps, having someone as cultural models, and living in racially diverse communities are also common ways to affect and shape transracial adoptees' construction of their racial and ethnic identities. Role models from their birth cultures are equally effective as a racial socialization practice as it is used in cultural socialization. One of the parents in Crolley-Simic and Vonk's (2010) study stated that their family's good relationship with a Korean helped their Korean-adopted daughter find a role model. Also, the Korean culture and life that they learned from this friend grew their awareness of racial equality and diversity as a whole family.

Overall, adoptive parents' racial awareness and attitudes toward racism issues have a direct relationship with whether and how parents arrange racial and ethnic socialization practices. Also, research has demonstrated that many adoptive parents are uncomfortable with issues of race, thus downplaying racial and ethnic socialization practices. The reasons are explained by

researchers as white people's different perceptions of race and culture (Shiao et al., 2004). While culture is seen by white people as a way to bring people together, race has the power to divide. However, the problem would be that, their adoptees, deprived of the help they need on navigating racism stereotypes towards them, are left on their own to deal with problems with development of ethnic identities.

Summary of Research on Parents' Socialization Practices

The review of research indicated that parents tend to prefer cultural socialization practices over racial and ethnic socialization practices, and more is known about parents' efforts toward cultural socialization through large numbers of studies. However, most of the studies investigating parents' cultural socialization practices are quantitative with large random samples, thus lacking the personal voices of adoptive parents and overlooking the complex and dynamic nature of parents' socialization practices in daily interactions. For example, Vonk, Lee, and Crolley-Simic's (2010) study, which took advantage of the data from the National Survey of Adoptive Parents (NASP), measured parents' cultural socialization practices with nine yes or no questions. Therefore, for a question about whether parents engage in a certain activity, the result can only show the percentage of parents who responded "yes" to the question. Because the numbers cannot illuminate the complex picture behind parents' responses to survey questions, more qualitative studies are needed to offer insight into the practice and process of parents' construction of their adoptees' cultural, racial and ethnic identity.

Apart from the over-use of quantitative studies, current studies only present parents' perspectives regarding the choice of activities, and many of the studies only included mothers' responses. Thus, the perspectives of fathers and adoptees who participate in the activities at their young age should also be studied in the future. It can be interesting to compare parents' and

adoptees' voices when they are both enrolled in the cultural learning process. With the general view of transracial adoptive parents' socialization practices, the next section will go further to specifically look at research on Chinese adoptees raised in U.S. families in terms of how parents connect their adoptees to Chinese culture and help them construct positive identities.

Research on Chinese Adoptees in U.S. Families

Studies have demonstrated that compared to other international adoptive parents, parents who adopt from China are more actively involved in helping their adoptees foster an appreciation of Chinese culture (Lee et al., 2006; Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Thomas & Tessler, 2007). They reported celebrating Chinese holidays or festivals; having books, videos, or movies that teach about Chinese culture; having birth country artifacts at home; or having friends from China (Rojewski, 2005; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tessler et al., 1999). Thus, in contrast to the past when parents adopted a pure assimilation approach to raising their international adoptees, now parents with Chinese adoptees are remarkable in their endeavors to construct a Chinese culture within their families (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001).

As the number of children adopted from China has grown, more studies have been conducted on adoptive parents' efforts to involve their Chinese adoptees in learning Chinese culture, the role of Chinese culture in their family life and their adoptees' identity development. This section offers more background information about China's adoption policy and a review of research on Chinese adoptees in U.S. families in terms of their adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices.

China's Adoption Policy

China's inter-country adoption policy was preceded by China's One Child Policy. In 1979, the People's Republic of China enacted the controversial One Child Policy restricting

families to have only one child with the primary intent of controlling the population at a billion people at the end of the twentieth century (Croll, Davin, & Kane, 1985). However, in the ensuing 20 years, the fate of female infants became problematic. In keeping with the Chinese tradition of producing a male heir to provide labor power and care for parents at their old age, Chinese couples would not keep their female babies and babies with special needs. Soon, abandoned infants were filling the orphanages in China at an alarming rate. As a result, in 1991, the People's Republic of China passed an adoption law, and efforts have been made to facilitate foreign adoptions of infants since then. Among the babies available for adoption, girls comprise more than 95% of Chinese adoptees, most of whom are adopted between 6 months and 2 years of age (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

Since China opened inter-country adoption, more than 70,000 primary infants have been placed into U.S. families. In 2005, the peak of China-US adoption, there were 7,906 infants and children adopted into the U.S., the largest number of any receiving country. Moreover, the Chinese government has instituted a number of regulations about the age, income, and marital status of parents seeking to adopt from China and the procedures of Chinese adoption, which includes a minimum 2-week stay in China during the pick-up process. The regulations have encouraged a phenomenon that the majority of U.S. parents who have successfully adopted from China are middle to upper income, older, well-educated, heterosexual European Americans.

With the large numbers of children adopted into U.S. families, it becomes a mainstream tendency for adoptive parents to cultivate an appreciation of Chinese culture in their adoptees. Parents are strongly suggested by adoption professionals and social workers to integrate Chinese culture at home, and the Chinese government's mandate which requires parents to help Chinese adoptees show an appreciation of Chinese culture (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001) also compelled

many parents to bring Chinese culture into their families in very conscientious and noticeable ways. Furthermore, the biggest parent-support group, that extends across the U.S, known as Families with Children from China (FCC), reinforces the message of fostering birth culture ties through various cultural activities organized for parents and their Chinese adoptees. Thus, parents with Chinese adoptees engage in at least some cultural socialization practices, whether it is due to their own will or outside pressure. The following review will discuss research on China adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices.

Research on China Adoptive Parents' Cultural Socialization Practices

Research on China adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices has displayed a shift from large quantitative studies with large samples of data to qualitative studies that often use interviews to show the plethora of ways and reasons parents construct Chinese culture for their adoptees. Research results indicated that parents educate their Chinese adoptees about their birth cultures at the expense of attention to race and other issues of social inequality. Scholars have gone further to assert that "in constructing Chinese culture for children, adoptive parents produce decontextualized and aestheticized versions of culture and engage in consumptive practices at the expense of attention to race" (Louie, 2009, p. 286).

Early quantitative studies. Tessler, Gramache and Liu's book in 1999 is the first systematic quantitative study that specifically examined the cultural socialization practices of adoptive parents with Chinese adoptees. With survey responses from 526 parents who adopted from China, they found that parents employed four different approaches to Chinese and American socialization for their children: *acculturation*—in which the Chinese identity is emphasized; *assimilation*—in which the American identity is emphasized; *alternation*—in which both Chinese and American identity are emphasized; and *child's choice*—in which adoptees

decide whether they want to do or continue doing the cultural activities. The problem with the study is that Tessler and his co-authors did not investigate the specific activities parents and children were involved in, but they made the argument based on the data that while many parents were passionate about introducing Chinese culture, they were unlikely to raise children with full bicultural competence due to a lack of access to reinforcing culture in everyday life as well as a tendency to pick and choose elements of culture, ignore traditional values and focus instead on holidays, food, and meeting Chinese people.

Scroggs and Heitfield's study (2001) documented the types of activities parents engage in with their children and the priority and frequency they assign to those activities, through analyzing 300 responses from online written surveys. The results reported by the study were very similar to those in research on international adoptees and their families. Parents with Chinese adoptees involve their adoptees in similar activities such as reading books, listening to ethnic music, having birth culture artifacts at home, learning birth culture language, etc. Also, they attached the highest importance to activities that require little contact with people from Chinese culture, such as displaying artifacts, reading books, and eating ethnic foods. The cultural values are downplayed in families' cultural socialization process.

Rojewski's (2001; 2005) efforts continued to push people's knowledge of China adoptive parents' cultural socialization practice. Using 339 parents' replies to online questionnaires, Rojewski and his colleague, also named Rojewski, presented more details about the activities parents engaged in and the frequency of those activities performed at home. Books were found to be the most frequently used method of focusing on Chinese cultural heritage, and over half the adoptive parents reported using books or stories at least two or three times monthly. However, given the question which only asked about parents' frequency of using "reading materials and

stories", it is difficult to know what kind of books and stories parents use for their Chinese adoptees. Rojewski also noted that parents were unsure of the right amount, or the best ways to acknowledge Chinese culture; hence, it will be interesting to compare the actual cultural socialization process in different families.

The early quantitative studies provided people with a general picture of China adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices; however, the heavy reliance on Internet survey techniques falls short in illuminating the complexities in parents' socialization process. Hence, qualitative studies have been increasingly used to describe the thoughts, emotions and practices of China adoptive families involved in the process.

Qualitative studies on China adoptive families. Fong and Wang's (2001) study is one of the earliest qualitative studies that examined the ways adoptive parents shaped the identity of their adopted daughters. Through semi-structured interviews with 10 parents, the two researchers noted that parents were enthusiastic about creating birth heritage for their daughters and wanted their daughters to have a source of pride in their Chinese identity. However, parents were also concerned that their limited knowledge about China could not facilitate their daughters' immersion into that culture. To use one parent's words, "I don't want people to feel like I was trivializing the culture…we want to be respectful of the depth and richness of that culture" (p. 24).

On the other hand, parents' ethnic and marital backgrounds as well as their understanding of core elements of Chinese culture and values affected their decision about their daughters' identity development. Therefore, the researchers proposed the need to study more China adoptive families in depth to explore the intricacies in parents' endeavors to help with their adoptees' identity development, because each family is unique in their background and family network.

This study proposed a few important factors for researchers to think about when studying China adoptive families, such as parents' personal background and their knowledge of Chinese culture. However, the problem of the study lies in that the researchers did not distinguish parents' cultural socialization practices from their racial and ethnical socialization practices in the study, and scholars have stated that parents who reject their adoptees' racial-ethnic differences might still do some cultural socialization practices for their children's identity development.

Compared to Fong and Wang's study, Bebiroglu and Pinderhughes's research (2012) particularly looked at parents' process of engaging in cultural socialization with their 6- to 8- year- old girls from China with a focus on adoption mothers' decisions and children's understanding of learning Chinese culture and being Chinese. A key point in this study is researchers' description of the interplay between parents' cultural socialization practices and children's interest in socialization. The study showed parents' flexibility in adjusting their decisions of whether and how much to involve their Chinese adoptees in fostering birth culture ties based on their perceptions of their children's needs and interests. Parents might initiate an activity without asking their children, propose an activity or wait for their children to ask for an activity. Parents' actions might also shift between these strategies, and some parents who originally initiated activities turned to waiting when their children showed no interest in the activities. This point explained to some extent the results in previous studies that parents' as well as children's interest in cultural socialization practices wanes over time (e.g., DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996).

Another key finding in this study is about children's understanding of their mothers' efforts and the unintentional consequence of cultural socialization practices. The young children in this study did not seem to associate the activities they engaged in with learning about Chinese

culture. Thus, further research need to investigate the interactions between parents and adoptees when they participate in the activities.

Moreover, this study touched upon an issue that attracts increasing attention in transracial adoption research—the authenticity of the activities. Several parents expressed that the celebration of cultural heritage came to feel "fake or superficial", and one parent emphasized her family's transition from activities organized by white parents with Chinese adoptees to activities organized by Chinese people. The concern with the authenticity of the cultural activities is also documented in several other studies and by scholars who worry about the decontextualized and aestheticized versions of culture parents present to their children.

For example, in Traver's (2007) ethnographic study of white adoptive parents' participation in Chinese cultural activities organized by Families with Children from China, she observed that some parents thought the activities Orientalized China as an old ancient country and ignored the existence and realities of modern Chinese and Chinese American life. It is interesting that parents attended these activities to connect to their children's Chinese heritage, but they were aware of the inauthenticity of the activities. Also, in Louie's (2009) discussion of China's adoptive families' endeavor toward creating birth culture heritage for their Chinese adoptees, she criticized parents for exoticizing Chinese culture and their celebratory focus on Chinese culture. The vibrant discussion of authenticity in Chinese culture socialization calls for more research on parents' definition of authenticity and their opinion of the importance of authenticity in their families' cultural socialization practices.

Overall, Bebiroglu and Pinderhughes's (2012) study sets up a new stage for scholars and researchers to think about China adoptive parents' ways to connect their adoptees and their families to Chinese culture. The two researchers have displayed that the two dimensions in early

quantitative studies, namely the types of the activities and the frequency of participation, are far from capturing the breath of experiences of children and families and the dynamic nature of families' cultural socialization practices. The cultural socialization process is more complex and layered than what early quantities studies provided.

Also from Bebiroglu and Pinderhughes's (2012) study came several issues to consider for future research. One is the discussion about the authenticity of activities. How much do parents care about this notion and how important is this notion to parents? Second is the different expectation between parents and their adoptees. While parents think they are doing the right thing, the Chinese adoptees might have distinct feelings and understanding of their parents' efforts. One study that particularly described the contrast is Ponte, Wang, and Fan's (2010) research on parents' and their Chinese adoptees' experience of visiting China. Whereas the parents saw the visit to China as a great opportunity to make China real for their children, the children did not experience the same satisfaction as their parents. The third key point from Bebiroglu and Pinderhughes's study is about the dynamic nature of parents' cultural socialization practices. Parents' decisions and actions changed over time with their perception of their adoptees' interest and needs; thus, the developmental context of the adoptees and their corresponding cognitive abilities should also be considered during future research.

Positioning My Study within the Macro Picture

The review of debates surrounding transracial adoption and research on parents' socialization practices indicated that researchers are shifting their attention from early psychological and behavioral studies of transracial adoptees' identity construction to studies on parents' socialization practices to establish the connection between the way transracial adoptive parents raise their adoptees and adoptees' identity development. My study intends to add to that

endeavor by delving into China adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices in depth, considering the large number of Chinese adoptees adopted into U.S. families and China adoptive parents' commitment to incorporating at least some Chinese cultural activities into families. My study also speaks for my attempt to push more qualitative studies into transracial adoption research in which quantitative studies permeate and define families' socialization practice with only statistics.

On the other hand, the review of transracial adoptive families' cultural socialization practices and China adoptive families' cultural socialization practices all point to the important role of books among parents' practices to create birth culture for their adoptees. Thus, using picturebooks about China as a starting point, I designed a study to introduce high-quality picturebooks about China into China adoptive families and examine parents' rationales for choosing picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to use within their Chinese adoptees and issues around parents' book selections. To further and better position my study, I sorted out two key points from the literature review and discussed the direction in which they have led in relation to my research design.

The Role of Books in Transracial Adoptive Families

The literature review in this chapter highlighted the conflicting attitudes between parents and adoptees toward reading books as an activity to promote birth culture ties. According to Vonk et al., (2010), reading books was almost the most frequently used activity parents to establish birth culture ties for their adoptees, and it was used in both cultural socialization practices and racial/ethnic socialization practices. The idea that reading books can facilitate the formation of family bonding made it a regular activity parents would like to use.

However, adult adoptees held different opinions of books' value in their family lives. While most parents supported the use of reading books at home, many adoptees deemed books to be less important and useful than real interaction with people. Reading books becomes a practice that implies parents' reluctance to engage in practices that demand more integration into adoptees' birth culture and more discussion of racial and ethnic issues. Thus, the conflicting attitudes between adoptive parents and adoptees toward books prompted the question: What kind of books about China do parents choose and for what purposes do they choose the books? There needs to be studies that focus on the reason why books receive such distinct evaluations from parents and adoptees, given the potentials of books to address serious emotional issues and themes (Roberts & Crawford, 2008) and empower children when they see their cultural experiences validated in books.

Reading and healing has an age-old tradition (Sautter, 2010), and in schools, teachers are encouraged to use bibliotherapy—reading specific texts in response to particular situations or conditions—to help children understand specific difficult experiences (Thibault, 2004). High-quality children's literature is believed to work as "mirrors and windows" (Bishop, 1990; Botelho & Rudman, 2009) for children to see their culture represented in books and come away from the reading experience with comfort and new understandings of how to handle distress, frustration and anger in daily life. Therefore, picturebooks about China and Chinese culture can be a powerful medium for Chinese adoptees to understand their heritage culture. In fact, some children remember so well the ethnic books that were read to them early in life (Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2012).

Thus, considering the conflicted attitudes toward books from adoptive parents and transracial adoptees and the power of books to cultivate children's appreciation for their own

cultures, my study examines the way European American parents choose picturebooks about China and Chinese culture: What kind of contents do they want to see in those books, what kind of cultural elements stand out to them, and how do they intend to communicate or discuss the books with their adoptees?

The Notion of Culture

The literature review revealed parents' concern with the authenticity of cultural socialization practices, which initiates a few questions: What is culture? Can culture be learned or practiced? Is culture a package of ideas or items that can be consumed or placed in homes? This study intends to promote our understanding of the notion of *culture* in globalized context.

This study is also my attempt to reexamine my understanding of what Chinese culture is in a globalized context when I, as a researcher, had to explain to parents about Chinese history and think about whether I own Chinese culture as a Chinese. When parents and I communicated about Chinese culture, was there new space created between me and the parents about what is Chineseness?

<div align="center">Pulling It All Together</div>

Multiculturalism has become a major framework in the U.S. for conceptualizing ethnic relations and school education (Gordon & Newfield, 1996), and people now are more willing to acknowledge that U.S. culture is multicultural. However, multiculturalism can be a way for people to exoticize and essentialize other cultures, thus blocking the possibility for people to cross ethnic-cultural boundaries to understand and appreciate other cultures.

By introducing picturebooks into European American families, this study aims not only to contribute to current research on parents' cultural socialization practices but also to add to people's understanding of culture and multiculturalism in a globalized context. The parenting in

transracial families, the way another culture is interpreted and incorporated in adoptive families, and the process in which parents read and transact with picturebooks about a culture they are not familiar with will hopefully offer something to think about in terms of culture and contemporary society. Finally, this study intends to fill a gap in educational research because there are no qualitative studies conducted on the topic of transracial adoption in the educational field. It is hoped this study will encourage teachers and educators to think more about the concept of adoption and give more attention to transracial adoptees and their families.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

"Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence."—Mikhail Bakhtin, 1984, p. 252

The above quote from Bakhtin can, to some extent, demonstrate the importance of dialogue in Bakhtin's life. To him, life requires dialogue; life without dialogue leads to death. However, it is necessary to point out that Bakhtin's conceptualization of dialogue is different from our daily use of the word *dialogue*—a conversation between two or more people as defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary. Dialogue, in this sense, may not be dialogical if people hold tight to their original beliefs and are only concerned with changing other people's minds; yet, in Bakhtin's dialogical theory, dialogues feature a strong orientation toward others through assimilating and responding to other people's views and tensions that are produced during the process. It is through dialogues with others, imagined others and ourselves that we understand and create knowledge of the world and ourselves. Therefore, Bakhtin's conceptualization of dialogue has a productive and transformative nature and an ethical caring for others through being open and responsive.

The other orientation in Bakhtin's dialogical theory answers the call from Gergen and Gergen (2000) about developing qualitative research methods that can "generate a reality of relationship, not separation, isolation, and competition, but integral connectivity" (p. 1025). With that call in mind, I applied Bakhtin's dialogical theory at all levels of my study as an epistemological, theoretical, methodological and analytical framework.

This chapter describes my practice of using Bakhtin's dialogical theory as the cornerstone of my study and my understanding of what dialogical research looks like in practice. The whole chapter is composed of three sections. The first section explains my interpretation of key points in conducting dialogical research, utilizing Bakhtin's dialogical theory as my epistemological and theoretical framework. The second section details my research design, including the methodology and methods used in my study. The third section illustrates my process of establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and my subjectivity reflection as the researcher.

What Dialogical Research Looks Like

Bakhtin (1984, 1986) based his dialogical theory upon his conceptualization of language as inherently dialogical and ideological. To him, every word is populated with other people's intentions and accents; therefore, for one to appropriate a word, he/she needs to confront those different voices and express his/her own attitude. To make the dialogical process more intelligible and accessible to readers, Bakhtin (1986) described a "microworld of word" (p. 127) to illustrate the possibilities when a word tries to relate to its object.

First, when a word tries to relate to its object, it enters a "dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words" (p. 276) that already envelops and occupies the object. In other words, when a word tries to establish a relationship with an object or reality, it needs to simultaneously decide how to cope with the entanglement of thoughts, views and judgments already bestowed upon the object by people who previously have used it. Second, the word is oriented toward "a future answer-word" (p. 280) and structures itself with the anticipation of a response from the answering word. Thus, for any word we say, that word is born in our

considerations of past thoughts occupying the object to which the word tries to relate and the future response to the word—in a dialogue between past, present and future.

The microworld of word, or the internal dialogism of the word, has become the foundation of my application of Bakhtin's theories to any object. Below I present my understanding of what dialogical research looks like when I relate Bakhtin's dialogical theory to qualitative research.

Research Sites as Dialogical Spaces

Based on the internal dialogism of the word, I conceive everything I see or hear in the research field as objects I want to relate to through my own words , and they are laden with historical contexts and various social discourses. Like a word that finds a way out by grappling with multiple forces within the object, I can understand the people and objects in the research site only through a willingness to dialogue with and evaluate varied ideas in the research field. In other words, research sites are like dialogical spaces in which researchers, with their own cultural models (Beach, 2000), co-produce new knowledge with research participants. Instead of considering the role of researcher as that of a miner (Kvale & Brickmann, 2008) of data in the research field, researchers co-construct data and meaning with research participants. It is a mutual shaping and co-authoring process for both researchers and research participants.

The idea of viewing research sites as dialogical spaces is also stated in Fecho and Meacham's (2007) argument. Using both Bakhtin and Rosenblatt's theories, they considered research sites as transactional spaces "where the academic and local communities mutually shape new texts" and suggested that researchers "open themselves and those communities to learning that is multi-dimensional, polyphonic and mutually transformative" (p. 165). Building from these ideas, I argue that practicing dialogical research requires researchers to give up the "I-know"

stance and embrace the uncertainties and potential discomforts that arise from the reciprocity between researchers and the research site. In this way, research becomes an inquiry into our life and world views instead of a procedure to capture a result.

Engagement with Tensions and Differences

Bakhtin (1984) argued that language is subject to both centripetal forces, which centralize language toward ideological unification and centralization, and centrifugal forces, which decentralize language and pull it toward individualization and diversification; hence, tensions are inevitable in the language we use to interact with the world. Yet, tensions are not something to be avoided in Bakhtin's theory; instead, Bakhtin suggested that tensions are a necessary and constructive part of the meaning-making process when distinct ideas confront each other in contact zones. For him, a word is "able to shape its own stylistic profile and tone" only through a dialogized process in which it "harmonize[s] with some of the elements and strike [s] a dissonance with others" (p. 277).

Bakhtin's construction of tension as something generative and meaningful motivates qualitative researchers to rethink the qualitative research field, which is "defined by a series of tensions, contradictions and hesitations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 15). Tensions between researchers and research participants, tensions in qualitative data, and other tensions would be handled differently in dialogical research based on Bakhtin's approach to tension. Frank (2011) made the argument to let stories breathe when he needed to emphasize the importance of examining stories in qualitative research. Borrowing his words and idea, I argue for a need to let tensions breathe in dialogical research, and I explain my way of letting tensions breathe below.

Tensions in qualitative data. In Bakhtin's dialogical theory, tensions come from the constant and never-ending struggle between the centripetal and centrifugal forces in people's

language, and the centripetal and centrifugal forces are specifically embodied by the tug of war between authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses. Whereas authoritative discourses centripetally pull one toward given and acknowledged social pronouncements, internally persuasive discourses centrifugally resist that tendency and tug one toward words that one finds persuasive and allows to shape his/her world view. Given such an understanding, data are considered polyphonic and full of tensions in dialogical research, and examining the opposing forces in data is fundamental in data analysis.

Compared to some other scholars' statements about looking out for the multi-voicedness of language, or the tensional aspect in data (e.g., Tanggard, 2009), dialogical research puts analysis of tensions at the center of qualitative data analysis because tensions are the starting point and focus for creating knowledge of the research topic. Letting tensions breathe in data means understanding what is at stake in the data and how tensions influence people's lives and supports their identity development. The aim of capturing tensions in data is to watch and interpret people's experiences instead of seeking an essence.

Another important point in Bakhtin's notion of tension is the dynamism and fluidity of opposing forces forming a tension. Therefore, the analysis of tensions in data also requires the observation and consideration of how tensions develop along with the research. Dialogical research demands of researchers a sensitivity to attend to the ways tensions are played out between centripetal and centrifugal forces and how the two forces work toward both unity and plurality.

Tensions between researchers and research participants. Social science research necessarily imposes a certain power over those being studied; thus, qualitative investigation demands consideration of the relationship between researchers and their subjects (Fabian, 2008).

In particular, feminists and other critical scholars have called attention to the many intrinsic tensions between the voices of researchers and the voices of participants who have a different racial, ethnic and sexual background from the researchers (e.g., Wilkinson &Kitzinger, 1996). In contrast to the regular confessional modes of reflexivity (Pillow, 2003) that seem to wipe out researchers' previous judgments and values after they reflect on their positionality, dialogical research confronts the tension between researchers and research participants with Bakhtin's ethical caring approach to others–dialogue.

We draw on multiple and distinct cultural references to explain our ideas and shape our identity construction (Enciso, 1994), and the different cultural references inevitably lead to a tension between researchers and research participants as they interact with each other. However, according to Denzin (2003), cultural difference is dialogic, interconnected and complex; hence, the differences and tensions become means for researchers and research participants to cross cultural boundaries—appropriate, reflect on and create new cultural references. In this way, they are also more aware of the words they speak, the discourses they internalize as persuasive discourses and the world they understand.

Hence, letting tensions breathe between researchers and research participants means using the differences between the two to engage both in a reflective view of the world in which they live and the cultural references to which they hold on. It is a mutual shaping and inquiry process through dialogue and toward more dialogues.

Tensions between dialogue and analysis. Bakhtin emphasized the unfinalizability of any words and language in his dialogical theory. For example, he used the phrase "ideological becoming" to describe human beings' ideological consciousness, which is permanently in the becoming process. Hence, analysis is never the end of qualitative research. Instead, analysis

promotes dialogue, and dialogue contribute to the analysis. The relationship between dialogue and analysis is like the relationship between response and understanding in Bakhtin's theory: "understanding and response is dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible with the other" (p. 282). Likewise, dialogue and analysis are mutually needed and with a tension existing between them.

Frank (2011), in discussing his dialogical narrative analysis methods, claims that researchers need to sustain the tension between dialogue and analysis. The same applies to my argument regarding dialogical research. Dialogical research requires researchers to nourish the tension between dialogue and analysis. On the one hand, dialogue about data and research process facilitates the analysis process, which enables researchers to generate meaning and understanding of the research topic. On the other hand, analysis enables an in-depth view of data and research, which promotes more dialogues about research and related topics.

This same applies to analysis of research participants. Analyses of research participants do not aim for a fixed understanding of participants' experiences but for the engagement of researchers and participants in more dialogues about life, and going a step further, in changing life. Such principles also apply to a dialogical research report: the writing does not aim for the production of a firm representation; the goal is to produce a text that is able to go alive and develop in the future. Therefore, letting tensions breathe in dialogical data analysis means being open to dialogue in data analysis and building from the analysis to more dialogues.

Contexts and Movements of Thoughts

Bakhtin (1986) coined the term *utterance* to refer to the written or spoken language in use. For him, utterances—our language used at a certain historical moment—have a unique temporal and spatial dimension that makes it "unrepeatable and historically unique" (p. 126). The

conceptualization of utterance puts emphasis on the notion of context in qualitative research and the notion of meaning as tentative and evanescent during the qualitative research process.

The notion of context is central to qualitative inquiry and at the same time, it is a complex and contested concept in terms of how researchers define context (Hammersley, 2008). Based on Bakhtin's theory, context in dialogical research includes both local and global context, as well as individual and social context, because Bakhtin's conceptualization of language acknowledged the mutuality of the individual and society. The permeation of social discourses into individual language is always there whether the speaker is aware of it or not. At the same time, context also refers to the one that is co-produced by researchers and research participants during the transaction. Thus, practicing dialogical research necessitates an understanding of context as socially constructed and constantly changing as well as an attention to the particular contexts in which utterances occur.

Given the definition of context, meaning, which is another key element of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009; Cresswell, 2013), remains unsettled and subject to revision and change. Moreover, because of Bakhtin's theorization of language and utterance as permanently pursuing a future response, each tentative meaning in a certain context becomes the site for future questions and responses; thus, the meaning of research becomes a movement of thoughts that are always in a state of perpetual generation. Borrowing Gergen and Gergen's (2000)'s words, dialogical research is a kind of research that "expands as it moves outward from the originary site" and "incite[s] dialogue that may undergo continuous change as it moves through an extended network" (p. 1030).

In conclusion, practicing dialogical research requires a strong orientation toward others, a willingness to dialogize about tensions in dialogue and an openness to the future word that has

not yet been spoken. It attempts to bring out the multiple voices that are at play in the research field and invites researchers, research participants and potential audiences to let tensions breathe and let ideas flow. In the following two sections about methodology and methods, I detail my efforts to practice dialogical research.

Methodology: Case Study Design

Case study research is the study "of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. xi). It is widely used as a flexible approach in qualitative research. As Compton-Lily (2013) stated, case studies can be "large or small, qualitative or quantitative, individual or collective, involve long or short time frames and multiple physical locations, draw upon a range of epistemological assumptions, and serve a variety of purposes" (p. 54).

I adopted case study as my research methodology because the emphasis on understanding, particularity and process aligns well with Bakhtin's dialogical theories. Additionally, case studies are popular and extensively used in family literacy research. Below I state my reasons for choosing case study as my research methodology in more detail.

First, I chose case studies because the emphasis on contextuality and understanding in case studies is consistent with the focus on context in Bakhtin's dialogical theories. Contextuality—one of the key features of case study, is the most talked about strength in the methodological literature of case studies. Anchored in its real-life situations, case studies produce a rich and holistic account of the case that enables readers to see the subtlety and complexity of the case situation. Moreover, since case study researchers emphasize carrying out studies in natural settings with a non-interventionist attitude, the data they obtain is more credible than data derived from studies with controlled designs. Similarly, Bakhtin's dialogical

theories also stress the concept of context by attending to the temporal and spatial environment in which an utterance is realized.

Second, case studies are a particularly suitable design for scholars interested in process. Not only do case studies have a special concern for the case in progress but this approach also strongly advocates documenting changes in time and place as well as people's interpretation of their worlds (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). The descriptions of cases involve documentation of their evolving development. Phrases such as "an instance in action" (McDonald & Walker, 1977, p. 181) and "a case in progress" (Stenhouse, 1978, p. 31) record scholars' concerns for case study as a research methodology that privileges the research process over the product. Given that my study examined European American parents' book selection process, case study is a suitable approach to be employed as my research methodology.

Finally, a case study approach has been a preferred research methodology in family literacy research, and its strengths in detailing the subtlety and complexity of the case situation in its progress and shifting contexts make case study a nice fit with family literacy research. Based on a recent review of family literacy scholarship (Compton-Lily, Rogers, & Lewis, 2012), four studies were most frequently cited, and three of them were qualitative case studies. Some of the authors clearly expressed their preference for case study as a research methodology over quantitative research methods. Considering that my study belonged in the realm of family literacy research, I chose case studies as my research methodology.

Overall, case study is an approach in which researchers can "engage the best of interpretive powers" (Stake, 1995, p. 136) by attending closely to the interaction of cases with their contexts. The insights can work as experiential understandings that illuminate people's knowledge of a broader class of phenomenon or events to which the case belongs. Moreover,

case study research aligned with my theoretical framework and my study in terms of its focus on understanding the context and the process in the development of cases. Given the above understandings, I adopted case study as my research methodology. In the next section, I offer descriptions of the way I conducted my study and the methods I used for data generation and analysis.

Methods

This qualitative case study used picturebooks about China and Chinese culture with four European American families and investigated adoptive parents' rationales for selecting those books with a view to helping their Chinese adoptees foster connections to Chinese culture. This study occurred between September 2014 and May 2015 and took 9 months. Participant recruitment happened during September and November in 2014. Data generation mainly took place between October 2014 and May 2015. More specific procedures and details are provided below.

Research Site

The four families participating in this study lived in a large metropolitan area and its surrounding regions in the U.S. Southeast. According to the website CensusScope, whereas African Americans make up a significant percentage of the population of the U.S. Southeast, Chinese Americans are basically scattered in this area. Hence, compared with adoptive parents living in San Francisco or New York, which are home to large numbers of Chinese Americans, adoptive parents with Chinese children living in the Southeast may have fewer resources and fewer chances to interact with Chinese American families and immerse in Chinese culture.

Selection of Research Participants

The selection of research participants shifted from purposeful sampling to snowball sampling. Below I detailed the process in which I recruited my four participant families as well as an overall description of the four families.

Selection criteria. According to Patton (2002), "the logic and power of purposeful sampling leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (p. 46). Thus, I chose my samples purposefully based on his sampling strategies. My basic criterion for choosing participants is European American parents who have Chinese adoptees aged between 3 and 8 years old.

The age levels of adoptees were decided based on two scholarly references. One is Scroggs and Heitfield's (2001) article which documented parents' choice of activities at their adoptees' different age levels. According to the article, for children aged between 3 and 5 years old, reading books to children about their birth culture became one of the top activities parents perform on a monthly basis. For children at the age of 6 to 9 years old, the frequency of reading books, eating foods, and listening to music stayed roughly the same; yet, taking language classes becomes the priority within families. For children beyond 9 years old, they are active in attending cultural camps for membership and belongingness, but their interest in birth culture dramatically decreases. Hence, reading books is an activity that parents frequently consider performing when their adoptees are aged between 3 and 8 years old.

The other scholarly reference is Brodzinsky's (2011) article about children's understanding of adoption at their different stages. He noted that children aged from 3 to 8 years old are more reliant on parents to help them understand their adoption status and heritage culture.

Thus, the age level from 3 to 8 is a period parents can use picturebooks about China to help their adoptees connect with their heritage culture.

Then, among the participants who volunteer to participate in my research, I intended to select a group of participants that could reflect a wide range of variation, such as parents having two Chinese adoptees, parents having one biological child and one Chinese adoptee, parents having only one Chinese adoptee or parents having one adoptee from China and a second one from another country. I believed selecting participants across a wide range of variation would elicit diverse perspectives from parents in terms of their choices and use of books with their adoptees. In general, I intended to select four to eight adoptive families to work with me, and the selection criteria were as follows: (1) European American adoptive parents, (2) who have Chinese adoptees aged between 3 and 8 years old.

Selection procedures. After I decided my participants' selection criteria, I contacted the Facebook manager of FCC Branch in a large city in the U.S. Southeast. FCC was created by a small group of parents at the dawn of China adoption in 1992 (Klatzkin, 1999) and has grown into a vibrant network of non-profit, volunteer family-support groups that extends across the U.S. and into Canada and the UK. As the largest family group in the U.S. for Chinese adoptees, FCC was a rich platform for me to recruit participants. The branch I chose had a group of around 1,000 families in its network, and it is the closest branch to my university.

The Facebook manager responded to me and sent out my poster to their listserv three times. However, I only received one inquiry from a single mom with three Chinese adoptees, and she decided not to attend the study later, because, in her words, she was "too overwhelmed to participate in the study although she was desperately interested in it." I did not find any participants from the listserv recruitment. Eventually in September, 2014, I got one participant

from the recommendation of a friend who was the president of the Asian Children Mentoring

Program at my university. Then this participant recommended me to her friend, and her friend

not only participated in my study but also forwarded my poster to her friends' circle. The

snowball sampling finally provided me with four participant families who met my criteria.

Luckily enough, the four families presented a variation of difference as shown below in the table.

All names provided below were pseudonyms.

Table 1. Demographic Features of the Four Participant Families

Number	Parents (Name/Age)	Parents' Occupation	Parents' Education	Adoptee (Name/ Age)	Biological Children (Name/age)
1	Grace (43)	Pastor	Ph.D.	Ashley (8)	N/A
2	Sarah (52) Wayne (53)	Physician Professor	Master Ph.D.	Emily (8)	Jeff (16)
3	Kate (40) Mark (41)	Teacher Manager	Bachelor Bachelor	Alice (6)	Adam (16) Colin (14)
4	Ben (50) Jessie (48)	Engineer Real estate agent	Master Bachelor	Mei (9)	Clara (15)

Summarizing the table, I had four participant families with altogether four adopted girls, which is

aligned with the tendency in intercountry adoption from China that about 95% of the Chinese

adoptees are girls (U.S. Department of State, 2012). The four families were different in terms of

these parents' ages, their education levels, their marriage status and the number of biological

children in their families. Those differences made each family unique yet also similar to each

other in certain aspects. I presented the uniqueness and particularity of each family in the fourth

chapter when I reported the results of this study.

The Book Selection List

I presented parents with 33 picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to browse and

select, which were divided into four categories. These 33 picturebooks were pre-selected by me

after I filtered the 105 picturebooks I found in my university's Curriculum Materials Library and

local libraries around Athens with the searching term "China." From the 105 picturebooks, I

decided on the books that offered an authentic and accurate representation of China and Chinese

culture. My criteria of evaluating a book's authenticity were based on my experiences as a

cultural insider and scholars' comments on what an authentic book should look like.

Summarizing from several scholars (Taxel, 1986; Cai, 2002; Yokota, 2005; Henderson, 2005),

authentic books have realistic, nonstereotyped characters, historical and cultural accuracy,

naturally integrated cultural details, authentic use of language, a multidimensional view of

culture and an emotional sensitivity toward a particular culture. Therefore, I chose the books I

wanted to present to parents based on these scholar's criteria.

I also looked at other references to assist in my judgment of books. Books that had won

awards had a higher chance of being included in my list than those books without awards. For

example, CCBC Choices, which was the best-of-year list created annually by the librarians of the

Cooperative Children's Book Center, often prompted my inclusion of certain books into the book

list. However, I was also aware of the high possibilities of books being authentic and having high

quality despite not having an award. For example, the folklore book *Three Monks, No Water* is

an authentic telling of a Chinese folklore story based on my perspectives as a native Chinese, and

this book has not received a book award. Moreover, the book series about celebrating Chinese

festivals were three neatly-written books about how contemporary Chinese families celebrate festivals. They were published by Shanghai Developing Press and distributed in the U.S. and haven't received any reward yet. Thus, I consulted those book award lists without a heavy reliance on them to affect my judgement of the authenticity and quality of a picturebook. Besides book award lists, I also referred to Qin's (2013) recommendation of high-quality picturebooks about Chinese cultural heritage and Chinese Americans. *Henry's First-Moon Birthday* was a book I particularly wanted to include after she introduced it in her article.

I tried to include books as authentic as possible in my book lists. However, the limitations of books influenced my book lists. Among the 105 picturebooks, there were only a few picturebooks portraying contemporary China, which validated scholars' statement that folklore and historical fiction about Asian cultures abound while the modern Asian world is nearly absent in children's literature (Cai, 1994; MacCann, 1997; Yokata & Bates, 2005). Thus, to make up for the quantity deficiency, I included the book *I see the Sun in China* which has attractive real-life pictures about modern China, yet it has some inaccurate details. I incorporated the book in order to investigate whether parents could capture the nuances of life that were not accurate.

Meanwhile, when I collected and filtered the books I found in libraries, I also sent Facebook posts to four major adoption groups with Chinese adoptees to inquire into parents' and adoptees' favorite picturebooks about China and Chinese culture. Only four parents responded to my inquiry, and other parents were following the posts to see the books suggested by some parents. Among the four parents' responses, *Ruby's Wish*, *The Seven Chinese Sisters*, and *Liu and the Bird* were the books they recommended. At that time, *Ruby's Wish* and *Liu and the Bird* were already on my book selection list, but I developed a strong interest in why parents would recommend *The Seven Chinese Sisters*. In my view, this book is not closely related to Chinese

culture although it is written by the renowned Chinese American children's book author Grace Lin and features Chinese characters. With this curiosity, I included the book into my list with a view to find out why certain adoptive parents liked it.

In my final list of 33 picturebooks, I endeavored to cover different genres in these 33 books (poetry, folklore, non-fiction, and historical fiction) and display the differences between ancient China and modern China as well as the different lives lived by people in China and Asian Americans in the U.S. I then divided all the books into four categories: holidays and family life, folklore, Chinese American families, and arts and history. In each of the four selection interviews, I presented books in one of the categories to parents. Because I only had two sets of books, some families might get the category of folklore books first while the other families might get the category of Chinese American families first. Usually there were about seven to nine books in each category, and Table 3.2 offered an overview of the categories and the number of books in each category. The detailed book titles in the four categories were included in the appendix.

Table 2 An Overview of the Book Selection List

Name of the Category	The Number of Books Included in the Category	Descriptions of the Category
Holidays and Family Life	9	Books about how modern Chinese families live their lives and celebrate Chinese holidays
Folklore	9	Folklore in Chinese culture
Arts and History	8	Books about Chinese calligraphy, painting, and historical fiction stories
Chinese American Families	7	Books about the lives of Chinese American families

Data Generation

Given my understanding of Bakhtin's dialogical theory and dialogical research, I conceived data as co-constructed by researchers and research participants. Therefore, instead of using the term *data collection*, I adopted *data generation* to illustrate the way I co-construct data with my research participants in the research field. This idea also coincided with Glesne's (2010) arguments that either data collection to data recording would not be a fit term to describe the process of qualitative research because qualitative researchers have an active role in producing data through the questions they ask rather than collecting inert data lying around in the field. Below is a table displaying the data sources I gathered in my study, and it was followed by a detailed explanation of how I obtained each data resource.

Table 3 Data Sources

Data Source	When	Frequency	Used in Analysis
Semi-structured initial and final interviews with parents (45-60 minutes)	Beginning and end of the study	Two per family	Yes
Open-ended book selection interviews with parents (60 minutes)	Every 2 or 3 weeks	Four per family	Yes
Researcher's field notes	Throughout the study	Six per family	No
Researchers' reflective journals	Throughout the study	Throughout the study	No

Interviews. I designed my interview sessions based on Seidman's (2006) three interview series model. As stated by Seidman, the three interview series is an effective way of plumbing the experiences of participants and placing them in contexts. The first interview establishes the context of a participant's experiences. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which it occurs, and the third encourages participants to ponder the meaning their experiences hold for them. Accordingly, my interviews with participant families were composed of three steps: an initial interview, four book selection interviews and a final interview.

With each participant family, I had a semi-structured initial interview with the parents to examine European American parents' attitudes toward helping their Chinese adoptees foster birth culture ties through various activities. Semi-structured interviews enable the interview to revolve around topics researchers are interested in and also allow the interviewees freedom to explore their ideas and experiences. Therefore, I used the first semi-structured interview to investigate parents' practice of activities that were aimed at connecting to the birth cultures of their adoptees, their perceptions of reading and habits of reading to/with their adoptees, and their choices of books when reading to/with their children. The initial interview with parents lasted 45-60 minutes and was conducted entirely at the parents' houses. The adoptees were not present when their parents had the interview with me.

After the initial interview, I had four open-ended book selection interviews with the parents. During each interview, I presented a group of seven to nine picturebooks from one category to parents and invited them to browse and respond to the books first without their children's presence. Parents were encouraged to perform a think-aloud of their responses during their book selection process, and the number of comments varied among the five parents. Grace

and Ben had profuse comments on the books while Sarah, Wayne, and Kate did not have many think-aloud comments. The interviews were mostly in the format of spontaneous conversations that allowed parents to bring up ideas, express feelings and recollect memories. When parents finished browsing the books, I asked them to provide an overall review of the books, discuss specific books they liked or disliked and place the books in order of preference.

All the book selection interviews with parents were conducted when the adoptees were not present although some adoptees would come out often to join us for different purposes: attracting their parents' attention, requesting for something, having a quick glance at the books, or even reading the books. For example, for the first two book selection interviews, Emily waited at the table when I displayed the books and begged her parents to read some of the picturebooks to her. Mei liked to greet me and her father often when Ben and I were conducting book selection interviews.

Because this is a study looking specifically at adoptive parents' selection of and responses to picturebooks about China and Chinese culture, I did not want the adoptees to affect their parents' original thoughts. Therefore, I emphasized to the parents that their children were able to see the books only after they finished the interview session with me. Three of the four families followed my study procedures while in Emily's case I had to reiterate the request when Emily was present during the first two book selection interviews with her parents.

When I completed the book selection sessions with the parent(s), I let the books stay at their house to increase the family's contact time with the books, and parents would tell me more information about their adoptees' transactions with the books during the next visit. In terms of the frequency of the interviews, each participant family had one or two book selection interviews each month, After four book selection interviews, parent(s) from each family had a final semi-

structured interview with me, and the questions were focused on encouraging them to reflect on the experiences of participating in this study and the value of picturebooks in fostering an appreciation for their adoptees' birth culture.

All the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Parents' read-aloud with their adoptees were videotaped to offer more references when discussing parents' and their adoptees' transactions with the books, such as their expressions, gestures and the way they transacted with the pictures and the words in the books. Yet, the videos were not analyzed.

Field notes. Field notes are written representations of what researchers have observed during the research, and they can be crucial to any qualitative study (Waren & Karner, 2005). Ideally, they are thickly descriptive of the research settings and what happens in the research field; however, due to my language capability as a second language speaker, I chose to take notes only on what I considered important as contextual information, such as the display of Chinese artifacts at the house as well as elements that cannot be captured by recordings, such as the way parents choose the books. The field notes were not used in data analysis, but they served two primary functions: 1) they provided thoughts and ideas for my reflective journal; 2) they facilitated my data analysis when I needed the context for reference.

Reflective Journals. My reflective journal documented my responses to the fieldwork and participants, including my biases and assumptions about the study and my efforts to understand and cope with dilemmas and mistakes during the study. In my reflective journal, I reflected much on the way I interacted with parents and the way parents' response to books challenged my understanding of Chinese culture and certain Chinese cultural values. The reflective journal was not used in data analysis; however, the journal assisted the process of examining the tensions that existed between parents and me.

Data Analysis

Pascale (2011) argued about the importance of aligning ontology, epistemology and methodology in qualitative research, and he proposed two terms—process of formalization and process of interpretation—to refer to the data collection and data analysis process in qualitative research. He maintained that qualitative researchers should pay particular attention to whether the process of interpretation is aligned with the theoretical framework of the study.

With Pascale's argument in mind, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis to analyze the data sources. In Braun and Clarke's statement, thematic analysis is a flexible and useful research tool that can be wedded to different theoretical frameworks; therefore, thematic analysis could be combined with Bakhtin's dialogical theory. Moreover, thematic analysis can generate "a rich, detailed, yet complex accounts of data" (p. 78) if used thoroughly and rigorously. Thus, I took Braun and Clarke's suggestions in looking at thematic analysis as a recursive process of interpreting data and going beyond the specific content to make sense of data.

In applying Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis, I employed both inductive analysis and deductive/theoretical thematic analysis to answer my research question. The inductive analysis involves coding the data for themes "without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researchers' analytic preconceptions" (p. 83). Thus, I used inductive analysis to review all the data and generate themes about parents' book selection process and their book selection rationales.

On the other hand, deductive analysis or theoretical thematic analysis goes the opposite way. It "is driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area" and is "more a detailed analysis of some aspects of the data" (p. 84). Considering dialogical research has a

particular focus on letting tensions breathe through discussing how tensions work in data and unsettle human life, I also used deductive analysis to identify the tensions in data, which helped me discuss the issues around parents' selection of books. Therefore, I used both inductive and deductive analysis to answer my research question. Table 3.4 below provides an overview of the analysis methods used with particular parts of the research question.

Table 4 Data Analyses

Research Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis Method
Parents' book selection process	From book selection interview transcripts, field notes, and researchers' reflective journal	Inductive thematic analysis
Parents' book selection rationales	From all the interview transcripts, field notes and researchers' reflective journal	Inductive thematic analysis
The issues around parents' selection of books	From all the interview transcripts, field notes and researchers' reflective journal	Deductive thematic analysis of tensions to discuss the issues

As I chose thematic analysis as my analysis method, I was aware of the necessity of not looking at themes as finalized when conducting dialogical research, because dialogical research discusses what is at stake in data instead of finalizing what data are. By probing into the meaning of a theme for the research, in particular discussing the possible social voices and personal struggles underlying a theme, themes become a starting point for researchers to understand and represent the research participants in their struggles and ideological becoming process. For

example, one of the themes describing parents' book selection rationales was positive contents. Engaging in dialogues about why parents were attracted to positive contents and what social discourses might have influenced their preferences of positive contents would help open up interpretive spaces.

Trustworthiness of the Study

According to Given and Saumure (2008), thinking about the trustworthiness of a study provides qualitative researchers with a set of tools by which they can examine the worth and credibility of their study. In this section, I reviewed the trustworthiness of my study through looking at my efforts to increase the credibility of study and examining my subjectivities throughout the research process.

The Credibility of the Study

Credibility was defined by Jensen (2008) as "the methodological procedures and sources used to establish a high level of harmony between the participants' expressions and the researchers' interpretations" (p. 139). In other words, researchers need to accurately and richly represent the phenomenon in question during the research process. It is known that qualitative researchers cannot achieve objectiveness in qualitative research; however, there are ways for qualitative researchers to ensure the representations and findings match the data. Below I described my efforts to produce an accurate representation.

The subjective nature of interpretation points to the need to use multiple data resources, known as triangulation, to understand the multiple perspectives available and make up for the limitation in interpretation from a single person's point of view. Moreover, interpretive research is often criticized for recognizing evidence only if they are in relation to the analysis, which reflects the necessity to rely on various data resources for solid research. To deal with the

complexity of situations, Richardson (2005) suggested crystallization of data as a more useful metaphor than triangulation, because there are far more than three sides by which to approach the world. Thus, during my data generation period, I triangulated my data sources with interviews, field notes, the researcher's reflective journal, parents' ranking order of books, and photos of Chinese artifacts and books about China at the parents' houses. Furthermore, I tried to establish enough contact time with families whenever they invited me to attend their family activities. For example, I went to the New Year celebration at Kate's house and listened to one of Mei's Chinese language classes.

During data analysis, I constantly expanded, modified and revised the codes to reach coherent themes that can describe the phenomenon. I also triangulated the themes with my field notes, looking for contradictions. As I wrote my research report, I continuously checked whether the data extracts I used were illustrative of the themes. I talked with my Chinese colleague about the research results to seek multiple perspectives on the data. Through these means, I hoped that I had conducted a credible study although I sensed my subjectivities sometimes influenced parents' selections of books.

Subjectivities

Bakhtin's dialogical theory emphasized people's personal histories and cultural worldviews when people transact with certain cultures. As a result, dialogical research attaches great importance to the experiences and sociocultural views researchers bring into the field to transact with research participants. Moreover, Pascale (2011) talked about "interpretation as always a matter of positionality—how one is situated within networks of power, geographies of knowledge, and histories of experience" (p. 72). Therefore, it is impossible for researchers to get "pure data uncontaminated by human thoughts and action" (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle,

Roulston & St. Pierre, 2007, p. 27). Instead, researchers need to constantly reflect on their

positionality in the study and the way their current cultural models have effects on the study.

In my study, I was aware of the mutual effects that those adoptive parents and I had on

each other surrounding the books. As a Chinese studying in the U.S., I was eager to get my

Chineseness recognized in daily life and in literary texts. I felt an urge to recommend

picturebooks that validated my understanding of China. I spoke highly of certain books and

explained why I deemed them authentic and high-quality. Although parents did not show as

much passion as I did, they might have been affected by my recommendations. I was also

constantly challenged by those parents' explanations of why they didn't like a book and what

they considered as Chinese. For example, regarding the book *Three Monks, No Water*, I

considered it an authentic Chinese book because I grew up knowing the story and reciting the

proverb related to the story. Yet, after parents told me they did not find the book Chinese, I was

first very disappointed, but then began to think hard about the concept of Chinese culture. Thus,

parents had an influence on me when we came together to read and discuss the books, and I am

sure that they were probably more or less affected by my descriptions of Chinese culture and

contemporary China. I hoped that I had presented the mutual influences between adoptive

parents and me in my research report so that the transactions us will continue to influence readers

of this study and instigate further dialogues and reflections.

Summary

In this chapter I illustrated how Bakhtin's dialogical theory has informed my

understanding of conducting dialogical research. I explained my research methodology and

research methods, and I reviewed the trustworthiness of this study. I found Bakhtin's theory

useful in opening up interpretive spaces and carefully thinking about the use of analytic tools and

the process of generating and analyzing data. With Bakhtin's dialogical theory as the theoretical framework, I hoped I had conducted a study that was able to provide a rich, nuanced and accurate representation of European American parents' rationales for selecting picturebooks about China and Chinese culture. In the next chapter, I presented case-by-case accounts of parents' book selection process and book use in each family, my thematic analysis of data across cases, and the results and meanings from the data.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF DATA

"Research does not merely report; it instigates." –Frank, 2005, p. 968.

In my third chapter, I discussed the key points of conducting a dialogical research—1) letting tensions breathe, 2) sustaining the tension between dialogue and analysis during the research report and 3) recognizing the important principle of unfinalizability in looking at both the researchers and research participants. Chapter 4 shows my attempts to fulfill the key points of dialogical research by presenting a research finding that encourages dialogical reflection on the data and raises as many unsettling questions as I possible based on the data I examined. As the above quote notes, research instigates questions and issue rather than answers.

The research question is, *What process and rationales for selection do European American parents of children adopted from China use when choosing picturebooks with the intent of helping their children establish birth culture ties, and what issues occur around that selection?* In this chapter, I presented case-by-case accounts of parents' book selection process in each family. Then looking across the cases, I offered an analysis of the themes I identified in the four families about these European American parents' book selection process and their selection rationales. Finally, I discussed the issues around parents' selection of books based on the tensions I identified in the data through a deductive thematic analysis.

As I was writing the chapter, I viewed writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), a journey of documenting my past, present and future becoming as well as the research participants' becoming. I was aware of the diverse effects my participants and I had on

each other when we came together to discuss picturebooks about China and Chinese culture. My Chineseness was visible in these adoptive families, and my understanding of China and Chinese culture was questioned, revised and reinvented during the transactions with parents surrounding the books. At the same time, these parents also eagerly sought my perspectives to shape their knowledge of China and Chinese culture.

It is important to reiterate that I interpreted the term *Chineseness* as being Chinese in terms of both a cultural and racial identity. Many scholars used the term without a definition (Dorow, 2006; Lee, 2007; Louie, 2009); however, I considered it important to pinpoint the meaning because the discussions of Chineseness were frequent as I used the data to examine how European American parents approached the cultural and racial aspects of their adoptees' Chineseness when they selected and used the books with their adoptees.

The cases were presented in order based on the age of the adoptees from the youngest to the oldest. Research reported that parents' interest in cultural socialization practices diminished with time (Deberry, Scarr & Weinberg, 1996; Bergquist, Campbell & Unrau, 2003). Thus, presenting the cases in children's age order might allow a view of the relationships between children's ages and the level of parents' engagement in cultural socialization practices. According to these adoptees' ages, Alice is 6 years old, the youngest. The next is 8-year-old Ashley. The third is Emily, who is 2 months older than Ashley and lives with her father, mother and brother. Finally there is Mei, who is 9 years old and was adopted when she was 6.

The descriptions of each case includes a brief introduction to the family's demographical features, parents' attitudes toward learning Chinese culture, and parents' selection of books. In each case, the descriptions were followed by a more analytical discussions of what I saw in that family. Then, after the presentation of the four families, I identified the themes in parents' book

selection process as well as their book selection rationales. Finally, I discuss the issues surrounding parents' book selections through the tensions identified in parents' book selection process and rationales.

The analysis of the European American parents' selection of books demonstrated that they constructed an aestheticized Chinese culture from the books that aligned with their interests and cultural models. Parents displayed an unwillingness to engage with Chinese cultural values and the racial differences of their adoptees through focusing on connections, universal elements, family bonding, and their children's reading abilities.

Kate and Alice

Kate and her husband Mark live in a small city in the U.S. Southeast. She is a middle school math teacher and her husband is a manager. They are both in their early 40s, and their two biological sons, Adam and Colin, are in high school and middle school, respectively. In 2010, they adopted Alice, a move they felt was under God's guidance. At the time of the study, Alice was 6, and she was the youngest one among the four adoptees with whom I worked. Although this is a two-parent family, only Kate participated in my study, and Mark chose not to without offering specific reasons.

Kate said their family experienced a transition of not caring about China to a love of China. At the beginning of their adoption, when the family found out they were going to travel to China to pick up Alice, they remembered thinking, "We don't want to go to China, why would we want to go to China? We just want her to be brought here." Then as they started through the process and helped Alice connect to her birth culture through celebrating Chinese holidays and practicing Chinese traditions, they began to think that China is "a really awesome country with

an amazing history and culture." Yet, I wondered whether that love was a compelled love because Kate told me that, "We have to love China because it's where Alice comes from."

Just as some native Chinese's comments on Kate's family expressed surprise—"You are more Chinese than us"—I was surprised about the Chinese elements Kate integrated into her family to help Alice establish birth culture ties. She used a bamboo steamer to steam Chinese buns which Chinese families replace with electric ones for consideration of convenience. Kate celebrated Chinese New Year each year in her family. She usually invited Alice's friends over to the house and prepared Chinese food and red envelopes to pass around. Moreover, the whole family was involved in the celebrations. Her two sons made Chinese couplet banners, and her husband decorated the houses with Chinese lanterns.

Despite the fact that Kate learned about China and Chinese culture mostly during and after the adoption process, I think she was still knowledgeable about China. She talked about China's pollution, the demonstration in Hong Kong, and the Cultural Revolution in Chinese history. However, she said she would not talk with Alice about this at the current stage because she wanted her to be very positive about her birth culture.

Kate said Alice likes reading books, particularly books about China and Chinese culture. She puts national geography books about China on the coffee table so that Alice "can flip through them at any time." She also has a few Grace Lin (a popular and renowned Chinese American children's literature author) books at home, such as *Thanking the Moon: Celebrating the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival* and *Dim Sum for Everyone*; she is their favorite author now. However, she felt those books were too simple, and she was ready for Alice to read "some Chinese stories that are more advanced."

Although Kate emphasized the fun aspect of Chinese books, I noticed a number of indications that she seemed more concerned about whether the books I brought could challenge Alice's reading a little bit. During our initial interview, Kate kept saying she was trying to read Alice chapter books such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, though she was still in the 1st grade. Kate wanted books that were on Alice's reading level but that were also age appropriate. She tried to teach her, "You don't have to have pictures when reading." I was puzzled about Kate's purpose of participating in this study. Was she using the books to enhance Alice's reading abilities or to satisfy her daughter's love of reading books about China and Chinese culture? Then, which purpose played a more significant role in Kate's mind? What was Kate's perception of her role in this study?

Kate's Book Selection Process

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, for each of my four visits, I brought 7-9 books into a family and let the parents decide how many books they wanted to read and which ones to look at. Compared with other parents, Kate would choose around four to five books to read in each of our book selection interviews, which was less than the number of books the other parents read. Often she asked, "Do I need to do another one?" or "Are we good?" to show her unwillingness to continue browsing the books. Considering the fact that most of the book selection interviews with her were around 8:00 PM during weekdays at her house, I figured she might be tired after one day's work. It could also be that she was not very interested in my books or she tried to avoid answering my follow-up questions by not reading the books because she often said "I asked hard questions."

When she began browsing books, she often picked up a book that connected to their family experience. For example, she picked up *Monkey King* because Monkey King is one of the

characters in a movie they watched together called *Big Bird Goes to China*. The same went with

Mooncakes when she took up the book and shared with me how much Alice loved mooncakes.

She also tended to choose books that had attractive covers as in the case of *Red Kite, Blue Kite*,

although she did not like the book later because she found out "it was too sad."

In contrast to other parents who were more focused on the content of the books they read,

Kate paid great attention to whether a book matched Alice's reading level. While she was

reading a book, she constantly pointed out challenging words in a text and commented on the

plot line of a book, as is displayed in her comment on *Monkey King*:

> *"Some of the words are a little challenging, like contemplating and captivity and I'll*
>
> *have to talk to her about some of the words' meanings. But sometimes if you read a book*
>
> *over and over, it helps to understand a little bit better. Yeah, I like the beginning, I mean,*
>
> *it seems like it's going to be just a little simple book and then as you keep reading, you*
>
> *are like wow, some of it is pretty complicated for her. So many characters make it a little*
>
> *bit confusing for her."*

Thus Kate was alert to the difficulty of a book for Alice. Moreover, she was concerned about

Alice's understanding of a topic. When she finished browsing the book *Red Kite, Blue Kite*, a

book about the separation of a father from his son during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, she

remarked, "Lots of adult stuff, deep stuff, I don't think she will understand that, and I wonder

what her response would be when seeing the parent being taken away. It probably makes her sad."

Kate did not comment much on the content of the books. Most of her comments were

related to whether Alice would be able to read and understand a book. Sometimes she expressed

her enjoyment of a book, saying "I like the theme of the book." Occasionally she commented on

the pictures of a book, noting "the picture in this book is not as appealing and vivid as the other

ones" or "the illustration looks like classic Chinese artwork." Her comments were brief, and I

regularly encouraged her to speak more about the book; however, she did not say much even

with my prompt. I could tell she was uncomfortable with certain contents, but she expressed

these concerns in an implicit way as in the case of *Ruby's Wish*. When she read the sentence

about the old man having many wives, she remarked:

> *Kate: Married many wives. Well, that's great.*
>
> *Xiaoli: Yes, in the 1900, a rich man had many wives. Does that make you feel*
>
> > *uncomfortable?*
>
> *Kate: A little bit. Maybe Alice would ask why he married many wives, haha, I don't know.*

It seemed that she was not eager to talk much about her discomfort with the cover-up words "I

don't know."

Overall, Kate was short in her comments on the content of the books; yet, she was more

expressive and responsive when her family's experience with Chinese culture was validated in a

book. For example, the lanterns in *Celebrating the Lantern Festival* connected her to the lanterns

she had at home:

> *"We bought a bunch of lanterns in China. They were flat and you can open them up and*
>
> *whenever we celebrate Chinese holidays, we will hang them up. You know, last week we*
>
> *went to the Chinese cultural center in Chamblee, they had so many lanterns…"*

The response to the books was extended into an exciting description of how they performed

Chinese cultural traditions at home. Not only was she passionate about her Chinese experience

being confirmed in books but Kate was also curious about various foods she read about in the

books. She asked me about the fruit used in the candy in *One Year in Beijing* and considered

making it for their next New Year celebrations. She inquired about Zongzi, a typical dish eaten

during the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, after reading a book about it:

> Kate: Where do you buy the lotus leaves to wrap the glutinous rice?
>
> Xiaoli: It's difficult to buy here. But you can buy ready-made, frozen Zongzi in the
>
> Chinese grocery market.
>
> Kate: Oh, really? Do you steam it, could I put it in my bamboo steamer?
>
> Xiaoli: Yes, either meat filling or bean paste filling
>
> Kate: Do you have rice in it? I need to try it.

My impressions were that Kate showed more interest in talking about the dishes she could make

for celebrating Chinese festivals than discussing the Chineseness in books or other cultural

details that demonstrated the cultural differences between Chinese and U.S. culture.

In her initial interview, she stated that, "It is impossible to recreate a Chinese home but

we can do little things like celebrating holidays as much as you can in our own way to promote

Chinese culture." Food was probably one of the important "little things" she was pursing at home

to help Alice connect to Chinese culture. On the other hand, maybe food, Chinese dresses and

other things related to Chinese holidays were Kate's conceptualization of Chinese culture; in

other words, her conceptions of Chinese culture were constructed from those material forms of

culture that she could easily incorporated into her families.

Kate's interest in making Chinese foods and celebrating Chinese holidays explained, to

some extent, her favorite category of books, holidays, and family life, among the four categories

of books I brought. She thought she would like the folklore category, but she did not find much

Chinese culture there. She did not feel the books were obviously Chinese, and "They are similar

to folklore books in the U.S. They teach life lessons, just in a different way." Regarding the

category of arts and history, she considered them difficult, because "The historical information and some of the concepts in Chinese arts (e.g., Chinese calligraphy) are difficult to understand for Alice." Moreover, she didn't quite like the historical fiction books, because "some of them were sad, and revealed a message that girls were not as good as boys." Finally, she deemed the books about Chinese American family "ok books" and did not have a preference for that category. In her words, "We are Americans, not Chinese, I don't really know that it is that important for us to have books about Chinese American families because, (pausing), we're not really a Chinese American family."

Kate's comments on the four categories of books implied that she was constructing a Chinese identity for Alice based her own cultural models (Beach, 2000), and her constructions assimilated the elements she aligned with and excluded the parts that she did not feel to be important in Alice's identity development. Compared to foods and holiday practices, arts and history were not preferred, and the Chinese values embedded in Chinese folklore books were downplayed. Moreover, Alice's racial identity was dismissed in their family when Kate considered all their family members as Americans. Would such a construction really help Alice understand her Chineseness?

When speaking of the reason for choosing holidays and family life as her favorite category of books, Kate expressed that Alice could relate to that category better, and probably she could relate better to them as well. Being able to relate to something is actually a frequent appeared rationale for Kate to choose or dislike a book. She would often say, "I don't think she'll relate to this one much," "I think she can kind of relate to it," and "there is little in this book she can relate to." Connections to personal experiences become an important criterion for Kate to choose books, and it is not difficult to understand why she did not prefer the Chinese American

family books. To use her own words, "We cannot relate to those because we don't know her Chinese grandparents, we don't really relate to that as much." The rationale of connectivity to personal lives became Kate's horizon to approach the Chinese culture in books and ignore the racial differences between Kate and her daughter.

Another reason she chose the holiday and family life category is because of the value of books for her to prepare Chinese festival celebrations. Kate indicated that, with the book *Celebrating Chinese New Year*, she no longer needed to look for the information online about the meaning of each food during their Chinese New Year celebrations, because "Now the information is already there in books." In contrast, the Chinese Americans books do not have the values that are desired in the holidays and family life books. Besides the practical value Kate suggested in holiday and family life books, she also emphasized the educational value of books. She wanted to read *Ruby's Wish* to Alice because of the educational value of the book although "there is a lot of history information in the book that needs explaining." Another example is the book *Look What Came Here from China*. Kate did not have a preference for this non-fiction picturebook, because Alice had not been drawn to a non-fiction book; however, she included in her choice for the reason that "this book is very educational and it would be good for Alice to know the information inside."

In conclusion, Kate was very aware of her child's reading needs when browsing a book and emphasized connectivity to personal lives and value of a book when selecting a book for her daughter. However, I also saw that Kate was constructing a Chinese culture based on her conceptions of what was important in Alice's Chinese identity rather than from the people who were living in it. Her focus on foods and holiday practices also implied her position to see

Alice's Chineseness as something cultural manifested in traditional celebrations rather than racial identification, which could be addressed through family activities.

Summary and Thoughts about Kate's Family

To summarize, the child's perceived needs, along with connectivity to personal lives and values of a book, were Kate's primary reasons for selecting books for her daughter. In her reflection interview, she shared with me the books I presented were frequently read by her daughter in the house; however, she did not see a change in Alice. While I was thrilled about the productive use of books in Kate's family, I kept pondering Kate's comment of not seeing a change in her daughter. I wondered whether it was because of Kate's emphasis on connections in her book selections, reflected in her continuous search for points that Alice could relate to, instead of differences that they could talk about. Another thought I had about their family was the focus on holiday celebrations in Kate's family.

Limits of connections. According to Bakhtin (1986), reading is "never a translation from the other's language into one's own language, but rather "the meeting of the consciousness in the contact zone" (p.141). Therefore, reading is more about how readers assimilate and re-process the differences when their own cultural worlds collide with those presented in texts, rather than looking for the parallel part between readers and texts. It is true that personal connections increase the aesthetic enjoyment of texts (Rosenblatt, 1938); however, engagement with difference encourages readers to realize the way their language and beliefs are socially constructed and the positions on which they stand to evaluate different ideas. Moreover, as Cai (2008) pointed out, personal choices and connections are never one's own but are rather permeated with social voices, which aligns with Bakhtin's (1981) ideas—one's ideological

consciousness comes from the constant struggle and mediation between different social discourses.

Thus, only through talking and discussing about the contents in books, particularly those uncomfortable parts, can readers come to a better understanding of their own cultural words and the cultures that are present in the texts. Yet, I did not think Kate had many dialogues about the books, and there was not much discussion about how she was going to use the books to promote Alice's understanding of Chinese culture. She told me, "it's difficult to discuss those difficult issues, and we want her to be positive about her birth culture." I agreed about promoting Alice's pride of her Chinese cultural heritage; however, having dialogues about differences will open up fresh new aspects and understandings for Alice to interpret her Chineseness.

On the other hand, only looking for connections in books leads to what Allan Luke (2003) called "parochial literacy" because "the search of relevance fences the kids into the local context and experience" (p.21) without helping children bridge space and time and reach beyond the global level. Thus, the obsessions with connections, sometimes, fail to stimulate the power of children's books in facilitating the shift between local and global cultures. This is especially the case with global children's literature, books that address cultural groups outside of America (Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). Given this consideration, it is important to push the texts beyond the level of personal connections.

Cynthia Lewis (2000) argued that disrupting the readers' inclination to identify with the text can heighten the reader's self-consciousness and text consciousness. I agreed with her point and maintained that readers need to confront a tension between connections and differences when reading texts about other cultures. Being aware of the tension provides a way for us to

move between local and global cultures and explore the ways in which people live and think in cultures that are different from our own.

Focusing on holiday celebrations. In Kate's family, I noticed a passion for performing Chinese holidays; correspondingly, holidays and Chinese foods were the predominant elements Kate assimilated in reading books about Chinese culture. Previous studies have documented white parents' obsession with holiday celebrations and have criticized their "celebratory view of China and Chinese culture" (Volkmann, 2003, p. 39). Klatzkin (2002) argued that with the abundance of holiday celebrations, white parents tend to exoticize Chinese culture and ignore "the living, breathing Chinese American culture at doorstep" (p. 29).

I did not want to criticize Kate's family, because I saw Kate's efforts in preparing those celebrations and Alice's pride of her birth culture when inviting friends over. It seemed Kate was creating a more vibrant form of Chinese culture in her house, one that reminded me of my Chineseness and one that was blended with her own family traditions. As I mentioned, she used a bamboo steamer for steaming Chinese buns, and I felt intimate and delighted when I saw the steamer. However, it also evoked the question of whether she was overdoing the ancient and romanticized aspects of Chinese culture by using a bamboo steamer. I don't know. Sometimes it is difficult to draw a line between appropriate efforts and overemphasis on Chinese culture.

I also recollected my original frustration with Kate for the fact that she did not relate to the books about Chinese American families. However, the more I thought about it, the more I understood Kate's position. Compared to those Chinese cultural values performed in Chinese and Chinese American families, holidays might be a more accessible form for Kate to pick up. You simply need to make the food and decorate the house, and holiday practices can be easily incorporated into family activities and used for strengthening family bonding. In contrast,

Chinese values were implicit to be perceived and performed, and often times they conflicted with European American parents' cultural models.

Yet, I still hope Kate can talk more about the differences (both cultural and racial differences) she identified in the books with Alice besides paying attention only to holidays. Adoptive parents' resistance to cultural differences fail to provide their adoptees with a comprehensive and living form of Chinese culture, and parents' reluctance to deal with their adoptees' racial differences often lead to the situation where adoptees face racism on their own.

An additional thought I had was whether Kate's resistance to dealing with differences was related to her worry about family bonding being undermined by those differences. She told me one time that "Alice would beg to go to China again when she read these books." Then, I asked her how often Alice said such things. Kate communicated that Alice implored to go back to China and see her birth parents, and this topic was on and off in their family. She also added, "We would let her search for her birth parents when she was much older, but we are also worried about that, because she is ours." I sensed Kate's discomfort with this topic, and her inadvertent disclosure led me to wonder again whether the connection to Chinese culture in Kate's family was compelled and whether Kate's purpose of encouraging Alice's reading of books about China and Chinese was to console and satiate Alice's longing for her birth parents. Apparently, there is a tension between family bonding and birth culture/parents connections as Kate connected her daughters to Chinese culture through these picturebooks.

As I was writing this chapter, Kate sent me a photo of Alice making a PowerPoint about the Chinese New Year to share with her classmates. She told me Alice came up with the idea, and she used some of the books I presented to them. I was ecstatic about the benefits books can

grant her, and I sincerely wished her love of books about China and Chinese culture will build a strong foundation for her to grapple with issues of identity and race when she grows up.

Grace and Ashley

Grace is a 39-year-old single mom with an 8-year-old daughter adopted from China. As a women minister with a Ph.D. degree, she felt that women ministers are unwanted and unaccepted in the southern U.S., and such feelings, in her mind, seemed similar to the situations confronting girls in Chinese orphanages, who are often abandoned due to China's one-child policy. In her words, she "felt kinship for the little girls for adoption in China." As a result, she adopted her daughter in 2008, and they live with Grace's parents.

During our initial interview, I found Grace knew much about China. As she said, she read voraciously about China after the adoption process began and had American friends doing business in China who would constantly share updates with her through Skype. She often read news about China online although she did not find "a lot of popular, positive stories about China."

Grace said she was open to introducing Chinese culture into her family, but I think Grace's neighborhood, her working environments, and the demographics of the school where Ashely was enrolled might not provide many opportunities. Grace worked at a church in which there were no Asian children, Ashley's school had few Asians, and there were few Chinese American families in Grace's neighborhood. Therefore, whether Grace made the attempts to reach out to Chinese culture and people of Chinese origins would directly affect her daughter's knowledge of China and attitude toward learning Chinese culture.

Grace's daughter, Ashley, was a very active and outspoken girl. Every time I went to their house, she was eager to show me some Karate moves she had learned or perform a song with her violin. As Grace described, Ashley was excited about my visit to their house and always

asked her mother when my next family visit would be. Ashley's enthusiasm about my visits was one of the cues Grace had recently taken to realize "It is important for Ashley to have people who look like her to be around her." Before my visit, there were already a few incidents in which Grace became aware that Ashley was purposefully seeking people who looked like her, especially little girls. Therefore, one of her purposes to attend this project was to have Ashley interact with "educated women from China here in America to see who she might be but was not because of her situation."

The other purpose to be involved in my study is to help Ashely find the "right" books that would interest her. With a Ph.D. degree in theology, Grace considered reading as "her relaxation and enjoyment" and expected her daughter to find the value of reading. Based on Grace's description, Ashley is

> *"Under her second grade level reading and is finally getting comfortable in her reading. [I was] trying very hard to find books that interest her because for so long they have to read what they are told to read in school and she has very decided ideas about what she likes and doesn't like, so some of the things she read kind of turned off her reading."*

Therefore, by participating in my study, Grace hoped to find books that might interest Ashley and ignite Ashley's love of reading. In fact, to achieve the goal, every night, Grace did bedtime reading with Ashley for half an hour, and she read a book of Ashley's choosing.

When flipping through the books at Grace's house, I found it interesting that the five books which were considered to be "about China" by Grace were not very related to China and Chinese culture in my eyes. Three of them were picturebooks about the topic of adoption, one is a simple Chinese language book, and the last one is Grace Lin's *Lissy's Friends*, a book with little connection to China despite its Chinese characters. I was curious about the Chinese

elements Grace saw in these books because I viewed the books with a different Chinese perspective.

The reason why Grace regarded these books as ones "about China" could also be related to Grace's principle of "not making Ashley feel different" in introducing Chinese cultures into their family. She didn't "want to push too much onto Ashley about Chinese culture so that Ashley feels ostracized and different from her family and her school"; hence, books with a lot of Chinese elements might not meet Grace's needs. However, Grace mentioned that she was learning about the importance of Chineseness in Ashley's life from those small incidents in which Ashley aspired to establish relationships with people who looked like her, and she had been "making efforts to help Ashley connect to her Chinese part in age appropriate ways."

Grace's Book Selection Process

Among the five parents, Grace was the only one who read all my books. She stated she was a fast reader and liked to read everything. Yet, reading fast did not reduce her attention to details and her transactions with the books. She made plenty of think-aloud comments on the illustration and contents of books. For example, she was an eagle-eyed reader of pictures and often remarked on the colors of a book. While reading *Monkey King*, she was amazed at the illustrator's use of both black and white to depict Monkey King. She expressed: "In our literature, they'll do color associations like white for good, black for evil, but Monkey King wears both, I really like that, so it doesn't assign emotions with the colors." She also particularly liked the book *Ruby's Wish* for the primary background color of red, because this is the color she often associated with China.

Regarding the contents, she commented on everything— themes, plot, points she did not understand and new knowledge she learned about China. A regular comment would go like this:

> *"Monkey is really naughty, haha, he uses magic to make many tiny monkey soldiers, cool, jade emperor is afraid of him, it seems the jade emperor always appears in ancient Chinese stories, Buddha was called in to stop monkey, monkey was trapped, very long-time out and saved by Monk Tan. They went on a journey to the west, they were caught by the black bear and bad monk, there are so many characters, I kind of got confused about the story, I don't think Ashley can understand this…"*

Thus, her book reading process was accompanied by her generous think-aloud comments, which provided me with opportunities to see places for offering her more background information to understand the story.

A recurring pattern I noticed during my observation is that Grace always had Ashley in mind when reading a book. She continuously corresponded a character to Ashley or talked about Ashley whenever she made a connection. When reading *Sons of the Dragon King*, she connected each of the seven sons to certain aspects of Ashley—"Ashley is good at swimming", "Ashley is also very musical", and "Ashley loves the water and lakes." Grace's love of her daughter was apparent in her profuse compliments on Ashley.

In Grace's initial interview, Grace revealed her fear that she was afraid that Ashley would want her birth mother over her someday and how she valued the bonding between she and Ashley. Thus, I found that Grace's thoughts of Ashley in almost every book indicated her emphasis on family bonding. Additionally, because Grace and Ashley lived with Grace's parents, the sweet interaction between grandparents and grandchildren in some of the books was also the reason why Grace liked those books. She felt the interactions were "so much like Ashley and my parents." Family bonding played an important role in her browsing and selection of books.

As a single mom who advocated for women power, Grace was alert to the representation of women's images in those books. She held reservations about the series of books regarding celebrating Chinese festivals due to the reason that she found "The grandfather was the only person who holds knowledge and tells the folklore story about why Chinese celebrate a certain festival." She was ecstatic about the *Mulan* book, because the Chinese book version had no love story in it, compared to the Disney version, and it challenged her stereotypes of women in China being in an unfavorable and passive situation.

Grace also made her efforts to engage with the books through comparing various sources and questioning her assumptions and biases. She made lots of comparisons between Chinese and American culture, such as the emotional associations with colors, the status of religions in Chinese and American societies, and the moon lady in Chinese traditions versus the man on the moon in U.S. traditions. Often the comparisons urged her to question her own assumptions and source of knowledge. For example, the comparison of *Mulan* in the Chinese version and *Mulan* in the Disney version prompted Grace to scrutinize her prejudice toward Chinese women and biased representation of Chinese women in media coverage. She realized that she should rely more on direct sources than secondary knowledge.

Because of Grace's outspokenness in her think-aloud comments and her eagerness to know more and examine her Chinese knowledge, she frequently turned to me as an insider for textual clarification and cultural explanation. She wanted to know the meaning of Chinese characters in books and requested more background information about the books. When finishing the book *Sparrow Girl*, which was set during the Chinese famine period in the 1960s, she said:

Grace: So I have never heard about the Chinese famine.

> *Xiaoli: It was during the 1960s. When China was founded in 1949, our government encouraged people to have babies. The more babies a woman had, the bigger contribution she made to the country. Then our population grew so fast that we didn't have enough to eat. The bad weather in 1959 kind of triggered the problem. We had a big famine from 1959-1961, then the government thought about reducing the population. Then gradually we had the one-child policy implemented in China.*
>
> *Grace: Interesting, now I understand the one child-policy and rationed food coupons for people. I heard a lot about China today.*

Thus, her reliance on me for background information helped her connect her past and present knowledge about China to enable a more enriched understanding.

Unlike Kate who had difficulty in expressing why she liked or selected a book, Grace was clear and firm on the books she wanted for Ashley. Contents were her primary concern when she selected the books. Whether a book would excite Ashley's interest was another concern. In fact, every time Grace finished her selection interview, she always said she was so eager to see which book Ashley would pick.

Among the four categories, folklore was Grace's favorite category. She liked the books about holidays and family life, but she did not think the group of books would apply to their family much, and none of the books really triggered her enthusiasm in starting a Chinese festival celebration. Next, the books about Chinese American families were "eye-opening" for her in a way that she hadn't considered before. Learning about the experiences of Chinese grandparents coming to the U.S. to live with their children and Chinese American families celebrating their Chinese social customs in the U.S. brought up some issues for her to think about in terms of

Ashley's identities in her future life. However, this category was the hardest one for her to identify with. In her own words, "I think it's helpful to read and have sympathy, but I don't see it relates to us well." Finally, the arts and history category did not appeal to her on a personal level as did the folklore books. "They feel distant to me, the history and the places. Yet, the folklore category does not sound inaccessible because there are also Aesop's Fables and the Bible teaching us moral lessons in the U.S." Thus, books' connectivity to personal lives made folklore Grace's favorite category.

Grace's remarks on the four categories implied her attitude toward Chinese culture and Ashley's identities. The topics of arts and history were distant, and Chinese American families were not relatable to her life. Moreover, the reason she liked folklore books was not because of the Chinese elements she saw but because the similarities between Chinese folklore and the Bible. Chineseness was probably comprised of differences that Grace would not like to deal with. Like Kate, Grace displayed an unwillingness to deal with the racial aspect of Ashley's Chineseness. Considering Grace's particular concern for family bonding and her principle of not making Ashley feel different, I speculated on Grace's worry and thought that her bonding with Ashley would be affected by the cultural and racial differences in Ashley's Chinese origins.

Summary and Thoughts about Grace's Family

In sum, Grace selected books that could interest Ashley and get her to read. She cared about the content of books and wanted books that have positive representation of women and family relationships. She disapproved of the book *New Year's Reunion* and *The Red Butterfly*, because "both of them are sad and talk about family separation. " Like Kate, she emphasized the values of books and the books' connectivity to personal lives. Therefore, the child's perceived

needs, family bonding, connectivity to personal lives, and positive contents are her key rationales for choosing books.

Unlike Kate who was not willing to engage in dialogues with me about contents that made her uncomfortable, I felt Grace and I both had been challenged to step out of our comfort zones and question our cultural identities through talking through the difficult and uneasy points for her in the books. For my part, I not only examined some of my cultural beliefs but also saw the importance of family bonding in transracial families when I tried hard to recommend *New Year's Reunion*, a book that reflects China's reality but may not align with adoptive families' interests. For Grace, she not only explored her cultural identities but also realized how much she imposed her own interpretation onto her daughter.

Cultural transaction between Grace and me. Grace was outspoken in her comments and receptive to new ideas. She liked to voice her discomfort and sought opinions from me. One example would be the folklore story about one Chinese official throwing himself into the river for being frustrated with their emperor who ceded half of the kingdom's territory to another kingdom. Grace stated that she was uncomfortable with it and wondered whether there would be other ways to solve the problem instead of sacrificing one's life.

Upon hearing her comment, I was stunned because the Chinese deemed this man patriotic, and we still commemorate him for his spirit of sacrificing for his country. Yet, while communicating this idea to Grace, I suddenly realized that my idea of patriotism was socially constructed by Chinese textbooks and the Communist Party's philosophy. Grace was true to pinpoint that sacrificing one's life did not solve the problem in the story. On the other hand, Grace was equally struck by my idea of sacrifice and remarked: "Maybe Americans need more ideas of sacrifice and such stories, because Americans always feel so entitled here, deserve this,

deserve that, but sometimes we need to sacrifice things." Thus, both of us were pushed into a contact zone in which our different ideas collide in a way that urged us to be appreciative of multiple perspectives.

The cultural transaction between Grace and me speaks to Bakhtin's (1986) argument: "The better a person understands the degree to which he is externally determined, the closer he comes to understanding and exercising his real freedom" (p.137). I admitted I was uncomfortable in examining my cultural beliefs, but delighted with the discovery, exploration and tension in the dialogical encounter between Grace and me. However, I wondered whether parents would be able to achieve cultural transactions without an insider's help when reading global or multicultural children's literature with their children. Besides, such cultural transactions often require parents to examine their cultural identities and challenge their sociocultural values. Thus, if adoptive parents choose to stay away from uncomfortable contents and select books with positive contents, how can Chinese adoptees acquire a multi-dimensional view of their birth culture?

Family bonding in transracially adoptive families. Based on Bakhtin's dialogical theories, the reading process is one in which readers actively assimilate, evaluate, and reprocess the voices in the text, and there are always tensions between the readers' cultural values and those presented in the text. When Grace and Kate were concerned about their daughters' reactions to the idea of family separation in certain books, I recognized the significance of family bonding in transracial adoptive families. Strengthening family relationships might be particularly important when these European American parents selected books to read with their adoptees.

Pertman (2000) maintained that, in transracial adoptive families, parents are anxious for a cultural construction of kinship through various family activities. Meanwhile, adoptive parents

need to cope with the child's natural desire to connect with their birth parents. Thus, parents experience a pull "between the genealogical model and the impulse to transcend it and create new forms of kinship" (p.35), and attending Chinese cultural activities often becomes a way for parents to both strengthen family cohesiveness and make up for the child's loss of birth parents. Based on Pertman's words, family bonding is a special pursuit for transracial adoptive families, which was revealed in parents' book selection process, and particularly obvious in Grace's concerns.

While I was talking to Grace about the books, I felt her struggles between wanting Ashley to connect to Chinese culture and fearing the family bonding would be threatened by the separation of families portrayed in some of the books, such as *New Year's Reunion*, a book about a father coming home once a year. When commenting on the book, she said "this is a good story, but it is too sad for Ashley." Thus, even though the book provided an accurate representation of migrant workers' families in China, Grace did not like the book and found the book "disturbing."

Her response to the book explained, to some extent, her preference of picturebooks about adoption I mentioned earlier. Those books were often used by adoptive parents to "immortalize the adoption process story and idealize the relationship between adoptive parents and adoptees" (Dahlen, 2013, p. 79). In comparison, books about China and Chinese culture representing differences were not so appealing to Grace. Yet, adoption picturebooks often fail to attend to the needs of adoptees to cope with their feeling of loss of birth parents and adoptees' differences from their parents whereas picturebooks about China and Chinese cultures offer a platform for adoptive parents and adoptees to address the differences.

In Grace's final reflection interview, she happily told me that through this project she saw Ashley developing an awareness of talking about China and bringing in Chinese culture into her

daily life. For example, when Ashley went to bed, she would say "the people in China just woke up and I wonder what they are doing now." Thus, Grace appreciated the project, because it offered her a foundation that now that she can build on to help Ashley learn more about her birth culture. Hopefully Grace would assist in the process as she becomes more conscious of the necessity for Ashley to connect to Chinese culture and people with a Chinese background. It is a developing process for Grace to think about how much Chineseness and differences she wants in her family in order to help Ashley develop a more positive cultural and racial identity.

Sarah, Wayne, and Emily

Sarah and Wayne are the only family among the four families in which both parents were involved in my study and did the book selections together. They are both in their 50s and have a biological son, Jeff, who is a high school student. Their adopted daughter, Emily, is 8 years old, was adopted when she was 14 months old.

Because of Wayne's job as a university professor of International Relations, he visited China two times to teach at Beijing and Nanchang's Administrators' College. The communications with local officials in Beijing and Nanchang provided him with much knowledge about China as well as the awareness of people's misconceptions of other countries because of biased media representation. Therefore, he was very interested in attending my study for the purpose of looking at "Chinese culture in children's books and the stories that kind of shape a culture." So, Wayne tended to be more critical in the selections whereas Sarah, a really mild and caring person, liked almost every book I brought into her house.

Another point in attending my project was their realization that "they probably get left behind in providing Emily with Chinese heritage and culture". They had regrets about not involving Emily in Chinese language classes and connecting her to more Chinese cultural

activities. In their house, I saw lots of Chinese cultural objects such as Chinese tea sets, costumes, dishes, coins, and hand-painted Chinese scroll paintings. They also had about 10 picturebooks about Chinese culture, most of which were folklore books, such as *The Moon Lady*, *The Seven Chinese Sisters*, *Red Butterfly: How a Princess Smuggled the Secrets of Silk Out of China*, and *Treasury of Chinese Folktales.*

Sarah and Wayne loved reading and considered reading a more effective way to get valuable information for "older generations" like them compared to YouTube. They said "Emily can read very well but it's very difficult to get her to sit down and read 20 minutes while [their son] Jeff can read 2 hours without moving." Sarah added that Emily "is at an age where she just loves girly stuff and gets really rebellious against anything we want her to do or books we suggest."

During our initial interview, Sarah and Wayne emphasized the importance of wanting Emily to have as much knowledge as they can about Chinese heritage and culture, but they also discussed their opinion of performing this in age appropriate and accumulative ways. They were waiting for moments to explain to Emily many things about China when she can understand, just like the things they did now with their son Jeff. They read Jeff's books and discussed with him about social justice, diversity and racism issues in American society and the global world. They told me they would share things about China with Emily when she is older.

Sarah and Wayne's Book Selection Process

Sarah and Wayne participated in the book selections together although Wayne was absent in one of the four selection sessions due to an illness. Because they read the books together, each reading the books at their own pace, there were few think-aloud comments. Sarah usually read

all the books, and Wayne read the books he was interested in and flipped through the rest of the books while he was waiting for Sarah.

Unlike the other three parents, Sarah and Wayne did not have many comments on the illustration and the content of the books. Sarah occasionally made connections to the books she had read and expressed her appreciation of the books. She was very open and always said, "Nice books, I think they are all nice." The only book she had hesitations about was *Red Kite, Blue Kite*, a book about the separation of parents from a child during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. She stated, "I don't know how I feel about teaching Emily stories like this. I mean I want her to know the history, but you know not in a negative way, so I don't know whether I want her to see the book." Despite expressing her concerns, Sarah did not exclude the book when Emily came in because she thought Emily probably would not understand the separation part.

Wayne did not say much, but he asked me questions about the pronunciation of Chinese characters and background information of the books. He usually did not initiate a comment on books, but often liked to add to Sarah's words either through providing more explanations or inquiring more about my understanding. For example, this happened when Sarah commented on *Red Kite, Blue Kite*, and communicated to me that such things happen in other countries too. Wayne conveyed his opinion that every country has its own problems, and the U.S. had a long history of unfairly treating African Americans. Later, when I was explaining to Sarah China's strict censorship of information, Wayne asked to know more about that topic because he was curious about the change happening in China in recent years and how a Chinese saw the development of their own country. As a professor of international relations, Wayne constantly made connections to global issues and his experiences in China.

Sarah and Wayne cared much about the accuracy of information. Both of them liked the book *Sparrow Girl*, a story about a girl protecting the sparrows in China's campaign to kill all the sparrows in 1960s. Sarah asked me whether the author is Chinese, and Wayne hesitated about whether the moral taught in this story "is beyond the actual historical event although it is based on something really happening." The same is with the book *Look What Came Here from China*. They held concerns about whether the facts offered in the book were accurate. As Sarah said, "it is good for kids to read and learn a little bit of facts and I hope what they learn is accurate."

In contrast to other parents who were constantly aware of their child's needs, Sarah and Wayne did not display such concerns. Only a few of their comments were related to Emily and were as simple as one sentence like "I think Emily might like it." However, their final book choices were more oriented to Emily. Sarah's book choice were books that "can be read together with Emily and those celebrate family themes, the closeness of family." Wayne liked the national geography book about the Chinese New year, but he chose the three-book series about Chinese festivals because Emily liked doing things, and the recipes in each of these three books could become a great weekend family project to do together.

Among the four book categories, Sarah's favorite category was holidays and family life because she liked the family theme. Wayne liked the folklore category best because he liked stories that conveyed transcendental messages across cultures. In his own words, those messages were "universal and applicable." In fact, the universality and applicability was emphasized a lot in Sarah and Wayne's reflection interviews. When I asked them about how they felt after reading the books and attending the whole project, they told me:

Wayne: The books convey the complexity of Chinese culture and I think it conveys the

values of individuals in China are very much of the value of people in other

places, the value of family, the value of your history, and so on.

Sarah: Yeah, like the folklore books, the messages they told are similar to stories in the

Bible or cultures with a similar message. And the struggles of Chinese people, I

mean, a lot of people are struggling in the world.

Thus, Sarah and Wayne focused more on the universal values in the books, and they told me "they haven't had a focus on a particular or unique Chinese cultural value in their family life." Sarah and Wayne's tendency to draw toward universal elements in all the books indicated their approach to Emily's Chinese origins. The Chineseness was not as important as the universal values across humanity, and the struggles and issues Chinese people face were equally insignificant because people all over the world had been treated unfairly and suppressed. In my opinion, their attitudes reflected a stance of dismissing the power and structural issues underlying social inequalities and racism. Although I respected their openness to discussing racism and diversity with their son Jeff, I wondered whether Emily's Chineseness would be effaced in their advocacy of universality.

Summary and Thoughts about Sarah's Family

In sum, during Sarah and Wayne's book selection process, they cared much about the authenticity of the books, and their value in strengthening their family relationships and teaching Emily universal themes across cultures. Cultural authenticity, family bonding and values of books are their key rationales for selecting books. In their final reflection interview, Wayne and Sarah both expressed their enjoyment of the project because through reading the books they were reminded of the recurring elements of Chinese cultures appearing in books, such as Chinese

emperors and Chinese foods, which made them aware of the necessity of exposing Emily to more books and resources about her heritage culture. As I left their house, Sarah told me she would buy all the books for Emily because she would like to have them all in her collection for Emily to read, at different times, and Emily can learn a little bit from all of them.

During my interaction with Sarah's family, I had a feeling that they focused on the universal themes in the books at the cost of specific details of Chinese culture. Moreover, I was struck by their opinion of searching and waiting for an appropriate time to discuss with Emily about Chinese culture, history and difficult issues, which led me to think about the context as a factor in European American parents' use of books with their Chinese adoptees.

Universal themes across cultures. According to Bakhtin's dialogical theories, readers grapple with different forces in the contact zones. Authoritative discourses that come from mainstream sociocultural aspects strive to impose their desired values on the readers, and the internal persuasive discourses are those utterances readers find true and assimilate into their world views. As readers engage with the tension between different discourses through "active agreement and disagreement", they "stimulate and deepen understanding of their own words, making the other's words more resilient and true to itself" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142).

In Sarah and Wayne's book selection process, they continuously picked out the universal themes in books about Chinese families, Chinese history and Chinese folklore. As they "trace the text into the world" (Rogers, 1997, p. 98), they saw that Chinese had similar pursuits as other cultures and suffered from struggles and suppression just like other people in the world. Although understanding universal humanity is important in reading global and multicultural children's literature, I think Sarah and Wayne had lost the chance of engaging deeply with Chinese culture by focusing on the universal themes. As Bolgatz (2005) maintained, an over-

emphasis on connections and universal elements can lead to colorblindness and a focus on cultural harmony that erases the differences that make us unique as human beings and form our identities.

For example, in the book *Celebrating the Lantern Festival*, there are not only the universal themes of loving families and protecting the weak from the evil, as Sarah and Wayne pinpointed in their comments. There are also many details about Chinese culture: the way family members interact with each other in an ordinary Chinese family, the customs of eating rice balls, attending lantern festivals and guessing lantern riddles, and a folklore story that shows the power of the Jade Emperor in ancient China. Whereas this book displays the closeness of family during Chinese holidays, it also presents the picture of living in a modern Chinese family. Sarah and Wayne's inclination toward the universal elements overlooks the potential of this book in guiding Emily to interpret Chinese culture and Chinese values performed in daily lives.

It is significant to point out that I value the universal and global part, but I see the uniqueness deserving equal attention as universality in reading global children's literature. There is a tension between uniqueness and universality in reading cultural texts. Only if readers cope with the tension well by keeping it vibrant can we appreciate other cultures as well as realize the uniqueness of our own cultural identities.

Contexts in the book use. Context, as the "dialogizing background" in Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) conceptualization of language, is integral to our interpretation of literary texts. Texts are laden with historical contexts that anticipate the encounter with the cultural contexts readers bring into the reading. Readers' responses to literature are so closely related to the immediate context where they conduct reading as well as the large sociocultural context which influences readers' reading practices. A good manipulation of the factor of context will bring into a rich

reading experience as Langer (1998) described—"one where readers have room to shift among their own knowledge and histories, the text, social realities, the multiple-voices of others and their own imaginings" (p. 18).

I noticed the significance of context in parents' book reading and selecting process, but it was particularly apparent in Sarah and Wayne's family. Because Emily mostly read books on her own, Sarah and Wayne tended to choose books that "they can read together" with Emily, in other words, more suitable for family reading. They probably had a time and place in mind when they selected a book. Therefore, Sarah and Wayne were conscious of the context factor in their book use.

Moreover, they highlighted the necessity of introducing Chinese culture to Emily in age appropriate and accumulative ways. Given Emily was not developing a curiosity toward Chinese books now, Wayne said he would wait for Emily to develop that curiosity over the next few years. He believed Emily would talk more about China as she grows up, and the books would be useful at a certain point of time, perhaps at the time when they take her back to visit China. I agreed that the use of books depends much on the age of the child and the sociocultural context he/she is in. However, I pondered whether Emily would return to these picturebooks—she might turn to more advanced books about China.

Although Sarah and Wayne gravitated toward the universal themes in books about Chinese culture, I respected their efforts to create contexts for Emily to have more contact with the books. A few weeks after I finished the study, Sarah texted me to say she bought most of the books for Emily and hoped Emily would be able to return to the books whenever she wants. I hope she did, and if I could, I would want to talk to Emily a few years later about those books. However, I also want to suggest to Sarah and Wayne that they should have more conversations

with Emily about the cultural values, cultural details and cultural differences in the books. The search of universal humanity could be very superficial without a foundational understanding of the uniqueness of each culture.

Ben and Mei

Ben's family came to my study last, and he contacted me to join my research because he was interested in the books after hearing about them in another family. The whole family lives in northern Georgia. Ben is an environmental scientist, his wife Jessie is a real estate agent and they are both in their 50s. Their biological daughter Clara is a junior high school student, and their adopted daughter Mei was 9 years old during the time of the study; she was adopted when she was 6. Mei was the oldest adoptee among the four families.

Because of Ben's graduate work in environmental science, he and his wife went to China in 2000 and were very impressed with China's history, people, and food, which was also the main reason why they wanted to adopt from China when they considered adoption for their second child. They were matched with Mei, who was then 6 years old and did not speak any English. Although Mei was in a 3rd grade class, Ben said she was far below her classmates' reading levels and did not like reading because she could not do well. Therefore, Ben and Jessie spent a lot of time reading together with her to increase her interest in reading and improve her reading skills. When Ben joined my study, it was when Ben was looking for new books that could appeal to Mei's interest, and Ben said the books I provided looked like the "right books for Mei's reading level."

On the other hand, Ben and Jessie made many efforts to keep Mei's Chinese language and culture, so Mei has a full schedule even during weekends. Twice a week, she attended an after-school program that engaged students in various activities about learning Chinese language

and culture. On Saturdays, Mei had a Chinese high school student come to help her with Chinese homework, and on Sundays, Mei had Chinese classes with a native Chinese teacher for 2 hours.

It is important to mention that Ben is the parent who always stays home and arranges Mei's schedule and makes sure she does everything as required whereas Jessie is always out as a real estate agent. Thus, the interaction I saw between Ben and Mei might be a little different than the interaction in other families. I jokingly compared Ben to a tiger daddy, and he said he "did much less than the tiger moms he saw in the Chinese after-school program." He seemed to know much about the way Chinese American families raise their children although the phrase "tiger moms" was the prevailing stereotype of Chinese parenting in the U.S. (Chua, 2011).

Ben spoke highly of Chinese culture and history; however, he showed little appreciation for the cultural activities and celebrations held in the U.S. There is a Chinese Cultural Center in in his city where various cultural events related with Chinese holidays are held. Ben considered them as "so so [because] the celebrations are pretty much the same every year, and the food is Americanized." I was not surprised about his attitude, because he lives "in a community where there are a lot Chinese, native born Chinese as well adopted." In his neighborhood, Ben found a Chinese teacher for Mei and a few Chinese American families that occasionally invited Mei over for dinner or other social events.

Ben viewed himself as a frequent reader and was involved in several book clubs. When he was browsing the books I brought, he would constantly connect to some other book titles. He was very sensitive to the violence and dark elements in children's books and tried to "protect Mei from those kind of influences a little bit longer". The books at his house about China were actually a nice set of books with various genres, including *D is for Dragon Dance* by Ying

Chang Compestine and *Maples in the Mist: Children's Poems from the Tang Dynasty*, a book

included in my book list for this study.

Ben's Book Selection Process

Ben read almost all the books I brought and often randomly picked up a book to read.

When I asked him why he picked up a certain book first, he would tell me "I don't know" or

"because it's close to me." Sometimes he showed resistance to picking up certain books. He did

not want to read *Gai See: What You See in Chinatown* and remarked that he had mixed feelings

about Chinatown because the Chinatowns he went to were really small and dirty, and the food

were so Americanized compared to that in China. So, he did not read that book. Another book

which he said was the last one that he wanted to read is *Look What Came here from China*. His

feelings about the cartoonish cover discouraged him from taking up the book; however, he said

he really liked the book after reading it. He noted Mei would really like it because "she is always

amazed at the fact that everything is made from China."

Although Ben picked up a book casually, he was an observant reader of pictures in books.

He pointed out the "The last image in *Lon Po Po* is terrible [because] there is blood swelling out

from the wolf's mouth." He considered the art work of *Sparrow Girl* gorgeous because "It shows

the girl is often under stress, which matches the whole story." Moreover, he cared much about

the publication dates of each book. He shared with me "the publishing year is a factor when he

chooses books despite the fact that sometimes newer books are not as interesting as those classic

older books."

Ben was sensitive to dark elements in children's books, such as violence, weapons, and

destruction of animals, and carefully filtered the books for his daughter. He would approve a

book because "there are not negative things there" or would hesitate about a book because "there

is still low tension in the book although it is a nice story." Many times I was surprised at his reason for rejecting a book. For example, the other three families all liked the book *Mulan*, which depicted a brave girl in ancient China who went to the army in replace of her frail father; however, Ben said he was concerned about the battles here. My personal attachment to the book *Mulan* urged me to persuade him to accept this book: "Battles are happening now in reality, and that's why Mulan's bravery is spoken highly of." He responded to me: "I just don't like to see conflict, which is unavoidable, but I am trying to protect her a little longer." Thus he continuously pointed out contents which he thought were not suitable for Mei.

With the principle of avoiding conflict, Ben had a hard time deciding the books he wanted to read to Mei as well as ranking the books. Sometimes he only ranked the top four books, and sometimes he divided the group of books into two levels and told me he would not be able to rank the books. From my side, I could tell the final parts of selecting and ranking were torturous for him because of his varied concerns. A typical self-dialogue when he was selecting and ranking the books is shown below:

> *"I would say no to* What the Rat Told Me *and maybe to* Lon Po Po*, and* Three Monks, No Water*, not my favorite book,* Mulan*, this is tough, with the battles,* The Seven Chinese Sisters *not my favorite,* The Seven Blind Mice*, maybe my favorite book, I have a hard time making decisions. This is the* Lon Po Po *book, about the wolf being killed, hmmm, this is hard..."*

The think-aloud self-dialogue showed Ben was struggling with the book selection process, which revealed his engagement with the books and efforts to weigh the contents between books. Yet, his primary concern for contents in books often trumped a book's Chinese elements. Even little

tensions in a book by his opinion would lead to his dislike of that book even if it offered a nice portrayal of Chinese culture and cultural values.

Although Ben had a hard process of selecting and ranking the books, he expressed to me he had fun reading the books, and I agreed on this point. He made lots of connections to prior family experiences and to books he had read. He associated *Liu and the Bird*, a Chinese calligraphy book, to Mei's Chinese language learning experience. He linked the goldfish in *Shanyi Goes to China* with his memory of seeing lots of goldfish in China when he was there in the year 2011 to pick up Mei. The connections were often followed by his curiosity to know more about China or his concerns about learning Chinese culture. For example, he communicated to me his unease about whether Mei was learning authentic Chinese culture given the fact that all her teachers in the Mayland Institute were Taiwanese, and I then offered my opinion of the differences between Taiwanese Chinese culture and mainland Chinese culture.

Being a book person and someone who was involved in book clubs, Ben also made numerous connections to books he has read. Unlike Wayne who expressed appreciation of the transcendental cultural messages in *The Runaway Wok,* Ben said no to this book. He first associated the book to *Jack and the Beanstalk*, then *Robin Hood*, and then to some other texts he read:

> *"Started sounding like Jack and the Beanstalk, but very different from that story, became Robin Hood, then you had these very greedy people they are rich and won't share their wealth and disappear at the end, some kind of mixed up. I don't know whether I want to introduce this idea to Mei. Were they punished in the end? Why did they disappear? I would say no to this book. Also I am thinking about the news I read about the Chinese Communist Party's idea of sharing wealth because of all the stories of corruption. Maybe*

the Chinese government wants people to believe it is good to share, I don't know, I would

say no to this book."

His connections to books and other texts he read facilitated his evaluating process of the book. There was a "multifaceted web of ideas" (Langer, 1998, p. 18) he evoked as he brought different languages and social belief systems into contact and negotiated links among his past, present and future reading of texts.

Additionally, Ben discovered universal themes when comparing books. He compared the book *Mulan* to *The Hunger Games* and remarked:

"Old themes in newer things, here she doesn't want her father to be recruited in the army,

so she disguised herself as a man, in a way like The Hunger Games, in which she doesn't

want her sister in the game. There is also a similar story in Jewish culture. I think the

theme comes up in a while with new stories. All through history, women are doing that. I

think in the U.S. civil war, women disguised themselves to fight in the war."

Through comparison, Ben placed the story of Mulan in the larger sociocultural context and recognized universal themes of women doing great things in history. However, Ben's comments only touched upon the universal themes without discussions of the Chinese quality of the book.

Thus, Ben was engrossed in the books and carefully filtered the contents for his daughter. Contents were his primary rationale for selecting books. In his book list, he included books that he thought were "uplifting, positive, and educational for Mei to read." His secondary concern was Mei's ability to read and understand a book. He commented when concepts were difficult or too implicit for Mei to comprehend or when certain words were too sophisticated. Compared to books that were long and difficult to hold Mei's attention, Ben chose books that are "a quick and easy read for Mei", such as *The Seven Blind Mice*.

The category Ben liked most was Chinese American families, which was distinct from the other three families. He stated that he was happy to know the new holidays and social customs in the category of holidays and family life, but his family did not celebrate Chinese festivals at home. The folklore category was "not really specifically about China, rather the books were more universal." As for the books in the arts and history category, to him they were difficult, and "some of the concepts were above a 3rd grader's level."

Compared to the above three categories, he found much value in the books about Chinese American families although he did not regard his family as a Chinese American family. For example, in the book *Grandfather Counts*, the similarities between the American-born Chinese children and Mei urged him to think about how to encourage Mei to keep her Chinese language learning because Mei, like the girl in the book, resisted learning Chinese. Additionally, he loved the relationship between the grandparents and the grandchildren portrayed in the book, which looked similar to the interaction style in the Chinese American family living nearby. The grandparents were highly involved in their grandchildren's life but at the same time were much disciplined with their grandchildren. He loved that relationship between family members, which provided some examples for improving his own family. Therefore, the value of a book was one of his reasons for choosing books.

Ben's comments on the four book categories implied that he had a slight difference from the other parents in his attitude and approach toward Chinese culture. Ben had a willingness to discuss and assimilate Chinese values into his families which may be due to his living environment and the interaction with Chinese American families. However, Chineseness was still not as important as the contents in books and Mei's reading levels when Ben used books to help Mei understand and keep her Chinese culture.

Summary and Thoughts about Ben's Family

In summary, during Ben's book selection process, he was alert to the dark elements in children's books, but also kept in mind Mei's reading level and interest. Moreover, he chose books based on a book's connectivity to personal lives and educational values. Positive contents, the child's needs, connectivity to personal lives and values of a book were his main rationales for selecting books to use with Mei.

As I went along the study with Ben's family, I was impressed with Ben's resistance to dark elements in children's books, perhaps, in my opinion, to an excessive degree. The other thought was about Mei's tight schedule with regards to learning Chinese culture. Ben said, "Anything that helps her enforce her Chinese culture is good." I was worried the series of Chinese activities would not have the intended effects Ben wanted and wondered how parents should carry out Chinese cultural education at home.

Dark elements in children's books. Ben had a fascination of filtering books that had dark elements, such as violence and death. Even when he liked a story, he would hope that Mei only receive the positive part and that she would not register the negative part. He chose books that were "low in tension." However, according to Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) dialogical theory, a literacy text is a heteroglossia of different social voices and social belief systems; therefore literary texts are often "contradiction- laden and tension filled" (p. 272). Thus, avoiding the tensions and sheltering children from those elements were really a poor tactic as Moustakis (1982) indicated.

Moreover, dialogizing about a topic promotes its understanding. Short (2011) reminded parents that, children need perspectives, not protection. It is not appropriate for adults to determine the choices and protect children from certain experiences where they can gain new

perspectives and strategies to solve problems and face reality. Therefore, parents should stop protecting children from experiencing tensions, and instead use tensions as opportunities for new interpretations.

Ben's concern for dark elements had similarities with some parents' preferences for a happy ending in books. In reading books like *Red Kite, Blue Kite* and *Sparrow Girl*, both Kate and Grace remarked that "the stories are sad, but at least they have happy endings." Based on parents' opinions, it seemed that children's books should be happy and denuded of dark elements. However, scholars pointed out that children's books should not avoid negative aspects of life, and writers should not "dumb down to children" (Law, 1993, p.15) when writing their books because children will lose interest in a book if it does not mirror the realities in life.

Similarly, cultures are about everything, good or bad. When sharing books about Chinese culture, parents should not avoid the unpleasant parts which might have the potential of allowing adoptees to develop a complex view of Chinese culture. The significant thing is to have dialogues surrounding the books with their adoptees.

Inserting Chineseness into families. Compared to Grace who was careful about bringing in much Chinese culture to make her daughter feel different, I saw that Ben was on the other side of the continuum, fearing that he did not keep Mei's Chinese culture. Ben was Jewish, and his eldest daughter was invested in learning Jewish traditions; however, Ben chose not to involve Mei in that process, because he felt "Mei's Chinese identities were more important than our Jewish identities."

With such hopes, Ben scheduled a series of cultural activities for Mei, and my study was one of the activities he designed for Mei. Yet, I did not know how much Mei got from this or how clear she was about the purpose of Ben's efforts. She was already resistant to her Chinese

language classes, and maybe she would not want to attend her after-school Chinese program in the future.

Ben's family led me to ponder how Chineseness should be represented in families and how children understand the meaning of those activities. Based on what I saw from my study, I did not think Mei understood that these books were read with a purpose to enable her rich understanding of China and Chinese culture. It is my guess that Ben did not explain this, and he conducted the read-aloud in a way that looked like he was going to help Mei improve reading. Thus, I wondered whether Mei's attitudes would be different if Ben had more conversations with her about the purpose of these different activities. Do parents really understand why they do this study? What are parents' perception of their roles in this study?

Another thought was about the Chinese language classes, something both Mei and other American-born Chinese children resisted. My question was whether attending Chinese language classes would be helpful to establish a Chinese identity and recognize Chineseness. I am not sure. Maybe it is of value in Chinese American families where parents and children discuss Chinese values with the language, but maybe not in European American families where the language is not used in a daily context. Because Chinese adoptees are often the only ones in a family to attend Chinese language classes, it is not surprising they struggle with the process. Whereas I appreciate Ben's efforts to connect Mei to her Chineseness, I also think Ben need to rethink how he can recognize Chinese cultures in families in more effective ways.

In Ben's final reflection interview, Ben communicated with me that the books did not have a big influence on Mei although he got a lovely education from the books. Because Mei was adopted when she was six, I was curious as to how much Chinese culture she knew about and how much interest she had in learning about it. She might know a lot but just did not

verbalize it. I should have had more contact with Mei when beginning the study and thought more about the books I could use with Mei. After all, she is a 9 year old girl.

<center>**Looking across the Four Families**</center>

Despite having only four families, I argue that there was great complexity and diversity in these parents' book selection process and the way books were used in the four families. Based on the case presentation of the four families above, I noticed that these parents exhibited different foci when selecting the books. On the other hand, there were also many similarities in the way these parents selected and evaluated books for establishing their children's birth culture ties. In the rest of the chapter, I offer my answer to the research question by looking across the four families for overarching themes in the parents' book selection process and their stated rationales. Then based on the tensions identified in this study through deductive thematic analysis, I discuss the issues existing in parents' book selections.

Parents' Book Selection Process

When the five parents were involved in selecting children's books about China and Chinese culture to help their child establish birth culture ties, they looked at the books in a way that was not very different from their selection of an ordinary book for their child. They evaluated the books based on their child's perceived needs and various aspects of the books. They posed questions about the accuracy of the information, generated connections to their personal lives and compared books with information from other sources. They showed behaviors and concerns mostly similar to their regular book selection scenarios based on previous research on parents' book selections for their children (Robinson, 1983; Owens, 1992).

However, because the main purpose of the book selection was to help their child connect more to Chinese culture, they anxiously sought my perspectives as a cultural insider to

understand Chinese cultures. To better see the pictures of parents' book selection process, I
organized the data from five parents into three overarching themes: *matching the books with the
child*, *making connections* and *seeking insider's perspective*. Below I introduce the themes and
subthemes. To offer a clear picture of the themes and subthemes, I have a thematic map
presented below. Also I have italicized the overarching themes and underlined the subthemes in
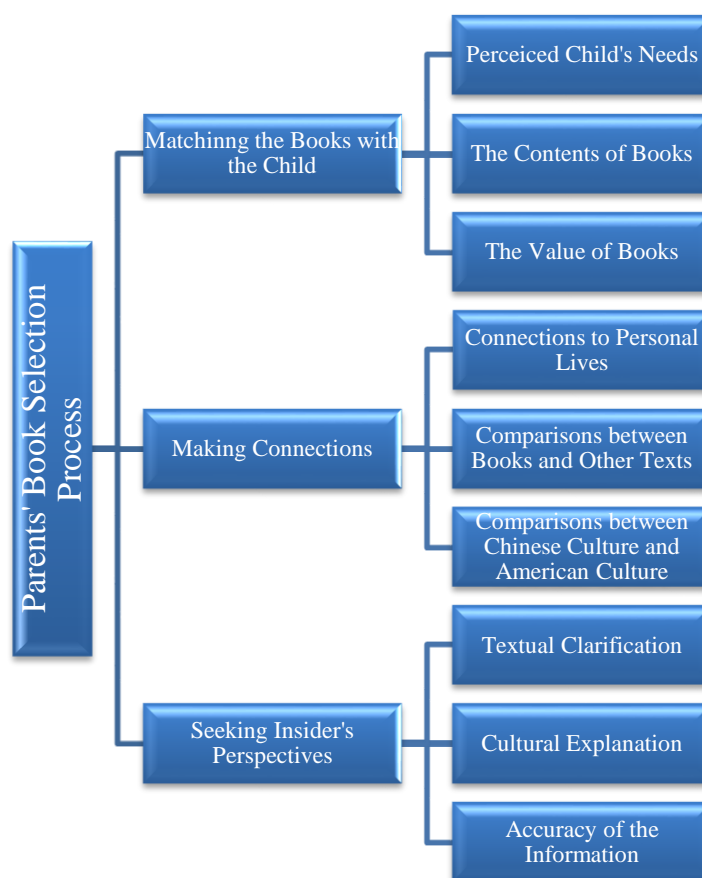the text.

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 │ Parents'     │         │ Making         │ │ Comparisons between  │
 │ Book         │         │ Connections    │ │ Books and Other Texts│
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Figure 4.1 Thematic Map of Parents' Book Selection Process

Matching Books with the Child

Matching Books with the Child is the theme I most frequently identified in parents' book
selection process. Parents made comments and evaluations on the books through the lens of what
they deemed to be best for their children, and such considerations aligned with previous research

that reported that parents most often selected books based on their intuitive understanding of the needs and interests of their children (Robinson, 1983; Anderson, Anderson, Shapiro, & Lynch, 2001). In this study, the theme *matching books with the child* included three subthemes: <u>perceived child's needs</u>, <u>the contents of the books</u>, <u>the values of the books</u>.

<u>Perceived child's needs</u>. During the book selection process, parents evaluated the books based on their child's perceived needs including the child's reading levels, the child's interests and the child's understanding of a topic. For example, except Sarah and Wayne's family, the other three parents often matched the books with their child's reading levels. Ben would be pleased with a book that "is a quick read for Mei", and Kate was highly conscious of the challenging words in a text. Sarah and Wayne did not take into account their daughter's reading level much because Emily could read and comprehend those books well with her reading level high above a 2nd grader. Hence, reading levels were pervasive in parents' discussion of books, whereas how a book would help their children's understanding of China and Chinese culture was much less talked about.

Parents constantly made predictions about whether their child would love a book based on their child's interests. For instance, when reading the book *The Sons of Dragon King*, Grace noticed the Chinese calligraphy on the margins of the page, and stated that Ashley would love the book because "she is fascinated with this kind of writings, and she loves drawing." Wayne, speaking highly of the book *Brush of the Gods*, in particular the last vignette of the painter who walks into his last painting, predicted that Emily would love the story because she loved imaginative books.

Parents also attended to whether their child was able to understand the complexity of a book. All five parents expressed concerns about whether their children could understand the deep

story line in the book *Red Kite, Blue Kite*. Some parents were uncomfortable with sharing the book with their daughter. Other parents directly spoke to me that their daughter would not understand the book. Kate said "Alice might connect to the kite, but maybe not the separation part", and Sarah told me that "this book, maybe when she is a little older." However, parents were open to letting their child see the books despite their hesitations.

Parents' perception of their child's needs were indicative of what they considered to be important in their children's personal lives. Children's abilities to read a book and the potentials of a book to ignite children's interest in reading more books seemed to be more important concerns for parents than using the books to learn about Chinese culture. Of course, ideally, a book that provided both insight into Chinese culture and seemed suited to the needs of the child would be, presumably, most sought after. However, given one of the other, parents seemed to lean toward books that matched their perception of their child's needs and wants.

The contents of books. The five parents made various comments on the contents in a picturebook, including its text, pictures, and language use. Parents' evaluations of the contents were again closely related to their child's perceived needs and their understanding of what was appropriate for their children, which, on a deeper level, implied parents' social beliefs and personal preferences.

Parents' comments on the text were varied. Ben was sensitive to dark elements in books, but he also displayed appreciations for stories that are "engaging and entice you to finish at the end", such as *Three Monks, No Water* and *Sparrow Girl.* Grace was thrilled about the power of women in books. Kate was concerned about the difficulty of a story for Alice, and she pointed out when a book is confusing in terms of plot or character development, as was in the case of *Monkey King*. Sarah was open to all books. She would love a book that celebrates the closeness

of a family (*Mooncakes*) but also a book that tells a sad story about a young princess leaving her homeland and being married away to the king of a far-off land to fulfill her destiny (*Red Butterfly: How a Princess Smuggled the Secret of Silk out of China*). Wayne liked those books that teach transcendental cultural messages. Parents' different responses to the text pointed to their sociocultural ideologies that established certain textual ideas as relevant, important or inappropriate for their children.

Except Sarah and Wayne who made only a few comments on the illustrations of the books, the other three parents were attentive to the visual aspect of books. They compared illustration between books and particularly appreciated a book that had beautiful illustrations; however, the text/subject was still their primary concern. If the ideas presented in books were good, then the beautiful artwork added to the appeal of that book.

The five parents were alert to the language in the books. Kate and Ben kept a watchful eye on big words. Ben said, "Some of the words in these picturebooks are more sophisticated than a typical children's book." Sarah, Wayne, and Grace all asked me about whether the poems rhyme in the book *Maples in the Mist: Children's Poems from Tang Dynasty*, and they were disappointed after finding out the translated poems did not rhyme, which, in my opinion, affected their ranking order of the book among other books.

Parents' evaluation of the contents of books demonstrated their efforts to engage with the books but also their conceptions of what children's book should look like in terms of texts, pictures, and language. However, this could be a problem if parents use their own criteria to dislike a book their children might like. For example, parents all shared with me later how they didn't like the book *The Seven Chinese Sisters*, whereas their children were excited about it.

The values of books. Parents commented on the values of a book, including the educational value and family value of a book. The educational value referred to transcendental lessons to be learned from a book and specific cultural and historical knowledge about China. Regarding the book *Red Kite, Blue Kite*, almost all parents expressed the opinion that the book is a nice way to teach their children about the Chinese Cultural Revolution, an important historical period in China, despite the fact that they were uncomfortable with the book. Furthermore, some parents did not have a preference for nonfiction books like *Look What Came from China* and *Celebrating Chinese New Year with Fireworks, Dragons, and Lanterns*, but they all made comments similar to Kate who noted that these books were "really educational, so good for Chinese culture." Although the parents appreciated having the books to inform their adoptees of certain knowledge about China and Chinese culture, I was curious about how much about the books these parents took on personally and were seriously engaged with. These books might simply be good for their educational values but would not be given as much attention as those books that aligned with parents' interests and cultural views.

The family value of a book referred to the way families can use a book for purposes of doing family projects and activities. For example, Sarah and Wayne were excited about the recipes in each of the three books in Celebrating Chinese Festival Series and wanted to use the recipes to make Chinese food during the weekends. Kate said books like *Celebrating Chinese New Year with Fireworks, Dragons, and Lanterns* supplied her with information of how to prepare Chinese food and celebrate Chinese traditions; hence, she no longer needed to search online. Parents' discussion of the family values of a book revealed their intention of using the Chinese cultural education for strengthening family bonding and creating cultural objects that symbolize family cohesiveness.

Making Connections

Harvey and Goudvid (2000) talked about three kinds of connections when people read a text: text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. During parents' book selection process, they also made the three kinds of connections. They made personal connections to their lives, and their text-to-text and text-to-world connections were reflected in the various comparisons they made between books and other texts and between Chinese and American cultures. Hence, the overarching theme *making connections* include three subthemes: connections to personal lives, comparisons between books and other texts, and comparisons between Chinese and American culture.

Connections to personal lives. Parents made various connections to their family lives, in particular to their prior experiences with Chinese culture. For example, the gold fish in *Shanyi Goes to China* awakened Ben's memory of seeing a pond in a park with lots of goldfish in Guangzhou when he was in China, picking up Mei in 2011. And the lanterns in *Celebrating Chinese Lantern Festival* connected Kate to the lanterns they brought from China, which are still used during their family's Chinese New Year Celebrations. The connections to Chinese elements often encouraged parents' desire to talk more about their China trip and curiosity about whether things were still like that when they were in China. In reading *Shanyi Goes to China*, Grace stopped over the sentence describing China as "the land of motorcycles." She shared with me her impression of China as "the land of electric bikes" in 2008, and asked me whether things changed in 2015. I then explained to her my understanding of China as "the land of cars" now with extremely busy traffic. Such connections and conversations revived parents' memories of experiencing China and Chinese culture and their interest in more conversations about China today.

On the other hand, connection to prior experiences was often the reason parents liked or disliked a book. Being able to relate to the story was extremely important for the parents, as in the case of Kate. Sometimes, even though the information in a book was partially inaccurate, connections would make this book appealing to parents. A typical example would be with the book *I See the Sun in China*, in which readers follow a young girl as she travels from a small town in China to Shanghai to spend the week with her aunt during the weekends. Most parents were excited about the books' descriptions and illustration of Shanghai. Kate's comments were representative of the parents' response to the book:

> *"I like the book because it mirrored my experience when I was in China, you know seeing people doing Taichi, going into city, it reminded me of the skyscrapers in Shanghai, the mall, we went to a mall very much like that. It was near our hotel and then I got a massage when I was in China, that's why I think I resonated with the book because it seems like modern China to me and it was close to my experience of going to China except the Kuanyin Statue."*

Despite parents' connections, some of its information was inaccurate due to the constant mention of the statue of Kuanyin (author's note: Goddess of Mercy) in public, which is untrue because the statue only exists in temples. Yet, most of the details were accurate about China, and the real-life pictures in the books offered an authentic picture of modern China.

The connections made this book aesthetically attractive to parents despite of some of the inaccurate details, which to some extent revealed that parents were more concerned about connections than the accuracy and authenticity of books. The connections enabled parents to validate their personal experiences and connections with Chinese culture, which served as links for parents to identify with their adoptees' Chinese origins and as entry points for parents to have

conversations about China and Chinese culture. On the other hand, parents should not be blamed for not knowing the specific details of Chinese culture, but we can encourage them to look at their connections with a critical view and to think more about the accuracy and authenticity of information even if their experiences were recognized in the text.

Comparisons between books and other texts. Parents' connections to other books and texts often developed into comparisons between texts, which often enhanced their understanding of China and Chinese culture based on the differences they captured between the books I presented and information from other books and media representation.

The comparisons urged them to contemplate the differences between those picturebooks and other texts as well as the ideologies underlying the differences. For instance, Grace compared the poems in *Maples in the Mist* to the nursery rhymes in the U.S. She stated that there was more depth in Chinese children's poems and wondered whether her daughter Ashley would be able to understand the implicit messages in those poems. Her thoughts prompted her further to ponder the role of children's books in Chinese parenting and the values that were taught through those Chinese poems.

The comparisons between books and information from media texts challenged parents' original understanding of China, Chinese people, and Chinese culture. All the four families compared the book *Mulan* with the Disney film *Mulan*, and single-mom Grace was most excited about the differences: 1) there was no love story in the book, and 2) Mulan actually obtained her parents' permission to fight in the war whereas the movie displayed that her parents were embarrassed by her decision and act. The differences pushed parents to re-examine their understanding of Chinese women, particularly Chinese baby girls, who were portrayed as undesirable and powerless in American media. In addition to the *Mulan* book, parents also spoke

highly of books that demonstrate girl power, as was the case in *Ruby's Wish* and *Sparrow Girl*.

Ben said "those books go against media reports that represented Chinese people as submissive

under the authoritarian Chinese government." Therefore, some of the picturebooks enabled

parents to have a modified and enriched understanding of China.

      Comparison between Chinese culture and American culture. Parents often compared

Chinese culture and American culture based on what they read in books. They noticed

differences between Chinese and American culture. Several parents, after reading the book

Henry's First-Moon Birthday, found it interesting Chinese celebrate a baby's first moon birthday

while American usually celebrate a baby's first year birthday. The relationships between

grandparents and grandchildren in the books *Grandfather Counts* and *Crouching Tiger* triggered

a few parents' thoughts about the different family dynamics in U.S. and Chinese families. I then

communicated with them about the Chinese philosophy of living together as a big family and the

current social realities in modern China that urge grandparents to undertake the responsibilities

of taking care of their grandchildren.

      In addition to the differences between Chinese culture and American culture, parents also

noticed similarities between the two cultures as well as transcendental themes across all cultures.

Almost all the parents perceived the cultural message from a few of the books that girls are not

preferred in China, in particular in ancient China, and some associated the messages to similar

situations confronting girls and women in the U.S. and other countries. Ben stated that the

dichotomy between boys and girls are existent in any society, and it would be nice to bring up

the conversations with his daughter using the books. Wayne connected the suppression of girls in

Chinese history to the American history of slavery and explained that oppressions of certain

groups of people happen in many countries, but there are always stories about people not giving up, fighting for voices, and persevering.

The connections and comparisons parents made not only endowed them with an enhanced understanding of China and Chinese culture by pushing them to re-think stereotypical understanding and negative representations of China but also facilitated a flowing process of shifting knowledge among cultures, histories, texts as well as a global awareness of inequality and suppression happening in all countries.

Seeking Insider's Perspectives

During parents' book selection process, parents regularly looked to me for information about Chinese and Chinese culture when they were not sure. I sorted their inquiry questions into three subthemes: textual clarification, cultural explanation, and accuracy of the information. It was often the case a simple question developed into complex back-and-forth conversations which helped me and parents both to develop understandings about China and Chinese culture.

Textual clarification. Parents continually turned to me with questions about pronunciation, plot and anything they felt they needed to know. Typical questions were "How do you pronounce this name?", "What are these on the edges of the books", and "What was written here?" Sometimes parents were confused about the story development, and they would depend on me to clarify the plot line. Almost all the parents were baffled by the character relationship and story organization in *Monkey King*; therefore, I retold the whole story and explained to them that readers need much background knowledge to understand the story because the current story is actually one little episode in a classic Chinese novel published in the 1600s entitled *Journey to the West*. Additionally, when reading the group of books on Chinese Arts and History, parents

inquired about the historical information of several books. I provided supplemental information that facilitated parents' understanding of books and their knowledge of Chinese history.

Cultural explanation. The five parents sought cultural explanations by asking questions related to China and Chinese culture based on the contents in books. For example, when Wayne saw the statue of Kuanyin (Goddess of Mercy) in *I See the Sun in China*, he remarked "is the statue common in multiple places of China?" I explained to him and Sarah that the statue only exists in temples, and we had a conversation about our government's implicit principle of discouraging religious practices. When Grace asked me about whether stories about Cultural Revolution were popular among children's books in China, I told her about China's censorship of information and the fact that those kind of stories would never appear in children's books in China. When Ben was surprised to find Chinese burn fake money in memorization of deceased ancestors in *Shanyi Goes to China*, I described to him that Chinese burn not only fake monkey but also other fake valuable items on important dates to be passed onto their ancestors in their afterlife. There were many conversations like these happening between parents and me surrounding the books. The books provided various access points for parents to know more about China, and the discussion surrounding the books promoted the formation of links between books and life.

Accuracy of the information. During parents' book selection process, parents would regularly confirm with me about the accuracy of the information. For instance, Ben, though excited at seeing the evolving process of Chinese characters from ancient times to modern China in *Liu and the Bird*, asked me whether the author is Chinese and wondered about how much historical facts were included when the author presented the evolution of characters or it is just based on imaginative ideas. Interestingly, I could not answer his question because I had never

considered that aspect. Kate and Grace read one sentence in *One Year in Beijing* about teachers

teaching students to use computers to log onto the internet. They both questioned the accuracy of

the information and asked how old the book is. Wayne held his reservation about the story of

Sparrow Girl because he thought the story "teaches a moral beyond the historical event although

it is based on something really happening." Therefore, the parents kept a watchful eye on the

accuracy of the information even though they liked a certain book.

Summarizing from the Three Themes

The three themes were used to offer a general idea of parents' book selection process.

Parents read and responded to books in a way that mostly was similar to their regular book

selections for their children. However, the specific purpose of establishing birth culture ties for

their adoptees urged them to know more about Chinese culture through seeking an insider's

perspective from me. Parents' efforts to read and carefully think through these books

demonstrated their serious attitude toward attending this study and helping their adoptees in

fostering birth culture ties. Parents' transactions with me surrounding the books displayed their

engagement in using these books to participate in another cultural world that is different from

theirs.

However, also from the selection process I saw tensions lurking in parents' discussions of

these books. For instance, there were tensions when parents' stated intention of supporting their

families' exploration of Chinese culture was compromised by their concerns for children's

reading levels measured by schools. There were also tensions when parents needed to use these

books to teach their adoptees cultural knowledge that they didn't know well either. These

tensions were all the more evident when parents selected the picturebooks they wanted to share

and read to their adoptees. The selection and ranking of books was a process in which parents

had to struggle between various thoughts, such as the purpose of attending this activity, the master narrative of school reading, parents' role in their children's knowledge acquisition, the role of books in parent-child read-alouds and their own sociocultural beliefs. In the next section I present parents' book choices and stated rationales to display parents' wobbles in balancing between different sociocultural views and discourses.

<p style="text-align:center">Parents' Book Selection Rationales</p>

In this section, I describe parents' overall selection of books and their book selection rationales. The five rationales demonstrated that parents picked and chose certain elements in their book selection process and constructed an aestheticized Chinese culture that aligned with their interests and cultural models. Using Bakhtin's centripetal forces and centrifugal forces, I also display the complexities underlying the five rationales when parents struggled among various ideological discourses.

Overall Selections

To better illustrate parents' book preferences, I constructed one table (Table 5 below) showing the most popular book titles in each book category from parents and their favorite book categories. Because some parents did not finish reading books in their book reading sessions or sometimes they only ranked the top four books, I only provided the top three books from parents' choices.

Table 5 Parents' Book Selections and Their Favorite Book Categories

Book Category	Most Selected (from 5 Parents)	Genres	Rationales	Parents' Favorite Category
Holidays and Family Life	*One Year in Beijing (5)*	Contemporary Realistic Fiction	Connectivity to personal lives; Values of a book;	Kate, Sarah

	Mooncakes (3)	Contemporary Realistic Fiction	Connectivity to personal lives; Family bonding; Values of a book;	
	Mei Mei Loves the Morning (3)	Contemporary Realistic Fiction	Family bonding; Values of a book; Positive contents;	
Folklore	*Mulan (4)*	Folklore	Positive Contents; Connectivity to personal lives	Grace and Wayne
	Sons of the Dragon King (4)	Folklore	Values of a book;	
	The Seven Blind Mice (3)	Folklore	Perceived child's needs; Values of a book;	
Arts and History	*Ruby's Wish (5)*	Historical fiction	Positive contents; Values of a book;	
	Look What Came Here from China (3)	Nonfiction	Positive contents; Values of a book; Connectivity to personal lives;	
	Brush of the Gods (3)	Historical fiction	Values of a book; Connectivity to personal lives	
Chinese American Families	*Shanyi Goes to China (4)*	Contemporary realistic fiction	Perceived child's needs; Values of a book; Connectivity to personal lives;	Ben
	Grandfather Counts(3)	Contemporary realistic	Perceived child's needs; Values of a book;	

		fiction		
	Crouching Tiger (3)	Contemporary realistic fiction	Values of a book	

The table showed that, among all the books, the books which were liked by all the five parents were *One Year in Beijing* and *Ruby's Wish*. Among the parents' favorite categories, two parents chose folklore, two chose holidays and family life, and one chose Chinese American families. I did not intend to analyze the selected books because that was not the focus of my study; however, parents' book preferences would be used as supportive evidence when I discuss parents' selection rationales.

Parents' Book Selection Rationales

My analysis of parents' book selection interviews led to five predominant rationales: perceived child's needs, positive contents, connectivity to personal lives, family bonding, and values of a book. Although I illustrate each themes separately, parents often offered several reasons for choosing a particular book. For instance, when Ben chose the book *Mei Mei Loves the Morning*, over other books, he said he liked the positive, uplifting contents in the books, the sweet interaction between grandparents and grandchildren, and the fact that his daughter had a similar name as the girl in the book. Thus, positive contents, family bonding and connectivity to personal lives were his reasons for choosing this book. In fact, the five rationales were inter-related in parents' selection of books, and the presentation of rationales below explained the overlapping parts among the rationales. On the other hand, parents wobbled when they weighed and balanced between rationales to rank the order of books.
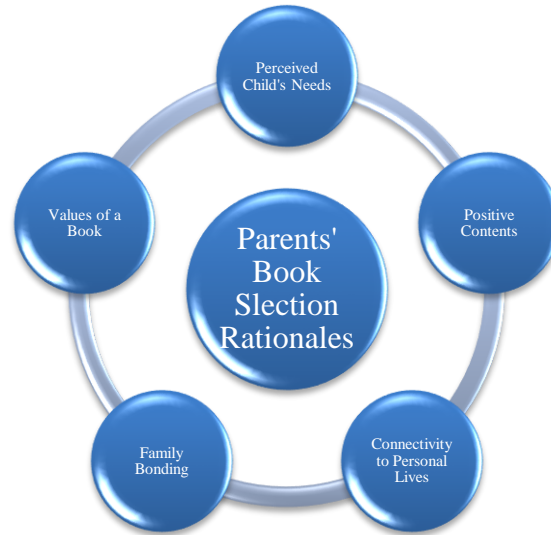
Figure 4.2 Thematic Map of Parents' Book Selection Rationales

Perceived child's needs. Perceived child's needs were parents' primary concern when they selected books to use with their child. Often other rationales became secondary in front of parents' concerns about their children's reading levels, interests and understanding of a topic even though parents expressed liking of a book during the initial browsing process. Most of the parents in my study liked the book *Three Monks, No Water* for its educational values of teaching their children about being responsible for their duties. However, they ranked the book low, worrying that their children would not have the attention span to sit through the books.

The same was true with books that the parents thought their children might not be interested in. Although many parents liked the book *Maples in the Mist: Poems for Children from the Tang Dynasty*, most parents did not rank the book high, because they did not think their children could "understand the literary value of the poems", as Sarah remarked. Thus, the potentials of using books to help Chinese adoptees forge birth culture ties were dramatically diminished by parents' primary concern for their children's needs in reading.

As these parents considered their child's perceived needs, parents attached great importance to reading as a school-based practice and as an activity important in their children's personal and school lives. They approached the books from their children's reading levels, and described their children's reading abilities with reading levels measured by schools. These parents were more or less affected by the master narrative of school reading operationalized in the form of standardized reading scores and assessments. On the other hand, they resisted the school-based reading by emphasizing the love of reading or the fun aspects of reading in my study, which definitely made their choices more complex when their stated intentions for book selections were helping their Chinese children establish birth ties. For example, although Kate did not like the book *The Seven Chinese Sisters*, a book she regarded as one with little educational value, she ranked the book first because "Alice would get the most enjoyment out of this one." Hence, child's perceived needs were spaces where parents were tugged by the master narrative of school reading and their conceptions of what reading should be like.

Positive contents. The parents gravitated toward books that had positive contents in terms of the representation of China and Chinese culture. They wanted happy stories or books that could promote their children's connections to the glorious aspects of Chinese culture. As Kate said, "I wanted her to be positive about her birth culture." Similarly, Sarah, when expressing concerns about the book *Red Kite, Blue Kite*, noted that "I wanted Emily to be proud of her birth culture when she talks about it with her friends." Thus, books like *Red Kite, Blue Kite* and *The Red Butterfly* were ranked low in parents' book preferences.

Moreover, books that offered a tourist view of China or superficial facts about Chinese culture were favored by parents. For example, parents' preferences of books like *Look What Came from China* and *Shanyi Goes to China* revealed parents' tendency to choose books that

emphasized China as an ancient civilization over books that documented social and political issues in historical and contemporary China.

The focus on the positive contents of Chinese culture might be related to the influence from scholars and adoption specialists who suggest that American parents who have Chinese adoptees involve in activities to help their children establish birth culture ties and construct positive identities (Scroggs & Heitfield, 2001; Rojewski, 2005). Thus, parents were drawn toward offering a positive birth culture experience to promote their Chinese adoptees' ethnic pride and self-esteem. It is thus not difficult to understand why they preferred books with positive contents. Even my presence in their houses were regarded by these parents as a way to instill in their adoptees ethnic pride. As Sarah stated, "I think it's very positive for her to see a Chinese girl grown up to be such a nice young lady. You are someone whom she can look up to."

Parents' focus on books with positive contents might also be related to the unfavorable media representation in the U.S. about China in recent years. Research showed the overall tone in the coverage of China in the *New York Times* between the year 1992 to 2006 remained negative (Peng, 2007). Parents in this study expressed similar opinions in their initial interviews. One of the examples would be from Grace, who did not find "a lot of popular, positive stories about China in media" during her first initial interview. Hence, books with positive contents might be particularly appealing to parents who aim to the counterbalance the negative media representative of China and emphasize the positive aspects of Chinese culture in their families.

Finally, using the books with positive contents would be conducive for strengthening family bonding, which, as I discussed earlier, was paramount for transracially adoptive families. Discussion of books about the separation of families in modern China or the sociocultural issues related with the Chinese Cultural Revolution might not contribute to the family bonding parents

aspired for. Thus, parents were more likely to be attracted to books with positive contents, although the focus on such books had a possibility of depriving their adoptees of prospects of learning Chinese culture in a multi-dimensional way.

  Connectivity to personal lives. Parents valued a book's connectivity to personal lives, and they frequently chose a book of which a child had some background knowledge. For example, Grace chose *Mulan* because Ashley had seen the film. Ben included *Shanyi Goes to China* because Mei had seen some of the Chinese artifacts during their China trip. It seemed the parents were hoping to help their child establish connections and build knowledge from background knowledge. Yet, on a deeper level, parents were looking for the validation of their family experiences in these books, particularly those that confirmed parents' efforts to introduce Chinese culture into their families. When Kate expressed her preference of the book *One Year in Beijing*, she was excited about the family traditions in the book that were practiced in her family. When Grace did not like the book *Lon Po Po,* she explained it was because there was "not as much of the Chinese culture that Alice would be familiar with." As parents search for the Chinese culture that their children were familiar with, they were also attempting to acknowledge their endeavors to establish birth cultures for their adoptees.

  With this thought in mind, it would be easier to understand why parents preferred a book which their children had some connections to over a book that provided new concepts or cultural knowledge that their children were not familiar with. The reason might be such books discussed ideas, concepts or traditions that parents did not have experiences with. For example, Kate ranked the holiday books higher than the Chinese zodiac book (*What the Rat told me*) because she said Alice was more familiar with the holiday celebrations than with the Chinese zodiac concept. Yet, other possible explanations would be she felt she was incapable to teach Alice

knowledge that she did not know either. Parents were often seen as children's first and most important teacher (Maccoby, 1994), and they socialized their children into particular social values and teach their children knowledge. Hence, parents might feel unsure to deal with topics that they were not familiar with. This probably explained some parents' feelings that the category of arts and history were distant, because they did not possess knowledge on that topic. Just like Kate said about the book *Red Kite, Red Kite*, "I would have to give her some background information to understand the story. I probably need to know more myself too." Therefore, topics that parents can have personal connections would be much easier for parents to discuss with their Chinese adoptees during family read-alouds.

Family bonding. Parents stated that they liked books that show the closeness of families; hence, books that advocate family themes or are beneficial for enhanced family relationships were highly preferred. The book *Mooncakes* was ranked high because of the strong family theme and the picture of a family get-together for holiday celebrations. The rationale of family bonding also explained why the category of holidays and family life was the favorite category from two parents. Almost all the books in that category emphasized the love and sweet interaction between family members. Thus, it was not surprising that books about the separation of families were not preferred. Likewise, although the book *New Year's Reunion* portrays a realistic view of migrant workers' families in China, it was often ranked low by parents. Pursuing family bonding was more important than learning Chinese culture

On the other hand, the rationale of family bonding was closely interrelated with the rationales of positive contents and connectivity to personal lives. As I discussed above, learning Chinese culture would be great if it can be embedded in the purpose of building family bonding and acknowledging family's previous cultural activities to incorporate Chinese culture at home.

Both the rationales of positive contents and connectivity to personal lives speak to parents' pursuit of family bonding.

Values of a book. Parents were drawn to books that had educational values that either teach transcendental cultural lessons or knowledge about China. Hence, although most of the five adoptees preferred storybooks to nonfiction books, their parents included the nonfiction book *Look What Came from China*, for the information about Chinese culture in that book. However, the storybooks were often chosen because of their universal values instead of the Chinese elements. For example, the book *Ruby's Wish* was popular with parents because it teaches the universal theme of women power rather than its Chinese aspect. Parents captured the universal part while I recognized many Chinese ingredients. It is the same situation with Ben's choice of Chinese American families as his favorite category. He did not deem those books very Chinese, and the sweet interaction between family members was the point that appealed to him most. Therefore, parents were drawn toward the universal values in books, which, from another point of view, could be understood as parents' reluctance to delve deeply into Chinese cultural details with the disguise of caring for universal humanity.

Whereas the five rationales were often interwoven during parents' book selection process, parents constantly wobbled when weighing and balancing different criteria. They wobbled between their own preference and their child's potential interests although they were more likely to surrender to the latter. When Ben considered the book *Brush of the Gods* as inappropriate for his daughter to read, he was also aware of Mei's interest in drawing and calligraphy. Eventually after much deliberation he included the book in the group of books he regarded as appropriate for Mei.

Although parents were more likely to identify universal themes in books, they still looked for Chinese elements in books, and often wobbled when a good story has few Chinese features. For example, both Kate and Grace wobbled about the book *The Seven Blind Mice,* because it has a good moral but it is also the least Chinese book in the folklore category. On the other hand, this short book is a quick and easy read for their daughters. Thus, they wobbled among three criteria: their child's perceived needs, the universal value of a book, and the educational values from the Chinese features of a book. It turned out they did not prefer the book. In fact, parents often chose books that have Chinese features with an ok story over books that have few Chinese features with a good story. Chineseness is important although parents might not take on that Chinese aspect personally.

Viewing the Rationales with Bakhtin's Dialogical Theory

Bakhtin's dialogical theory (1981) pointed out language is continuously tugged between centripetal forces that "unify and centralize verbal-ideological thought" toward unified and officially recognized language and centrifugal forces that resist that tendency and pull one toward "decentralization and disunification" (p. 272). Thus, people's expressions and ideological consciousness reflected the uninterrupted work from the tensions between centripetal forces and centrifugal forces. In explaining and analyzing parents' book selection rationales, I perceived that parents grappled with various social discourses to decide the books they wanted to share and use with their Chinese children. To better illustrate parents' ideological struggles within the process, I used Bakhtin's centripetal and centrifugal forces to analyze how these parents negotiated between different social discourses and personal voices that aim to unify and disunify parents at the same time, such as the master narrative of school reading, the advocacy of positive birth culture experiences from the adoption society.

Bakhtin's (1981) centripetal forces give expression to forces working toward sociopolitical and cultural centralization, which aim to unify people's thoughts around certain official and mainstream social discourses. On the other hand, centrifugal forces pulls people toward their personal voices and individual differences. In parents' book selection process, centripetal forces come from discourses include: 1) the master narrative of school reading; 2) the mainstream opinions from the adoption society that parents need to help their children with positive racial and ethnic identities; 3) the overall negative media representation of China; 4) Chinese culture in general. The centripetal forces from the above discourses intend to push parents to establish the importance of school-based reading in their families, the need for positive birth culture experiences for their adoptees, and the image of China and Chinese culture as negative and lacking in certain aspects. Correspondingly, the centrifugal forces come from discourses and parents' personal voices that were 1) their pursuit of family bonding; 2) their conceptions of the role of parents in families; 3) the purpose and the role of reading in their families.

Bakhtin pointed out that the tug of war between centripetal and centrifugal forces shape one's ideological views and make our ideological world "contradiction-laden and tension-filled" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). That's where "zones of contact" (p. 345) come in as spaces where we can navigate the two embattled forces for achieving our ideological consciousness.

During parents' book selection process, parents were involved in contact zones in which school culture, ethnic culture, their own sociocultural views and my voices collided and dialogued with each other. The master narrative of school reading had a big influence on them when parents used children's reading levels to approach the books; however, they also resisted the tendency by emphasizing to me the importance of the fun aspects of reading for their children.

Parents aspired for family bonding, but was also more or less guided by the opinions from adoption agencies and specialists that European American parents have the responsibility to foster birth culture ties for their Chinese adoptees. At the same time, they were faced with differences between their own cultural models and those from Chinese culture, which required them to scrutinize their cultural identities and step out of comfort zones. They also had to balance between local and media representation of China in the U.S. and what I told them as a cultural insider from modern China.

With the contact zones, the five parents negotiated among various discourses and personal voices for meanings and ideological consciousness. Based on the analysis of the rationales, parents' pursuits of family bonding seemed to be predominant over other discourses. However, the rationale of family bonding was also infused with the pull of parents toward centripetal forces from schools and the adoption society. Thus, the five rationales showed a dialogical inter-relatedness of the centripetal forces and centrifugal forces parents were faced with. Likewise, parents' five book selection rationales were also closely inter-related. The five rationales indicated the struggles parents had gone through and the complexities involved when parents selected books for their Chinese adoptees.

Summarizing the Rationales

Overall, the parents' five book rationales demonstrated that they tended to choose books that have a positive representation of China with universal themes that they can relate to, such as the love between family members and the perseverance of people in achieving their goals. Parents' rationales indicated their additional intention of improving their children's reading abilities and family bonding besides using the books to help their children connect to their birth culture as well as parents' inclination to choose books that align with their interests and personal

lives. It seemed parents were more willing to reside in their personal comfort zones in their ranking and selection of books. On the other hand, the five rationale also displayed the intricacies of various ideological discourses parents had to struggle through during their book selection process. In the next section, I discuss issues surrounding parents' book selections based on the tensions identified in parents' book selection process.

Issues Surrounding Parents' Book Selection

Earlier when I presented case-by-case accounts of each family's situations, I discussed some of the tensions in parents' selection of books such as those between connections and differences. In this section I illustrate the tensions I identified across the four families for the purpose of explaining the issues around parents' selection of books. I first illustrate the tensions and then use the tensions to set forth the issues I saw in these European American parents' efforts to connect their Chinese adoptees to Chinese culture.

Tensions across the Four Families

When the European American parents cared about whether their children would be able to relate to a story and when the parents chose to step away from Chinese American families because their lives were not relatable, I perceived the tension between connections and differences. A pure focus on the connections restricts the possibilities for the adoptees to explore their Chinese cultural heritage. Moreover, parents' resistance to differences indicated that their construction of Chinese culture was based on their own cultural models rather than the lives performed by Chinese people. Yet, as the data analysis showed in the previous section, parents' focus on connections was also related to their pursuits of family bonding and their eagerness to recognize their efforts in practicing Chinese culture at their houses in these books.

There was the tension between universality and cultural uniqueness when parents drew toward the universal elements in the books without examining the details about Chinese culture. The pursuit of universal elements reflected a stance that tended to ignore the uniqueness of Chinese culture. The attraction to universal elements also raised the question of how much Chineseness parents wanted in their families. Were the European American parents using universal values to avoid delving into the Chineseness in their adoptees' identities?

There was the tension between family bonding and birth culture/parents connections when parents used the books to focus more on family bonding instead of assimilating Chinese culture values as a whole family. As Dorow (2006) described, parents were tugged between the child's essential Chineseness and the parents' desire to transcend that background and create a new family identity. Thus, the European American parents' pursuit of family bonding might affect their attitudes toward the level of birth culture connections for their Chinese adoptees.

There was the tension between the child's reading abilities and birth culture connections when parents evaluated the appropriateness of a book based on their children's reading abilities and understanding of a certain topic. Often parents' concern for their children's reading abilities exceeded the Chinese elements in a book, which sometimes might undermine the possibilities for adoptees to be exposed to a more comprehensive and complex view of Chinese culture.

These four tensions indicated the complexities involved in these parents' selection of books with the intent of helping their adoptees forge birth cultural ties. The European American parents' attitudes toward their adoptees' Chineseness and parents' conceptions of Chinese culture would greatly affect how much influence these books would exert on their adoptees and themselves. As the study exhibited, these parents were not willing to incorporate too much Chineseness and difference into their families and constructed an aestheticized Chinese culture

for their adoptees for strengthening family bonding and skirting discussion of issues of differences and racism. The aestheticized Chinese culture refers to these parents' focus on idealized and pleasant Chinese cultural elements that often times established China as an ancient civilization rather than a modern and complex country. However, the critical view on parents' book selection cannot dismiss parents' sincere efforts in attending this study to introduce more Chinese culture into their families and also the centripetal and centrifugal forces that led to their book choices.

Identifying the Issues

Based on these tensions and the European American parents' book selection rationales, I identified two issues in parents' selection and use of books. The first one was the parents' tendency to focus on connections and universal elements without much discussions of differences. Thus, parents chose to be blind to their adoptees' differences when they approached Chinese culture in a way that aligned with their interests and cultural models. Maybe they were aware of the differences, but they disguised the differences in aestheticized and celebratory ways that sidestep the risky issues of racism, power and positioning in the U.S. society. The parents' approach did not require them to transact with Chinese culture because they looked at Chinese culture at a distant and from a "safe" place.

The second issue was that the parents' pursuit of family bonding and other family needs took precedence over the purpose of birth culture connections for Chinese adoptees. When parents were confronted with Chinese cultures in those picturebooks, they were inclined toward elements that were beneficial for building family cohesiveness and creating family identities. During their assimilation of Chinese cultures, parents chose elements that fixed Chinese culture at an ancient stage, and they re-inscribed those elements with their family traditions. In this way,

Chineseness was more related as symbols and practices of family cohesion than cultural values that distinguished European American parents from their adoptees' origins.

The book selections with the parents and their book transactions with their adoptees could be an opportunity for European American families to construct cultural spaces and think about the positioning of Chinese culture in their family world. However, the parents were aimed more at the benefits these books could bring to their children and their families than thinking about the necessity for them to engage more with Chinese culture and examine their own cultural identities. Thus, the books did not exert a big influence on the parents and adoptees' understanding of Chinese culture.

In the next chapter, I continue to extend my understanding of my data and study results by problematizing the ways these parents approached Chinese culture and Chineseness in these books and contemplating on what Chinese culture is in a global context. I also discussed the implications of this study for both European American parents to examine the ways they interact with books about China and Chinese culture and for teachers and teacher educators who develop curricula of global children's literature for building intercultural understanding and global awareness.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS

The initial purpose of the study was to understand European American parents' selections of picturebooks about China and Chinese culture to help their Chinese adoptees establish birth culture ties. Through this study, I hoped to contribute to current research on transracial adoptive parents' cultural socialization practices and people's understanding of culture and multiculturalism in a globalized context. The study may also potentially help teachers and teacher educators contemplate on the ways they can use multicultural and global children's literature to assist students in showing appreciation for other cultures.

My research question in this investigation was *What process and rationales for selection do European American parents of children adopted from China use when choosing picturebooks with the intent of helping their children establish birth culture ties, and what issues occur around that selection?* To facilitate my inquiry into the research question, I drew on Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) dialogical theory to understand parents' responses and transactions with picturebooks about China and Chinese culture. Inductive thematic analysis was employed to identify themes in parents' book selection process and their rationales for choosing books for their Chinese adoptees. Deductive thematic analysis was implemented to identify the tensions existing parents' selection and use of books, which provided me a foundation to discuss issues around parents' selection and use of those books.

The results showed the five European American parents matched the book with their child's perceived needs, connected to their personal and family experiences, compared between

different sources of information, and sought insider's perspectives during their book selection process. However, there was not much discussion about how parents were going to use the books for assisting their adoptees' understanding of Chinese culture.

When the European American parents selected books for their adoptees, perceived child's needs, positive contents, connectivity to personal lives, family bonding and values of a book were the five rationales parents used to determine their final ranking order of books and books they wanted to read to their adoptees. The five rationales demonstrated that parents picked and chose certain elements in their book selection process and constructed an aestheticized Chinese culture that aligned with their interests and cultural models. However, the analysis of the five rationales also showed parents' efforts to balance between various ideological discourses when they selected and ranked the books, and they were affected by the master narrative of school reading, the negative media representation of China, the advocacy of promoting positive birth culture experiences from the adoption society, and other personal and social voices that complicated their selections.

The two issues identified in these five parents' selection books were 1) parents focused on connections and universal elements in books instead of discussing cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese culture; 2) and parents selected the books more for strengthening family bonding and other family needs than helping their adoptees learn about Chinese culture. As a result, the books did not make a transformative influence on both parents and the adoptees' understanding and attachment to Chinese culture as parents reflected in their final interviews.

In this chapter I extend my considerations of the data and study results. I begin by reflecting on European American parents' selection of books in their families. Based on the reflections, I reexamined and reconsidered the concepts of *culture*, *cultural authenticity*, and

multiculturalism in a globalized context. Then, I explain what I consider to be the limitation in my research design and my book list for parents' selection. Finally, I discuss the implications of this study for European American parents of children from China, as well as teachers and teacher educators who are involved in addressing cultures in students' lives and classrooms.

<div align="center">Reflections on Parents' Selection of Books</div>

The reflections on European American parents' selection of books were my attempts to better understand the data and results from this study as well as questions about Chineseness in a globalized context. What is Chinese culture? How much Chineseness do European American parents who adopt Chinese children want in their families? Might Chineseness mean too many differences for these families? As I discuss these parents' reluctance to deal with cultural and racial differences between themselves and their Chinese adoptees, I also acknowledge their efforts using Banks's multicultural education continuum. Additionally, this section positions my study within the big picture of transracial adoption research in order to interpret previous research regarding the value of parents' cultural activities to help their adoptees form birth culture connections.

An Aestheticized Chinese Culture

An aestheticized Chinese culture refers to the European American parents' focus on the idealized and pleasant Chinese cultural elements that often times established China as an ancient civilization rather than a modern and complex country. This tendency was revealed by one of these parents' rationales for choosing books about China and Chinese culture: positive contents. Parents tended to choose books that provided a nice portrayal of Chinese culture. Even though books like *Look What came from China* only provided a superficial tourist view of Chinese history and inventions, they were ranked higher than books that documented social and political

issues in China such as *Red Kite, Blue Kite*, and *The Red Butterfly*. Parents' search for positive

contents in books confirmed previous research that adoptive parents produced "decontextualized

and aestheticized versions of Chinese culture" for their Chinese adoptees (Louie, 2009, p. 286).

Moreover, some parents' obsession with holiday celebrations in this study pointed to the issue of

a celebratory focus on Chinese culture in transracial adoptive families.

Parents' book selection process indicated they were editing Chinese culture and picking

up the elements that aligned with their cultural models. The editing and filtering process

reflected not only parents' personal understanding of Chinese culture but also the potential

influences from social discourses that viewed Chinese culture as exotic and desired. According

to Said (1979), westerners had a long history of looking at Asian and Asian items as objects of

desire, and the orientalist conceptualizations had pushed Asian cultures into the realm of

aesthetic appreciation. Thus, it was not surprising to find parents in this study were more

attracted to traditions and inventions that displayed the rich and long history of Chinese

civilizations than talking about sociocultural issues in contemporary China. Parents' search of

Chinese culture stayed at the stage of appreciating China as an ancient civilization without

delving into Chinese culture at a deeper level and learning what China is like in a modern

context.

When I wondered about parents' efforts to understand Chinese culture, I was aware of the

complexity and difficulty to define Chinese culture and Chineseness. As parents asked me all

kinds of questions about China, I realized that Chinese culture is so broad and complex to define,

with China being such a large country with different regions and a variety of people, traditions

and perspectives. Moreover, the idea of Chinese culture is constantly changing in a globalized

context just like my Chineseness being constantly contested and re-negotiated in the U.S.

Moreover, with China being so big and overseas Chinese and Taiwanese producing new forms of Chinese culture in other territories, defining Chinese culture becomes a complex task, whose boundaries are difficult to map and often subject to revisions.

However, even though the definition of Chinese culture is difficult, I argue that parents' efforts to connect to Chinese culture should reach beyond the current accessible forms of celebrations and artefacts to the more subtle and abstract level of interpreting Chinese values. In addition to ethnic food, costumes or holiday celebrations, knowing Chinese culture also involves exploration of Chinese people's daily lives, the nuances in the way people express themselves, the interaction between family members and the parenting styles in Chinese families. Therefore, besides books about inventions and holiday celebrations in China, efforts should also be made by adoptive parents to seriously think about books that portray contemporary Chinese culture and consider incorporating some of the values into their family lives. However, I had to admit and point out that parents' connections to the positive contents of Chinese culture were related to the books I presented to them. The limited availability of children's books about modern China in the U.S. and my selection and judgment of those books more or less influenced parents' book choices.

On the other hand, I noticed the difficulty for parents to pick up some of the Chinese values in books. For example, the value of respecting old people, particularly the elder members of the family is implicit in the book *Celebrating The Lantern Festival*, but no parents had mentioned it no matter whether they noticed it or not. Another example would be the values embedded in the book *Crouching Tiger*, in which the boy was required to show modesty when he was eager to show that he could do well in some gestures of Chinese martial arts. Being humble and not showing off is an important cultural value in China.

Even when parents did pick up a certain value, they felt uncomfortable to integrate it into their families. In the book *Grandfather Counts*, both Grace and Ben had discussed the Chinese value that children have the duty of taking care of their parents when parents get old. They both expressed the opinion that such values did not apply to U.S. families. Yet, talking with me about these values enabled Grace and Ben to be more receptive of this value and the way Chinese show love to their family members. Thus, I think having an insider to discuss some of the Chinese values in books is useful for parents to better understand Chinese cultures.

An interesting phenomenon with parents' understanding of Chinese culture is their emphasis on authenticity about their knowledge about China. Although they tended to focus on the traditional part of Chinese culture, they wanted the information to be accurate. Nevertheless, I hold the opinion that parents did not give Chinese culture due respect if they continued to select idealized and decontextualized aspects of Chinese culture while ignoring Chinese culture performed in daily life and in a contemporary context. Chinese culture does not contain discrete cultural elements that can be decontextualized and selected to enter the families, but values and life practices that become alive and meaningful in context.

How Much Chineseness Do Parents Want?

Interpreting and integrating Chinese values into adoptive families is much more difficult than honoring holiday celebrations, Chinese foods, and costumes. On the other hand, the way parents approach Chinese values also initiates the question: How much Chineseness do parents want in their families, and how should their children's Chinese origins be incorporated into families when parents are working on building a family identity? Were these families creating a value system unique to their families through engaging in certain aspects of Chinese culture?

As Dorow (2006) stated, Chineseness is inherently existent in these Chinese adoptees because of their birth origins, physical features and the circumstance in their early life as babies. However, Chineseness also represents difference or even obstacles to parents when they build family cohesiveness. Parents experience a pull between their children's inherent Chineseness and parents' desire to move beyond this background in creating a new family identity.

During parents' book selection process, family bonding was one of the key rationales guiding parents' book selections. In one of the selection interviews, Grace was concerned about the separation of families in *Red Kite, Blue Kite* and how it might affect Ashley's emotions, and Kate held apprehension that the books might reignite Alice's longing for birth parents. It seemed the Chineseness part was secondary to parents' concern for family bonding. This might also explain the reason why parents were inclined to attend to connections and family experiences that were validated in books when they selected or introduced a book to their adoptees.

I found parents' attitude toward the Chinese part of books interesting. Compared to "books with no Chineseness", in their words, parents preferred books with Chinese elements, such as a Chinese background, or a Chinese character; however, the Chineseness part did not seem important to the parents. When they explained the rationales for choosing a book, it was often the universal values of the books that appealed to them. For example, when Sarah and Wayne expressed their preference for the book series about celebrating Chinese festivals, they did not touch upon the Chinese elements; they said they liked the books because of the family theme in the books and the value of those books for providing recipes of Chinese dishes that can be used for weekend family projects. Therefore, Chinese elements were important for parents' book selections, but I did not know how much Chineseness parents picked up and transacted with. Was Chineseness viewed as differences that parents were not willing to ponder? Or

Chineseness was something abstract and intangible and the tangible aspects like holiday and celebrations were much easier for them to identify with and pick up?

Also interesting to share was the fact that there was not much discussion about China and Chinese cultures during parent-child read-alouds and the use of books after I left, although my observations of such transactions were beyond the scope of this study. Wayne said they had never focused on a specific Chinese cultural value, and understanding the messages in a book was what he hoped Emily to take away from the book at the current stage. Although I agreed that children might be able to understand the cultural aspects of books better at an older age, having some conversations with Chinese adoptees about Chinese culture would at least help them understand the purpose of doing this activity and to know that their birth culture is valued in their family. Research showed children did not associate the activities they engaged in with learning about Chinese culture (Bebiroglu & Pinderhughes, 2012); thus, I worried that the adoptees might think it as a reading activity to improve their readings. In fact, as I observed, adoptees' attitudes revealed such a tendency. Emily was, like her mother said, achievement minded when reading a book, and Mei was resistant to the books because it seemed like a reading activity to her. If parents could discuss more explicitly the purpose of reading picturebooks about China and Chinese culture as learning more about their adoptees' birth culture as a whole family, the books would probably play a more central role in the lives of the children and their families.

Regarding the book discussions, Kate expressed to me that she felt it was difficult to talk over with her daughter about these picturebooks because she was not knowledgeable about Chinese culture, and some of the sociopolitical issues were complex to discuss. My opinion is that learning about another culture always involves tensions because it confronts the limits of our knowledge, challenges our current cultural models and unravels our stereotypes of other cultures.

If parents are not willing to embrace the tensions, how can they help their Chinese adoptees to establish birth culture ties in a more thoughtful and in-depth ways?

The above phenomena and results led to the question about whether parents were really willing to help with the birth culture connections. There were moments I wondered whether parents felt compelled to forge birth culture connections because of the mainstream discourses on the identity crisis transracial adoptees face later in their life. Additionally, the Chinese Government's mandate of demanding of parents to connect Chinse adoptees to Chinese culture put a moral burden for parents to undertake. The interesting yet lucky thing is, compared to other cultures like black cultures, Chineseness has been constructed by the adoption society as something good to keep for adoptees. Thus, most parents with Chinese adoptees are following the mainstream tendency to assist with birth culture connections for their adoptees, though at different levels of frequency and depth.

Another thought I had about the study was the place where Chinese cultural socialization practices fit into the family. Apparently the parents in my study selected the books to meet one of their family needs—improving their children's academic reading. It evokes the question: Which one is more important, enhancing a child's reading or using the books for forging birth culture ties? Or these parents were aiming for both? Moreover, because adoptees often have a tight schedule with school homework, their own interested activities, and activities for learning Chinese culture, how can Chinese cultural education be integrated into their schedule in a way that does not draw resistance from adoptees? As we can see in Ben's family, Mei complained about her learning Chinese language class and attending my study, and Ben really struggled with how to keep Mei's Chineseness. How should Chineseness be present in adoptees' family lives?

Whether out of external pressure or their own will, parents working on connecting to their adoptees' birth culture need to choose how much and the manner in which they want to represent Chineseness in their families . I think books about China and Chinese culture can be a good way for parents to construct cultural spaces to make meaning of Chinese culture and consider the position of Chinese culture in their families, especially when coupled to other efforts to engage Chinese culture. Yet, I maintain that engagement with Chinese culture requires from parents a willingness to discuss and carefully think through differences in books apart from simply validating family experiences in books. Otherwise, I doubt the books would make a big impact on the parents and the adoptees.

Chineseness as a Racial Identity

During parents' book selection process, all the parents maintained that they did not consider their families as Chinese American families and could not relate to the books in that category. Hence, most of the parents deemed it good to know books about Chinese American families; however, those books were largely irrelevant to them. The only parent who liked the category was Ben, who found some value in the books portraying the Chinese American families, but still the life in those families was not relatable to his family.

Personally, I had struggled with this point for a long time. I understood parents' position in not identifying with Chinese American families. These parents were raised and grew up as white Americans, and urging them to label themselves as Chinese American families might be totally against their will. Yet, I was worried about the Chinese adoptees, whose visible racial features and Chinese origins would lead them to be defined as Chinese Americans no matter how much they know about China. Given such considerations, I was concerned about parents' blindness to their adoptees' Chineseness as a racial identity.

Parents' reluctance to deal with their adoptees' racial identity also confirmed previous research evidence that showed white parents, though willing to help their adoptees establish birth culture ties, often adopted a color-blind approach to racial difference between their adoptees and themselves, thus leaving the adoptees navigating racism in society on their own (Shiao, Tuan, & Rienzi, 2004; Vonk, Lee, & Crolley-Simic, 2010). Thus, I argue that European American parents need to know more about Chinese American families in terms of how those families understand and cope with racism and how they express Chinese cultures in daily lives. With this consideration, children's books which offer an authentic and complex view of Chinese American families is a valuable source for European American parents to use with their Chinese adoptees because it is often written from a child's perspective, thus easier for their Chinese adoptees to interpret and relate to.

Additionally, I speculated whether parents' reluctance to deal with differences and talk about Chinese values in books had something to do with their resistance to the racial identity of their Chinese adoptees. The more they talk about Chinese values and daily lives, the greater the possibility is that they would involve discussions about the status of Chinese Americans in U.S. society and the entrenched racism toward Chinese Americans in contemporary institutions. In contrast to the racial differences, parents were probably more comfortable with the cultural differences through celebrating Chinese holidays and honoring Chinese traditions and inventions. Nevertheless, the focus on the cultural differences of Chinese adoptees deflects attention from the fact that race matters and will continue to matter throughout a Chinese adoptee's whole lives, and parents' choices in celebrating Chinese culture in aestheticized ways fail to prepare their Chinese adoptees to understand the issue of racism in the U.S.

On the other hand, parents' color-blind approach could be the result of their assimilation of certain authoritative discourses in the international adoption society that cultural education and pride about China and Chinese culture would be the solution to adult adoptees' identity issues in the future (Louie, 2009), because adoptees' love of Chinese culture would be their defenses against racist remarks thrown at them in the future. As a result, parents eagerly and comfortably promote their adoptees' cultural identities without much attention to the racial positioning of Chinese and Chinese Americans in the U.S.

To conclude, these white parents' book selections about China and Chinese culture showed that the way they conceptualized Chinese culture and addressed differences might not help their adoptees understand their cultural and racial identities. The emphasis on connections, the pursuit of family bonding, the inclination to draw toward universal elements and the request for authentic yet static cultural facts all pointed to the result that those books would not play a big role in European American parents' endeavors to establish birth ties for their Chinese children.

Theorizing Parents' Selections in Multicultural Education

Although I argue parents' selections of books might not help their adoptees much in connecting to Chinese cultural heritage, I also want to acknowledge parents' efforts in supporting their children's exploration of Chinese culture. In particular, as I presented in the fourth chapter, parents showed serious attitudes toward participating in my study and eagerly sought my perspectives to acquire new knowledge about China and Chinese culture. They cared about the accuracy of information, inquired about what China is like in contemporary settings, and engaged in Chinese culture through comparing it with U.S. culture and other cultures.

With this thought in mind, I placed these parents' efforts and book selections within Dr. Banks's (2006) discussions of the four approaches to the integration of multicultural content into the curriculum for multicultural education. I theorized parents' interests to explore how European American parents can move forward in integrating Chinese culture into their families more effectively.

Banks pointed out four levels of integrations of multicultural content in his multicultural education continuum: contributions, additive, transformation, and social action. The first two levels refer to the addition of ethnic contents into multicultural curriculum without structurally changing the dominant society's ideologies and values, whereas the latter two levels structurally change the curriculum to enable students to view concepts and issues with diverse perspectives from varied ethnic and cultural groups and to take action to help solve issues.

Among the four approaches, parents' attraction to aestheticized Chinese culture aligned with the first contributions approach that focuses on heroes, holidays and discrete cultural elements from non-dominant social groups. Banks pointed out the contributions approach provided teachers a quick and easy way to integrate ethnic content into the curriculum quickly. However, such an approach failed to address the real experiences of non-dominant groups by focusing celebratory attention to the discrete cultural elements, such as costumes, foods, holidays and other tangible cultural products. Despite the weakness, Banks stated that these teachers practicing the contributions approach should be "encouraged, supported, and given the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to reform their curricula by using more of the effective approaches in the continuum" (p. 247).

Similarly, for European American parents who tended to be attracted to aestheticized and discrete cultural elements in Chinese culture, we should recognize parents' efforts in exploring

options to help connect with their adoptees' Chinese culture origins. On the other hand, parents need to be encouraged and supported to interpret Chinese culture as a living form embedded in daily lives and view issues and concepts from the perspectives of people from Chinese culture. In this way, Chinese people and Chinese culture are no longer seen as "the other" for these European American families but significant frames of references for parents and adoptees to think about their family identity and deal with issues in daily lives.

Talking Back to Previous Research

Studies (Crolley-Simic & Vonk, 2002; Vonk et al., 2010;) showed that among transracial adoptive parents' numerous cultural socialization practices such as preparing ethnic foods and attending cultural camps with their adoptees, reading books is an activity adoptive parents frequently used to help their adoptees forge birth culture links, and parents like this activity because family reading can facilitate the formation of family bonds. However, adult adoptees considered this activity as less important and useful than real interaction with people. Reading books was a practice that implied parents' reluctance to engage in practices that demanded more integration into adoptees' birth culture and discussion of racial and ethnic issues.

This qualitative case study validated previous research results, showing that reading books did not make a big influence on adoptees aged between 6 and 9 years old, as the parents reported in their reflection interviews. On the other hand, it added to current research by delving into the reasons why reading books was not useful for adoptees to understand Chinese culture and their cultural and racial identities. The four cases in the studies, while displaying particularity in each family, showed that parents picked and chose certain elements in their book selection process and constructed an aestheticized Chinese culture that aligned with their interests and cultural models. Moreover, parents' focus on connections and universal elements

and the lack of discussions between parents and adoptees about Chinese cultural values and sociopolitical issues might be one of the reasons why the books did not affect the adoptees much.

Although this study focused only on the book reading activity, the results also pointed to the problems with parents' cultural socialization practices in general and the reason why adoptees did not show a closer attachment to or appreciation of their birth culture in the long run despite their parents' efforts to incorporate various activities related to their children's birth culture at home. Parents' resistance to talking about the Chineseness of their adoptees, in particular the racial aspect, would affect adoptees' understanding of their cultural and racial identities. I also argue, in response to previous debate in transracial adoption research on whether parents' cross-cultural abilities are important (Grow & Shapiro, 1974; McRoy & Zucher, 1983; Simon & Altstein, 2002), that parents need to acquire a cross-cultural competence in order to successfully help their adoptees form a birth culture connection and an appreciation of their identities.

Rethinking Concepts of Culture, Cultural Authenticity, and Multiculturalism

The research process, parents' book selection rationales and my constantly contested Chineseness urged me to reexamine certain concepts in a globalized context. The first concept is culture, defined as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, morals, customs, and and other capabilities and habits acquired by man or woman as a member of a society" (Blount, 1982, p. 56). Yet, in a globalized context, that complex whole becomes unstable and changeable because of the interaction with and influence of other cultures. Culture can no longer be seen as essentialized knowledge in a person's life; instead culture is socially negotiated and constantly revised and reinvented in the context of every life. Thus, for European American parents to pick and choose certain elements and package those elements into cultural experiences for their

adoptees tends to stereotype Chinese culture and ignore the dynamic nature of culture in the context of globalization.

In contrast to the view of seeing culture as a complex whole, I was drawn toward understanding culture as a set of meanings produced in daily life. In presenting his concept of culture, Geertz (1973) wrote that "Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be…an interpretive one with meaning"(p. 5). I like his metaphor of comparing culture to spinning webs, and consider it a nice way to describe the current situations in a globalized world. Various cultures are transacting in contact zones, and the boundaries between cultures become permeable. We as people in a globalized context, are just like Geertz said, spinning webs through interpreting and interacting with other cultures. The webs are meanings we produce and also new cultures we create. Thus, culture is about making meaning of life and understanding human experiences. Hence, for European American parents to connect to Chinese culture, it is more about interpreting Chinese and Chinese Americans' life experiences, good and bad, instead of attending separate cultural events and purchasing lifeless cultural objects. It is also a process of getting to know more about ourselves, why we are Chinese, Chinese Americans, or Americans.

With this consideration, cultural authenticity is not simply about accuracy of information but also about cultural values performed in daily life as well as how cultures are expressed, revised, reinvented in different contexts. Thus, the pursuit of authenticity in children's books about Chinese American families would involve understanding evolving conceptions of what it means to be Chinese Americans in past, present and future contexts. Another key aspect about cultural authenticity is the necessity to keep an instance of engagement with books about other cultures. If readers cannot be deeply engaged with the books and demonstrate a sensitivity

toward the cultures portrayed in the books, then all kinds of responses become inauthentic in their search of cultural authenticity because superficial connections and comments would not lead to a transaction with other cultures and an understanding of the authenticity and complexity of other cultures.

Moreover, we need to push for a more complex understanding of the concept of multiculturalism although the danger of multiculturalism in the U.S. has been pinpointed for a long time in the U.S. Scholars maintained culture was imagined in the forms of material culture, and the celebratory focus on cultural differences through discussing different holidays, foods, and costumes was a color-blind multiculturalism without touching upon issues of white privileges, racial politics, and power (Anagnost 2000; Dorow 2006). This comment on culturalism is very similar to the approach parents adopted in their book selection process: using idealized Chinese culture elements for family cohesion and sidestepping issues of racism and sociopolitical issues.

In a globalized context, we need to operationalize a more profound understanding of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is not about advocating cultural differences and producing stereotypical images of other cultures. It is about understanding ourselves as multicultural human beings because being multicultural is a common human experience in a global village. On a daily basis, people transact with several cultures and have dialogues with others and self. In the Dialogical Self Theory, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) considered the self as a society of mind in which different I-positions of a person, or different cultural identities of a person, dialogue and collide with each other. Thus, we are multicultural as a person, and learning another culture is more about transacting with another culture than looking at a culture from a distance. Correspondingly, for parents to read and use picturebooks about Chinese culture with their

children, it is a process of making meaning of our own culture and other cultures through transacting with the books.

Limitations of the Study and Further Inquiries

In this section, I ponder the limitations of this study from two aspects: the book list for parents to choose from and the research design. Then, based on the limitations, I propose research ideas that can be explored in future studies.

Limitations of the Books

While I criticized parents' tendency toward books that provide an aestheticized version of Chinese culture, I had to admit that the book list parents chose from failed to provide a multi-dimensional and complex view of China and Chinese culture because of the limited availability of children's books in the U.S. about China, Chinese culture and Chinese Americans. Several scholars have lamented on the situation that folklore and historical fiction about Asian cultures abound while the modern Asian world is nearly absent in children's literature (Cai, 1994; MacCann, 1997; Yokata & Bates, 2005).

Thus, in my book list, although I did my best to collect high-quality picturebooks for parents, the view of contemporary China in these books was still lacking depth and width. That's also the reason why I included some inauthentic books to show modern China given the fact that most of the descriptions were accurate. Besides the availability of books, my personal preferences and criteria of authenticity and quality books also consciously and unconsciously influenced the books I offered to parents.

Limitations of the Research Design

While this study showed the patterns in five European American parents' selection and use of books about China and Chinese culture for their Chinese adoptees, it must be viewed

within the context of several limitations. First, the small number of parents participating in this study reduced the potential to generalize the results, and could not represent the diversity in adoptive families with Chinese adoptees, such as black families with Chinese adoptees and Chinese American families with Chinese adoptees. The results could not represent European American families living in other regions of the U.S. Compared to Georgia where there is not a large population of Chinese Americans and native Chinese, American parents who live in the New York area or in San Francisco might have different rationales for selecting and using books with their Chinese adoptees. Second, parents were presented with a pre-selected groups of books decided by the researcher, so their book choices were confined by my choices. For example, there were only four nonfiction books in the book list, which perhaps did not meet the needs of some parents who prefer nonfiction books over fiction books for their children. Third, my discussion with the parents surrounding the books influenced their book choices to a certain extent.

Further Inquiries

There are many interesting ideas that are worth investigating based on the limitations of the study. For example, future studies can look at Chinese American families or black families with Chinese adoptees and examine those parents' selection rationales and their ways of introducing Chinese culture into family lives. There were no boys in this study, thus doing a study of families with only Chinese boys or with both Chinese boys and girls might provide a different picture. Moreover, this study had a mix of fathers and mothers in the book selections; probing into fathers' or mothers' selection rationales separately may allow a view of how gender plays a role in parents' efforts to connect their adoptees to birth cultures.

Implications of This Study

In this section, I discuss the implications of this study. First, I set forth the implications for European American parents with Chinese adoptees. How might they use children's books about China and Chinese culture in a more thoughtful way? Second I expound the implications for teachers and teacher educators who are engaged in multicultural education or using multicultural and global children's literature with students. How can teachers guide the students to engage in other cultures in more effective and transformative ways?

For European American Parents with Chinese Adoptees

I understand it is difficult for European American parents to impart in Chinese adoptees a cultural and racial identity that they do not possess; however, with a new conceptualization of culture in the world's globalization process, understanding Chinese culture is also interpreting parents' own identities as European Americans. As parents transact with Chinese cultures in contact zones, they see better "the degree to which [they are] externally determined" and come to "understanding and excising [their] real freedom" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.137). Hence, the cultural learning process is one in which both parents and adoptees transform themselves instead of one in which parents pass facts about Chinese cultures to their adoptees.

The integration of Chinese culture should be performed by the family as a whole and in a more seamless way into family activities than just a series of cultural events designed for the adoptees. The focus on Chinese culture should be oriented toward interpreting and incorporating Chinese values into families rather than displaying Chinese culture in material forms because the efforts to expose children to their Chineseness can be understood better within the broader context of daily family life.

Given such considerations I think reading children's books about China and Chinese culture is a suitable activity for European American parents to engage in with their Chinese adoptees. Parent-child reading is often a frequent family activity in which parents help their children build knowledge about the world; thus, reading books about China and Chinese culture can be subtly inserted into the family life but also overtly about Chinese cultural education. Through reading books and having dialogues with their Chinese adoptees about the similar as well as different cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese culture, parents help the adoptees recognize their Chinese origins, interpret Chinese culture, and contemplate on their cultural and racial identities.

The key aspect is that parents need to explicitly explain to their Chinese adoptees the purpose of their reading and associate the whole activity to establishing the importance of Chinese culture in their families. Without a clear explanation of the purpose of the activity, children often create alternative meanings around the activities, which often do not have the intended effects of boosting Chinese adoptees' cultural pride. Moreover, European American parents should be willing to engage in dialogues with their children surrounding topics about China, Chinese culture, and the adoptees' Chinese identity. Sidestepping the issues often leads to the result that the adoptees have to cope with complex cultural and racial issues on their own.

I strongly suggest European American parents have more interactions with native Chinese and Chinese people so that parents may have a better chance of interpreting Chinese culture and challenging their limits of knowledge and stereotypical images of China. The interaction with Chinese and Chinese Americans will promote parents' and adoptees' understanding of how Chinese culture is performed in everyday life and reproduced in new forms in globalized contexts. As Florio-Ruane (2001) commented, cultures become "more

complex in nature and more risky in content through dialogues" (p. 60). It will also help embed Chinese culture in a larger cultural plan of learning other cultures and appreciating cultural diversity in the families.

For Teachers and Teacher Educators

The study suggests that teachers can learn from what parents have to say about the books they select for their young children. Educators have often advised or imposed on parents what parents should be doing to promote their children's literacy development. Articles have been written about how parents should conduct read-alouds to maximize the benefits of family reading practices (e.g., Lane & Wright, 2011). Family literacy programs have been created to teach parents how to engage in literacy practices that will lead to children's great performance in school-based assessments (Auerbach, 1995;Timmons & Pelletier, 2015). However, there are few studies showing why parents select certain books and the implications such selection may have for teachers and their classroom practices. This study provided a snapshot of the complexities involved in parents' rationales for selecting books: the master narrative of school reading, opinions from media representations, parents' pursuit of family bonding, and other needs all have played a role in these parents' book selection decisions. The sophistication in parents' book selection process indicated that teachers need to know more about what informs parents' book selection and what parents see as important in order to work better with parents to support literacy learning at home and in school.

Moreover, this study on transracial adoptive families urges teachers to be more sensitive to the needs of adoption families. As Meese (2012) stated that while adoptions have become increasingly more diverse with domestic and international transracial adoption, these diverse family structures are still largely overlooked in the U.S. curriculum. Moreover, pre-service and

in-service teachers are no more knowledgeable about adoption than the general public and receive little support from teacher preparation as to how to better cope with the needs of adoptions families (Taymans, Marotta, Lynch, Riley, Oritz, Schutt, Mallery & Embich, 2008). Pertman (2000) claimed the adopted children, especially at the elementary level, are often "victims of an insensitive culture that is ignorant of adoptive family issues." Hence, there needs to be more resources and studies to help teachers handle the questions and conversations that arise surrounding adoptive families. This study points toward the skills and sensitivities teachers need to hone in order to work more effectively with adopted children and their families. The explanation of parents' concerns and rationales in their book selection process provides background knowledge for teachers to consider when working with children from adoptive families.

Additionally, the way the European American parents approached Chinese culture in the picturebooks have some implications for teachers who use multicultural and global children's literature to cultivate students' intercultural understanding and global awareness. Like parents, teachers might also be faced with the question of how to use multicultural and global children's literature in a more effective way to promote students' engagement with other cultures. According to Banks's (2006) multicultural education curriculum, it is impossible to expect teachers to move directly from a highly mainstream-centric curriculum to one that focuses on decision making and social action. Rather the move from the contributions approach to the social action approach is likely to be gradual and cumulative. I think the discussions of the issues about parents' book selection process have implications for helping teachers move from the first approach to higher levels of multicultural content integration.

In selecting and using multicultural and global children's literature for their students, teachers should not only focus on foods, holidays, and artifacts of certain ethnic cultures but also the meanings and importance of those cultural objects and practices within ethnic communities. Using multicultural and global children's literature should not be superficially confined to a tourist view of other social groups or other countries, but rather should be more about how people in other cultures think, live and make meaning. In this way, teachers guide students to see the ideologies, values and conceptions in that ethnic culture and involve themselves in the process of acquiring knowledge about another culture together with their students.

Moreover, based on the tensions I discussed about parents' book selection process, I argue teachers should not only focus on students' connections and the search for universal themes in books but also push the connections and universal themes to delve into the cultural uniqueness and differences between different cultural groups. As the study showed, the emphasis on connections failed to bridge space and time between the local and the global and can lead to a cultural harmony that erases differences (Bolgatz, 2005) and dismisses issues of power, racism, and social inequalities. The emphasis on universal values across humanity overlooked the uniqueness that reveals the complexity and nuances of a specific people's lives. As Banks (2006) stated, the effort to view other cultures as unique and distinct helps one understand his/her own culture fully and how it relates to and interacts with other cultures.

Furthermore, the tensional aspect of learning another culture is particularly important when teachers and teacher educators use multicultural and global children's literature to foster a respect for other perspectives or an awareness of global community. Lewis (2000) criticized an overemphasis on "identifying with and responding experientially to characters" (p. 255) in literature instruction and argued that students should take pleasure in both the personal and

sociopolitical aspects of a text. Thus, teachers should encourage the discussion of differences and issues in literary texts and provide a platform for students to live with the tensions of recognizing, respecting, and assimilating others' perspectives. Appreciating others' perspectives and using their perspectives as frame of references when viewing concepts and issues is the key step in moving curricular contents from the contributions approach to high levels of multicultural education in Banks's argument. In this way, teachers and students become agents of social change who promote democratic values and understand better what constructs an American culture and society.

Although using books about multicultural and global children's literature would help students cross cultural boundaries to other possible worlds, times, and places, teachers are confined by the fact that many children's books about minority groups in the U.S. are largely written by white authors, and stories about other countries are mostly folklore and historical fiction, with only occasional images or simplistic representation of contemporary life (Short, 2012). Furthermore, as the study showed, teachers and students might not be able to pick up implicit cultural values in some of the books because of the limits of knowledge and cultural perspectives. Therefore, having a cultural insider to explain a story and embedded values in the story will assist the process of cultural transactions.

In sum, using multicultural and global children's literature for multicultural education is the process of employing language to cross cultural boundaries and making meaning from the transaction of cultures. It requires from teachers a readiness to confront tensions when classroom become contact zones in which different cultural models clash, and conversations become risky and threatening. Yet, as Greene (1988) pinpointed, meaningful teaching and meaning must

happen on the verge, and learning about another culture is a messy, disturbing and transformative process.

Concluding Thoughts

As I finished this study and wrote the last chapter of this dissertation, I was amazed at the change occurring in my understanding of myself, my home country, and other cultures at this point. In the past 5 years, my Chineseness was visible in daily life and reminded me of the American context where I was and the necessity to examine my thoughts continuously in order to feel more comfortable with the tensions going around me. In particular, conducting this study had pushed me to confront my Chineseness when I discussed with European American parents numerous topics about China, their adoptees' identities, and their family lives. While I did not know how much impact this study made and will make on the adoptive families, I saw my understanding of Chinese culture was frequently questioned, revised and transformed, and I thanked this study for providing this opportunity to understand my cultural identities.

I was especially grateful to these European American parents for allowing me into their houses and witnessed the love these parents had selflessly given to the adoptees who otherwise would probably grow up without a family. Some Chinese people say these adoptees are lucky to be adopted by American parents, and I only agreed on the family part. It is lucky for these Chinese children to have a family, but how they grow up and perceive themselves in their adult years, I do not know. It is probably not lucky if European American parents do not venture out and engage with the Chineseness in their adoptees in a more thoughtful and risky way. I say risks, because such efforts often involve prying into and threatening parents' own cultural views and models. Louie (2009) said, many American parents prefer Chinese adoptees over black adoptees because of their perception of Asian culture as more aligned with white culture. If this was the

case, I hope white parents can challenge this assumption because each culture is remarkably unique and different.

This study also urged me to contemplate on literacy education in both the U.S. and China. China has a long history of employing standardized tests to evaluate students, and the U.S. seems to head toward that direction with the implementation of Common Core State Standards. Can these tests prepare students to live in an increasingly diverse, complex and interconnected world? I think not. My understanding of this study pushed me to advocate an approach to literacy education that puts interpreting and making cultures at the core of literacy education. It is an approach that encourages the engagement with other cultures for the purpose of moving between the local and the global and developing transnational and cross-cultural understandings. As Bakhtin (1986) said, "I live in a world of others' words and my entire life is an orientation in this world, beginning of my assimilation of them and ending with assimilation of the wealth of human culture (p.143). Thus, our whole lives can be boiled down to an exclusive orientation toward other people's words and cultures.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Guide for the Initial Interview

- **Information about the Family**

Could you introduce a little bit about your family? When did you adopt your child? Why did you want to adopt from China?

What do you do? What does your husband (wife/partner) do? Any other children?

- **Parents' Current Understanding about China**

What do you know about China? Where did you get the information, from books, media, newspapers, or people's conversations?

- **Parents' Impression of China**

What's your impression China? How is China represented in books, media and people's daily conversations?

When you went to China in 199?, what was your impression of China? Any differences and similarities did you notice between what you read in books and what you saw in China?

Which part about China did you like best, its history, culture, people, or food?

- **Parents' Attitude toward Adoptees' Birth Culture**

How can Chinese culture play a role in your child's personal growth and development?

How do you talk about China with your child? What do you talk about?

How do you talk with your child when other people are discussing about China or when China is represented negatively in media?

What have you done now to promote your child's knowledge of Chinese culture?

- **Parents' Perception of Reading**

Are you a reader yourself? How do you see reading play a role in your own life?

How do you expect reading plays a role in your child's life/identity development?

- **Shared Reading at Home**

Do you often read with your children? What kind of books do you read to your children? Do you have bedtime reading stories? Any books about China? Does your child like the books?

Do you go to the library/book store with your children? What are your selection criteria for children's books? Is there a difference between your selection of books and you child's selection of books?

Does the child's father/mother read to him/her?

What kind of books does your child like? Fiction or non-fiction?

- **Discuss Children's Books about China**

Have you read any children's books about China? How do you like them? What is your child's response? How do you talk about China using those books? What purpose do you want to serve?

What's your impression of China in those books? Any particular content/subjects that stood out?

What kind of books/what kind of contents would you like to see about China in children's books, history, culture, people, contemporary China?

What's your general impression of those books? Do the books help you understand China?

How do you feel about China after reading those children's books?

What is your child's favorite book?

Are some books more emotionally appropriate at a certain time? Are some books more suited for bed time stories?

Depending on the age of your child, what contents about China will be suitable for your child at a certain age?

- **Other Forms of Resources**

Apart from books, what other kinds of activities do you do with your child that helps him/her know more about China?

Compared to other resources like digital stuff and food, how do you think about the role of books? What are books' advantages and disadvantages?

APPENDIX II

Interview Guide for the Final Interview

About the Books (going through the book list first)

- What are things you like about these books? What are things you don't like these books?

- Which is your favorite category?

- Do the books help you know China and Chinese culture a little bit?

- In what way do the books help you understand China? Cultural values? Cultural and historical facts?

- Tell me some of the limitations of these books.

- Could you give me an example that a book has changed your opinions of China in certain ways?

- Did you experience difficulties of understanding or feelings of discomfort/resistance when reading certain books? Which would you prefer, books that are uniquely Chinese but probably not relatable to your life or books that are universal but with Chinese elements?

- How do you feel about China after reading all these four categories?

- What are the elements/aspects you feel important to let your child know when reading the books?

- What other contents would you like to see about China?

- Would you recommend these books to other parents?

Using Books with Your child

- How did these books play a role in your family? In other words, did they make some

  changes? Initiated some discussion/questions?

- How did your child like the whole process? What did your child say every time I leave?

  Could you tell me some of her feelings and words? What were your thoughts about that?

- How would you suggest to other parents in terms of introducing books about China to

  their kids? Is it useful/beneficial or not (not very useful/helpful)?

- How can books be introduced in ways that increase children's interest in Chinese culture?

- What have you learned from the experience?

Revisiting Your Rationales and Motivations for Choosing Books

- What will be your selection rationale now for books about China and Chinese culture?

  Has anything changed?

- How do books about China compare with books from other cultures?

- Compared to other resources, how do you see the role of books in your efforts to keep

  your child's Chinese cultural heritage?

Appendix III

Book Selection List (33 books)

Category 1: Holidays and Family Life (9 books)

Book Title	Author/illustrator	Publishing Year	Publisher	Book Awards	Grade Level	Genre
Celebrating the Chinese New Year (*a book series*)	Sanmu Tang/ Wu Ying translator	2010	Co-published by Better link press in NY and Shanghai Publishing and Development Company	None	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Celebrating the Dragon Boat festival (*a book series*)	Sanmu Tang/ Mina Tenison translator	2010	Co-published by Better link press in NY and Shanghai Publishing and Development Company	None	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Celebrating the Lantern Festival (*a book series*)	Sanmu Tang/ Mina Tenison translator	2010	Co-published by Better link press in NY and Shanghai	None	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction

			Publishing and Development Company			
Celebrate Chinese New Year with Fireworks, Dragons and Lanterns	Carolyn Otto/Haiwang, Yuan	2009	National Geographic	Children's Catalog Supplement to Nineteenth Edition, 2009	1-4	Nonfiction
Mooncakes	Loretta Seto/Rene Benoit	2013	Orca book publishers	CCBC 2014 choices	Preschool-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
A New Year's Reunion	Yu LI-Qiong/Zhu Cheng-Liang	2011	Candlewick Press	Fengzikai Award. China Notable children's books, 2012 ALSC American Library Association	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Mei Mei Loves the Morning	Margaret Holloway/Ying-Hwa-Hu	1999	Albert Whitman	Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, 2000 National Council for the Social Studies NCSS	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
I See the Sun in China	Dedie King/Judith Inglese	2010	Satya House Publications	None	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Book name	Author/illustrator	Publishing Year	Publisher	Book Awards	Grade Level	Genre
One Year in Beijing	Xiaohong Wang/Grace Lin	2006	China Sprout	None	Preschool-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Category 2: Arts and History (8 books)

Book name	Author/illustrator	Publishing Year	Publisher	Book Awards	Grade Level	Genre
Look What Came from China	Harvey Miles	1999	Franklin Watts	None	2-3	Nonfiction
Liu and the Bird: a Journey in Chinese Calligraphy	Catherine Louis/Xiao-min Feng	2006	North-South	2006 IBBY Honor List	1-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Red Butterfly: How a Princess Smuggled the Secret of Silk out of China	Deborah Noyes/Sophie Blackall	2007	Candlewick Press	2007 Kirkus Book Review Stars	1-4	Poetry
Red Kite, Blue Kite	Ji-ji Liang; Greg Ruth	2013	Disney/Hyperion books	2014 CCBC Choices	1-3	Historical fiction
Maples in the Mist: Poems for Children from the Tang Dynasty	Mingfong Ho/Mou-Sien Tseng transalator/Jean Tseng illustrator	1996	Lothrop, Lee & Shepard	50 Multicultural Books Every Child should Read, 2006, CCBC	1-4	Poetry

Ruby's Wish	Shrin Yim Bridges/Sophie Blackall	2002	Chronicle Books	2003 CCBC choices	Preschool-3	Historical Fiction
Brush of the Gods	Lenore Look/Meilo So	2013	Schwartz & Wade Books	Booklist review Stars	Preschool-3	Historical Fiction
Sparrow Girl	Sara Pennypacker/Yoko Tanaka	2009	Disney/Hyperion books	Amelia Bloomer List, 2010 ALA Social Responsibilities Round table	Preschool-3	Historical fiction

Category 3: Folklore (9 books)

Book Title	Author/illustrator	Publishing Year	Publisher	Book Awards	Grade Level	Genre
What the Rat Told Me	Marie Seliier/Catherine Louis/Wang Fei	2009	Northsouth	2010 CCBC Choices; USBBY Outstanding International Books	Preschool-3	Folklore
The Sons of the Dragon King	Ed Young	2004	Atheneum Books for young readers	Publishers Weekly Book Review Stars,	Preschool-3	Folklore

				May 24, 2004 Cahners; Parents' Choice Award, 2004 Recommended Picture Books United States		
Three Monks, No Water	Ting-xing ye/Harvey Chan	1997	Annick Press	None	Preschool-3	Folklore
Monkey King	Ed Young	2001	HarperCollins Publishers	Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, 2002, NCTE	Preschool-4	Folklore
The Ballad of Mulan	Song Nan Zhang	1998	Pan Asian Publications	None	Preschool-3	Folklore
The Seven Chinese Sisters	Lathy Tucker, Grace Lin	2003	Albert Whitman & Company	Booklist Book Review Starts, 2003, ALA	Preschool-3	Folklore
The Runaway Wok	Ying Chang Compestine/Sebastia Serra	2011	Dutton Children's Books	2013 Washington Children's Choice Picturebook Award	Preschool-3	Folklore
Seven blind mice	Ed young	1992	Puffin Books	Sharing Cultures: Asian American Children's	Preschool-2	Folklore

				Authors,2001 ALSC American Library Association		
Lon Po Po	Margaret Mahy	1990	Puffin Books	Caldecott Medal; Sharing Cultures: Asian American Children's Authors,2001 ALSC American Library Association	Preschool-3	Folklore

Category 4: Chinese American Families (7 books)

Book Title	Author/illustrator	Publishing Year	Publisher	Book Award	Grade Level	Genre
Grandfather Counts	Andrea Cheng/Ange Zhang	2003	Lee & Low Books	50 Multicultural Books Every Child Should Read, 2006 CCBC	Preschool-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Shanyi Goes to China	Sungwan So	2006	Frances Lincoln Children's Books	none	1-4	Nonfiction
Gai See: What	Roseanne	2007	Abrams Books	2008 CCBC	Preschool-2	poetry

You Can See in Chinatown	Thong/Yangsook Choi		for Young Readers	Choices		
Henry's First-Moon Birthday	Lenore Look/Yumi Heo	2001	Atheneum Books for Young Readers	Kaleidoscope, A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K-8, Fourth Edition, 2003, NCTE	Preschool-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding	Lenore Look/Yumi Heo	2006	Atheneum Books for Young Readers	2007 CCBC Choices	Preschool-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
Crouching Tiger	Ying Chang Compestine/ Yan Nascimbene	2011	Candlewick Press	2012 CCBC Choices	Preschool-3	Contemporary Realistic Fiction
A Gift	Chen Yong	2011	Boyds Mills Press	The de Grummond Children's Literature Collection	Preschool-2	Contemporary Realistic Fiction