A Narrative Study About International Adopted Young Adults’ Experiences Regarding Identity Development

Veronica Algerstam and Agnes Andersson

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Supervisor: Yvonne Sjöblom
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Abstract

Title: A Narrative Study about International Adopted Young Adults' Experiences Regarding Identity Development

Authors: Veronica Algerstam and Agnes Andersson

This study was based on three interviews with three internationally adopted young adults. The aim of the study was to explore how international adopted young adults have experienced their identity development in a retrospective perspective in relation to family and friends. To answer the research-questions semi-structured qualitative interviews have been performed. A narrative method was chosen to explore how the participants' described their experiences. Topics that appeared in the result where topics such as family relationships, the society’s influence on the participants and connections to other adoptees. The conclusions of this study were that communication and connections to family was an essential factor in the subjects' identity development. The informants feeling of belonging was affected by society’s influence on appearances and it was important for the participants to have someone in their life that they could talk to and get support from.

Keywords: young adults, international adoption, identity development, family relationships, belonging.
The Preamble

We here want to turn our appreciation to the people who have contributed to the creation of this study.

We are very grateful to our participants, who took the time to participate and shared their personal experiences. Without you, this study would not have been possible.

Lastly, we want to thank our supervisor, Yvonne Sjöblom for her expertise during this process. Thank you for your guidance and encouragement during the times we lost track.

Gävle, January 2017

Agnes Andersson and Veronica Algerstam
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1. Introduction
Adoption gives children who for different reasons cannot grow up with their biological parents an opportunity to receive another family, and it is also a way for couples and singles to build and/or enlarge their family. In Sweden, international adoption is the most common kind of adoption (Magnusson Österberg, 2016). Before a child is considered for an international adoption, a rigorous investigation should have been carried out concerning the child's possibility to stay within his or her family or in a family within the country of origin (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005; Magnusson Österberg, 2016).

The Swedish Intercountry Adoption Authority (MIA) and the Swedish Board of Health and Welfare write in their education material for adoptive parents that “The adoptive parents should affirm the child's origin as well as the attachment to Sweden so that the child can be proud of their origin and their belonging to Sweden” (Quote translated from Swedish to English) (Socialstyrelsen and MIA, 2006, p 94). This can be considered a strategy for adoptees to deal with the fact that their appearance may challenge their “Swedishness” (Lind, 2012).

Adopted children have ties to two countries and two families, although they may not have contact with their biological family. Most international adoptees may grow up with adoptive parents that they do not share cultural and ethnic background with, problems regarding adoptees divergent identity can therefore occur (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005). International adoptees may not always look like the stereotypical Swede and because of this the surrounding society may not always understand that they have grown up in Sweden. Adopted children may encounter issues from the surroundings such as, being treated as they do not belong in the country they have grown up in. This kind of treatment could influence the adoptees feelings of belonging (www.mfof.se).

On social media, different forums can be found for adopted people where they can read about and discuss adoption. There is a podcast called Adoptionspodden which is founded by Pablo Paez. In this pod Paez interview people about their thoughts and experiences of adoption in Sweden. The interviewees are in different ages and have different experiences of adoption. Most interviewees are themselves adopted but there are also interviews with adoptive parents or with people that have a connection to adoption. Each interview has a topic that is in the interviewee’s interest to discuss, for example, finding their birth parents or how to be
Swedish. Frequent topics that are discussed are their relationships to their adoptive parents, upbringing and identity (Paez, 2015).

The aspects that were described above created an interest within us to explore this issue further. There appears to be several different factors that influence one's identity development and therefore it is important to highlight adopted people's own experiences of this.

1.2 The Subjects Relevance for Social Work
The Swedish Social Board of Health and Welfare is responsible to ensure that children grow up in functional homes where they can develop in a healthy way (http://socialstyrelsen.se). Research and popular scientific sources concerning adoption bring up some topics regarding adoptees well-being and development. However, we feel that there is an absence of adoptees’ own experiences and of how they have expressed themselves concerning their identity development. The sources found indicates that adoptees are a group at risk for poor well-being and identity development. As a social worker in schools or in other institutional settings one can meet adopted children. It is important to have knowledge about issues concerning identity development for a specific group like adopted children and for children in general. Therefore, we want to perform this study to highlight some adoptees own experiences to generate more knowledge on issues that adopted individuals might encounter.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions
The aim of the study is to explore how international adopted young adults have experienced their identity development in a retrospective perspective in relation to family and friends.1

- How do the young adults describe their identity development in relation to family members?
- How do the young adults describe their identity development in relation to friends?
- What have the young adults perceived as difficulties versus advantages regarding their identity development during their childhood?

1.4 Explanation of concepts
This section involves short definitions of central concepts in this study that needs to be clarified.

Adoptive parents: The adoptive parents are the parents that legally have the responsibility for the child in the new country (www.mfof.se).

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1 Friends- Friends involves surrounding people in the participants’ life. See 4. Method for further explanation.
**Biological Parents:** The biological parents of a child refer to the child’s birth parents (www.mfof.se).

**BUP - Child and Youth Psychiatry:** BUP is a specialist assistance for children and adolescence under the age of 18, who experiences mental illness or disabilities (Regiongavleborg, 2010).

**Foster Parents:** A foster parent is a person other than the child’s biological parent that take care of the child in their home. The foster parents of a child shall assure that the child’s needs are met and give the child care and the prerequisites to a healthy adult life (www.socialstyrelsen.se).

**International Adoption:** International adoption concerns when a child is adopted from one country to a family in another country. In this study, it refers to children adopted from other countries to Sweden (www.mfof.se).

**Origin:** In this study origin refers to the birth country and background of the adopted individuals (www.mfof.se).

**Parents:** In this study, all participants but one used the term parents when referring to their adoptive parents and therefore the term parents is used when talking about adoptive parents. However, in some occasions adoptive parents have been specified.

### 2. Previous Research
#### 2.1 Identity Development

According to Grotevant (1997) personal identity is connected to the interrelated issues of similarity and uniqueness. Personal identity concerns questions as, how a person is like others and how that person is a unique individual. These questions are considered in the negotiation between an individual’s psychological sense of self and the sociocultural context. Hence it concerns the cultural and historical contexts of the self, the self and how it changes over time (ibid.).

Grotevant (1997) further argued that identity is related to self-definition which refers to a combination of social style and personality characteristics that the individual defines him or herself by and which others recognize the person from. Identity also refers to the subjective sense of cohesiveness of personality, this since identity concerns the social and individual construction of meaning. Lastly, identity also concerns a construction of different connections
across an individual’s present, future and past, regarding a person’s feeling of continuity across time. Identity can therefore be explained as a psychosocial construct (Grotevant, 1997). Before the adoptive placement, adoptees can often experience neglect, abuse, maternal separation, psychological deprivation and malnutrition within poor families or orphanages (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005). These feelings can create psychological deprivation and lead to maladjustment within the children (ibid.). Juffer & Von IJzendoorn (2005) found that adoptees were overrepresented in mental health services. This is supported by Grotevant (1997) who argued that the results in many clinical studies have shown that identity problems are assumed to be involved in problems adopted children may encounter. However, it is important to note that few studies have traced clear linkages between these psychological shortcomings and identity (ibid.). Nonetheless studies shows that behavioural problems were modest, which indicates well-adjustment in most international adoptees (Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2005).

Grotevant (1997) further argued that the areas examined in the literature concerning identity are areas that individuals have some degree of choice or control over, as relationships, values, occupations and ideologies. Despite this there are also areas that a person does not have any influence over, for example; adoptive status, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race. According to Horstman, Colaner & Rittaenour (2016) these differences might coincide with uncertainty about adoptive parents, birth parents, the meaning of adoption as well as feelings of equivocal loss. Adoptees that perceive the break up from the biological parents as a rejection needs to conciliate feelings about the self with feelings of lost. When lack of clarity arises concerning reasons behind the adoption a confusion of identity, depression and low self-esteem may occur. When adoptees are provided with an understanding of factors surrounding the adoption lower levels of depression and higher levels of self-esteem is presented (Horstman et al., 2016).

These variations in the construction of adoption may have consequences for the personality and social development of adopted individuals and their sense of identity. Adoptees need to come to terms with who they are as an adopted person, and with themselves in the family and cultural context that they are adopted into, to be able to construct a sense of identity. This requires an integration of the adoptive status into the personal identity. For some the process can be very difficult while for others it is not that problematic (Grotevant, 1997; Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004; Colaner & Kranstuber, 2010).
2.2 Identity and Family
According to Von Korff and Grotevant (2011) young people must come to conclusion of what it means to be connected to both birth family and adoptive family. Their adoption experience must further be integrated into a coherent identity narrative as adopted. This process happens by daily social interactions with others, especially with family members.

Contact with birth relatives can create a possibility for the members in the adoptive family to start conversations about adoption. These conversations between children and adoptive parents can be important during adolescence (Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011). Communication in the family promotes reflective exploration, which can provide answers to questions concerning adoption and help the adoptees in their construction of an adoptive identity (Horstman et al, 2016). By facilitating contact with birth relatives, the adoptive parents can also open for conversation about the topic in the family. This can help the young adults with their identity formation. By talking about adoption in the family the child is provided with tools to interpret, construct and organize the meaning of adoption in their lives (Von Korff & Grotevant, 2011; Horstman at al., 2016).

Adoptive families are a unique setting when exploring the influence of relationships between siblings. The influence of negative sibling relationships can be difficult if there are disparities in birth family contact or in biological relatedness. For example, if one sibling is the adoptive parents’ biological child and another is an adoptee, or if one adopted sibling has no contact with his/her birth family while the other has contact (Farr, Flood and Grotevant, 2015).

Farr et al. (2015) further argued that studies show that the behavioral and/or emotional closeness between siblings is a factor that can prevent individuals’ risks of externalizing problems. This is also illustrated by Samek and Rueter (2011, as cited in Farr et al, 2015) who argued that siblings from families with open communication often reported more emotional and behavioral closeness regardless of adoptive status. In a study by Farr et al. (2015) it was found that siblings that were involved in the adoptees knowledge concerning birth family and contact with birth family were less at risk of experiencing externalizing problems. The results of the study also demonstrated that adopted siblings that had positive feelings about their adoption experiences, influenced the adoptive siblings to also experiencing more positive feelings about their own adoption.

2.3 Ethnic Identity
Lind (2012) discussed “Swedishness” and culture of origin in her study about transnational adoptees and the consequences of looking visible ´non-white´. Lind questioned why the pride
of one’s foreign origin is important and why the pride of one’s origin is not enough. Lind draw this back in history to the 1960’s when the transnationally adopted children were supposed to be as “Swedish as anybody else” (Lind, 2012). Later when these adopted children grew up, they showed that not all of them were feeling as Swedish as anybody else. When they were without their adoptive parents they were perceived as immigrants and were subjected to xenophobia and racial discrimination (ibid.). This changed the approach for the adoptive parents so that they now were urged to acknowledge and respect the child’s background and origin (ibid.).

Mohanty’s (2015) study indicated that moderate level of ethnic identity was associated with positive self-esteem and that low or high levels of ethnic identity were associated with low self-esteem. Those who for example overemphasized the culture of origin may deny their membership in the adoptive country and the other way around. Mohanty (2015) discussed the part of belonging and identifying oneself with a group and that the outcome of this can affect one’s well-being. The study also considered the effect the adoptive parents approach to adoption and the child's origin as an important factor in the child’s well-being. Mohanty wrote about the importance of involving the child in his/her heritages as a way for the child to accept the thoughts and feelings regarding the adoption. If the child does not have these opportunities it may affect the child's well-being and identity (ibid.)

Lind (2012) also wrote about the meaning of the term origin, or rather the explicit meaning of the term. The term origin can refer to the child's biological-, social-, cultural- and political origin, as well as the details about the child's pre-adoption past and personal experiences. Lind wrote about the importance that kind of information can have for an adoptee and the collective origin provided by culture, ethnic and national belonging. In the conclusion, Lind brought up the participants’ appearance and that it often challenges their “Swedishness” (ibid.).

3. Theoretical points of departure

3.1 Erik Homburger Erikson’s Theory of Identity Development
In Erik Homburger Erikson’s (1969) theory of identity development the lifecycle is a central factor in identity. The different developmental phases in an individual’s life contains some kind of crisis. The individual is mature enough to be able to experience and go through identity crisis in their adolescence. This is because a person receives social responsibility,
physiological growth, and mental maturity in the adolescence. This phase is not possible to pass without finding a shape of the identity that determines the life course (Erikson, 1969).

The most fundamental factor for mental vitality is the feeling of basic trust. This feeling is an attitude towards oneself and the world around. The basic trust is determined by the first years in a person’s life. Trust here refers to a reliant attitude to others and to oneself (Erikson, 1969). Children start to identify with their parents when they are about 3 years old. This is also the age where the child learns to move more freely and therefore a feeling of being unlimited in the circle of goals occurs. The child learns to understand the language and starts to ask questions. By language and locomotion, the child start to fantasize and creates many different roles. Furthermore, the child starts to develop a feeling of initiative which provides a feeling of single-mindedness and ambition. The child becomes more loving and relaxed with a clearer judgment (Erikson, 1969).

In the beginning of the school years the child is very eager to learn and to do things with others. This is the age where children start to get attached to teachers and other children's parents (Erikson, 1969). The child here starts to learn from adults and begin to seek attention and credit for achieved things. This is the phase where the child may start to feel less worthy for the things they do and their self, which can be caused by a previous conflict. The child can discover that its skin colour or the parents’ background can determine its’ value from others rather than their eagerness to learn. This can create a pattern of feeling unworthy which can have significance for the character development (ibid.).

Erikson (1969) argued that the adolescence is a period of life where a child starts to get more conscious. This period can be considered a transition between childhood and adulthood. In this period the child lays significant focus on how they leave impression in others in comparison with what they feel that they are. The adolescence is the period where an individual starts to link previous roles and skills into the present-day ideals (ibid.). By searching for continuity and cohesion some might have to struggle with previous crisis that they experienced when they were younger to be sure of whom they are. The elements of identity that they experienced in the childhood needs to be integrated in a larger context where demands from the society have been raised. The youth starts to look after individuals and ideas that they can believe in. When the identity starts to function well, the individual feels comfortable with one-self and experiences that one is important and means something to others (Erikson, 1969).
Erikson (1969) argued that in every development phase there is some kind of crisis or conflict of the development. During adolescence, an individual can experience a character confusion. The solution to this confusion is dependent on the ability of initiative, basic trust and independence. Without this kind of problem solutions, an individual is at risk of evolving an identity confusion, which implies an incomplete and scattered identity. However, Erikson (1969) is of the opinion that some kind of character confusion is needed for the healthy development of identity which he calls positive solutions of crisis. Factors that affect the development of positive solutions of crisis is relationship with others where the parents of the adolescent are a main factor. However, relationships with contemporaries is also important. The interaction with others help a person to develop a picture of who one is (ibid.).

Lastly, Erikson (1969) argued that a central aspect concerning the creation of identity is the feeling of being the same. A stable identity implies that a person feel like they remain the same. Even though identity is deeply rooted in the early years, the identity continues to develop under the lifecycle. The identity is therefore based on the early years which formulate the path of identity during a lifetime. The childhood is in this way rephrased to a new pattern (ibid.).

3.2 Communication Openness Theory
Brodzinsky (2006) argued that H. David Kirk was the first researcher to acknowledge the importance of openness regarding communication about adoption between adoptive parents and adoptees. Communication openness has later been supported by other theoretical trends within the area of adoption such as Brodzinsky’s adoptive family life cycle theory (Brodzinsky, 2006).

Brodzinsky (2005, as cited in Brodzinsky, 2006) argued that communication openness is presumed to take place in three different levels. The first level is called intrapersonal and reflects self-exploration of feelings and thoughts about adoption within the individual. This process come forth after the child has been informed about their adoption and has started to realise what it implies to be adopted. From the adoptive parents’ perspective, it emerges when they start to consider adoption as an alternative for being a parent. For the birth parents the process begins when they face an unwanted or unexpected pregnancy and starts to consider adoption (Brodzinsky 2006).
The second level of adoption communication is called *interfamilial* and refers to an exploration of issues within the adoption for the adoptive family members and among birth family members. Many adoption experts have written about an active, open and emotionally attuned dialogue between adoptive parents and adoptees and its importance (ibid).

The third level of open communication has been described as *interfamilial* which reflects an exploration of issues regarding the adoption between birth and adoptive family members.

Grotevant, Ross, Marchel, and Mcroy (1999, as cited in Brodzinsky, 2006) argued that collaborative involvement between these family systems are important for the emotional well-being of the adoptee. Furthermore, Brodzinsky (2006) argued that adoption communication theory stresses support and expression of emotions that is related to adoption. It is therefore important for adopted children to be able to rely on that their parents show empathic sensitiveness to the feelings that the child expresses. Continuously, Brozinsky (2006) argued that though there might be relatively little research about communication openness in adoption, the data available shows that non-defensive, open, and more direct communication about adoption in adoptive families, promotes a more positive adjustment for children in both the childhood and into adulthood.

4. Method

In this section the study's implementation will be presented. Initially we want to clarify that the concept of *friends* in the aim involves surrounding people of the participants. Therefore, this can imply friends as well as people that for different reasons have occurred in the participants’ narrative.

Considering the aim of this study, a qualitative method has been used. Qualitative methods allow the researchers to search for meanings and connections in the data as well as raising the individuals’ own experiences for deeper understanding (Alvehus, 2013). A central focus in many qualitative research is the importance to have interest in what a person considers important. This study will have a narrative approach. The narrative method is chosen based on that it allows the researchers to understand the subjects’ experiences and the meaning that is revealed through their narration about identity questions (Johansson, 2005).
4.1 Preliminary Understanding
Before starting this study the authors had different knowledge and experiences about adoption. One of the authors was internationally adopted to Sweden and the other one was born in Sweden. The author that was adopted had an interest in questions concerning adoption beforehand. The author who was born in Sweden had a narrow knowledge about adoption however, she was interested in questions concerning identity. The authors different backgrounds concerning the topic, adoption and identity and how the different experiences may have influenced the study and the result have been taken into consideration. The authors’ different experiences conducted a good balanced in the research.

4.2 Narrative Research design
A Narrative research explores individuals’ stories which are used to gain understanding of them and their interactions (Larsson, Sjöblom & Lilja, 2008; Johansson, 2005). This knowledge can be provided by allowing the subjects to tell their own story about their life (Johansson, 2005). The storytelling provides the research with the participants own knowledge and how they themselves have experienced their identity process and relationships (Sorbring, Andersson & Molin, 2014).

According to Grotevant (1997) a narrative approach can examine adopted individuals’ identity development. This can open for an understanding on how individuals can make sense of being adopted and how that can have an impact on the sense of the identity (ibid.). The narrative approach can therefore be a tool when addressing questions of the adoptive perspective and identity.

According to Johansson (2005) stories provide us with meaning, structure and coherence in relation to our experiences. A main theme in these analyses is the individual’s own perceptions of themselves. The way a person tells about their own life can provide knowledge on how people view themselves which is an important part of the identity. The language used can therefore provide a deeper wholeness of the subjects’ experiences of their life which is something we aim for in this research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

The results from each interview were presented separately and under each episode followed a narrative analysis and interpretation where imagery, themes and the narrative tone of the story were interpreted and presented. In narrative research, it is more interesting for the researcher to interpret and understand people’s experiences and therefore we have chosen to present large parts of the interviews to give the reader an understanding of the narrative. The questions that we asked during the interviews are in the result explained before or presented in
the conversation, this to give the reader an understanding of how the conversation went (Larsson et al. 2008). We have chosen to separate the narrative analysis and the empiricism analysis to clarify the difference between the interpretations of the language and the theoretical connections.

4.3 Narrative interview
Narrative interviews focus on the subjects’ stories. These stories are to be found in most kinds of interviews however a narrative approach of a story allow the interviewee to look back at their life. This method has been described as a documentation of individuals’ experiences and how they define, perceive and interpret the surrounding world (Bryman, 2008). Larsson et al., (2008) argued that stories function as a kind of communication between a person and their surroundings, which an individual can relate human conflicts and human actions to. Furthermore, stories can function as a tool to look back and connect happenings in one's life that can be connected to a wholeness that others can understand. The questions asked in this research will be open and formulated as for an example "can you tell us about...". This allows the interviewee to answer in a more descriptive, longer and telling way. The role of the interviewer is then to be more passive and short-spoken which will allow the interviewee to talk more and not to be interrupted. However, follow-up questions were asked when needed (Larsson et al. 2008).

4.4 Mode of procedure
The university of Gävle’s metasearch Discovery was used to find relevant sources for the study. This metasearch was used due to the free access for students at the university and since it allowed the researchers to access several databases through a single search (Jansson, 2016). Hence, it is therefore very useful to access different databases. Discovery allows the researcher to limit or specify the search to peer-reviewed articles which simplifies the selection for relevant and reliable sources (ibid.). The literature chosen were based on the relevance of the topic, search words that were used were “identity and adoption”, “identity, family, and adoption”, “identity in adolescent” “adoptive children and identity”, “identity and family relationships”. About 2 000 to 10 000 hits was found depending on the different search terms. Several of the sources were found when reading other articles concerning the topic. This made it possible to encounter additional relevant articles and literature.

4.4.1 Sampling
The aim of the study was to investigate how young adults describe their identity development. Therefore, the study was conducted with young adults that were above the age of 18 but not
older than 25 years. The age-criteria was chosen with the hope that they previously have gone through identity processes and have received more life experiences of growing up with adoptive parents. By interviewing young adults, the ability to look back to different experiences in childhood in a retrospective manner can be provided (Erikson, 1969). The design of the sampling was a nonprobability design with convenience sampling. Researchers using convenience sampling will use whatever sampling units available and there is no possibility to specify the units in the sampling (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Facebook was used to get in contact with eventual participants. A post was published on the authors’ Facebook-walls where information about the purpose of the study were written and that we wanted to meet adopted individuals who were interested to participate in the study. The post was shared by other Facebook friends 19 times, which made it possible to reach a wider audience. In this way, we got in contact with 3 individuals that were interested to participate in the study. The post was also shared in a Facebook-group for adopted people, where adoptees can discuss questions and share their experiences. Being a member of the group indicates that one has an interest in adoption and questions concerning the topic. We consider that as a positive quality that the participants have an own interest in adoption to get well-thought out answers, though we search for personal experiences and not objective ones. Since the post was published openly the participants voluntarily answered the post and this as well indicates the participants’ own interest in adoption. From the adoption group, 6 additional people were found who were interested in participating in the study. By these 9 individuals, 5 fitted into the criteria of age and were therefore offered to participate in the study.

4.4.2 Interview Performance
Five interviews were performed for this study, however, the result is based on three of the interviews. The first interview performed was a pilot interview that was carried out to test the questionnaire. This interview was only used to see what kind of answers that was received and was not analysed. The second interview that we chose to not present was decided because we wanted to present large episodes from the interviews and go into depth to convey the participants’ experience during their growth. Due to limitations of the study it was not possible to present all of them.

We discussed the patterns of the interviews and decided to keep the three interviews where the narratives distinguished from each other. We therefore chose to present three different categories in how an identity development can be understood and they are presented as
unproblematic, problematic and highly problematic. We want to clarify that the category unproblematic do not imply that the identity development has been completely independent from difficulties rather than the issues that appeared have been manageable. The interview that we have chosen not to present was interpreted as highly problematic and because there were two narratives that could be categorised as highly problematic that interview was chosen not to be presented. Some of the themes that emerged during that interview was also located in the others narratives. However, the results of this study cannot represent the interview that was not presented.

From the beginning, we wanted to meet the participants in person but because of the geographical distance the interviews were performed over Skype or Messenger with video-conference. Skype and Messenger allow participants to attend the study regardless of geographical distance (Simeonsdotter Svensson, Pramling Samuelsson, Hellström & Jenholt Nolbris, 2013). Video-conference allowed the researchers and the participant to hear and see each other and give the advantage for the researchers to see facial expressions and body language (Simeonsdotter Svensson et al., 2013). The possibility to see each other, during the interview gives an advantage in the data collection, due to that the participants tend to give more thoughtful answers (Grinnell, 2001).

Simeonsdotter Svensson et al. (2013) refers in their article about Skype experiences in education to video-conference as face-to-face communication at a distance. Video-conference allows participant to perform the interview in a familiar place where they feel secure. Simeonsdotter Svensson et al. (2013), found that a familiar environment was beneficial in maintaining a conversation about learning. Therefore, we thought it would be in advantage that the participants performed their interviews in an environment where they felt comfortable when sharing their stories. To avoid technical issues during the interview we asked the participants to check their devices, concerning audio, visual image and internet connection before the interview.

Present during all five interviews were the study's researchers and the participant. To facilitate for the participant one of the authors were leading the interview while the other one had more focus on possible notes or questions that arose during the interview. All five interviews were held in Swedish though all participants and the researchers had Swedish as their mother tongue, this was also done to minimize misunderstandings. The conversations in the study are translated by the researchers. The translations were carefully elaborated to express the right meaning after the translation.
The interviews were recorded with two cell phones and allowed the interviewer to pay full attention to the participants. After the interview the recording were transcribed into text by the researchers due to that it allows one to listen to the interviews as well as working with the translations from the spoken words in the interviews (Larsson, Sjöblom & Lilja, 2008).

The interviews had a semi-structured approach with a questionnaire with topics and questions. Semi-structured interview allows the researcher to freer probe any interesting topic that appear during the interview (Crossley, 2000) and therefore the questionnaire was considered a suggestion and were not strictly followed. A semi-structured interview gives the researcher the possibility to try to enter the participant's psychological and social world (ibid.) and we consider that as an important part in understanding the participants’ experiences.

4.5 Tools of analysis- Narrative Analysis

In connection to the interviews and the transcriptions a primary analysis were initiated. The transcribed interview material was repeatedly read through in order to familiarize with the material and to get an overview of eventual themes and co-occurring concepts (Crossley, 2000). Thereafter Mcadams three concept to identify personal narratives were used (ibid.). These were; the narrative tone; imagery; and theme:

The narrative tone refers to how the participants have told their story, for example, if the tone of the narrative has been optimistic or pessimistic. It is here important to consider that the tone of the story can be optimistic even though the story might contain bad events. This may implicate that even though bad things have happened one remains hopeful that it shall get better in the future (Crossley, 2000). Imagery stands for the characteristic set of images that every personal narrative express and contains. Narratives can be explained by imagery which make sense of who a person is. The language is used to describe and characterize key events and life chapters. Personally, meaningful symbols, metaphors and images are here considered. The imagery is then explored to see whether the imagery has developed and how it is related to relationships, family backgrounds and the dominant discourses of the society as belief systems, morals and values (Crossley, 2000). According to Crossley (2000) themes can be described as the dominant themes in a personal narrative. A pattern of factors that has been important and motivating during a narrative is here considered.

The different concepts were composed in working maps that brought up different episodes of the narrative. The episode was then analysed and imagery, themes and the narrative tone was identified (see table 1.) (Crossley, 2000). The participants’ stories that appeared during the
interviews are affected by several different factors as; the interviewees preconception about what kind of story that are expected; what kind of story that is okay to talk about in a certain context; and what intentions the interviewee and the interviewer have with the interview (Martinell Barfoed, 2008). Because of these factors the what and how the interviewer asked the questions were analysed in relation to the stories that were provided. The results from the analyses were thereafter compared to previous research and the chosen theories (Larsson et al, 2008).

Table 1. Working Map- From Anna’s interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-confidence and self-image during the childhood into adolescence</th>
<th>Imagery</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moved to Singapore</td>
<td>Culture shock, didn’t feel different compleional - “I am home”, “I looked as everybody else which I thought was really funny” - choking differences in school, homesick (Sweden),</td>
<td>A need of feeling belonging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Essay Credibility
4.6.1 Reliability
According to Ruth (1991) reliability is seen as a complicated aspect in qualitative research. This is mainly because qualitative research does not often concern physical or physiological processes or facts, instead the content in the data collection often concern human aspects as creation of meaning and values. The questions of reliability therefore concern the researcher’s requisite to gain insight into the relevant qualities in the phenomenon that is studied. The selective attitude of the researcher and one’s own values can result in that certain aspects of the phenomenon are lost while some are overestimated. The researcher here needs to realize where the limits for own perceptions goes and keep an open mind to minimize risks of becoming biased (Ruth, 1991). Spinelli (1989 as cited in Ruth, 1991) argued that this is accomplished by temporarily setting own values and theories in parenthesis. In this study the researchers’ preconceptions and own values were considered and set aside to reduce risks of becoming biased. Ruth (1991) further argued that the communication between informant and researcher is an aspect to consider regarding reliability in qualitative research. This implies whether the researcher’s and the subject’s conception of the world coincide. To raise the reliability of the interview material, the transcriptions of the interviews were sent to the participants who then had the possibility to correct or add information to ensure that the
transcription corresponded with the oral statement, however, only one of the participants chose to add and clarify the transcription of the interview (Ruth, 1991; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

4.6.2 Validity

Validity in research refers to the correctness, strength and truth of a statement. In social science validity is about whether the method is investigating what it is supposed to investigate (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Ruth (1991) wrote that in qualitative research validity concerns the relevance and meaning in the collected data.

The method of choice was carefully examined to make sure that the chosen method, in this case the narrative method would allow the researchers to find relevant data that could answer the formulation of questions. The questionnaire was formulated to make sure that the questions asked were open and non-leading. To increase the level of validity a pilot-interview was performed before the interviews of the study. The same questions from the questionnaire were then asked to all informants, however, follow-up questions were sometimes asked to get a deeper understanding. The transcribed texts were processed several times to make sure that the subjects stories were rightfully transcribed. The chosen terminology of the text in this study was carefully considered to not use generalizable terms.

4.6.3 Generalizability

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argued that questions directed to interview studies concerns whether the results are generalizable. This implies whether the results from a study can be transferable to other situations and subjects.

The aim of this study is not to find results that can be generalized and drawn to a larger population. Instead the overall intention with this study was to create an insight in how the subjects have experienced their identity development and possibly open doors for further research. Since there was a small sample of units in this study we are aware that the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. However, Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argued that analytical generalizability involves assessments regarding the extent to which the results of one study can be used as a guide for happenings in other situations.

This study offers rich descriptions and arguments about the generality of our findings. It is therefore possible for the reader to judge whether the findings of this study can be connected to other situations.
4.7 Ethical consideration

Interview research are exploring private lives and putting accounts in public arenas. These complexities may result in ethical dilemmas. It is therefore important to take ethical concerns in account from the beginning of an investigation to the final report (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, the Science Research Council (2002) argues that the individual protection demand is a fundamental base in the ethical principles for social science research and humanities. These principles shall make sure that members of the society have a right for protection against insight in their private lives. Individuals also need to be protected against physical or psychical harm, infringement or humiliation. The fundamental individual protection demand is concretized in four different requirements;

The first demand is the demand for information which constitutes that the subjects of the study shall be provided with advance information about the study and under what conditions (The Science Research Council, 2002). The participants were provided with an information sheet before the interviews, the sheet contained information about the purpose of the study, the main features in how the study would be carried out and eventual benefits and risks. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous and that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any point. Further follow the demand for consent that emphasizes the significance of the informant’s right to determine their involvement (ibid.). The participants were asked to sign a consent form to make sure that they had taken part in the information of the study. Two of the participants did not have the possibility to send back the consent form, therefore an oral consent was given before the interview. The oral consent was recorded in a separate recording than the interviews. The demand for confidentiality ensures that all personal data will be stored in safety from unauthorized (The Science Research Council, 2002). The participants’ names in this study have been changed to random names to keep their anonymity. The random names of the participants were chosen based on names starting with the respective letter A, B and C. The chosen names were Anna, Bonnie and Caroline. Only the supervisor and the researchers had access to the participants’ real names. The demand for usage guarantees that the received information only will be used in purpose of this study (ibid.) and to ensure this, all material was destroyed when the study was completed.

The interviewers kept the situation of the participants in mind during the interviews by answering the units’ reactions in a careful way. The units were given the opportunity to talk to the point without any interruptions in order to reduce possible stress-inducing elements. The
units were informed before the interviews that it was not a demand to answer all questions if the participants were not comfortable to. Sensitive areas were handled in a careful way with respect for the informants’ reactions and with considerations to the reaction the researchers sometimes chose not to go further into depth if not relevant. The researchers were careful with the analysis of the interviews to make sure that sensitively lines were not crossed.

4.8 Discussion of the narrative method
The narrative method has given the advantage to look at the story from a holistic perspective and allowed the study to receive a more profound understanding of the participants’ whole narrative. By using a narrative method, the questions could be formulated to receive long and describing answers about the units’ growth and development. The empirical material found was thereby describing and provided a deep understanding of the participants’ narrative. By exploring the meaning of the spoken word and searching for tones and imagery it was possible to locate underlying features and understand how these are related to relationships and dominant discourses of the society. It may not have been possible to find these features with a traditional qualitative method. The narrative analysis opened for a more profound and multi-dimensional description and deeper reflections concerning identity and its kind of problematic (Larsson et al., 2008).

The narrative method involves many different aspects and here the researchers’ analytical ability are being examined. The narrative method can be difficult to implement for novices as there are many ways of performing narrative methods. Therefore, it has been time-consuming for us to understand the narrative method and a lot of time has been dedicated to discuss the different ways of implementing the narrative perspective in this research. Another difficulty with the narrative method is that it can provide a lot of material to work with which is good but for this limited study it might be difficult to implement all material received.

An alternative method for this study could have been a quantitative approach. It could have been interesting and relevant to investigate a larger sample of international adoptees and their thoughts concerning identity development. However, with a quantitative method the person's own experiences that this study searched for would have been lost.

5. Presentation of Results and Narrative Analysis
In this section the result of the study is presented. The story from each participant is presented separately with a continuous narrative analysis and interpretation. In the conversations, the
interviewer´s questions are presented as I and the participants will be presented with the first letter for their given name: Anna- A, Bonnie- B and Caroline- C.

5.1 Interview- Caroline
Caroline was 23 years old and she was adopted from China to Sweden when she was 1.5 years old. Her family consist of her mother, father and older sister. From the result, Caroline’s narrative was categorised as non-problematic.

5.1.1 Family Relationships
Here follow parts from the interview where Caroline described her relationship with her family:

C: No but it is very good, I think I have more contact with my parents than other people that are 23 years old. I talk to them every day, I live in another town so it is 60 Swedish miles between us now, but we talk every day. We talk about life and what is going on. I have a very close relationship to my parents.

I: Is it someone that you are closer to in your family?
C: I would say that I am equally close to both mom and dad however mom is maybe that person that I cling to a little more. But I have a good relationship with both of them.

Caroline described that it has been a very open environment in the family concerning her adoption:

I: Can you tell us a little about your childhood in relation to that you are adopted?
C: [...] My parents have been very open about my adoption and where I come from. They have showed me the papers and pictures from when they adopted me and the journey to China… So, I have always had a clear picture about how everything came about and where I come from. I found out quite early that there are no papers that show who my biological parents are and that it would be very difficult to find them, so I got that with me quite early.

I: Can you tell us about the first time you realized that you were adopted?
C: I don’t remember that but I understood quite early that my parents were not my biological parents, but I have, from the moment I met my parents, from the first day, I have attached to them so it has not been any oddities.
Caroline described her relationship to her sister as good but not to close:

C: [...] I have an older sister, that is 19 years older than me and that relationship, maybe is a little vague, it is nothing bad, mostly because she has her own family and children and a job, so it is hard to keep the contact.

I: You talked about the relationship between you and your sister and that it is not so good, has it always been that way?
C: Yes, but I think it is because my sister moved from home only 1 year after I arrived, and then she moved to another city, but she has always been there as a good support and sounding board. But then she got a family and it has been, now that we are older we have a better connection. During the teens I think that I missed this close sister relationship that you might have when you are a little closer to each other in age [...] 

In the interview, Caroline described her feelings of growing up without her biological parents:

C: [...] when I was a child maybe 6-7 years old, I reflected some on who my biological parents were, but I have always had very good parents (fotnot) so it has not been a trauma for me.

I: In which way do you think that it has influenced you of growing up without your biological family?
C: I don’t think it has influenced me that much, I see them (fotnot) as my real parents and they are the parents I know and love.

5.1.1.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation
Caroline described her good contact with her parents by saying that she believed that she has more contact with her parents than other 23 year olds. She once again clarified her good contact with her parents with words as “very” and “close” in relation to “relationship”. When she described the communication in the family about adoption she again wanted to emphasize that they have a more than good communication. The term “very” was therefore well used when she discussed this topic. It can be interpreted as Caroline’s early understanding about factors surrounding her adoption has promoted her process of accepting her adoptive status.

When Caroline looked in a retrospective perspective at her childhood she could recall that she could attach to her adoptive parents from day one. This showed that Caroline has an awareness of the attachments significance in a child’s life.
5.1.2 Relationships outside of the family

In the interview, Caroline described that she felt lonely during her time in high school but she said that it did not concern her that much:

I: How were you as a teenager?
C: When I was younger I felt lonelier in the teens, especially in high school and it depended much on that I did not feel any belongingness with the class and so on, it was no one that performed sports, nobody that had horses. They did not have the same interests as I had and then I felt quite on the outside.

C: I was not bullied but I kind of stayed with myself, but I was not so concerned about it, I had so much with the horse-riding so I did not have that much time. I do not remember so much from my teens it was quite, well not dark, but still pretty dark but not in a very negative way, I don’t have so many memories from that time.

Caroline described that her contact with other adoptees have been important for her:

C: Yes, the China-girls have been very important… To have someone in the same age that are like-minded even though we are very different. To be able to have fun with them has meant a lot to me, and then I have had some other close friends. Then the stable also have meant a lot to me because it is a place where I have been able to have close friends that I could talk to so yes that has been important.

I: Is it someone in your surrounding that you have been able to identify with?
C: Yes, but all the China-girls I have been able to, we have this deep connection because we all were given away and came from the same, a very big place.

I: You have talked about that you could turn to your parents and these China-girls with a lot of questions concerning your adoption. What do you think that it has meant for you, that you have had people to turn to about this?
C: I think that it has had a very big significance for me, it has been very important for me, if I didn’t have someone to talk to I think that I would have had bigger speculations and identity questions… No but if I would not have had that support I think I would have had more speculations and questions about it, so I am very happy that I had that support.
5.1.2.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

It is difficult to understand Caroline though she said that her difficult times in high school did not concern her, but she also described it as a dark period. This may be interpreted as she experienced mixed-feelings concerning this period of her life.

In Caroline’s narrative, she clearly explained that her contact with other adoptees have had a great impact on her. She used words as “like-minded” when she explained their connection. In Caroline’s story about her adoptive friends the importance of belonging clearly emerges. She also expressed that she might have encountered more issues regarding identity and her adoption if she would not have had these friends to talk to. This implies that being able to speak about one’s thoughts and feelings concerning adoption can promote a healthy identity development.

5.1.3 Similarities to parents

Caroline talked about heritage from her adoptive parents, this is what she described:

I: How have you handled that you have a different appearance from your parents?
C: I think that I rather, my parents or my surrounding has not thought so much about that we have a different appearance, it has probably been so that they have thought more that we are alike in our behavior and I have very much in common with my parents how I am raised and so on [...]

I: You talked earlier about that you are very alike your parents in your behavior and thoughts, what do you think that it has meant for you to hear that you are alike your parents?
C: I think that is very important because then you move the focus from appearance to who one is as a person, which is very important that you don’t focus on why you have a different appearance… It is not so fun to hear that… instead it may be funnier to hear these like-minded or different-minded capacities [...]

5.1.3.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

In Caroline’s narrative, she acknowledged the importance of transferring the attention to qualities instead of appearances when it comes to biological heritage. By describing this, awareness of the society’s values of appearances emerges. Caroline’s discussions concerning this can also be interpreted as a way of feeling belonging to her parents.
5.1.4 Society’s views on me as an adoptee
In the interview, Caroline talked about her experiences during her childhood:

I: How was it in school when you were younger?
C: [...] I think I was too young to be able to reflect on those questions that I got then and I don’t remember it either so I can’t remember whether it was judgmental questions or if it was based on ignorance, but then in high school it was a big class with diversities so it was people from all kind of different background so it was nothing strange.

I: You have talked a little about comments from the surroundings can you tell us more about how the society has reacted to you as an adoptee?
C: [...] I experience that most see me as a Swedish person because I have a western look regarding clothing and I talk Swedish and behave like a Swede... But it is not so often that I meet judgmental comments but however, I can meet questions that are based on ignorance.

5.1.4.1 The Advantages of Information
Caroline have always been curious about her background and this occurred in the interview like this:

C: [...] I have had children books about adoption and we had some books about China and that have helped me to get some kind of connection or contact with China. [...] 

C: No but I have always tried to find out pretty much about China and their policy during that time [...] 

C: So of course, it affects one, it is not so fun to feel that you are unwanted in the country that you were born in. But at the same time I am very grateful that I got a new opportunity here in Sweden... So of course, one has had speculations but not in that way that it has taken over and that you have felt something horrible.

On the question about important turning points or moments Caroline mentioned a book she received from her mother called A second daughter, the book is about China during the time when the one-child-policy was implemented. Caroline explained the significance the book have had for her.
C: No but I got a book from my mother for many, many years ago, that I might have read too many times… that book have influenced me a lot because I got an understanding for how the one-child-policy were performed in China. I think that book have influenced me very much and especially that I got a better understanding. […]

5.1.4.2 Narrative Analysis and Interpretations
Caroline reflected over that she in her childhood might have been too young to understand a deeper meaning of questions that she received concerning her adoption. She demonstrated that she nowadays is aware of the reactions adoptees may experience from the society by expressing that she cannot remember whether it was judgmental questions or questions based on ignorance. The loaded values of the words “judgmental” and “ignorance” here emerged.

Caroline described that she experienced that most people consider her as Swedish. She emphasized this by explaining that she has a western look and behave like a Swede. It can here be interpreted that by following the Swedish norms and culture, she believes that others consider her as Swedish.

Through books and an interest for China, Caroline has developed knowledge about her background. It can be interpreted that the knowledge about China’s social situation and policies have helped her come to terms with her adoption- and identity process. Therefore, this can be considered as an important factor for her.

5.1.5 Narrative Tone
In relation to Caroline’s narrative, the tone of her account was neutral. This may be related to how she described the years in her life. By her narrative, it can be considered that the topic is not difficult to talk about as she did not experienced any big issues regarding her adoption or identity development during her growth. She could therefore talk about it in a neutral way without expressing strong emotions. From these results Caroline’s narrative was interpreted and categorised as unproblematic.

5.2 Interview- Anna
Anna was 22 years old and was adopted from China. She came to Sweden when she was about 1.5 years old. Her family consist of her mother, father and her sister who also was adopted from China. Anna described difficulties during her childhood and her narrative was therefore categorised as problematic.
5.2.1 Family Relationships

During the interview, Anna spoke about her family with warmth:

I: You said that it was a lot concerning identity, can you evolve that a little further?
A: I have always, from the first moment been interested in my background and I have always known that I am adopted. I have always been able to talk to my parents about it, been open and asked questions and thoughts about everything, and that feels very good. [...]

During a question on childhood in relation to adoption, Anna again brought up that she always could talk to her family:

A: [...] I have always been able to talk to my family about it, maybe a little easier with my father, he has been more open. [...]

Anna also mentioned at several times during the interview that her family is important to her:

I: Can you describe your view on yourself during the years you grow up?
A: [...] you\(^2\) do not take things for granted so much ... I have a very close relationship to my family and I hold them very dear. [...]

The following is what Anna answered when asked whether there is someone that she is closer to in her family:

A: It is my sister actually.
I: Why do you think that is?
A: We have always been close to each other and played a lot with each other. But now we have come to know each other in a different way, we can really talk and not irritate each other. Always if you say something to mom and dad you sometimes say the wrong things and then you get frustrated. But I can talk to my sister.

5.2.1.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

In Anna’s narrative, her thoughts and feelings about her family clearly emerged. She often used the word “open” when talking about her family. Anna repeatedly clarified the family's importance with words such as “family-loving” and “cherish” to describe that she holds them very dear. She described that her family has been very supportive in her attempts to search for

\(^2\) You- the Swedish word *man*, has in Anna’s narrative been translated to *you.*
her biological family. In the family it has been an open environment to talk and ask any types of questions concerning adoption and this is something that Anna has appreciated during her upbringing. She expressed that she could talk about everything with her sister and used words as “frustrated” to clarify that she cannot talk about everything with her parents.

5.2.2 Biological Parents and Anna’s Search for her Origin

Under this heading follows different sections from the interview where Anna talked about her biological parents and what it has implied for her to not have contact with them:

I: We have touched upon this with biological parents and origin but in what way would you say that it has affected you of not growing up with your biological parents?

A: [...] It has affected me in that way that you have felt a little lost and lonely with that you do not know where you come from, and the ones that should have loved you and take care of you, they have not done that. You can think over what the reason was whether they loved you and whether they still exist and so on. So of course, it has left some traces but I am still very happy over my upbringing and my life and who I am today… It feels like it maybe has been a better life here than what it would have been in China. It depends on the reason, they might have been middle class people, and then it was the one-child-policy so maybe one would have had a good life there also, or maybe they were very poor and had it very difficult. I mean being given away for adoption is sad but also very fun.

A: [...] I have been to China three times with my parents… They have talked to different papers about writing articles… It is very funny like when I went there last summer with my boyfriend it was like this, that person was more similar to me than the others, what if we are related, it is fun to speculate, think and fantasize and so. [...] 

During a question concerning her perception on herself during her childhood, Anna described a situation where she wrote about her biggest wish in “my friend’s book”:

A: [...] People in your own age wrote that they wished for a pony, or becoming superstars, a horse rider, veterinary or so on. While I wished that I would meet my biological parents, it was always what I wished for[...]

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5.2.2.1 China
Anna has travelled back to China several times and referred to the trips as important to her:

A: I think that every time I travel back to China, each time you think a little different. You see yourself a little different, you see the world a little different. It has left some traces in me. [...]

During Anna’s trips to China she has visited the orphanage two times. Here follows a part of the interview where she talked about the visits at the orphanage:

A: When I was eight the orphanage said that they were 100% sure of the birth date and that I was found on a sidewalk… When I was 12 they said that they didn’t had a clue of when I was born… and that I was found on a train station… I was very sad because they took away the only thing I had.

5.2.2.2 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation
Anna talked about her biological parents as something that has been difficult to her. She has faced a lot of questions concerning her adoption and the reasons behind her being given away. In her narrative, a desire to meet her biological parents clearly emerged. This come forth when she said that her greatest wish as a child was to meet her biological parents, and by her actions of advertising for her biological parents in China. But also that she looked for biological similarities in the people in her origin town. She illustrated a disappointment in her biological parents by saying that “the ones that should have taken care of you and loved you did not do that” and demonstrated once again a desire to meet her biological family. She further described that “you can think over the reason whether they loved you and still exist” which can be interpreted as an ambivalence where she tries to search for answers as she later expressed that she could have had a good life there. Her descriptions of being given away for adoption as “sad” and “fun” show a somewhat contradictory view which can be a way of refining her situation.

5.2.3 Relationships outside of the Family
When the interviewer asked Anna about an important person in her life outside the family she answered her boyfriend:

A: The first person I think of is my boyfriend… he has really done so, no but helped me to grow as a person, and my self-confidence have gotten much better… You can really talk to him, and that is really good….It is my first boyfriend and one has doubts on yourself and you kind of, ‘will somebody like
me’...and then you find that person that really like you for who you are and that is very, very funny and means a lot to me [...] 

5.2.3.1 Other adopted friends

During the interview, Anna brought up that she has contact with other adopted people:

I: Can you tell us about your childhood in relation to your adoption, how has it been in the family?
A: [...] When I was adopted we were ten Swedish families that adopted ten girls and we have had meetings one weekend every summer and it is very very fun. It is a little like siblings, we have known each other since way back. It is very fun because everyone knows everyone, everyone have their stories and have experienced all different things and think in different ways. And then you can sit there and talk and feel like one in the crowd and that is really great.
I: Can you tell more about these occasions and what meaning they have had for you?
A: They have had a great significant, it has been, all the families live in different parts of Sweden … Almost all of us have siblings… So it is really fun, when we meet, we are usually in a hostel and we fill the whole hostel and eat food and the parents are there and the siblings are there [...].

Anna also mentioned an adopted friend that she felt that she could identify with:

A: Yes, that is my friend who is also adopted. We are very different but also very much alike. We have different interests and different ways of acting but we have the same background so you can really feel with the other, and you can tell the other if you are happy or frustrated and the other one can understand. It is like she says, it is crazy that you have known each other longer than you have known your parents, and she is right about that. Because you can say that it is the only one you have from your earlier life.

Anna explained her treatment from friends and classmates that are not adopted:

A: I am a person who has few but good friends… so the friends have been still, they have been curious but have never said anything mean. Then there are classmates… some of them are nice and careful and accept it even though they might not understand it. Some have more questions so it is very different… I think that it is about how much general education you have. Some parents might
explain that some children are adopted… then it is the people that might get in contact with it for the first time that just “aha okay”.

5.2.3.2 Narrative Analysis and Interpretations
Anna described her boyfriend as an important part in her growth as a person. She emphasized this by saying that she had experienced doubts within herself which she started to overcome when she realized that her boyfriend liked her for who she was. This was clarified when she expressed “it is very fun” and that “it means a lot to me”.

In Anna’s story a need of belonging once again appeared as she talked about the significance other adoptees have had in her life. To stress the importance this had for her she expressed that she could feel like one in the crowd. When Anna talked about comments that she had gotten in her childhood she expressed that she nowadays can understand that these comments could have originated from incomprehension even though it was difficult at the time. This may imply that Anna have come to terms with the society's ignorance about adoption in general.

5.2.5 Self-confidence and self-esteem during the childhood into adolescence
In the following section, different parts from the interview are presented where Anna talked about her self-confidence and self-esteem in a retrospective perspective from childhood into adolescence.

Anna started to describe the early years in school and experiences of being the only Asian:

I: You have talked a little about self-confidence earlier, can you describe a little about your self-confidence and how it has been from childhood until today?
A: [...] you were the only Asian in school and sure some teased me and some thought that I was beautiful and ‘you have so nice hair’ and then you got really happy, and some ‘you have crooked eyes’ and then you got really sad.

On a question concerning shyness in the childhood and its connections to being adopted Anna described following:

A: [...] people can be very mean, and then you might become a little shy when attending a children’s party where everyone is blonde and have a certain style and then oneself comes there and, it was a bigger thing when you were little, you were more insecure and so on, and then also when people came and ask ‘do you not know who your mother is’, that is not so fun to hear… that’s the things that have been difficult during childhood with being adopted otherwise I have
been happy and playful and hanged out with the friends that I liked… I was never alone in the schoolyard.

5.2.5.1 The Society’s views on me as an Adoptee
During the interview, Anna got a question on how she felt that comments from others concerning her adoption have affected her, this is what she answered:

A: When you were a child it was not fun at all, you were ashamed of being adopted and that you had a different appearance and that your parents were older and so on… Sometimes you got quite mean comments, which I don’t know if they were supposed to be mean, but that’s how it is, children can be mean so it was no fun at all. But now on later days you just laugh, you think that it is funny so you take it in an easier way. You are more secure, sure I still don’t know who my biological parents are but I do not get sad if somebody say something clumsy, adults express themselves quite clumsy sometimes. I don’t believe that they say those things to be racist or mean or to put me down. It is most that you remember very much of what people say. Sometimes when you meet people for the first time you can talk about some funny things just to joke about oneself. It is a little funny to tell what kind of comments you get as an adoptee.

When asking Anna if she has been discriminated for being adopted she described that she has met prejudices for being an Asian:

A: Maybe not because I am adopted but because I am Asian… It is not as much taboo to express oneself in a spiteful way against yellow Chinese as to dark people. Then it is okay to comment in a bad way. That is not so funny, why is it not okay to toss away a half-bad comment to dark persons but it is okay with Chinese… It has been some situations when I have felt like god is those people for real… Especially when I go out with my dad, it’s not funny, because then it can be many prejudices that it is an old man going out with his young foreign girlfriend, even though it is my dad… Everybody isn’t quite, some is very curious and some are judgmental… Most times you just laugh and some you just feel like you don’t know whether to laugh or cry, and you get moody at some.

5.2.5.2 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation
To demonstrate how others have treated Anna she used direct speech by going into a role as others. She here brought up an example; “you have so nice hair” which she explained made
her feel happy or “you have crooked eyes” as she explained as a negative statement. This can be interpreted as a way of showing the differences in different moments where she has felt violated with times that she has received compliments and as a way of illustrating that she has met both positive and negative comments.

In Anna’s narrative, she said that people can be very mean, this expression is used to explain her shyness in the childhood and reasons for why she has felt alone. She said that she experienced it as more problematic when she was younger because of her insecurities and her being ashamed of her complexion. She expressed that nowadays she can handle this and can at some point laugh about comments. This can be interpreted as an improvement in her ability to handle these situations. However, it is possible to see a difference in how she described that some comments affect her. Her narrative showed that she was more easy-going towards comments that concerned adoption processes compared to comments that comes with prejudices and racist expressions about Asians. Her sensitiveness towards her appearance and origin once again comes forth in this episode.

5.2.6 Singapore and the years after
Anna moved with her parents to Singapore when she was a teenager:

I: You said that it was a lot concerning identity, can you evolve that a little further?
A: [...] when I was a child then I thought like this that I am a Chinese. I thought that it was funny, it was exotically… Then we moved to Singapore when I was a teenager, Singapore is in southeast of Asia but it is many people there that originates from China, and when I came there it became a big culture shock. I looked as everybody else which I thought was really funny I wanted to blend in… ‘Finally, I am among people that look like I do, I am home’. Then the culture became evident which was completely different. I mean I came there with my Swedish culture. In the physical education, I went all the way while the other girls did not even want to go out in the sun because they got tanned… It was very hard to make new friends because they were like ‘but she is really strange she looks like us but is really odd’… it was very shocking. I missed Sweden and my friends back home, so I was like ‘now I am Swedish’. And then when I came back to Sweden I thought that I look like a Chinese but is Swedish on the inside.
In a question concerning Anna’s perception of herself and how it has changed, Anna answered:

A: Absolutely, Singapore has left traces… partly it is an Asian country with its principles and the school and so on, and you get a wider perspective of the world… I feel that I don’t am so much Chinese… I thought that it was very hard to be a teenager which also has changed me. You have had a lot of problems which has changed you, one has been very insecure. Lately it feels like… very very good and maybe it is because of the hard years you have had. It feels like you are completely secure in oneself, you are happy and upwards and care less about what others think.

I: You have talked a little about self-confidence earlier, can you describe a little about your confidence and how it has been during childhood until now?
A: […] I think that it was in High School that the confidence took another turn; you got a better group of friends. I enjoyed the high school period very much, one gets secure in time.

5.2.6.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretations
Anna expressed that she thought that it was fun to be a Chinese however she also described her issues in her childhood when it came to belonging and having a different appearance. Anna descriptions of her time in Singapore pointed out the importance of culture and the society that one lives in. Singapore can be interpreted as a turning point as it turned out to be a positive experience for her, as the ambivalence of her cultural identity disappeared when she realized that she was a Swede.

5.2.7 Narrative Tone
The tone of Anna’s account can be interpreted as optimistic. This can be related to her optimistic tone in how she described the last years in her life and her current situation. Anna could overcome her issues with belonging and complexion that followed her during her childhood and described that her current situation was really good and that she had come to terms with who she is.

Anna’s narrative was interpreted and categorised as problematic due to the issues concerning belonging that she experienced during her growth. However, she had protective elements in her life that helped her with her identity development.
5.3 Interview- Bonnie
Bonnie was 19 years old at the time for the interview and was currently overseas on a long-term trip. She was adopted from Latvia when she was 4 years old. Bonnie was adopted to a family who consisted of an adoptive mother, an adoptive father and a sister who was also adopted. Bonnie lived in her adoptive family until she was 14 years old. Due to different circumstances, she moved to a foster family when she was 14 years old and she has lived there until the time of the interview. Bonnie considers her foster family as her family. Bonnie met her biological mother in Latvia before she travelled to Australia. Bonnie’s narrative contained difficulties regarding her identity and her adoptive parents and was therefore categorised as highly problematic.

5.3.1 Orphanage
Bonnie lived in an orphanage until the time of the adoption:

B: [...] the three first years are very important to be able to learn how to connect with others and then I was in an orphanage and it is a very big difference in how one gets treated in an orphanage comparing to a family. I think I closed up pretty much and didn’t learn how to connect, and then all of a sudden I was a part of a family and that became a little strange from being in an orphanage.

I: Do you experience that you have felt safe within yourself during your upbringing?
B: During the first years, I was very scared of men in general… In the orphanage, it was only female supervisors so I had never met men.

When Bonnie answered a question regarding whether growing up without her biological parents have influenced her, she again brought up the time in the orphanage:

B: [...] the time in the orphanage has affected me, affected me very much considering relationships with others and so on. So I believe that it has affected me a lot, in how I am as a person and so on.

5.3.1.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation
Bonnie traced her experienced difficulties in her growth to her first years as she expressed the importance of basic trust in the first three years. This indicates an awareness and a way of defending the reasons of why she later could not attach to her adoptive parents. Bonnie stressed this by using words as “very” and “a lot” in combination with “affected me” when she talked about her time in the orphanage.
5.3.2 Adoptive Family

Here follow different episodes from the interview where Bonnie described her childhood:

B: [...] I was very happy so I heard, that I was very lively and happy and very sporty.

B: I had a good childhood, as any childhood actually. The only thing that was different was that the adoption took so long time, it got so extended so I was quite aware that it wasn’t my biological family since we had to go back and sign papers all the time, but otherwise it was quite normal I guess.

5.3.2.1 Communication

Bonnie described that it was an open communication in her adoptive family about her adoption. However, she described that she experienced unclarity:

B: It was very open, they talked about my mom and that she couldn’t take care of me but they never told me why she couldn’t take care of me... But it was open that I had lived in an orphanage and it was very open so it was nothing strange it was just the way it was.

When asking Bonnie if she has felt that she wanted to search for her biological mother she answered that she had a lot of questions about her biological mother when she was younger. Bonnie further described that the reason for this was that she did not feel belonging with her adoptive family:

B: We didn’t get a connection. When I was little I was afraid of men, and I think that was hard for my adoptive father, that I held him at a distance. I could not be home alone with him, my adoptive mother had to be with me constantly... and then I distanced myself when he was around, and he was always around because we were a family… I never came into their family completely, they had another adoptive daughter as well and they had connected very well and I was with them at a corner. I don’t know but I never came into that family emotionally. I was quite closed and I think that we needed help with that… because I was so closed in myself with my feelings [...] 

In the interview, Bonnie talked about a life crisis, when the interviewer asked her to evolve that further she again brought up her adoptive family:
B: [...] I had a lot of thoughts and feelings about who I was and so the family\(^3\) that I lived in had a very clear picture of how they thought that I should be or how I had been during my growth and I didn’t think that I should be that way anymore. I don’t know how to explain but I had a lot of feelings and thoughts which I felt that I could not share with them and I closed myself because I could not share my thoughts and feelings. And then I started with a self-harming behavior and then it became a big crisis for them as well because they didn’t understand what I was going through [...].

I: You said that you always have had a good confidence but that it has been worse with your self-esteem, can you develop that a little further?

B: I have always had a good self-confidence and been secure in myself. I have believed that I can do things… but the self-esteem was, since I was never able to identify with my parents or someone in my family, I have always been a little lost in who I am and maybe I didn’t have such a good picture of myself. I have always felt that I had been, well the picture of me haven’t been so good. I haven’t thought that I was worthy for some things or that I’m not amiable because I am I, I don’t know. But I guess it is kind of, that picture was worse than my self-confidence.

I: Can you describe your view on yourself during your growth?

B: [...] I don’t know I have always had some kind of, that I had to feel gratitude towards my parents\(^4\) that they have helped me or what to say, and therefore I never wanted to talk about that I had questions about my past and so on when I was a child... I never showed it instead I tried to be happy.

5.3.2.2 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation

In the way Bonnie described the reasons for her being unable to attach to her adoptive parents she showed a consciousness about attachment processes and awareness of the reasons for her own experienced difficulties surrounding this.

When asking Bonnie about the communication in the family she expressed that it was an open communication and used words as “it was nothing strange” to emphasize this. However, she also said that she experienced unclarity. Despite her earlier claim, Bonnie expressed several times during the interview that she experienced a bad connection and felt an inability to open

\(^3\) Family- adoptive family

\(^4\) Parents- adoptive parents
up to her adoptive parents. Here it can be considered that the way the interviewer asked the questions might have affected Bonnie’s answers. By asking a direct question about communication Bonnie might not got the time to reflect what a good connection implies.

Bonnie’s descriptions about her childhood appeared to be contradictory as she said that she was a happy child but later in her narrative she described that she had a lot of thoughts that she could not share and experienced unclarity. She also described that instead of turning to her adoptive parents with questions she “tried to be happy”. She described that she let others see that she was happy although this was a way of protecting her adoptive parents from what she truly felt. Her different descriptions about happiness in her narrative may be considered as ambivalent as she expressed mixed feelings about the person she was as a child.

When Bonnie described her self-esteem, she expressed that the reason for her bad self-picture depended on that she could not identify with her adoptive family. The way she expressed this can be interpreted as a way of clarifying why it turned out as it did later in her life.

5.3.3 Moving to Foster Family

Bonnie was placed in a foster family, who consisted of a foster mother and father and two younger sisters. In the interview, Bonnie described this as a turning point:

I: Can you describe yourself in the teens?
B: [...] In my crisis I moved from my adoptive family to a new family, a foster family because it did not work [...] 

I: Can you evolve that further, you said you had an identity crisis?
B: [...] My parents\textsuperscript{5} did not understand what I went through… I did not have the help that I needed and therefore I needed to come away.

In the interview, Bonnie was asked where she felt most at home:

B: I feel home with my new family, my foster family.
I: Can you tell us a little more on why you feel most at home there?
B: Because I connect with them and they have always listened to me and accepted that I may not, because my old family maybe not accepted that I wanted to be for myself that much, instead they wanted us to be a family and then you should be in a certain way and be together, do stuff together. While my new family accepted that I maybe wanted to be in my room for 4 days in a row

\textsuperscript{5}Parents- adoptive parents
without going out, and that has made me feel safe and that I can be who I am with them, and when I can be myself I feel safe.

I: Can you describe your relationship to your parents there?
B: The relationship with my foster parents is very open and I can talk about everything with them. If I have bought a purse I talk with them about it, about my mom from Latvia I talk with them\(^6\). Yes, it is very good, like a family is.

I: Is it someone in your surrounding that you feel that you have been able to identify with?
B: I have never, not during my upbringing, not until now with my mother\(^7\) who I feel that I can identify with. We are pretty alike in the way we act... I believe that’s why I felt on the outside in my other family because I could never identify with them.

I: You said that you consider coming to your foster family as a turning point; can you develop your feelings about that?
B: Yes when I came there it was no demands on me, because it has always been an underlying demand on me in the adoptive family that I should be in a certain way… and then when I got to change family that demand wasn’t there anymore and I could finally start to find out who I am and be as I wanted to be and be able to open up.

5.3.3.1 Child and Youth Psychiatry (BUP)
Bonnie also described her contact at the child and youth psychiatry (BUP) as an important person in her life:

B: The most important person outside of the family was my counsellor at BUP since she was the first person that I could talk to in an unconditional way. So, she has really helped me, when I was feeling the worst I did not even want to live anymore and she was the only one that I could talk to at that point… It was also because I knew that it was her job and that she was not allowed to tell anyone what I had said so that made it easier for me to talk to her and she became very important for me.

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\(^6\) Them- foster parents
\(^7\) My mother- foster mother
5.3.3.2 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation
When Bonnie got in contact with her counsellor at BUP her life turned around, she started to learn how to deal with her emotions and talk about her feelings with others. Bonnie herself expressed that moving to her foster family was important for her and a turning point in her life. When Bonnie talked about these two factors the tone of her narrative took a turn towards a more positive light. Therefore, these two experiences in relation to each other can be interpreted as turning points in Bonnie’s story.

When Bonnie talked about her foster mother she used the word “my” with “mother” to emphasize their relationship and her ability to identify with her. Bonnie referred her relationship with her foster parents as the “way a family is”. The term “family” is here used to refer to the society’s normalization of a family and Bonnies own perception of how a family that function well looks like. The way she refers to this can be connected to her previously despondency and unsteady relationship to her adoptive parents.

5.3.4 Biological Family
Bonnie described that she had some thoughts about her biological family when she was a child. Before she went overseas Bonnie met her biological mother in Latvia:

I: Can you tell us a little more about your meeting with your biological mother?
B: She found me on Facebook because I have changed to my birth last name… and then I felt that I wanted to go and meet her... I don’t know why I wanted to meet her, it was very special. [...]

I: Had you felt that you wanted to search for her or look further into your background?
B: Yes, when I was younger and lived in my adoptive family, because I felt a little like an outsider. So, then I wanted to meet my real mother and my biological family and thought a lot about them. But since I moved to my foster family and connected very good with them I have not thought about it at all until she contacted me.

I: Do you think that it has affected you today that you have met and got contact with your biological mother?
B: No I don’t think so, it is more that I know what she looks like and that it is a question, a part in myself and my life path that has fallen to place… and hear her
story, why she left me and so on, it has given me some kind of calmness or something but not anything more than that.

5.3.4.1 Narrative Analysis and Interpretation
Bonnie expressed that she thought about her biological mother when she lived in her adoptive family because of her poor attachment with her adoptive family. However, when Bonnie moved to her foster family she did not think about her biological mother as much as before. This can be interpreted as a need of feeling belonging. The poor connection with her adoptive family made her think about her connection to her biological mother but when she connected to her foster family and felt belonging to them she did not have the same need to her biological mother.

5.3.5 The Narrative Tone of Bonnies Story
In relation to Bonnie’s narrative, the tone of her account is optimistic with a trace of ambivalence. This may be related to her optimistic tone in how she described the later years in her life. Bonnie was able to overcome the negative legacy that accompanied her during her childhood as her poorly attachment to adoptive parents, and her emotionally withdrawing from others. In Bonnie’s narrative, it emerged that her family relationships at the time of the interview was stable and Bonnie were on a good way to find peace within herself. However, there is an underlying tone of insecurity and ambivalence as she several times during the interview describes her childhood in a contradictory way. This may imply that even though she had come to terms with the issues she faced as a child, the damage remained within her. Today she has found possibilities and tools to work with herself, and viewed herself in another way and has therefore an optimistic tone.

Bonnie’s narrative was categorised as highly problematic due to that she experienced a great deal of difficulties during her growth. These difficulties were both connected to her adoptive family and her self-esteem.

6. Empiricism analysis
In this section the result is analysed with theories and previous research. The participants’ stories will be analysed separately to clarify the findings.

6.1 Caroline
A frequent theme in Caroline’s interview is her good and close connection to her parents. Caroline has experienced that her parents have informed her about her adoption process and
that has helped her too early in life find acceptance that the possibilities to get in contact with her biological parents is very small. The communication in the family has promoted Caroline’s positive adjustment to her life as an adoptee (Brodzinsky, 2006). This can be a factor that has influenced her good relationship with her adoptive parents who she referred to as her real parents, the parents she knows and the parents she loves. Caroline’s early adjustment and acceptance can have a part in her sense of identity (Grotevant, 1997; Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004).

Caroline described that she can identify with her parents, she experienced that she has a lot in common with her parents and that they are like-minded. Caroline has in this way felt that she can interrelate issues of similarity with her parents which according to Grotevant (1997) is a factor in personal identity. Even though Caroline may not share genetics with her parents, she experienced that she has inherited personal characteristics from them. It can therefore be considered as a way for her to come to terms with herself in the cultural context and her adoptive family (Grotevant, 1997; Colaner & Kranstuber, 2010). Caroline described that she also identifies herself with her adoptive friends, this can also be considered as a way of integrate her adoptive status into her personal identity (Grotevant, 1997; Colaner & Kranstuber, 2010; Mohanty, 2015). From the results of the interview it does not appear as Caroline has had any issues regarding character confusions or crisis. Her relationships with her parents and her adoptive friends can be factors that have developed an ability to positively solve crisis and the interaction with family and friends can have helped her in her search to find herself (Erikson, 1969). From the results of this interview it appears as Caroline has been able to develop a healthy identity development and expressed that she feels secure in herself (ibid.).

6.2 Anna
The results from the interview demonstrated that Anna has experienced a close relationship to her family. She explained that they have been very supportive and open concerning her adoption both in direct communication as discussions and supportive connections as travelling back to China and searching for her origin. Anna described that she had a close relationship to her sister, who she can talk to about everything. This result can be supported by Brodzinsky (2006) and his argument about the importance of an emotionally attuned, open and active dialogue between adoptees and adoptive parents. Anna’s close relationship with her sister can be considered as a preventative factor towards risks for externalizing problems (Farr et al., 2015).
As mentioned above, Anna’s parents have been very supportive in her search for her biological parents and origin. Grotevant, Ross, Marchel, and Mcroy (1999, as cited in Brodzinsky, 2006) wrote that collaboration between adoptive family and biological family can support the wellbeing of the child. Anna’s parent’s involvement in this collaboration can be considered as a way of doing that. As Mohanty (2005) and Lind (2012) wrote about the association of balance between the origin and adoptive country, Anna’s stories about her supportive parents can be linked to her ethnic identity development and psychological wellbeing. The open communication in Anna’s family can be a determinant factor of her emotional and behavioral closeness to her sister which is illustrated by Samek and Rueter (2011, as cited in Farr et al, 2015).

In the early years in school Anna described that she was more sensitive to comments which affected her self-image. Erikson (1969) argued that the early school years is a phase where children may start to feel less worthy, the child here may discover that skin colour and background can determine its values from others. This can be seen in Anna's story where she described a need of belonging and that she became shy when attending places where there were only “Swedish-looking” children.

Anna described feelings of loss and a lack of clarity concerning questions surrounding the adoption. Horstman, Colaner & Rittaneour (2016) argued that lack of clarity can be a factor that affects the self-esteem which Anna also described as something that has been hard for her.

In the result from the interview Anna expressed that she experienced a great support from her friends that also were adopted, they could share their experiences and create a feeling of belonging (Mohanty, 2015). This can be connected to the importance of openness communication that Brodzinsky (2006) writes about. Even though Brodzinsky’s focus is within the family, the main idea is to have someone to turn to with thoughts and questions related to adoption. Anna’s experiences with questions and prejudices from people outside her family are reminders of that her “Swedishness” is challenged. These kinds of experiences can also be recognized with Lind’s (2012) participants in the study about “Swedishness” and looking non-white.

In the results of this study it showed that Anna experienced some kind of character confusion when she was a teenager, where she felt lost and insecure. As Erikson’s theory points out adolescent is a phase where these confusions often arise (Erikson, 1969). However, Anna was
able to solve this confusion and has today come to terms with who she is. According to Erikson (1969) the ability to solve these confusions is titled as positive solution of crisis; this ability is determined by relationships with parents and contemporaries. Anna’s close connection to her parents and that she has close friends may be a determinant factor for her ability to solve her character confusion (ibid.).

6.3 Bonnie
The results from the interview indicated that Bonnie had experienced a lack of clarity surrounding her adoption. She expressed that she had issues with her identity development and that she had a low self-esteem and a depression which made her feel that she did not want to live anymore. Horstman, Colaner & Rittaneour (2016) argued that these kinds of feelings can be affected by a lack of clarity. Bonnie further described that she felt obligated to be happy and thankful towards her adoptive parents and because of this she felt that she could not share her thoughts with them. Communication in the family is described as an important feature that can promote reflective exploration which can help the child to construct their adoptive identity (Horstman et al., 2016). Bonnie experienced that she could not communicate as she would have wished with her adoptive family and because of this she did not get the tools she needed to be able to understand the meaning of her adoption.

Bonnie explained that her time in the orphanage affected her ability to trust others and let people in. Bonnie thereby did not get a feeling of basic trust when she was an infant as Erikson (1969) discussed that this might have affected or influenced her attitude against others later in life. Bonnie’s adoptive parents’ inability to answer her needs may have affected that she later developed a life crisis. As Bonnie, did not experience a feeling of continuity and cohesion concerning her adoption and who she was, she had to struggle with previously unsolved crisis. Eriksson’s theory (1969) can explain Bonnie’s experiences as a character confusion, and since she did not get a feeling of basic trust as a child Bonnie did not have the tools needed to solve the crisis on her own.

Bonnie described her contact with BUP and the relocation to her foster family as a turning point in her life where she learned to communicate and open up to others. This helped her to solve her character confusion and started to come to terms with who she is. Brodzinsky (2006) talked about the importance of an open and emotionally attuned dialogue between adoptive parents and adoptee. This is something that Bonnie described that she now has with her foster family.
At the time Bonnie met her biological mother she had found herself in her foster family, meeting her biological mother gave her the balance she needed to understand her background. Bonnie’s calmness and her feeling of that everything “fall” into place after meeting her mother can be connected to Mohanty’s (2015) work where she wrote about the importance of the balance between origin and current adoptive status.

7. Discussion
The aim of this study was to: Explore how international adopted young adults have experienced their identity development in a retrospective perspective in relation to family and friends. In this chapter the result from the study and analysis is discussed in relation to the research questions of the study, these are following:

- How do young adults describe their identity development in relation to family members?
- How do young adults describe their identity development in relation to friends?
- What have young adults perceived as difficulties and possibilities regarding their identity development during their childhood?

In relation to the first research question the results showed that family is a central factor in the identity development. All interviewed participants described important factors in their parents’ responsiveness and treatment concerning background and adoption. Caroline and Anna experienced a good communication in the family and illustrated a higher level of connection to their parents which also can be associated with a more stable identity development. Bonnie who did not experienced a good communication and connection, experienced difficulties regarding her sense of self. Bonnie’s stories are a distinct example on how important a good relationship between adoptive parents and child is for the individual’s personal development. This is something that can be found in Erikson’s (1969) theory of identity development and in Brodzinsky’s (2006) Communication Theory. The influence of siblings and extended family-members’ acceptance and the feeling of belonging to a family indicates not just the importance of a good connection to parents but the importance of a good connection to someone in the family.

The importance of being able to locate abilities and behavioral patterns with one’s family was identified in the result as an important factor regarding sense of self and self-esteem. Though adopted children do not share the biological bonds to their adoptive parents it might be im-
portant for adopted children to feel other kinds of connections to their adoptive parents. Being able to identify with someone is a way of recognizing similarities between oneself and someone else. This feeling can create a feeling of belonging to that person and therefore, the feeling of identification to one's adoptive parents can have a great influence in the adoptees sense of self (Grotevant, 1997; Horstman et al., 2016).

For the second question the result implicated that relationships to friends were very important as well, especially with other adoptees. The relationships with other adoptees can serve as essential factors in the process of accepting and feeling that one belongs. The feeling of belonging concerns appearances as well as personal characteristics and experiences. From the result of the interviews these factors are important for a person's identity development.

In relation to the third question one of the topics was the adoptees’ relationship to their background, which had a significant influence in their identity development. The participants expressed diverse experiences of how they have dealt with factors concerning their background and origin as, reading books about origin country or travel back to the country. One participant expressed that reading books and learn about the situation in her origin country helped her in her understanding and acceptance regarding her adoption. This can be a way of clarifying some of the question marks in one’s background. Parents may be able to support the child in these questions. However, one participant expressed that she had a good connection to her parents but experienced unclarity about her adoption. That has influenced her ability to feel belonging and coming to terms with who she is as an adopted person (Horstman et al., 2016). This shows that there might be a need of formal support to deal with these questions.

In relation to Bonnie’s account it emerged that support from others as her counsellor and later foster family was a determining factor in her life regarding her further development. It is possible to see that this is an element that can be essential for adoptees that experiences difficulties regarding their personal identity. In questions concerning adoption, whether you are a parent or an adoptee it can be important to understand that the support from family might not always be enough to be able to cope. Children that have spent their early years in an orphanage or in an uncertain environment can hold difficult feelings within themselves and might therefore need professional support to deal with these issues.

Another theme that appeared during the interviews was the feeling of belonging and solidarity. In the result, it appeared as appearance had a great significance for the feeling of
belonging and self-esteem. Caroline and Anna who are adopted from China and have stereotypical Asian appearances had both experienced questions from the surrounding concerning their adoption, origin and relationships to their parents. Bonnie who is adopted from Latvia and have a stereotypical Nordic appearance did express that she had never got questioned about her belonging to her adoptive parents or origin. This draw the attention from the adoption itself and shifts the focus to origin and appearance and that it might not be the adoption that the society have difficulties to accept but the person’s origin. Living in a country and having a different look than the stereotypical appearance can affect the feeling of belonging to the society one live in. The impact that the society has on norms, values and culture, and the influence it has on people with foreign origin here clearly occurred.

In conclusion, the result illustrated that the feeling of belonging involved different dimensions that vary from a small context as family and friends, to larger contexts as the dominant discourses of the society. This demonstrated a more complex picture of belonging than the “obvious” belonging to one’s family. A holistic perspective therefore needs to be considered to be able to understand the complexity in belonging and connect these different contexts to understand how the values in these contexts affects a child’s identity development.

7.1 Identity patterns
From the results of the study it clearly emerged that we met three different patterns concerning our participant’s identity development. Caroline expressed in the interview that she had come to terms with her adoption and that she had a very good relationship with her family and demonstrated an unproblematic identity development. This can be connected to Dunbar & Grotevant (2004) and Grotevant (1997) and their arguments that a stable identity is dependent on clarities surrounding the adoption process but also the ability to come to terms with who you are as an adopted person.

Anna also experienced a good relationship to her family but it also occurred as Anna had not come to terms with the circumstances surrounding her adoption and expressed that she felt an urge to find out more and to meet her biological parents. Since Anna has experienced unclarity concerning her adoption and has not completely come to terms with her background and also expressed her issues with her self-esteem and belonging, Anna demonstrated a problematic identity development.

Bonnie did not experience a good connection with her adoptive parents and faced many issues regarding her adoption process and demonstrated a highly problematic identity develop-
ment. It is also important to consider that Bonnie lived in an orphanage to the age of four and did not experience basic trust as Erikson (1969) discussed. This result showed that the relationship and connection to one’s adoptive parents is a very important feature. However, other externalizing factors is also important to consider as coming to terms with who one is as an adoptee, sense of self and one’s self-esteem.

Finally, we want to highlight that the narrative of this study was created between the interviewee and the interviewer. The accounts of our subjects are not a specific reproduction it rather depends on who the listener is and how one interprets the story. This does not imply that the results from this study are considered as not trustworthy. The way the stories are narrated and what is stressed says a lot about what it is that actually are being told (Crossley, 2000). By the results from this study three adopted individuals’ experiences regarding their identity development have been emphasized. We believe that interesting and important factors have occurred in the result. However, it is important to point out that this study has its limitations because of the size and time limit. The findings indicate that these are important questions to further explore in research.

7.2 Suggestions on Further Research
From the previous research that we explored concerning adoptees identity development we found that it was a lack of individuals’ own experiences regarding their identity development throughout the lifecycle. Therefore, we consider that there is a need of further research which explores individuals’ own reflections and experiences about their situation and how it has developed during their growth. Our study brought forth interesting descriptions from individuals in the target group of 19-25 years old. We believe that it would be interesting to explore individuals’ identity development and how they perceive this in different periods of their life. A case study where interviews are performed during different periods and ages would therefore be interesting to get a wider perspective and to see the development more clearly. We believe that this would create a wider understanding of the issues that an adopted individual may encounter concerning their identity development.
The Reference List


Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

- How would you describe yourself?
- How would you describe yourself during your childhood?
- How would you describe yourself during your adolescence?
  - Is it anything of what you have described that you think can be explained with the adoption?

- Can you tell us about your childhood in relation to your adoption?
  - Within the family?
  - Outside the family? in relation to friends, school, day care center and so on?

- Can you describe your view on yourself during the years you grew up?
- How do you experience that your view on yourself have changed?
- Do you experience that you have felt secure within yourself during your upbringing?
  - In what way/How? Why do you think you did not feel secure?
- Can you tell us where you feel most at home?

- Can you tell us about the first time you understood that you are adopted?
  - How old were you?
  - How did you understand it?
  - What significance did that have for you? What did it mean to you?

- How have the environment been at home concerning questions about your adoption?
  - How have you talked about your adoption and about your biological family?

- How have you experienced that relationships outside the family have been for you?
- Can you tell us about your relationships with your closest family? What do they look like today?
- Can you describe what your relationship with your parents looks like/have looked like?
- Can you describe your relationship to your siblings?
  - Are you closer to any particular sibling, why?
- Is there anyone that you are closer to in your family?
  - Why do you think that it is so?
- Can you describe what your role is in the family?
- Can you describe your relationships to remaining family such as grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles etcetera?
  - Is it anything of what you have described that you think can be explained with the adoption?

- Can you tell us about a person/ persons who have been particularly important for you outside the family?
  - Can you describe in what way this person has been important for you?
• Is it any person in your life that you feel that you can identify yourself with?  
   - Why do you think that is?

• In what way do you think that it have affected you that you have not grown up with your biological family?
• Have you had any thoughts or questions about your biological parents when you grew up and do you have any thoughts or questions now, in what way?

• Can you tell us about your experiences with people outside the family in relation to your adoption?  
   - How was it in school when you were younger?  
   - Spare time, Work, Friends?
• Have you at any point felt discriminated because of your adoption?  
   - Can you tell us more about that? How have that affected you?

• Can you tell us how you have dealt with that you have different appearance than your parents?  
• Have you experienced that people outside the family have reacted on that you have a different appearance than your parents? School, work, spare time?  
   - How have that affected you?  
   - If not, why do you think it have not affected you?  
• Can you tell us how you have dealt with that you have different appearance than your siblings?

• Do you feel that there are any important turning points or moments in your life that have changed you in the years when you grew up?
• What are your thoughts about adoption in general today?  
   - What reasons do you think are behind your opinion of adoption?