DISSERTATION

Transnational Adoptions and Life-Trajectories

a biography study of teenage and young adult adoptees

living in Austria, England and Sweden

Verfasserin

Mag. (FH) Elisabeth Baum-Breuer

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English Abstract

Nineteen young people with exposed life histories: This doctoral thesis explores the implications of transnational adoption for the life path and identity development of individuals who were abandoned or placed for adoption at a very young age. The study deals with a global theme and touches on the cultural background of thirteen different countries, from Bolivia to Sweden, China to England, India to Austria. The study traces the historical development of transnational adoption and sketches a profile on functions and expectations of families and children against the background of different welfare systems, with a theoretical focus on biography and identity theories relevant for adoptees.

Problem-centred interviews were employed in combination with photo-research using biographical material for this study. The interview set out to explore how transnational adoptees adapt to their new lives, throughout various developmental transitions, in their adoptive environment. The interview required that each subject answer eighteen questions pertaining to their life experiences while a further four questions centred on personal photographs which participants had been requested to select for the study. Poetry and prose written by transnational adoptees raised and residing in England illustrate and accentuate the explicit data, obtained from the interviews.

The methodological approach is qualitative employing Bohnsack's Interpretation of Pictures (2008) and Documentary Method and an Interpretive Thematic Content Analysis (Merten, 1995; Smith, 1995) was applied to the text of the interviews. The thematic analyses on the transcripts of the interviews revealed six themes: Abandonment, Adoption, Attachment, Cultural Identity, Support Factors and Envisaged Future. The interpretation of the choice and content of the carefully selected and analysed personal photographs revealed three typologies: people, places and possessions.

Three major concerns emerged pertaining directly to the research question and enquiries.

 a) The relevance of protective factors experienced within the adoptive family for adoptees' future development.
 b) The need for transnational adoptees to be 'connected' with other transnational adoptees in their adoptive country.
 c) The significance of time as a dynamic factor in the development of interest for adoption and cultural identity issues along the life span.

A model, Axes of Adoption was developed by the author in order to guide and explain the life-trajectory material derived from the research enquiries. Implications for further research underline the need for studying and understanding the dynamic process of transnational adoption as it unfolds along the axis of life, revealing new dimensions for the individuals and societies involved. In conclusion, this dissertation points to the significant role of including transnational adoptees in the discussion on crossover cultures, hybrid identity and global youth.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Neunzehn junge Menschen mit exponierten Lebensläufen: Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Implikationen transnationaler Adoption für den Lebensweg und die Identitätsentwicklung von Menschen, die im sehr jungen Alter ausgesetzt bzw. zur Adoption frei gegeben wurden. Die Studie befasst sich mit einem globalen Thema und berührt den kulturellen Hintergrund dreizehn verschiedener Länder, von Bolivien bis Schweden, China bis England, Indien bis Österreich. Die Arbeit skizziert die historische Entwicklung von Auslandsadoption und zeichnet ein Bild der Funktion und Erwartungen von Familien und Kindern in der westlichen Welt gegen den Hintergrund verschiedener Wohlfahrtssysteme und unternimmt eine nähere Betrachtung von adoptionsrelevanten Biographie- und Identitätstheorien.

Für die Untersuchung wurden Problemzentrierte Interviews in Kombination mit einer Photo-Recherche mit biographischem Material durchgeführt. Bei diesem Ausgangspunkt galt es zu entdecken, wie sich diese adoptierten Menschen im Laufe verschiedener Phasen entwickelt haben. Achtzehn Fragen des Interviews bezogen sich auf ihre Lebenserfahrungen, während vier weitere Fragen sich auf mitgebrachte Photographien bezogen. Auszüge von Gedichten und Prosa transnationaladoptierter Menschen, die in England leben, wurden als Illustration und Untermauerung des gesammelten Datenmaterials eingesetzt.

Für die Untersuchung wurde ein qualitatives Forschungsdesign gewählt. Bohnsacks qualitative Bildinterpretation und dokumentarische Methode (2008) wurden in Kombination mit einer interpretativen Inhaltsanalyse (Merten, 1995; Smith, 1995) angewandt. Sechs Hauptthemen konnten aus der Inhaltsanalyse herausgearbeitet werden: Verlassensein, Adoption, Bindung, kulturelle Identität, Unterstützungsfaktoren und Zukunftsbilder. Aus der Bildinterpretation anhand von sorgfältig ausgewählten und analysierten Photographien entwickelten sich drei Typologien: Bezugsmenschen, Bezugsorte und Besitztümer.

Drei Thesen ließen sich aus der Forschungsfrage ableiten:

a) Die Bedeutung von Schutzfaktoren, die innerhalb der Adoptivfamilie erfahren wurden, für die weitere Entwicklung;

b) Die Notwendigkeit der Verbindung und des Kontaktes mit anderen transnational adoptierten Menschen in den neuen Heimatländern;

c) die Bedeutung von Zeit als dynamischem Faktor im Lebenslauf, was das Interesse an Adoptions- und Identitätsfragen adoptierter Menschen betrifft.

Eine Theorieskizze 'Axes of Adoption' wurde von der Autorin entwickelt, um das aus den Forschungsfragen gewonnene Lebenslaufmaterial zu erklären und zu strukturieren. Die Arbeit schließt mit der Empfehlung an die Praxis, sich weiteren Studien um den bedeutsamen Prozess der transnationalen Adoption in der Lebenslaufperspektive zu widmen und weist auf die bisher unterschätzte Rolle transnational adoptierter Menschen in der Diskussion um Crossover Kulturen, Hybride Identität und Globale Jugend hin.

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This paper is dedicated to Sindu and my father Dr. Franz Breuer

written in loving memory

of my mother Florette Pirquet Breuer and Reinhard Baum

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Personal Preface

Three years ago I was standing in the tiny country cemetery of Heiligenkreuz (in Lower Austria), comforting the daughter of a mid-forty year old mother, whose funeral we had just attended. It was at this moment that I realised my professional and personal connection to the issue of adoption had become intertwined. The mourning adolescent was the first person whose transnational adoption I had processed on behalf of the Austrian authorities. The adoptive family had kept me abreast of the child's developments and we have remained in regular contact.

As a social worker I have encountered the subject of adoption over the past 35 years in various forms. Right at the very beginning of my professional life I was extremely fortunate to be able to spend some time on a practical placement with Anna Freud at the Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic. This opportunity had been made possible for me by Dr. Ilse Hellman, a child psychoanalyst and close friend of the family and it proved to have a formative influence on my career path.

My first post was with the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), where I was involved with the International Year of the Child (1979), as well as on the ICSW Inter-Country Adoption Project in India. My boss and mentor at ICSW had been directly involved with waves of transnational adoptions in the 1960s and 70s.[1] I was able to greatly benefit from her extensive field experience and rich insight. After almost fifteen years in international social work, my professional path led me to the Child Welfare Office in Mödling, Lower Austria and here I was involved with adoption permission procedure during a time of dramatic increase of adoption applications and placements. Parallel to this post, I began lecturing on Child and Family Welfare at the University of Applied Sciences, Department of Social Work in Vienna. The subject of adoption has seen keen student interest and in 2007 I organised an international workshop week on the subject of international adoptions. The results of this workshop and my first study [2] pinpointed a need for more research, with adoptees themselves, thus preparing the ground for this dissertation.

My initial personal interest in the subject of adoption derived from a fleeting situation very early in my life. At this point in time I was a three month old, London-born, baby - the only child of my

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[1] Ingrid Gelinek, Secretary General of the International Social Service (1969 – 1978), from 1978 -1991 Secretary General of the International Council on Social Welfare and from 1991-1994 UN/NGO Coordinator for the International Year of the Family.

[2] Baum Breuer, E., (2007): Adopted children from foreign countries and their integration in Austria – a contribution to the development of standards and strategies from a social work perspective".

Austrian refugee mother and father who had become parents at the age of 45 and 46 years respectively. The biological clock was racing, both were aware that there was little likelihood of their being able to have another biological child and had therefore decided to apply for adoption. I imagine that the social worker, assigned to my parents' application, identified their wish for siblings for their biological child as being the underlying motivation for adoption. My assumption is that this was not reason enough to grant adoption permission; thus my parents' application was denied. My parents often reflected on this decision and when I studied to become a social worker also told me about the situation, which – had permission been granted - could also have changed my own life-trajectory. The story of this situation and decision has contributed to triggering my personal and professional interest in this controversial global topic. Furthermore, five of my younger cousins from our large extended family have been adopted, three of which transnationally, and I have followed their development through both personal and professional lenses.

I wish to pay my deep respect to these young people who agreed to work with me, giving of their time, interest and feelings. I hope that the insight and information gained may be valuable for other adoptees, for families with adopted children and for those hoping to adopt, for professionals working in the field of adoption and for members of the interested public.

1   Introduction

Children of foreign nationality placed for adoption in a new home country are very special members of the societies in which they live. In part, they also signal the ever-increasing trends towards globalisation. These children's quest for a sense of place and belonging is central to their life's focus. While this journey is one upon which we all embark at some time or other, for transnationally adopted persons it is often a particularly complex journey with little (if any) information for tracing birth relatives and places of childhood. Consequently, many uncertainties pave these children's path through adolescence into adulthood.

For centuries, adoption has been portrayed in various forms of media. Greek mythology, for example, gives us the stories of Oedipus and Herakles while the Christian religion relates the acceptance of Jesus by Joseph of Nazareth. The world of opera gives us Siegfried from Wagner's Ring Cycle[4] and English Literature, Bronte's moody Heathcliff.[5] In many cases the subjects are abandoned children who become saviours or religious idols. In more recent years, heroic figures like Superman or the orphan Harry Potter have kindled the fantasies of many viewers and readers. There is a certain mystery in the realm of forsaken children. However such figures in myths, fairy tales and adventure stories *"romanticise"* what it is to be an abandoned baby (Jardine, 2000: 486).

In the real world, however, adoption is often characterised by generations of secrecy, shame and stereotypes (McGinnis et al. 2009). Indeed, glossy feature articles about the transnational adoption of children by film and pop stars seldom mention the less glamorous aspects of adoption. It is with this lack of reality in mind that this study seeks to understand and relate more about the very real experiences of being a young, transnational adoptee.

The issue of transnational adoption is being subjected to ever increasing scrutiny and debate by theorists convinced that the process of incorporating the growing diversity of migrants into contemporary societies necessitates a fundamental re-thinking of crucial concepts like culture,

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[3] Recorded for BBC Radio 3, 2005).
[4] Premiere Bayreuth Festival 1876.
[5] Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte, originally published 1847.

ethnicity, community and identity (Bhabha, 1994; Maalouf, 1998;). The form and outcome of these debates, and indeed the respective adoption scenarios depend to a certain extent on the specific welfare systems of the countries involved. This study takes a brief look at the three main types of welfare states as represented by the countries Austria, England and Sweden.

Thus, the intention of this thesis is to offer an explorative and qualitative contribution to research on the implications of transnational adoption for life-span development. It also aims to identify, compare and discuss each of the adoptees' experiences in their adoptive countries; each coming from a distinctly unique ethnic and multicultural situation.

1.1 Transnational Adoption – a definition

There are several different terms of definition in regard to the adoption of children from one country to another. These include: inter-country adoption, intercultural adoption, overseas adoption, international adoption and transnational adoption. In addition the terms transracial and mixed-race adoptions are also to be found in the literature. Recent literature would suggest that 'transnational adoption' is the more contemporary term of definition and will therefore be employed throughout this study (Howell, 2003; McGinnis, 2009; Yngvesson, 2010).

1.2 Motivation and Explanation

This doctoral thesis investigates the phenomenon of transnational adoption and its implications for teenage and young adult transnational adoptees living in three European countries. A major task in this research is to fathom what it means to not know who one's biological parents are. Equally important is the identification and comprehension of the implications inherent in the life of a transnationally adopted individual.

Over the past decade there has been a marked increase in transnational adoptions from areas of the developing world due to the lack of children for adoption in Western industrial countries. In today's world, life has become increasingly interdependent between continents and countries, whether this is on the subject of technical-industrial development, energy, raw materials or as in this focus, human resources. Giddens (1990: 64) gives us the following definition of the processes of Globalisation *"The intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa"*. Thus in our context for example, the birth of a baby in Sri Lanka may have implications for a Parents' Day festivity in Sweden, or the charity activities of a group of doctors and nurses in

Austria may have a direct effect on the sanitary and medical conditions of an orphanage in the Ukraine.

Studies have demonstrated that adoption has a dual implication for the life-trajectory of individuals: it can be both a chance and a risk (Oelsner and Lehmkuhl, 2005). This perspective applies to both the adopted individual and to the adoptive family. This study focuses on adoptees' teenage and young adult years as well as concentrating on their experiences, insights and suggestions. Indeed, it appears crucial that transnationally adopted people *"claim space and visibility" for their own experience of adoption"* (Harris 2006: 8).

In order to highlight the concept of visibility, this study draws upon Bohnsack's (2008) Interpretation of Pictures and Documentary approaches. Through the use of the transnational adoptees' own material – i.e. biographical documentation, the interpretation of adoptees' personal photographs as well as prose and poetry - it is intended to make the experiences of these young people as visible as possible.

1.3   Researching Transnational Adoption within a Pedagogical Context

Life histories and autobiographies are central to modern pedagogical thinking (Krüger and Marotzki, 2006), and are a basis for empirical data. By following the course of identity development as a dynamic learning process throughout the life span, this study underlines the role of education and the value of intergenerational transfer, thus positioning it within a pedagogical context.

This biographical research investigates the adoptees' life-trajectories as an integrative study for a pedagogical approach to identity development, within the specific context of transnational adoption. Biography research is interdisciplinary, being represented in various disciplines and schools of human sciences.

Biographies, i.e. life histories have two dimensions: an external meaning biography as a process, as a life course, a life-trajectory, and an internal meaning, implying biography in the context of life experiences (Schulze, 1999). The life course may also be viewed as a basic anthropological concept (Loch, 1979) with each and every human being identifying him or herself with an autobiographical pact (Lejeune, 1989). A life course does not have to be legitimised by explanation or reason but just be told and related. In our ever changing, post- industrial society, whose pre-figurative cultures (Mead, 1970) allow less and less for the future to be predicted by the past, life evolves against a changing backdrop of risks and chances, becoming a project which has to be repeatedly reviewed and revised, often implying that new choices and decisions have to be met. Life-course, rearing and education constitute a specific connection, characteristic of the human species. The connection

constitutes itself through the rearing and life experience of the individual and the capacity for self-reflection of this life experience. The horizon of education is formative for the significance of the life course while the horizon of the life course is decisive for the significance of education (Loch, 1979).

Education has a significant role to play in this globalised world, in which a new understanding of identity is necessary in order to transcend our national construct of cultural identity (Bhabha, 1994; Maalouf, 1998). Rapid global development calls for appropriate considerations and broader cross-cultural horizons within the education system. Young people must be provided with personal resources which will prepare them to approach contemporary universal developments, and problems, actively and productively (Klafki, 1994). In addition, as we progress along the life path it appears necessary to develop a dynamic relationship towards our own biography, enabling a change in perspective of viewing life history and its meanings (Schweppe, 2006). Biography is a resource (Dausien and Kelle, 2009).

1.4   Towards the Development of a Visual Biographical Research Model

With the above considerations in mind, Maalouf's (1998) concept of horizontal and vertical heritage provided a backdrop for the development of a 'three-step' visual model (outlined below) to consider Nature/Nurture intersections within a life-Span (Baltes et al., 1980) approach to Adoption – the life phases being: childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

This section considers the development of the model in the light of a particular focus on hereditary and environmental influences. A few comments on heredity and environmental influences necessarily precedes an explanation of the model.

It takes little imagination to consider the overwhelming and muddy confluence of factors such as: conception, birth circumstances, genetics, abandonment, care institution, adoption itself, the removal from one's own culture and the attempt by both adoptee and adoptive parents to bridge issues of cultural identity. In short, if in 'normal' circumstances it is difficult enough to balance aspects of heredity with those of environment in order to achieve more than is expected - according to the correlation of 'nature' and 'nurture' – surely a greater appreciation of the tightrope walked, by all involved in transnational adoption, must be afforded by society at all levels.

A way to specifically consider the influences of nature and nurture and to give them greater meaning vis à vis the life-span approach employed in this model is to leave the theoretical debates behind and look at the way ahead. Scarr (1992) suggests that while heredity may have a greater influence on a child's life (this having a direct relevance for transnational adoptees from impoverished countries), we can also see how, in spite of hereditary influences, the environment can predict that a child will not achieve his/her full genetic potential. For example:

> *Feeding a well-nourished but short child more and more will not give him/her the stature of a basketball player. Feeding a below-average intellect more and more information will not make him/her brilliant.* (Scarr 1992:16).

However:

> *At another level...even a child with the genetic disposition to become a genius will not develop normal intellect in an impossibly, cruel, utterly un-stimulating, or completely cold and impersonal institutional environment. At this level of the interaction (*between nature and nurture), *the environment completely predicts development with no contribution from heredity.* (Peterson, 1996: 89f.).

From the point of view of parents who wish to adopt transnationally, and are concerned about the genetic and environmental influences surrounding a prospective adoptee, these findings can only be reassuring. It was of little consequence for hundreds of Romanian orphans (left alone all day in sickening circumstances) whether they may have been genetically brilliant or not. For those who were adopted, regardless of genetic ability and original environmental influences, they were inevitably able to achieve a greater life-potential just by being taken out of such a cold and stagnant environment.

The Deprivation Theory endorsed by Bowlby (1951), Goldfarb (1943, 1947) and Spitz, (1945, 1965) states that deprivation early in life is irrevocable. Contemporary arguments, on the other hand, with regard to resilience research, suggest that trauma and deprivation may be rectified depending on the positive environment encountered later in life (Scheithauer and Pertermann, 1999; Geller and Golomb, 1992; Kaduschin, 1970).

The responsibility of adoptive parents, as with biological parents is, according to Scarr's research (1992: 15) to be *"good enough, ordinary parents"*. She considers that while genetic transmission is important, so equally is a *"good enough environment that supports children's development to become themselves"*.. The life-span approach of this model asks transnational adoptees about the choices they make for their future. Naturally, the coincidence of the axes of nature and nurture will

determine each individual adoptee's decisions based on many individual differences which have been shaped by heredity and the environment throughout their lives. In turn, these decisions will have an impact on futures, as yet, unforeseen.

The first phase of the model is introduced and explained below. Further developments and phases are described within the appropriate chapters (see 3.7.1.4 and 5. 1.3).

1.5   Rationale and Research Questions

The development and application of this model supports research and enquiry into the main focus of the study: *"What are the implications of transnational adoption for the life trajectories and the identity development of individuals?"* It also addresses the five research enquiries:

1. Demographic information on adoptee and adoptive family
2. Adoptees' level of information about heritage and adoption details
3. Levels of interest and strategies in dealing with the issue of adoption
4. Adoptees' sense of cultural identity and belonging
5. Adoptees' envisaged future life-path

The three-step process begins with a 'Life-Span' approach to the development of an Interview Template for Biography Research (see Figure 1 below). The first 'step' is a template based on the 'Axis of Life' – a simple life-span axis (representing 'nature') that starts with Birth and charts three life phases - Childhood, Adolescence and Adulthood – culminating in Death. The initial concept was that all people (unless circumstances dictate otherwise) 'travel' this axis and experience these stages (taking note of cultural differences). This first 'step' then was considered the necessary foundation on which further 'steps' could be built. As a template, it allows for research into a vast array of topics with the Axis of Life remaining as a constant and Environmental Axes changing according to the topic of research.
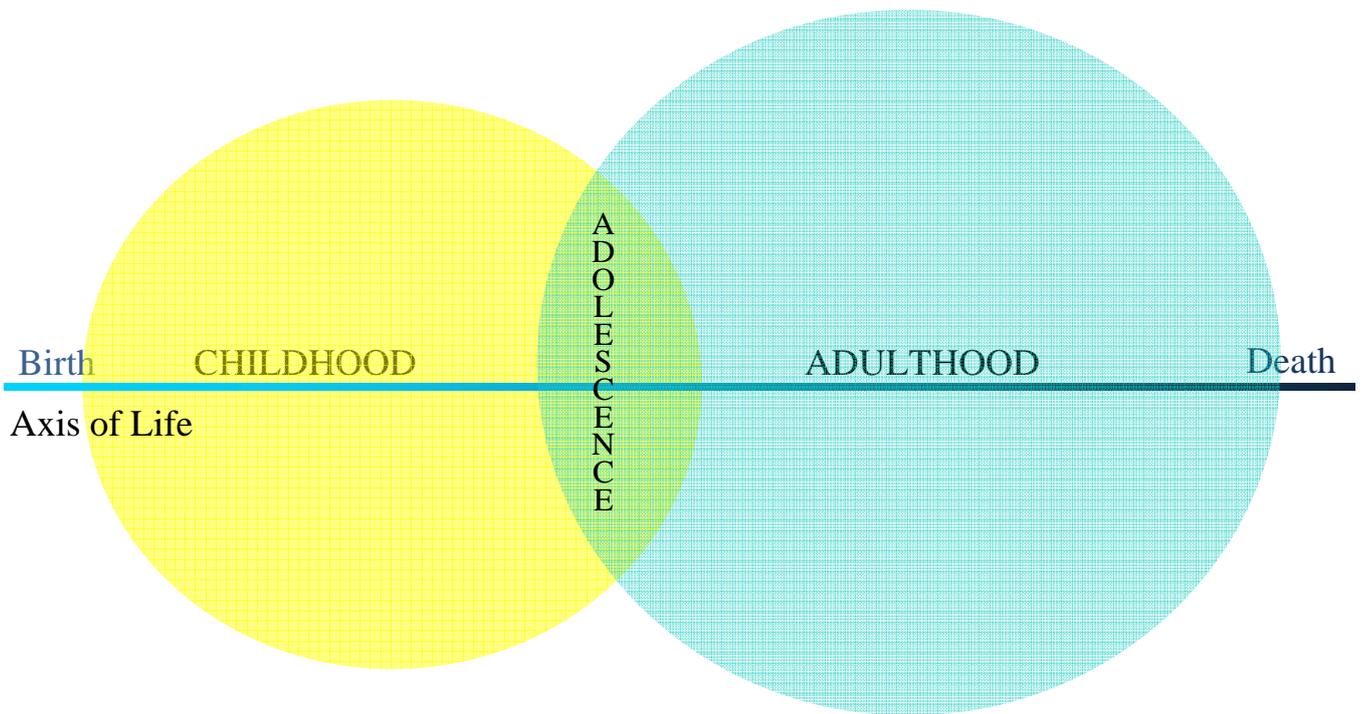
Figure 1: A Life-Span approach to the development of an Interview Template for Biography Research

The model allows for a detailed description and analysis of subjective phenomena; it has the potential to sketch complex social connections and interactions. It also conveys adoptees' own experiences and messages through which the practices of transracial and transnational adoption can be studied.

1.6   Structure

This study is comprised of 6 chapters. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework underpinning this body of research and concentrates on the context of study – transnational adoption. This section makes an initial tour d'horizon through its historical development and takes a glimpse at future perspectives. Four background aspects are also discussed: the development of transnational adoption, the family unit in society, welfare systems and identity research.

Methodological Considerations (Chapter 3) discusses: a) the theoretical aspects of the qualitative research design, i.e. thematic content analysis (Merten, 1995; Smith, 1995), employed to analyse the interview data and b) the theoretical approaches supporting the methods of data collection, i.e. Documentary approach and Interpretation of Picture approach (Bohnsack, 2008). Chapter 4 (Method) outlines all aspects of the development of this piece of qualitative research. The Results and Discussion section (Chapter 5) discusses in depth the analyses conducted on the biographical information and photographs collected by the researcher. In conclusion, Chapter 6 outlines the limitations of this study and implications for further research and includes a personal reflection on the research process.

2 Transnational Adoption within the Frame of a Pedagogical and Life-Span Approach

2.1 Historical development of adoption – a profile

In 1994 Wendels observed that adoptions have been an integral part of society since around 2350 B.C. when records document the birth and 'adoption' of Sargon I (King of Akkad, Mesopotamia). Equally Wils in 1991 points out that early Roman law contained a sophisticated and clear cut process, distinguishing between two forms of adoption: 'arrogatio' - in which adoption was only permitted if the adoptee was under no paternal protection – and 'adoptio': a contract made between the adoptive father and the biological father, enabling children (only males) to be adopted and was employed in cases of infertility and childlessness.

From a more contemporary perspective, the first ever international law directed at dealing with global transnational adoption was the Hague Convention of 1993, proposed during the Hague Conference on Private International Law.[6] It is a multinational treaty, of which the overall objective is to protect the rights of transnationally adopted children. The Convention seeks to provide this protection by:

a) ensuring that a transnational adoption only occurs if it is in the child's best interest;
b) establishing a system of cooperation between participating countries in order to secure contractual agreements, thus preventing the illicit sale of children;
c) ensuring recognition of inter-country adoptions which conform to the requirements of the Hague Convention.

If we look at the development of transnational adoptions, we see that inter-country adoption (as it was then referred to) was mainly a philanthropic response, by North America. This response was in answer to the devastation of Europe in World War II which resulted in thousands of orphaned children, (Altstein and Simon, 1991). In order to understand how transnational adoption has become a global concern, it is of interest to outline the trends of transnational adoption through the past 60 decades. At the outset however, it is important to note that the early days of transnational adoption involved only a small number of children from relatively few countries. International adoption was viewed as neither an appropriate nor suitable response to the increase of child suffering in the Third World. The merits and possibilities of transnational adoption were, however, applied in certain circumstances concerning specific individual cases, (Kühl, 1990).

In the early post-war years most adoptions originated from Greece, Italy, Germany and Japan. In the 1950's Korean children accounted for 15.000 of a total of 34.500 children adopted into US

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[6] The full text of the Hague Convention is avaiable at w.w.w.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=69.

families, (Selman, 2009). By the early 1960's, as a result of natural and man-made catastrophes (e.g. floods in Bangladesh, earthquakes in Indonesia, the Vietnam war and the Nigerian civil war), aid organisations made an appeal for prospective adoptive parents to come forward and adopt children orphaned by these events. Kane (1993) points out that overseas' adoptions of children from Ecuador, Columbia, the Philippines and India set a trend for the 1980s which witnessed the emergence of Korea, Columbia and India as being the major countries of origin for transnational adoptions.

Selman (2009) illustrates that since 1997 there has been a clear shift in the origins of transnational adoptees. For example, in 1997, 67% of children adopted in Spain came from Latin America. By 2000 this percentage had fallen to 21% while adoptees from Romania, Russia, Bulgaria and the Ukraine accounted for 47%. Indeed, by the turn of this century Eastern Europe accounted for the greatest number of transnational adoptions worldwide. Of all the countries releasing children for transnational adoption, Bulgaria (in 2003) had the highest ratio of adoptions to live births (15.5 per 1000), (Selmann, 2006). Interestingly, this situation changed radically when Romania and Bulgaria sought to join the European Union. By 2005, the growth of transnational adoptions originating from China revealed Asia (accounting for 53%) to be the largest source of transnational adoptees worldwide.

At its zenith (2005), transnational adoption had become a worldwide phenomenon, seeing some 45.000 children per year moving between over 100 countries. In 2005 however, there was a sharp decline in the number of transnational adoptions, estimated at around 17%, (Selman, 2009). Since then, only the African continent that has shown a growth in the numbers of transnational adoptees, estimated to be around 15%. It is likely, for the foreseeable future, that Africa will be the only continent showing an increase. Of the African countries, Ethiopia has been of most significance in global terms, witnessing an increase in transnational adoptions from 500 in 1998 to almost 3000 in 2007, (Selman, 2009). Children's welfare organisations worldwide are expressing grave concern over the vast number of AIDS orphans in Ethiopia. While this situation has given rise to enquiries by adoption agencies, the majority of these children are being cared for by extended family members and aid priority is to offer support to grandparents and other caring relatives.

In recent years scandals, in which child trafficking procedures have become more transparent, underline the unacceptability of transnational adoption as a rescue mission at times of crisis (McGinnis, 2005); e.g.: the Tsunami catastrophe in 2005, the attempt of French aid workers in 2007 (subsequently arrested) to rescue 103 children from Chad's famines, and most recently the Haiti Earthquake and floods in Pakistan (2010).

Statistics from the recent and extensive survey of adult adoptees in the US reveal that, since 1971, nearly a half-million children have been transnationally adopted, the vast majority of them from orphanages throughout Asia, South America, and most recently Africa. Equally, on the European side of the Atlantic, the list of waiting parents-to-be is growing ever longer.

2.1.1 Characteristics, Requirements and Procedure

Adoption is a social and legal protective measure for children. It should be considered and authorized with this sole aim in view. In order to understand the social and legal process vis à vis adoption, this section outlines the characteristics, requirements and procedures of adoption from both a practical and literature based standpoint.

Adoption is a highly specific form of help (Kirton, 2000) which often raises awkward questions regarding the relationship between the comparatively few who are chosen and the large majority who are left (Triseliotis, 1991). There are many critics who argue that while the emphasis is often placed on saving children from death, poor health or the horrors of institutional life, most prospective parents seek to adopt healthy babies. Very few adopt those who are most in need (Warren, 1999). Although officially governed by the principle of interest and care for the child, the needs of the children are often subsumed by the interests of the adoptive parents. Influential international children's organizations, including the United Nations Children's Organization (UNICEF)[7] urge that priority be given to support for children and improvement of child care measures and facilities in countries of origin.

Transnational adoption is a reality of today's globalised world, regardless of what supporters or critics may say. The individual State carries responsibility to ensure that adoption is a protective measure, governed by the child's best interests and fundamental rights. As banal as it may seem, it is necessary to underline and ensure that the focus, in the process leading up to adoption, centres on the child and not the prospective parents. It is imperative that the whole process of adoption be implemented by a multidisciplinary team of services competent in the protection of children. Furthermore, it is of the utmost importance that any services involved in the procedure of adoption should be nationally accredited and subject to periodic inspection by the appropriate authorities.

The International Social Service (ISS), (1999) stress that it is essential that the needs of the child guide the work of those professionals engaged in adoption proceedings. We also understand from the ISS that it is of the greatest priority that children be raised in their own families. Only where the birth family does not meet the conditions that ensure the child's psychosocial, physical and emotional development, should competent child protection bodies seek adequate alternatives.

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[7] www.unicef.org/ and (1998) Intercountry Adoption, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Poverty alone should not be a criterion for severing a child's bonds with his/her birth family. Indeed the following quote from the International Social Service's Ethics and Principles – Guidelines for Practice, states that *"the best environment for a child's development: offering a child a substitute family should, other than in exceptional and justified cases, prevail over his/her placement or long-term residence in an institution."*(International Social Service 1999: 4) Thus it follows that if adoption is seen as the adequate protective measure, it should be made available to all children whose personal and family situations warrant it, without prejudice against their social situation, physical features, ethnicity, culture, physical or mental health orders.

In order to highlight adoption as a social and legal protective measure where children are concerned, it is necessary to take a step-by-step approach through the procedures of adoption.

Figure 2: Adoption Permission Procedure
Source: Data modified from Child Welfare Department, NÖ Landesregierung, 2007

Mandatory requirements of the adoption process in Austria include[8]

a) An initial screening by the Child Welfare Authorities and units entrusted with this responsibility

b) A minimum of two home visits by two social workers working with comprehensive interview guidelines and questionnaires

c) A psychological assessment and report after consultation with adoptive parents

d) Educational courses (minimum 30 hours) designed specifically for transnational adoption. These preparation courses are viewed by experts as an effective method of educating prospective parents on the challenges that they will confront as a transracial family. Importantly, they also provide an opportunity to learn about the culture of their adoptive child.

Austrian Procedures differentiate between three forms of adoption[9] :

a) *Incognito adoption:* although no personal data is exchanged, the name, date of birth and other relevant details of the birth mother - and possibly birth father - are kept on file. Depending on the experience and principles of the adoption organisation, and the social worker assigned to any case, it is possible that a letter from the biological mother or parents may be held on file, to be handed over upon the adoptee's coming of age.

b) *Semi-open adoption:* a meeting takes place in a neutral setting between the birth parents and the prospective adoptive parents. There is no exchange of names or addresses.

c) *Open adoption*: a personal meeting takes place between the birth mother - and possibly biological father - and the adoptive parents. There is also an exchange of names and addresses.

Whichever form of adoption is employed, much will depend on selection, preparation, counselling and accompaniment of the adoptive parents.

For adopted individuals, gaining information about their origins is not just a matter of curiosity, it is a matter of obtaining the raw materials needed to fill in the missing pieces of their lives and thereby developing an integrated sense of self (McGinnis et al. 2009). Adoption professionals, and society

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[8] Vorschrift: N.Ö. Landesregierung (2007)
[9] Bundesministerium für Soziale Sicherheit Generationen und Konsumentenschutz. Internationale Adoption. Arbeitsbehelf für MitarbeiterInnen der öffentlichen und freien Jugendwohlfahrt (2004)Wien

at large, need to recognize this basic human need and right, facilitating, where possible, access to necessary information by adoptees. In this respect it is important that the staff of orphanages and children's homes obtain and note down information on biological parents for later reference. It is also extremely helpful for adoptees, in their search for identity, if photos of their early environment (e.g. birth parents, carers, children's home etc.) have been taken and placed on file.

An extensive study conducted with adult adoptees in the USA (McGinnis et al, 2009) implies that adoptive parents should be advised that asking for help and support from relevant services is a positive and strong step to take rather than a sign of failure. The study's recommendations call for an expansion of parental preparation and post-placement support in order to educate parents on the conspicuousness of race across the developmental course, informing and instructing them on issues of racial identity development. If adoptive parents are fully educated about racial discrimination in all its forms, they are then better placed to advise and equip their children with the necessary tools with which to combat the prejudice and racism that they are almost likely to face. The study suggests the development of empirically based practises and resources to prepare transnationally adopted youth cope with racial bias. The study indicates that perceived discrimination is linked with greater psychological distress, lower self-esteem, and discomfort with one's race/ethnicity. Adoption per se can be a chance but it may also be a risk. Awareness of this ambivalence can contribute to adoption being a positive chance for the child, for his/her adoptive family and, in a broader sense, for community and society (Olsner and Lehmkuhl, 2005).

One adoption expert who is involved in instituting educational programs within the adoption process in order to facilitate awareness of cultural issues states: *"The fact remains, however, that children who grow up in transracial families require special guidance in their ethnic and cultural development. To aid adoptive parents and their children in developing cultural identity is a lifelong process"* (Ku 2005: 516).

By its very nature, transnational adoption extends the adoptive family's cultural and social frame of reference to encompass bi-cultural and/or multi-cultural aspects. It is necessary that these families realise from the outset that biculturalism/multiculturalism will be, both for them and their children, a lifelong issue. Bi-cultural socialization may be defined as the process by which children come *"to acquire the norms, attitudes, and behaviour patterns of their own and another [...] ethnic group".* *"It [...] implies some degree of bicultural competence which allows children to feel at ease and to switch back and forth comfortably as they represent their dual heritages in their everyday lives"* (Tessler 1981: cited in Phinney & Rotheram 1987: 10ff.). Tessler here also propounds that *"the most negative potential outcome of (bicultural) socialization is that children develop no strong attachment to either culture, thus feeling isolated and alone, without a strong reference group."*

Tessler notes three models of bicultural socialization (LaFromboise et al., 1993):

1. Assimilation: adopted children discard their original cultural identity and fully immerse themselves in the culture of their adoptive country.

2. Acculturation: although adopted individuals may actively, and willingly, participate in their adoptive culture, they will always identify as members of their birth culture.

3. Alternation: the adopted child is able to seamlessly alternate between two cultures.

Regardless of the category into which transnationally adopted children may fall, it is apparent that they require the support and commitment of their adoptive parents. These children not only need to be educated about their birth culture but also require commitment from their adoptive parents to help them become successful citizens of their adoptive culture as well.

Adoption is a complicated and emotional process that affects the entire family. It is essential that prospective adopters understand and reflect upon this reality before proceeding with adoption formalities.

2.1.2 Trends and perspectives

Today, many countries are involved in and/or affected by transnational adoption, whether they are the countries of origin, countries of reception, or both (Selman, 2009). Because of the global nature of transnational adoption, it is seen to be in danger of becoming an instrument for large scale child trafficking. In order to combat this development, Article 21 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has endeavoured to ensure rigid steering mechanisms to protect children placed for inter-country adoption. The UNCRC has stipulated that adoption may only take place through negotiation with competent authorities in accordance with applicable law and procedures. The United Nations Children's Organization UNICEF sees the support of children in their home countries as priority and does not process adoptions.

For a comparatively small number of children it appears that transnational adoption will remain an option. The following quote from a British adoption expert provides us with a helpful perspective on the issue:

> *„In an ideal world, the children at the heart of inter-country adoption should, of course, be given the opportunity to grow up in their own families, in their own countries of origin, where they are supported by health care systems, education systems […]However, many countries do not have the choices that we have come to take for granted; neither do they*

have the number and range of substitute families to provide viable alternatives for all children currently contained in institutions, let alone families who reflect precisely each child's ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic heritage. We must confront reality and recognise that there is a place for inter-country adoption for a small number of children, where the authorities in their countries of origin confirm that there is no prospect of placing them in a family, and where it is considered appropriate to place them for adoption in foreign countries." (Harnott, 2000: 255f.).

One of the major differences between international adoption work in the 1960s and today (apart from the sheer numbers) is the issue of information. In former times persons interested in adopting would usually consult the child welfare agencies and receive their first detailed information from social workers. Today, applicants usually have already been surfing the internet extensively on the subject. In addition, there is a wide variety of literature available and more adoption agencies exist with comprehensive information networks. Nevertheless, the quantity of information acquired in advance of the permission procedure does not necessarily mean that this data is sufficient or always pertinent.[10] The social worker processing the application remains a very important source of information and advice. Indeed, it is imperative that these professionals are well qualified in adoption work and kept abreast of latest developments. In many countries social workers are active in the forefront of work in this area, with adoption and post adoption work having received a specialist status within the profession (International Federation of Social Workers, 2002).

In addition to theoretical knowledge and practical field experience, self-reflection on the issue of adoption is a necessary component for all professionals. Elements of this self-reflection should include:

- own personal attitude to adoption
- personal and professional experiences with the issue of adoption
- personal feelings about trans-cultural issues and the
- general attitude in their institution regarding adoption

In the majority of cases, applicants wish to adopt as young a child as possible. Recently it has been possible to adopt comparatively very young babies from some countries such as Ethiopia, South Africa or Vietnam. However, within countries which have ratified the Hague Convention, it is very rare that children are adopted before they are one year old. Because of on-going famine and HIV

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[10] This information was elicited during the Author's research for her Magistra Diploma Thesis for Social Science Professions (2007)

Aids there is a very high mortality rate among birth mothers in Ethiopia and South Africa. This fact, together with a lack of suitable child welfare resources, accounts for higher numbers of very young children and even infants being placed for adoption in these countries. For many inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, (e.g. UNICEF, ISS or SOS-Children's Village International), the main emphasis and thrust of work is stipulated as being the improvement of resources and standards for abandoned children in their home countries. For member countries of the Hague Convention, a comprehensive check of possible domestic adoption placements is a pre-condition to a child being placed for transnational adoption. Only if no suitable placement is possible in the country of origin, may these children then be placed for transnational adoption. According to Elena Beysyuk, Director of the Lugansk State Orphanage in the Ukraine [11],

 "Statistics tell us that there is a decreasing number of Ukranian citizens willing to adopt children. In the year 2006 the number of foreign adoptions increased. The most adoptions were to USA, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Slovenia, Poland and Canada. In the epoch of globalization it is not so important to which country a child is adopted but what the adoptive parents can give to a child".

By the end of the 1980s global numbers appeared to have peaked. In 1991 however, despite the temporary rise as a result of the situation in post-Ceausescu Romania, Altstein and Simon predicted a continuing decline in transnational adoptions. Indeed, 1988 to 1993 proved to be a transition period in which numbers of transnational adoptions declined in many countries. The years from 1993 to 2004 however, saw acceleration in the numbers of transnational adoptions. The rise in demand for children seems in many ways to have been fuelled by the apparent increase in the number of children available for adoption in China, Russia and Guatemala. One of the reasons for such an increase in demand was due to the fact that single people were now allowed to adopt a child. In recent years, this trend has been met with growing concern witnessed, for example, by China's sudden reversal of its adoption policy. This conscious move by the government, through its central authority the China Centre for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), has been due to the growing number of applications from single women (many in same-sex relationships). In 2006 new guidelines were announced by the CCAA requiring that prospective adopters must be heterosexual and married for a minimum of two years (Bellock and Yardley, 2006; Hilborn, 2007). This move has put an end to adoption by single women, who accounted for up to a third of USA adopters in the late 1990s (Selman, 2009). China is becoming aware of the negative image that continuing international adoption can create and as such has done much to improve its child welfare system and promote domestic adoption.

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[11] Presentation at an international workshop on "International Adoptions – foreign adopted children and their integration" in Vienna, 11 April 2007.

A decade into the 21st Century, we are now faced with clear evidence that not only are the numbers of transnational adoptions in decline, but that there is growing criticism of overseas adoption as being prone to abuse and illegal trafficking (Post, 2007; Smolin, 2007). Many experts envisage that this may well be the beginning of the end of wide-scale inter-country adoption. Others argue that there is current proof of a continuing growth of numbers of children being placed for adoption in Ethiopia and a revival of transnational adoption from Cambodia and Vietnam. This would indicate more a *"downsizing and reshaping rather than an end"* (Selman 2009: 591). As far as the situation of childless couples in affluent Western countries is concerned, their chances of adopting a child transnationally would seem to be slimmer with longer waiting periods.

The global economic crisis may prove ambivalent, on the one hand it could lead to a reduction in demand of children for adoption, however it could also result in an acceleration of market forces and an increased risk of child trafficking (Selman, 2009). According to Smolin (2004), continuing evidence of child trafficking, despite all legal instruments such as the UN Child Convention or The Hague Convention, is a reason why Inter-country adoption should end unless it is reformed. Smolin has suggested that history may label *"the entire enterprise as a neo-colonialist mistake"* (Smolin 2004: 325). In a similar vein, the shipment of poor children from England to Australia and Canada has received comments such as: *"a damning verdict is inescapable"* (Parker 2008: 293). Equally, the Government of Australia has officially apologised to 'the stolen generation' of aboriginal children.

It is worth noting that great caution must be exercised in regard to the generalisation and condemnation of overseas adoption, especially in view of the feelings and experiences of many thousands of transnational adoptees and adoptive parents. It is important to recognise the positive aspects experienced by many of those involved, including the realisation of many of the adoptees that without such intervention they may well not have survived. Other experts argue the case that inter-country adoptions may be viewed as a global gift particularly with respect to the cases of many children with special needs, who have been and are being adopted (Juffer and Van Ijzendoorn, 2009). They call for further research aimed at exploring the possible potential of adoptive families as being a vehicle for the reversal of adverse effects of early deprivation. Other advocates of transnational adoption go even further in their recommendations, calling for an increase in permitted adoptions to meet the needs of children in the developing world. In their view, transnational adoption is the most logical solution needed to answer the dilemma of abandoned and orphaned children.

Altstein *(*1984) states that the most important question that exists in relation to transnational adoption is an ethical one and asks whether removing a child from his or her native culture to raise it in another is moral or humane? Hoksbergen (1991) articulates the hope that *"culture and economic circumstances in all Third-World Countries change to the extent that it will be the exception when a child's only chance for a satisfactory upbringing exists with a family thousands of miles from its birthplace"* (Hoksbergen 1991: 156). Until this expressed hope can become reality, it is imperative that transnational adoptions are only carried out under the terms and conditions laid down by the Hague Convention: the guiding principle for any adoption must always be in accordance with the child's best interests. It is also important that greater emphasis be placed on 'open adoptions' thus enabling children to retain links with their countries of adoption, take pride in their origins and, where at all possible, maintain some form of contact with their birth families.

2.2 The family – in focus

Whichever form the family takes (whether for example an extended family or a nuclear, patchwork, single-parent, same-sex, foster or adoptive family), the family performs a variety of important functions for its various members. The extent of these functions is mainly dependent on the economic nature of the particular society of which this family is part. *"Family patterns have changed and adapted through cultural development over the ages and continue to change. The primary need to love and nurture the human child in order that the generations may continue exists, despite the ongoing changes in the world"* (United Nations 1993: 1).

Generally, more functions are performed by extended families in more tribal societies than by nuclear families in more modern Western industrial societies. The basic and most intimate functions of families being: sexual activity, procreation, child bearing, child rearing, loving, nurturing, caring for aging and disabled members, discipline and the provision of a supportive environment. Other family functions include production and income-generating activities, home-making activities, social education activities, education and health and nutrition. However, due to shifts in economic, cultural, social and technological factors, along with the effects of interventions by Governments and other social organizations, we have seen great changes in how many of these functions are carried out. *"The lives of everyone are changing dramatically throughout the world, not only as a function of the well-publicized demographic changes, but also as a direct and indirect consequence of the far-reaching and ongoing changes taking place in work, education, economies and societies. Yet current thinking about families is so often focused on the changes that the vital contributions that families make to individuals, communities, societies, cultures and economies are*

often overlooked. Recognition of the essential work that families do and how well they function, sometimes against the odds stacked against them, provides the basis of sound policies for families" (United Nations 1995: 1).

The family is a legally protected and private institution providing a primary field of learning and education (Ecarius, 2009). In the process of growing up, it is the family which facilitates early socialisation and provides children with their first bonding experiences. Ideally children experience the care and love of a supportive family wherein they learn the necessary standards of social behaviour. Initial patterns are developed within the framework of the family. Families are, however, an ambivalent institution and just as positive patterns of behaviour and communication are learnt (e.g.: acceptance and recognition, balance between closeness and distance, between respect and tolerance) so are the patterns and traits of deprivation and neglect.

Sadly, some families have adverse psychological effects on their children, hindering them in their potential through various forms of neglect and deprivation, or in severe cases, physical and/or sexual abuse. Child mortality cases in recent years, such as 'Baby Peter' in England and 'Baby Luca' in Austria, are shocking in the extreme. These situations are not helped by the tabloid media circus which immediately looks for someone to blame. Child welfare workers and authorities often become the scapegoats in cases such as these and may be unfairly criticised for 'looking the other way'. On the other hand, should child welfare workers intervene, in order to ensure a child's safety, and place him or her into a care institution, foster or adoptive family, they may then find themselves the focus of media attention for interfering and meddling in private affairs.

It seems that the family is often very much idealised. We have, however, discussed that it is often an area of conflict but, whatever the situation; it is in this arena that children must learn about themselves and the world in which they live. They must learn not only to build a relationship with themselves but also to build interpersonal bridges with their immediate social environment. These abilities are developed through learning and educational processes. Therefore the interaction and educational structure patterns of the family are of relevance, regardless of what specific type of family or cohabitation form it happens to be. In the context of this study it is important to keep in mind that primarily *"All children have the right to be cared for by their parents within the traditions of their family and land of birth. Any alternative should be considered a last resort. Children are a nation's most precious resource and few countries should want to let them go easily."* (Mather 2007: 481).

2.2.1 Construction and choice

During the past several decades, research on the family – as the basic social unit - has sought to emphasise the great diversity of forms that families have taken. In order to highlight this, awareness-raising projects have been undertaken at local, national and international levels. The United Nations General Assembly [12] proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family (IYF). The theme of the Year was "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world". The principles of the IYF include the following statements:

1. *"...the family constitutes the basic unit of society and therefore warrants special attention. Hence, the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to families so that they may fully assume their responsibilities with the community"*

2. *"Families assume diverse forms and functions from one country to another, and within each national society. These express the diversity of individual preferences and societal conditions. Consequently, the IYF encompasses and addresses the needs of all families."*

Given the above, it would be a moot point to ask whether the principles of the IYF adhere to adoptive families. This question is raised because, in spite of the large numbers of adoptive families, it reflects the remarkable lack of attention devoted to the subject by sociologists (Fisher, 2003). This lack of interest is indeed something of a conundrum given that sociologists persistently argue that families are not just a product of blood relationships but are increasingly a 'social construction', a matter of deliberate choice. The sociological study of adoption is of great importance however, and could help to illuminate many of the changes occurring in Western families today. As expressed by Berebitsky: *"Adoption continues to function as a site on which the culture at large works out its understanding about 'family', including the issues of who should be in a family, what roles family members (including both birth parents and adoptive parents) should play, and what functions (both public and private) the family should fulfil."* (Berebitsky 2000: 168).

It is of interest, historically, that changes in the status of the family are linked with the changes of perceived worth accorded to children per se. Aries (1962) maintained that the 'discovery' of childhood (as being developmentally discrete) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, was a measure of the growing importance of family life: *"The concept of family is inseparable from the concept of childhood. The interest taken in childhood is only one form, one particular expression of this more general concept – that of the family"* (Aries 1962: 353). The publication in 1762 of the novel 'Emile' by Jean-Jacques Rousseau also bears witness to this

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[12] (December 1989, Resolution 44/82)

development, portraying childhood as a specific period and not just as a prelude to adult life. In Western countries, the increasing differentiation between economic production and the home transformed the basis of family cohesion. As instrumental ties weakened, the emotional value of all family members – including children – became more salient (Zelizer, 1978). It is of interest to note that the increasingly positive response to childhood, a *"sentimentalization"* (Zelizer 1985: 9) was intimately tied to the changing world of motherhood. Changes in worth conferred upon children also served the interests of women: *"Exalting the child went hand in hand with exalting the domestic role of woman; each reinforced the other while together they raised domesticity within the family to a new and higher level of respectability."* (Zelizer 1985: 9).

In short, children became precious and the change from being objects of utility to beloved members of the family unit is indisputable. The precise characterisation of this shift, however, has remained elusive (Kett, 1977). The study of children has been predominantly psychological in its orientation as research has been dominated by psychologists, economists and demographers mostly concerned with parental motivation for childbearing and its relation to fertility patterns and population policy.

The family systems' literature provides little information on adoptive families (Sykes, 2001). For instance, it is only comparatively recently that discussion has focused on the belief that adoptive families go through many of the same experiences and processes as other families (Anderson et al., 1993; Gorrell Barnes, 1998; Hajal and Rosenberg, 1991; Lindesy, 1995). There has been a reluctance to acknowledge that the main foundation on which the adoptive family is built is that of the experience of 'loss'. This is true for all parties in the adoptive system. Adoption opens up a possibility for people to compensate for *"a gap"* in their lives" (Sykes 2001: 312).

Adoptive families would appear to be subject to the shifting sands of social policy trends (Sykes, 2001). The changing characteristics of adoption, over the past thirty years, reflect shifts within society, evolving family structures, a shortage of babies for adoption, and a recognition that the needs of older children might be met by placement for adoption. These shifts have encouraged a greater transparency in the adoption process and have created awareness that availability of heritage information is vital. An equal measure of importance is the maintenance of links (if possible) with families of origin. The United Kingdom reflected these shifts by adding an 'assumption of contact' to the Children Act of 1989. In her study on 'Adoption with Contact: a study of adoptive parents and the impact of continuing contact with families of origin" Sykes notes that *"some adoptive families are faced with such complexity and diversity of activity that severe stresses and strains are the result"* (Sykes 2001: 296). It is possible that this situation may apply more specifically to the

UK. In cases of neglect or sexual and/or physical abuse, for example, the Child Welfare System may (against the wishes of the biological parents) instigate the process of adoption by placing the child into an appropriate care facility.

As noted above, different models and approaches to adoption, and adoptive families, over the past few decades, have paved the way to a greater transparency. (This does vary, as we will see, between countries.) From the 1960s onwards, in the United Kingdom, the concept of promoting a more open approach to communication between biological and adoptive parents gained in significance (Sykes, 2001). Sants (1964) published clinical observations of the 'genealogical bewilderment' described by adoptees. Inspite of the growing support for a more transparent approach to adoption, it was strongly contested by theorists such as Goldstein et al. (1973, 1980). Opponents of 'open adoption' used psychoanalytical theory and early attachment theories (Bowlby, 1969) to argue that adopters should be identified as the 'psychological parents' and that all contact with the birth parents be severed. This approach depicted a deficit model. It supported the findings of clinical case studies (Kraft et al.,1985) where any contact of, or by, the birth parent was seen as a threat to the bonding process between child and adoptive parents. Interestingly, it was mostly due to the growing numbers of black and dual-heritage children requiring care in the UK, that challenged this opposition to 'open adoption'. Because of Pennie and Best's (1990) concern that the strengths of black families had been undervalued, a critical voice against the attachment theory approach was raised. Pennie and Best (1990) argued that cultural differences should be considered when placing children for adoption*: "To black people the meaning of bonding is very different to that which is held by society in general and social workers in particular. Bonding between black children and parents is seen as multi-dimensional, while in the British context it is seen as mono-dimensional, i.e. the close relationship between parents and child within the nuclear family"* (Pennie and Best 1990: 2).

Schaffer argues that a strong history of social interaction over kinship is equally likely to develop close ties and relationships between child and adoptive parents. Ainsworth (1991) confirms these views, emphasising that it is the shared experiences in kinship groups that create long-lasting bonds of affection. Demick and Wapner (1988) explicitly state that, no matter what degree of contact actually exists, the role of the birth family must be recognised and acknowledged. Other researchers such as Hajal and Rosenberg (1991) argue that with a more open approach to adoption, the 'hidden system' becomes less hidden, thus individuals within the family system become more active in finding the most favourable ways of functioning for all concerned. Schaffer (1990)

concludes that even children of a fairly young age are able to attach and bond with more than one set of carers at the same time.

In contrast to the deficit model of adoption proposed by the psychoanalytical school, Miller's (1976) and Gilligan's (1982) relational model emphasises the importance of 'connection' as opposed to 'separation'. The model is advanced by Silverstein and Demick (1994: 115) who suggest that "*the self-in-relation model points the way toward a process that has the potential to provide members of the adoption triad with the means to bear the stress, pain and complexity of adoptive relationships.*" Thus a more transparent system means that adoptive families don't have to cope alone. It also creates an opportunity for increased mutual empathy, allowing space for the changing needs of different members of the adoptive family system through its life-cycle. Carter and McGoldrick (1980) concentrate on developing a family life-cycle approach, referring to the changing developmental tasks for different members of the adoptive family system.

During the adoption permission process, strong emphasis is placed on the importance of family support networks. Prospective adopters are specifically asked about their own family backgrounds, the frequency of contact with their immediate families and whether their parents or siblings would be willing to care for the adoptive child if needs be. According to Ecarius (2009), familial multigenerational relationships are always focused on pedagogical and educative processes. Thus an inter-generational connection (whether it be a biological or adoptive one) may be equally important for the child. Of course, not all inter-generational experiences are ideal and it is worth considering that Szydlik (2000) differentiates between ten types of intergenerational families: estranged-independent; estranged-supportive; ritual-independent; ritual-supportive; autonomous-independent; autonomous-supportive; close-independent; close-supportive; estranged-co-resident and close-co-resident. However (with reference to Bengston and Roberts, 1991) Szydlik also indicates three types of solidarity which appear to form between the generations in any family group and suggests that they may also have relevance for adoptive families. The three types of solidarity are:

  a) Functional: implying money, time and space as in financial transfers, instrumental help and co-residence.
  b) Affective: the feeling of belonging, emotional closeness and affection,
  c) Associative: includes joint activities and contacts such as telephone calls, text messages, visits and holidays.

Inter-generational familial solidarity is described as multi-faceted and multi-dimensional and may, of course, be affected by differences in social status, gender, religion and profession. These forms

of solidarity are not necessarily balanced equally between the generations. Solidarity is a highly ambivalent concept and inter-generational relationships are therefore always characterised by an unsolvable contradiction between dependence and autonomy. Solidarity and conflict within families are not necessarily opposite poles; family solidarity can be the positive outcome of a constructive way of dealing with ambivalence.

It is interesting to note that current debate speculates as to whether the Welfare State promotes or hinders solidarity among the generations. Critical modernisation theorists are certainly apt to opine that the Welfare State is more likely to result in a decrease of family responsibility as far as social support is concerned. This decrease in willingness of families to offer social support is known as 'crowding-out' Ecarius (2009). However, the life-span approach allows for a more optimistic point of view in that inter-generational families create an automatic and naturally occurring form of support as discussed below.

Life-span theorists discuss that all the developmental stages - childhood, youth, adulthood and old age - constitute a complex entity spanning the entire life-trajectory. Ecarius (2009) discusses that each phase of the pedagogical relationships which exist between generations are developmentally influential. Indeed, as already noted in our discussion on the pre-figurative culture Mead in 1970 suggested that we eschew post-figurative upbringing in favour of a more pre-figurative approach to familial relationships. This creates a two-way learning scenario whereby the older generation equally learns from the younger generation.

In accordance with this approach, Lüscher and Liegle (2003) outline a more osmotic inter-generational process where learning occurs naturally through mutual inter-personal processes such as empathy, understanding, acknowledgment and respect of others. Thus social education as an interactive process between the generations, takes place in families where the younger generation learns from the older generation and vice-versa. It is the task of the older generation to empower the younger generation to continue and develop family tradition and heritage. Adoptive children do not only get a new set of parents, they also become grandchildren, even also possibly great-grandchildren and the older members of their extended family units become grandparents etc. Lüscher and Liegle underline the significance that this interaction may have for the younger generation. Grandparents play a leading role in long lasting learning processes and in identity development, often being 'confidants' in the exchange of experiences and ideas. While the task of 'rearing' children is usually undertaken by the parents, relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are often more balanced than those between parents and children.

Whether or not the Welfare State promotes or hinders inter-generational solidarity and contributes to decreasing levels of responsibility in families, it behoves us to consider all aspects of the above discussion as being equally relevant for both biological and adoptive families.

2.2.2 Expectations and functions of children in the Western World

In the Western world, the preciousness of children, described by Zelizer (1985), has intensified over time. In an era where the breakdown of relationships is a statistical likelihood, it is often children who are expected to take on bonding functions once carried out by the missing 'parent' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1990). This may result in the unhealthy 'parentification' of children.

In Western industrial countries, the twentieth-century's economically 'useless' (albeit emotionally 'priceless') child has displaced the nineteenth-century's 'worker' child (Zelizer 1985: preface x). The birth of a child in the eighteenth-century was welcomed as another pair of working hands as well as a potential source of care for his/her parents in their old age. Undoubtedly, the most dramatic shifts in this regard have been witnessed among the working classes but the sentimentalization of childhood has intensified regardless of social class. "The economic and sentimental value of children were thereby declared to be radically incompatible. Only mercenary or insensitive parents violated the boundary by accepting the wages or labour contributions of a useful child. *"Properly loved children, regardless of social class, belonged in a domesticated, non-productive world of lessons, games, and token money"* (Zelizer 1985:11). Improved maternal and child health care and lower mortality rates in many Western countries implied that chances of survival increased. No longer was it necessary to have numerous children to ensure that one or two would survive and reach adulthood.

As discussed, the end of child labour saw a greater emotional value being attached to children and because of this mothers also gained recognition for their role in successfully rearing the next generation. This situation gave rise to a long standing notion that a married woman without children was to be pitied and was accorded little status. Thus having a child became a pre-requisite for being not only a successful woman but also a fully-fledged member of society. For married women then, a child became a 'must have'. This perception of successful womanhood naturally developed into a societal pressure to have children. Those parents who couldn't have children increasingly turned to adoption. This created a 'demand' for what Zelizer (1985: 192) terms *"sentimental adoption"* which added to a *"fairy-tale dimension"* of adoption (Zelizer 1985:191). An increasing demand for babies boosted their perceived value and prospective adoptive parents were willing to put down

large sums of money to obtain a baby of their own. As early as 1923[13], prominent personalities from entertainment and politics filled glossy magazines with photos and articles on their new offspring.

The purchase of children was not limited to celebrities however. In an interview conducted in 2007, Ingrid Gelinek[14] recalls that: *"wealthy American couples flew over in their private jets to pick up children from countries like Indonesia or Bangladesh after natural catastrophes of earthquakes or floods, or they flew to countries like Nigeria and Vietnam in the aftermath of wars. In those days up to 30,000 Dollars were being paid for a child. There was an absolute jungle of corruption. Private houses were set up as orphanages by local and foreign business enterprises. Parents were bribed with money and children were literally being bought."[15]* The International Social Service was one of the key international Non-Governmental organisations involved with international adoption at the time. It was not responsible for processing adoptions but for ensuring health and care standards for children who were being placed in care. Additionally ISS played a central role (as it does today) in formulating and warranting standards in international adoption procedures.

Clearly the adoption of children by prominent parents is not a new phenomenon. Let us put cynicism aside and avoid the debate that asks: is press coverage a motivation for adoption? Let us, instead, focus on what the driving force behind wanting to have a child and family may be. An American survey (1979) looking into the psychological motivations for having children concluded that the motivation was *"the desire for love and affection and the feeling of being a family"* (Zelizer 1985: 4). The fact that still so many people decide to have children *" […] attests to the nonmonetary benefits they expect to derive from their progeny"* (Zelizer 1985: 4).

As conceded in recent studies by two German experts, (Oelsner and Lehmkuhl, 2005) prospective adoptive parents do not approach the decision of adoption logically or rationally as they would in other areas of decision making, such as buying a house, a change in job or taking a loan. Adoption is a highly emotional issue, aspirants often driven by great yearning and the advancement of age. Having children later in life is a common factor amongst couples who wish to secure a professional footing before planning a family. Hence, it is only when a couple is into their late 30's that the subject of children and adoption arises by which time the biological clock is ticking rapidly. In Austria the age limit for adoptive parents is maintained at 40. This restriction either daunts or

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[13] New York Times Magazine, March 17 1923, p.9 jan 20, 1925 Dorothy Dunbar Bromley "Demand for babies outruns the supply" . New York Times Magazine, March 3, 1935, p.9
[14] Secretary General of the International Social Service 1969-1978
[15] Interview given to Author by Ingrid Gelinek in March, 2007.

accelerates the hopes and plans of prospective adopters. Interestingly, this author's former study[16] discovered a paradoxical relationship between the (usually high) level of prospective adoptive parents' education and the lack of reading and preparation on adoption issues. This pattern emerges despite the provision of literature lists by social workers conducting the adoption procedure. Such a paradox may be interpreted as a certain fear of what the reality of adoption may mean for the prospective parents. Fear that if, in reality, there are difficult problems accompanying an adoption one or other of the couple may shy away from the decision to adopt.

A leading Austrian children's and youth psychiatrist, Werner Leixnering[17], stressed in an interview in 2007 that adoptive children are risk or high-risk children and that problems may well arise along their life path which would also affect the adoptive parents. If there is to be any chance of positive development and a successful life-trajectory for adoptees it is essential that a realistic look at the possible risks entailed in transnational adoptions is undertaken. Several key factors which contribute to risk status include:

- adverse prenatal experiences (such as exposure to alcohol or drugs, or poor maternal nutrition) (Yates et al., 1998) ;
- inheritance of various genetic traits including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression (Wierzbicki, 1993);
- the experience of abuse as a small child (Verhulst, 2000);
- living in an institution for longer periods of time (Frank et al, 1996):
  - adoption at a more advanced age sharply increases the risk of adoption failing, from 1.9% for children adopted in infancy, to 5% for those adopted between the ages of 3-5, to 26% for those adopted at the ages of 15-17 (Brodzinsky et al. 1998).

In his book 'Intercountry Adoption - Developments, trends and perspectives' (2000, p.530) Selman concludes that two key themes have emerged from studies undertaken with overseas adoptees: *"Early childhood deprivation can no longer be seen as irretrievable. Most children subsequently placed in stable loving families show a great capacity for catch-up in physical and emotional development". […] Adoption is a lifetime experience for all concerned and involves a constant exploration of identity which is made difficult by many adoptees' lack of knowledge of their past. [In adulthood most will want to find out more about their background and many will wish to return to their country of origin or seek out their birth families. Despite the difficulties identified in adolescence, the majority of internationally adopted children have developed well, both*

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[16] Baum Breuer, E. Magistra Diploma Thesis(2007)
[17] Interview given to Author (February, 2007)

psychologically and physically, overcoming the traumas of their early lives, and seem likely to make important contributions to their countries" (Selman 2000: 105).

Adoption experts such as Rene Hoksbergern (1993), holder of the Chair in Adoption Research for Europe, see improvements in placement procedures and post-placement support as factors which could contribute significantly to the positive trajectory of transnational adoptions. Best-practice post-placement support (Nordic Adoption Council) may include:

- post-adoption counselling;
- get-together facilities such as children's camps, courses;
- establishment of special interest groups; homeland tours;
- summer camps in the country of origin;
- exploring roots in cooperation with central authorities and agencies in the country of origin;
- regular reports for up to 18 years to states of origin.

A Scandinavian study undertaken by Dalen (1999 cited in Selman, 2000: 103) shows that "*…around 75% manage well, without any sign of major problems"* while between 25 – 30% of adoptees have problems *"…linked to language, learning, identity and ethnicity".* Kirton's illustration is similar: *"The broad picture which emerges is that, while a majority of adoptions are "successful", in terms of family relationships and the psychological well-being of adoptees, many adoptees experience difficulties related to questions of ethnicity and identity."* (cited in Selman 2000: 67).

A recent large-scale study ('Beyond Culture Camp: Promoting healthy Identity Formation in Adoption', McGinnis et al., 2009) calls for an increase in the amount of research carried out on the risk and protective factors that are influential in the adjustment of transnational adoptees. These protective factors are grouped into three categories: 1) Individual Characteristics, 2) Bonding and Attachment and 3) Behaviour Patterns.

1) Individual Characteristics: implying gender, temperament (including the capability of self-regulation and self-reflection and humour), positive social attitude, positive self-perception and cognitive intelligence and capabilities. These are personal resources, inherent in the child or youth and not dependent on his/ her social or material environment.

2) Bonding and Attachment: this refers to members of nuclear and extended family; to friends and peers; to people at school and in the community.

3) Behaviour Patterns: referring to the consequences of behaviour, this category implies that children need to be brought up with clear value systems, rules, regulations and standards of behaviour. In addition it is important for children to experience transparency regarding the consequences for their behaviour.

The report also states that increased post-placement support should be a principal recommendation. Further research is necessary especially with regard to transnational adoptees' identity development, and stresses that studies should also centre more on the perspective of adoptees themselves. The key findings, central to this report, include the insight that adoption is an aspect of identity for adopted people that increases in significance as they grow older. Race and ethnicity are also key factors, coping with discrimination being an important aspect of coming to terms with racial and ethnic identity.

It is very apparent from the above mentioned research that adoption professionals, parents, teachers, social workers, youth workers and psychotherapists need more effective strategies for addressing the realities faced by all in the transnational adoption situation. Other positive influences which contribute to positive identity identification include access to a more diverse community and affiliation with people from a similar cultural background.

One of the most effective ways of furthering and promoting positive racial/ethnic identity development is actual first-hand experience such as travel to the country of origin, racially diverse schools, or role models from the same race /ethnicity. A significant contribution to finding one's identity is being able to obtain biographical information such as documents, reports, oral information (e.g. from the orphanage), tokens and belongings, photos or, ideally, contact with birth family members. This reality has broad implications for adoption law, policy and practice.

Of interest here is the coinciding shift from the former principle of interest for the adopting person (e.g. inheritance of name, wealth, property, etc.) to a principle of protection for the adoptive child at which point institutions and instruments of child care and social services became responsible for adoption procedures. Specific areas of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, pertaining to adoption, reflect this development.[18]

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[18] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. General Assembly Resolution 44/25 20. 11. 1989. Article 21.

2.3 Welfare systems and adoption scenarios – close-ups

The following discussion outlines the different adoption policy systems employed by the countries researched in this study (Austria, Sweden, United Kingdom). It also considers each country's adoption policy in the context of their welfare system. Even though the study's three specified countries are all European, it is interesting to note the variances between their adoption policies. The distinct differences between these policies may be explained by understanding the different welfare systems operating in each country.

Esping-Andersen (1990) has categorised three types of welfare states and notes that modern, capitalist nations cluster into three groups, each adopting one particular type. Each category of welfare state is represented by the countries in this study. The Welfare State is based on the following principles:

- equality of opportunity
- equitable distribution of wealth
- civic responsibility for those who are unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for life.

Areas of responsibility of present-day welfare states range from the provision of cash welfare benefits (e.g. maternity benefits, unemployment support, old-age pensions) to welfare in kind such as health or childcare services. By means of these provisions welfare states, to a certain extent, affect the well-being and personal autonomy of their citizens. Welfare capitalism refers, in the context of this chapter, to the combination of a capitalist economic system with a welfare state. In Europe, government operated welfare systems were introduced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Germany and Britain focused on constructing safety nets for citizens, which included public welfare and unemployment insurance. In this connection it is worth noting that Welfare capitalism has a different connotation in the USA, i.e. the concept of businesses providing welfare-like services to employees.

The classifications developed by Esping-Andersen are:

- Liberal, e.g.: USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, increasingly, the UK
- Conservative, e.g.: Germany, France, Italy and Austria
- Social Democratic, e.g: Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands.

The two poles in Esping-Andersen's construction are the Liberal and the Social Democratic Models. When looking at the former, we notice that the state is primarily concerned with directing resources to the most needy. Stringent bureaucratic control is executed to identify which citizens are in need, and also to minimise cheating and abuse of the social net. This leads to a sharp division between the receivers and the producers of social welfare. Typically the producers do not profit from the 'business' of social welfare and are therefore often unenthusiastic about the concept.

With regard to the Conservative model, we observe that the state distributes welfare to those people who fulfil specific established criteria (e.g. have children, require medical treatment etc.) with as little bureaucratic intervention as possible. This necessitates high tax levels, but most citizens in this system are benefactors in some form or other (e.g. children attending high quality state day care facilities as in Scandinavian countries) and this leads to a broader support of the system.

Esping-Andersen (2007) stresses that, from the perspective of welfare and efficiency, an optimal policy would address both the quantity and quality of children respectively. Thus parents, who have children and invest well in their future, contribute not only to their private but also to their collective welfare. Government income support for families, with children, varies tremendously across countries in both scope and generosity (Gormick and Meyers, 2003). For example, in the USA 22% of families, who had already received income support, were still living in poverty. In the Nordic countries this figure drops to 5%. The alarming difference between the numbers of children planned for by families and the actual number born in society overall may be interpreted as a failure of the welfare state. Regardless of where the failure lies however, the fact remains that an increasing number of births represents an overwhelming burden on economies and societies. It seems that the 'real challenge' is to forge policies that empower families to attain private goals and, simultaneously, engage in the achievement of public goals. Measures to this end include pre-natal and child health care, early intervention programmes for at-risk children, child day care facilities and support services, financial support for families and public financing of education. According to McDonald (2002) it would appear that family formation in advanced societies is becoming subject to a set of qualitatively new rules which 'boil down' to gender asymmetries within the household.

In order to have a more specific picture of each system, and to gain an overview of how the systems relate and contrast, it is necessary at this point to take a close-up look at the adoption scenarios in each one of these 'new' home countries of transnational adoptees.

2.3.1 Austria

Austria typifies the Conservative model but certainly does not count as a 'global player' in terms of numbers of transnational adoptees. Nevertheless, over the past few years transnational adoptions have increased markedly in comparison to in-country adoptions. An estimated 300 children are adopted annually from foreign countries.[19] Exact figures are not available due to the fact that Austrian legislation, as yet, has no governing law for in-country or international adoptions. All adoption permissions are processed through the local statutory child welfare system. The actual adoption procedure is, in some cases, conducted through private adoption agencies in Austria which are connected to IANA[20] and through a European umbrella organisation EurAdopt [21].

The reasons for the increase in Austrian international adoptions are manifold; one of the most significant being the lack of children placed for in-country adoption. This is due, in part, to family planning, legal abortion up to 12 weeks, financial support for single mothers and the stigma which is attached to giving a child up for adoption. Very long waiting periods exist for domestic adoption, (in some regions up to 8 years). Age limits are strict (maximum of 40 years' difference between child and main caring parent). The growing tendency to have children later in life often means that couples realise too late that they may have fertility problems. By the mid-thirties the biological clock and adoption regulations become increasingly limited. Thus in some cases, transnational adoption is the only feasible possibility. Furthermore, the Austrian system only permits voluntary adoption; no child, removed from its biological family by the child welfare authorities may be placed for adoption unless it is the specific wish of the child's parents/mother. Children who have been removed from their families of origin by child welfare authorities and cannot return, for whatever reason, remain in care. Prospective foster or adoptive parents must stipulate in which form they wish to assume responsibility for the child/children at the onset of the permission procedure.

Care facilities include foster parents, children's homes, communal group homes and children's villages with additional institutions like youth homes for older children. A whole spectrum of facilities exists in both the private and statutory sector. Both sectors receive state support; the private sector is also able to benefit from donations. Equally, the state provides for children requiring therapy and other support as a consequence of developmental problems, deprivation or traumatisation. This is in stark contrast to the UK's position on financial responsibility (see 2.3.2).

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[19] Fucik R., Justizministerium,Standardartikel v. 20.10.2006
[20] IANA International Adoption Network Austria
[21] EurAdopt Authorised European Adoption Organizations

Other reasons for the escalation of interest in international adoptions include: media coverage, internet information, increased intercultural sensitivity, a greater volume in long-haul travel and globalisation in general.

In Austria it is mainly young children who are adopted; most applicants stipulate that they wish to adopt as young a child as possible. To date, the majority of adoptive children living in Austria are younger than 10 years of age. Couples who already have a child or children of their own are only able to adopt internationally as there are significant numbers of couples on the waiting lists who have no children. It is possible to adopt as a single mother, if partners are not married then only one of the partners is officially able to adopt and be granted custody of the child. (Some countries, e.g. Latin America, stipulate that they will only allow 'their' children to be adopted by married couples.) In contrast to foster families, there is no mandatory long term accompaniment for adoptive families through the child care system in Austria. The Austrian adoption system has identified that it is vital for prospective adoptive parents to develop contacts with parents who have already adopted. Adoption agencies stipulate this condition as a pre-requisite for adoption. Indeed, they state that as a function of the adoption process their role is to assist prospective parents in making appropriate contacts.[22]

Very little research has been undertaken in Austria on the subject of transnational adoptions. The aim of this study is to rectify the situation by contributing pertinent data, and first-hand input from adoptees, to the 'field'. The main objective for comparing the research data (adoption biographies, settings and procedures) issuing from Austria with those from England and Sweden is to review and analyse valuable information that may be pertinent for Austria's international adoption programme. Given that Austria's work in the area of transnational adoption is still, comparatively speaking, in its infancy, it would be of great value to learn from the experiences of other countries. Naturally, it is hoped that this research will generate valuable information for all countries involved in the transnational adoption process. It may even prompt transnational adoptees, in co-operation with adoption networks across Austria, to create an Austrian anthology of poems and prose such as the British editions 'In search of belonging' and 'The colours in me'.

2.3.2 England
Standard legal procedure states that, where necessary, English children who have been removed from their biological families and taken into care by child welfare authorities, may be placed for adoption even without their parents' consent. England's adoption system is distinctly different from

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[22] Eltern für Kinder Österreich, Family for You and Kleine Herzen, adoption agencies reporting at the international workshop at the University of Applies Sciences, Vienna in April 2007.

that of Austria and Sweden.[23] This fact is statistically significant in that a potentially greater number of children are available for in-country adoptions compared to Austria. This situation is not without ethical implications. Every day children enter the child welfare system (i.e. have to be removed from their families of origin for reasons of abuse, violence or massive neglect) and for a number of these children, adoption appears the best option as far as their long-term stability and emotional well-being is concerned. Many of these children are mixed-race. The regulating legislation in England and Wales (some specific regulations do apply exclusively for Wales) is the "Adoption and Children Act 2002" (ACA)[24] which was fully implemented in 2005. The act is founded on four principles:

- welfare of the child is paramount in all decisions made by courts and adoption agencies; this includes the decision to dispense with a parent's consent to adoption;
- a 'welfare checklist' reflecting adoption-related issues;
- any delay in the plans for permanence/adoption (when children cannot be cared for by their birth family) must be avoided at all costs;
- a mandate that no order be made by the court, unless the court considers that making the order would be better for the child than not doing so.

The act is conceptually underpinned by the following concepts:

- enhancement of permanence options through the 'extension of residence order' up to 18 years of age, and by introducing 'special guardianship';
- introduction of the possibility of unmarried couples adopting jointly;
- encouragement of people to adopt by obliging local authorities to ensure that support and the required financial assistance are available to adoptive parents;
- acknowledgment of the life-long impact of adoption on all parties;
- the establishment of a more consistent approach to the release of sensitive and identifying information contained in adoption records.

The very first principle "paramountcy of the child's welfare" draws our attention to an inherent difference between the British adoption regulations vis-à-vis Austrian and Swedish legislation where adoption can only take place with the consent of birth parent(s). This fact remains of ethical concern and there will always be debate, not only as to where the decision for a child's future lies, but also as to whose interests are being served by that decision. When judging whether a child should be placed for adoption without its parents' consent (with the possibility of greater stability

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[23] Information: Sarah Pepys, Pact Charity Reading, February 2009; Irene Vasik, N.Ö. Landesregierung Abteilung Jugendwohlfahrt, September 2010 ; Tobias Hübinette, Multicultural Centre Botkyrka, and Karin Nykänen, Östersund Socialförvaltningen Familjerättsenheten, December 2010.

[24] Text taken from: Fergus Smith (2006) Adoption Now. Law, regulations, guidance and standards.

and a more secure childhood), or remain in a children's home (in deference to the parents' sensibilities), it behoves all legal bodies, welfare authorities and adoption agencies to consider the child's interests as paramount.

The past decade has seen an increase in the adoption of children in care with 2,700 children adopted in 1999/2000 against 3,800 in 2004/2005. This peak in numbers was followed by a slow decline in 2007/2008 with only 3,200 adoptions from care 'situations'. In spite of this period of decline, the care system is currently placing approximately 500 more children for adoption, per year, compared to ten years ago (Holmes, 2008).

National Adoption Week is an annual campaign, organised by the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) in co-operation with adoption agencies and the media, to raise awareness of adoption issues and to recruit prospective adoptive parents. BAAF publishes a newspaper 'Be my parent' and runs the 'Be my Parent' website. A matter of detailed attention is the "matching" of children and placements. The following are some of the key criteria used in this complex task: culture, language, religion and ethnicity with the issue of social class posing especially sensitive questions. Discussion is on-going as to whether class-related lifestyle is a valid basis for the selection or rejection of prospective adoptive parents. Rigid class association has loosened more over the past decades with the employment structure being more varied, increasingly more dual career families and greater cultural diversity existing. Experts report that wealth and spending patterns have become the key indicators (Future Foundation Think Tank, 2006). Nevertheless, it is a fact that the majority of looked after children, and those for whom an adoptive family is a permanent perspective, do come from poor families, meaning that the significance of class differences for the future of these children will not disappear. In reality an absolute ideal 'matching' is hard to be catered for. It is the attempt of an optimal combination of 'matching' and 'selecting' factors that experts must strive for, bearing in mind the child's best interest. Quality standards undergo adaptations and changes as decades pass into eras. Journalist Claire Gorham, herself a mixed-race adoptee writing in the Sunday Times on 9 August 1998 states: *I was adopted in 1966. Like my adopted brothers and sisters, I came from a Catholic organisation which, in its holiness, put black and mixed-race babies in the same ward as mentally and physically handicapped white babies. Colour, was clearly seen as a considerable disability in those days*". Her adoptive family epitomised the 1960s "melting pot ideology". Gorham sees the issue of transracial adoption being " hijacked by political correctness" , too many professionals believing that it is better for a child to be waiting in a children's home until a family of the correct match appears on the horizon, rather than being adopted by a white family. In her opinion the well–being

of some of these children is being sacrificed for the sake of dogma *"a particularly ridiculous state of affairs when we are living in what I feel is one of the most racially tolerant societies in the world"* (Gorham: 9.8.1998).

Certain 'same race' policies exist today which continue to polarise debate. On one side, supporters feel that minority ethnic children are likely to suffer problems in relation to racial and ethnic identity and to face racism relatively unsupported by their adoptive families. Hence it appears particularly important to recruit prospective adopters who are able to parent older children, also children with disabilities, children in sibling groups and children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. On the other side, it is argued that prospective adoptive parents wishing to adopt transnationally are often particularly mindful of the significance of identity and cultural issues, and able to meet their children's needs in these areas. Furthermore, arguments in favour of mixed race policies pertain to the general success of transnational adoptions and underline the child rescue aspect, implying that whatever fate and difficulties the child may encounter due to adoption, these are surely relatively minor in comparison with those they would have to contend with in their birth country.

With regard to transnational adoptions there is a certain "free market" pressure discernable in the UK although not to the extent as it is in the USA, the impetus comes from ensuring the "supply" of children and it is clear that those involved have neither interest in removing the "need" for these adoptions, nor any wish to subject prospective adopters to more stringent regulations, but rather to make use of *"their favourable market position within the global economy."* (Kirton in Selman 2000: 82).

2.3.3 Sweden
Sweden, in proportion and in relation to other countries is the country in the world that has received the most children through transnational adoption. It is a country which has indeed a comparatively long history of international adoption that dates well back into the 1930s. At this moment in time when Europe was edging towards the brink of war, some 500 Jewish children found refuge in Swedish foster families. Many of these children were then subsequently adopted. In addition, between the years of the Second World War from 1939 – 1945 approximately 70.000 children were placed in Sweden from their native Finland , some 6.000 of these remaining in their new home country on a permanent basis as either foster or adoptive children. A third wave of adoptees reached Sweden immediately after the end of the war, when 500 abandoned German children were brought to Sweden for adoption placement. These adoptees were partly Jewish children from Eastern

Europe who had survived the concentration camps, some were children of Norwegian mothers and German fathers who were part of the "Lebensborn"[25] breeding programme (Hübinette, 2001).

On a somewhat larger scale, international adoption was initiated in Sweden after World War II as a means of rescuing children fathered by American soldiers in Germany, Italy and Japan from social stigmatization. These children were in many cases mixed-race. It was after the end of the Korean War that international adoption became wide-scale in Sweden. Information from Statistics Sweden (SCB) stipulates 43,882 international adoptees in Sweden born between the years 1932 – 2001 coming originally from more than 130 countries of the world. These international adoptees represent 1-2 percent of all generations born from the beginning of the 1970s. In total international adoptees constitute 15 percent of all non-white immigrants in Sweden and approximately one thousand children continue to arrive in Sweden annually for adoption (Hübinette, 2001).

The statistics indicate that Sweden, together with two other Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Norway, constitute the states with the highest proportion of transnational adoptees per capita (Selman, 2002). Various reasons for this strong Swedish dominance can be traced: one of these is that Swedes coming from a country without colonies discovered the miseries of the Third World in the 1960s and almost felt an obligation to rescue children from poor backgrounds. Another less idealistic motive (Hübinette, 2001) was the sudden disappearance of adoptable Swedish children during the decade as a result of rapid economic growth and a high participation of women in the labour force, as well as the development of an advanced social welfare system. Hübinette also sees as an even more important reason, Sweden's self-image as *"the world's most democratic country and a paradise of human rights, equality and social justice"* (Hübinette 2001:3). With reference to Pred (2000) Hübinette adds that this is an image which is recently being challenged by the sudden appearance of racism towards non-white immigrants.

In accordance with its longer history of transnational adoption Sweden like other Western countries with similar traditions has far more extensive research findings than for example Austria. Adoption research in Sweden can basically be divided chronologically into two generations: the first focusing on mental health during adolescence and the second concentrating on socio-economic factors and epidemiological indicators among transnational adoptees as adults (Hübinette, 2001)). In a very generalistic term, results from these two generations of research do show contradictions: on the one

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[25] Registered Society Lebensborn - Lebensborn Eingetragener Verein founded in 1935 with the objective of increasing the Germanic/Nordic population of Germany. The purpose of the society was to offer young girls, who were deemed as ‚racially pure' the possibility of giving birth in secret. These children were then raised in Lebensborn homes, which existed in Norway, Germany and Austria, in total some 18.000 children were adopted from Lebensborn Homes between 1935 - 1945. (Heidenreich, 2002; Schmitz-Köster, 2003).

hand positive results have been indicated in terms of social adjustment and mental health (Bagley, 1993; Feigelman and Silverman, 1983; Simon and Altstein, 1987). Overall these have pointed to positive results in terms of social adjustment concluding a good mental health among transnational adoptees, fully comparable to the majority population. It is however important to bear in mind that they have been limited to small groups of children and adolescents. On the other hand, researchers from the second generation indicate that transnational adoptees differ from the majority population in Sweden in terms of both socio-economic status and psychiatric well-being, (Hübinette, 2001).

In a large scale study concerning 17,172 international adult adoptees Hübinette (2001) has developed the Theory of Multiple Burdens (see 2.4.1) which illustrates how transnational adoptees are facing extra problems and hurdles in life because of race, adoption, gender, and class factors. In this study Hübinette calls for future Swedish adoption research to follow transnational adoptees into middle age and even up until old age, with a focus on identifying risk factors for social maladjustment and psychiatric illness, in order to develop preventive measures and treatment methods.

2.4 Biography and Identity Research - a glance
2.4.1 Theories of identity relevant for adoption

From biography work undertaken with transracial and transnational adoptees we begin to see the outline of a picture that suggests that the search for biological roots and birth family often becomes the narrative of adult life for many of these individuals (Harris, 2006). This search is often strongly linked to a quest for racial and cultural identity. Whatever the outcome of this quest, whether the sought-after person(s) are found or not found- it is only the beginning of the journey. "*The search for family is, in fact, a search for self.*" (Harris 2006: 12). What we learn about ourselves along this journey is just as important, in fact perhaps even more than the actual outcome.

The theory of identity which has formed the groundwork for subsequent and specific models pertaining to identity issues of adoptees is that of Erikson (1980). The development of identity has generally been associated with adolescence. In Erikson's theory, this represents the fifth stage in which individuals must negotiate the ego identity versus identity diffusion crisis. Erikson believed that identity formation includes the context and environment in which an individual matures. Furthermore he states that identity must be integrated into culture so that a *"unity of personal and cultural identity"* (Erikson, 1968: 20) can be formed. This inclusion of environment and culture into

the theory sets the stage for conceptualizing culture and race into identity formation, particularly for transracial and transnational adoptees (Baden and Steward, 2000).

Extending Erikson's work, Marcia (1980) developed an identity status approach to study identity formation. Marcia included a focus on more of the conscious processes of identity formation as opposed to the unconscious processes delineated by Erikson, who had stated that traditional psychoanalytic theory had not incorporated identity as evidenced by the theory's failure to conceptualise terms for the environment. Marcia's identity statuses were also intended to be outcomes of the process of identity formation and to be structural properties of the personality (Patterson et al, 1992). Marcia uses a graphic model where the presence or absence of an identity crisis and a commitment to an identity determines the identity status of the individual. This model has in turn proved to be important groundwork for the development of the Cultural-Racial Identity Model (Baden and Steward, 2000).

Much of the work addressing identity in adoptees has, as already stated, focused on Eriksonian theory and psychodynamic theories. LeVine and Sallee (1990: 221) note the additional emotional and behavioural stress imposed by adoption in their paper 'Critical phases among adoptees'. They describe the basis of adoptees' adjustment as centred around the process of fully understanding the implications of being adopted. They describe the following phases:

- Phase I – pre-awareness;
- Phase II-dim awareness of a special state;
- Phase III-cognitive integration of biological and social differences;
- Phase IV – identity crisis of the adopted adolescent;
- Phase V – concomitant acceptance of the biological and adoptive family.

Anderson, as early as 1986, advises that "*We also have to recognise the need of the adoptee to learn good things about his country at the same time as he gets an understanding of his social conditions which forced his parents to give him to adoption.*"(Anderson 1986: 29).

To better conceptualise the role of race and culture in identity formation, a distinction must be made between ego /self-identity and ethnic identity. Phinney and Rosenthal (1992) state that positively valued ethnic identity is necessary for the construction of a positive and stable self-identity. They note differences between the dominant culture and adolescents' cultures of origin as primary factors in adolescents' abilities to integrate ethnic identity into self-identity. Yngvesson (2010) speaks of a *"contradiction"* experienced by transnational adoptees between their self-image and the status of being an immigrant applied to them by their adoptive society (Yngvesson 2010: 34).

One of the earliest attempts of understanding the identity experiences of transracial adoptees is offered by Falk (1977, cited in Zastrow, 1977: 57) in which different possible scenarios are sketched out, firstly:

„ at some point the TRA (transracially adopted) child will cast off the protectiveness of the family of orientation and establish his more-or-less independent identity in the community of his choosing. If in this new circumstance he finds himself forced into situations where he is identified stereotypically and he is without prior experience in coping with them, he may face an identity crisis […] His identity will be with the white world, while others will assume that his identity is with the black world. His rearing establishes the white world as his referent, and his new peers demand that his referent be the minority world."

Secondly, drawing on Erikson's work Falk suggests that: *"given the necessary guidance and affection by adoptive parents, transracial adoptees could develop a positive self-concept and the social and interpersonal skills needed to successfully cope with the environment. Through exposure to the history and culture of the transracial adoptees' race, they should be able to obtain more information regarding the meanings and values associated with their race".*

One of the most renowned theorists in the area of racial identity development is Helms (1990) who expanded on the prior work of Cross (1971) to better understanding for the methods by which individuals identify with various racial groups. Racial identity was hereby conceptualised as being comprised of a combination of personal identity, reference group orientation, and ascribed identity. In the first category, personal identity, Helms describes the feelings and attitudes one has about oneself. The second term, reference group orientation, implies the degree to which particular racial groups are used and the third, ascribed identity means the overt expressed affiliation to a particular group. Against the backdrop of Erikson's theory of adolescent identity development (1968) and the role of sociocultural influences, Helms suggests that at different times or stages in individuals' lives, different individuals and institutions are influential in the development of racial identity. During infancy and childhood parents and adult figures of authority will have the most influence, while during late childhood and adolescence peers or cohort and non-familial social institutions (e.g. school, media) will be more influential.

Richards (1994) argues that although identity formation involves the appreciation and awareness of one's difference from others, it also however involves a sense of sameness, commonality with others, and identification with larger groups or systems. There is a need for distinctions to be made between one's personal and one's social identity. With regard to personal identity, Richards

observes that the way in which we are influenced through our relationships with others is more important than the influences of belonging (or not belonging) to social groups. In forming social identities, individuals have a tendency to classify themselves according to those group memberships that they consider to be important. Within a single family, all members will have distinct personal identities while their social identities may be similar. Richards' emphasis on this distinction becomes clearer when seen in an adoption perspective: *"Personal identity cannot be reduced to, nor subsumed under, social identity, and it is a major confusion in much of the debate about transracial adoption that the term 'identity' is used as if it included personal identity, when the phenomena under discussion are aspects of social identity"* (Richards 1994: 82).

Furthermore Richards does not view transracial adoptees as necessarily suffering from identity problems, arguing that personal identity is the basis of a sense of emotional security and because the formation of personal identity is essentially unrelated to the ethnicity of one's family. He underpins this opinion with empirical literature, demonstrating that *"transracially adopted children […] are basically as healthy psychologically as control groups"* (Richards 1994: 83). He describes the controversy about transracial adoption as being focused on the problems that transracial adoptees are likely to have in their social identity and his overall prediction is one that envisages transracial adoptees generally being able to cope with problems of social identity given an already established and secure personal identity.

The ages at which identity formation occurs can vary according to the population and the type of identity being formed. Traditionally adolescence has been seen as the phase during which identity crises take place and identity is formed (Erikson, 1968). However in view of racial and ethnic identity, the developmental stage may differ. Helms (1990) consider racial identity development to be a life-long process. Bagley (1992) describes identity formation as a long-term process cautioning that *" uncertainty and unhappiness at one point in a child's or adolescent's development may simply be a transient phenomenon as the individual copes with certain problems in the formation of personal identity, at different points of the life-cycle"*. (Bagley 1992: 101)

Based on this reasoning, Bagley (1992) advised against studies of adoptees before the crucial stage of adolescence, this opinion being shared by other researchers e.g. Norvell and Guy (1977), Brown (1995) and articulated as follows by Baden and Steward (2000: 323). *"The identity of transracial adoptees may best be represented by those having already traversed many of the identity conflicts inherent in adolescence"*. Mecheril and Hoffarth discuss youth with a migration background as experimenting in the "Möglichkeitsraum Adoleszenz" (2009: 239) in which adolescents perceive

themselves as actors, creating and re-creating themselves in this space in time in which various possibilities are open. Adolescence is seen here less as a phase of life but more as a life link, in which individuals intensively examine their own relationship to themselves. The concept of Adolescence is seen here in a two-fold way: on the one hand it is a social space of self-experience and possibility; while on the other hand it is a cultural construction of biographical periodicity.

Two geometric figures are frequently used to visualise processes of adoption theory and practise. The Adoption Triangle, Figure 3 (Sorosky et al., 1978) depicts the system partners i.e. the adoptive child/children, the biological mother/parents and the adoptive parent/parents. The Adoption Rectangle, Figure 4 (Textor, 1996) includes the adoption agency as a fourth party. The inclusion of the adoption agency is a significant one as these agencies often play an informative and supportive role pre/post adoption. Child Welfare Units, though often involved in the Permission Procedure, are rarely contacted for support by adoptive parents.[26] In some European countries post-adoption work is a mandatory part of Child Welfare Authority work and some countries (e.g. Ethiopia) insist on receiving post adoption development reports up until the adoptee is 'of age'.[27]

Adoptee/s

Biological parent/s   Adoptive Parent/s
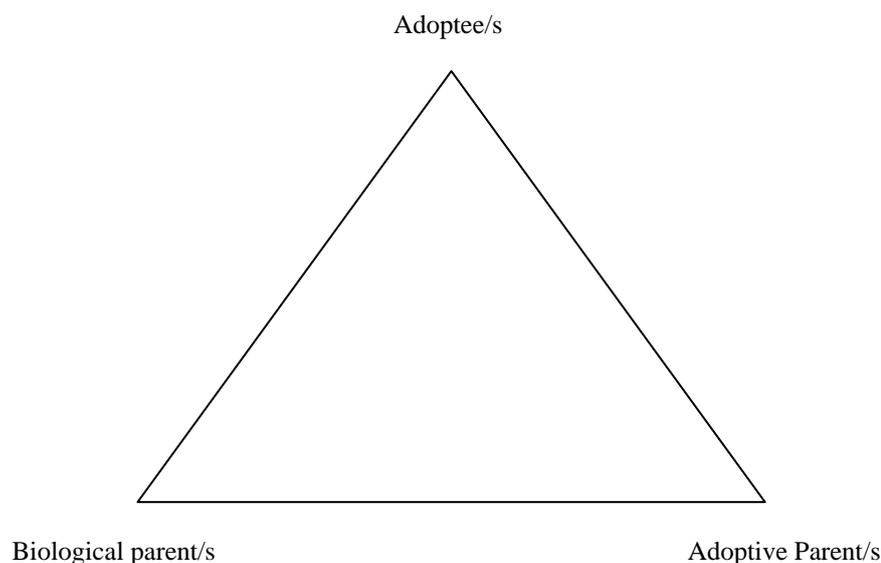
Fiqure 3: The Adoption Triangle - *Source:* Data modified from Sorosky et.al., 1978.

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[26] Baum Breuer, E. (2007) Magistra Diploma Thesis, p. 138
[27] Information source: Zentralbehörde (Central Authority for Adoption) Amt der N.Ö. Landesregierung.

Adoptee/s   Biological parent/s

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Adoptive parent/s   Adoption agencies
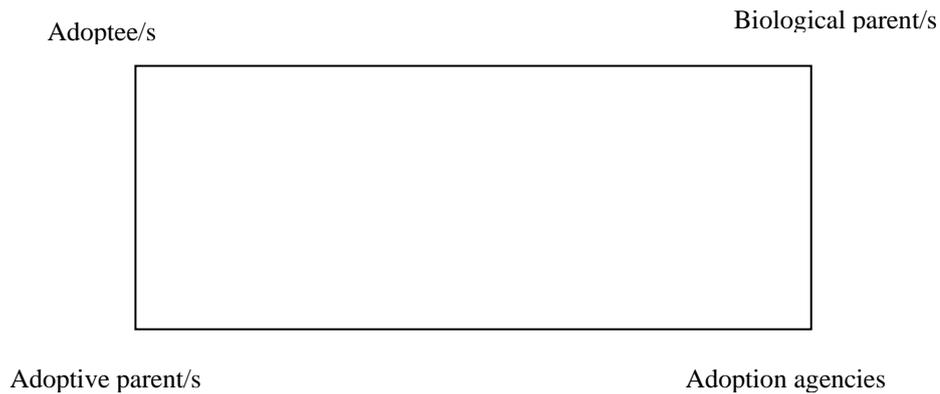
Figure 4: The Adoption Rectangle - *Source:* Data modified from Textor., 1966.

Matters relating to family and sibling constellation are of considerable importance and require information and planning. In adoption placement, professionals usually strive to place the adoptee in the „*Benjamin*"position (Lange 2003: 94) as the youngest in the family. The official recommendation of the United Nations on this subject is as follows: „ *The general experience is that it is better for an adopted child to be younger than the older children and preferably of the opposite sex to the one nearest in age" (*cited in Kühl 1990: 178).

The above recommendation is based on natural experience, in which the *"newcomer"* (Lange 2003: 94) child is always the youngest. However in adoption work there are cases in which more than one child is to be adopted simultaneously. These are often cases of siblings, who should if at all possible, remain together. In such situations it can happen that the biological order is interrupted and an adoptee may be placed as a *"sandwich"* child (Lange 2003: 95) or even as the eldest child. Hoksbergen (1986, 1987) has investigated and discussed the relevance of family and sibling constellation in connection with adoption success in a number of large-scale surveys. According to a study undertaken by Winter-Stettin in 1984, it appears that placement of an adoptee as the eldest child led to adoption breakdown in double the amount of cases and by far the most adoption breakdowns (six-times as many) occurred in the case of placement of the adoptee in a sandwich position (Lange 2003: 95).

Adoption more often than not entails a great deal of waiting and uncertainty, both these elements can affect identity development and can be nerve fraying. Bearing the interest of the child in mind, it is perhaps helpful to consider the advice of Anna Freud and Joseph Goldstein, who state that, if someone has to wait, then this should be the adults and *"not the child"*. For the prospective parents this waiting time can be a positive factor for their own preparation (Goldstein et al 1991: 43).

The term "Adoption Syndrome" was coined by the Swiss child psychiatrist, Herzka (1977) who defines this syndrome as specific psychopathological risk situation. He sees this condition as being comprised of three aspects:

i)   Risk status of adoptive child after either a high risk pregnancy, high risk birth or both;

ii) High expectations placed on the child by the adoptive parents;

iii) Identity issues and problems experienced by the adoptive child/youth.

Herzka (1977) describes a "Visiting Card Function" vis à vis the adopted child. This means that adoptive parents (especially those who haven't been able to have their own children) often believe that they have failed in their social 'duty'. Thus they have particularly high expectations in regard to their own parenting capabilities. In Herzka's experience, adoptive parents often feel particularly obliged to successfully parent their child/children so as to be able to show off an 'excellent product'. Inevitably the child will feel pressured both emotionally, socially and educationally. In striving to meet these expectations (attached to the often felt requirement of gratitude) psychological problems may arise. These can take the form of aggressive outbursts, guilty feelings, moodiness or unpredictable behaviour. Studies (Huth, 1978; Schleifer, 1997) have indicated that adoptive parents are often less reticent to seek professional help than biological parents and do so at the first signs of trouble. This can be explained partly due to the fact that adoptive parents in the process of adoption have often become more open and informed regarding psychological support services. Of interest here though is the understanding that adoptees have often been exposed to difficult circumstances prior to adoption. It is easier for adoptive parents to seek support given that the responsibility for these circumstances does not lie with the adoptive parents (Schleifer, 1997). While this can be a helpful understanding for adoptive parents, if taken to the extreme it can result in a more detached attitude which can be detrimental to the child's development. It can result in a form of disassociation from the adoptive child which could imply that because the child is not their 'flesh and blood', difficult behaviours have nothing to do with the parents whatsoever.

Other studies (Schechter, 1964; Peters et al., 1999) have shown that fantasies of adoptees regarding their biological families, a common feature, may be connected with ensuing potentiality for psychiatric problems. However, according to the German authors Oelsner and Lehmkohl (2005), these fantasies, although most upsetting, appear necessary in order for the adoptee to come to terms and work through the issue of his or her adoption. Of interest is a detail from Scandinavia where 'motherland tours' are organised, in which adoptees visit their country of origin with a group of

peers, accompanied by social workers but not by their adoptive parents.[28] This could be a possible indication of adoptees' loyalty conflict experienced by adoptees between their adoptive families and their quest for information on their birth families. *"The more adoptive parents acknowledge the importance of the natural parents and involve them in the upbringing, the more the relationship between the adoptee and the adoptive parents is strengthened."* (Hoksbergen 1997: 44). The question arises whether couples applying for transnational adoption are aware of the implications that are involved with becoming a transracial or transnational family?

Although in some countries like the US, UK or Sweden already many transracial and transnational adoptees have grown into adulthood, there is still comparatively little reliable and consistent information available regarding the most effective and suitable methods of working with these young people. Instead, literature addressing transnational adoptions has primarily focused on proving or disproving the predictions of supporters versus opponents of transnational adoption.

The Swedish researcher Hübinette, (who himself was transnationally adopted from Korea) has developed the Theory of Multiple Burdens (2003:8) with regard to the international adoptees of Sweden. This theory implies that transnational adoptees *"have too many issues to deal with"* caused by a combination of hurdles due to race, adoption, gender and class factors. On the one hand, the same problems of racism and discrimination as non-European immigrants which prevent them from achieving a higher socio-economic status due to the race factor. And on the other hand, they face the same psychological traumas of having been abandoned and separated from their birth parents as domestic adoptees do, this being the adoption factor. Hübinette has data showing that transnationally adopted females in Sweden have more problems than male adoptees, which can be explained by self-destructive behaviour caused by the sexualisation of non-white women that is prevalent in Sweden, especially applying to females from Asia from where three-fourths of transnational adoptees originate. The class factor is derived from the possibly negative effect of having grown up in an upper or middle class adoptive family and the difficulties encountered by adoptees in their adult lives to reproduce the social status of their adoptive family, being a non-white in Swedish society.

Cases where adoptees have been successful in tracking down members of families of origin have in some instances nevertheless left the transnational adoptee still feeling like a cultural (and sometimes linguistic) outsider within their birth family (Harris, 2006). Studies have shown that support, (both personal and professional) is extremely important in preparation for and during the search and also

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[28] Information (2007) Family For You., Workshop International Adoption – foreign adopted children and their integration. Vienna

in the immediate post-contact period. A distinctive line that has emerged in life pictures examined in some of the consulted studies for this survey is that of adoptees being able to find their own coping strategies and solutions. It seems that there is no set procedure or programme, people finding answers at different stages of their lives. Their journeys are never easy and their destinations are often uncertain, however such studies suggest that it is possible for transnational adoptees *"to move on from feeling acute pain and grief, to gaining a more grounded self, a sense of being rooted within oneself and a sense of belonging"* (Harris 2006: 13).

Baden and Steward (1995) introduced a model for understanding and depicting the unique identity experiences of those reared in racially and /or culturally integrated families. By the nature of the composition of such families, these children's childhood experiences are qualitatively different than those of children raised in racially and culturally homogenous families with regard to issues of race and culture. As a result, children from these racially and culturally integrated families need helping professionals who are trained to meet the differing needs of these individuals. Psychologists have recently begun to address the subject of racially integrated families, however they are still at the onset of their ability to accurately understand and identify the factors affecting members of racially integrated families. It was with the intention of developing guidelines for increased information and support of psychotherapists working with these individuals, that the Cultural-Racial Identity Development Model (Baden and Steward 2000) was created.

In this model culture and race are separated by the creation of two specific dimensions regarding ethnic and racial identity. *"The transracial adoptees' levels of identification with a culture or cultures is determined by their levels of knowledge, awareness, competence and comfort with either or both the culture of their own racial group, their parents' racial group, or multiple racial groups."* (Baden and Steward 2000: 324). The model works with a two-pronged approach as a framework of understanding. Firstly the model accounts for racial and cultural differences among parents and their children, Secondly the model takes into consideration the impact of experiences and attitudes of adoptees parents, peers, extended family, social support networks and the larger community on the adopted children. Introduced into this model is a Cultural-Identity Axis with a further two dimensions: Adoptee culture Dimension and Parental Culture Dimension. Using this research tool, Baden and Steward identify four types of cultural identities: Bicultural Identity; Pro-Self Cultural Identity; Pro-Parent Cultural Identity, and Culturally Undifferentiated Identity.

Swientek (2001) in comparison offers us a three-group categorisation in relation to transnational adoptees and their cultural identity process:

1. In the first group we find adoptees who find no acceptance for their country of birth, denying the often difficult prevailing conditions such as poverty, famine, crime which led to their adoption.
2. Members of the second group on the other hand only identify with their country of birth , actually knowing the country and speaking the language.
3. In the third group we find adoptees who, after getting to know their country of origin, find themselves torn suffering under a feeling of homelessness between the two countries and two cultures. This may culminate in identity crisis, thus calling for a re-development of identity.

Trolley (1994, 1995 p. 261) advocates the identification of variables which are beneficial for promoting the culture of the country of birth and integrating these with the culture of the new home country. These guidelines accompany the advent of the concept of "Hybrid Identity" which is of particular relevance in our context of transnational adoption. New post-modern hybrid forms of identity are developing among the young generation (Hugger, 2007) in which contrasts become clearer, requiring tolerance and dialogue. According to Hein (2006) hybrid identity may on the one hand pose a conflict of culture for individuals, on the other hand it can open up the possibility for access to multiple cultures, by means of *"cultural navigation"* (Hein 2006: 397) affording individuals of bi- or multiple cultural heritage with active coping strategies. Thus hybrid identity no longer implies a plotted path to diffusion but more so one which may lead to a positive new identity construction, with these individuals in turn acting as communicators, facilitators and translators (Hall, 1994) between cultures.

"It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated[…] The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha 1994: 2f.). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2007: 58) writing on the subject of Global Youth and transnational ways of life state that *"diese Personen haben nun gewissermaßen eine Brückenfunktion"*.

Transnational adoptees have identities which are impacted by two cultures. If this bridging of cultures cannot be accommodated, there is danger of a life-long tear between the two cultures :
"The margin of hybridity, where cultural differences 'contingently' and conflictually touch, becomes the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience", (Bhabha 1994: 296.) This

may lead to a *"long-distance Nationalismus"* for another country or culture and to no sense of belonging.[29] If on the other hand, it is possible to connect the two cultures this can be both a valuable and enriching aspect of the individual adoptees' lives and indeed for the societies they live in. Hall (1994) speaks of people with hybrid identities as being translators. In their research on growing up in the era of Globalisation (2007), Villanyi, Witte and Sander include a contribution by Hugger on hybrid identities: " *Hybrideidentität versucht also, diese Gemengelage von Ambivalenzen, Brüchen und Komplexitäten für die Subjektkonstitution unter kulturellen Globalisierungsbedingungen auf den Begriff zu bringen. Sie bricht mit den Entweder-Oder-Zuordnungen des modernen Subjekts und tauscht diese für ein Sowohl-als-auch ein"*. (Hugger 2007: 175). Growing up with a migration and/or hybrid background entails not only a process of transcending geographical and cultural borders "Natio-ethno-kulturelle Zugehörigkeit" but is also a phenomenon which articulates and accentuates the inner and outer frontiers, the frontiers between "Wir" and "Nicht-Wir", (Mecheril and Hoffarth, 2009: 244f). In the context of our study, this "Wir" may imply a sense of belonging not only to family, community, ethnicity or culture, but also mean a sense of affiliation to other transnationally adopted young people.

Adoption is a critical life-event which poses life-long questions and brings life-long implications. The questions which arise from this event are often extremely painful but they are also questions which may enable enormous creative power to be generated as we can see from the poetry and prose by adoptees in England introduced in this study. In the coming chapter we will now be taking a look at the theory of life-span development which in the author's opinion, is relevant for the biographies and identities of transracial and transnational adoptees.

2.4.2 Critical life-events and phases
The path of life courses is paved by life events and phases and it seems relevant against the backdrop of this study's subject, to take a look at experiences and situations which occur in the lives of adoptees. For this purpose I wish to include aspects of Life-Span Development into my considerations, which propose that human development occurs from conception to death and that it involves the intricate inter-weaving of biological, sociocultural and psychological processes (Baltes, Reese & Lipsitt, 1980; Dannefer and Uhlenberg, 1999).

Life-Span developmental Theory conceptualizes individuals as producers of their own development (Labouvie-Vief 1981). Adults are seen as being actively involved in the creation of opportunity

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[29] Interview of Homi K. Bhabha in TAZ 19.11.2007

structures for their own development. At the heart of the Life-Span Approach to human development is the emphasis on the dynamic interrelatedness of the developing individual and the changing sociocultural context (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Within the theoretical framework of Life-Span Developmental psychology, non-normative or critical life-events are considered one of three major forces that influence development across the life span (Baltes et al., 1980), these three forces being: Normative Age-Graded, Normative History-Graded and Non-Normative.

Basically a differentiation is made between normative and non-normative critical life-events. The former are situations which are a part of life courses in general, such as entering kindergarten and school, beginning a job, forming a partnership, becoming a parent, retiring from work, etc. while the latter are specific occurrences which do not necessarily apply to every biography. Adoption is one of these. Personal associations of what is regarded a critical life-event vary greatly between lay persons and professionals, such as psychologists or social workers. *"Wenn sich Psychologen mit der Bedeutung von Lebensereignissen auseinandersetzen, dann beschäftigen sie sich mit einer großen Vielfalt von Situationen, die in ihrer Wichtigkeit und Zentralität für die betroffene Person klar variieren."* (Rosch Inglehart: 1988: 14f.). Lay persons generally associate critical life-events with negative connotations such as death of a spouse or close relative, illness, accident, divorce or loss of job, or on a larger scale with natural catastrophes like earthquakes, floods, tornados or man-made catastrophes such as war, attacks, acts of violence, chronic life pressures like bad working conditions and even problems of a daily nature such as conflicts, rows, etc. In contrast, professionals include in their list of critical life-events not only negative but also positive situations and happenings. These may include special personal achievements like exams, awards, new positions, also holidays and special occasions. Also neutral situations, such as changes in working hours are included within the term critical life-events as studied for the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes and Rahe, 1967).

With regard to transnational adoptees, experience shows that basically normative life-events may indeed include non-normative critical elements, posing implications for further situations. Anna Freud in her writings for example, lists *"Trennung von der Mutter"* as a critical life situation (Freud 1956-1965: 1656). This creates enormous psychological problems for children to cope with. Studies from the Hampstead Child-Therapy Clinic with children who were separated from their mothers in early years, and who were not able to bond with a suitable substitute person, showed that after a fairly normal development throughout childhood these individuals suffered severe personality disorders on entering puberty. The absence of a mother-substitute did not make it easier

for them to bond with others, on the contrary in a time when other youths start growing away from their parents, these youths began a passionate search for a mother.

Like all children, adoptees go through changing phases in the course of their development in which they are exposed to vulnerability and instability. Besides, it should not be pre-supposed that adopted children can cope with the fact of their adoption along with the regular problems of growing without going through psychological and inner-family crises, especially not during the period of puberty and not even if they have particularly sensitive and understanding parents (Harms and Strehlow, 1990). Berger (1993) raises the question as to whether, in cases of entirely symptom-free development of adoptive children, it is not more a case of over adaptation and that these individuals are possibly limited in their own true sense of creativity and activity.

The central theme of being adopted is not only coping with 'double parentage' but primarily the grief filled question, 'Why did my mother give me away?' (This question also featured dominantly in the responses in this study). The question sadly often remains an unanswered secret. According to Berger (1993) it is important to let the individual mourn about a situation that has been decisive for his or her life, but for which the adoptive parents bear no responsibility. In therapy it is vital that the therapist can lead adoptive parents to understanding and accepting their child's mourning process. It is not so much the loss of connection to biological parents that is mourned, but more the idea of not being wanted during and after pregnancy and then being 'given away'.

On the other hand, Berger (1993) mentions that often difficulties which are encountered by adoptive parents and are consequently brought forward at counselling sessions, are not necessarily always adoption-specific. If the adopted child has the ability to be more emotionally and cognitively flexible, given the special circumstances of his or her life situation, the more able he or she is able to cope with problems arising throughout the course of their life development.

Just as adoptive parents often think that encountered problems with their children are essentially to do with adoption, so too may adoptees perceive their problems with parents as being specific to adoption. A situation witnessed by the author during a lesson on Foster and Adoption Placements with First Year students illustrates this phenomenon:[30] One of the twenty students in this class was a female adoptee from an Eastern European country. In the first introductory session at the beginning of the semester, she had introduced herself with the statement: „*My name is I…. and I am adopted*". On receiving the semester lesson plan during the course of the session, she noticed immediately that the 9th lesson was scheduled to deal with the theme of Foster and Adoption Placements. After the lesson she enquired as to what the forthcoming session dealing with adoption

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[30] Bachelor Programme, Social Work University of Applied Sciences, Vienna, 17. November, 2008.

would actually focus on. I answered and we spoke for a while, in the course of which I responded to the initial statement situation and asked her whether she would perhaps like to say something to her fellow students on the subject from her first-hand experience. We agreed that she would give my proposition some thought and let me know about her decision before the lesson.

She agreed, and gave a most valuable and authentic contribution to the subject. She had spent ample thought and time on preparing her presentation, which was in part extremely critical, the adoption having taken a very problematic course during adolescence. An extensive discussion developed in class, touching at considerable length on the subject of teenage turmoil. With astonishment the adoptee heard that fellow students (all of which were so called 'biological children' of their parents) had also experienced similar conflicts with their parents. After the lesson, the adoptee remarked to me in confidence, that in a way, this insight was in a strange way *„ a bit of a comfort",* implying that not all her problems were because of having been adopted, but were also a *„bit normal".*

Basically both the adoptees and the adoptive family members have to learn to live with their special situation, accepting limits and constraints, respecting each other and modifying their original expectations. Thus the task of the counsellor or therapist or accompanying social worker can be to act as a kind of interpreter between adoptive child and adoptive parents (Berger, 1993).

As we have seen from Anna Freud, separation for any child from the mother can be a critical life event and the first venture for children into the wider society such as kindergarten or primary school can also be a very stressful critical life event. Thus for adopted children who have already experienced a traumatic separation from both family and culture of origin it is then conceivably an even more difficult transition to have to cope with this life event in their new culture at such a young age when the effects of separation may still be acutely felt. These children may even be re-traumatised by the event. *"Im Kindergarten zeigte Li-Sue zu Beginn Kontaktschwierigkeiten und große Scheu. Nach einem Jahr Kindergarten verweigerte sie den Besuch eine Zeitlang, da die Trennung von der Adoptivmutter ihr so zu schaffen machte. Sie blieb einige Monate zu Hause, die Eltern suchten Rat bei der Sozialarbeiterin. Schließlich wurde eine Kinderpsychologin zugezogen, die nun die Familie begleitet. Im Herbst überprüfen sie, ob der Verbleib im Kindergarten besser geht."* (Baum-Breuer 2007: 80).

It is hardly surprising then that adopted children are sometimes very sheltered by their new families and entry into kindergarten for example may mean first exposure to racial discrimination. An eighteen-year old Indian adoptee in Austria related such an experience when she was five years old: *"on my first day at kindergarten a boy came up to me and called me 'chocolate face', at first I didn't realise that he didn't mean anything nice because I liked chocolate so much myself. Two little girls who had heard him say this gathered around me and were very sweet, telling me not to be upset. I had had no idea what was meant but it was the first time I think that I had a negative experience because of my skin colour – but not the last".*[31]

It will depend partly on how and if at all, the child has been prepared for this event. In order to prepare the adoptive child for such encounters it is necessary that the adoptive parents are themselves aware of possible difficult and critical situations that their child is exposed to. Some adoptive parents appear oblivious to situations to which their children are exposed to. Claire Gorham sketches a sober picture, a far cry from cajoling adults glimpsing black babies in prams or cradles: *"I went through school unaware of race issues, mainly because I was oblivious to them. Racism hadn't been part of my reality at home; I hadn't been primed to expect it, nor was I given any means to defend it – therefore, I simply didn't pick up on any racist allusions or innuendos. My parents loved me as their child. They never treated me as someone who was going to be potentially disadvantaged. […] That was my parents' way of loving: idyllic and colour-blind. But however benign their intentions, this wasn't representative of society's view of me. The world, I discovered later, would view me by my colour, whether positively or negatively."* (Gorham: 9. August 1998 Sunday Times).

How the transnationally adopted child and adolescent copes will also depend on the reactions and preparation of the child's environment, hence participation in preparatory courses is so important for prospective adopters. A psychologist's observations from the International Workshop on Adoption at the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna 2007 points for example to : *"situations in which children have stopped to cry altogether because of neglect and no bonding persons in the hospitals or homes where they have been during transition between abandonment and adoption. Starting to cry again is for these children a tremendous risk, for they are "opening" themselves, making themselves vulnerable for possible new loss."*[32].

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[31] Translated from an interview in German given to the author of this research during her Magistra Diploma Thesis (2007)
[32] Presentation Reinhard Neumayer : Vienna, 12.April 2007

Even once children have left the orphanages or children's homes for their ‚new' families, a long period of adjustment for both children and adoptive parents often lies ahead. Heinz Karlusch, a child psychologist who has worked extensively in the field of adoption and foster placement, relates that these children may have a strong emotional backlog-demand. *„Junge Kinder mit emotionalem Nachholbedarf bemühen sich vor allem um den Erhalt von Nähe und emotionaler Zuwendung und bringen noch wenig Energie für die Konzentration auf die ‚sachliche' Welt auf. Ihre Motivation zum Lernen benötigt noch dichte emotionale Begleitung und Unterstützung.*"[33] Children in such situations will seek emotional and physical proximity to their ‚new' bonding persons, often prefering to play with a toy whilst on the lap of their mother or father, rather than playing on the floor, which other children of their age are often already doing.

Some children who have been subject to several separations in the course of their young lives, almost paradoxically display massive attachment irritations, such as fear, aggression or denial as soon as they find themselves in situations where they long for friendliness and closeness. It is of paramount importance that adoptive parents are informed of these possible patterns of behaviour and that they realise that any changes take time, often a long time.

Another example from this Workshop cited by Pascale Vayer, mother of three adopted children and director of an Adoption Agency "Kleine Herzen", shows what unexpected problems may be encountered in the course of adoptions:

"A two-year old child was adopted from an orphanage in Russia. The adoptive mother spent several months together with the child in the orphanage before returning with her new son to Austria. He had been one of a large group of children and the adoptive mother wanted to give him a lot of individual attention during the first months in his new home and environment. She took leave from her job and spent her entire time with the little boy. However instead of blossoming under this special care the child became more and more restless and unhappy. The adoptive mother became quite desperate that their interaction was not working and began to suffer from depression. On consultation with a psychiatrist she was recommended to return to her job part-time and place her son in a play group for five hours a day. The child's (and mother's) situation improved, for the little boy had never been used to being without other children and only with adults."

According to Rosch Inglehart (1998) there are four central question areas regarding reactions to critical life-events.

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[33] Karlusch H., Verstehen, vertrauensvolle Hoffnung, liebevolle Geduld. Eltern für Kinder Österreich, Festschrift Heft 97, November 2005.

1.   The first pertains to the initial conditions and situations for the development of critical energy.

2. & 3.   The second and third are directed towards how the individual person is likely to react in the critical life-event situation, and if a prognosis can be made, whether they will address the situation with a retreating or coping strategy.

4.   The fourth area referred to is the long-term consequences, and whether any prediction can be made regarding the future course of life, being more stress-relieved or stress-burdened. It is this aspect of long-term consequence that appears of particular relevance for the subject of this study. Adoption is a non-normative critical life-event with implications for the entire life-trajectory of the individual.

For some critical life events and phases formulated stages and epigenetic diagrams (such as Erikson's "Eight Ages of Man") have been developed to illustrate and explain the sequence of reactions experienced by individuals in such situations. In his study of Attachment and Loss (Bowlby, 1982) describes three stages which are of great relevance also for the situation of children in the adoption process. In the first stage, the person is driven to try and retrieve the loss by crying, anger and protest. This is followed by a second stage in which the person is depressed, desperate and disorganised while the third stage sees the advent of a letting –go and re-organisation of life. Bowlby added a fourth stage positioning this stage at the very onset of the process, one in which the person is in a state of shock.

These theories are nevertheless ambivalent; due to individual differences one can never predict either the duration or intensity of these stages. There are no uniform answers (Silver and Wertman, 1980) and studies are highly contradictory. On the other hand they can be beneficial for those directly or indirectly involved, as they are marked by positive life-philosophy. Another important aspect of these depicted stages is that depression is viewed as a normal part of reaction and not as a pathological behaviour.

To conclude it is worth considering stage theories because they allow for the normal expression of a variety of behaviours in the specific context of transnational adoption. It is for this reason that the author's own life-event model will be employed to help us understand the biographical and identity issues surrounding the critical life events for transnational adoptees.

3. Methodological Considerations

This section discusses the theory behind the qualitative approach with a special focus on specific approaches and methods employed in this study. The analysis carried out on the interview data is discussed in terms of content thematic analysis, interpretation of pictures and the documentary method. Instrumentation outlines the development of the Problem-centred, semi-structured interview employed in the research. The importance of the Interviewer in terms of possible bias is also discussed along with participant criteria and ethical considerations.

3.1 Qualitative Paradigm

The essence of qualitative research is that it focuses on the socially constructed nature of reality and is generally exploratory and takes into account the relationship between the object(s) of research and the researcher. Qualitative research, by its very nature does also imply a certain degree of bias. However, maintaining objectivity bias is as important in the conduct of research as in the reporting of its findings. Furthermore, the word qualitative implies that the focus of research cannot be gauged or measured by mass, quantity, intensity or frequency but that the emphasis of investigation is placed on specific characteristics. Qualitative research holds also the conviction that the social world has to be discovered and that this can only be achieved through first-hand observation and participation in natural settings (Hammersley, 1990).

3.2 Phenomenological Approach

The approach taken in this study was in accordance with Patton's (1990) symbolic interactionist and phenomenological perspectives. These perspectives approach the meaning and experience of the particular phenomenon under investigation. In this case the phenomena of interest are the experiences of transnational adoptees and the implications for their identity development and life trajectories (as reflected in this Study's research question).

3.3 Documentary Approach

Considerable progress that has been made in qualitative methods is directly connected with developments in the field of text-interpretation. On the basis of a thorough reconstruction of their formal structure texts are treated as autonomous domains of self-referential systems.

Reality must, if it should become scientifically relevant, be articulated by ways of 'protocol sentences' or 'basic statements' and that means in the form of a text. However, such a

methodological status has been denied to pictures in empirical research in the field of social sciences up to now. The documentary method is based on Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge and opens up a methodological access to pictures, allowing also for methodologies from art history, such as developed by Panofsky and Imdahl to become relevant for empirical research in the social sciences (Bohnsack, 2008). Therefore, verbal contextual and pre-knowledge can be controlled methodically in the documentary interpretation of pictures. The reconstruction of formal structure of pictures thus becomes of central importance in analysis.

3.4 Interpretation of Pictures Approach

Acknowledging that pictures have the methodological status of self-referential systems has consequences for the ways of understanding pictures as a media of communication. A differentiation is made between two quite distinct means of iconic understanding: a communication *about* pictures, in contrast to an understanding *through* pictures (Bohnsack, 2008). The later implies that our social reality, our world, is not only represented by – but also constituted or produced - by pictures and images. Bohnsack refers to the sociologist Mannheim when he explains that the understanding and the orientation of action and everyday practice through the medium of iconicity is mostly pre-reflexive, iconic or image-based understanding and that this is embedded in tacit knowledge, in 'atheoretical knowledge'.

It is the transition in interpretation from the sphere of explicit knowledge to that of tacit knowledge that is termed transition from Iconography to Iconology, which constitutes the shift in analytic stance from 'what' to 'how' and from immanent to documentary meaning , implying a change in perspective and analytic mentality (Bohnsack, 2008). This signifies a change from the question of what cultural or social phenomena are all about, to how they are produced.

The aim of employing picture material in critical pedagogical methods is to re-construct and de-construct the messages and meanings of pictures and to become conscious of personal constructs. According to Reich (2005) three patterns can be identified in this connection:

Firstly by means of constructing – *"we are the inventors of our reality"* This implies: self-experience, try out yourself, experiment; secondly by re-constructing: *"we are the discoverers of our reality"* This means to learn to understand why former /present observers have interpreted a picture in a certain way, the motives have to be understood to understand the facts; and thirdly by de-constructing : *"It could also be different! We are the detectors of our reality"* this pattern is about different ways of viewing and about what has been missed out in other interpretations.

On the basis of these expectations and criteria of qualitative (picture/ photo) research and pertinent literature, the following steps are described by Bohnsack (2003 and 2007) for the implementation of picture /photo analysis: Step one is to frame- In order to capture pre-knowledge it is necessary to locate the picture. This implies that information is required when and where the picture or photo to be analysed was taken and where it is situated in the book or photo album it has been chosen from. Step two is the re-construction of the first impression- Pictures and photos evoke feelings and associations. In order to be able to capture these they must be consciously re-constructed. It is therefore of significance for the later interpretation to involve oneself with the process of recognition of these very first impressions. In step three an interpretation is formulated, the intention being to focus on what we see incorporating our level of knowledge. In progressing in this manner acquired methods and descriptions are applied. Step four constitutes the reflecting interpretation meaning that the iconicity of the medium picture or photo is to be singled out in this part of the analysis procedure and this is done on two levels: firstly, *formal composition* which entails looking at the formal structure and aesthetic elements keeping in mind the overall composition and totality of the picture. There are three dimensions regarding the formal composition, these are: planimetric composition, scenic choreography and perspective projection. The second level is that of the *iconological or iconic interpretation.* The aim in this step is to fathom the actual meaning, intention and content of the picture or photo as a document. This is achieved by comparative analysis and by synthesis of two types of knowledge (Friebertshäuser et al. 2007). The one being knowledge about the piece of work and the other pertaining to the time dimension of the picture's origin and diagnostic understanding of this era.

In concluding, the use of picture semantics and syntax make it possible to filter out the primary and secondary subject contained in the picture / photo. Ultimately this enables the researcher to develop a typology, by means of working with contrasting objects and thereby detection of common and / or differing traits, inherent in these pictures or photos.

3.5 Triangulation of perspective

Triangulation is the procedure often employed in social sciences to indicate that a mix of methods has been used with the aim of doubling or tripling checking results, enabling a form of cross examination. The main purpose of this approach is to increase credibility and validity of attained results in qualitative research. The technique of triangulation has proven to be a most relevant and effective method for facilitating validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. Its particular reference and application pertains to combining different research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Thus, by means of the combination of

multiple observers, theories, methods and empirical material, researchers may combat intrinsic biases or problems that arise from merely single-method, single-observer or single-theory studies. Definitions of triangulation include: the "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen and Manion 2000: 254); a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (O'Donoghue and Punch 2003: 78) and as contended by (Altricher et.al., 2008: 147) triangulation "gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation". Denzin, (1978) identifies four basic types of triangulation: data triangulation – involving time, space and persons; investigator triangulation – involving multiple researchers in an investigation; theory triangulation – involving the use of more than one theoretical scheme for the interpretation of the phenomenon and finally methodological triangulation – involving the use of more than one method to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires and documents. In the particular case of this study, traits of data and methodological triangulation are discernable.

3.6 Qualitative Thematic Content Analysis

The data analysis by means of Qualitative Content Analysis enables a systematic analysis of texts, pictures, or films. It is an interdisciplinary method used in various scientific fields. However the subject studied with the method of scientific content analysis is not the actual action but insight on actions found in reproduced form (i.e. texts, pictures, films). In the case of this study, the texts to be analysed by way of the method are comments and answers taken from semi-structured one-to-one interviews. It is not only the manifest content of the written form that is analysed but also the latent structure and the patterns inherent in the texts, the aim being the systematic processing of communication material.

Regarding Structure the aim is to filter a certain structure from the material whereby criteria are identified in advance, in addition it is necessary to include anchor examples and coding rules. In this study the information derived from the data (both interviews and photographs) is placed into themes of content (interviews) and typologies (photographs).

An interpretive, phenomenological, thematic content analysis (Merten ,1995; Smith et al.,1995). Bohnsack's picture interpretation approach was also applied to the biographical photographic material. These methods constitute two very different approaches, the first offering explicit answers to explicitly formulated questions, while the second affords implicit information and is used in a reconstructive way. These two contrasting methods with the addition of the method of data collection – Problem-centred, semi-structured Interview – form a three-pronged approach to

investigating the theme of transnational adoption against the backdrop of a literature study inherent for this research.

Consistent with an idiographic approach, themes that emerged from the interview data were developed and articulated by the participants and researcher (Smith et al., 1995). Results were interpreted in light of the literature. Interpretive analysis was further validated and verified using a triangulation approach where data are scrutinised using different theoretical perspectives (Patton, 1990).

3.7 Instrumentation

3.7.1   Problem-centred, semi-structured, Interview (APPENDIX F)

For this study, the Problem-centred, semi-structured, Interview was selected as the key instrument of research (Witzel, 1989).   Also, as a visual guide to aid a life-span perspective of each interview, the template for Biographical Research was further developed (see 3.7.1.4).

The Problem-centred Interview is characterized by a combination of induction and deduction. Researchers do not approach their field research neither entirely devoid of theory nor concept (Lamnek, 1995). Pre-knowledge is employed in a heuristic-analytical way and a certain openness in the interview situation is guaranteed through narrative elements within the conversation.

Three basic aspects characterise the Problem-centred Interview:

(1) By centring its attention to the problem area, this form of interview is oriented towards the focal questions of the investigation. Pre-knowledge on the subject of research helps the researcher to understand the answers of the interview partners and to concentrate the interview situation on the actual problem area.

(2) The subject orientation of the Problem-centred Interview is flexible with regard to the subject of research, and can be used both as a single method and also in a combination of methods. For this reason it may be useful to not only study the subject of research by means of problem-centred Interviews but to use additional elements of this method (e.g. group discussion, biography methods or standardized questionnaires).

(3) Finally, the orientation of the entire research process forms the third basic aspect of this method.

3.7.1.1 Implementation of a Problem-centred Interview

The Problem-centred Interview is characterized by an introductory question which is intended to stimulate the interview partner to speak freely. These questions are formulated as openly as possible but at the same time should already be directed towards the problem area. In the further course of the interview, specific 'probe' questions are posed which enable a deeper and more detailed involvement with themes that have arisen during the initial phase. Should aspects of the questions not be addressed by the interviewee then further 'prompt' questions can be used in order to ensure comparability and comprehensiveness of data collection. According to Lamnek (2002) it is necessary for the researcher to be adept in the formulation and use of an interview guideline in order to ensure a balance in methods between openness and theoretical pre-knowledge. The pre-formulated initial question, the 'probe' and 'prompt' questions belong to the genre of narrative communication strategies. If comprehension questions become necessary, these may be posed in the form of specific 'probe' questions. By means of this comprehension strategy, it is possible for the researcher to complement deductive aspects which were inherent before the implementation of the interview with inductive aspects gained from questions and answers during the course of the interview.

By means of mirroring, interview partners sum up the interview statements in their own words, thus also giving them a possibility for correction. Comprehension questions have the intention of clarifying the opinion of the interview partner. Another way of gaining details on the specific problem area is by means of confrontation however this is the most difficult method of questioning and requires trust and sensitivity.

3.7.1.2   Development of Interview Schedule

The interview categories, individual questions, probes and prompts were developed during the course of interview preparation, whereby pilot interviews were conducted with teenage adoptees in June 2009. After evaluation and recommendations by the pilot group, amendments were made and additional dimensions added.

3.7.1.3 Interview Schedule

As well as 6 questions relating to demographic data, the interview schedule was comprised of 22 questions divided into 5 sections as follows:

- 5 questions relating to the actual adoption

- 6 questions relating to coping strategies & possible support

- 5 questions relating to sense of cultural identity

- 2 questions relating to future life path

- 4 questions relating to photos chosen by interview partner

Issue of Adoption: questions aimed to discover if adoptees had any information about their biological background and heritage, and if so, from whom they had received this information. Another area of interest related to whether adoptees had any photos or belongings from this first period of their lives. Further questions pertained to the age of the adoptee at the time of emerging interest on this subject as well as to the specific catalyst for this interest, e.g. projects at school, group meetings of other transnational adoptees, trips to countries of origin etc.

Coping Strategies and Support: aimed at defining needs within and beyond the adoptive family. In this second section of the interview, questions related to coping strategies and support which had possibly been sought and received in order to come to terms with their specific situation. A focus was placed on adoptees' reactions to their adoption in the course of their lives, with specific reference to persons to whom they were able to confide in. Furthermore, information was elicited as to aspects which have been found helpful in these situations and also regarding aspects which have proven to be difficult during upbringing.

In this section questions were addressed to the interviewees, in their roles as experts, regarding measures and support mechanisms for young people who, similar to themselves, have been adopted transnationally.

Cultural Identity: aimed at tracing any subjective feeling of particular attraction and/or bonding on behalf of adoptees to people coming from their country or continent of origin. Another series of questions sought to find out whether adoptees felt any kind of bond with their birth countries and whether they had ever returned to their country of origin since adoption or whether they had ever undertaken any steps to obtain more information about it. Furthermore, it was hoped to be able to gain insight to the feeling of identity of each of the interviewees in this respect, whether it was that of belonging to their new home country, or more so to their country of origin. The concept of "Hybrid Identity" was raised and explained (where necessary). Of further interest included the composition and constellation of their circle of friends, whether mainly Austrian or Swedish or more multicultural.

 Future Life Path: questions sought to ascertain whether interviewees thought that they would eventually want to find out more about their country of birth and their roots. In closing they were

asked how they envisaged their futures regarding profession, environment, country of residence and family aspirations.

3.7.1.4 Development of the Visual Model for Biographical Interviews

Further to the development of the Visual Biographical Research Template (see 1.4), aspects of Care and Choice were identified as being the two most important environmental influences for human development and were chosen as the two intersecting environmental axes. Indeed, Maslow's needs hierarchy (1973) stipulates the importance of care vis à vis shelter, bonding, relationships and self-esteem. Maslow also addresses the later 'tasks' of life and the axis of Choice reflects the movement of people towards 'self-actualisation'. The author of this research considered it appropriate to apply the needs hierarchy to this specific enquiry about the life course of transnational adoptees.

Thus an axis of care was applied to the 'life axis' at an intersection just after 'Birth' and includes the life phase of Adolescence as it was expected that many of the issues covered by 'Care' would be just as pertinent for Adolescents as for young children. This axis encompasses all the issues surrounding the adoptees' understanding of what happened to them, from birth through to the present time, in terms of all aspects of care or lack thereof. This axis also acknowledges adoptees' emotional experiences in relation to issues of care and their cognitive processes about these experiences. Finally, the axis of care brings together the first four research enquiries around which the interview questions on issues of Care were based:

1. Demographic information on adoptee and adoptive family
2. Adoptees' level of information about heritage and adoption details
3. Levels of interest and strategies in dealing with the issue of adoption
4. Adoptees' sense of cultural identity and belonging

The Axis of Choice was chosen as the second intersection, placed just after adolescence. Of interest was the adoptees' envisaged future life path and their aspirations. The visual model for biographical interviews has been developed from the adoptees' present standpoint: looking back along their life-path but also looking forward into the future. This axis accounts for the fifth and last research enquiry: how Adoptees' envisage their life ahead.

5. Adoptees' envisaged future life-path
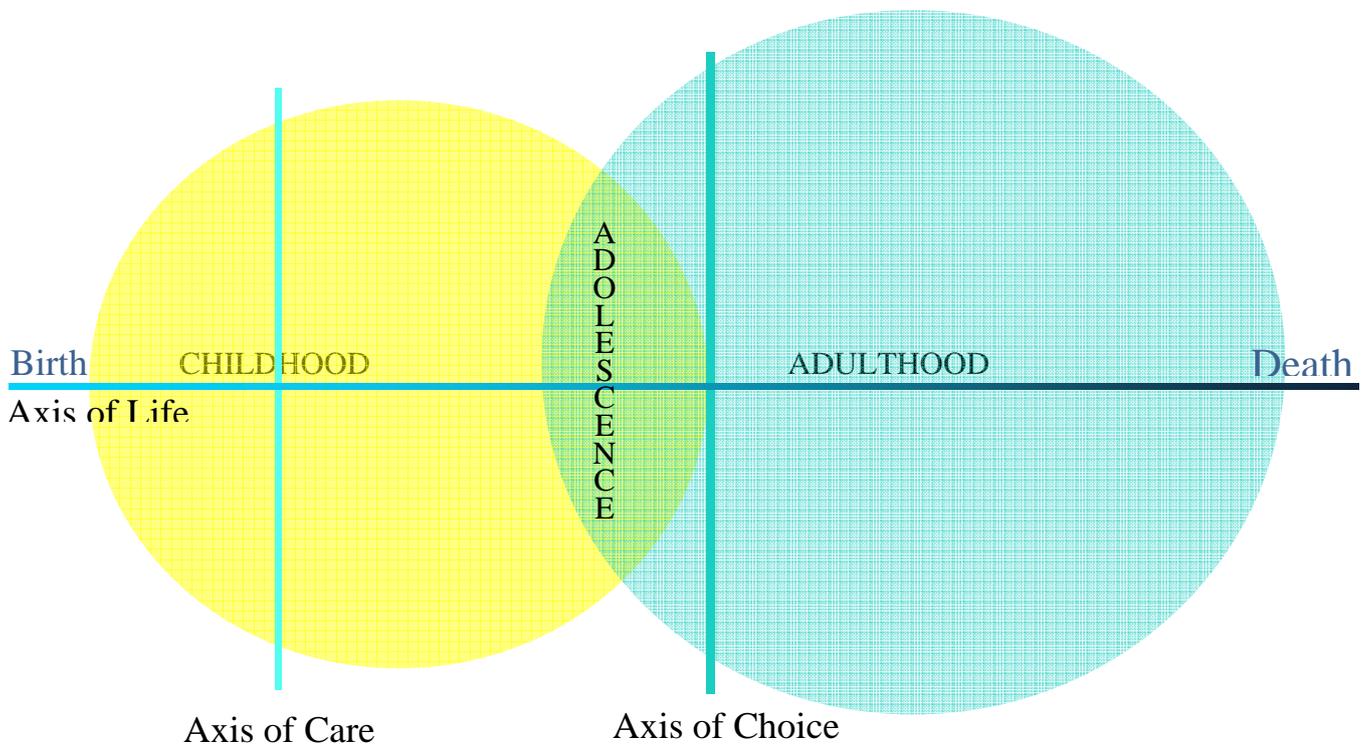
Figure 5: A Specific Nature/Nurture Approach for Biography Work with Transnational Adoptees

The purpose of this second phase is to allow for a life-trajectory enquiry. Along with the semi-structured interview, this visual nature/nurture approach allows us to structure material derived from the interviews along the life-span continuum.

3.7.2   Subjects' own Photographs

The photographs were part of the methodological approach of the study according to the guidelines suggested by Bohnsack (2008).

3.8   The Interviewer

It is important to note the potential for interviewer bias. The author of this study has worked as a Social Worker for 35 years. Given this area of interest and extensive knowledge base, every effort has been made to interpret respondents' interviews without bias or judgment. It is equally noted,

however, that the author's experience has enhanced the ability to interpret the interview responses vis à vis the issues of transnational adoption. Informed by both personal and professional experience, the author has developed a model, namely The Axes of Adoption, for working with and researching this population of subjects.

3.9   Participant Criteria

For the purpose of this study it was important to interview transnational adoptees in countries with a comparable adoption situation. Although Sweden has a much longer history and tradition with international adoption, its adoption process is of comparable status with Austria and was therefore chosen as another country from which to collect data. Data from England was also sought; however the situation with regards to adoption cannot easily be compared with that of Sweden and Austria (see 2.3.2). For reasons that shall be discussed, live interview data was not able to be collected. In the place of interviews an anthology of poetry and reflections by transnational/transracial adoptees living in England was used for the collection of appropriate data - (see 4.4.1.)

It was considered important to obtain homogeneity of response, unconfounded by too great an age difference between the respondents in this study. With this in mind, and in accordance with Patton (1990), a criterion sampling method was employed to recruit subjects whose age group spanned the teenage years to young adulthood. The pre-determined criterion for the selection of this age group was to develop more of an understanding of the additional difficulties faced by young transnational adoptees in this particularly difficult developmental stage and the coping strategies they employed to address them. The slightly older age group of young adults was a necessary inclusion with the specific criterion being their ability to address their experiences from a position of fresh hindsight. This was considered a useful lens through which to plot the course of these specific subjects' life trajectories.

Participants were informed that their anonymity was guaranteed. Those participants who consented to an interview were instructed that their responses would remain confidential by removing identifying information from their interview responses. They were informed that all demographic, identifying information and consent forms would be stored separately from interview data.

4.   METHOD

4.1   Recruitment

The identification of interview partners was made possible through co-operation with adoption placement services and Child Welfare Offices in Sweden and Austria. In Sweden fourteen prospective interviewees were identified and contacted in writing by social workers at the Child Care Office in Östersund. Out of those contacted, nine indicated a willingness to participate in an interview. In Austria co-operation was sought with an adoption network in Vorarlberg, in the Western most province of the country and through Child welfare Offices and Adoption Agencies in Vienna and the province of Lower Austria in the Eastern part of Austria. Of the ten identified prospective interviewees contacted a 100% response rate was returned, indicating a willingness to participate in an interview.

4.2   Participants

Nineteen subjects participated in the interviews (eight males and eleven females).

4.2.1 Demographic Information for Respondents

Table 1 summarises demographic information for each respondent. Three main factors emerged: age, age of adoption and sibling constellation. The largest cluster of ages was in the age range 14-19 with the youngest interviewee being 14 and the oldest 33 years of age. Of interest is that this majority of age range was represented only in Austria. There was a greater spread of ages represented by Sweden's interviewees. Out of the nineteen subjects, eight were adopted within their first year while nine were adopted between the ages of 1-3 years old. The oldest age of adoption was 6 years. Of note is that Sweden had the greater number of children adopted in their first year while Austria represented a larger number of adoptees in the 1-3 age range. Of the interviewed adoptees 6 (approximately one third) grew up as single children, while in a two cases biological siblings were also adopted by the new family. At a notably higher rate, adoptees in Sweden were raised together with non-related adopted siblings, in total six and in Austria two cases. A further sibling constellation was identified in Austria where in three cases adoptees were raised together with biological children of their adoptive parents.

Table 1: Demographic information for Transnational Adoptees

Demographic factors	Austria	Qty	Sweden	Qty
Age range – Male	14-19: 20-30: 30+:	3 0 0	14-19: 20-30: 30+	2 2 1
Age range – Female	14-19: 20-30: 30+:	5 2 0	14-19: 20-30: 30+:	0 3 1
Age at adoption	0-1: 1-3: 3+:	3 6 1	0-1: 1-3: 3+:	6 2 1
Sibling Constellation	Single Child: Sibling adopted by family: Adopted Non-related Sibling: Siblings-Biological children of AP's:	4 1 2 3	Single Child: Sibling adopted by family: Adopted Non-related Sibling: Siblings-Biological children of AP's:	2 1 6 0
Education: Parents	Academic Skilled Professionals Unskilled Labour/Home	4 14 2	Academic Skilled Professionals Unskilled Labour/Home	2 13 3

4.3   Materials

4.3.1 Semi-structured Interview Materials

These consisted of an Interview Schedule (Appendix D) and a Mic Active Zoom Handy Recorder

H2 used to record and transcribe the semi-structured interviews.

4.4 Procedure

4.4.1 Poetry and Prose – a perspective from Adoptees in England

In the original plan of this research the author's intention had been to interview transnational adoptees in England. However, despite considerable support and connections from various organisations and individuals within the United Kingdom, this plan could unfortunately not be carried through. It is difficult to ascertain where the actual reasons for this shortcoming lie, whether due to a possible lack of time capacity and persistence on behalf of the researcher or in a certain hesitancy of agencies in England towards what may have been seen as a foreign intrusion into internal affairs.

Nevertheless input from adoptees in England has been included in this study, albeit in a very different form. On one of the researcher's field trips to the UK, her attention was brought to two compilations of reflections by transracially and transnationally adopted people living in England.[1] and [2]. These anthologies contain poetry, prose and drawings by and for adoptees, suitable for reading and reflection either by adoptees alone or with support from their adoptive family. According to Rhona Cameron such creative venting of inner-most feelings, answers a need of adoptees to reflect and portray in whatever form, the overriding feeling of loss experienced. It can often be that this feeling of loss is not understood by adoptees themselves or by others close to them and is "*often compounded by guilt and the fear of the betrayal of our adopted parents*". This may lead to an inner isolation and goes hand-in-hand with „*the desperate longing to fit in*". Indeed, *"the complexity of adoption and the void it leaves us with must be hard for those not adopted to comprehend. The void can stay with us our entire lives, if not addressed"* The Colours in me, 2008 (Foreword with no page number).

The poetry and prose in these anthologies offers us a deep insight into the experiences, feelings and life situations of young, transracially and transnationally adopted individuals. The material has thus been incorporated in excerpt form as an introduction and illustration to each of the main themes and sub-themes which emerged throughout the thematic content research analysis – see Chapter 5. Complete versions of the poems are included in Annexe E. These collections are valuable examples of adoptees' self-empowerment strategies and could be a wonderful role model for adoptees in other countries.

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[1] Harris, P. Ed. (2006) In Search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people. British Association for Adoption and Fostering. London.

[2] Harris, P. Ed (2008) The Colours in me. Writing and Poetry by adopted children and young people. British Association for Adoption and Fostering . London.

4.4.2 Semi-structured Interview

The identification of interview partners was made possible through co-operation with adoption placement services and Child Welfare Offices in Sweden and Austria.

Sweden

An initial fact finding mission to Sweden was undertaken by the researcher in September 2008. Thereafter possible interview partners were identified and contacted in writing by social workers in Sweden. Persons above eighteen years of age were addressed directly, below this age the contact was through the adoptive families. The introductory letter explained the nature of the research and interview. A consent form was included with the letter which addressees were asked to sign to indicate their willingness to participate. Those who consented to interview were asked, in writing, to bring with them one to three photographs which bore significant relevance to their development of their individual identity.

A second one-week trip (December, 2009) was then undertaken, by the researcher, to conduct the interviews. Nine interviews were conducted in Sweden with persons adopted from the following countries: Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face at a variety of locations organised by the Social Services (an office room at Mid-Sweden-University) and in some cases venues were chosen by the participants themselves, (cafes, a restaurant and the researcher's hotel).

Austria

In Austria the identification of interview partners and organisation of meetings was less complicated. Co-operation was sought with an adoption network in Vorarlberg, in the Western most province of the country and through Child Welfare Offices and Adoption Agencies in Vienna and the province of Lower Austria in the Eastern part of Austria. In total ten interviews were conducted in Austria, of these interview partners three had been included in the first research study of the author in 2007. Countries of origin of the Austrian adoptees were: Hungary, India, Kurdistan and Romania. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face at a variety of locations arranged directly between the interviewees and the author of this research. Locations of choice were a Paediatrician's office, family homes and cafes.

4.4.2.1 Interview Procedure

The one-to-one interviews were conducted in the adoptees' language of choice (in most cases this was the subject's first language i.e. German or Swedish. In two cases however the interview partners wished to answer in English). In the case of Swedish interview partners, a simultaneous translation was carried out by a professional interpreter, organised by Mid-Sweden- University in Östersund. A professional interpreter was employed to carry out these translations so as to avoid any personal bias and confounding factors that may have occurred with translations carried out by friends or family of the adoptee.

Interviews were recorded and took approximately 40 minutes to complete. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded by the researcher. The Swedish interviews were transcribed from the Professional Interpreter's simultaneous English translation. The Austrian interviews were recorded and subsequently translated from German into English by the researcher. All identifying information was removed.

At the beginning of each interview the researcher introduced herself and informed participants about the purpose of the study and format of the interview. The researcher explained what was expected of the interviewees and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses. The respondents were then asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (Appendix G). All interviews were completed by the researcher.

Twenty-two open-ended questions were then asked of the participant. The first eighteen questions pertained to background, adoptive factors and cultural identity while the last four related to the interviewees' photographs (see 4.4.3). All questions were delivered separately and in numerical order (1-22). Probes and prompts were put to the subjects, where necessary, throughout the interview. Each verbatim transcription amounted to two-three pages.

4.4.2.2 Interview Analysis Procedure

The interview transcripts were analysed for emerging themes relating to the main research question and research enquiries, *"[…] beginning with particulars and only slowly working up to generalizations"* (Smith et al., 1995: 19). One of the main advantages of this procedure is that *"Themen (Inhalte) beliebiger Art in vergleichsweise wenige Kategorien sortiert werden können"* (Merten 1995:147). All the transcripts were read and analysed noting paraphrases, generalisations, and reductions thereby capturing elements of significance within each interview transcript, and

emerging themes were identified. From the analysis of these themes, a master list of themes and sub-themes was derived.

4.4.3   Procedure for Collection of Photographic Material

Included in the initial invitation to interview was also the request that each respondent select and bring with them one to three photographs. Explanation was given on the intention of including these photographs in the research. In most cases copies of the chosen photographs were brought to the interview, however in some cases photocopies had to be made immediately after the interviews, either at the university office or photocopy shop, in two cases photos were sent after the interview with attached explanations as to what and whom the photographs depicted and where the pictures are kept.

4.4.3.1   Interpretation of Picture Analysis Procedure

The collected photographs were viewed and analysed by means of a five-step procedure (see 3.4). Through a process of contrast typologies were developed, thereby detecting common and/or different characteristics as well as filtering meaning, intention and primary and secondary subjects of the photographs.

4.4.4 Enhancing Quality and Credibility

A triangulation approach (Patton, 1990) was used to analyse the data, in order to minimise potential bias, and enhance reliability and validity of the final analysis. Two researchers (i.e. the author and a colleague who was also investigating in a similar area of research) independently analysed the nineteen interviews and compared thematic analyses. A 80% congruence was found when the analysts compared their coding for themes and sub-themes.

De-identified examples from the transcripts, used to identify the themes, were given by each researcher to justify the placement of each theme. Any disparity between the themes was discussed between analysts until agreement was reached. To enhance the face validity of the themes, sub-themes and defining examples, two study participants were asked, independently, for their reactions to the question: "Do these findings seem believable and reasonable?" Both participants, independently, agreed that the findings were credible and reflected their own perspectives and experiences. No changes were recommended.

5 Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section has been organised into two parts:

Part 1: discusses the data derived from the interviews with transnational adoptees in the form of a content thematic analysis;

Part 2: discusses the data derived from the interpretation of the photographs (brought to the interviews by the adoptees) in the form of three identified typologies.

The discussions of results in both Parts 1 and 2 pertain to the research question and enquiries upon which this study is based.

5.1   Part 1: Interviews

5.1.1   Content Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis produced six themes: 1) Abandonment, 2) Adoption, 3) Attachment, 4) Cultural Identity, 5) Support Factors and 6) Envisaged Future. These accounted for transnational adoptees' understanding and experiences of their own adoption, the development of their cultural identity, the felt levels of support available and their expectations for the future.

All six themes contain a number of sub-themes varying from two to four (see Table 2). The function of the sub-themes is to further expand and elucidate the major theme. Each theme and sub-theme is defined and discussed below using pertinent passages from interviews. The nineteen interview partners are categorized into eight groups (A-H) in Table 3, according to: age; occupation (i.e. pupil/student/employee/ plus a special category regarding parenthood); and location in Austria and Sweden.

5.1.2 Thematic Analysis of Interviews

The results of the thematic analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes derived from a Thematic Analysis of the Interviews

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Abandonment	i. Worthlessness ii. Loss iii. Isolation
2. Adoption	i. Information ii. Protective Factors iii. Emotional Factors
3. Attachment	i. Adoptive Family ii. Peers iii. Own Children
4. Cultural Identity	i. Country of Birth ii. Country of Adoption iii. Identity Crisis iv. Identity Development
5. Support Factors	i. Adoptive Parents ii. Education iii. Social Services & Counselling iv. Coping Strategies
6. Envisaged Future	i. Qualifications & Professional Aims ii. Settling Down

Table 3: Summary Groups of Interview Partners

Group	no. of participants	Gender mix	socio-demographic situation
A	4	M/F	teenagers, pupils/apprentice, Dornbirn, Vorarlberg
B	2	F	teenagers, pupils, Mödling, Lower Austria
C	4	M/F	adult students in Innsbruck and Vienna
D	2	M/F	teenagers, pupils, Östersund
E	2	M	adult students in Stockholm and Östersund
F	1	F	adult student who has become a mother, Östersund
G	2	F	adult employees who have become mothers, Östersund
H	2	M/F	adults in prof. work , Östersund + Jämtland County

1. Abandonment

I remember being abandoned.
It is etched deep inside my body.
It is a wholly sensory memory.
[...]It is a pre-verbal memory.
I told no one about it.
I had no words,
so I could not tell anyone about it.
Imagine that!
I imagine it as a black hole.[34]

Abandonment is a critical life event (Rosch Inglehart, 1988). It has been termed the *"A"* word (Brown 2000: 32) which in the case of these nineteen interview partners, occurred either immediately after birth, within a few months of being born, or up to six years later. Although in terms of actual 'being', it is conception that constitutes our onset, it is birth that we take here as our starting point of the life course. (No responses indicated any known information on conception or pregnancy histories). Many concepts and facts evolve around the term „birth": date of birth, place of birth, birthday, birth language, birth country, birthmark, etc. For most people these are part of ordinary life or just formalities to be filled out. This situation is very different if one has been adopted. Each of these above terms then has a completely different meaning with a possible dual implication: *date of birth-* may mean a guess, who knows when I was really born?; *place of birth -* may also mean a place I will never actually know; *birthday* – may also mean the day I was left and abandoned; *birth language* – may mean a tongue that I will probably neither ever hear nor be able to speak; *birth country* – may mean a distant place which I will perhaps visit, but will it ever be a home country?; *birthmark* – may mean a genetic mark that no one else knows about but maybe some relative also has. To this list we may add *birth mother and family of birth* terms relevant for adoptees encompassing an inner yearning and search of belonging, which may accompany them throughout their lives.

The notion that adoptees are "*special"* because - as is often used to explain to them about their adoption - they have been especially "*chosen"* is ambivalent (Jardine 2000: 486).

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[34] Deborah Weymont „ Black holes – mapping the absence" In: In search of belonging (2006: 20).

Results indicated far reaching implications in the cases in which children were abandoned as cited by a young adult woman (G2):

> *I have no information apart from the fact that my birth mother left me in a restaurant which she often frequented […] According to the report she left me with my belongings in a bag and said she was going to the wash room but never came back for me.*

A difference in perception was highlighted between being literally abandoned, i.e. left somewhere or intentionally being set out somewhere, as opposed to being brought to a carer or care institution. In families with several adoptive children the case histories are often very varied and it appears that differentiation occurs, this being a certain comfort as in the case of another young woman (H2):

> *I was therefore not abandoned, as were my adoptive siblings. Someone cared enough for me – this makes a difference. […] I had no problem talking about adoption, but my siblings did, especially my brother who was abandoned on a beach, maybe it's also worse for him to have been abandoned as a boy, girls are often abandoned. He never talks about it.*

However, for those who were abandoned, the comparison of situations may prove to be additionally painful with lasting consequences as stated by a two-fold mother (F1):

> *This situation of having been abandoned has an impact on the rest of my life and on my relationships.*

i. Worthlessness

> I started asking her questions like, how did she meet my father? What was he like? She insisted that it was a one-night stand. I deliberately asked her about the adoption papers saying that she had been assaulted, and she said that it was not an assault.[35]

Results in the interviews brought to light feelings of worthlessness experienced in regard to the birth family. In the case of a female student (C2), she felt that because she was of no worth to her original family, indeed more of a burden, she was given away:

> *In total we were sixteen children, I was number thirteen, apparently I was ill with Hepatitis B, of no use for the family and I was a girl – that's why they gave me away.*

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[35] Ron McLay "From darkness to light – a transracial adoption" In: In search of belonging (2006: 313ff.).

Worthlessness was mentioned as an experienced issue in relation to adoptees' collection from their countries of birth and journey to new home countries. In the majority of cases adoptees had been collected from the children's homes or orphanages by their adoptive parents however in two cases only one parent came to collect the child. In both these cases the adoptees reported that their relationships to the parents who had remained in the country of adoption were more distanced. A female adult (G2) related having been sent to the new home country on her own, her prospective parents only having seen photos of her from the adoption agency:

> *I wasn't picked up from the orphanage by my adoptive parents. I came alone to Stockholm just accompanied by an air hostess on the flight country.*

The feeling of worthlessness was also acutely experienced in another case throughout childhood (C4) culminating in adoption breakdown when the adoptee was thirteen:

> *My adoptive mother never accepted me, she was physically violent towards me when I was smaller and later she mishandled me psychologically, like saying things like that my real mother never wanted me.*

Upon intervention by the child care authorities, she was transferred to a crisis centre and then placed in a children's village where she remained until beginning her studies at university, returning to the village every holiday.

In economic terms, the fact that most adoptees come from poor countries (Hoksbergen, 1993; Selman, 2009) some of whom have experienced reproaches that they should be grateful for having been saved from poverty, has added to an underlying idea of being potentially worthless. A statement made by a young female student (C4) gives some indication on this subject:

> *I should be grateful that I've been adopted from India as everybody is only poor there.*

ii. Loss

I shall never hear you whisper, Tum meri jaan hai
(you are my life)
I shall never hear you say, Mujhe tum pyaar hai
(I love you)
I shall never hear you call me, Meri beti
(My daughter)
I shall never hear you tell me, Tum khubsurat aur haushyar ladki hun
(You are a beautiful intelligent girl)
I shall never feel your hug and kisses again
Nor you mine.[36]

The issue of loss was encountered in various facets, constituting according to (Sykes, 2001) the foundation on which adoptive families are built. Specific dimensions stated including that of loss of living a life in the birth country, hereby losing access to birth culture and language. Primarily loss was experienced on a personal level with the loss of parent(s), siblings and extended family, and in one case of a teenage male in Sweden (D1) the loss of an identical twin:

> *This thing with my twin brother, I only found out about half a year ago. I was irritated everybody in the family was talking about it. My mom did research and she'd known about it before but only told me recently. She's never told me if she's known about my twin brother all along, it's not important for me, it's important for her. I want to meet him, but it doesn't have to be right now.*

In addition, the issue of loss was found to occupy adoptees' thoughts also with regard to the loss that their adoption has implied for birth parent(s) as illustrated by the comments of two teenage adoptees (A1) and (D2):

> *I'm only interested in my mother, where she comes from, what kind of background she has and why she did it: gave me away.*

> *My reactions when I think about my adoption are that I think about my biological mother and how she is doing.*

---

[36] Perlita Harris "I shall never hear you whisper" In : In search of belonging (2006: 35-36).

iii. Isolation

I was born into the world, small weak and powerless

Given a name, clothes hugged now motherless

No one to call my own

No place to call a home

I slept for a while, curled up in a ball

All fragile and alone

Would anyone love me at all?[37]

The isolation experienced by adoptees pertained to situations when they felt alone and isolated in a specific situation. For some these appear to be pre-verbal memories, for others such as the teenage girl (B2) quoted below, these situations were experienced consciously and could be articulated:

> *Then one day I was picked up by car and taken back to Austria by my adoptive parents, I can still remember this. I cried the whole way to Austria.*

Furthermore a sense of isolation was experienced when confronted with being different this was often the case when adoptees entered into kindergarten or school, leaving the protective environment (Falk, 1977) and atmosphere of their adoptive families. A young mother (G2) recalled her own school days:

> *When I started school I began to become aware that I was different from the other children.*

In one case, (C2) the fact that the adoptee was always referred to as the 'adoptive child' enhanced the feeling of isolation (the adoptive relationship between mother and child was not outwardly apparent as the child was from Eastern Europe and the mother Caucasian):

> *She always said that I'm her "adoptive child" never "her child" this I really noticed as of the time I started primary school. […]It's OK to tell a child that he/she is adopted but one shouldn't keep on saying this a lifetime long.*

Isolation is also described as being felt acutely in familial relationships in which no deep attachment has taken place (Bowlby, 1982 and 1988) and is illustrated by a young female student's (C2) comment below:

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[37] Julia (at age 14) "The beginning of me" The Colours in me (2008: 38).

Everything to do with my mother has to do with the adoption, because if I had been her biological daughter then nothing would have bothered her about me the way it has. […] She was trying to force a personality on to me that was similar to hers, and was bothered because I wasn't of her flesh and blood.

Children, who have spent their early years in orphanages or children's homes in the company of other children, may feel isolated if they are only in the company of adults in their new surroundings. Thus, in such cases well meant individual attention on behalf of adoptive parents may prove to be contra productive (2.4.2).

2. Adoption

Angry
at birth parents
D aring to trust new family
O bedience is very hard
P atience is needed
T ime is a healer
I need to be helped
O dd feelings are flying
N o one can understand me[38]

The overall issue of adoption including the sub-themes of Information, Protective and Emotional Factors constitutes the second major theme of this analysis. For the majority of adoptees contributing to this study, the interview situation was the first time that they had been questioned on the subject of their adoption. For some it appears that this was initially a daunting prospect, as mirrored in the quote of a teenage male (D2) below:

> *When the letter for the interview came, at first I didn't want to come and do it but the more I thought about it, the more it felt OK.*

In another case the interviewed male adult (H1) reports that the possibility of sharing his experience was welcomed both by himself and by his mother:

> *My adoptive Mom was very happy that I was asked to do this interview directly because otherwise it's always her who is asked. I'm glad about the directness.*

The general reaction of interview partners to this co-operation was positive, although two teenage males appeared uncomfortable with the situation and some of the questions, one of them (A1) took up the offer given by the interviewer, to turn down answers to questions:

> *I don't want to say anything on that question.*

Although the subject of adoption is ever present in the lives of adoptees, results indicate that interest for the issue varies, depending on stages of life, capacity for comprehension and specific events. A teenage female (B1) stated:

> *I see adoption as such positively but what's going on in the media with stars and celebrities trying to promote themselves with their "good deeds". I think it is a cheek and is disgusting. But as I said, as such I am in favour of adoption.*

---

[38] Chantelle (at age 12) "Adoption" The Colours in me (2008: 87).

For many, starting kindergarten or school were catalyst events for triggering awareness for adoption (see also 1 iii) . In these situations, adoptees reported often being confronted with direct questions from other children pertaining to their being 'different' (Richards, 1994). A teenage male (D2) and a teenage female (A2) said:

> *I was physically different, I'm brown skinned and this came up on my first day at school, funny.*

> *People asked me why I'm brown. At the beginning it wasn't pleasant because I didn't know what it was about, I thought that I was like the others.*

But the fact of being darker was not only experienced as being negative, on the contrary one young woman (G1) stated:

> *People in Sweden love tanned skin, they envied my colour, that's been good and I've enjoyed that.*

On a further positive note, an overriding feeling conferred included such statements as one given by a student mother (F1):

> *I felt that I was something very special in a very positive way. I can remember this feeling.*

Significance was given to being able to fathom why the adoption had taken place (LeVine and Sallee, 1900; Hajal and Rosenberg, 1991; Yngvesson, 2010) for example, the birth mother had been very young and single, or the birth parent(s) had died. Other plausible reasons stated for having been given up for adoption included general economic and social situations, i.e. poverty, no possibility for adoption in the country of birth or destitute standards in local children's homes.

Such answers show a certain amount of knowledge and understanding on the general life situation in the respective country of birth. The following comments by a male student (E2) and male teenager (D1) in Sweden and teenage male apprentice (A4) in Austria underline this conclusion:

> *I haven't had any negative feelings about the adoption. It was done for a good reason and I have a good life here so I feel very positive about it.*

> *Vietnam is a very poor country, I'd rather be here. I know that life is better here.*

> *I think it's super that I was adopted, I've got a really good life here, in India my situation wouldn't be nearly as good. To start with I'd be in a home.*

Other answers such as the one below by a female student in Austria (C3) were more directed to an emotional feeling of having been saved and a rescue narrative (Swientek, 1995; Yngvesson, 2010):

> *I thank god for my parents in a very special way, these parents waited especially to get me. It was the biggest and best thing that could ever have happened to me that I was adopted by these parents. It's a different kind of fate and I came to these parents for a different reason.*

The majority of interviews stipulated how important it was that adoption was treated as an open issue within their adoptive family, this openness referring to both a pragmatic access of information, as well as to an atmosphere and readiness for transparency. Openness is essential in order to achieve increased mutual understanding within the highly complex network of the adoptive family (Silverstein and Demick, 1994).

Negative association with the issue of adoption was encountered when adoptees felt that they had had to give primary consideration to the feelings of their adoptive parent(s), rather than to their own needs as commented by an adult female adoptee (H2):

> *My parents never actively brought the subject up. I think that we as children didn't want to upset our parents and that's why we didn't bring it up.*

There was also report in two cases of an underlying expectancy for gratitude toward having been saved. One female student in Austria (C2) recalled trips to her country of birth, which were conducted essentially with the following objective in mind:

> *[…] so that I can appreciate more what I have here. They never seemed interested themselves.*

i. Information

> On Sunday 18 May 2008 at 11.15 am. my mum and I had a special talk. My mum said
> to me: "I've got to talk to you" […] I was frightened, curious, wondering what's up:
> a cold feeling on my skin, butterflies in my stomach.
> […]
> Mum said, "Elliot, you are my son and I love you very much, I need to talk to you about you: why I'm telling you is
> you're at an age to understand. Eliot, you didn't come out of my stomach You came out of someone else's.[39]

---

[39] Elliot (at age 11) "Before and after" The Colours in me (2008:88).

In practically all cases, data on adoption was given to the subject by the adoptive parents, only in two cases was a social worker stipulated as an additional source. The information on the adoption included name of parent(s), birth village, town, city or province, and sometimes also the name and place of the orphanage or children's home, as in the case of a mother in Sweden (G1):

> *I know the name of my biological mom. At the time when I was a baby, people went round to poor villages in Ecuador and tried to buy children for adoption. My mom had very little money and at the time little girls were very sought after. I know the area but I don't know anything more about my biological mother.*

However, in the majority of cases like that of a female teenage in Austria (B2), very little detailed information was available:

> *I don't know very much. It's depressing sometimes but I'm sure that I'll try and find out more, one day.*

In four cases the birth certificate is the only piece of information that they have.

In the majority of cases, thirteen, information was given to the child by both adoptive parents, in four cases only by the adoptive mother and in two cases it was stated that the adoptive father who was the main informant. In some cases, information had been given only orally, in other cases written reports from orphanages and children's homes existed. In eleven cases, adoptees had photos of themselves pre- and during the adoption procedure, four of these even having videos of their collection from the country of origin. An adult female in Sweden (H2) said:

> *I've often watched this film and I remember watching it when I was little. I think it was a really good idea that my Papa made this film.*

Seven adoptees are in possession of objects from the time of their adoption these including bracelets, clothing, a pair of shoes and soft toys. A female student (C2) stated that she is in possession of:

> *…many photos videos, soft toys and most importantly, a pair of red shoes. If one were to ask my adoptive family what they identify me with, it would be these shoes.*

Asked as to a wish for more information, respondents' answers were varied diffuse as can be seen by the following answers: two mothers in Sweden (G2) and (G1) said:

> *Well this is a big discussion currently, the whole thing about the impact of biology versus environment and the development of personality. I think about these questions a lot. Perhaps*

one day I'll want to find out more about my birth parents, today I don't know what would make me want to do so, but this might change.

I'm torn about this but it wouldn't be my first destination, right now it's not a big deal. I'm torn about finding out information on my biological family, somehow I would like to get to know them, see them and see if I resemble them.

While respondents like a young female in Austria (A3) were affirmative on this question:

Yes, my interest is growing. I didn't ever use to think about my birth country and roots but now I'm getting more and more interested. Somehow lots of new issues keep coming up.

Some adoptees like the respondent immediately above appeared on the brink of starting to find out more about their backgrounds, one male (E1) in fact leaving for his first return trip to his birth country immediately after the interview. He in fact dwelt on the fact of the timing of the interview situation and impending trip to his home country:

I've never been back to India since my adoption but as I've already mentioned, I'm going back in two weeks time, it's really quite a coincidence that this interview is happening just now!

In one case of another female teenage in Austria (A2) fear was explicitly cited in regard to finding out more:

I'm scared of my roots. I'll have to confront myself and go there with my parents, really go to Delhi in the north and go to the home. I've never really spoken to my parents about my fears but I'm sure they'd react quite normally. They'd try to help. My mother always says, that fear can only be conquered if you confront yourself with it.

In a minority of cases, no interest whatsoever was stated by a male student (C1) in Austria. However whether there is really no interest or whether this is a case of denial, remains unclear in the opinion of the researcher:

No, I'm pretty lazy and I'm not really interested. I wouldn't know what to do with the information and for what purpose it should be.

For others yet again, primarily the younger respondents, the time for finding out more seems a long way away. A male teenager (D1) answered that he would perhaps reach this point of interest in:

Maybe in 20 or 30 years, right now it's not really important

Le Vine and Sallee (1990) state that the basis of adoptees adjustment centres around the process of fully understanding the implications of being adopted and indeed information is a requisite for understanding.

The theme of information appears also to be significant regarding inheritable factors, this development naturally becoming more apparent when a status of parenthood has been reached. A concerned mother in Sweden (G1) mentioned the following:

> *Later on in my life I've become interested in the adoption in a more practical medical way, this in regard to illness for example. I wonder if illnesses sometime skip generations. My child has some allergies and I am starting to have them too. The Doctor keeps asking me questions, and I don't know what to say, as I don't know anything about the medical history on my side.*

ii.   **Protective**
            factors

. . .
Love is in the air
Love is in the air
I have nobody by my side
Love is in the air [40]

Like most adopted children, this survey's subjects were exposed to manifold biological and psychosocial risk factors (Hoksbergen, 1993; Dalen, 1999; Lange, 2003; Selman, 2000 and 2009) in their early lives through high-risk pregnancies, birth deliveries often under bad medical conditions and through separation from their birth mothers and passages of time (ranging from 2 months to six years) spent in orphanages or hospitals, often under very destitute circumstances. Two female adoptees (F1) and (A2) give us some insight below to their early years:

> *My birth mother took me to an Indian market and gave me to another woman to look after while she was buying things until she returns – but she never did. Then I came to a children's home run by German nuns. They really cared for deprived children and saved my life. I was about 7 months when I came to this children's home.*

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[40] Henry (at age 12) The Colours in me (2008:74).

I was about 2 yrs. Up till then I lived with my parents but they were too poor to feed me and had to put me in a home.

With these high risk elements in mind it is interesting to bear in mind the implications of protective factors , which figured high in respondents' comments and their part as contributing to resilience of adoptees and optimistic development histories (Ölsner and Lehmkuhl, 2005). A mother in Sweden (G2) said:

I've always had the feeling that people have cared for me and wanted to protect me.

Personality and temperament appear to play a major role in the subject's view of life, as aptly illustrated by one male student adoptee (C1):

I've just lived my life […] I have the ability to make friends very easily, I've been to so many different schools and have had to start anew so often that I'm really good at getting into contact, it's great fun.

Others, such as a male teenager in Austria (A1) however have encountered difficulties in coming to terms with their respective situations:

It was difficult that I grew up with a whole load of racists. Just turn your back on racists and carry on running. Pride. I managed to keep my pride and get respect just by using violence. I got into fights, sometimes I lost out, especially if I was in the minority, which was often the case. But the others learnt to respect me. Fists, pride and honour.

Special bonds to grandparents – and even to great grandparents - were frequently mentioned in the responses and are in keeping with our pre-figurative culture (Mead, 1970). A female pupil (A3) said:

My Opa [41] is very important for me. We used to spend a lot of time with these grandparents especially when our parents were away. […] Opa has now moved from Germany and lives in the house next to us and we look after him.

Friendships formed early on in life were reported to have been exceptionally important, often shielding the adoptee from negative experiences at kindergarten or in school. Comments below from adoptees in Austria (B1), (C1) and (A4) underline the significance of these formative and lasting friendship bonds:

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[41] Opa is a German term for grandfather –author's note.

I've never really had difficulties. Of course you're always stared at first but you learn to live with that. My closest friends, who I've been together with since Kindergarten have been a great help when starting new classes or new schools.

My parents and the way they have brought me up, that really helped a lot. It was quite easy going but with rules which had to be kept. Their way of bringing me up was especially important for my social behaviour.

Real friends good friends not ones who are involved with drugs, alcohol or smoking.[…] I've got a colleague at work he's lost so many people, he was really sad and depressive and that's very dangerous because then one's more likely to start on alcohol or drugs, if there's nobody there it's real shit. […]Parents have to be an example if they're not then it can't work out. Without a positive example it's not going to work. My mother taught me always to come to her straight away and talk if something is bothering me.

The relevance of protective factors experienced within the adoptive family for adoptees' future development is in keeping with results from large-scale studies conducted with adoptees (Hoksbergen, 1997; Dalen,1999;) underlining how well - given overall results – adopted children with risk-status have developed. An estimated 75% managing well, without any sign of major problems, with the remaining 25% having some problems essentially linked to language, learning, identity and ethnicity. Protective factors are seen as a buffer towards risks and contribute to building up further resilience.

iii. Emotional Factors

<div align="right">

I came with problems – they helped me solve them

I came with memories – they listened to them

I have my difference – they liked them

I brought my love – they shared their with me[42]

</div>

The palette of emotions identifiable in the responses is very broad and in cases extreme, ranging from dark despair to shining joy with many shades of colour and feeling in between. A young female pupil (B2) in Austria gave the first comment, while a mother in Sweden (G2) contributed the second comment:

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[42] Luke Howard (at age 6) „My family" The Colours in me (2008: 55).

Sometimes I get depressed and feel as if I'm falling into a black hole, but then the depression goes away and I have to laugh heartily. I've got to learn to protect myself against some things in my life. About my father for example, when he explodes and says devastating things to me, like if he had known how I would be, he wouldn't have adopted me, and worse things. I always have to be considerate towards him, otherwise he'll have another stroke, I'm not supposed to shout back, why not?

I never really felt loved, although when they both became sick (both died of lung cancer recently) they were able to tell me that they loved me. They used to show off with me, like that I was getting good grades at school.[…] People would say that the parents cared so much but I didn't feel that it was a loving family. Perhaps I always wanted more as a sort of compensation for having been adopted.

In three cases of female adoptees, feelings of acute jealousy on the part of their respective adoptive mothers were depicted, in two of which cases the mothers had not collected their adoptive daughters from the country of birth. This jealousy causing emotional reactions ranging from hurt to guilt to denial among the adoptive daughters. A female student in Austria (C4) related that:

I would never have been able to do my Matura (A Levels) and study if I had stayed in the adoptive family, she would never have let me get a higher education than she has […] I was so desperate, I wanted to deny the whole adoption issue but I couldn't because it's so obvious, I look so different.

Being left alone with emotional needs has proven difficult for those who could not confide in anyone they trusted. In this respect the situation of siblings appears relevant (Lange, 2003) as respondents discussed confiding in their siblings when they were confronted with problems. A young female pupil (A3) answered that she had often found comfort through:

"my brother, and how he feels about adoption"

A further source of comfort when experiencing emotional difficulties for this particular respondent (A3) have been:

Friends and family, perhaps also music when I've been playing it myself, I play the guitar and play what I've learnt with my guitar teacher. And horse riding has also been helpful, I used to have riding lessons and riding is so free and you feel so free and relieved without any problems.

In four cases active engagement either in music, sport or tackling the actual difficulty as illustrated by the response of (C2) has helped.

I felt ashamed that I couldn't speak my mother tongue. I'm going to learn to speak Rumanian.

However, in some cases adoptees have had to hold back their emotions, not wanting to burden their parents, as illustrated by the answer of a young female pupil (B2):

Earlier on I often kept the issue to myself as I was afraid of hurting their feelings if I brought the subject up. I can talk to my mother's sister about everything, even if I'm at loggerheads with my father. It all remains within the family. [...]My mother's sister really helps in difficult situations. I used to fight with her, she's rather explosive (the whole family is very artistic and explosive – Hungarian fire) and she lives on her own and isn't used to discussing things. But I know that she really loves me and so I can accept her just as she is.

The message conveyed by some respondents was that, despite difficulties, if trust and a sense of belonging to the family prevail, problems can be overcome, and the above cited interview partner (B2) adds:

I've always now considered this family as my family. I really do love both of them even if we sometimes could murder each other.

The emotional value of the child has gained new saliency with adoptive parents experiencing the preciousness (Zelizer, 1985) of their children. Studies have recorded evidence that professional help is sought earlier by adoptive parents in contrast to biological parents (Schleiffer, 1997, Lange, 2003). Due to the procedure of adoption requiring self-reflection readiness and skills, adoptive parents are possibly more sensitive to emotional factors of their children than sometimes biological parents (Ölsner and Lehmkuhl, 2005). An adult male (H1) mentioned a specific situation which mirrors emotional turmoil in early years and a young female (A2) indicated where she goes for support:

When I was about 2/3 years old I put my arm next to my white daddy's arm and compared the colour. I saw a picture of myself on the wall and I tore it up but I don't know why, it's a story in the family.

I always talk to Mama. Although for some things Papa is more important. I can talk to him about general things better than to Mama. Often we talk in the evenings, he comes and sits with me in my room, it has always been like this, also during advent time in the evening. Then the whole family sits together and talks.

Sensitiveness and empathy toward others and a feeling of childlike responsibility are portrayed in the following quote by a mother in Sweden (G1):

When I was 12 or 13 I cried a whole Christmas Eve at the thought of my being given presents but that nobody was giving any presents to my biological mom.

The overriding difficulty stipulated by respondents was coming to terms with the fact that they do not know who their birth mothers are and that they were given away. In one case, (C2) the adoptee has subsequently met both her birth parents once a teenager and has regular contact to some of her biological siblings since:

I met my birth mother and my birth father, he cried when he saw me.

This meeting has been positive and underlines the significance of connection rather than separation (Miller, 1976) and has given a direction to her life:

I know that I will go back, whether I stay there or not, I don't know, that will depend.

In summary, 11 of the 19 respondents stated that they had positive emotions about their adoption an answer by a mother in Sweden (F1) is representative:

I felt that I was something very special in a very positive way. I've just always been lucky.

3. Attachment

What do you see when you look at me:

A baby born to be taken away,

There and then, on that very day?

What do you see when you look at me:

A toddler who brought joy to a man and woman

Who thought they couldn't have a child of their own?[43]

The majority of adopters wish to adopt a child as young as possible in order for the bonding and attachment process to take place as early as possible (Bowlby, 1969), studies stating that a sharp increase in failed adoptions is traceable where the adoption age is more advanced (Frank et al, 1996; Brodzinsky et al, 1998). In pragmatic terms this is also supported by the fact that maternity (and if chosen also paternity) leave is available up to a certain age, irrespective of whether the child is biological or adopted. Results also underlined the importance of inter-generational ties within family networks (Ecarius, 2009) which are in their essence pedagogical and educative processes. Grandparents and even great grandparents were mentioned in the survey as being significant, living forms of solidarity within the familial generations (Szydlik, 2000; Bengston and Roberts, 1991).

i. Adoptive Family

What do you see when you look at me:

The child with the face that does not fit,

Who looks like her parents not one little bit?

What do you see when you look at me:

A teen who's adept at explaining the reality

To those with one view of what constitutes "family"?[44]

As children of a fairly young age are capable to bond with more than one set of carers (Schaffer, 1990) so too are they able to accommodate the information that they have two families (Demick and Wapner, 1988; Hajal and Rosenberg, 1991) if recognition is given to the birth family, as the following comment from a male adult (H1) underlines:

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[43] Miranda Wilkinson "What do you see?" contd. In: In search of belonging (2006: 116f.).
[44] Miranda Wilkinson "What do you see?" contd. In: In search of belonging (2006: 116f.).

It's always been very natural for me that I have 2 sets of parents. My adoptive mother talks about going back to Sri Lanka to visit. She often talks about my brown dad and mom and my adoptive parents have put money aside for schooling my biological brother.

However, this task of supporting an adoptee through potentially very stressful periods can put great strain and pressure on an adoptive family, which is indeed the most important support network for adoptees. A male student (E1) in Sweden said:

As long as the immediate family supports you, you can make it and you can make a difference by yourself later in life.

It is therefore no wonder that outside help is often needed and indeed sought by adoptive families, this ranging from plain baby-sitting in order to combat sleep deficit to medical consultation and psychotherapy (Baum-Breuer, 2007:137). A female teenager (B2) emphasised that:

Security is important, that one has people around where one knows for sure that one can depend on them. I've got this with my parents, my family and my best friends who even protect me from teachers!

Sibling constellation proves significant (as already mentioned under point 2 iii) whereby in the case of the below example given by a mother in Sweden (G2) , the siblings, of which there were three, were all adopted but not blood related:

[…] I want to be close to my siblings, that's most important especially because of what has happened to our parents, I want to be close to my family.

Three respondents mentioned that they do not actually speak to their (adopted) siblings about adoption-related problems, but nevertheless feel a connecting and comforting bond between them. A female student in Austria (C3) said:

I just can't identity myself with my country of origin. Nobody knows about this. It connects me and my brother but we never mention it.

ii. Peers

...Maybe I am special!

I'm happy. I'm not sad. My adopted friends make me feel glad

They like me, they help me. They don't ask me personal questions

'Hello Jasmine, are you coming out to play? They roar!

'Do you need any help! They ask

They don't make me feel different!

'You're just like us,' they whisper quietly!

Yes, I really am special.[45]

The importance of transnational adoptees being 'connected' (Miller, 1976: Harris, 2006 and 2008) with other transnational adoptees in their adoptive country was clearly discernable in many of the statements, such as the one by a male student in Sweden (E2):

> *Well I've got friends who've also been adopted and there's a kind of feeling of "togetherness".*

However, adoptees are dependent on their adoptive family in order to be able to mix in a social circle. A female student in Austria (C4) remarked sadly:

> *Close friends of the same age are also very important and I think also contact to other adoptees could be important, I was never allowed to have this.*

It was only in a minority case that the adoptive parents were destructive with regard to facilitating such contacts, however a number of respondents did mention that they have no contact to other adoptees, simply because neither they nor their family know anyone who has also been adopted.

But valuable peer contacts were also reported in other forms. A female cosmopolitan student (C3) stated:

> *I'm often really happy when I'm in a circle that is mixed – it was so great in New York, everybody looked different and you're not conspicuous.*

Over 66% of respondents answered that their circle of friends was multi-cultural, in fact transnational in that these friendships transcend internal geographic borders, developing into novel

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[45] Jasmine (at age 10) "I am special" In: The Colours in me (2008:89).

life-forms through a mix of cultures (Hall,1994; Hugger, 2007) as depicted in the answer of an adult male adoptee (H1):

> *I've got lots of friends and these friendships are based on common interests, it's a very mixed group – multicultural.*

Tolerance was stated as being the most important attribute by a young woman (C3) living in Austria:

> *For me the most important thing was that the others accept me as I am. I'm very tolerant I can always think myself into someone else's situation. I always try and understand others that's why it's difficult for me if others don't understand me.*

iii. Own Children

<div style="color:purple; text-align:center">

I've called my son the name I was born with, Joseph.
I owe it to myself to acknowledge that I do have birth parents.[46]

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Although only three of the interview partners (all female and all in Sweden) had become parents themselves, their related experiences have tremendous weight as they point to life events (Baltes et al., 1980,1988; Rosch Inglehart,1988) which have far reaching implications and which have been catalysts for their own development. A mother of a young son (G1) said:

> *I was in the process of finding out who my birth mom was and was in contact with the adoption agency in Ecuador but then I became pregnant at 18 and had my child and had somebody who looked like me and my interest in my adoption waned. My child looks like me and is like me![…] Prior to having my baby it was difficult not knowing who my mom is, but then I didn't think about it so much anymore.*

Future perspectives took on quite new dimensions in the case of another young mother in Sweden (F1):

> *I could on the one hand imagine living in a different country e.g. Spain, but on the other hand I want my children (Veronica has 2 children of her own) to grow up in my network of family and friends here. I'm a bit scared of the case of working here and then only seeing my children for about 2 hours a day, that's why I'm thinking about maybe working in a different country in order to have more time for my family. In Sweden one works very long hours even with children. This causes incredible problems.*

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[46] Michael Caines " Things may have been different, but I just don't know" In: In search of belonging (2006:304-307).

The above information can be interpreted as illustration of what worth these children have for their mother and what she is willing – and not willing to do - to ensure their well-being, and may also be an indication of a cathartic process for the mother's own experience of adoption.

A quite startling revelation was made by one respondent (G1):

> *I changed my name – originally I was called Doris, I think I was named after the lady from the Adoption Agency who was called Dorothy. I never felt comfortable with the name Doris, and after the birth of my son, I changed my name to the female version of his name at the age of 23.*

(At this point of the interview, she mentions that she has never seen the connection between her son's name and her name till now – she thinks it was a totally unconscious decision to change her own name.) Even interest for more knowledge about the country of origin since the birth of an own child was recorded by the same interviewee (G1):

> *I've tried to get my son interested but he's more interested at the moment about the fact that he has a very young mom.*

However, in the third case (G2) there was no healing dimension vis-à-vis the experience of adoption after having parented an own child, on the contrary inner turmoil and feelings of rejection have been brought to the surface, these heightened by a present second pregnancy:

> *Now after having had my son, I realise how much a child needs in the first year, and ask myself why I didn't get this love.*

4. Cultural Identity

The significance of time as a major factor in the development of interest for the subject of adoption and for cultural identity issues, became very clear on reviewing respondents' answers in relation to their age. One of the assumptions at the onset of this study had been that the term Hybrid Identity could be applicable for many of the interview partners. This however was quite clearly not the case. When specifically asked if they felt that the term Hybrid Identity could apply to themselves, eleven such as a young female in Austria (A3) answered with "No" (seven of these were under nineteen years of age):

> *The term doesn't fit for me*

Three answered with "Yes" (two of these were over twenty years of age) and one a female teenager in Austria (B2) said:

> *I can say that I'm a hybrid identity too. The Hungarian part is a part of me – a beautiful part. I even have dual citizenship.*

And a further four including (E1) a male student in Sweden just about to leave for his first return trip to his country of birth, answered that they were "unsure" (three over twenty and two under nineteen years of age):

> *I haven't heard of the term but I think it's good. I cheer for both Swedish and Indian teams and I've even been in the Swedish Athletic team. When I get to India, I'll probably feel totally Swedish, I'm a bit afraid of this, but I'll think about this new term.*

In fact of those who answered with "Yes", two felt that they were even more 'global' identities rather than hybrid. Viewing identity as "fate" is one of the most dangerous clichés of modern day

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[47] Mariyam Maule „The heart of humankind" In: In search of belonging (2006:128).

society (Sen, 2006), constituting a strong tendency of reducing individuals to one characteristic, especially in terms of religion and culture. Maalouf's hope (1998) for a new understanding of identity can be seen as mirrored in the answers of two respondents, who felt that their identities had transcended hybrid or multiculturalism and were global identities. It is no coincidence that these two belong to the oldest age group of the study. This result is in keeping with the advice of Bagley (1992) and Brown (1995) Norvell and Guy (1977) and Baden and Steward (2000) to judge the identity of transracial adoptees after the period of adolescence.

Answers pertaining to cultural identity elicited extremes, one male teenager in Austria (A1) stated that irrespective of where he is, he feels like:

> *A foreigner, I've got an Austrian passport and Indian blood. It makes no difference where I am, I'm always a foreigner.*

Whilst at the other extreme pole, a twenty-four year old male in Sweden (H1) answered:

> *I live on a farm and I have a very traditional personality just like a Jämtländer, I'm set in my ways, stubborn. The Jämtländers are famous for these qualities. […] I've heard of the concept (hybrid identity) but it wouldn't apply to me, I'm a Jämtländer. There were 7 families with children in my village and I was the only dark child but I felt at home.*

Interestingly enough, sport played an important role for offering adoptees an opportunity of dealing with their issues of cultural identity. A male student (E2) said:

> *I was selected to play soccer for a Swedish national team against Peru and there I got a feeling of Latin America and this has sparked my interest in the continent.*

Furthermore, the majority of respondents mentioned having done assignments at school on their countries of origin, which afforded them an educative objective for reading and learning about their country of origin, and indeed also presenting this knowledge to their fellow pupils. The same male student (E2) answered that he had used the opportunities offered:

> *During school projects I've taken on assignments to do about Columbia, it seems a natural choice.*

Mostly these assignments have been undertaken during secondary education, thus adoptees were already often in their adolescence. As stated by Falk (1977), Phinney and Rosenthal (1992), Lafromboise (1993), Ku (2005) and McGinnis (2009), exposure to the history and culture of their countries and races of origin is very positive for developing ethnic identity, which again is necessary for the construction of a stable-self-identity.

In the light of occupying oneself with the country of origin, these school projects appear valuable for a broadening of horizon and reflection of heritage, though not all respondents associated a positive experience with such an assignment as mentioned by a young female in Austria (A2):

> *I held a presentation on the subject of India and on adoption at school but I didn't enjoy doing it. I'm afraid of the country. Perhaps adoption scares me, makes me feel uncomfortable.*

i. Country of Birth

See the past as the past and reach for the future. Talk with your mum and dad about birth parents sometimes, but don't dwell on it. They (birth parents) aren't here and you have a whole life to live, so get on with it. Enjoy going back to your birth country for its own sake and maybe for the future, but not to find the past.[48]

Only a minority of respondents had returned to their country of birth since their adoption. These experiences span a range from an extremely positive pole as in the case of a female student (C2)

> *As soon as I'm over the border in Rumania I feel really well, I'm really happy that I'm not the outsider, but that my parents are the outsiders, that they don't belong. The mentality connects me[…] Basic behavioural patterns are similar. There are clichés like that Rumanians are lazy or steal these are negative, there are also positive ones, like that they are special or very gifted at languages*

To a more negative pole, as in the case of a female pupil (A3) who was adopted from India:

> *Actually we went there when I was about 7 or 8 years old. I've got memories, it was awful, everybody was so poor, I really felt sorry for them. I couldn't believe that there are people who are so poor.*

According to Trolley (1994, 1995) promoting pride in the native culture is important for the integration of cultural identities.

For those adoptees who have never returned, much has depended on how their adoptive family has approached their country of origin. Ideally, the additional culture of the adoptive child has been incorporated into the family as in the case of a female adult in Sweden (F1):

> *Bolivia has always been part of my thoughts. My parents always included Bolivia in our family life. They brought lots of objects back from Bolivia like pictures and pan flutes and decorated our house with them.*

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[48] Heather Nan Ziyuan „For other adoptees" In: The Colours in me (2008:175).

Others (predominantly the older respondents) such as a young woman (F1) relate that they are planning to return:

> *I feel a strong attraction to my origin – not to my roots – but to my origin. I've never been back since my adoption but we are planning to go in 2011.*

For yet others, the prospect of returning on a visit to their country of birth is still a long way away, and as recorded actually meeting someone from this country is often a bridge toward building a relationship to the country of birth. Two pupils in Sweden (D1) and (D2) said:

> *I've never actually met anyone from Vietnam. If I would, perhaps I would feel attracted, but maybe not. I'm very shy.*

> *I've never met anyone from Guatemala but I feel that I would want to. I've never been to Guatemala since my adoption.*

(At the end of the interview however (D2) remembers that he has in fact met footballers from Guatemala, which has been a very positive experience for him.)

ii. Country of Adoption

I wake, being informed by the great BBC,

I rise, in anticipation, of a hot cup of tea,

[…]

England to me will forever be home.

My heart and my head have always been there,

Though people still point, pass comment and stare.

'How's life in China?' How the hell should I know?

[…]

I can't really blame anyone, they thought it was best.

Why is it so hard for people to see

That I'm part of England, and she's part of me?

My whole life has been here, I'm as English as you,

If my face matched my heart, it would be red, white and blue![49]

Respondents' answers to the question complex centring on their sense of belonging and cultural identity in the country of adoption showed that the younger they were, the more they identified

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[49] Bella Frey "England forever? " In: In search of belonging (2006: 86).

with the new home country. Language appeared an important factor as mentioned by a male student in Sweden (E1):

> I remember that when my brother and I came to Sweden, I decided to become as Swedish as fast as possible and within 6 months I only spoke Swedish anymore

And adoptees who were interviewed in Vorarlberg, the most Western province of Austria all spoke in a very broad local dialect, and were obviously proud of this ability. A young male apprentice (A4) said:

> I've been living here for about 14 years and I can speak our dialect perfectly.

Once again, sport played a role in the answers given, and support for the specific country was seen as an indication for a sense of belonging to the country of adoption as related by one male adult (H1):

> If there's a soccer game on TV between Sweden and Sri Lanka, I want Sweden to win.

For other respondents, notably the elder ones, their country of adoption appears to be more a transitory place. A female student (C2) said:

> I have the feeling that Austria has been a kind of island, a port of call in my life, not my home. Even as a small child I felt that Austria won't be my last and permanent place.

The growing interest for the culture of origin, which in these reported cases began in later teenage years, appears to grow stronger the older adoptees become, defining itself as a clear part of their identity as referred to by another female student in Austria (C3):

> This whole area, the Orient, especially North Africa, countries like Morocco, Tunisia, but also Syria and Oman are inside me, are a part of me.

Observations of the researcher in Austria and Sweden as to how society is portrayed in advertising, in daily life, in school books, etc. showed a marked difference between the two countries of adoption. In Austria for example, a 'worst practice case'[50] an intensive project for more kindergarten places, depicts not one single child other than Caucasian children in its widespread advert in one Viennese paper. However some sixty percent of children in Vienna have a bi- or multicultural background (Tatschl, 2010). In contrast, Swedish advertisements and portrayal of children or family life is essentially multicultural as can be seen by viewing any billboard,

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[50] Advertisment in a free daily newspaper „Heute", March 2009.

newspaper, TV advert or advertisements for Swedish products.[51] Therefore it seems important that greater awareness exists on behalf of the adoptive country's government, regarding the particular needs of its new citizens in view of a greater acceptance of multicultural ethnicity.

iii. Identity Crisis

"Is it too extreme to think that we were experiments? Experiments in racial harmony and love-transplant surgery. We are the only ones who can tell about the laboratory conditions and the effect that those conditions had on us.

[..]

I guarantee that most parents who adopted transracially had no experience of others who had done the same. These are the conditions of the experiment. I can also guarantee that most children who were transracially adopted were transplanted into an alien environment. There's the laboratory."[52]

The interview answers on this sub-theme clearly defined three groups: those who had not yet entered into the stage of identity crisis, those presently right in the midst of transcending this phase, either in a mode of denial or confusion, and those who had left adolescence behind them.

The second group, i.e. those in a period of crisis formulated the following thoughts:
The central issue of identity is encapsulated in the question "Who am I?" This question was also evident in the statement of one female teenager (B2):

I don't know who I really am, where I come from and what my identity is.

Fundamental questions in this search for self include:
Who are my biological parents? Where do I come from? Why was I given away? Was I loved? Do I belong here? Am I loved? Is it right that I'm here? What would it be like in my family of origin, in my country of origin? Is my biological mother /my biological father still alive? How does he / does she live? Would my parents here be hurt and offended if I go in search of my "real" parents? Do I have siblings? Who could understand me? Will I ever be able to find anything out about where I come from and why I was given for adoption? Why was especially I saved from perhaps a destitute life in poverty and sickness? Am I allowed to live in this luxury? Could it be that because of being rescued I have a special task in life? Which tasks lie ahead of me in life? Multiple adoption-related questions and issues pertaining to race, gender and class factors have been formulated into a Theory of Multiple Burdens (Hubinette, 2001).

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[51] IKEA Catalogue 2009.
[52] Lemn Sissay In: In Search of Belonging (2006: Foreword xiii).

In one case the specific crisis had to do with the country of origin, while in other cases the crisis was directly connected to an adoptive parent, as indicated by a female student (C2):

> *I don't know why my mother adopted me. Apparently she's in therapy already, maybe I ought to go too. I've always known this isn't a real mama, the word was a title, it's the done thing to use this word. Later a void opened up between us and it became clearer and clearer that I was just adopted.*

In two of the nineteen cases contact between adoptee and an adoptive parent had been severed entirely. (Herzka (1977) seeks to explain that a combination of high risk status of a child, paired with a high expectancy of adoptive parents vis-a-vis their adoptive child and the inherent identity issues of adoptees can culminate in the so called Adoption Syndrome. In another case, a female adoptee (C3) was very troubled about misleading a sibling to a sense of identity:

> *My brother is younger, I'm responsible for him. Actually we do have one really big problem: when we were smaller, […] I told him something about our birth father coming from Iraq and he believed this. I gave him an identity and he found a peace of mind and has grown up with this and that's what he has told all his friends (our adoptive father in fact really does look oriental) so they don't know that he's adopted, but my friends know that I'm adopted! Anyway, my brother and I had a huge row about the whole thing. I'm envious of him he's found an identity with my story, which was a lie.*

Professional help was partly sought however in most cases adoptees related that adoptive family was able to support the adoptee during this difficult period, which according to Bagley (1992) may simply be a transient phenomenon. Those respondents who had worked their way through these critical times were able to reflect candidly, as reflected by (G1) and (C3):

> *I also have a passport photo of when I arrived at Stockholm Airport – I'm an "Arlanda Child" – Arlanda is the name of the Airport in Stockholm.*

> *I had kinds of crises about the whole issue when I couldn't cope with the fact that I had been given away, I felt ashamed.*

According to Harris (2006) this acute sense of crisis may contribute to the development of inner strength and a sense of being rooted within oneself. A female student in Austria (C4) said:

> *I was so desperate, I wanted to deny the whole adoption issue but I couldn't because it's so obvious, I look so different.*

She then went on to say:

> *"I'm certain that I'm going to become a nurse. I could imagine for example once I'm trained going to India and working in an orphanage for a while. As a girl I often used to have a fantasy about going back to India and working, and if I go back well trained, then I could help much more."*

Another answer, equally frank of a twenty year old, sheds light to an ongoing crisis and a quest to which no answer has yet been found. A female student in Austria (C2) said:

> *Perhaps I'm fleeing because at present so many things are unclear in my life.[…] This real feeling of home is what I'm looking for.*

This statement is in keeping with the views of Helms (1990) who considers racial identity development a life-long process.

iv. Identity Development

<div align="center">

What's my identity?

I'm me. I am who I am because of everything that's happened to me. Just like anyone else.

[…] I'm proud of who I am and where I'm from. It's a part of me. But it doesn't define me. [53]

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Findings from the interviews and data collection tie in with the work of (Erikson, 1968; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990) who suggest that during infancy and childhood, up to early teens, parents and adult figures of authority will primarily influence the feeling of identity development. A teenager in Austria (B1) related how she had depicted herself as a child:

> *I drew myself at kindergarten and primary school and I always drew myself white and not dark – I think it's an indication of integration.*

Normative life events, like entrance into kindergarten or school, which belong to the category of normative age-graded critical life-events (Bates et al., 1980, 1988) can become critical events for transnational adoptees, as at this point they leave the shelter of their adoptive family and are out on their own for at least a couple of hours a day, open to probing questions or hurtful statements of other children, that they look 'burnt' because they are dark and why they look so different from their adoptive parents. Much will also depend on how the child has been prepared for this event and

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[53] Elizabeth (at age 17) "I'm me" In: The Colours in me (2008:75).

this again depends on the sensitiveness and empathy of adoptive parents for the critical situation (Gorham, 2000). According to Rosch Inglehart (1988) much will depend on how the individual person reacts to such a critical life-event situation i.e. will this situation be addressed with a retreating or coping strategy.

The path of identity development is often a solitary one for transnational adoptees. Comments by a female student living in Austria (C3) give us insight to this fact:

> *I would have liked to have someone to lead me the way but I have to find my way myself.*

> *My problem is that I didn't get this Identity from home, I couldn't because my parents don't have this identity themselves, I've had to find it myself. I've got two worlds. […] I could never say deep from my heart that I'm Austrian. I couldn't really define any countries but hybrid in as far as I'm both East/West.*

Some support appears to be found in an exchange with others in similar situations. According to studies by (Hoksbergen, 1986 and1987) there is a relevance of adoptive sibling constellation as already referred to in thus results section (see 2 iii and 3 i). Furthermore such and strategies and programmes like the 'Motherland Tours' of the Nordic Adoption Council, prove positive regarding identity development, through interaction with others in similar situation and with the country and culture of origin (Baden and Steward, 1995; Dalen,1999; Kirton, 2000).

Some respondents like this female student (C2) have been able to find explanations for themself:

> *I explain it to myself like this: I was raised in a Western way but my basic "me" is Eastern.*

In another case (C3) the adoptee had reflected intensively on the issue of identity development and ascertained that:

> *It's quite clear for me that I'm searching for something I've become very interested in Religion.*

The term 'search' (or synonyms) for this concept were frequently cited. A female studying in Vienna (C3) said:

I'm frantically looking for my roots I'm even studying Arabic at the University. I'm nothing out of the ordinary at the Institute, people are always asking questions but I don't answer, sometimes I just say it's all very complicated. I have absolutely no intention of saying anything on this matter. I want to live how I feel comfortable and how I can identify myself. I know that this yearning and searching will never stop.

Indeed, the concept of identity in relation to nation or culture proved in several cases to transcend mere national boundaries, as illustrated by the response of a mother in Sweden (F1):

> I don't feel typically Swedish but that has to do with the fact that my family isn't typically Swedish either. If I think about the stereo type Swedish family then I feel more Bolivian or shall I say more of a stereo type Identity of Latin America.

One of the fundaments of identity both internally and externally is the name by which one is known, thus also playing a role in identity development. In one particular case (C3) the adoptee going to considerable lengths to adopt her original name:

> I have also recently changed my name officially to my real name. When I was born it wasn't possible to register me with my real name in Austria! My parents would have had to prove that more than 5 other people had this particular name therefore I was given a classical European name. […]But nowadays this situation has changed and it was my special wish for my 20th birthday from my father.

Eight of the nineteen adoptees used their original birth first names for identity at the interview (the majority had second names which were European), two interview partners had changed their name when reaching adulthood (one is quoted above) and a second changed her name after giving birth to her first child (see sub-theme 'own children') while the remaining nine adoptees used European first names, five of which had official second names which were their original birth names.

5. Support Factors

*My success as an individual is partly driven by my own inner strength
and belief in what I am about.*[54]

Individuals are conceptualized as being producers of their own development (Labouvie-Vief, 1981; Lerner, 1984). These individuals develop within a changing socio-cultural context and their inner strength will be a result of experiences, support structures and coping strategies which they have acquired over their lives' course. While in young years much of the support will come from the immediate family, and primarily from the adoptive parents, other factors will become important along the life-trajectory. However it is important that support services are available for this group of society and that society realises that such services and strategies are needed. This situation does vary a great deal between the countries in question, Sweden with its far longer tradition of international adoption offering a wide range of support and social networks for adoptees (see 2.2.2. Nordic Adoption Council).

i.   Adoptive Parents

*What do you see when you look at me:
A woman who, through everything, knows
That, although there have been many highs, many lows,
If her white middle-class parents had not adopted
A little black baby on whom they doted,
Her life would have likely been far more tragic?
Never to have known that wonderful magic
That only comes with unconditional love,
That can take the smooth as well as the rough.
Thank God my parents chose to adopt me.
Without them, I truly don't know where I'd be.*[55]

Although the theme of adoptive parents has been mentioned extensively in other themes of this analysis, it appears legitimate to add them also to this dimension of support factors. As we will see, their acceptance and support are viewed by the majority of respondents as the central pillars for adoptive children. An adult man (H1) living in Sweden stated:

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[54] Michael Caines „Things may have been different, but I just don't know" In: In search of belonging (2006: 304ff.).
[55] Miranda Wilkinson "What do you see?" contd. In: In search of belonging (2006:116f.).

The relationship between child and adoptive parents is the foundation, that's what counts. However, one of the ambivalences in adoption work centres round the question, in whose interest the adoption actually is? Theoretically speaking, the mandate must be in the interest of the child (International Social Service, 1999), to try and ensure this international legislation has been developed specifically for the protection of children (Hague Convention, 1993). Adoption does however also serve the interest of the parents as depicted in the following quote from a young mother (G2):

> *They used to show off with me like that I was getting good grades at school. […] People would say that they cared so much but I didn't feel that it was a loving family. Perhaps I always wanted more as a sort of compensation for having been adopted.*

The above contribution gives an insight into problems faced when approaching the underlying issues involved in adoption. Herzka (1977) in his discourse on the adoption syndrome acknowledges the risk of adoptive parents using their adoptive child as a quasi visiting card vis-a-vis society.

In considering the situation of parents who take on the responsibility of adopting a child, and placing this act of adoption in its life-long context, it becomes clear that detailed preparation is necessary for this task. Correct adoption procedure includes mandatory preparatory courses and in the opinion of one of this study's young experts (C4), the following prerequisites are mandatory:

> *Adoptive parents have to be tolerant and really want this adoptive child!*

The adoptive parents feature 'top of the list' with regard to helpful factors for adoptees. The need for security and trust were often mentioned in the interviews and adoptive parents were cited as the most consulted confidants and the most important supportive factor for adoptees. Adoptive parents who can acknowledge and act on the need of their child for contact to the culture of origin and where possible even to the family of origin, prove to be an important supportive factor in the lives of these children (Schaffer, 1990; Ainsworth, 1991; Demick and Wapner, 1988).

A male adult (H1) described his situation:

> *It has always been very natural for me that I have 2 sets of parents. Especially my adoptive mother talks about going back to Sri Lanka to visit. She often talks about my brown dad and mom and my adoptive parents have out money aside for schooling of my biological brother. […] There used to be organised reunions for families with adoptive children, that was good but I don't go anymore. It isn't as important any more - my Mom wanted me to go.*

Returning briefly to the matter of correct adoption procedure, it bears mentioning that specific age limits are stated (the age difference between child and main caring parent should not exceed forty years[56] although as we will see from the following example, these are not always adhered to.) In one case of this study an adoptive couple had ultimately been able to adopt a three-year old child although they were both significantly older than the stipulated limit (at the time the adoptive father was sixty-one and the mother forty-nine years of age). The adoption had been possible as the prospective adoptive mother (a Hungarian) had good contacts in her country of birth and while she was in the process of applying for permission, already brought a foster child from her village in Hungary to Austria. A number of lapses and sick leaves in the local child welfare office in Austria in turn led to delay and confusion and by the time the authorities actually came around to start the adoption procedure, the child had already spent four months in the new family. The authorities reluctantly agreed to grant permission, despite the grave age irregularity, in order to spare the child the ordeal of a further separation in her young life. In our interview situation, the particular adoptee (B2) stated:

> *My parents are always here for me in these difficult times when I need them.*

Albeit an ironic afterthought was added:

> *They have a lot of time both are retired, that's not always an advantage!*

The adoptive parents are now seventy-three and sixty-one respectively. This adoptive family has required and received considerable post-placement support, including child therapy for the adoptee and intensive family counselling, in part financed by the child welfare office. The teenage adoptee mentions often worrying about the future and what will happen to her, as both her parents are frail and not in good health.

Although the specific situations of adoptees often warrant particular attention to protective factors after often high- risk pregnancies, high-risk births and deprived early months or years in institutions, a balance in care and attention and especially in 'normality' is also urged for in interview responses. A young female in Austria (B1) explained this as follows:

> *My parents brought me up to be a perfectly normal child and didn't make a special fuss and*
> *always called me their child.*

While in the case of transnational adoptions it often seems apparent that the child is maybe not the biological offspring, it is nevertheless significant that the child is termed as "my child" or "our child" and not as my or our "adoptive child".

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[56] Vorschrift: N.Ö.Landesregierung (2007)

In two cases, respondents had lost one adoptive parent. In the majority of cases, adoptive parents have provided their children with a network of family members and lasting support structures. In the two cases in which both parents had died, the adoptees have siblings (also adopted, though not biologically related) and these have become their primary support factors, helping each other to cope with the loss of their parents and to deal with their issues and the implications of adoption. A young male apprentice in Austria (A4) and a mother in Sweden (G2) give us insight to their respective situation:

> *I miss my father, especially now. Earlier on I missed him as well especially when I started school. He was a policeman but he also taught police officers as a teacher, he would have been able to help me with school. I miss him now that I'm growing up. There's no substitute father. If Mama had a boyfriend or a fiancé it would take me time to get used to it, about ten years or so.*

> *Since the recent death of both my adoptive parents, I'm thinking more and more about the adoption.*

ii. **Education**

> In time you will see life as a collection of haphazard events, an incomplete mosaic, a montage or abstract collage, rather than a puzzle where everything fits neatly in its place".[57]

The support factor of education for adoptees can be looked at from different perspectives. Firstly, the family offers the initial framework for pedagogical and educative processes through its multigenerational relationships (Ecarius, 2009) and intergenerational familial solidarity (Szydlik, 2000). Secondly, education offers a broader horizon for adoptees on their background and heritage, including the possibility of knowledge about their country of origin and the implied socio-economic factors involved in the issue of transnational adoption. It is here that education can be supportive in that additional knowledge and insight may help the adoptee to understand more about the circumstances of his or her adoption. New perspectives may open up for reflecting the life path in hind sight, a capability which researchers of the fourth life phase (Schweppe, 2002) see as an important strategy for coming to terms with certain life events and crossroads. This remains in the realm of a hypothesis as far as this study and its participants is concerned but could be relevant one day when their lives' paths have reached the stage of old age.

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[57] Laura Fish „Letter to Myself" In: In search of belonging (2006: 206ff.).

Education is a pertinent area as the majority of respondents stated that it was within school curricula that they had chosen topics related to their countries or continents of birth. A female teenager in Austria (B1) and an adult female living in Sweden (H2) commented:

> *I took a special subject at school and did a presentation on India but it's more the social aspects, like for example the work of Sister Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity that I'm interested in.*

> *I've done some assignments in school, did some research for geography and chose Korea. It seemed a natural choice.*

Although only some adoptees may begin to actually search on their birth family and background, it would be a misunderstanding to believe that even if they are able to find their birth parents, that this is then the end of the journey. On the contrary, it appears that it's really only the beginning. In the search for birth parents, adoptees will often be confronted with discoveries that unveil just how incomplete people's lives and biographies histories can be.

Thirdly, education can be a spurring aim in life, widening the horizon, giving structure and incentive to the developing person and influencing the life course (Schulze, 1999). One female student in Austria (C4) stated:

> *The most important issue has always been for me my education and training.*

Education also gives a sense of identity as can be sensed in the remark of a female teenager (B2):

> *I'd like to see myself as someone who has accomplished her schooling, who has decent education and finds a good job.*

The centrally defining 'felt' experience with regard to education emerged as being its value, it is certainly not taken for granted by the respondents and is seen as the key and preparation for a productive life (Klafki, 1994). A young male in Austria (A4) has high-set goals:

> *I'm training to become a carpenter as an apprentice. In 5 years I'll be qualified and then maybe continue and do my Guild Diploma […] I think that I'm pretty ambitious if I decide on something that I see it through. Maybe I'll even go to evening school and do my Matura [58], I plan to do this.*

This survey also brought forth results showing that of those adoptees who had not completed any form of higher education, all three were women living in Sweden, carrying out unskilled jobs.

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[58] Matura, is the Austrian equivalent to English GCE A level Examinations

These results are in keeping with studies undertaken in Sweden regarding the socio-economic status of transnational adoptees, and to the theory of Multiple Burdens (Hübinette, 2001).

iii. Social Services /Counselling

I find it hard because I'm sad. I'm sad because I miss my birth mum.

Sometimes I wonder if my birth mum knew me.

That I am in England?

One day I would like to go back to China and look at my orphanage,

It's sad when you be adopted.

Adoption is nice

Adoption is sad

Adoption makes me glad

And sometimes mad.[59]

One of the keys to improvement in adoption placement is seen in post-placement support (Hoksbergen, 1993; McGinnis et al 2009). However neither in Austria nor in Sweden is there mandatory post-placement contact between the adoptive family and the social services or child welfare office. A female student and mother of two (F1) expresses the following opinion:

> *At the beginning when one comes to Sweden the social services make home visits, I would have wished that they continue to keep up the contact with me especially in my teens. I think it would be very important for adoptive parents and young adopted people to get some form of further accompaniment by the authorities.*

Although adoptive families are free to seek support if necessary, there are certain fears involved in contacting the child welfare office (Baum-Breuer, 2007: 100 and 138) evolving around the possibility of the child being taken away from the family by the authorities if their parenting skills are not adequate. Such measures are only taken in drastic cases like the one described by a female student in Austria (C4):

> *The child welfare authorities intervened because I was so difficult in school and had so many problems. Then it all came out that my adoptive mother didn't want me and although I know that my father dearly loved me […] he was helpless at the time.*

The above response gives an insight into the problems faced by adoptees in adoption breakdown, the need for outside support and the future perspectives which may develop from a crisis. Our interview partner (C4) continues her story:

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[59] KB (at age 9) „Adoption" In: The Colours in me (2008:121).

After they put me in the Children's Village I didn't want to have anything to do with the family anymore and refused to see them.[…]In the children's village I met a woman who had adopted a little girl from Ethiopia and I experienced how much this woman told her daughter about her home country and showed and read books with her about adoption. I had never seen anything like this. She gave me a book then on adoption and also one about India and this kindled my interest.

Post-placement support can be offered by specialist organizations cooperating with child welfare authorities, which may be easier to reach for clients (Baum-Breuer, 2007: 144). Outside support is clearly called for by a female student of social work in Sweden (F1):

As I see it with my experience it's especially in this period that problems arise with identity development, not only in connection with adoption, although it can happen that parents overlook some issues that do have to do with the adoption.

A further stipulation is that adoption work be given a specialist status within social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2002).

With regard to counselling, only five respondents stated that they had sought professional help, one was in the process of therapy and a further two were toying with this perspective after having experienced recent deaths of an adoptive parent, and in two of the five cases in which support had already become necessary, the catalyst had also been the death of an adoptive parent. Nevertheless, in some instances primary support and advice remained within the private sphere, as mentioned by (C4):

I also had psychotherapy but this wasn't as important as this personal bond.

iv. Coping Strategies

<div align="right">

This other woman's reflection is equal,

Yet moves with a grace that is taken for granted.

She knows who she is and where she has come from.

She belongs where she grew and stays where she's planted.

[…]

And so, I will always be in her presence

but not in her shadow. I'm earning a place

Where kinky hair and rootless roots

are enough.

I've learnt to love my face.[60]

</div>

The coping strategies which were derived from answers in this survey are two-fold, indicating firstly a personality characteristic (as discussed earlier in the sub-theme protective factors) and secondly a process, together constituting a key concept for adaptation and health (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

The socialisation experienced within social networks of family and community have empowered the interviewed adoptees, a male student (C1) said:

> *Their way of bringing me up was especially important for my social behaviour.*

And a young woman (G1) commented that because her adoptive parents had been

> *Open and honest and because I grew up in a community where everybody was open-minded I felt very accepted. That has helped a great deal, I never felt excluded.*

In view of some of the life histories, crises could be overcome with a combination of support from outside and inner strength stemming from heritage. The young female student in Austria (C4) whose adoption breakdown we have already touched on, informs us further:

> *Coming to the children's village I felt that I'd been given a new chance in life. I want to make something out of my life. People in the village boosted my self confidence and told me that I've got a lot from my real mother, her intelligence, her ambition, her wish that I have a good life. I've never looked for a mother substitute – I have a real mother.*

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[60] E. Stanhope „Fantasy for Maura" In: In search of belonging (2006:86).

Time and progress may also be seen as elements in the discussion on coping strategies. One statement illustrating that nowadays adoption is indeed a contemporary subject, being met and treated with far more openness than some three decades ago. An adult female in Sweden (G2) made the following comment:

> *That people can speak about the adoption also as children, like in school, in the family.*
> *When I was a child nobody ever asked me about it.*

Yngvesson (2010, P.9) suggests that the 'pull back' to the country of origin is fundamental to the logic of (biogenetic) identity, and as such may be seen as a coping strategy in the long run, however "going back may complicate the experience of identity, constituting I as a dynamic, discontinuous, and always in need of one more return".

The realisation by adoptees that articulating themselves on the subject of adoption is important and cathartic (Harris, 2006 and 2008), can also contribute to their coping skills. Whether this active involvement is for example by giving an interview, or through cooperation in an anthology of writing or drawing, via participation in self-help groups or joining a motherland tour, all these ideas and activities can be significant coping strategies.

6. Envisaged Future

Shall I think of you in years to come

When all I have sought is done?

When I have succeeded. When I am complete

When I have a nice house on a well-to-do street

[…]

You made your decision and though broken hearted

You signed on the line and so we were parted

Shall I think of you in years to come

When all I have sought to do is done?

I know this sounds foolish, of this I am sure.[61]

Questions pertaining to adoptees' ideas, plans, hopes and fantasies about their future brought a very clear picture of where adopted envisaged settling, fairly explicit answers in the areas of professional qualifications and aims, however with regard to family perspectives answers were not as decisive.

i. Qualifications and Professional Aims

. . .it was a very slippery slope into social work really. I have ended up working in adoption although I've not worked in assessment. I made a conscious decision not to work in an area of adoption that involved going out to assess potential adopters because I think my personal experiences and history could expose me to allegations of bias, especially if it involved intercountry adoption. I've always had a passion for post-adoption support. I think it's crucial. […] I like being able to provide support to people.[62]

The largest group of respondents, a total of six stated that they would want to have professions working with people these included: social work, nursing and the teaching profession. One young woman (F1) explained her perspectives and plans:

I'm studying to be a social worker and I hope to work with children and families.

Another young woman (C3) stipulated specifically:

I do know that I want to work with people and for people. I'd like to work in a global organization, something international but not with an economic focus but with a humanitarian.

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[61] Kevin Toni Mitchell (at age 18) In: The Colours in me (2008:129).
[62] Chris Atkins "From Kowloon tiger to Chinese cockney" In: In search of belonging (2006: 276ff.).

Four respondents are either in the process of studying at university or planning to do so. (C1) a creative young man in Austria related:

> *I'm at the Film Academy at the moment and this is the direction I want to work in. I really love acting, but this is too risky just on its own, that's why I'm also learning camera techniques and filming*

Three female adoptees living in Sweden were already part of the work force and had not received higher education, one of these had however begun to train as a massage therapist.

One youth had already begun an apprenticeship (A4) while a second youth was in the process of looking for a suitable possibility and expressed the following plans (A1):

> *My aims are now to start an apprenticeship, either as a salesperson, painter or decorator. Then I want to do my driving licence, complete my apprenticeship […] and become independent.*

A career in sport was the objective for two youths in Sweden, one as a TV sports reporter and the second (D2) as a professional footballer.

> *It's my definite dream to become a professional footballer. I want to play for Barcelona, I love the Barcelona Football Team.*

For some of the younger respondents careers are still a long way ahead and ideas about their envisaged future pertained more so to location rather than to profession, as a young teenager (A2) illustrates:

> *I'd like to travel through the world, though I think it's the most beautiful here in Vorarlberg.*

The two remaining professions stated were that of actress and farmer. A young man born in Sri Lanka (H1) stated:

> *I want to stay on the farm in Jämtland ^{63} in my grandmother's house. This is the 8th generation on the farm. I want to continue farming and also work in forestry.*

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[63] Jämtland is a province in central Sweden

ii. Settling Down

<div style="text-align: right;">

Adoption- there wasn't any fucking option.

Whether it's right or wrong,This poem isn't a song.

I was mixed race, my family they were white.

They made the choice to put up the fight, that's right.

We're all the same, you and me,

Let's face up to the reality.]...]

As you grow older, as you grow stronger, you'll see racism isn't our reality.

Don't live in a world full of hate,

Let's show the fascists our lives are great.

About to start my own family,

Sabrina, JJ and me, let's teach our children a better way of life.[64]

</div>

The scenario below illustrates that the majority of respondents (eleven) envisage their futures in the respective country of adoption. One young woman (B1) said:

> *I want to stay close by. I can imagine going abroad for a short period but I certainly want to stay here, where all my family my father, grandparents, cousins and all my friends are.*

In part the reasons given were mainly based on emotional bonds, in other cases they were pragmatic like the comment made by one male teenager (D1) in Sweden and another young man in Austria (C1):

> *I want to stay in Sweden because here there's free health care.*

> *I want to stay in Austria – certainly for the beginning. I'd like to build something up in the film business, get a flat if possible not in Vienna, I'm much happier in the country.*

These results mirrored on a small scale, findings from large scale surveys (Hoksbergen, 1993 and 1997; Dalen, 1999; Selman 2000) of transnational adoptees settling in and contributing to their new countries.

Two respondents could imagine returning to their country of adoption, though it remains unclear if this would be the country where they actually settle down in. A young woman (C2) expressed the following:

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[64] John-Paul Johnson „Adoption Rap" In: In search of belonging (2006:105).

> *There must be a country where I want to live and die. […] I have to go back to Rumania to find out, work through and sort out my roots, that's where I come from. Perhaps Rumania is this country, but perhaps not. I'm going to go on my search.*

A further five respondents including a young cosmopolitan man (E1) replied that they could envisage living in other countries, later on in life once they had completed their education:

> *I'm open for anything. I'm an IT student and will go where my future job will take me.*

These adoptees are protagonists of global players, who with a combination of emotional grounding through the protective factors of their carefully selected adoptive families, with professional and supportive adoption practise have been able to overcome the inherent risks of adoption, and with good education as a key to life, are able to reap the chance of adoption and transcend national identity boundaries (Maalouf, 1998) contributing as such to a deeper understanding between cultures.

In regard to having a family and children the majority of answers (nine) were still vague, most of these respondents were young and had not dwelt on the subject. One female respondent (C4) who had suffered under the adoption syndrome (Herzka, 1977) stated:

> *I can't imagine having a family as I'm much too scared about failing as a mother like my adoptive mother did.*

Another young woman, herself mother (G1) answered:

> *I wouldn't adopt myself because I'm thinking about issues like racism and discrimination.*

Three adoptees had already become parents and a further three answered that they hoped to have children, mirroring the preciousness of children (Zelizer, 1985) for their own lives.
 A young male (H1) announced:

> *I want to have lots of children.*

5.1.3   Final Development of Visual Biographical Results for an 'Axes of Adoption' Model

With regard to the previously discussed life-span perspective we can now apply the six major themes, derived from the interview material, to the biographical life-span research model. We see from this diagram how the themes may be interpreted within the three axes of 'life', 'care' and 'choice'.

It is important to re-iterate the fact that all three axes are applicable to all human beings and that it was merely of interest to ascertain whether the biographical model would be able to 'make sense' of the major themes from both a nature/nurture and life-span perspective within the context of transnational adoption.

To this end, the final development of the 'axes model' adequately portrays the results of the thematic analyses within a visual context; see Figure 6.
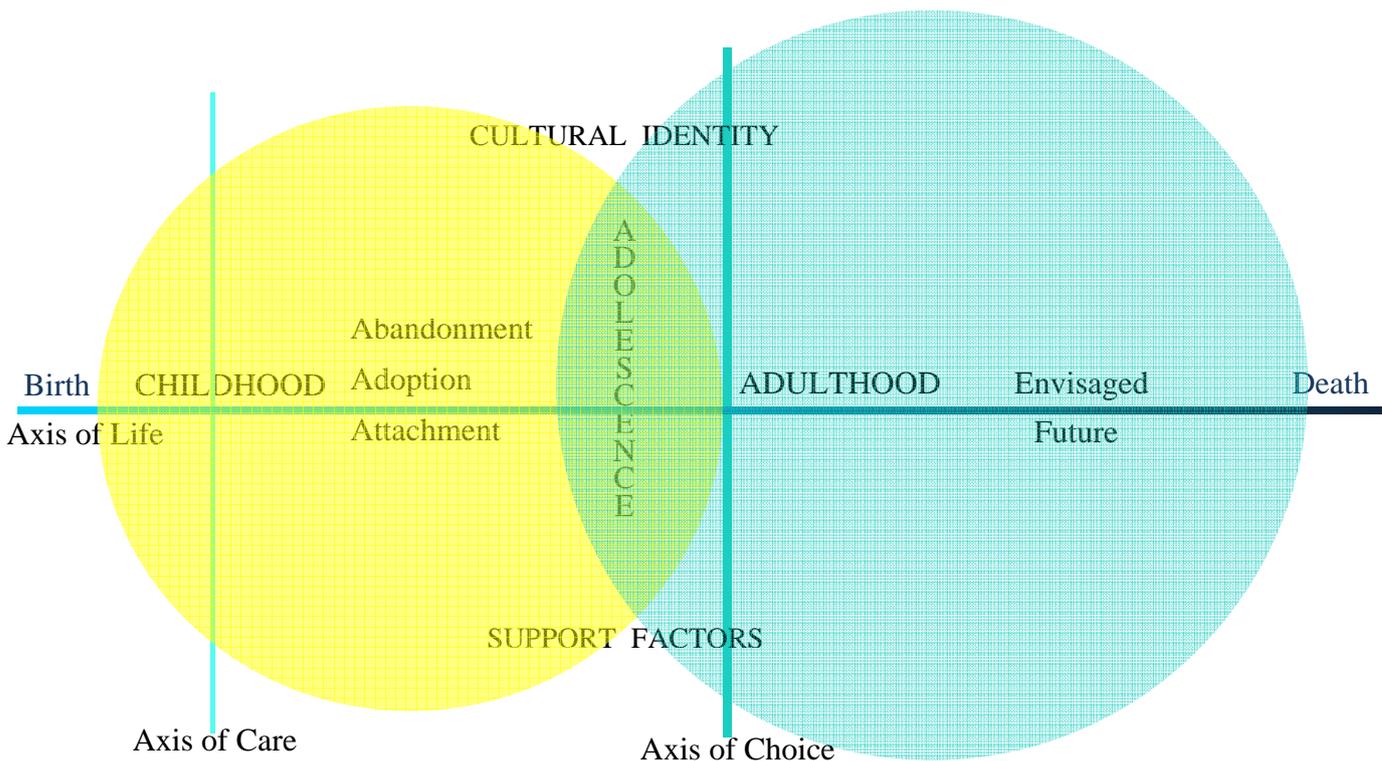

Figure 6: Results and Final Development of a Visual 'Axes of Adoption' Model- a blueprint

5.1.3   Summary

Throughout this stage of the study, three major trends pertaining directly towards research questions 1 – 5 emerged: these trends were Protective Factors; Social Networks and Time Factors (regarding interest in origin, adoption and country of birth). This summary outlines the broader spectrum of these three considerations.

Arising out of the respondents' answers was the pain of coming to terms with abandonment, regardless of whether this was in the literal sense of being abandoned, of having been given away or of not having been wanted enough to be kept. It was notable that the younger the respondents, the less they had dwelt on this issue, being still more cocooned in their adoptive family environment. Two respondents in the critical phase of adolescence denied any interest on the subject of adoption. It appeared that the more settled and confident adoptees were in themselves, the more they could afford to consciously delve into the depths of their background and origin.

In order to enable adoptees to gain self-confidence and trust after the drama and trauma of their introduction to life, 'Protective Factors' must play a vital role where all involved with adoption are concerned. The significance of protective factors as guiding principles to aid in dealing with the risks inherent in transnational adoption can never be overstated and indeed should be underlined at every point. Naturally, these risks must be candidly discussed with prospective adopters by authorities and organisations, highlighting the important role of Protective Factors as a necessity for the positive development and outcome for transnationally adopted individuals. In the majority of cases, these protective factors were provided by the immediate adoptive family and notably the adoptive parents. However in a minority of cases, where adoptees perceived the family environment as threatening, they were dependent on other mentoring environments for protection and orientation. In one case where no substitute protective environment existed, it was apparent that the adoptee was very much out on her own, exposed and reliant on inner stamina and, at present, very lost in life.

The second trend, Social Networks, is seen to gain in significance for adoptees further along the axis of life. Responses indicated that these networks included their families, peer groups and friends (including other adoptees). While the protective factors are central to childhood years, supporting adoptees into adolescence, social networks as it appears from results, take on a leading part for accompanying young individuals through the labyrinth and turmoil of this next life phase. The visual model, developed in the course of this study, depicts this comparatively exposed grid of

adolescence between childhood and the transition into adulthood. While many of the respondents' social networks developed through their own social connections and interactions, other networks had been organised as a part of post-adoption programmes. The possibility of engaging in such specific exchange with youths of comparable background was welcomed by those who have experienced this opportunity. In the majority of cases, however, no such contact had taken place. Subjects have felt isolated even amidst the most loving of family circles. This occurs as a result of having few if any connections with others who have experienced the same situation. In more general developmental terms, their situation and the inherent sensitive identity issues call for the company and empathy of peers. The transition period of adolescence is certainly one of ambivalence; elements of identity crisis paving the rocky path toward identity development. Possibly these feelings of isolation mirror the naked truth that at certain periods along the life-trajectory we are undeniably on our own, when we enter this world at birth and in parting when we die.

The time factor for acknowledging and addressing the issue of adoption along the life-trajectory constituted the third trend. Although 'Time Factor' was not a specific theme in itself; apparent throughout all the main themes and sub-themes of the analysis was the issue of time and age as to when adoptees had begun to show interest in the issue of adoption and their own specific biography background. Although the subject of adoption appears to always be latently present, the levels of awareness, interest and willingness to confront oneself with this topic varied considerably. Responses indicate that during the first years after adoption children are settling into their new families. For those adopted at very young ages, adoption is a pre-verbal memory; older children have more conscious and, sometimes vivid, memories. Issues such as sibling constellation, socialisation in kindergarten and school, as well as cultural environment also impact on this time factor trend.

For the majority of interview partners, the involvement with this study was the first time that they had been specifically addressed for information and their feelings about adoption. Articulation of these sensitive areas proved for some to be difficult, especially for individuals who had not as yet spoken to anyone apart from their family or friends about their life history. However, during the course of the interviews and by the responses elicited, it became clear that the subject was of great significance to respondents, even if this was not yet quite tangible. Of interest was the certainty conveyed by most respondents that their interest in the topic of adoption would gain in intensity the older they became.

The more settled adoptees were in themselves and also in their lives, the more it seemed they could afford to reflect on their biographies. In cases in which respondents had become parents themselves (in all three examples these were mothers) having a child /children of their own had triggered and accelerated interest in their own adoption. The experience of parental responsibility, of deciding to ,keep' a child, blatantly confronts the adoptee once again with their own fate. In the cases included in this study, there was indication that having a child contributed to a growing sense of inner security and strength, with these children constituting an anchor in the lives of their respective parents.

5.2   Part 2: Interpretation of Adoptees' Photographs

5.2.1   Interpretation of Pictures

Pictures are a source of orientation for everyday practice on the quite elementary levels of understanding, learning, socialization and human development, with behaviour in social situations or settings being adopted and learned by means of mental images, and memorised through the medium of images. One of the main aims in choosing the medium of pictures for this analysis was to approach the subject of identity development in a re-constructive way, proceeding from the immanent literal meanings of the respective photos to their documentary meaning (Bohnsack, 2008).

In applying the Documentary Method we hope to gain a methodical access to pictures, treating them as self-contained, autonomous domains and subjecting them to analysis in their own terms, allowing verbal contextual and pre-knowledge to be methodically controlled in the documentary interpretation of pictures. Acknowledging that pictures have a methodological status of self-referential systems also has consequences for the ways of understanding pictures as a media of communication. It is therefore important to differentiate between two distinct means of iconic understanding: a communication about pictures and an understanding through pictures. (Bohnsack, 2008). This implies that our world, our social reality is not only represented by, but is indeed also constituted or produced by pictures and images which underlines the significance of pictures and images for practical action, and their capacity to provide orientation for these actions, as we will see in some of the following examples.

Working with the Documentary Method according to Bohnsack, 2008 necessitates a step-by-step procedure in order to ensure the incorporation of the various levels of conceptual and verbal explications, acknowledging that the orientation of action and everyday practice by means of the

medium of iconicity is mostly pre-reflexive. Initially we concentrate on the interpretation at the pre-iconographical level, discovering our own subjective associations, working our way through to the picture's formal structure and composition. By thoroughly reconstructing the formal composition of a picture, individual elements are unveiled and may then be interpreted ‚ensemble‘, integrating single elements into the over-all context, and not isolated from the original context, as is the case in ‚common-sense‘interpretation. It is only through contexts and settings that single elements attain their proper meaning. This mutual relation is termed *reflexivity* and the method of interpretation, which allows access to the structures of meaning constituted by this reflexivity, which Garfinkel refers to as the *documentary method*. (Bohnsack, 2008).This implies that we are only able to validly reconstruct context if we are successful in identifying formal structures, which are documents for the natural order, yet have been produced by the actors themselves.

After these first steps we then reach the next level, that of iconographical meaning. Our aim is to succeed in gaining access to pictures as self-referential systems, thereby also attaining systematic access to the inherent laws of the picture, to the producer's realms of experience, for example, to the realms of experience of a family with its specific collective habitus (Bohnsack, 2008).

With regard to analysis of a family photo, Bohnsack (2008), in referring to Foucault, states that as users of this method we should proceed on the assumption - or basis of secured information – that the pictured persons are indeed a family, thus necessitating that we activate our knowledge about the institution of the family and its role-relations. Whereby if we happen to know that it is actually the „Johnson Family“, we should on the one hand draw upon our knowledge about the role-relations of the presented picture producers (mother, father, child, sibling, cousins and grand-father), on the other hand we should suspend or ignore as completely as possible, all the knowledge we have about the concrete biography and history of the „Johnson Family“.

Within the framework of the Documentary Method and Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge, referred to by Bohnsack (2006) as „The Praxeological Sociology of Knowledge“ two forms of knowledge are differentiated, these being: communicative knowledge, pertaining to generalized, mostly stereotyped and institutionalized knowledge and conjunctive knowledge, which is connected with proper names, in an individual, case-specific and also milieu-specific context.

In the development of qualitative methods for the interpretation of pictures, it is important to differentiate these from texts. However it is also equally important to develop common standards or methodological devices, relevant for the interpretation of texts, as well as pictures (Bohnsack, 2008). Such examples of common standards include: To treat both the text and the picture as a self-referential system; To differentiate between explicit and implicit (atheoretical) knowledge; To

change the analytic stance from asking the question *What* to *How;* To reconstruct the formal structure of both texts and pictures in order to integrate single elements into the over-all context; and to employ the use of comparative analysis.

However, as Bohnsack (2008) further stresses, if iconicity is to be advanced as a self-contained domain, to its inherent laws and to its autonomy independent from texts, the application of these common standards and methodological devices must be quite different to that of the realization of these standards in relation to texts.
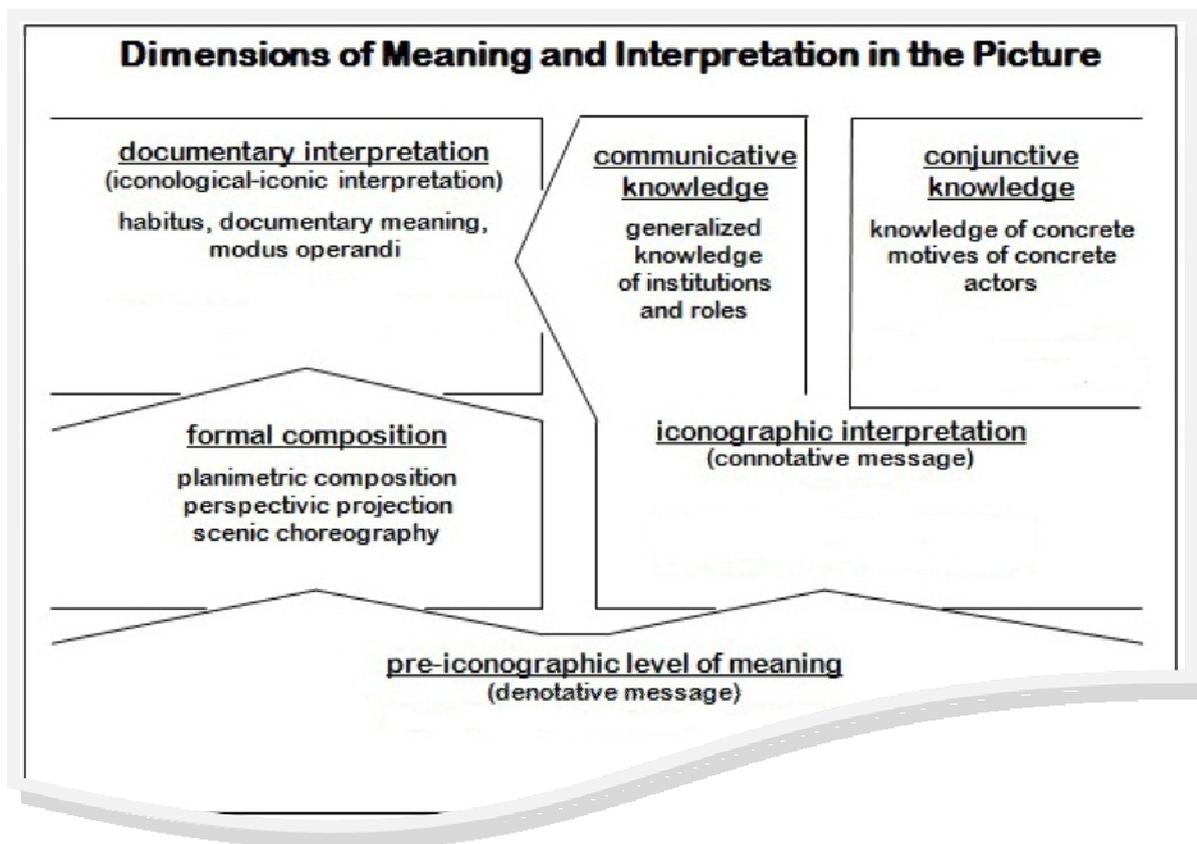
Figure 7:   Dimensions of Meaning and Interpretation in the Picture
            Source: Adapted from Bohnsack, 2008

5.2.2   Analysis of Picture Typology

The analysis of the adoptees' photographs identified 3 typologies: 1) People, 2) Places and 3) Possessions. These typologies accounted for the significance of placement of these specific themes in the transnational adoptees' lives (up until the time of interview). The typology of people had a significant number of sub-typologies.

Table 4: Typologies derived from an Interpretation of Picture Analysis

People	i. Individual Adoptee
	ii. Adoptee with Sibling
	iii. Adoptee with Mentor
	iv. Adoptee with Peers
	v. Adoptee with Adoptive Parents/Family
	vi. Adoptee with birth parents & adoptive family
Places	East and West
Possessions	Children's Shoes
	Soft Toy
	Bracelets

The nineteen adoptees who contributed as interview partners in this study were given the task of selecting pictures which they feel have significance for their feeling of identity and identity development. In all, twenty-five photos were submitted and subsequently analysed according to the stipulated procedure (Bohnsack, 2008) explained in the paragraph below. For three adoptees (B1), (C4), and (H1) actually deciding on one specific photograph in advance of the interview proved to be difficult, so they brought two and in one case, three (H1) with them and made a final choice towards the end of the interview session. In one case (B1) two photos from one and the same person were used in the analysis ('Adoptee with Peers' and 'Possessions/Bracelets'). One adoptee arrived without a photo but forwarded one later (F1), while one adoptee (G2) neither brought a photo to the interview nor did she they send one after the interview, possibly due to the fact that her adoptive sister (H2) had already submitted an example depicting them both.

The analysis was conducted in five steps, beginning with the forming of the frame, which implies deriving information as to when and where the picture was taken, where it is to be found or kept(in an album, in a frame, in a collage, etc.). The second step entails re-constructing the first impression and becoming conscious of the associations and feelings evoked in the researcher.   These

associations are emphasised through the use of a graphic indication of personal reflection for each picture. In the third step an interpretation of the picture is formulated, focusing on what can actually be seen. The fourth step is directed towards a reflecting interpretation and has a two-pronged approach: firstly the picture's formal composition, where possible, is analysed methodically by discussion of the planimetric composition, scenic choreography and perspective projection. Secondly an iconological/iconic interpretation is undertaken, aiming to fathom the meaning, intention and content of the picture as a document by synthesising two types of knowledge pertaining to the actual piece and to the time dimension of the picture (its origin and a diagnostic understanding of the era in which the picture was taken). In the fifth and last step, the intention is to filter out the primary and secondary subjects contained in the photo by means of picture semantics and syntax.

Operating within the principles of Bohnsack's 'horizons of comparison' (2003) this interpretative analysis of pictures compares photos of similar instances or backgrounds, from different milieus or different cultures.

People

By far the largest typology in this analysis was that of ‚People', within which six sub-typologies emerged. The most frequently chosen subject was the individual adoptee, depicted in total by five adoptees, of which two selected photos of themselves in childhood and three at their present age. All five of these adoptees were male. The next largest sub-typology (four examples) was made up of photos depicting the adoptee with adoptive parents or members of the adoptive family, followed by an equal number of photos in the sub-typology Adoptee with Sibling and Adoptee with Mentor (two examples), and one photo of an adoptee with peers and one example including the adoptee with both members of the birth and adoptive family.

     i.   Individual Adoptee

The following pictures were chosen for contrast, whereby it must be stated that all submitted photos in this category of individual adoptee were close-up pictures, unfortunately making the methodical analysis of the respective picture's formal composition difficult. However, the pure fact that the majority group submitted close-up individual photos given exactly the same instructions as all other interview partners, is in itself relevant in terms of identity, self-confidence and belonging. It can however also point to a need for more specific instructions when employing this method of

interpretation on behalf of the researcher. Within this first sub-typology one photograph will be analysed. It depicts a twenty year old young man (C1). He was adopted from India to Austria at the age of seven months.
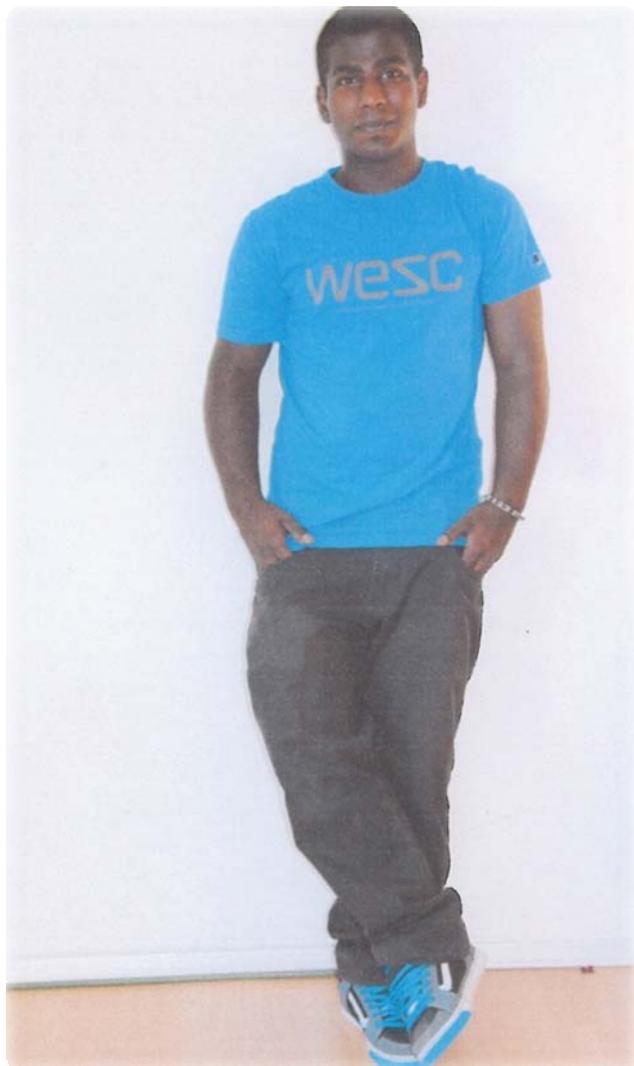
In this photograph we have a full-scale close-up photograph of an adoptee taken recently in his Austrian home in preparation for an actor's casting. It is one of many photos that the interviewee has on his computer and his comments on the photo and why he selected this particular example are:

"I'm on it full size and have a strong presence – it's me totally"

Personal associations: In seeing this photo in colour the dazzling blue of the T shirt and colour-coordinated sneakers makes a strong first impression. Although it is obviously a posed picture, the expression on the subject's face evokes the feeling of ease and self-confidence, reminding me of pictures I have seen of successful Indian or Pakistani cricketers, in addition I have a feeling that the young man is perhaps accustomed to being photographed.

From the conjunctive knowledge I know that the young man's father is a famous actor and that the family has recently been at celebrity events with a lot of press coverage.

The photograph depicts a young man either in his late teens or early twenties, standing in front of a pale coloured wall, a friendly expression on his clear-shaven face. His hair is short and he is wearing casual quality clothing and a silver coloured metal bracelet on his left wrist. The bright blue T shirt has four letters written on it but there are no clues as to what WEZC implies. His legs are crossed over at the knees and his hands are partly in the pockets of his dark jeans. There are no

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other objects or subjects in this picture, merely what looks like a small brown leaf or bread crumb on the floor to the left of the young man.

The common-sense typology would suggest that the subject – a dark skinned young man of Asian race - is on the brink of beginning an independent adult life, this could be in a multicultural environment or in an Asian country. The careful choice of colour and effect used in this picture, suggesting that the subject has aesthetic inclinations, his pose looks professional indicating either a good natural sense of presence or good coaching.

This photo fits into the genre of the pose (Bohnsack, 2007b) a medium intrinsic to the field of advertising, a form of „hyper-ritualization" wherein the paradoxical challenge is experienced by expressing individuality through the medium of poses and stereotypes. This is in turn a demonstration of the photo's trans contrariness in its iconic or iconological meaning: the presentation of individuality by posing or using stereotyped postures (Bohnsack, 2008).

ii. Adoptee with Sibling
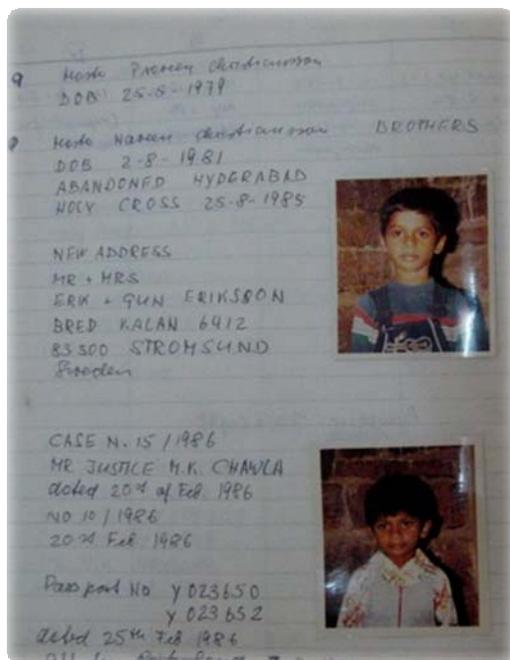
This category will depict two examples from the study, the first shows the photos of two abandoned brothers who were placed in an orphanage in Hyderabad, India. We see here the adoption registration book. The photo was submitted by an adoptee (E1) the elder of the two brothers, who returned to India on a visit for the first time since his adoption immediately after the interview. He contacted the local social services and re-visited the orphanage where he and his younger brother had spent the first years of their lives life after their mother's death, and was able to find this material in the orphanage's archive. He sent a copy of this adoption registration as his contribution to the picture analysis, stating that this photograph has the most significance for him regarding the adoption. He has now filed this page along with other adoption-relevant papers. Both brothers were adopted into the same Swedish family, growing up with three further adoptees from India (an elder brother and elder twin sisters).

Personal Associations: The picture kindles in my memory associations with a special little boy who was the hero of a series of stories that my father made up for me when I was a child. We had seen the photo of this boy in a newspaper. He was similar in age and stance to the adoptee in the photograph, and had been rescued from an earthquake in Skopje. In the stories he got into all kinds of imaginary adventure situations which were even written up in book form by my father for his granddaughters.

In this photo we see a boy of approximately six years of age, positioned in front of a brick wall (it is not clear whether he is standing or sitting). He is wearing a pair of blue dungarees and a blue pullover with red and white stripes. He looks clean and tidy and has a clear gaze in his large dark eyes. His expression is serious and his head is tilted very slightly to one side.

The planimetric composition and scenic choreography is focused entirely on the close-up of the picture's sole subject. The connotative message of this photo conveys an impression of both vulnerability and also inherent strength that forsaken children often possess. It is the kind of picture used by children's organizations for charity PR purposes with regard to sponsorship and awareness-raising. The stark words ‚Abandoned in Hyderabad' are dominant on the frugal handwritten page. In view of our conjunctive knowledge about the biographical significance of this photo for the adoptee, the primary subject transported through the documentary interpretation may be termed ‚the sought and found missing link'. As brothers who have been through the experience of abandonment, adoption and integration into a new family and new country side by side, the subject of ‚togetherness' is clearly fathomable as a secondary subject.

The second example of this genre shows the subject, a twenty-four year old South Korean born adoptee (H2), (woman in black jacket) with her elder adoptive sister (G2), who also originally comes from South Korea. The adoptive sisters also have an adoptive brother and have recently been bereaved by the deaths of both adoptive parents. The photo was taken in a local restaurant in a town in central Sweden where they both live, and is kept in a photo album by the younger sister. To my mind the picture depicts a sense of togetherness, the sisters'faces are very close indeed their cheeks are almost touching.

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Personal Associations: The photo triggers associations of close sister relationships like that of my grandmother and her sister and indeed my own daughters who are of a similar age and also three years apart like these sisters. Personally I find the knowledge that my daughters are emotionally and geographically close, comforting. I hope that they will continue to be supportive to each other throughout their lives.

Both young women are situated close to one another in the centre of the photograph. The elder sister is seated while her younger sister is standing slightly behind her and is bending over, thus appearing similar in height. The adoptee who submitted this photo is wearing a white top with a deep cleavage and a black leather jacket. Around her neck is a designer pendant. Her sister is clad in a purple sleeveless blouse and is wearing long feather-like earrings. Both sisters are wearing make-up and have their hair pulled back. On the far right edge of the picture the fingers of another person are partly visible holding a camera. The background of the picture is comprised of a wood panel wall and part of a table is visible in the left corner. The picture would suggest that it has been shot in a simple country town restaurant, the clothing of the elder sister indicating some form of special occasion, this presumption is backed up by the presence of yet another camera and the impression that the sisters appear in a festive mood.

In formal composition terms this picture consists of one horizontal axis which is emphasized by the pine wood panelling running from left to right, forming the backdrop of the closeup photo of the two subjects. The vertical lines of the panelling underpin the framework of this picture with the objects (table and a camera) to the right and left flanking the pair. The scenic choreography is formed by circumference of the right arm of the woman in the purple dress and the left arm of the woman in the black jacket. Their faces and individual predominant features (eyes, smiling mouths) are at an equal level while it is evident that the woman in the black jacket is positioned slightly behind the woman in purple.

An interesting feature of the photo is marked by the clothing of the subjects: while one is wearing a garment with an Asian note, the other is dressed in a very contemporary fashion complemented with a trendy piece of designer jewellery, suggesting an acceptance of both Asian and Western backgrounds. Given the often multiple-burdened situation of Asian female adoptees in Sweden (Hübinette) the blatantly revealing top and deep visible cleavage of the one woman is noteworthy, the pendant most probably being a fake . This interpretation stemming from a milieu-specific observation that this group of Swedish society is often exposed to financial problems.

 The harsh word „fake" could also be used for a description of the subjects' constructed family. However, their respective sense of belonging is anchored by their family cohesion. The loss of the

parents and the issue of adoption, which pertains to all three siblings, are situations in which they appear to be of mutual support, as these comments from the elder and younger sister illustrate

> *Since the recent death of both my adoptive parents, I'm thinking more and more about the adoption.*

> *I want to be close to my siblings that is most important, especially because of what has happened to our parents, I want to be close to my family.*

While the filtered primary subject of this picture may be seen as that of mutual support, the secondary subject is one of fake family construction and real family loss, echoing the „productive ambiguity" in the deeper semantic structure of the picture, transmitting the significance of the pictorial meaning in the form of "transcontrariness" (Bohnsack, 2008).

iii. Adoptee with Mentor

This is a holiday photograph taken on the island of Crete. It shows the then teenage adoptee who is now a student (C4) on the beach with her mentor, a staff member of an Austrian children's village. The photo is kept in the subject's holiday album.

The photograph contains mainly strong primary colours of red, yellow and blue and is obviously taken on a very sunny day, noticeable by the shade of the trees.

Personal Associations: In my memory it recalls former own working vacations with youngsters in Italy as a voluntary carer whilst studying to become a social worker. The young adoptee also reminds me of the first transnational adoption that I conducted; the subject at the time was two years old and also came from India. The significance of mentors along the life trajectory is my overriding association with this photo.

The location of the picture is on a sandy beach with some kind of fir trees in the background. Both females are clad in beach wear, the adoptee sporting a bright red brand T shirt and white and brown bead necklace. Her long dark hair is tied back to a ponytail with a scarf. She is smiling slightly but also squinting into the sun, presumably because she is not wearing sunglasses. Her mentor is wearing a bright yellow tank top with turquoise trousers - probably shorts - with white stripes down the sides. She is wearing large dark sunglasses and has a broad smile on her face. Her long blonde hair is falling loosely across her shoulders. In the background a man can be partly seen, he is wearing a cap. In the left of picture the bright green T shirt of another youngster is partly visible.

The dunes in the background of the photo form the sandy horizontal plane which runs from mid picture to the foreground and immediate backdrop of the two main subjects. Practically all additional elements of the picture are vertical, beginning with the depicted three people and visible trees and bushes. The scenic choreography is directed by the distinct drop in height between the tall adult woman and budding girl, accentuated by a similar build in terms of their shoulders and breast parts. The perspective centre is marked by the eyes of the juvenile girl, these being the only eyes visible, the man in the background is looking in another direction and the adult woman beside the girl is wearing sunglasses.

With regard to the actual photo, we know that the mentor here in question is at present the most important bonding person for the girl and has been of formative help after adoption breakdown which the subject experienced in her adoptive family. The negative experience with the adoptive mother is soothed by the affection and positive support of a motherly person, her size signalising protection. An inherent communicative message of this photo is the importance of support in a context of protection. In addition it underlines the need for orientation and direction from outside the immediate family in formative adolescent years, which are often accompanied by inner turmoil for transnational adoptees (Hoksbergen, Berger).

iv. Adoptee with Peers

This photograph shows the adoptee (B1)with girl friends who also happen to be distant relations of her large extended Austrian family. All three teenage girls are single children and have been in close contact since their early childhood, even attending the same kindergarten and schools. The picture was taken in the subject's bedroom in 2009 and is displayed in a silver frame in her home. Both other girls also possess this picture in standing frames in their respective homes.

The first impression gained from this photograph is of happy-go-lucky girlie teenage weekends. The smiles of all three girls are mirrored in their shining eyes and all three are looking straight at the camera, as if they are quite accustomed to having their pictures taken.

Personal Associations: As a single child I can well empathise with the importance of these friendly-familial-bonds and remember many sleepovers with girlfriends and cousins during teenage years with secret midnight feasts and endless nightly conversations on what our future lives may hold in store for us.

In the centre of this photograph is the Indian-born teenage adoptee, her bright white smile focusing all initial attention. She is wearing a light turquoise T shirt with short sleeves and on her left wrist she has a shining bracelet. Her dark hair is of medium length. To her left is a girl of similar age – between fifteen and eighteen – she has very pale skin with a few freckles on her nose and hazel eyes. She is wearing a striped T shirt in subtle colours of beige, creme, brown and blue. To the other side of the adoptee a third teenage girl is partly visible, she is also very light skinned with many freckles and blue eyes. A piece of pink and turquoise clothing is visible but not discernable as to whether it is a blouse, top or T shirt. In the background of the photograph a pine coloured drawer can be seen along with a number of children's drawings. The clothing and carefree expression of the girls is representative of a comfortable middle-class background.

This very close-knit composition makes any planimetric composition difficult basically the photo is dominated by the central figure, the adoptee. The background artefacts (drawings and a cupboard) can be interpreted as symptomatic for the transition period of adolescence between childhood and

adulthood, the phase in which the subject is herself currently in. The drawings as symbols for childhood depict three girls holding hands and a second very stylised drawing of cartoon-like image of a girl, while the cupboard as a symbol for adulthood, is an expression of own space and possession. The central positioning of the prime subject, the other two subjects partly visible, directs the scenic choreography and underlines the general focus and intention of the picture. This is further emphasised by the stark contrast in colour between the dark adoptee and the fair-haired girls on the one hand and between the dark complexion and bright white teeth in the smiling face of the central subject on the other hand. The visible piece of jewellery on the adoptees wrist tops this staging. The selection of this specific photo with two peers albeit in secondary roles, on behalf of the adoptee is relevant in a documentary sense in its representation of a specific generation. The iconic interpretation of this photo is one of successful social integration with an added message of young 'joie de vivre'.

v. Adoptee with Adoptive Parents / Adoptive Family

In the first example of a family photo, the picture of a Columbian-born adoptee (F2) living in Sweden was taken in the family back garden in 1995, his reason for choosing this specific photo:
…because my brother is also in this picture, as well as my adoptive parents. This is how I live now, this is my life.
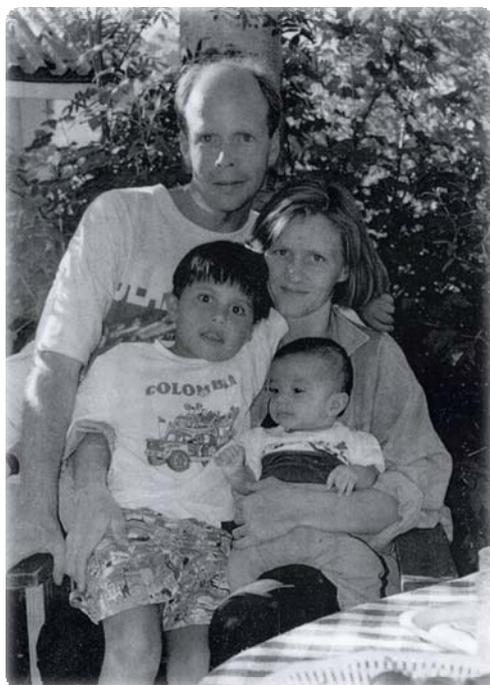
The photo is kept in a family album.

The initial impression is one of harmony, peacefulness. The photo seems natural although it was obviously a set picture.

Personal Associations: I find myself thinking about the significance of family photos and all the albums I have from generations back and how amazed I am that they have not been lost in the turmoil of war and emigration. I also remember spending many hours with my grandfather sticking photos into family albums and of how I enjoyed leafing through these albums as a child, as my daughters also did during their childhood. In a day and age of digital photos collection methods are different, but still very popular and important.

This specific example shows a nuclear family grouped in front of a tree with the mother seated and her two sons on her lap, while the father is sitting on the rim of the chair, leaning towards his wife and children. The parents appear to be somewhere in their thirties or early forties, the elder boy is around four years of age and the baby about a year old. Apart from the baby, all are looking straight at the camera, with wide open expressions. The elder boy is wearing a T-shirt with „Columbia" written on it. In the background leafy bushes are visible and beyond these a few roof slates from a neighbouring building can be discerned. There is a table in the foreground (round or oval in form) with a tray and glasses on it, and a bowl of fruit with what looks like either grapes or plums.

The planimetric composition of this picture is strictly dominated by the vertical line of a tree in the background and a table (set at an angle) in the foreground, between which the small group of four persons is positioned around a central chair, framed on either side by delicate foliage, giving it a soft and open order.

The scenic choreography depicts the subject (adoptee) in the very centre of the picture from both a vertical and horizontal perspective, with the other persons juxtaposed around him, whereby the father and adoptee form a direct vertical axis with the tree in the background.

This softness and openness are not only documented in the planimetric composition and scenic choreography but also in the expressions on the faces and the intertwining posture of the four persons where each person is in some form or other in bodily contact with the others (mother and elder adoptee with their arms around each other, baby touching his mother's arm and elder boy touching his father's leg).

The informal presence of nourishment on the table in the foreground (on trays and no set table) indicates that this was no official portrait session but an informal family snapshot. Essential elements of the milieu of this family, of its realms of experience, such as an appreciation for nature, a concern for healthy nourishment or informality are thus expressed in an immediate way.

All together there is a relaxed and belonging relationship between the impression of being open and soft on the one hand and being secure and ‚constructed‘ on the other. The mellow relationship makes up the atmosphere of the picture and gives some insight into the family's habitus. In a verbal-textual manner this habitus can be formulated through „transcontrariness" as the habitus of openness and belonging in the context of provision and security.

To complement the former picture, a further example from this sub-typology shows a family photo with a grandfather and three grandchildren taken in Germany at the home of the adoptee's grandparents, whilst she and her brother and their two cousins were visiting during the Christmas holidays. The grandfather plays an important role in the life of his granddaughter (A3) and she has spent a lot of time with him. Recently widowed, he has moved next door to his son's family in Austria and now the adoptee can see her grandfather on a daily basis. The photo is in a family photo album.
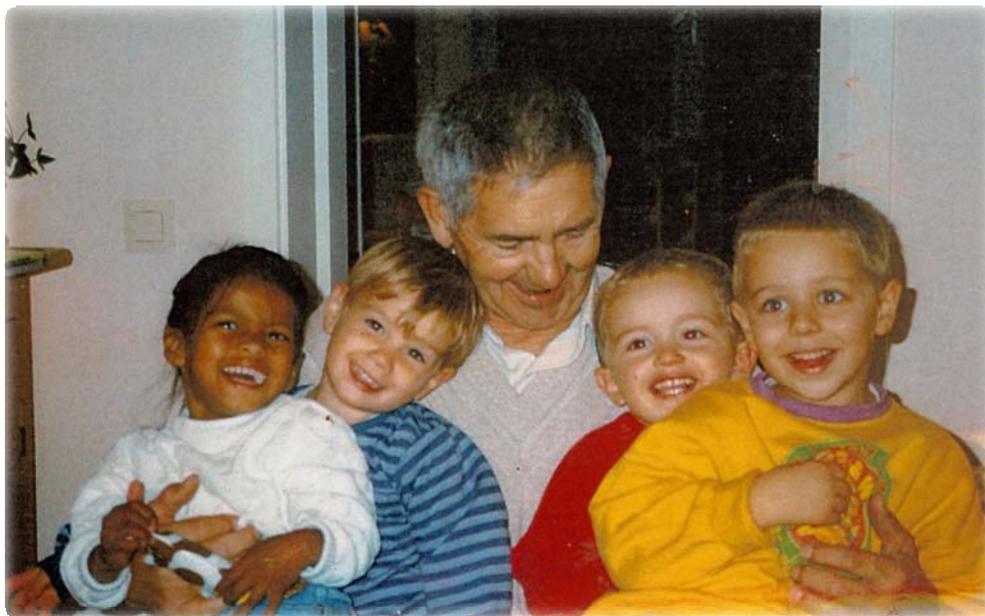
Personal Associations: The formative bond to my maternal grand-father appears before my inner eye. We were 33 first cousins scattered around the world and many spent the summer holidays with him in Austria. He taught us not only good manners but also pranks and games and we had so much fun together. I remember well rivalry between our various parents for his attention but not between us children.

It is a lively photo and the children seem full of happy energy, probably not able to sit still for many photos to be taken! The expression on the grandfather's face appears benevolent and even though his eyes are downcast, I am convinced that they are smiling, as are his lips. The photo conjures up an idyll of extended families.

The grandfather, a man maybe in his sixties or seventies is in the centre of this photo with four of his grandchildren, the interviewee with her brother (one of the biological children of her adoptive parents) and two cousins. All four children appear to be seated on the grandfather's lap and he has his arms around the outer children, the adoptee and one of her cousins. The children are between around three years up to six years in age. The grandfather is wearing a V neck grey pullover and white shirt, the children are colourfully dressed, the two boys to the left (the cousins) in a yellow sweater and red pullover respectively, while the adoptee is wearing a white pullover and her brother a blue striped sweater. The three boys are fair haired and fair coloured in contrast to the dark skin and dark hair of the young adoptee. Everybody in the picture is smiling, only one child (the brother of the adoptee) is looking into the camera. The grandfather's eyes are looking down at his grandchildren. The photo was taken inside and in the background one can glimpse another room through the open doorway. A light switch and a cabinet with a plant on top are visible to the side of the picture.

In this example the planimetric composition evolves from the vertical parallel lines of the doorway in the background and the horizontal axis of the four children in the foreground.

With regard to the scenic choreography, the grandfather is basically the central point of the picture – in both vertical and horizontal terms – forming an anchor point for the single plane on which all four children are positioned. By setting the four children along one line the overall initial impression gained is one of equality and equity even though the grandfather's visual contact is directed towards the children on his left side, his head is nevertheless tilted towards the right side and the two other children.

These details in addition to the encompassing hands of the old man around the young group, add to the idea of equality and equity among the children. However, due to the little girl's strong contrasting presecence (dark colouring and white teeth and

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light pullover), her minority situation is emphasized. In addition, all extra objects of the picture (light-switch, plant and cabinet) are to be found in the location of this child, hence drawing added attention.

The family construction hereby depicted is integrated into a trans-generational context, and also into the context of the extended family, a form of lived-family structure still slightly more typical some fifteen years ago than today. In filtering the primary subject of this photo we witness an ‚intended equality of children‘ and ‚inter-generational resource‘ as its secondary subject.

vi. Adoptee with Birth - and Adoptive Family

This group photo was taken in Sri Lanka when the adoptee was collected by his adoptive parents; it shows his birth mother and birth brother and adoptive mother. The picture forms the centre-piece of a family collage that hangs above the bed of his adoptive parents in Sweden. This adoptee has recently moved into his own house; the photo is placed in a picture frame. We know from the interview that the adoptive parents have set aside money to support the birth mother and her elder son but that she has never taken this offer up.

Personal Associations: The first thought that comes to mind is one of fear on the part of the biological mother and baby, the mother realising the separation that is impending and the infant

sensing it. The photo makes a very strained impression and reminds me of complex situations I experienced when working with families, especially in situations such as visits from biological parents in the homes' of foster families.

In the photo an Asian woman is seated in the centre of the picture in a large armchair, she has a young baby on her lap and is dressed in traditional clothing. To her left is a boy of around six years of age who is standing while resting his right arm and left hand on the armchair. His is smiling and has a gap between his front teeth. To the right of the Asian woman, a blond Caucasian woman in around her thirties is seated on the rim of the armchair. She has her left arm around the elder boy and her right hand placed on the Asian woman's shoulder. She is wearing a sleeveless summer dress. To the left of the photo there is a dark door with a metal handle. The background wall is totally bare.

The planimetric composition shows four parallel blocks, all of which are portrayed to be connected

by interlinked out-reaching limbs, but which nevertheless appear separate. These are the adoptive mother, next to her the birth mother and infant and again next to her the elder brother, and then as an extra block, the dark door.

The scenic choreography encompasses the two mothers and the baby while the perspective's centre has moved out away from the (intended) focus – the baby and birth mother – to the elder brother. In relation to the other three subjects in the picture, he has far more space for himself in the picture, additionally he has no one behind him nor in front of him and he is standing on his own, not actively touching any one of the others (the adoptive mother's arm appears to be touching him on the back).


The aspect of *perspective* is particularly interesting in the sub-typologies with family members as we have seen from the comparison with the two earlier pictures. Only in one of these has actually the most important person of the exercise (the adoptee) been situated in the perspective's centre.

From our psychological knowledge of child development we are aware that it is possible for the elder brother to have held feelings of jealousy toward the ‚intruding' baby, and that possibly his adoption was experienced as a relief, maybe also as a resource through possible additional money for the family and more food and attention for himself. He is the only smiling person in the picture but by no means the only person looking straight at the camera, it is his radiance that catches the attention of the viewer.

However, despite the seeming austerity of this photo, it has great value for the adoptee being surrounded by members of both birth and adoptive families. This is quite a singular picture in our collection. Indeed the fact that this photo was taken is an indication of the importance of pictures and images for practical action and orientation for these actions. In this case, there is a marked influence on the level of behaviour in social situations, for ensuring that a photo was taken of the adoptive child with his birth family members in order to give him a link to his heritage, when the subject of identity development becomes relevant for his own life-course.

The iconic interpretation centres on a meaning of having an 'inner-core to identity' encompassing knowledge and pictures of both birth and adoptive parents. These images are mentally internalised through the medium of the picture. In a secondary sense, the subject is being a 'chosen one', whereby this pertains to both sons: one chosen to remain with the birth family and one chosen to be given up for adoption. Just the mere possibility of being able to trace contact to the birth family appears to have played a decisive role in the successful integration of this adoptee in his new family and new country. A habitus of connection is transported through this medium in the overall context of openness.

Places

Within the sub-typology 'Places' only one adoptee (C3) submitted photographic material. She chose two exemplary pictures from recent travels, one from the Orient, taken in Oman and the other shot in New York.

"...I'm both: East...
and West"
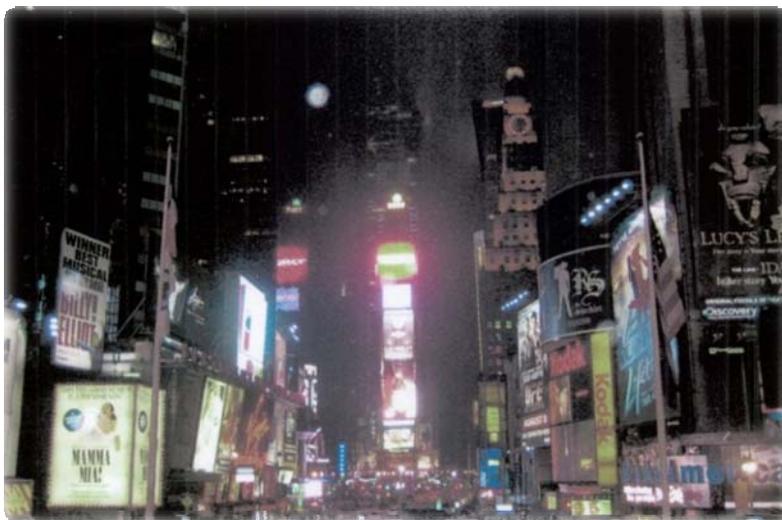
Both photos were taken with a digital camera and are stored on her computer, she had extra prints made for the interview and explained the reason for her choice of photos as follows:

> *I could never say that deep from my heart I'm Austrian, I couldn't really define any countries, but I'm hybrid in as far as I'm both, East and West.*

Personal Associations: Feeling like a hybrid spirit myself, I immediately think of England and Austria when I see these photos and the relief that I have experienced, in recent years, realising that I don't have to fit in to any specific country but be what I am: both. However the feeling of being torn between the two countries for many years, especially whilst growing up is still very vivid in my memory.

The central rising sensation when looking at this pair of pictures is one of great contrast, one photo having being taken in daylight, the other a vision of dazzling nightlife. The first is very formal, almost stately with no trace of human life whereas the second is abuzz with cars on the streets (discernable through their lights and reflections) and though very vague, the impression is of crowded sidewalks and busy night owls. Although these photos offer no audio visual merits, in the first scene quiet and tranquillity may be assumed - albeit a call to prayers or the minaret's bells - whereas in its pendant, imaginative taxi horns and the hub of traffic are realistically evoked in the author's ears.

In the oriental picture a mosque and minaret give the scene a religious connotation, while in the American photo, a skyscraper (possibly the Empire State Building) towers over the hotspot scene. The sidewalks are plastered with adverts for shows and cinemas. The predominant colours in the upper picture are natural hues of green, blue and sand. On the horizon a faint range of mountains is visible and tidy cropped shrubs and bushes can be seen in the foreground. The lower picture is a night picture, taken presumably with a flash. Against the dark backdrop, radiant greens, blues and reds mix in with luminous buildings – and a full moon.

The primary message is clearly articulated by the adoptee: ‚I am both' (Bhabha,1994; Hall,1992). At first glance this photo is clearly representative for the concept of a hybrid identity. However, seeing as no narrower specification of countries is made, we may dare to interpret this message a step further and recognise the documentary meaning as pointing towards a more global identity (Maalouf, 1998), the way being paved by higher education and the horizons which evolve thereof.

Possessions

It was with a metaphorical photo of a pair of children's shoes, that one female interview partner (C2) created this third sub-typology, ‚Possessions'. The shoes were purchased by the adoptive mother in Vienna before leaving for Temesvar, Romania to collect her adoptive daughter, who wore them when she travelled to her new home country. The adoptee still has these shoes which have high symbolic value. This photograph is kept on a pin board in the adoptee's bedroom of her Viennese apartment.

Personal Associations: The first thought that comes to my mind is that of earth under one's feet, of being grounded. I remember a sermon by the local priest in which he used a pair of shoes referring to the author Peter Altenberg to signify the concept of being in motion, of progressing in life, not stagnating. As a parent, I follow the Austrian custom of hanging children's first shoes in cars as a talisman for safe journeys.

The only objects in this photo are a pair of red leather lace-up children's shoes, designed to fit a child of around two to three years of age. The leather still looks supple, indicating that it has been carefully cared for. Inside the shoes a pair of smiling yellow bears is visible. The shoes display white stitching around the rims along the sole and decorative patterns on the upper surface to the outside parts of the shoe. The tongues and shoelaces are inside and the shoes are on a speckled background of pinkish stone with black spots, which could possibly be a granite surface.

A common-sense interpretation would presumably pick-up on the good quality leather and condition of the shoes, signifying care on behalf of the purchaser. In the context of the child's adoption and the shoes' documented significance two decades later, the latent meaning is on the one hand hybrid identity (there are two equal shoes). From our conjunctive knowledge we know that the adoptee has re-visited the country of origin a number of times and is learning the language and therefore on the other hand a further iconic interpretation is that of the hope for becoming grounded and the on-going search for balance in life.

Soft Toy

A second example in this typology is the photograph of a soft toy rabbit submitted by a teenage pupil (B2). This toy is the last keepsake that she has from her former family in Hungary and she held it in her lap during the traumatic trip from Hungary to Austria when she was adopted at the age of three, a memory which is still vivid in her mind. The rabbit was given to her by her foster sister. The photo was made especially for this research study as the bunny rabbit has significance for the girl's identity and is part of her life story. The big fur bunny sits on the adoptee's bed while she is at school.

Personal Associations: Special keepsakes from childhood have also accompanied through my adult life, most importantly my favourite doll. I presently 'share' her with my granddaughter during overnight visits. The doll was a so-called "Walkie-Talkie Doll", her limbs are still mobile, not so her tongue.

The large grey and white rabbit has been positioned for this photo in front of an elegant white enamel stove with shiny brass doors and seated on a wooden stool. It plays the solo part in this performance, its pose making it appear a regal rabbit. The planimetric composition and scenic choreography underline this leading role. We know from the adoptee's comments that the photo has been made especially for this study and we may thus fathom how important the object is for the subject. The red dots of the rabbit's paws are very noticeable and it has a white satin ribbon around its neck, large dark button eyes and a very pink nose. The very good condition of the furry creature which must now be well over fifteen years old, suggests that it is looked after well, with the intention of being kept for a long while to come. Other furniture is visible in the background and the sun is shining into the rear part of the room, giving the whole scene a warm glow.

In this example we experience a further indication regarding the significance that possessions may have as links to childhood, and in this particular case, also connection to former family. These objects are obviously an essential part of the life stories of their owners. They have accompanied our adoptees for many years and will presumably do so for many years to come. Ensuring that children may keep such tokens from their early days requires empathy and understanding on behalf of the young individuals from their new parents. It also appears here necessary to emphasise the need of information from professionals involved in adoption work to prospective parents on the subject of possessions and their wider meaning.

Bracelets

The third and last example in this category is from another female teenager (B1). She submitted this particular photo, whereby she could not quite decide between this example and another photo, showing her with peers (which has been discussed in the first typology, 'people'). Both examples have been included as both have important messages.

The interview partner was almost two years old when she was adopted and was wearing these bracelets when her new parents first saw her. She had been brought to a children's home in Ranji immediately after birth and was then soon transferred to an orphanage of the Missionaries of Charity until her actual adoption. Her adoptive parents brought the bracelets back to Austria with their small daughter and placed them in a special little box, where they are still kept today.

Personal Associations: I recently had a safe built into my house in order to store some special pieces of jewellery. I had been spurred in this decision by the burglary of one of my closest friends who had lost all her most treasured family pieces, whereby the numeric loss was the least painful. The coral necklace that my mother gave me to start my jewellery collection when I was a teenager is priceless and could never be replaced. It is the emotional value that counts.

In the photo we see the slender fingers of a dark skinned female, holding tiny orange/gold and crimson/gold bracelets. They appear to be made of enamel or wood and have been lacquered in glowing hues and then decorated with gold coloured details. Against the backdrop of the long fingers, the bracelets resemble rings but are indeed the pieces of jewellery which adorned her tiny wrists as a very young child.

The gesture by which the teenager is holding and showing the bracelets is wonderfully tender and portrays the priceless value that these two tiny objects have for her. As a researcher one is taken to reflecting on the intrinsic message that this young adoptee has been given along her life path: so much care has been taken of you and of these accessories, for you are of such incredible value.

5.2.3   Summary

In the last stage of this study, once again three major trends emerged, all of which were directly linked to the research questions 1 – 5 : the first trend pertained to the subject complex of ,Individuality' while the second two trends , Protective Factors and Social Networks corresponded with the results from the Thematic Content Analysis.

This summary seeks to sketch out the main features discerned by the researcher in the picture interpretation. Here it is important to note that a distinct trans-generational context formed the background for both the trends of 'Protective Factors' and 'Social Networks'. Equally, some of the pictures and explanations describe the transition from post-figurative through to co-figurative and then on to pre-figurative cultures (Mead, 1970).

The first trend of 'Individuality' appeared in different forms and different connotations, depending on the particular present situation of the adoptee. Portrait photos portraying adoptees on their own were only submitted by male adoptees. This phenomenon is interesting in regard to patterns of gender specific social networks and communication patterns. After completion of the interpretation process, the researcher concluded that the inherent messages of these pictures were on the one hand that of self-confidence, conveyed by subjects stating how they totally identified with themselves in these pictures, feeling well attached in life to people close to them and grounded in their respective lives. In contrast, other submitted photos of the individual genre contained more so messages of isolation and confusion. Here the photos appeared symptomatic for the perceived life situation.

Isolation pertained to inner isolation, and was experienced regardless of being part of a large extended family and a multi-cultural circle of friends. Confusion appeared to stem from breakdown in family structure, through divorce situations.

The concept of 'hybrid identity' also figured quite dominantly and was expressed through various metaphors, e.g., a contrasting pair of pictures from two very specific different areas of the world (i.e. East and West). A pair of children's shoes also underlined the idea of a hybrid identity accompanied by the story of their travels, pointing to an on-going search for identity.

A source of orientation for action (one of the objectives of photos per se) was given by one picture, the only example showing both members of birth and adoptive family. This contribution represents a quest for identity which has been supported and achieved through openness and generosity on behalf of both families; through the authorities and the welcoming environment in the new home country and through the acquired strength of the adoptee. The example brings us on to an interesting result of the study, which is that childhood photos submitted (in part individual and in part in family pictures) were only from those adoptees who felt relatively comfortable in their adult lives. In these cases, showing themselves as children (either in their country of birth or newly arrived in their country of adoption) opens up a view and connection to the inner core of their identity.

With the second trend, 'Protective Factors' we meet again this complex issue of supportive, healing, and resource-oriented phenomena awaiting children in families and communities who realise the life-long responsibility that child-rearing indeed implies. The latent messages discernible through the interpretation of the submitted photos included: security, nurture and nature, sense of belonging, openness, mutual support and orientation and value. The experience of constructed families and the choices that these individuals had made to plan and build up a family were described by adoptees in a confident way, nevertheless being able to differentiate between the interest of their parents and their own situation. Experienced situations were seen to be memorised through the medium of pictures (e.g. the photo with the grandfather and his four grand-children), regardless of whether the children were adopted or biological grandchildren.

In the third closely linked trend of 'Social Networks', represented by photos with peers and mentors and places, again the messages of mutual support, protection, orientation, and sense of belonging came across clearly. The significance of social integration for representatives of a specific generation into peer groups and cultural societies was an additional underlying message of this

trend. This pinpoints to a need of identification of social networks of transnationally adopted young people, some of which already exist, though more so in countries with a longer tradition and history of transracial and transnational adoption, England and the Scandinavian countries. Initiatives such as for example the anthologies of poetry and prose included in the study, or Motherland Tours, have undoubtedly been instrumental for developing such networks with transnationally adopted young people.

6 Conclusion

Four research enquiries (Demographic information on adoptee and adoptive family; Adoptees' level of information about heritage and adoption details;   Levels of interest and strategies in dealing with the issue of adoption; Adoptees' sense of cultural identity and belonging) were employed to explore the implications of transnational adoption for the life-trajectories and identity development of individual adoptees involved in this survey. A fifth additional research enquiry addresses the envisaged future plans and aspirations of the interview partners.

A comprehensive literature chapter introduced the ensuing research, positioning the project within a life-span pedagogical context. The actual study was conducted by means of a problem-centred semi-structured interview. A complementary additional approach employing the documentary method was used. Thus the analysis of data collection was divided into two parts: a qualitative thematic content analysis and an interpretation of pictures.

The comparatively small sample does not make it possible to draw adequate or representative conclusions for this segment of society. Reaching teenage and adult adoptees was in some cases complicated due to the fact that in Austria there is no mandatory further accompaniment of adoptive children by either the child welfare authorities or adoption organisations. In Sweden this situation is easier due to the personal social number which remains the same throughout life. Inclusion of interviews from Adoptees living in England would have given the study added depth. Despite the small sample, relevant points for attention, discussion and further study have arisen from this doctoral thesis. Notably, the subject of transnational adoptees is not mentioned in general terms of crossover cultures, hybrid identities or global youth, which in the author's opinion warrants amendment.

Three major trends emerged from the qualitative content analysis, these were: Protective Factors, Social Networks and Time Factor in regard to the issue of adoption becoming of interest for the individual. All these points may give further insight into the need for best possible selection, preparation and counselling of adoptive parents. A further important message gained directly from adoptees responses is the need – in some cases - for long-term accompaniment by post-adoption services. While the importance of connection to peers is within theoretical discussions of normative development, this phenomenon becomes vividly clear within the specific context of transnational adoption. The element of time factor which emerged with regard to the individual adoptees' specific

interest for the issue of adoption and his or her own biographical history is supported and underlined by the developed life-span model 'Axes of Adoption'.

Emerging trends from the pictorial analysis were congruent with those from the content thematic analysis, these being Protective Factors and Social Networks. The centrally defining ,felt' experience of individuality emerged as a major trend from the interpretation of pictures. This sense of self will vary depending at which juncture along the life-trajectory the individual is at and according to the experiences that the individual has made, as we have seen by the choices made for submitting photos. It is the hope of the author, that the graphic model may be useful for placing certain life stages and phenomena in perspective.

This train of thought leads us to a need to re-think the concept of 'roots' in the context of transnational adoption. The term 'roots' is often used in biography issues, however as far as adoption is concerned, these roots are mostly severed, conjuring up a picture of being 'cut-off', 'disconnected' or 'disfigured'. It appears that 'roots' may be overcome, indicating and identifying the role and task of education. Taking another metaphor, that of 'core', a central organic entity, the researcher would suggest to rephrase the term 'searching for one's roots' to the term 'searching for one's core' when involved with the sensitive subject of adoption.

6.1 Limitations of the Research

The main limitations of this research were geographical and age constraint. With greater facilities in terms of time and finance, respondents could have been sought throughout the respective countries and not only in one or two areas. Furthermore, due to the fact that there are comparatively few transnational adoptees of a more advanced age, i.e. 40 years and plus, little is known of how the phenomenon of transnational adoption implies to the life-trajectories of adoptees later on in life.

In addition, a different methodology could have been developed that would possibly have enhanced the overall consent to co-operation in this study. A larger array of responses might have enabled more conclusive observations on age and multi-cultural aspects to be made, including further conclusions to be drawn on differences in geographical life environments i.e. urban-suburban-rural areas. A further limitation of the research is the explanatory nature of this study which is not designed to make conclusive remarks.

A younger researcher would have perhaps placed more emphasis on contemporary internet social networks and media (e.g. Face book, Blogs) which could be of great relevance for transnationally adopted individuals.

6.2 Implications for the Research

Further considerations for research would be to promote more research on the topic of transnational adoption (especially in Austria where there is comparatively little data) continuing to study the implications for identity development along the life-course. If possible it would be valuable to be able to follow-up this study with longitudinal research following the trajectories of the interviewed individuals, all of which readily gave the author contact addresses and confirmation that they would be interested in such a project.

On a final note the wonderful examples that we have seen from the British anthologies would be an excellent idea to follow. Indeed, discussions are already underway with an adoption network in Austria to carry out such a proposal within the context of an EU Project with transnational adoptees. *"Indeed, it is only by listening to transnational and transracial adoptees and reflecting on their experiences that we will develop adoption support provision that is tailored to their specific needs and those of their relatives by birth and adoption"*.
(Harris, 2006 p.7-8).

6.3 Personal Reflection during the Research Process

In the process of reflecting the past three years since my involvement with this research study began, I was able to identify three specific areas. The first centred on the actual interview interaction. Thinking back to how the interviews were conducted I tried to check whether I had been able to consistently follow the principles of good interview practice and technique (Smith, 1995). In some cases, especially the first interviews I fear that I was too explicit and that some of the questions were insufficient for eliciting a satisfactory response. The locations were a further subject for reflection. For the younger interview partners, the university office that I was able to use in Östersund, Sweden was possibly not very welcoming. In these cases it would perhaps have been more conducive to meet in a coffee house or at a home visit. I also realised that in some cases, notably where teenagers were in difficult phases with their parents, my age and gender (especially in one case where there was a conflict between son and adoptive mother) possibly had an adverse affect on the flow of response.

In general, the interviews were fairly emotional, in some cases the interview partners were indeed quite upset and it was difficult to just come to the end of the session and leave. I almost felt guilty for having dwelt in such detail and depth on very personal aspects of the adoptees' lives and then

just vanishing again into the far away world of dissertations and academic institutions. On one occasion in Sweden the conversation went on for almost another one and a half hours after the interview as the adoptee in question was so upset (recent death of her adoptive parents and second pregnancy). In most cases addresses were exchanged and mutual intention to try and stay in contact articulated, even with the idea of a follow-up study.

The reaction of interview partners to the request for photos was generally very positive and most went to great lengths in order to find the most suitable photos. Of the nineteen adoptees only two submitted passport photos because they felt that this portrayed their situation accurately. They felt alone, one was an identical twin who had been separated at birth from his brother, the other was going through a critical period but showed up at the interview nevertheless and drew a portrait of himself in addition to submitting the photo.

The second area of reflection pertained to my own conceptions and preconceptions. Coming from a bicultural background myself, this fact had obviously been influential with regard to the questions asked on cultural identity. Possibly I am very occupied with biographical and family information because I have fairly detailed knowledge of my parents biographies and family information, leading to a certain sensitivity for family issues, which prompted yet again other question areas. Through the formative bonds with my maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother my interest in intergenerational issues also obviously played a role in the interpretation and analysis. Another investigator would have most probably approached many of these issues differently. Certainly I frequently found myself in the course of this research process pondering on my own life-trajectory and cultural identity and also on the lives of my parents, grandparents, my children and indeed on the budding life of my tiny granddaughter.

The third area of reflection brought me to some new personal revelations. I realised that my closest connection to anyone who has not known their biological heritage, was my late first husband, who never knew who had fathered him, growing up from the age of seven in a children's village, and who died of cancer at the age of forty-two. This critical life-event has obviously been a catalyst for my interest and concern for the subject of identity development.

Being already 55 at the time of writing, I have covered a fair stretch of my life-course and it feels as if many aspects of life are becoming clearer. With the term "Hybrid Identity", which I heard for the first time during a lecture of my supervisor at the University on "Biographie und Lebensalter", I suddenly had the feeling that at long last I had found a key to my own true cultural identity. No longer was I "half English and half Austrian" a feeble explanation which I had sometimes resorted to. I was both nationalities completely, not one without the other. I had spent a number of years

between late teens and early twenties moving between England and Austria, always seeing the other country (the one I wasn't living in at that moment in time) through rose-tinted spectacles. I had great difficulty in deciding where I should settle down and was very much in search of roots and a sense of belonging.

Another personal phenomenon accompanied this study and prompted the choice of one of the research methods. I had just completed a seminar on qualitative research and the Interpretation of Picture Analysis Method had been introduced in detail and had fascinated me. Raising my head from my writing desk, I realised that throughout my life, as long as I could remember, there had always been one particular photo above this desk (which had been my father's desk) and that this photo had always hung above the desk, irrespective where the desk had been, whether in my parents apartment in Hinterbrühl, in our sitting room in Emmer Green or in the flat in Holland Park, London.

This photo shows my great grandfather Josef Breuer and his grandsons playing chess in the family garden in Vienna. Great grandfather Breuer has his head cupped in his left hand (a posture I often saw my father taking whilst playing chess). He is sitting opposite his elder grandson Georg, between them the chess board, both immersed in concentration. Young Franz, my father - aged around nine - is leaning closely next to his grandfather, scrutinising his every move. The boys' father was away on the Austro-Italian Front of World War I when this photo was taken and their grandfather was of central importance to them. Josef Breuer in turn received explanations on new technical gadgets and invitations to watch them play football. The photo's significance lies in its latent messages of intergenerational learning, family cohesion and cultural heritage. I began to realise that my great grandfather, whom I had of course never met, had had an important significance for my own identity development, his influence alive through generations and across geographic borders.

This led me to thinking that individuals may be guided and formed by people who can be close to them but do not necessarily have to be related or even known to them. I began to wonder if this could be a relevant train of thought for my study on transnational adoptees, many of who will never be able to find out anything about their biological heritage, but whose identity development will be impacted on by other people. I consulted my supervisor and the professor who had lectured on the

method of photo research using biographical material, and both were enthusiastic that the method could be relevant for this study.

The occupation with methods of biography research has on a further note had implications for my own professional work. As director of the Children's and Youth Home in Pottenstein, I have recently introduced "Biography Work" with the method of a Lebensbuch[65] in the residential groups to engage the children's interest and understanding of their own life-stories and development.

Coming full-cycle to the beginning of this paper, I would like to offer a glimpse of the present life situation of the teenage adoptee whose life was so affected by the critical life event of her mother's death three years ago. Recently she volunteered to do a practical placement in the day-care centre of the children's home. Although the home is in a fairly rural area of Lower Austria, around eighty percent of the children in this group have a migrant background. Both volunteer and children enjoyed their time together and her future plan is to become a teacher.

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[65] Lebensbuch, developed by Edith Engelhart-Haselwanter of the Vorarlberger Kinderdorf, Bregenz.

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Dissertation:

"Transnational Adoptions and Life-Trajectories

a biography study of teenage and young adult adoptees

living in Austria, England and Sweden".

Wien am 24.November 2009

Sehr geehrte (r)………………. , (bitte Name des Interviewpartners einsetzen)

Vielen herzlichen Dank für Ihr Interesse und Ihre Bereitschaft an dieser Untersuchung zum Thema „Transnationale Adoptionen" teilzunehmen. Diese Forschung wird in Kooperation mit der Universität Wien, Institut für Bildungswissenschaft, und der Universität Östersund in Schweden durchgeführt und untersucht die Lebensläufe von Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen die in England, Österreich und Schweden adoptiert wurden.

Wir würden Sie ersuchen, für ein individuelles Interview (Zeitdauer in etwa 30 Minuten) zur Verfügung zu stehen und zu diesem Interview 2-3 Photographien, die für Ihre Identität von besonderer Bedeutung sind, mitzubringen. Diese Photographien können sowohl Exemplare sein, auf denen Sie selber abgebildet sind, oder auch Bilder von Familienmitglieder (Herkunftsfamilie oder Adoptionsfamilie) sein oder auch Menschen abbilden, zu denen Sie eine Bindung haben und die für Ihr Identitätsgefühl von Bedeutung sind.

Das Interview wird formale Fragen (Alter, Adoption, Lebenslauf) und narrative Fragen (bezüglich Identitätsentwicklung, Integration und Lebensperspektiven) beinhalten. Fragen, die in irgendeiner Weise vielleicht unangenehm wären, müssen nicht beantwortet werden.

Ziel ist es, in dieser Untersuchung, relevante Informationen und Einsichten für andere adoptierte Menschen und Fachleute auf dem Gebiet der transnationalen Adoption zu erhalten.

Mit vielem Dank nochmals für Ihre Bereitschaft, an dieser Untersuchung mitzuarbeiten.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Mag. Elisabeth Baum-Breuer

English version of letter of instruction to participants

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wien

Dissertation study:

"Transnational Adoptions and Life-Trajectories

a biography study of teenage and young adult adoptees

living in Austria, England and Sweden".

Vienna, 24.November 2009

Dear . . .   .(please insert the name of the candidate)

Thank you very much for your interest and willingness to participate in this study on transnational adoptions and life-journeys. The study is being undertaken by the University of Vienna in cooperation with the University of Östersund and is researching on the life-trajectories of teenage and young adult transnational Adoptees living in Austria, England and Sweden.

We would ask you to give a one-to-one interview (in Swedish or English) of about 30 minutes and to bring 2 to 3 photographs which have a special meaning for you and your identity, with you to the interview. These photos can include you yourself and they can also be of family members (either from your biological family or adoptive family) or of people to whom you are attached and who have had an impact on your sense of identity.

The interview will include factual questions (age, adoption, life history) and also narrative questions regarding identity development, integration and life perspectives. Questions which may be in any way uncomfortable for you, need not be answered.

Our aim in this survey is to gather relevant information for other transnational adoptees and professionals working in this field. The researcher responsible will be visiting Östersund during the winter of 2009 (December is scheduled)
and will be accompanied by local social workers.

Once again, many thanks for your readiness to support this initiative!

Elisabeth Baum-Breuer
University of Vienna

universität
wien

Dissertation study:

"Transnational Adoptions and Life-Trajectories

a biography study of teenage and young adult adoptees

living in Austria, England and Sweden".

Wien, 29. September 2009

Hej

Jag hoppas att vill delta I den här studien av internationella adoptioner och levnadsresor. Studien görs pa Universitetet I Wien, Österriket, I samarbete med Mittuniversitetet I Östersund. Den handlar om uppväxten hos ungdomar och unga vuxna internationellt adopterade boende I Österrike, England och Sverige.

Vi vill intervjua Dig genom enskilda samtal pa svenska villket tar ca 30 minuter. Vi vill även att du tar med 2-3 fotografier, som betyder nägot särskilt för Dig och Din identitet, till intervjn. Dessa fotografier kan vara pä Dig själv, Dina familjemedlemmar (endera frän Din biologiska familj eller Din adopterade familj) eller av människor som Du blivit fäast vid eller nägon som haft stor inflytande pä Din identitet, den du är.

Intervjun kommer att tu upp fakta frägor som alder, adoption och livshistoria, den kommer även att tau pp öppna mer berättande fragor angäende identitetsutveckling, integration och perspektiv. Frägor som kan kännas obehagliga för dig behöver du inte svara pä.

Värt mal med den här undersökningen är att samla sa mycket relevant information runt omrädet internationella adoptioner. Undersökningens ansvarige kommer att besöka Östersund under vintern 2009 (December är schemalagd) och kommer att arbeta tillsammans med socialsekreterare frän orten.

Hoppas Du vill delta som jag vore väldigt tacksam och glad för.

Med vänliga hälsningar

Elisabeth Baum-Breuer

Universitetet i Wien

Appendix B

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Dissertation: "Transnational Adoptions and Life-Trajectories

a biography study of teenage and young adult adoptees living in Austria, England and Sweden".

Mag. Elisabeth Baum-Breuer

Demographic & Survey Questions

Number (anonymity of interview partner):

Age:

Gender:

Country of birth:

Country of adoption:

Age at adoption:

Adoptive family:

AF (Adoptive Father):

Age:

Profession:

AM (Adoptive Mother):

Age:

Profession:

Siblings:

Home Environment/Location:

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Question	Transcript	Para-phrase	Generalisation	Reduction
Questions relating to the actual adoption:				
1. What do you know about your biological background and heritage?				
2. From whom did you receive this information?				
3. Do you have photos or belongings				
4. When did the subject of identity/roots/biological background become an issue for you?				
5. What prompted this emerging interest?				
Questions relating to coping strategies and possible support:				
6. How did you react when the subject of adoption became an issue for you?				
7. Did you confide in anybody at this time? If so, to whom and why to this particular person?				
8. How would you describe your reactions to adoption in the course of your life so far?				
9. What have you found helpful for your particular situation?				
10. What has been difficult for you?				
11. What do you consider would be important and supportive for young people who have been adopted transnationally like you?				

Questions relating to a sense of cultural identity:			
12. Do you feel attracted towards people who come from your own country /or continent of origin? Have you ever returned since your adoption?			
13. How is your own circle of friends composed? Is it mainly Austrian/ English/Swedish or more multi-cultural?			
14. Do you feel any kind of particular bond to your country of origin? Have you wanted to obtain information about this country and have you undertaken any steps toward this?			
15. Which cultural identity do you feel that you have?			
16. Have you ever heard of the term "Hybrid Identity"?			
Questions relating to the future life path:			
17. Do you think that you will want to find out more about your country of birth and your roots?			
18. How and where do you envisage your future (profession, environment, family, etc).			
Questions relating to the chosen photograph:			
19. When and where was this photo taken?			
20. Who is/ are the person/people depicted?			
21. Where is this photo kept (in an album, loose in a photo boy or draw, in a picture frame on the wall or in a stand frame? etc.)			
22. What are your reasons for having chosen this specific photo?			

Poems

Excerpts from poems and prose were used to illustrate and introduce the thematic content analysis.
The poems are included here in their full version.

"Black holes – mapping the absence"

by Deborah Weymont [66]

I remember being abandoned. It is etched deep inside my body.

It is a wholly sensory memory.

Something is wrong. It feels cold (the absence of warmth).

It feels like nothing (the absence of something).

It is the sound of my own cries. It is the sound of the silence that follows (no one is listening).

It tastes like shit (bottled milk). It smells like shit. It hurts like hell.

It feels lonely. It looks like I'm on my own.

It is a pre-verbal memory.

I told no one about it.

I had no words, so I could not tell anyone about it.

Imagine that!

I imagine it as a black hole.

---

[66] In search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people (2006: 20).

"I shall never hear you whisper"

by Perlita Harris [67]

I shall never hear you whisper, *Tum meri jaan hai*

(you are my life)

I shall never hear you say, *Mujhe tum pyaar hai*

(I love you)

I shall never hear you call me, *Meri beti*

(My daughter*)*

I shall never hear you tell me, *Tum khubsurat aur haushyar ladki hun*

(You are a beautiful intelligent girl)

I shall never feel your hug and kisses again

Nor you mine.

Nor shall I whisper to you, *Aap meri jaan hai*

(You are my life)

Nor gaze at your beauty with recognition in my eyes

Nor hold your hand in mine and say, *Aap meri Maji hai*

(You are my mother)

Nor show you that, *Mujhe aap se pyaar hai*

(I love you)

Don't erase your memories of me

Cutting me dead while I grow up

Don't forget me, *aapki beti*

(your daughter)

For I shall never forget you

Koi goria

(Some white people)

Rubbed your memory from my mind

Antoher stole my dreams one night

Koi baat nahin

(never mind)

For, *kal*

(yesterday or tomorrow)

My memories will return

In my memories

Phir milenge

(We will meet again)

"The beginning of me"

by Julia (aged 14)[68]

I was born into the world, small weak and powerless

Given a name, clothes hugged now motherless

No one to call my own

No place to call a home

I slept for a while, curled up in a ball

All fragile and alone. Would anyone love me at all?

My question was answered because the next day

A lovely couple arrived who took me to play

They cuddled me and fed me, they promised me a new start

They said I had a special place deep in their heart

They have looked after me since then, almost 14 years

Through the laughter, the anger and the uncontrollable tears

They are the best people in the world and I will love them forever

Mum, Dad and Jack. I love you and will leave you never

---

[68] The Colours in me. Writing and poetry by adopted children and young people (2008: 38).

Adoption and new family

by Chantelle (at age 12)[69]

Angry at birth parents

Daring to trust new family

Obedience is very hard

Patience is needed

Time is a healer

I need to be helped

Odd feelings are flying

No one can understand me

New place, new family, new trust

Everyone tries to understand

What I feel

Feelings can be shown

At any time

Mum and dad love me loads

I feel lonely sometimes

Love is important

Your family will love you forever

---

[69] The Colours in me. Writing and poetry by adopted children and young people (2008: 87).

Love is in the air

By Henry (age 12)[70]

I can't get close to anyone

It feels like not having any friends

I feel so lonely I have nobody to be with

Love is in the air

Love is in the air

I have nobody by my side

Love is in the air

I feel like running away

I don't know anyone around me

I feel like a loser

Love is in the air

Love is in the air

I have nobody by my side

Love is in the air

Love is in the air

Love is in the air

I have nobody by my side

---

[70] The Colours in me. Writing and poetry by adopted children and young people (2008:74).

Love is in the air.

The music is sad and I sing, play the guitar, bass and the guitar solo but Dad has programmed the drums.

I was adopted at six-and-a half and this song is how I felt for about the first two years. Now I feel really happy with my new mummy and daddy.

My family

By Luke Howard (at age 6)[71]

I came with my problems – they helped me solve them

I came with my memories – they listened to them

I have my differences – they liked them

I brought my love – they shared theirs with mine

What do you see?

By Miranda Wilkinson[72]

What do you see when you look at me:

A baby born to be taken away,

There and then, on that very day?

What do you see when you look at me:

A toddler who brought joy to a man and woman

Who thought they couldn't have a child of their own?

---

[71] The Colours in me. Writing and poetry by adopted children and young people (2008: 55).
[72] In search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people (2006: 116f.).

What do you see when you look at me:

The child with the face that does not fit,

Who looks like her parents not one little bit?

What do you see when you look at me:

A teen who's adept at explaining the reality

To those with one view of what constitutes "family"?

What do you see when you look at me:

Do you see a young lady with dark brown skin

Who has tried all her life to simply fit in?

What do you see when you look at me:

A mother troubled as she cradles her baby,

Feeling hurt and confused,

Thinking, 'How could she leave me?'

What do you see when you look at me:

A woman who, through everything, knows

That, although there have been many highs, many lows,

If her white middle-class parents had not adopted

A little black baby on whom they doted,

Her life would have likely been far more tragic?

Never to have known that wonderful magic

That only comes with unconditional love,

That can take the smooth as well as the rough.

Thank God my parents chose to adopt me.

Without them, I truly don't know where I'd be.

Adoption and friends – 'I am special'

by Jasmine age 10[73]

I'm happy. I'm sad other kids make me feel bad

They pick on you because you are "different".

'Where are your brothers and sisters? They scoff!

'You're lying' they shout!

'You're mum's fake, ' they shriek!

Is this because I'm special?. . . . Mum and Dad have said I'm special

But I don't always feel it.

But wait. . . . Maybe I am special!

I'm happy. I'm not sad. My adopted friends make me feel glad

They like me, they help me.

They don't ask me personal questions

'Hello Jasmine, are you coming out to play? They roar!

'Do you need any help! They ask

They don't make me feel different!

'You're just like us,' they whisper quietly!

Yes, I really am special.

We often get together,

Films, pizzas, parks wherever.

We meet! We eat! We play and talk. . . .and parents just chat and chat and chat!

We might disagree sometimes but we stay friends.

---

[73] The Colours in me. Writing and poetry by adopted children and young people (2008: 89).

We always look forward to seeing each other.

We always have an exciting day

And that's because we're SPECIAL!!!!

In the heart of humankind

By Mariyam Maule[74]

In the beginning it was one

The world, with no borders, definition or difference

With the heart-shaped land mass in the centre

Afrika

Afrika

The heart of humankind

Giving the means of life to the world

Circulating essence

For humankind's will to live in harmony

The nucleus of humanity

A legacy of peace, love and understanding

Afrika

Mother of humankind

Tenderly watching over the sons and daughters of man

The cradle of civilisation

Then, an almighty earthquake shook the earth

---

[74] In search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people (2006: 128f.).

Splitting the heart of humankind

Into many separate veins running through continents

A shift of consciousness occurred

Causing pain, anguish and great suffering

The heart was displaced, fractured

Usurped by the mind

An exodus flowed outwardly

Blood ties broken

The loving union divided

Signalling a schism

Creating national states and partition

The hair now torn from the roots

Of the nourisher

The umbilical cord disconnected from humankind

The children separated from the birth mother

O, rainbow citizens of the world

Look to the beginning

Look to the roots

Look to the self

Afrika

Mother Afrika

Her heart never stops beating

Yearning for all her children to return home

Fantasy for Maura

By E. Stanhope[75]

In another place, on another plane,

Alongside now yet sight unseen,

I'm living a life with familiar actors

Whose moves are known but have never been.

This other woman's reflection is equal,

Yet moves with a grace that is taken for granted.

She knows who she is and where she has come from.

She belongs where she grew and stays where she's planted.

It's a dangerous game to think of her so,

because I'm related to her but curiously not.

She's more desirable than me and able to keep.

She's the original model that no one forgot.

And so, I will always be in her presence

but not in her shadow. I'm earning a place

Where kinky hair and rootless roots

are enough.

I've learnt to love my face.

---

[75] In search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people (2006: 86).

England forever!?

By Bella Frey [76]

I wake, being informed by the great BBC,

I rise, in anticipation, of a hot cup of tea,

My breakfast consists of marmalade on toast,

And on Sunday, at two, it's the best British roast.

Yorkshire puds, gravy, beef on the bone,

England to me will forever be home.

My heart and my head have always been there,

Though people still point, pass comment and stare.

'How's life in China?' How the hell should I know?

Now get lost you creep, I'm not a freak show!

Korea gave me life, sent me on to the West,

I can't really blame anyone, they thought it was best.

Why is it so hard for people to see

That I'm part of England, and she's part of me?

My whole life has been here, I'm as English as you,

If my face matched my heart, it would be red, white and blue!

---

[76] In search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people (2006:86).

Shall I think of you?

By Kevin Toni Mitchell (at age 18)[77]

Shall I think of you in years to come

When all I have sought to do is done?

When I have succeeded, when I am complete

When I have a nice house on a well-to-do street

When the "good life" is mine and I live it unfettered

When I feel as though things could hardly be better

I'd take stock of it all, then my smile disappears

As I think of all that you've missed through the years

Head hung low I'd sit back and sigh

But what can be done? The bygones have gone by.

If I could go back what words could I find

To borrow your ears, try change your mind?

How would I say it, where would I start?

What words could convey the want in my heart?

Pictures speak a thousand words

I looked at our photos, listened and heard

Your eyes speak volumes of what's clear to see

The love that you once had only for me

You made your decision and though broken hearted

You signed on the line and so we were parted

Shall I think of you in years to come

When all I have sought to do is done?

---

[77]The Colours in me. Writing and poetry by adopted children and young people (2008: 129).

I know this sounds foolish, of this I am sure

For all of my wealth I would remain poor

My wretched heart still destitute

With a labour of love that bears no fruit

I wonder sometimes, will it always be such

That I have a great deal, but never enough.

Time goes by, the years they pass

People change but feelings last.

You might never know if I weren't to say

The truth is I think of you everyday

A wish too great to be said aloud

Is that one day we'd meet and you would be proud

Adoption rap

by John-Paul Poulson[78]

Adoption- there wasn't any fucking option.

Whether it's right or wrong,

This poem isn't a song.

I was mixed race, my family they were white.

They made the choice to put up the fight, that's right.

We're all the same, you and me,

Let's face up to the reality.

Whether you're black or white, Muslim or Jew,

Racism just isn't for you

Shit, I grew up with it everyday.

'Golliwog', 'Nigger', that's what they'd say.

Being mixed race isn't a game. Well, I said before, we're all the same.

The reason for racism, there is no reason, let's not believe them.

It's hard to see why they do it. People, let's get through it.

Growing up was great for me, I was blessed with the best family.

Life was good, life was sweet. I learned to stand on my own two feet.

As you grow older, as you grow stronger, you'll see racism isn't our reality.

Don't live in a world full of hate,

Let's show the fascists our lives are great.

About to start my own family,

Sabrina, JJ and me, let's teach our children a better way of life.

People, stand up and make a fight!

---

[78] In search of belonging. Reflections by transracially adopted people (2006: 105).

Appendix E

Declaration

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorgelegte Arbeit selbständig verfasst habe und nur die angegebenen Hilfsmittel verwendet habe.

Die Arbeit ist in keinem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder abgeleht worden.

Wien, im März 2011

Elisabeth Baum-Breuer

Curriculum Vitae

Name	Elisabeth Baum-Breuer
Geburtsdatum	21. Juli 1955
Geburtsort	London
Staatsbürgerschaft	British und Österreich

Schulbildung

1960 – 1966	Volksschule in Caversham, England
1966 – 1973	Gymnasium in Oxford (Abschluss mit „A Levels")

Ausbildung

1975 – 1977	Akademie für Sozialarbeit, Wien
	(Diplomprüfung mit Auszeichnung)
1977 (2 Monate)	Praktikum bei Anna Freud
	Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic, London
1998 - 2000	ARGE Sozial Pädagogik, Wien
	Diplom in Mediation und Konfliktregelung
2006 – 2008	Diplom-Studium für sozialwissenschaftliche Berufe
	Fachhochschule Campus Wien
	Diplomarbeit : *„Adoptivkinder aus dem Ausland und*
	deren Integration in Österreich – ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung
	von Standards und Strategien aus Sicht der Sozialarbeit"
Sept. 2008-10	Diplomlehrgang Sozial Managen
	ASOM - Akademie für Sozialmanagement, Wien
	Diplomarbeit: *„Walkabout in Allentsteig – Kinder und*
	Jugendliche des N.Ö. Landesjugendheimes im Wandel der Zeit –
	ein Projekt mit Chiara & Co."

Seit WS 2008/09	Doktoratsstudium, Universität Wien
	Institut für Bildungswissenschaft

Berufstätigkeit

Seit Jänner 2010	Direktorin, N.Ö. Landes Kinder-und Jugendheim Pottenstein.
Seit September 2004	Lektorin am FH Campus Wien Studiengang für Sozialarbeit
	(nebenberuflich) Unterrichtsfächer : Kinder und Familienwohlfahrt, Internationale Sozialarbeit, Fachenglisch sowie Sonderlehrveranstaltungen und internationale Tagungen zu verschiedenen Themen.
Juli 2009 - Dezember 2009	Koordinierung der Vorbereitungen und Aufbauarbeit für „Die Brücke" Zentrum für Krisenintervention und Clearing, Allentsteig.
Dez.1991 - Juni 2009	Diplomsozialarbeiterin, Abteilung Jugendwohlfahrt
	Amt der N.Ö. Landesregierung, Bezirkshauptmannschaft Mödling.
1991	Koordinatorin für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
	SOS-Kinderdorf International, Wien.
1979 – 1991	Assistentin der Generalsekretärin, International Council
	on Social Welfare, Arbeitseinsätze weltweit
	sowie Vertretung der Organisation bei den Vereinten
	Nationen in Genf und Wien.
1977 – 1979	Englischlehrerin, Österreichischer Entwicklungshelfer Dienst
	und Englischlehrerin Berlitz Sprachschule, Wien und London.
1976 – 1977	Englischlektorin, Internationaler Kinderbuchklub, Wien
	(neben Ausbildung).

1973 – 1975	Sozialeinsatz im Internationalen Pestalozzi Kinderdorf, Schweiz und im Rahmen des Freiwilligen Sozialen Jahres im SOS-Kinderdorf Wienerwald in Hinterbrühl.

Veröffentlichungen   Mitarbeit als Expertin für das Buch „*Kindsein Zwischen Leben und Überleben*" (2009) Studienverlag.
„*Auslandsadoption- Lebenschance oder Lebenslüge?*"
mit P. Penz , erschienen im Österr. Amtsvormund, 2008.
Mitarbeit als Interviewpartnerin für das Buch „*Übergängen Raum Geben – Kinder zwischen Daheim und Zuhause*"
(2003) SOS-Kinderdorf Verlag.
„*Mediative Ansätze in der Sozialarbeit einer Jugendabteilung* „ mit U. Punz-Guschlbauer, erschienen
(2000) im Österr. Amtsvormund.

Vorträge   International Day Lecture. Mid-Sweden-University, Östersund
„*International Adoption from a Social Work Perspective*"
September, 2008.
„*Auslandsadoption- Lebenschance oder Lebenslüge?*"
mit P. Penz , Generalversammlung Verein der Österr.
Amtsvormunder, Oktober 2008.

Sprachen   Englisch / Deutsch (zweisprachig aufgewachsen)
Französisch – fließend