The Negotiation and Crafting of Identity Among Transnational and/or Transracial Adult Adoptees in Sweden

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Abstract

This master's thesis will be discussing how nuanced experiences affects the crafting of identity among transnational and/or transracial adult adoptees raised in Sweden from an anthropological perspective. The purpose of this thesis is to show that adoptees craft their identity in numerous and complex ways, one as unique as the other. The nuanced experiences are important to underscore since the adoptee demographic is vast and it consists of multiple individuals with unique lives, and if these distinctiveness are ignored, we run the risk of depicting a flawed picture of the adoptee experience. In an attempt to avoid doing so, this thesis will use an intersection of different theoretical frameworks from previous literature on adoption and identity, which are belonging, body, and kinning, with additional theoretical concepts on materiality to complement. This paper follows eight adoptees, who share their individual narratives that revolves around the crafting of their Swedish, Adoption, and Ethnic identity. I will bring their experiences to life by putting them in relation to each other to showcase their uniqueness.

Keywords: Adoption, Belonging, Body, Kinship.

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1. Introduction

This thesis will address different transnational and/or transracial adult adoptees experiences in Sweden in relation to attitudes towards and from their environment. By highlighting such experiences, instead of ignoring them, it is possible to craft a more holistic and accurate picture of the current adoptee demographic in Sweden.

This topic was chosen because it is near to my heart since I am a transnational and transracial adoptee myself. When I was two months old, I was adopted and raised in Sweden where I grew up in an upper-middle-class white homogenous neighborhood where I was socialized by my adoptive parents to believe that I was as Swedish as everyone else. However, when I turned six years old and started first grade, I was quickly reminded that I was not like those around me. Attitudes towards my appearance became a focal point for those at my school to categorize me as an outsider. Due to their opinions about my appearance, I tried to prove my belonging by showcasing my Swedishness through my language proficiency, interests, and values, although, this wasn't enough for them to stop excluding me. I often tried to discuss my experiences of exclusion with my adoptive parents, who were sympathetic towards my feelings, but didn't have the necessary tools to help me manage the negative attitudes towards me. Not only was there a struggle of trying to gain inclusion with the dominant whole, but I was often met with frustration and dismissiveness whenever I was trying to talk with my adoptive parents about my biological parents and my birth country. I was told that my adoption was closed, meaning that there was no information to be gathered regarding it, that my adoption documentation was classified, and that if I ever tried to find my biological mother, I would risk both her life and my own. These threats made me scared to bring up the topic again, that was until I started writing this thesis.

I am 30 years old, as of the writing of this thesis, and I have never had the chance to reflect on my adoption or my ethnicity since it was decided by those around me. However, I recently found out that the information that my adoptive parents gave me wasn't accurate, or put differently, the information they were given wasn't true. I have received my adoption case that contains information about my pre-adoption life, the name of my biological mother, the hospital I was born at, and more. This newly discovered information about my personal history compelled me to dive further into the multifaceted world of identity crafting among adoptees to showcase how nuanced and complex it is.

1.1 Research Purpose

There are many reasons for this thesis topic, one of which is to showcase a more nuanced picture of what it is like to be a transnational adoptee in Sweden through adult lenses. Identity crafting must be understood through an intersectionality of variables based on the adoptee's own experiences; one adoptee's experience is not the same as someone else's. Previous researchers on the topic of identity have looked at how unique themes and concepts operate separately to explain identity crafting among adoptees, but less scholarly attention has been given to explore adoptees' experiences from a more holistic point of view. This thesis will bring forth and highlight the nuances, the layers of complexity that are present for identity crafting, and by analyzing these personal experiences through different theoretical frameworks, I will complement the research that has already been done by adding the concept of intersectionality.

The second reason is that anthropologists have shown less interest researching transnational adoption from countries outside of Europe to Europe and Scandinavia until recent times (Howell, 2009). This is concerning since despite the decline in international adoptions from 2012 & 2013, when Sweden conducted roughly 466 international adoptions, till 2022, where Sweden carried out 98 international adoptions (MFoF, 2022. Accessed at: https://www.mfof.se/), Sweden still has a total of nearly 60 000 international adoptees (ibid.).

Lastly, this research is to determine the impact of transnational adoption in adult adoptees. After a conversation with a representative from "The Family Law and Parental Support Authority" (MFoF), which is the central authority in Sweden in respect of intercountry adoption, it was expressed to me that there is a need to look at adult adoptees since focus normally have been on researching underaged adoptees. Therefore, there is much to be gained by turning our attention to how diverse and multiple the experiences of adult adoptees can be, and by studying such experiences, we can begin to learn how to improve transnational adoptions to Sweden.

The purpose of this thesis is to display the vastness and complexity of the transnational and/or transracial adult adoptee experience in Sweden, and how these experiences are affecting the adoptee's crafting of identity.

1.2 Key Concepts

One of the key concepts that I will be utilizing stems from Anthais' (2008) idea of "translocational positionality," which states that "the concept of translocational positionality addresses issues of identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions" (2008: 5). Anthais (2008) uses this idea to reflect on the importance of intersectionality of class, ethnicity, and gender and how identity is changing over time. Anthais' (2008) focus will be embedded in this thesis when I discuss the three different forms of identity crafting, Swedish identity (Lind, 2012), adoption identity (Darnell et al., 2016), and ethnic identity (Brocious, 2017). I will borrow from Anthais (2008) research when discussing the various forms of identity since I believe that the adoptee demographic can also draw benefits by adding the perspective of intersectionality. Put differently, looking at only one form of identity does not suffice, but looking at how different forms of identity come together offers a new depth to the complexity of the adult adoptee experience, which is in much need of academic attention.

1.3 Research aim & Research question

The aim is to nuance the knowledge base about the various experiences of transnational adoptees in Sweden. This provides a foundation for adoptees, adoptive parents, and different organizations with focus on adoption, to improve the adult adoptee understanding. Through analyzing these experiences, we can learn how adoptees negotiate and craft their identity through life, which offers a more holistic perspective, by addressing the nuanced narratives, to understand what it is like to be an adult adoptee in Sweden.

Crafting of identity is a continuation of interactions over time, which means that the adoptee's idea of who they are isn't stagnant, "identity implies an interactional perspective [where] these processes refer to the dynamic attunement between individual and context. Thus, the possibility for reformulation of identity exists across the life span whenever individual or contextual changes occur" (Grotevant, 1997: 5). Furthermore, identity crafting is particularly unique for the adoptee demographic, "the identity process becomes increasingly complex as layers of 'differentness' are added; thus, this process is typically more complex for adopted than for non-adopted persons. Because most of the additional dimensions of differentness do not concern things that the person has chosen, the task of identity involves 'coming to terms' with oneself in the context of the family and culture into which one has been adopted" (Grotevant, 1997: 4). As such, the complexity of identity crafting is layered and elastic, which

changes through both life and contexts. This thesis aims to showcase unique situations where adoptees reflect on their phenomenological experiences with their environment and show how they distinctively use varying tools and arguments to craft their identity.

In the context of transnational adoptees in Sweden, the thesis poses the following research question: how do experiences of differentness, in relation to their environment, influence identity crafting?

1.4 Thesis Outline

Following the introduction, in chapter 2, I will dive into the necessary background information needed to understand the main objective of this thesis. This is where I will summarize literature on anthropology and adoption, followed by the theoretical frameworks, which are divided into: belonging, body, and kinning. After that is chapter 3, where I will explain the methodology used. Succeeding that are the "Empirical Chapters," which starts with chapter 4 titled "Misinterpellation," where I will be discussing nuanced experiences when there is a clash between the adoptees socialized upbringing and attitudes from their environment.

Chapter 5 is titled "Materiality," and will focus on materiality as an obligatory passage point that bridges the adoptees pre- and post- adoption lives, and how the adoptees utilize materiality when trying to understand their personal history and lack of medical records. I will also showcase how adoptees use materiality to learn about their past when their adoptive parents are not able to teach them about it. Lastly, I will address the shared distribution of agency between the adoptee and materiality.

Chapter 6 is titled "Returning," and will be looking into how adoptees perform exploration activities in order to find resolve through strengthening of their ethnic identity. Examples of such exploration activities are returning to their country of origin, learning their birth language, or imagining what returning would feel like.

Lastly, chapter 7 will present the final discussion and concluding remarks of the thesis, followed by the reference list.

2. Theory

2.1 Literature Review: Anthropology and Adoption

Much of the research that has been done gravitates towards the understanding of kinship structures and how the act of adoption looks differently in varying parts of the world. Previous scholars acknowledge that adoption has been significantly present in other societies as a well-known practice, which takes many different shapes and forms. Adoption could be defined as "the practice whereby children, for a variety of reasons, are raised by adults other than their biological parents, are treated as members of the family among whom they live, and are accepted as such by others" (Howell, 2009: 150). However, despite such well-known practice, many anthropological scholars have given limited time and resources discussing the effects that adoption has on the adoptee, especially from non-European countries to Europe (Howell, 2009).

Under this section, I will be discussing literature on adoption from an anthropological perspective and the many questions that previous scholars have tried to answer, such as, what is the purpose of adoption? How are families constructed? How can adoptive families compensate for the lack of biological ties? And more. In contrast to what scholars have previously done, this thesis will not be attempting to explain why adoption takes place or what constitutes as a family, instead it will look at the impact adoption has on adult adoptee's crafting of identity by analyzing the experiences among adoptees and how they negotiate their identity in different contexts.

Kinship used to be a pivotal area for anthropology to study, and adoption offered a comparative point, that allowed for new insight into the structures of how we understood kinship, "by and large, anthropologists have treated kinship as a complex system of culturally defined social relationships based on birth and marriage. Social practices that emphasized radically different criteria for relatedness emerged as problematic" (Howell, 2009: 154). Adoption has been considered as a form of "fictive kinship," in fact "all too easily, nonbiological kinship relationships were characterized as fictive, pseudo, ritual, or artificial kinship" (Howell, 2009: 155). Meaning that those that were adopted were not considered the parents "real child."

Some of the ways in which adoption has been studied comes from J. Goody's work (1969), who provided an overview in looking at adoption practices from China, Greece, Rome, and

India, and defined the purpose of adoption, "to provide homes for orphans […] To provide childless couples with social progeny. To provide an individual or couple with an heir to the property," as cited in Howell (2009: 151). Meanwhile, E. Goody (1982), referenced in Howell (2009), was mainly concerned about the qualities of adoption in West Africa, and instead looked at the combination of social parenthood and fostering practices and how the concept of childless wasn't prominent, as previously understood as a core requirement to satisfy when it came to adoption. Therefore, E. Goody deviated from the previously held belief of what adoption was meant to provide, which displays a clear distinction between the view on adoption between Europe and Africa.

Meanwhile, some scholars have looked at how kinships are structured when adopting and caring for a non-biological child is executed in terms of land resources. This implied a relatedness between kins apart from blood connection, as seen in the Banabans in the Gilbert and Ellis Islands, by Silverman (1971) in Howell (2009). Another way that scholars have looked at adoption is by Meigs (1986) in Hua of New Guinea Highlands, where the dichotomy of nature and nurture doesn't exist, but rather, it is believed that the child is built from menstrual blood and semen. Meaning that, even though "two people are not related by birth can create kinship by feeding each other, or through unilateral feeding […] Thus, when you eat a food you are ... eating some of the […] vital essence of another person. Eating by this logic, relates people, making them kin" (Howell, 2009: 155). A similar idea can be seen by the Zumbagua group in the highlands of Ecuador, and thus, by eating the same food together over a longer period of time, the child becomes a full member, this is a process of kinning (Howell, 2009).

Kinning in itself, can be read as, "'a universal process' through which a 'foetus or new-born child […] is brought into a significant and permanent relationship with a group of people that is expressed in a kin idiom […] the kinning process is the effort of incorporating adoptees into a network of kinship. Any kinning process presupposes a de-kinning process to strip a person of their meaningful relations" (Guerzoni & Sarcinelli, 2019: 8). However, as many of the studies conducted have shown, the understanding of adoption is usually studied from within the local culture's framework with a shared ontological and cultural point of view, while transnational and/or transracial adoption have been left significantly underexplored.

Within the theme of adoption, we find the subcategory of transnational adoption. Transnational adoption has had its previous expressive value, economically, replaced with a psychological value. Of the ability in providing comfort and personal fulfillment for couples in Europe and North America. As such, there has been a shift in understanding the adoptee's sense of purpose, which now required a new form of emphasis on the relationship between biogenic and social kinship, the adoptee's relationship with their country of origin, and the many other challenges revolving around their identity.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

This upcoming section will be discussing the theoretical frameworks that I have chosen for this master's thesis. The first framework will be discussing "belonging," and how the adoptee negotiates belonging through the idea of misinterpellation (Walton, 2020). Misinterpellation causes a clash between the adoptee's socialized self of the belief that they are Swedish in relation to reminders by their environment that the adoptee is not a member of the dominant whole. The second theoretical framework revolves around the "body," and how performances of "Swedishness," or whiteness, are attempts for the adoptee to prove their belonging, and how the body is tied to identity through a process of becoming, rather than stagnant (Walton, 2015; Lind, 2012; Zhao, 2019; Wulff, 2005). The last theoretical framework is "kinning," which is how parents' socialization practices affect identity crafting differently, whether the adoptive parent/s is able to communicate efficiently with their child (Doncan-Morgan, 2010), deciding to maintain traditions and cultural practices from the birth country around the adoptee (Shin, 2013), and more.

2.2.1 Belonging

Walton's work (2020) on Korean adoptees in Australia highlights the contradiction between the universal and the particular. She aims not to let one culture, or identity, "take over" the other, but instead argues for an identity where multiple ontologies can co- exist. Walton's (2020) focuses on "analyze adoptees' experiences of identification and contested belonging, using the concept of misinterpellation and a phenomenological framework to understand their sense of self" (2020: 22). It is within the clash between color-blindness, which is the belief that the adoptee is as Swedish as everyone else, and the recognition of racism, that tension occurs, where negotiation of identity takes place. Walton (2020), in support and reference to both Patton (2002) and Samuels (2009), use the term color-blindness in relation to the encouragement that parents should raise their children the same as those children that aren't adopted, thus ignoring that their child don't share the same physical features as those who are not transracially adopted.

In contrast to Walton (2020), Ben-Zion (2014) is arguing that there is an enforced hybrid identity that is applied from the "outside" onto the adoptee where the adoptee is experiencing a clash between their socialized upbringing and their physical appearance. This differs from Walton (2020) since Ben-Zion (2014) displays how adoptees negotiate between group

identities, within a liminality, and experience a double-consciousness, while Walton (2020) argues for an embracement of the two identities.

I will highlight two main arguments of the work done by Patton (2002). First, Patton (2002) is in agreement with Walton (2020) in that the "outside" is projecting onto the adoptee's assumptions about themselves. Patton (2002) partakes in a multifaceted analysis on adoption, which highlights policy, kinship, social and political structures, to showcase the nuances of the adoptee's negotiation of identity that shows degrees of color-blindness. In her work, Patton (2002) tells multiple narratives about adoptees who felt that their parents were not equipped to teach them about, or even acknowledging, racism and how to deal with it, which was also brought up by other scholars such as Samuels (2009). Secondly, in contrast to Walton (2020), Patton (2002) underlines how the adoptee is highly sensitive to both cultural "camps," and each camp, being their cultural and ethnic groups, is uniquely connected to the adoptee. The adoptee is well aware of the bordering lines in which one group begins and one ends. "Gone native" is therefore a term used by Patton (2002: 7) as a concept applied onto the adoptee due to their dual belonging, meaning that the adoptee developed skills to separate the groups of people and learn what behaviors are appropriate within each camp. Such skills may result in either to distance themselves from other people of color by claiming that the adoptee is "different" or to build an allegiance with those that physically look like them (Patton, 2002: 7).

Negotiation of identity among transnational adoptees are displayed in many forms. This section has mainly been dedicated to liminality, co-existence, and fluctuating between groups, however, how adoptees negotiate their identity takes many other shapes as well. The main focus in the work done by Darnell et al., (2016) is the negotiation of identity within the transracial adoptee demographic, which they termed "Adoption Identity." Darnell et al. (2016) focus on exploring the different ways in which adoptees craft their identity through reflection on their phenomenological experiences through various themes such as: adoption history, birthdays, and biological parents (Darnell et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, Stoddart et al., (2021) acknowledges the workings of Darnell et al. (2016), in regard to negotiation of identity through group membership, yet deviates from their study by also highlighting aspects of marginalization. The study done by Stoddart et al., (2021) looks at how Taiwanese adoptees, from early adulthood to middle adulthood, negotiate their identity through both postcolonial theory and social identity theory by the influence of the

environment on micro, meso, and macro levels. Through the lens of social identity theory, Stoddart et al. (2021) examines adoptees negotiation of identity based on group membership, while postcolonial theory reflects on how "race is socially and politically constructed to maintain the subordination of non-white subpopulations" (Stoddart et al., 2021: 72). Both theories aim to understand adoptees' struggles and obstacles that they may face on a familial, community and societal level based on attitudes from their environment (ibid.).

2.2.2 Body

We see in both Lind (2012) and Wulff (2005) different ways in which identity is closely tied to body movement. Lind (2012) puts the adoptee's own experience of negotiation of identity at its nuclei through body movements and illustrates how adoptees are extremely aware of their need to perform certain acts in order to prove their belonging within the dominant whole. For example, "to demonstrate their Swedishness, transnational adoptees must rely on the criteria of Swedishness [...] If you enter a shop you're treated in one way before you start talking and say your name. Then you're treated in an entirely different way and that's just the way it is. When you walk in you're a wog [svartskalle] and when you say your Swedish-sounding name you're treated differently" (Lind, 2012: 7). Lind (2012) focuses on transnational and transracial adoptees and their negotiation of identity through reaching certain requirements in order to prove their belonging with the Swedish dominant whole (Lind, 2012). The result on whether the participants felt as Swedish as everyone else or not varied, and in other cases the validation of feeling Swedish or not was based on an "authentic Swedes" approval (ibid.). As such, adoptees would rely on language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and other traits, in order to satisfy the requirement that they needed to in order to be perceived as a part of the whole. However, what became evident in Lind's (2012) research was that some adoptees could not be considered fully "Swedish," despite their performances and cultural understanding, and therefore be subjected to cultural exclusion due to their physical appearance (ibid.).

Meanwhile, Wulff (2005) investigates how dance and embodied movement is tied to national identity, situating the body "as a site of culture" (2005: 45) through an elaborative analysis of different parts of the body and how movement forms unity tying it to identity strengthening. I decide to highlight Wulff's (2005) work, despite her main focus being within dance anthropology, since it highlights how the body is referred to as a subject rather than an object, which implies that the perception of identity is highly fluid and contextual that works through

a process of becoming, similar to other scholars within adoption and identity (Walton, 2015; Lind, 2012; Ben-Zion, 2014). I reference Wulff's (2005) work in relation to Lind's (2012) because of two reasons. Firstly, as Lind (2012) mentions, the adoptee is not allowed "in" to the Swedish dominant whole since the adoptee and the culture in which they were raised do not share a common past, no shared ancestral memory, and therefore no expected shared future together. Secondly, the adoptee cannot have the same rhythm as the culture in which they are adopted from since they were both spatially and temporally removed from their birth country.

On the other hand, Brocious (2017) conducted a study where the adoptee is negotiating identity and group belonging through practices such as returning to the country of origin and participating in practices closely tied to the home country. Borcious (2017) explores Erickson's identity theory and looks at what activities are more strongly strengthening the adoptee's ethnic identity through exploration activities to find resolve. I am using Borcious (2017) and Lind (2012) in juxtaposition to each other to display how different embodied experiences can be, and while Lind (2012) explores identity crafting through the body's performance of Swedishness, Brocious (2017) explores identity crafting through connections of the country of origin. I am doing so to showcase how their studies are displaying nuanced perspectives to illustrate the importance of not seeing the body as an object, but rather a subject of continuous change that is contextual (Brocious, 2017; Lind, 2017).

Similar to Lind (2012), Zhao (2019) studied how transnational adoptees raised in Norway negotiated their identity through the performance of whiteness, "whiteness both as an embodied performance and as part of the identity work transnational adoptees do when positioning themselves within Norwegian nationhood" (2019: 1263). This ties well together with Lind's work (2012), arguing how inclusion and exclusion are negotiated between different groups by the adoptee is an ongoing practice, where there is an emphasis of embodying certain characteristics that allows the adoptee group access (Zhao, 2019; Lind, 2012).

Meanwhile, Walton (2015) embarks on a study where she is discussing the crafting of identity by viewing body movements as "an embodied subjective process" (2015: 395) where the body is in conflict between the subjective perception from the adoptee themselves, those of the birth country, and the people from the new home country. Walton (2015) is using a different theoretical framework about embodiment and performativity and argues that the

disruptiveness of "others" and the self is affecting the crafting of identity for the adoptee. For example, Walton (2015) adds an emphasis on contextual importance since the lived ambiguity from the "moving" of identity borders causes uncertainty for adoptees (2015: 396). Therefore, the embodied experiences are affecting the adoptee's identity crafting through a process of becoming, which is highly sensitive to the adoptee's interaction with the environment (Walton, 2015).

2.2.3 Kinning

Complementing what has already been said, this section of the theoretical frameworks will cover kinship structures, and how it impacts the adoptee's crafting of identity. Yngvesson (2012) puts an emphasis on how the assimilation of adoptees into Swedish culture used to be executed. As an example, Sweden used to be a fertile soil for adoption, and due to the values of the country, was believed to be more than suitable to accept large quantities of those in need of a home. The Swedish approach to help adoptees integrating with the culture would be through nothing short of a full assimilation through a "clean-break" process (Yngvesson, 2012: 328). This meant that the adoptive parents would be cutting the ties between the adoptee and the adoptees' birth country, which would turn the adoptee into a "generalized child" that could be characterized with fresh attributes in their new country (Yngvesson, 2012: 343-345). Howell, both in (2003) and (2006) support this argument by asking for a process of kinning of transnational and transracial children, which allows for a separation from the biological parents.

On the other side of that argument, Leinaweaver (2018), argues that through socialization practices, family bonds are established, which are equally, yet differently, as important for the adoptee's crafting of identity. This backs up Émile Durkheim's understanding of parental practices, which claims that social ties transcend the believed ipso facto that blood relatedness is what defines kinship (Leinweaver, 2018). When looking at kinship ties in other parts of the world, adoption is shown to be derived from social bonds, which is in stark opposition to western Anglo-European households (Notermans, 2004: 48; Strathern, 2014). Leinaweaver (2018) argues in favor of Durkheim's proposal that "kinship is a social bond or it is nothing" (ibid.). As the references above shows, it matters less about whether it is the child's biological parents that raises them, and more about the process of socialization that will become crucial for the adoptee's crafting of identity. Through the exploration and understanding of kinship structures, Leinaweaver (2018) adds to the body of text concerning adoption and identity by

highlighting explorative knowledge to the parent and child relationship, which debunks the myths of biological connectedness as the main component for kinship.

Docan-Morgan (2010) highlights the importance of parents learning how to effectively communicate with their adopted child, and how failed attempts in doing so can lead to struggles for the adoptee's negotiation of identity. Docan-Morgan (2010) explores what happens when racially loaded comments, that are geared towards the adoptee, are not being talked about within their adoptive family. The reasons for this, Docan-Morgan (2010) explains, are due to various motivations by the adoptive parents, such as: 1) self-protection, 2) relationship protection, 3) social inappropriateness, and 4) parent unresponsiveness (2010: 340). Moreover, in related work regarding communication, yet diverging from Docan-Morgan (2010), is Galvin (2003) who looks at how family structures and boundaries are established, and how communication-related issues are tied to internal views of the self. Galvin's (2003) study focuses on the intersectionality of race, gender, and culture, and how this gradually changed the previously perceived norm for family dynamics and therefore challenged the family consultation. Therefore, Galvin's (2003) work is dual, not only is there an emphasis on how adoptive families communicate and define their own kinship structure among themselves, but there is also an additional layer of negotiating on how families communicate their kinship outwards (ibid.).

Furthermore, Shin's (2013) study is addressing white, English-speaking American adoptive mothers, who have decided to learn Korean in order to promote cultural identity among their children, through something Shin (2013) titled "cultural keeping," which is inspired by the works of Jacobson (2008). Cultural keeping "is aimed to complement the adoptees negotiation of identity […cultural keeping refers to] promote the maintenance of the child's birth culture once he/she is adopted. Culture keeping may involve preparing and serving ethnic foods at home, decorating the house with cultural artifacts that represent the child's birth country, participating in cultural events sponsored by adoption agencies, enrolling children in ethnic music or dance classes, and visiting the birth country" (Shin, 2013: 163). With that said, studies done on kinship does not only imply crafting of identity through the family structure for the adoptee's new family (Shin, 2013; Jacobson, 2008; Docan-Morgan, 2010; Leinaweaver, 2018; Yngvesson, 2012), but also through the adoptee's connection to their biological kin.

As seen in the work done by Lord (2018), grief over the loss of culture, language, biological parents, are other areas that are deeply affecting the crafting of identity among adoptees. In relation to Darnell et al., (2016), Lord (2018) highlights two theme-based narratives about adoptees that express grief. One such theme is the loss of the biological parents and the despair when searching for their identity, and the other one involves trying to understand their medical history when the adoptee falls ill (ibid.).

I believe that previous scholars on the topic of identity crafting among adoptees have overlooked two things. Firstly, not enough attention has been given to how multiple factors/themes intersect in different situations that, in collaboration, contribute in varying degrees to the adoptee's crafting of identity. Put differently, intersectionality of experiences and theoretical frameworks have been left underexplored. Secondly, more academic attention should be given to analyzing identity crafting in varying contexts based on the adoptee's personal history. It is essential to use concepts and theoretical frameworks together and not to view each theme/concept as individual entities operating separately from each other in a vacuum since important uniqueness and depth that is embedded in each adoptee's narrative will be flost. As I have previously shown in the theoretical frameworks, scholars have homed in and looked at identity crafting from a specific point of view, but I believe that it is important to look at the adoptee experience from multiple perspectives in order to understand identity crafting more holistically.

3. Methods

3.1 Overview

This section will introduce the different forms of ethnographic methodological tools that were used throughout the fieldwork.

I applied participant observation in the form of "deep hanging out" and digital ethnography through participation in online activities. I also conducted sensory ethnography through "object elicitation," which allowed for stories about the adoptee's life to unfold. Another form of sensory participation used was auto-ethnographic practices where I would share my own narratives as an adoptee to encourage engagement by the participants to elaborate on their experiences. Doing such sensory ethnographic participation allowed me to "follow the narrative," and it gave me a better understanding of the adoptee's life. I also decided to engage with adoptees in varying environments, such as: their home, work, and at cafés. The methodological practices are tested and proven efficient among multiple scholars (Pink, 2015; Götsch & Palmberg, 2022; Miller & Horts, 2021; Hjorth et al., 2017).

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended in order to let participants reflect on being adopted, with a set of guiding questions ready to be asked should participants feel unsure of what to say. For the deep hanging out sessions, 12 days were spent at Jennies' restaurant where I would help out with setting the tables, clean dishes, and sell pastries. The purpose of attending multiple activities, both in-person and online, were to strengthen my relationships with other members of the adoptee community. Some of the events varied from digital presentations, museum events, only adoptee gatherings with adoptees that are both for and against adoption, as well as in-person activities like Christmas crafting and *fika* (traditional Swedish coffee time). Interviews were also done with parents with focus on raising an adopted child. All of these activities were meant to give a more holistic perspective of the adoptee experience. Fieldwork preparations started in early October 2022 and ended early January 2023.

3.2 Informants

The informants that participated in this study were all adult women (18 years old +, varying from their early twenties – mid sixties).

The informants:

1. Jennie, adopted from Sri Lanka when she was one and a half months old,

2. Julia, adopted from Korea when she was three months old,

3. Sophia, adopted from Chile when she was five months old,

4. Cia, adopted from Ecuador when she was two years old,

5. Linnea, adopted from United States when she was three years old,

6. Padmaja, adopted from India when she was one and half years old,

7. Sarah, adopted from Taiwan when she was two and a half years old,

8. Emma, adopted from China when she was one year old.

3.3 Interviews

Research was carried out by interviewing adoptees and asking them to walk me through experiences in relation to adoption, either by opinions about themselves or from their environment, based on their appearance or adoption status. I decided to let my participants choose where we should conduct the interview, based on what would be most comfortable and convenient for them. Some of my participants asked to be interviewed through a video call, phone calls, some in their home, and others through face-to-face, either at their job or at a café.

The interviews were audio recorded in order for me to much more easily go back and listen to the information when I was thematically transcribing the data. I had some questions prepared before the interview started, and I also had a small script which I read for the participants, which consisted of today's date, my name, and the usage of the information that they would provide. I also told each participant that they may at any time withdraw from the research and that they were never forced into answering any question that they did not want to. The time of the interviews varied based on when the participant and I both felt that we were finished, but the interviews lasted roughly between an hour to three.

I found my participants by setting up appointments (Hannerz, 2006: 34), which was possible by having done an oral presentation at Stockholm Adoption Center (*Adoptionscentrum*, which I will in this thesis call Adoption Center) on October 8th, 2022, and by publishing an ad in a

private Facebook group where I explained that I looked for participants. I experienced no difficulties getting participants for the thesis. Following that, I was messaged by those wishing to partake in my research, and I chose the people based on them being at least transnationally adopted and over 18 years old. One participant, Linnea, was the only one who was not also transracial. Some of the people that did reach out to me were not included either because of time constraint, not being transnational, or underage.

Some of the participants were also interviewed multiple times and I am still in contact with some of them today, however, due to time constraints, this wasn't possible to do with everyone. I did also have multiple phone calls with adoptive parents and people working with adoption to get more general information in an attempt to make the thesis as holistic as possible even though the focus was on the adoptee experience.

3.4 Participant Observation

3.4.1 Deep Hanging Out

I spent 12 days together with Jennie working at her restaurant as well as visiting her home on four different occasions where we livestreamed and talked about adoption from varying perspectives. The days that I spent at Jennies' restaurant were mostly structured around the same routine, and in the beginning of my fieldwork I would familiarize myself with her colleagues and other people working nearby. I would start the day by helping Jennie unpack the daily groceries that had arrived as well as set the tables for the upcoming guests, which gave us plenty of time for small talk. This is where I did the bulk of my participatory observation by using the method of "deep hanging out" which generated multiple casual conversations with Jennie, "many ethnographers admit that much of their ethnographic data emerges from these kinds of conversations, and they are what 'deep hanging out' is often all about." (Fontein, 2014). During this time, Jennie and I were discussing common and uncommon experiences of being a transnational and transracial adoptee. Jennie was able to tell me narratives about her experiences of being approached by various people at the restaurant that would ask her multiple questions based on her appearance.

The topics that we would discuss included, but not limited to, adoptive parents varying ways of socialization, different friend groups, kinship structures, expectations of visiting our birth country, the difference between being an adopted woman and an adopted man, and more. These discussions became crucial and valuable information for this thesis since Jennie and I

both understood that our similarities brought us together and it gave room for a sense of belonging. On the other hand, the times where Jennie and I deviated from each other helped me understand new ways of complexity that offered another dimension of identity crafting since Jennie would often share complexities that would otherwise be unfamiliar to me. An example of this would be her identifying herself as an adopted immigrant due to her father having immigrated from Italy. She believed that due to her father's immigrant status, Jennie added an additional layer when reflecting on her identity. This status made Jennie an expert in negotiating different forms of group belonging with the diverse set of people eating at her restaurant.

Jennie and I would also discuss what we thought was missing to make Sweden better at handling adoption. Jennie mentioned that Sweden often did not know how to deal with adoptees, the concern about separation anxiety, racism, and general struggles that are tied to the adoptee. This was also second by one of the staff members at Adoption Center who I was in continued contact with throughout the fieldwork who expressed a similar concern.

3.4.2 Digital Ethnography

I was able to engage more with the field by attending presentations on zoom, where I would both listen to others and share my own adoption narrative. The presentations that I attended were "searching for biological roots" (*Röttersökning*), "parents preparing to adopt" (*Nyfiken på adoption*), and "return trip to the adoptee's country" (*Återresa*). I did so to further install myself in the adoption world and to learn about adoptees' general thoughts on their adoption experience. Digital ethnography as an ethnographic method was proven particularly successful when I was not able to attend in person, or if the event was only offered online, which made it possible to expand my field (Miller & Horst, 2021, 21-44). This was important since I managed to reach a larger demographic and get in touch with adoptees, adoptive parents, and staff working with adoption, to gather more input from different avenues emphasizing a more holistic perspective of understanding the adoptee experience in Sweden.

Attending these events gave me a common denominator which I was able to reference in conversations with adoptees and adoptive parents, which made my participants feel more comfortable with the interview. I was also able to get to know more people that worked with adoption and having them vouching for me allowed for an increase in my credibility to carry out my research when I was interviewing my participants.

3.5 Sensory Ethnography

3.5.1 Object Elicitation and Co-participation

The sensory ethnographic tool that I used was sensory participation through object elicitation (Pink, 2015: 96-98) and, inspired by Götsch & Palmberger (2022) and Reed-Danahay (2019), auto-ethnographic practices were also used, in order to help bring forth my participants' narratives. Although, I did not incorporate my own biography as a participant in the research. I did find it particularly useful in sharing my own narrative as it encouraged my participants to think together with me about different experiences. Before showcasing how I did that, I will address why object elicitation was particularly successful, especially when it came to explaining the importance of the adoptee's relationship to their adoption documents and items from their country of origin.

When meeting with participants, I asked each one of them to bring something that was particularly important to them in relation to their adoption. Items would vary, but some of them were photographs, adoption documentation, and clothes. I asked the participants to use the object to help explain to me what strong emotional connection and feelings they had connected to the object. In order to help engage in these conversations I would also highlight the importance and at times show my own adoption documentation to share my adoption experience. For example, when I sat down with Linnea in downtown Stockholm, her and I would compare adoption documentation and see where we overlapped and deviated. We would look at the vast differences in the documents that we had, hers would be covered up at times to keep much of her documentation hidden, while my documentation was so limited that it did not offer much at all. There was a shared feeling of belonging and connectiveness through object elicitation that connected Linnea and me.

Other adoptees would use photographs of their biological family and use it as an object to further discuss the narrative behind it. When I spoke with Jennie, who showed me a photo of her biological family, she told me that she could look at the photo and speculate about what her biological mother had gone through in order to give Jennie a chance at life. Using object elicitation allowed for the participants and myself to co-create and build a stronger bond where trust was established through the reciprocal sharing of vulnerability through our objects. I was able to reach a new depth that otherwise would have been difficult should I not have shared my own documentation.

Inspired by Götsch & Palmberger (2022) and Reed-Danahay (2019), I decided to co-participate with my participants through the sharing of my own adoptive biography, which showed itself being a successful way to encourage the participants to share their own experiences. As a result of me sharing certain situations from my adoption history, my participants felt inspired to pick their own situations and elaborate.

I found that using this style of sensory ethnography, in relation to secondary research methods, was particularly useful in order to encourage my participants to narrate their experiences (Pink, 2015). By secondary research, I am referring to the re-usage of information done previously, "secondary research' is a catch-all term meaning re-examination of information which has been gathered for other purposes" (Thin, 2014: 37). Meaning that when I was not able to ask questions or find related themes that overlapped based on my own experiences, I turned to already established research, which offered a plethora of ideas and questions to carry the interview to new depths.

3.6 Observations

While I was conducting participant observation, such as "deep hanging out," I was able to engage with Jennie as she interacted with customers, colleagues, and other sellers near her restaurant. It was noticeable that Jennie, as she also acknowledges, behaved like a chameleon as she was able to transition in and out of behaving differently based on who she talked with, although, this could also be because of the work context in which she was in.

I also found it extremely difficult to make myself feel included in the adoption world, despite being adopted myself, which is also why I engaged in many of the activities like Christmas crafts, *fika*, and did digital events through zoom seminars. I overcame this uncertainty by showing my own vulnerability and willingness to explore and share sensitive information about myself, which made my participants and those I engaged with more comfortable with my presence.

What I observed was that many of the people that were not interviewed for this thesis were still interested in my findings. I was approached by adoptive parents who wanted to gain a depth and insight in how their adopted child/children might think and feel. Other adoptees felt compelled to tell me about what it was like to be adopted and felt inspired to share their

narrative too, both to give me more information and to satisfy their own need of having someone that listened to them. I also encountered people that were guests at Jennie's restaurant that wanted to share their opinions and ask questions, and from staff working with adoption since many were interested in knowing more about my findings.

What I noticed during my scheduled visits to the adoption events was the diverse set of opinions that people had on the topic of adoption. One of the events that I attended was hosted by the Modern Museum in Stockholm, and during this event the participants were shown a movie followed by a panel and an event for only adoptees, where adoption was criticized for being a colonial practice. This was a new experience for me and those that attended this event had vastly different opinions about adoption than those that I had spent most of my time with. I came to know different views and attitudes towards adoption and what impact it has on the adoptee. This resulted in uncomfortable encounters since I would be questioned and ridiculed for believing adoption was something positive and I was encouraged to change my perspective. This encounter became crucial for me since this thesis is meant to showcase complexities, and I was reminded about the nuances when attending the event.

3.7 Fieldnotes

As I was spending time with my participants, I took continuous fieldnotes (Whitehead, 2005), which I later wrote down more clearly when I got home. When sitting down for an interview I asked my participants if it was okay that I took notes throughout our interview. However, I made sure not to spend too much focusing on the fieldnotes since I did not want it to distract too much from the conversation, and since I was also voice recording the interview, I knew that most of the information said would be saved. During the times when I was conducting my deep hanging out session with Jennie, I would have my phone ready to take notes, and as Jennie was helping customers, I would write down what we had talked about. During other events such as *fika* and Christmas crafting where a lot of information was given from multiple people at the same time, I made frequent visits to the bathroom to write down what had just been said.

After an event or an interview, I would go home and type up my fieldnotes in a more structured format, and I made sure that I wrote everything down as close in time as possible to when I received the information. I also made sure to separate my own thoughts and theoretical frameworks to what the person I spoke with had said, so that it would be easier for me to go

back when writing the thesis. If there were any misunderstandings, or I struggled understanding what was said, I would reach out to the participant for clarification. This was possible since those I talked with were keen on helping out and making sure that the information they gave was what I needed. However, the only time this was not done was when I attended the event with adoptees that were against adoption. I believe that my personal opinions did not grant me access to this group of adoptees, which is unfortunate since their opinions and experiences are also important to depict since they too are a part of the adult adoptee demographic.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

I drew inspiration from the chapter on ethics by Harper referenced in Konopinski (2014). After speaking with a representative from the Adoption Center I realized that asking people to talk about their adoption experience could be an emotional challenge, which is why I took my participants' emotions into my highest consideration. Therefore, I made sure to first ask the representative at Adoption Center about their availability to have adoptees reach out to them should they need someone to talk to. When this was confirmed to be possible, I felt more comfortable continuing my research and I made sure to tell the participants to contact someone working at Adoption Centrum in case our conversation opened up emotional memories and thoughts regarding their adoption, which they were unable to deal with themselves. Moreover, I have emphasized to all my participants that they will be anonymous, that they may at any time withdraw from the research without any consequences, and that they can at any time choose not to answer a question. I was given verbal consent from my participants, and all names given to people within this master's thesis have been altered to protect the participants.

3.9 Analysis

The way that I analyzed my data was through thematic transcription. These were themes that were consistently brought up in my participants' narratives, which I later used the various theoretical frameworks to analyze, starting on the next page in chapter 4 of my empirical chapters.

It became more useful to let my participants decide which themes should be addressed since I did not want to reproduce my own narrative and experiences and direct my participants into generating answers that I myself would say. Therefore, the semi-structured open-ended questions were only intended to be used to continue the conversation when the participant felt stuck.

The way I analyzed my material required me to go beyond what I had previously intended the thesis to be, which was to use a theoretical framework to analyze how adoptees craft identity through a dichotomy of ethnic origin and Swedishness. However, by allowing my participants to guide me through their experiences, nuances and depth was added which colored this thesis by eight unique narratives instead of what otherwise could have been a reproduction of own biases of the adoptee experience. The themes helped me reach a new understanding of the nuances, which depicted overlaps, depth, and showcased nuances of the adoptee experience.

Empirical chapters

In chapter 4 I will be discussing the idea of misinterpellation (Walton, 2020), also known as interruptions, which are exemplified through questions such as, "where are you really from?" or "do you miss your real parents?" These questions cause a clash between the adoptee's socialized belief of belonging with the Swedish dominant whole, based on how their adoptive parents raised them, and the adoptees environment that questions adoptees belonging with other Swedes. Chapter 5 will be looking at materiality, and how materials such as documentations, photos, clothes and more, are forms of obligatory passage points, which carries agency, and bridges the pre- and post- adoption lives for the adoptee (Walton, 2013; Latour, 1994). Chapter 6 will be looking at how adoptees perform, what Brocious (2017) calls, exploration activities, and how adoptees are doing so to find resolve through the strengthening of their ethnic identity.

4. Misinterpellation

This chapter will display how adoptees' experiences of their socialized upbringing and group belonging affect their Swedish identity. In order to do so, this chapter will use the theoretical concept of minsiterpellation by Walton (2020), which describes misinterpellation as a form of interruption that adoptees experience through comments, actions, and so forth, that reminds the adoptee that they do not belong with the dominant whole, as they have been socialized to believe.

According to Walton (2020), misinterpellation can be explained as "a process whereby someone's subjective positioning is read by or interpellated by someone else in a way that contradicts how the person being 'read' understands that positioning" (Walton, 2020: 28). I will use this concept in juxtaposition with Pattons' (2002) idea of "gone native," Yngvessons' (2012) "clean-break" concept, and others, to show how adoptees experience the clash between their socialized upbringing and their environment's opinions, and how this affects their Swedish identity (Lind, 2012).

This chapter will be divided into three areas: firstly, when the adoptee first realizes that they were adopted or did not look like everyone else. Secondly, the way that adoptive parents socialized the adoptee to be a part of the dominant whole and/or if the adoptive parents introduced norms/concepts/other aspects from the birth country. Lastly, I will bring forth

situations to show how/if adoptees embodied their supposedly emplaced Swedishness when negotiating group belonging.

4.1 Finding Out

Jennie, who was adopted by a Swedish mother and an Italian immigrant father, has known her whole life that she was adopted, but not sure exactly when she started reflecting what that meant. Jennie told me that her adoptive mother reminded her about an instance when she was in a trolley and saw a boy who was also darker, similar to Jennie's complexion, and Jennie said, "look, another brown child." This was the first time she remembered finding out that she didn't look like most of those around her.

Julia, whom I met during my speech at the Adoption Center in Stockholm, told me that from an early age she noticed that she was different, as she was the only one that looked Asian. This became more and more heightened during both family gatherings and when she was picked up from kindergarten, as she would notice how people would stare and approach her or ask questions that other children did not receive.

Then there was Sophia, whom I was introduced to through her dad, who approached me as I was interviewing someone else in downtown Stockholm. Sophia has known her whole life that she was adopted, but she can't remember if there was a specific instance where she was told that she was adopted. However, Sophia does recall one instance when she realized that she did not look like everyone else, which was when she met a sibling pair who also were not ethnically white Swedes. Even though they were darker than Sophia, she told me that this was most likely the first time any of them saw someone that looked like them.

In a similar fashion to most of the participants, of not having a specific situation when they were told that they were adopted was Cia. Cia grew up in a homogenous white area where there was no one that looked like her, and she even told me that she was surprised when she saw herself in the mirror. She couldn't identify herself with the person that stared back at her since she felt herself being blond and Swedish on the inside, even though she acknowledged that she wasn't.

Much similar to Cia and Sophia, in terms of highlighting the experience of growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood, was Padmaja. However, in contrast to the adoptees

previously introduced, one of Padmaja's first realizations of her perceived foreignness stemmed from a nasty comment. Padmaja told me about one particular time when she got called "Chinese." Padmaja didn't exactly know why or what that meant at the time, but she understood that it was tied to her appearance.

Sarah was adopted from Taiwan, but she doesn't remember that her parents have explicitly told her that she was adopted, and she thinks that it was natural that she wasn't her adoptive parents' biological child since she did not look like them, and therefore did not point to a specific instance when she found out that she did not look like everyone else.

Similar to Sarah, there is also Emma who was adopted from an Asian country, China. Emma doesn't recall when she found out that she was different, but she does remember how kids in middle school would stretch their eyes to make fun of Emma's facial features.

Up until this point, I have introduced people who are both transnational and transracial. However, the next person is the first, and only, non-transracial person in this thesis. Linnea is an adoptee who did not find out that she was adopted until she was 47 years old. However, Linnea has been suspicious about herself being adopted ever since she was young. Linnea found out that she was adopted because she was seeing a psychologist in order to get an evaluation of whether she had ADHD. In order to get the evaluation, it required Linnea to bring in her adoptive mother to be asked questions, and this was when the adoptive mother confessed to the psychologist that Linnea was adopted, but that the psychologist was not allowed to tell her. Despite not being allowed to tell Linnea that she was adopted, the psychologist decided to do so anyway.

What became apparent was that each adoptee had their own unique experience of finding out that they did not look like the rest, or that they were adopted, despite their socialized upbringing where they were taught to embody what it meant to be Swedish. As presented in the chapter introduction, finding out happens because there is a clash due to misinterpellation (Walton, 2020) between the socialized self that the adoptee has of themselves being Swedish and the adoptee's environment's attitude towards them. This next section will elaborate on how adoptees were socialized by their adoptive families and other people in their environment.

4.2 Socialization

As you have previously read in section 4.1, adoptees have had different experiences of finding out that they did not look like everyone else, or that they were adopted, despite their socialized upbringing. This was partly credited to the adoptive parents doing their best to socialize their child to become Swedish so that the adoptee would not feel excluded. These forms of socialization practices are called kinning (Guerzoni & Sarcinelli, 2019) and performed by something called a "clean-break" process (Yngvesson, 2012), which is when adoptive parents would cut the ties from the adoptee's country of origin and socialize their child to become Swedish. With that said, some parents did more or less to incorporate practices, traditions, and so forth, from their child's country of origin, which according to both Galvin (2003) and Shin (2013) affects the adoptee's identity. Some participants were also socialized by people from their country of origin, or a culture similar to theirs, where they learned norms and values about their birth country, which is something Jacobson (2008) calls "fictive kinship."

Despite being raised to be as Swedish as everyone else, there was an experience that Jennie believes had a great impact on her. When she was young, Jennie's adoptive mother came with her to her class and told everyone that Jennie was adopted. Jennie believes that her adoptive mother may have foreseen potential obstacles that Jennie might face due to her not looking like the rest in the class. Despite acknowledging Jennie's potential struggle, Jennie does believe that her adoptive parents could not fully understand what it meant for her to be adopted and therefore struggled in her ways to communicate with them. The crafting of kinship structure and how families communicate with the adoptee are explored in the works of both Galvin (2003) and Docan-Morgan (2010), and how failing to communicate efficiently can have damaging consequences for the adoptee's crafting of identity. This was often the case when adoptees felt that their adoptive parents were not able to fully understand what it meant to experience certain attitudes towards having a transracial appearance. Moreover, Jennie believes that she did not internalize a view of herself as a Swede, despite her upbringing where her parents did raise her as one. However, whether an adoptee felt Swedish or not varied, and in contrast to Jennie, Cia did feel Swedish.

When I met up with Cia over an online meeting, she told me that she knew that as soon as she opened her mouth, she would be granted access and belonging, she told me that, "I want to be Swedish; I want to blend in, and not to get excluded, and I was let in," displaying a sort of

embodied Swedishness (Zhao, 2019). This is opposite of what was stated by Lind (2012) since the access to the Swedish dominant whole was never gatekept for Cia. Cia came to Sweden escorted by a woman and Cia's biological half-sister. The biological half-sister's adoptive parents and Cia's adoptive parents made an adamant effort for the sisters to meet each other during holidays. Furthermore, when starting pre-care, Cia's adoptive parents placed Cia in a class where they knew she had another friend that also did not look Swedish, although Cia's friend was from Chile and not Ecuador. As a result of the friendship that developed between Cia and the friend, Cia's adoptive parents also decided to place her in a school where they knew the friend would go.

Moreover, at school, Cia did spend a lot of time with other people from Chile where she felt connected since they looked like her, even though she did not speak Spanish like many others did. Having a support system can act as a "fictive kinship," which is something that Jacobson (2008) argues is important when strengthen the adoptees identity, cited in Shin (2013), fictive kinship "encourage a conceptualisation of kinship beyond the nuclear family – one that may include other adopted children from the same country and members of the ethnic community that are supportive of adoptees" (2013: 174). This form of emplaced feeling is unique because Cia does feel like she embodies what it means to be Swedish, despite her adoptive parents making an effort to socialize Cia to be more in touch with her cultural and ethnic heritage through the establishment of fictive kinship. This form of kinning, which introduces the adoptee to their country of origin, is something Shin (2013) calls "cultural keeping." Cultural keeping is defined, but not limited to, as, "preparing and serving ethnic foods at home, decorating the house with cultural artefacts that represent the child's birth country, participating in cultural events sponsored by adoption agencies, enrolling children in ethnic music or dance classes, and visiting the birth country" (2013: 163). In the case of Cia, we see that cultural keeping did not have the intended effect that her parents wanted.

In contrast to Cia, in relation to implementation of the birth country around the adoptee, we see in the narratives of Sarah how her parents exercised a form of "color-blindness." I reference the term color-blindness from Patton (2002: 22) and Samuels (2009: 87) who both use the concept to explain how adoptive parents used to be encouraged to raise their children the same as those children that aren't adopted, thus ignoring that their child doesn't share the same physical features as those who are not transracial. Sarah was raised to become Swedish by abandoning her old identity in a pre-adoption life, similar to the "clean-break" process

presented in Yngvesson (2012). By cutting the ties from Sarah's birth country, her parents would establish something that Yngvesson (2012) calls a "generalized child," which meant that the adoptee would turn into a blank sheet, ready to be fully assimilated into Swedish culture. This meant that the parents were kinning their child to follow the social norms, eat Swedish food, dress like a Swede, and so forth (Guerzoni & Sarcinelli, 2019). Both Sarah and her Swedish adoptive sister were raised the same without acknowledgement of the ethnic differences between them, although Sarah wishes her adoptive parents would have let her eat with chopsticks, to eat Chinese food at home, and to celebrate Chinese traditions.

Sarah's adoptive parents did occasionally bring up Taiwan when Sarah was young, but at that time she pushed away everything that had to do with her birth country and didn't want to associate herself with it since she wanted to be like everyone else. This was also the case with Julia, who pushed away everything that had to do with Korea in order to blend in and not get bullied. Now that Sarah is older, she wishes that her parents would have been more adamant about including Taiwanese culture in her everyday life. I think this exemplifies the idea of translocational positionality that Anthais (2008) speaks of since identity isn't stagnant, but contextual, and changes throughout the adoptee's life. This is exemplified with the change of heart Sarah has towards the implementation of cultural keeping practices in her adulthood. However, Sarah believes that if she would have been allowed to celebrate her heritage as a child, things could have been different. This form of "pushing" the cultural heritage away has implications of Patton's (2002) idea of "gone native," where the adoptee recognizes the camps of Swedish and non-Swedish and tries to push themselves further away from the camp of their country of origin.

In a similar fashion to Sarah, Emma was also raised in a family with a white ethnic adoptive sibling. Emma told me that her parents raised both her and her adoptive brother to both be Swedish. Similar to Cia, Emma was able to be socialized by a friend group to learn about her ethnic and cultural identity, again emphasizing the idea of fictive kinship by Jacobson (2008). On the other hand, she doesn't recall her parents teaching her about racism and what to do when being exposed to it, and Emma herself hasn't brought up the topic of racism with her parents because she doesn't feel like they can comprehend how it affects her. This sort of fear of not believing that adoptive parents can understand the racial difficulties of the adoptee is seen in Docan-Morgan (2010) where the adopted is, "avoiding discussion of certain topics […and] adoptees might avoid disclosing instances of racial derogation with their White

parents […] parent unresponsiveness, seems to resonate with critics' concerns about transracial adoption: that White parents are incapable of either preparing their children for racial derogation or responding effectively when it occurs" (2010: 340-341). Although, racial conversations weren't the only type of conversations that adoptees struggle having with their adoptive parents.

Another participant, Linnea, who was adopted from the United States and grew up having US traditions around her, felt disconnected to Swedish culture, despite acknowledging that there is a Swedish identity embedded in her. I believe this exemplifies the clash between the birth country through cultural keeping (Shin, 2013) and embodied Swedishness through kinning (Zhao, 2019; Howell, 2009). On the other hand, even though the United States have been surrounding Linnea her whole life, she also had a Swedish adoptive mother that she felt the need to identify with when she was young, which also caused a clash between her two sides. Linnea was raised with two cultures and therefore acknowledges both, although with a preference to the US, both culturally and geographically, and therefore feels more North America. This type of split and twoness of selves is explained by Du Bois in both Ben-Zion (2014) and Dickson & Bruce (1992), "two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which he leads, really show very little relation to each other" (Dickson & Bruce, 1992: 300), which caused Linnea to feel a "*rotlöshet*" (lack of roots). Lacking roots was therefore not something that Linnea was able to tell her adoptive mother about due to their poor relationship.

What I have displayed in section 4.2 are contradictions between the environment's attitudes towards the adoptee not being like everyone else and the parent/s attempt to socialize their child to strengthen their Swedish identity. Adoptees have had varying responses to their parent/s socialized practice, some decided to "go native" (Patton, 2002), which was exemplified by Sarah. Other adoptees find it difficult to know where they belong, a form of lack of roots, as seen in the example with Linnea due to her duality of belonging. Meanwhile, other adoptees establish fictive kinships (Jacobson, 2008) through their adoptive parents' implementation of cultural keeping (Shin, 2013) as seen with Cia and Emma. This next section will showcase how adoptees experience group membership in relation to their environment and people's attitudes.

4.3 Group Belonging

Jennie adopts a different style of group belonging by embracing the three cultures embedded in her based on the context she is in, exemplifying Anthais (2008) and Walton's (2015) arguments that identity is contextually impacted. An example Jennie gave when her socialized Swedish upbringing failed to grant her inclusion was in relation to "*minoritetsstress*" (minority stress). Minority stress is the feeling of constantly being watched and having to be aware of one's actions. The idea of constantly being watched and monitored has common properties with the panopticon. According to Reiman (1995) "the targets of the panopticon know and feel the eye of the guard on them, making their actions different than if they were done in private" (1995: 38). Lind (2012) explains the adoptees' experience of minority stress and the need of proving their belonging as follows, "*if you enter a shop you're treated in one way before you start talking and say your name. Then you're treated in an entirely different way and that's just the way it is. When you walk in you're a wog [svartskalle] and when you say your Swedish-sounding name you're treated differently*" (2012: 92). Although Jennie told me that even though she is ready to perform Swedish when someone asks her to, she is met with a variety of responses based on the context that she is in.

During the deep hanging out participation, I got the chance to experience a situation where Jennie and I both were asked to prove our Swedish belonging when a man approached us. The man had observed Jennie as she was unpacking groceries, and after a while the man asked Jennie if she was from Turkey. When Jennie responded with a "no," the man turned to me and asked the same question, I also replied "no." Jennie and I exchanged looks with each other and smiled, and I asked Jennie to reflect on this encounter with me. I believe that this instance carries depth, showcasing the complexity that adoptees experience as mentioned by Grotevant (1997: 4).

Firstly, Jennie was simply existing, and embodied in her was the different parts of her identities, with the idea of always being ready to perform Swedishness. Secondly, I argue that the man believed that it was acceptable for him to assume country of origin, to ask the question, regardless if this question would cause any form of discomfort for Jennie. This form of marginalization and maintaining hierarchy finds its roots in social identity and postcolonial theory (Stoddart et al., 2021). Here, Stoddart et al. (2021) examines adoptees negotiation of identity based on group membership, while postcolonial theory explains how "race is socially and politically constructed to maintain the subordination of non-white subpopulations"

(Stoddart et al., 2021: 72). Lastly, Jennie expresses the stress of having to perform Swedish well, which I relate back to the idea of the panopticon mentioned in Reiman (1995: 38). However, even though Jennie was ready to perform Swedish at any time, she did not want to perform it to the extent where she would become a "sell out."

A sellout, according to Jennie, is someone that "abandons their cultural heritage in order to gain access to the dominant whole." She told me that this is something that often happens when adoptees do not want to get exposed to marginalization or unfair treatment, and instead adopt a more blatant role and act as someone who is completely integrated in society. As such, "gone native," as mentioned by Patton (2002: 7), is therefore a term used as a concept applied onto the adoptee, which results in the adoptee developing skills to separate themselves from their birth country.

I asked Julia if she thinks about how to perform Swedish and Korean? She responded that performing was something that she does almost subconsciously. We see in the literature by Lind (2012), how adoptees respond to their environment when performing Swedish, "to demonstrate their Swedishness, transnational adoptees must rely on the criteria of Swedishness constituted by citizenship, culture, language, name and having Swedish (adoptive) parents" (2012: 92). Julia goes so far to call this type of behavior an instinct due to having gone her whole life feeling like she has to prove that she belongs with other Swedish and Korean people.

Furthermore, Julia was telling me that when she was buying something from someone that is Asian, Julia tries to perform what she believes is culturally appropriate by saying "thank you," while bowing her head and accepting the item with two hands. This is something that she does without thinking about it, she even thinks that it sounds crazy, but understands that this is something that she had to learn in order to defend herself from exclusion. I argue that this form of localizing when to use what behavior, based on what group Julia tries to belong with, while being both an insider and an outsider and understanding what an appropriate performance is, is tacit knowledge developed through the "gone native" approach seen in Patton (2002). Patton (2002) states that, "I was not learning a way of perceiving cultural reality so much as discovering a set of practices that drew on my daily mode of social interaction […] I have spent my life looking like an insider while feeling I was *really* an outsider. In fact, I was both an insider and an outsider" (2002: 7). Julia feels both Swedish and Korean, but there are instances where her Swedish identity is being heightened even without

her thinking about it. This idea of moving identity and cultural borders are seen in the works of Walton (2015).

Julia was telling me that when she was buying something at an Asian store that she felt extremely Swedish, and that one time she was approached by a Swedish man who spoke Swedish to her. Apparently, the man "just knew" that Julia was Swedish, and Julia feels like her Swedishness is something embedded into her based on how she dresses and her body language, which can be explained by Zhao's (2019) research on how embodied performances is a way for transnational adoptees to position themselves. Another person that also feels like belonging both to Sweden and her birth country was Sarah.

Once, when Sarah was visiting a friend, who is married to a Taiwanese woman, Sarah felt undecisive of whom she belonged more with, and that she instead lived in an "in-betweenness" (*mellanförskap*). She does feel connected to the husband since they were both raised in Sweden, but Sarah does also celebrate Taiwanese traditions as an adult, thus connecting herself to the Taiwanese woman. We see in Galvin (2003) how incorporating cultural practices from the country of origin can strengthen the adoptees identity with their pre-adoption life, "artifacts and rituals play a role in family cultural identity development […and by participating] in rituals from a child's birth culture" (2003: 243). As a result of the lack of cultural keeping as young (Shin, 2013), it could be argued why Sarah feels a strong connection to her Swedish male friend, and at the same time why she also finds belonging with the Taiwanese woman due to Sarah's interest in Taiwanese practices as an adult. Similar to Sarah, although to a different degree, Emma also found ways of negotiating her group membership based on clashes between her socialized upbringing and her environment, which were caused by instances of misinterpellation.

Even though misinterpellation was present when Emma grew up, through reminders by her environment that she looked different, this was amplified during COVID-19, and when Emma would go on the bus people would be particularly adamant about not sitting next to her. I think that this is an important instance of misinterpellation since it showcases the translocational positionality Anthais (2008) talks about, "in terms of social hierarchy, a person may be placed in a different position depending on the saliency of a particular category […] in terms of context, meaning and time and in relation to different regulatory practices of the state, as well as in terms of the individuals own understanding of their social location" (2008:

14). Due to COVID-19, Emma was reforming her intersectionality by having her Asian appearance being modified to signal new information based on the current global state. In this particular time of her life, Emma was reminded about her physical features and what prejudices were associated with it, prejudices that she otherwise experienced differently in her youth when she was taunted by the kids she went to school with, as mentioned in section 4.1. This example shows again how identity isn't stagnant and how when time passes the adoptee has new experiences.

As mentioned earlier in relation to Jacobson's (2008) idea of fictive kinship, Emma told me about when interacting with an Asian demographic, and how that was different from interacting with ethnic white Swedes. Emma has had Chinese culture around her since she was young, and the Asian community where she lived made her feel included, however, Emma doesn't feel like she is fully Chinese. On the other hand, because of her appearance, she doesn't feel fully Swedish either, and much like Sarah, Emma feels like she lives in an in-between (*mellanförskap*). Similar to Julia, Emma has learned how to negotiate her behavior based on which group of people she is with.

What I have presented in section 4.3 are multiple adoptee experiences of misinterpellation through group belonging, by showing the complexity and nuances of membership in relation to socialized upbringing. For example, when looking at how adoptees performs Swedishness without thinking about it (Lind, 2012), we see Julia exercising an embedded feeling of whiteness, as seen in Zhao, where "whiteness [is] both as an embodied performance and as part of the identity work transnational adoptees do when positioning themselves" (2019: 1263). Meanwhile, Sarah, during her younger years, exercised the idea of "going native" (Patton, 2002) to better blend in and protect herself, although this changed as she grew older, which resulted in new forms of negotiating belonging through a reexamination of ethnic similarity and cultural upbringing. Section 4.3 also discussed Jennie's experience of minority stress when interacting with the man at the restaurant where she felt pressured into performing Swedishness, which could be explained through the idea of the panopticon (Reiman, 1995) and social identity and postcolonial theory by Stoddart et al. (2021)

What I have presented in this chapter are various experiences of misinterpellation and how it affects the adoptee's identity through the three subheadings of finding out, socialization, and group belonging. I started the chapter by highlighting the first time that adoptees found out

that they were adopted/did not look like the majority of the people around them. Following that, I elaborated on the different forms of socialization practices by the adoptive parents and fictive kinship. Lastly, I discussed how the socialized upbringing of the adoptee was exercised in various ways to negotiate group belonging.

I will in this next chapter be discussing how materiality contributes to the adoptee's crafting of adoption identity. According to Darnell et al. (2016), a way of strengthening the adoption identity is by learning about the adoptee's personal history, which is why I will mainly be focusing on how materiality can help bridge the pre- and post- adoption lives.

5. Materiality

In this chapter I will be discussing adoptees' experiences with materiality and its significance to the adoptee's crafting of adoption identity. Darnell et al. (2016) explains that adoption identity is partly tied to the importance of biological family, birthday, and the adoptee's history, "in addressing their adoption identity […] suggesting the historical and underlying contexts of the biological family that brought the child into the world may always play an important role in the formation of the adoptees' sense of self" (2016: 163). As such, I will argue that materiality acts as a bridge between the adoptee's pre- and post- adoption lives that will aid the adoptee when learning about their adoption history.

I will draw inspiration from a combination of theoretical concepts, one of them being Walton (2013) and their idea of an "obligatory passage point." Walton (2013) states that the obligatory passage point uses "a focal actor [that] bring all the other actors though an obligatory passage point. As its name implies all actors have to agree to journey through this point. And the passage is irreversible" (2013: 7). I am making the case that materiality is used as an obligatory passage point for the adoptee that bridges their pre- and post- adoption lives where they gain new information about their adoption history, and once this new information is learned, there is no going back to the unknown.

I would like to offer a piece of my own adoption narrative, drawing inspiration from Reed-Danahay's emphasis (2019) on the usefulness of auto-ethnographic practices in research to exemplify the argument above. I did not know much about my past due to the limitations of my documentation, however, I was recently given my adoption case and I found out the name of my biological mother. Following that, I invited my adoptive family and friends to share this experience with me. Therefore, when I obtained new information about my adoption history, the materiality did not only bridge my own pre- and post- adoption lives, but I was also able to bring other actors with me through the materiality, such as my adoptive family.

I will pair Walton's' (2013) concept of an obligatory passage point with Latour's (1994) concept of shared distribution of agency between humans and material. Examples of shared agency could be seen when new information, such as DNA relatives, are added in the documentation, which showcases the agency of the adoptee over the material. Moreover, due to the new information embedded in the document the adoptee responds, for example by returning to their birth country to look for their biological kin, or by having an emotional response such as anger or sadness, which showcases a reciprocal relationship between human

and materiality. This form of relationship can be explained by Latour (1994) who describes a similar concept of shared distribution of agency between humans and the speed bump, "a speedbump that forces drivers to slow down on campus. The driver's goal is translated, by means of the speedbump […] The driver modifies his behavior through the mediation of the speed bump" (1994: 38). Much like the driver, the adoptee modifies their behavior and changes their course of actions based on what the materiality tells them, and the material gains new information from the adoptee as they learn more about their adoption history.

The last theoretical concept of how adoptees use materiality stems from having a poor relationship with their adoptive family. According to Docan-Morgan (2010), "adoptees may find that their parents are unprepared and unequipped to respond to adoptees' experiences" (2010: 337). The lack of capabilities to understand the adoptee, for various reasons, and not having enough information about the adoptee's history, encourages the adoptee to instead turn to materiality that is tied to their adoption for answers, to find out more about their pre-adoption life.

Similar to chapter 4, I will offer three different subheadings to show adoptees nuanced experiences of their usage of materiality. Firstly, the adoptee's emphasis on the importance of having correct documentation to explain both the accuracy of their adoption and their medical background. Secondly, discuss the importance of photos of the adoptee as a baby and of their biological family. Lastly, I will be examining how clothes, or other items that were brought up during the interview, were used as a tool to vocalize their personal history through reflections of their pre- and post-adoption lives. All these themes are meant to showcase the complexity of the adoptee experience in Sweden through the difference in how materiality is used.

5.1 Documentation

Sophia told me that she has two binders with documentation about her adoption, which is where her parents kept all the documents from their time preparing for Sophia's arrival and when they picked her up. However, at times, reading the adoption files can be difficult since it depicts the condition in which Sophia was in when she was adopted, which portrays her as someone who was both physically and materially abandoned. Darnell et al. (2016) explains this idea of understanding the adoptees identity through their adoption history, which helps to bridge pre- and post- adoption lives, "the adoptees' history and identity exploration was always couched in their 'adoption story,' which appeared as a primary link to the past." (2016: 160). As a result of Sophia's parents keeping documentation, Sophia has the option to revisit parts of her pre-adoption life through documentation, and Sophia is able to understand more about her adoption history. Using the example above, I argue that the concept of re-visiting her pre-adoption life uses the documentation as a form of obligatory passage point (Walton, 2013) where Sophia is able to pass through the documentation into her life before she was adopted to better understand herself. This was also a way for Sophia's parents to learn about who she was before being adopted.

Sophia also believes that the documentation about her adoption acts as a component that helps her find comfort in how the process of the adoption took place. Some of the documents show the many steps her family had to take in order to showcase that they were giving Sophia a good home. Despite having a well-documented record to show the accuracy of her adoption, Sophia still had limited information about her biological family, but to her, this did not matter since she had no interest in trying to find her biological parents. Another person that also finds comfort in her documentation as a way to show the legitimacy of her adoption was Emma.

Emma told me that even though she doesn't have information about her biological parents, she does have her adoption case, which she went through and looked at a few months ago, as of the writing of this thesis. The documentation included information about her adoptive parents' legitimacy for adopting Emma. Again, in similar fashion to Sophia, Emma is using the documentation to both learn about her pre-adoption life, but also to get answers that her adoptive parents were unable to give her due to lack of knowledge about Emma's past. Emma also told me that she has no additional information about her birth parents, which she thinks is a reason as to why she has no interest in finding them. I think that Emma's relationship with her documentation exemplifies the distribution of agency Latour (1994) speaks of since

Emma's actions are affected by the information about her past, which is a reason for her lack of striving towards finding her biological parents. In contrast to Emma, Jennie did have a lot of documentation about her adoption and felt more encouraged to return to her birth country in search for her roots, again displaying nuances of how distribution of agency affects the adoptee's usage of materiality differently.

In contrast to Sophia and Emma, is Jennie, who does have a lot of documentation and decided to return to her country of origin in pursuit of her biological family. Other than toys from Sri Lanka, which has been with her from day one in different aspects, Jennie also values her documentation as it became crucial when searching for her roots. Jennie told me that the lack of accuracy within the documentation, such as the missing of Jennie's biological mother's date of birth, made the search of finding her biological mother more troublesome. However, upon returning to Sri Lanka and visiting the orphanage Jennie spent time in before being adopted, she was able to obtain all of the documents that were left there, and she was able to locate her biological family. We see here how the information in the documents encouraged Jennie to travel to her country of origin, which I believe strengthens the argument that materiality bridges pre- and post-adoption lives, and also how documentation opens up a world for those around Jennie, showcasing the documentation as a form of obligatory passage point (Walton, 2013). I also believe since we see Jennie act on the embedded information in her material, it displays the shared agency between human and material spoken of in Latour (1994).

Another of the participants that felt deeply connected to her documentation was Padmaja, especially in terms of understanding her medical history. When Padmaja was supposed to first be adopted, the process got delayed. The practice was eventually carried out, and one of the reasons as to why the process was sped up was due to the health complications of Padmaja. According to her documents, Padmaja was sick, and she needed to be adopted to a family in a country that was able to nurture her back to health. However, Padmaja has come to realize that certain information in the adoption papers may not actually be true, we know this to be something that deeply affects adoptees. According to Lord (2018), "for some adoptees this sense of loss [of medical history] never goes away and leaves them [the adoptee] with an incomplete identity" (2018: 143). In her documentation, it says that Padmaja had sepsis, a broken collarbone, and malaria at a young age, "surviving all of that makes me feel like a miracle child," she told me. Padmaja's adoptive mother did confirm that she was traveling

with pills when they adopted her, which she thinks adds some legitimacy both to explain why the adoption commenced and why Padmaja is struggling with health complications today.

Not only is Padmaja uncertain about her medical history, but she doesn't know whether her date of birth is correct either, which again shows the effect that the information in her documentation has on her. According to Darnell et al. (2016), not knowing when your birthday is could have varying consequences for the adoptee since "birthdays were rites of passages that were celebrated and embraced by many […but] for some adoptees […] birthdays brought heartache (2016: 160-161). As such, both the lack of medical history and knowledge about her birthday are two major factors that affects Padmaja's post-adoption life. Therefore, Padmaja is heavily influenced on what the documentation tells her, which much like Jennie and Emma, I argue displays the agency that is embedded in the material (Latour, 1994). Although, lack of a medical record is not only relevant for the adoptee themselves, but it also becomes crucial for the adoptee's children, as I will show in this next narrative.

Sarah believes that she has done a complete 180 degrees turn on how she treats her children, in comparison to how her adoptive parents raised her, and therefore, Sarah has established a strong foundation of physical and emotional attachment towards her children. It became particularly important for Sarah to do so, and to know more about her medical history, when her son got a stroke. I believe the lack of medical records, much like Padmaja, as emphasized in the literature by Darnell et al. (2016) and Lord (2018), makes Sarah more reliant on her documentation to explain why this happened to her son. I also make the case that the emotional and physical responses towards her children, based on what her documentation can tell her about her medical background, showcases the agency embedded in the material (Latour, 1994). Furthermore, even before having her own children, Sarah used materiality in different ways, which again displays what Anthais (2008) says about how context, time, and space affects the identity of the adoptee. Putting Padmaja and Sarah in juxtaposition to each other, and comparing their experiences, shows the complexities and depth embedded in their narratives of how they use materiality differently in relation to medical history.

Another example of displaying how materiality is used as an obligatory passage point with embedded agency is shown through the poor relationship that Sarah has with her adoptive family, due to their unresponsiveness when Sarah was trying to find her biological family. Sarah's family were not able to offer any insight about her past, and she therefore turned to

her friend who went back to Taiwan and brought Sarah's adoptive documents with her in an attempt to get help finding her biological relatives. A social secretary sent an email to Sarah and told her that they found her biological mother, which propelled Sarah into taking a DNA test to confirm if there was a match. However, due to not yielding any accurate results, Sarah decided to travel to Taiwan to take two more DNA tests at a police station, both to confirm the legitimacy of the adoption and to see if this woman was her biological mother, which she was not.

When returning to Taiwan, Sarah met the woman who they thought was her biological mother, and the woman's family has on multiple occasions made efforts to make Sarah feel included in their family despite the lack of blood connection. Sarah, and those that she met, has had their worlds expanded and intertwined through the interaction of the documentation, which I believe again exemplifies both the obligatory passage point embedded within materiality (Walton, 2013) and the idea of agency (Latour, 1994), showcasing how Sarah uses materiality in a unique way. Another person in this thesis that has had a difficult relationship with their adoptive family and who is looking to establish new forms of kinship relationships through gathering more accurate knowledge about her documentation is Linnea.

Roughly, a little more than a year ago, Linnea was given her adoption case, which she knows has a lot of misinformation about her origin, and while we sat down for the interview, I engaged with Linnea and her documentation, using her adoption case as a form of object elicitation, which allowed me to better understand her adoption history (Pink, 2015). Through the mutual sharing of documentation, it allowed me to co-participate, as I was invited into Linnea's pre-adoption life through the embedded information of her documentation.

Linnea showed me the documentation with much of the information hidden, which made her angry, feeling herself robbed of her origin. I believe Darnell et al. (2016), explains this well when they were referencing one of their participants in their research that mirrors Linnea's feelings, "she looked back to the beginnings of her life and not knowing her past, which can trigger present events. In this case, it was not having a birth certificate, name, or date of birth, thus leaving more questions unanswered" (2016: 160). Other than some inaccurate information about her past and cover-up text, Linnea was given a short narrative of why she was adopted, which she knows isn't all true either. Even the names on the documentation, which she thought were her biological parents, are false.

Linnea, similar to Padmaja, believes that not having accurate information about her past and not knowing her medical history, was extremely damaging especially when her daughter had to go to the hospital and Linnea was asked about the medical history of her family. This is something we see adoptees struggle with and brought up by a participant in Lord (2018), "even then, his search for biological genetic information was instigated by his wife to provide health information for their own biological children" (2018: 146). The genetic composition of the adoptee doesn't end at their birth, but it is something that they carry with them for future generations, and not having that is seen to cause much damage to the adoptee and those around them. The lack of information about her adoption, has made Linnea wanting to find her biological family, which much like in the cases of Jennie and Sarah, displays agency embedded into materiality shown by (Latour, 1994).

In section 5.1 I have shown how adoptees turn to their documentation to get answers. I have presented differences in the responses to the embedded information in the adoptee's documentation. For example, Emma, who did not have much information decided not to pursue and look for her biological family, neither did Sophia, although she had a lot of information. Meanwhile, Linnea, who had some information, decided to search for her biological kin. I believe these variations of the adoptee experiences further displays the nuances that exist within the adult Swedish adoption demographic. I have also shown that some materiality is used to get a richer understanding about the adoptee's medical background in order to explain the adoptee's present and future, like with Padmaja, who uses her materiality to understand her everyday life when living with medical complications. On the other hand, Linnea and Sarah are both using their documentation of medical background to understand why their children were hospitalized, which we see is common among adoptees that are parents (Lord, 2018: 144-146).

5.2 Photos

Materiality takes many different forms, in this upcoming section I will be discussing the importance of photos, and how they too can be viewed as an obligatory passage point. It was the adoptees who were parents that spent most time reflecting on the importance of photos, which I would argue is tied to the feeling of loss that is being amplified since they don't want their child/children to be robbed of the same origin as they were. By having photos of themselves before the adoption, it would both help bridge the pre- and post- adoption worlds and allow adoptees to compare the appearance between themselves as young and their child/children, strengthening the bond between parent and child.

Linnea has had a suspicious feeling that she was adopted ever since she was young, and one of the reasons as to why is because of the lack of photos of herself as a baby, which is why she felt an incredible joy when she received a photo of herself. Linnea told me that she also recently found a photo of her biological mother, and now, when Linnea looks at herself in the mirror, she sees her children, she sees her ancestors and their heritage, this form of ancestral history and its impact on identity is supported by Wulff (2005). Linnea does accredit a lot of who she is to her genetic composition.

Another example of how photos played an important role in bridging Linnea's pre- and post-adoption lives, was when Linnea first started searching for her biological family. Her documents took her on a wild goose chase where she ended up finding what she thought was her biological father, although it was not. Linnea told me that the name that her documentation showed was the wrong person. Instead, the name that was written on the documentation was another man that Linnea's biological mother had dated after her and the biological father had broken up. The person that Linnea first looked up was someone by the name of "Johnsson," whose name was on the adoption documents. It also said that "Johnsson" had kept a photo of Linnea as a baby, which she eventually did receive. What Linnea also found out was that her biological father did not even know that Linnea existed.

Receiving the photo from "Johnsson" was important for her since she grew up not surrounded by any photos of herself as a baby. I believe that Darnell et al. (2016) says it well in reference to one of their participants making the statement that uncertainty about your past fills the adoptee with more questions and frustration about their life today (2016: 160). Therefore, finding the photo does strengthen Linnea's adoption identity. As such, the hidden background

of Linnea has shown itself damaging, not only to her, but also to those that were involved in the lies by her adoptive mother. This again showcases what Darnell et al (2016) and Docan-Morgan (2010) has exemplified in their studies on how lack of personal history and poor adoptive family communication greatly affects the adoptee. Seeing the photo of herself as a baby has brought great joy and peace to Linnea's life, resolving some of the damage done by her adoptive mother. I would argue that the photo also works as an obligatory passage point since it does involve a network of other actors, such as "Johnsson" and their family.

Some overlapping similarities can be seen between Linnea and Sarah. Sarah told me that in her home she has Taiwanese tattoo writings and pieces of cloth as decorations, which according to Galvin (2003) does help strengthen the adoptee's identity through incorporating materiality from the adoptee's country of origin. Furthermore, Sarah told me that she at times receives questions about what would happen if she found her biological parents, "would you be whole then?". Sarah thinks that it would help her feel more whole if she gets a photo of her biological family, but that she can never be fully whole even if she was able to meet her biological parents. "Just meeting them is a part of being whole," she says.

The last person who highlighted the importance of having a photo was Jennie, and through object elicitation methodology (Pink, 2015) I was able to encourage Jennie to dwell deeper into reflecting on what the photo of her biological kin has meant to her. Jennie elaborated on her feelings and thoughts that stems from this photo and how it represents Jennie's curiosity about what her biological mother might have gone through in order to give Jennie up for adoption. Jennie has tried to put herself in her biological mother's position, and never blamed her for giving Jennie up for adoption. Instead, Jennie had the urge to travel back to Sri Lanka and find the biological mother and let her know not to feel any guilt. "It is a piece of me in an image," Jennie described her photo as.

In the cases with Linnea, Sarah, and Jennie, all have had difficult relationships with their adoptive family, but still have varying experiences when reflecting on the importance of having photos of themselves or their biological family. Obtaining photos to observe the genetic similarities between the adoptee and their biological parents, and to connect it with the adoptee's biological child, ties well together with understanding adoption history. The photos offer an invitation for the adoptee and those around them to travel backwards and forwards in time, comparing the adoptee to their biological parents and seeing the similarities between

themselves and their child in the pursuit of understanding and crafting their history (Wulff, 2005) in relation to strengthen identity (Darnell et al., 2016).

5.3 Clothes/Other Items

This section is using materiality in a slightly different way than what previous sections have explored. For example, materiality is still used as a bridge to connect the adoptee to a life before their adoption, however, materiality such as cloths and other items are also used as a form of object elicitation to aid the adoptees in a telling of their adoption history. I want to again offer a personal narrative; I was recently given the blanket that I was wrapped in the first time my adoptive parents met me. As I touch the blanket, feel it, smell it, and look at it, I feel it being embedded with history from a time before I was adopted, and materiality helps me explore and vocalize these feelings and thoughts.

Object elicitation, according to Pink (2015), is an ethnographic method that helps the anthropologist learn about the experiences from the participant. Not only did I use that method to gather information for this thesis, but I was also watching how my participants used the same methodology in their own right, much like myself and the blanket, to bring forth feelings and thoughts about their past and learn how to vocalize these experiences. (Pink, 2015). For example, Emma told me that when she came to Sweden, she carried with her the clothes that she used from the orphanage she stayed at before she was adopted. She also has a golden colored coin which reads her name at the orphanage and an image of the orphanage itself carved into it. The coin is at her home and she thinks that if it disappeared, she would be sad even though there isn't a strong emotional attachment to it. I believe that regardless of whether Emma does use the clothes or the coin as strong identity building material, it still has other properties, and it is through this sort of object elicitation that allowed Emma to elaborate on parts of her adoption history, which according to Darnell et al. (2016) effects the adoptee's identity. On the other hand, we see in the case of Julia, video recordings and a doll became different forms of materials that carried other variants of embedded properties.

Julia told me she has a doll with black hair that her adoptive grandmother gave to her, a Korean flag, a Korean national dress that hangs in her dresser, and a special adoption box. The box included recordings her parents made when they adopted her and is important to her since it helps Julia connect with her past. To reiterate, Darnell et al. (2016) who puts an

emphasis on how the crafting of identity is highly dependent on the adoptees ability to learn about their history, "the adoptees' history and identity exploration was always couched in their 'adoption story,' which appeared as a primary link to the past" (2016: 160). I will therefore make the case that Julia is able to use her Korean box, and other material, to learn about her history through object elicitation where she is able to vocalize and connect to her past.

Julia is thrilled that she has multiple items that she can turn to for a connection to her pre-adoption life. For example, she is able to watch video recordings that her adoptive parents have where she is shown glimpses into the orphanage she was adopted from, which are important videos as it displays who she was before she became her adoptive parents' daughter. On the other hand, she is still aware that she has to take the information about her past with a bit of caution since she couldn't be sure what information was fabricated and what was true. This struggle of whether the information is accurate or not is also felt by Padmaja and Linnea, which seems to be something adoptees struggle with. Here, I again turn to the work done by Lord (2018), who elaborates on what a loss of culture and biological family does to the adoptee, "I think it's fair to say that international adoptees know loss. We have lost our native languages, our culture, and our first families" (2018: 147). Therefore, it is important for adoptees to get as much accurate information as possible about their adoption history due to their loss of native language, culture, and first families. Materiality in itself offers a plethora of usage for adoptees to help craft their adoption identity, however, what is embedded in the material itself doesn't always offer an accurate representation of the adoptee's past, but it does offer a way to vocalize and speak about their adoption.

What section 5.3 has shown is that materiality helps bridging the pre- and post-adoption life. Adoptees have used their materiality as a form of object elicitation to help them talk about their adoption experience (Pink, 2015).

I have in this chapter brought up different experiences when the adoptee uses materiality such as: documentation, photos, clothes and more. I have discussed how materials help bridge the adoptee's pre- and post-adoption lives in order to strengthen their adoption identity by learning about their adoption history, which is referenced by the work of Darnell et al. (2016). One way of exploring the adoptee's history was by turning to their documentation to find out more about their medical background (Lord, 2018), as we saw in the narratives with Padmaja,

Sarah, and Linnea. Others used their documentation to find comfort reading about their pre-adoption life as it gives them relief in the accuracy of their adoption, like we saw with Emma and Sophia.

Documentation has also displayed its ability to be an obligatory passage point (Walton, 2013), which has impacted, both in a positive and a damaging way, the adoptee and those around them, as I showed in the narrative of Linnea. Furthermore, materiality is also used through items such as photos allowing the adoptees that were parents to see their ancestral lineage and strengthen their bond with their own child/children. I have also shown how clothes and other items are used to help the adoptee vocalize and to tell their adoption history through stories, which is done through a form of object elicitation (Pink, 2015). Lastly, I have also shown how the distribution of agency of materiality, as mentioned in Latour (1994), affects adoptees in varying degrees where they felt encouraged to act. For example, we saw in the case with Sarah who both took DNA tests and traveled to Taiwan based on the information that her documentation contained.

In the last empirical chapter, I will be discussing how adoptees perform exploration activities to find resolve through strengthening their ethnic identity (Brocious, 2017). The adoptee is doing so through reflection on their relationship to their country of origin. Some adoptees have had the chance to travel back and meet their biological family, while other adoptees are content with not traveling back.

6. Returning

In this last chapter I will be discussing adoptee's experiences of how they strengthen their ethnic identity through exploration activities to find resolve in relation to their birth country. This chapter will include experiences of physically returning to their country of origin, reflections, looking for and/or meeting biological relatives, learning the language from their birth country, general feelings towards the idea of returning, and more.

Some adoptees have more or less aspirations and/or opportunities of returning to their birth country, and I am bringing this up to show nuances of experiences. I am arguing that the adoptee's idea of feeling whole in relation to their birth country can be obtained through the performances of exploration activities, which according to Brocious (2017) are behaviors that connect the adoptee with their country of origin that strengthens their ethnic identity. Much like the other empirical chapters, I will divide this chapter into three different subheadings. Firstly, I will discuss the exploration activity of preparing to return, which could take the form of learning the language of their country of origin and getting their documentation in order. Secondly, I will discuss the exploration activity based on the adoptee's time spent in their birth country, either through physically visiting or through other means. Lastly, I will discuss the exploration activity of imagining, which brings forth the adoptee's thoughts about their birth country.

Brocious (2017) explains how the adoptees ethnic identity is crafted through exploration activities that brings them resolve, "as adoption practitioners continue to recommend and refer families of transnational adoptees to exploration activities, these findings that prioritized birth country language learning, birth country travel, and on-going relationships with other adoptees may be useful" (2017: 331). I will argue that Brocious's (2017) theoretical concept of exploration activities can be utilized through cultural keeping (Shin, 2013), which was introduced earlier in this thesis. This form of cultural keeping is different than what was discussed in chapter 4, which was cultural keeping through socialization by the parents and fictive kinship. On the other hand, in this chapter, cultural keeping is instead carried out by the adoptee's own accords. I will also connect Lord's (2018) study on the importance of finding answers about the adoptee's past. This is a slightly different take than what chapter 5 showed, where the focus was on understanding the medical history, while in this chapter the adoptee is using exploration activities to learn about their ancestral and ethnic history.

6.1 Preparation to Return

I am revisiting the story of Julia, as I intend to present her experiences preparing to travel back to her birth country as forms exploration activities. Julia's interest in participating in a Korean language course came from her aspirations of wanting to find her biological roots, and therefore learning the language was a way for Julia to prepare herself for a potential trip back to Korea. As brought up earlier in the thesis, loss of language and personal history is something that adoptees often grieve (Lord, 2018; Darnell et al., 2016), and in order to resolve this feeling of loss, Julia, like other adoptees, tries to find resolve through different forms of engagement with their birth country. According to Shin (2013), cultural keeping "is aimed to complement the adoptees negotiation of identity […] Culture keeping may involve […] visiting the birth country" (Shin, 2013: 163). I argue that Julia's actions of attending language classes and aiming to return to her birth country are forms of exploration activities manifested in cultural keeping behaviors.

I asked Julia whether it was enough with the course that she is currently taking about Korean culture and language in order to prepare for a trip back. She told me that her biggest dream was to establish a relationship with her Korean family, and therefore, learning Korean was an important step in order to make that happen. She continued by saying that "it depends on the type of relationship that I manage to establish with my biological mom, and if it is a strong connection, I am willing to dive deeper to learn more." Julia has high expectations and is curious of what will happen to her when she returns to Korea since she believes that there is one piece missing inside of her, which can be resolved when she arrives back. This piece that Julia is talking about, I would argue, is tied to her ethnic identity that she believes can be resolved once she returns, which is supported by Brocious (2017: 331). Furthermore, Julia has already made steps towards this resolve in Sweden, which I will discuss in section 6.2. Therefore, I believe this is grounds for making the case in favor of the contextual fluidity of identity crafting over the course of life explored by Anthais (2008). I also argue that ethnic identity isn't just tied to the geographically arbitrary borders of the birth country, but ethnic identity can be strengthened from anywhere. In contrast to Julia, Jennie did not learn the language of her country of origin before returning to Sri Lanka, which shows that ethnic identity can be strengthened differently.

Before deciding to return to Sri Lanka, Jennie had spent four years prior searching for her roots by going through her documentation. Thankfully, she had a friend from her birth country who was able to connect Jennie to a married couple from Sri Lanka who was about to visit Sweden, and when Jennie and the couple were out for *fika*, Jennie told them that she was searching for her roots. Touched by her story, the wife went out of her way and began to look for people that could help Jennie. Fortunately, they were able to find one of the sisters that worked at the Catholic orphanage where Jennie was from, and Jennie was asked to travel to the orphanage. In 2014, Jennie and her ex-husband, went to visit Sri Lanka in hopes of finding her biological mother, and in less than 24 hours upon arriving, Jennie was given the address to her biological mother and found her. Not only that, but afterwards, Jennie's biological father arrived only moments after to meet Jennie. This was a shock for her since the narrative about her adoption history was that the biological father had abandoned the biological mother, implying that he did not want to be present in their lives.

What I have shown so far are two different experiences of resolve through exploration activities as a way to strengthen their ethnic identity (Brocious, 2017). Through the narrative of Julia, I have shown how language courses are used to better prepare her for returning to her country of origin. On the other hand, with Jennie, I displayed her experience of returning to her birth country and meeting her biological kin. I am also arguing that learning the language of the adoptee's country of origin is a way to compensate for the grief of the loss of personal history mentioned by Lord (2018). According to Lord (2018), this sort of grief over loss of history was explained by one participant in their research, "her analogy of being a complicated and unfinished puzzle is an excellent illustration of the loss or incompleteness that adoptees experience […] It is difficult to feel like a whole person when there are so many unknowns and so many integral parts of you that are missing" (2018: 146-147). Therefore, participating in various exploration activities helps resolve many unknowns within the adoptee. This next section will further dive into different forms of exploration activities by discussing adoptee's time spent in their country of origin.

6.2 Time Spent in Country of Origin

Julia told me that the Adoption Center was able to arrange for her and her adoptive family to have a video call with Julia's biological mother. Julia explained that the video call was incredibly emotional and that her adoptive family could clearly see the similarities between Julia and her biological mother. Julia also recognized how similar she is with her biological mother and that there is no denying that they are related, and because of this video call, she feels more certain and ready to make a physical return trip.

Julia's adoptive family also emphasized the similarities between Julia and her biological mother based on their body language, how they act, and how they wiped their tears, "you [as in Julia and the biological mother] are identical," Julia told me. This experience was something that became extremely strong for Julia, to have the same essence as her biological mother, more than just the appearance. I believe that the encounter with her biological mother firmly displays a form of resolve which Brocious (2017) talks about in their work. Although, I argue that resolve is nuanced and even though it is embedded in the experience Julia had when meeting her biological mother, it can have a reversed effect should it not be met fully. Therefore, I will in this following section dive deeper into the layers of complexity of what this experience meant for Julia, and her reflections of it. This experience showcases the complexity of identity crafting, as mentioned in the introduction by Grotevant (1997: 4), which is unique for adoptees.

Even though her biological mother claimed that she wanted to stay in touch, Julia has yet to hear back from her again. This has been difficult for Julia, but she has come to terms and respects her biological mother's decision of not returning any of Julia's attempts of reaching out. With that said, Julia also acknowledges that not hearing back from her biological mother is something that triggers some of her previous trauma since she really wants to meet her biological mother and her biological grandmother. This is because Julia had a special relationship with her adoptive grandmother. One of the aspects that made the video call special was that Julia's biological mother told Julia that her biological grandmother has been praying for her every day since she got adopted. Hearing this made Julia cry rivers, and Julia felt something inside of her being resolved, and in that moment, she felt like her adoptive grandmother was with her. I believe that the resolve through the video call helped Julia heal a part of herself, but I also make the case of the complexity of what could happen should the adoptee's expectations not be met. In order to both reach a state of deeper resolve and to

compensate for the lack of engagement from her biological mother, Julia wants to return to Korea, and soon. Julia believes that if she goes back and gets rejected from her biological mother, at least she knows that she has done everything she can to establish a contact.

Taking an opposite path to Julia, Cia has a different experience when interacting with her biological mother. Cia has been traveling back to Ecuador multiple times and she also learned Spanish, which I have shown earlier in this chapter, is an exploration activity known by adoptees (Brocious, 2017). When Cia was younger, she wasn't interested in Ecuador and her focus was just on Sweden. However, one day, much like with Jennie, it "just came" to her and Cia wanted to return, "It felt like I had to travel today, now, now, this is very important to me," Cia told me.

Upon returning to Ecuador for the first time, before learning Spanish, Cia realized a few things, firstly that she can't communicate with the people there, and secondly, that she has two identities, two cultures, two languages, and she didn't like the fact that she can't speak one of the languages. Because of this, she decided to travel to Spain and study Spanish and she now feels whole, again showcasing what I argued earlier with Julia, that the strengthening of ethnic identity doesn't have to be in the birth country (Brocious, 2017). I would argue that much like Julia's idea of "feeling whole," through the learning to the native tongue and wanting to travel back to the country of origin, Cia too performs similar activities to find resolve, although the experiences of Cia and Julia are different. I argue that these differences further prove the importance of underscoring the nuances of the adult adoptee experience in Sweden.

I have used two different phenomenological experiences of Julia and Cia to answer three main questions posted by Brocious (2017), which are, "Is birth country travel essential for exploration? What is the role of birth country language learning? […] what [is] the right course of action is that will lead their adopted child to a healthy sense of self, one that incorporates resolved ethnic identity?" (2017: 322). Due to the contrast of experiences between Julia and Cia, exploration activities through language learning and returning to the birth country only offers a surface level answer of the understanding of the experience of the adoptee. Using individual narratives, and putting them next to each other, depicts important differences of how exploration activities are carried out. If we are leaving out important nuances and complexities that are embedded in the adoptee's personal lives, we would be left

with homogenous generalized conclusions that are insufficient, leaving much to be lost. Another example to show the nuances between Julia and Cia comes in the form of their wants of having a relationship with their biological mother.

Cia told me that it has been difficult to maintain contact with her biological mother since Cia thinks that she already has a mom, and it is more annoying than something positive having two mothers. When Cia returned the first couple of times to Ecuador, her biological mother felt that Cia was her child, but Cia did not reciprocate those feelings and instead felt that her biological mother was a complete stranger, "it has been more of a burden," she told me. In juxtaposition to Julia and Cia, I will in this next section show Jennie's narrative about her version of resolve through the relationship with her biological parents. Secondly, I will also be exploring another form of resolve, one that is rooted in the adoptee's adoption history. When I say adoption history, I am referring to the knowledge about why the adoption took place.

Jennie did not have a big interest in finding her biological family until the day that she gave birth to her first child. Jennie told me that when her child was born, she was calling out for her mom, but to her surprise, it was not her adoptive mom, but to her biological mother. This is when her urge to find her roots sprouted, which happened due to seeing the reflection of herself in her child and wanting to feel the same in relation to her biological mother.

Jennie knows that she has one older biological brother who is about 2-3 years older than her, and she has two younger siblings, which is something that she found out when she traveled back to Sri Lanka. When Jennie met her biological mother, Jennie was given her adoption history and what had happened to her in the early stages of her life. I want to remind the reader about what was discussed in in chapter 5, when referencing Lord (2018), about the difficulties of feeling whole when much of you is missing (2018: 146-147). Therefore, Jennie was able to eliminate many of the unknowns about her life and find resolve within herself that she felt was missing because she now had both met her biological mother and she has an understanding of why she was adopted.

The first thing that Jennie did after finding her biological mother was to visit the hospital where she was born. Furthermore, it turns out that the biological father heard the news about Jennie's return and decided to meet Jennie as well, which was a big shock for her since he has been absent in the narrative about Jennie's pre-adoption life. I asked Jennie how she felt about this experience, and Jennie told me that it felt like home. She explained to me that it was so obvious that she was her mother's child and told me about the first time they went out to eat and how the biological mother wanted to feed her, tie her shoes, and Jennie felt that her biological mother might have been more of a mom than her adoptive mom was.

I believe narratives like Julia's, Cia's, and Jennie's are important, to show nuances of the effects and how exploration activities look different when trying to find resolve through the strengthening of the adoptee's ethnic identity. It is key to show how the search for resolve to deal with loss of a relationship with biological kin, the loss of adoption history, and how the execution of cultural practices (Shin, 2013) manifest itself differently and on the adoptees own accord. What I have shown thus far is how activities such as meeting biological parents does strengthen the ethnic identity for some adoptees, but for others it does not. On the other hand, not all adoptees have the option or aspiration of meeting their biological parent/s, which is why this next section will be discussing Padmaja's experience and how she negotiated her ethnic identity in relation to her birth country.

When I asked Padmaja whether she felt more Swedish or Indian, she told me that it was not something that she has thought about, "I feel like I am in an in-between state […] being neither," and she says that it is highly contextual. This is an idea explored by Walton (2015) who puts an emphasis on contextual importance and merging of pre- and post- adoption identities, arguing there is a lived ambiguity that the adoptee experiences from the "moving" of identity borders, which causes uncertainty for adoptees (2015: 396). Walton (2015) argues that the embodied experiences of ambiguity are affecting the adoptee's identity crafting through a process of becoming, which is highly sensitive to the adoptee's interaction with the environment (Walton, 2015). Walton (2015) calls this, "an embodied subjective process" (2015: 395). With that said, Padmaja was still able to acknowledge a few instances where she felt more Swedish than Indian, which happened during her time in her birth country. Padmaja decided to travel back to India so that she could get in touch with her history, which we have seen argued by Lord (2018) and Brocious (2017) is important to strengthen the adoptee's identity. She felt that the history she was taught in school was not including her, but that it

was a history for Swedes. This was a conflicting feeling for her since even though she felt Swedish, she also didn't, making Padmaja feel both included and excluded at the same time.

Padmaja told me that she did feel Swedish on multiple occasions when she went back to India, even though the people she met looked like her. It was an astonishing experience to return, but at the same time, Padmaja knew that this wasn't her history either. Padmaja's experience again helps answer the question Brocious (2017) asked, "is birth country travel essential for exploration?" (2017: 322). In the case of Padmaja, I can only offer a wage "maybe" as an answer. Padmaja feels like she jumps between the two categories of Swedish and Indian, and that just being in her birth country isn't enough to strengthen her ethnic identity. On the other hand, Padmaja does feel especially connected to her history through food, "when eating Indian food, this is I," she says. This is supported by the work of Howell (2009) who states that, "thus, when you eat a food you are ... eating some of the […] vital essence of another person. Eating by this logic, relates people, making them kin" (Howell, 2009: 155). What Padmaja has depicted so far is that, even though she returned to her country of origin, her ethnic identity wasn't necessarily strengthened because of it, but it was instead strengthened by consuming Indian food in Sweden. I believe that this experience of Padmaja depicts a clear difference between her and Jennie.

Another instance where there was an attempt to strengthen Padmaja's ethnic identity was when she was invited to someone's home in India. However, this too did not strengthen her ethnic identity like she imagined it would. After spending some time in their home, Padmaja was given a bed to share with a girl that also lived there, and when waking up the next day Padmaja had gotten sick, which prompted her to stay at a hotel instead of at the home. Times like this makes Padmaja feel that there was a disconnect between the way people lived in India in comparison to Sweden, which made Padmaja feel particularly Swedish. Despite the generosity from the people she met, Padmaja felt that she did not want to stay there, which clearly indicated a dissonance, or a clash that is similar to the misinterpellations discussed in chapter 4, between her socialized upbringing and her birth country's culture. In contrast to Padmaja, Sarah did thoroughly enjoy staying with those that she met in her country of origin and took full advantage of the kindness of being shown around in Taiwan.

Sarah told me that she has been traveling back to Taiwan four times since 2017. Sarah was able to build a relationship with the woman that she thought was her biological mother and the woman's family, who all welcomed Sarah into their lives with open arms. I use Jacobson's (2008) idea of fictive kinship to describe this new form of relationship between Sarah and the woman and her family, which describes the idea that social bond is what is important and without that kinship is nothing (Leinweaver, 2018: 3).

I brought up this part of Sarah's narrative regarding her exploration activities to show how she strengthen her ethnic identity to find resolve throughout the establishing of a social bond through a fictive kinship with the people she met in Taiwan, which is a different experience in comparison to Cia, Jennie, and Padmaja. I would like to remind the reader what has already been discussed, Cia did find her biological mother, but did not want to have an interactive relationship with her, Jennie on the other hand, found, wanted, and was able to maintain a strong relationship with her biological family and got a narrative about her adoption history. Meanwhile, Padmaja thought that there would be a stronger sense of ethnic identity by being around those that looked like her, but that wasn't the case. Meanwhile, Sarah established a fictive kinship due to not being able to find her biological kin. For the last narrative, I will introduce Linnea again, and elaborate on her experiences of returning.

Linnea longed for a father since her adoptive father had stayed in the states when Linnea's adoptive mother had moved them both to Sweden. In order to accommodate for the missing parts, Linnea decided to travel back to the states and what became special for Linnea was how her daughter commented on Linnea's similarities with other people around her. To reiterate what argued earlier in this thesis by Lord (2018), this was a way for Linnea to accommodate for the missing pieces of her (2018: 146-147). This feeling of validation was something that strengthened Linnea's conviction that she wasn't strange or abnormal, and that much of her opinions that were frowned upon stemmed from being raised in an environment that wasn't beneficial for her. Where others, in Sweden, would have made her feel alienated, the US embraced her in a way and made Linnea feel at home.

Another instance where she elaborated on the resolve that she felt was from the first time she met her biological father. Linnea told me that her biological father knew that he was Linnea's dad even before the DNA test just from how she spoke. Linnea told me that it felt like they have known each other forever and this was the first time that Linnea has ever felt belonging, and now she can finally be who she is. She always felt American at heart, but there was a time when she felt that she should have abandoned her American citizenship to embrace her Swedish side. That was until she found out that she was adopted and instead decided to double down on the fact that she was American and become as distant as possible from her adoptive mother. I believe we see the properties of the "gone native" approach by Patton (2002) in Linnea's course of actions, where she is able to localize where Swedish and American begins and ends and gravitate herself towards her US belonging by recognizing healthy and positive views of what it means to be from the states (2002: 7). As a result of these experiences, Linnea is able to find resolve to questions about herself by returning to her birth country.

We have seen how different forms of exploration activities are being performed in nuanced ways by adoptees as a way to find resolve in relation to the adoptee's birth country. Adoptees have shown multiple ways of exploration activities through numerous practices, either by returning to their birth country, meeting their biological relatives, learning the language from their country of origin, and more. All these performances are meant to display nuances and to show that the adoptee demographic is diverse and complex. I have analyzed the narratives through varying theoretical frameworks, such as: Brocious (2017), Lord (2018), Patton (2002), Leinweaver (2018), Darnell et al. (2016), and others, to show that exploration activities happen in varying depths and is highly contextual and individual. For this last section, I will elaborate on adoptees' exploration activity to find resolve through their imagining of what returning to their country of origin would be like.

6.3 Imagining

I asked Julia what she feels returning to Korea would be like. Julia felt that after years of working through her traumas she is now more at peace with herself, and that it almost feels like she has opened up a space inside of her that now leaves room for her Korean identity to take place. If trying to return to her birth country earlier, it would not have given Julia the full sense of resolve that she was looking for; she was not ready to receive it. Instead, Julia had to first conduct exploration activities to help her heal and accept a part of herself, which she had been suppressing when she was younger. As such, exploration activities aren't necessarily the act of learning the birth language or returning to the country of origin (Brocious 2017), but instead, exploration activities to find resolve manifested itself in Julia's actions through therapy sessions, conversations with her adoptive family, with her friends, and others, in order to heal.

With that said, even though Julia is more prepared to return to Korea, she still believes that she will not fit in. She thinks that she will be reminded about what it was like when she was young, where she felt like an outsider and that it is obvious that she does not belong. However, Julia still hopes that returning to Korea will fill her with a feeling of "being home," but she is well aware that it could be difficult, especially returning for the first time. Although, as mentioned before, not all adoptees want to visit their country of origin.

Sophia was one of the participants who wasn't too keen on traveling back to her country of origin and finding her biological family. When I interviewed Sophia, she too had reflections on what it would be like to travel back to Chile. When I asked her if that was something that she wanted to do she told me that it would be interesting to be there just to experience it, to embrace the feeling of when the plane land, to breathe the air, and to place her feet on the ground, although she has no need of find her biological mother. She also believes that once those feelings are met through that experience of returning, they can't be replicated, which is why Sophia has postponed the return visit because she doesn't want the imagined experience to disappear.

Sophia had always felt that her adoptive family in Sweden was her family, so the need to find biological relatives didn't entertain her, and that she much rather let the idea of the relationship with her biological family be imaginative. Furthermore, Sophia does speculate on the possibilities of what may happen should she find her biological parents, would they want

to have a strong relationship or not with Sophia? What if they want to maintain contact? What expectations does that come with? These were but some of the questions that Sophia had, and because of that, Sophia said that she much rather avoids that potential situation all together. On the other hand, this doesn't mean that Sophia feels nothing for her biological parents, Sophia does feel gratitude towards them, and if anything, it would be enough to just let her biological parents know that Sophia has a great life where she is.

Sophia believes that the social bond that she has with her adoptive family replaces the need for a relationship with her biological family, which is echoing Leinaweaver's (2018) idea of social bond being more important than blood ties for establishing kin relations, and that the kinship structure she has is enough, which Jacobson (2008) is in support of. We see overlaps of the exploration activity of imagining between Julia and Sophia. Both of them imagined what it would be like returning, although Julia wanted to return and establish a relationship, but needed to find resolve elsewhere before returning. Meanwhile, Sophia found resolve through her adoptive family, and was at peace with herself and did not feel the need to return to her birth country to search for biological relatives.

In this last chapter, the participants gave me an opportunity to learn about their many reflections and experiences when deciding, or not deciding, to return to their country of origin as a form of cultural keeping (Shin, 2013). These cultural keeping actions are manifested exploration activities that are meant to be used by the adoptee to find resolve through the strengthening of their ethnic identity, as discussed by Brocious (2017). Some adoptees decided to work through their strengthening of ethnic identity by returning to their country of origin and finding their biological parents, some performed activities by imagining what it would be like from the comfort of their home, and others through learning the language from their birth country. I have shown how returning to the birth country has had varying effects on the adoptee. For example, we see in the case with Padmaja in juxtaposition to Sarah, that both of them returned to their country of origin but had starkly different experiences through their association with those that looked like them.

Others like Jennie and Cia were both able to return to their country of origin. However, Cia did learn her birth language and was able to find resolve through that but was not keen on establishing a close bond with her biological mother. Meanwhile, Jennie did not learn Sinhalese, but did find resolve through learning about her adoption history and building a

bond with her biological family. Again, what this chapter has showcased are nuanced experiences of how transnational and/or transracial adult adoptees in Sweden perform exploration activities in relation to their birth country.

7. Discussion & Concluding Remarks

Entering the final portion of my master's thesis, I would like to remind the reader about the purpose for this research, which was to display the vastness and complexity of the transnational and/or transracial adult adoptee experience in Sweden, and how these experiences are affecting the adoptee's crafting of identity. As presented in the chapter "theoretical frameworks," I have brought forth three different theoretical frameworks; belonging, body, and kinning, complemented with theoretical concepts on materiality, which I then used to analyze the different experiences of the eight adoptees.

I brought forth experiences through various anthropological methods to encourage the adoptees to share their experiences. I did so to showcase two things. Firstly, no one theoretical concept can suffice for displaying how identity crafting among adoptees commence due to their nuances and complexities, and secondly, to show that different themes and identities carry depth and cannot be viewed in a vacuum since they are intertwined with each other. As such, this thesis has looked at identity crafting more holistically, by incorporating multiple themes and theoretical frameworks to understand the adult adoptee experience in Sweden. Therefore, my contribution to the understanding of identity crafting among adoptees from an anthropological perspective is conjured through an emphasis of individual experiences to showcase nuances, complexity, and the concept of intersectionality, which stems from Anthais (2008) idea of translocational positionality. In other words, the thesis is written to display not only how identity is nuanced and complex, but also elastic, changing over time.

An obvious area that is missing from this thesis is of course a broader gender perspective of the adoptive experience, which was not possible due to the limitation of time. I believe that using my own position of knowledge, to encourage dialogue through the reflection on experiences, did manage to offer a comparative male perspective, albeit less explicit, embedded in the thesis.

I have shown how identity crafting has an embedded fluidity that isn't stagnant, which is instead both contextual and temporally affected, implying that identity isn't set in stone, but negotiated and crafted over time. The methodology that I used to carry out this research consisted of interviews where I would "follow the narrative," participant observation through "deep hanging out," home visits, and in-person activities. I also did digital ethnography through online activities, and lastly, I conducted sensory participation through auto-

ethnographic practices and object elicitation in order to co-participate with my participants to encourage them to share their experiences of being an adoptee.

The sample size used for this thesis carries importance, it is meant to showcase that even a smaller sample size can suffice for what I tried to do, which was to show how the vast nuances of the adult adoptee experience affects identity crafting. Put differently, what I have shown is that if we can see drastic nuances in a small sample size, then adding more adoptees should further prove my point that the adoptee demographic is not homogenous. The depths and complexity would further increase by including more participants, which I believe speaks volumes for how nuanced the adoptee experience is, and that these differences need to be heard.

Each empirical chapter has offered its own layers of depth through each of the narratives, which I then used the different theoretical frameworks to analyze. In chapter 4, "Misinterpellation," I introduced the idea of being interrupted, and how the adoptee was negotiating their Swedish identity through the clash between their socialized self and the environment's attitudes towards them. At times, the adoptees, like Sarah, who was raised to become Swedish through a "clean-break" process (Yngvesson, 2008) where her adoptive parents would remove all connection with her birth country. On the other hand, Emma, despite being socialized to be Swedish like her adoptive brother, found people around her that taught her about her ancestral and cultural heritage, which is known as fictive kinship (Jacobson, 2008). Meanwhile, in the narrative of Julia, who experienced what it was like to feel both like an insider and an outsider at the same time, emphasized her experience of learning how to perform certain behaviors when called upon, which shows the "going native" approach that was discussed by Patton (2002).

I then transitioned into chapter 5, titled "Materiality," where I offered adoptees experiences on how materiality, such as documentation, photos, clothes, and more, acts as a bridge between the adoptee's pre- and post- adoption lives, and I showed how adoptees uses their material differently as a way to strengthen their adoption identity through their adoption history. Padmaja used her materiality to better understand her present day medical condition by turning to the information embedded in her adoption case. Having accurate knowledge about the adoptee's medical history was a way to strengthen their adoption identity, which was argued by Lord (2018). Other participants like Linnea and Jennie, used their adoption

documentation to find out more about their adoption narrative, which according to Darnell et al. (2016) was important when trying to strengthen the adoptee's sense of identity. I also showed how adoptees shared a distribution of agency with the materiality and how humans and material engaged in a form of reciprocal relationship where they both affected each other, an idea borrowed from Latour (1994) and seen in the narratives of Sarah. Lastly, I also presented how the adoptee uses their materiality as a focal point where they are able to invite people around them to learn about the adoptee's past, which was an idea borrowed from Walton (2013) called "obligatory passage point."

In the last empirical chapter, chapter 6, titled "Returning," I introduced the idea of exploration activities in the form of cultural keeping as a method for strengthening the ethnic identity through resolve. It was brought forth by Brocious (2017) that adoptees try different forms of exploration activities such as returning to the country of origin and learning their birth language as methods to help strengthen their ethnic identity. In the example with Jennie, we saw that returning to her birth country and meeting her biological mother did help resolve a piece that she thought was missing. Meanwhile, Cia, who did not find the same resolve when meeting her biological mother, instead found it when she learned Spanish. On the other hand, Sophia had no interest in neither returning to her birth country nor to learn her mother tongue, and instead found resolve through the imagining of what returning would be like and being content with her adoptive family.

The participants' experiences have been the backbone of this thesis, and it cannot be underestimated the importance of letting their narratives be heard. Letting the adoptees' nuances guide this thesis has allowed for the adult adoptee experience in Sweden to display their complexities. As a result of that, this project is permitted to show the importance of intersectionality, which makes the view of the adoptee demographic more holistic. The thesis offers insights into complexities of relatedness regarding adoptees. I hope that sharing the results of my study through talks, presentations and lectures – to organizations such as *Adoptionscentrum*, MFoF, adoptees and their parents as well as others concerned parties interested in adoptees experiences – might evoke a greater awareness around the nuances and complexities of adoptees relatedness.

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