

Pathways to Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation in Adolescence and Emerging
Adulthood

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Dedication

To David

Abstract

This dissertation examined a proposed model of narrative adoptive identity formation with specified associations among age, gender, adoptive parents' facilitation of contact with children's birth relatives, conversation about adoption taking place in the adoptive family, adolescent and emerging adult current emotional expression about adoption, and adolescent and emerging adult narrative adoptive identity. Two waves of data were collected from 184 adoptive families; including adoptive mothers, adoptive fathers, and adoptees (mean age 15.68 years at adolescence and 24.95 years at emerging adulthood). The hypothesized structural model showed a good fit to sample data. Narrative adoptive identity was positively associated with both conversation about adoption and current emotional expression about adoption, sparked by meaningful adoption-related social interactions, specifically adoptive parents' facilitation of contact. Results suggest several elements are integral to adoption-related social interactions associated with narrative adoptive identity formation: (a) adoptive parents actively facilitate interactions, (b) interactions start when children are relatively young, and (c) interactions are emotionally meaningful to young people. Adoption professionals may be helpful in identifying social interactions that meet the diverse needs of youth in adoptive families. Future research should explore the ways adoptive parents integrate different types of adoption-related social interactions into daily family life.

keywords: adolescence, adoption, contact, emerging adulthood, emotion, identity, narrative

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Pathways to Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood

Identity formation lays a foundation for adult psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Steinberg, 2001). It is a time when young people reflect on and experiment with goals, values, and beliefs in order to develop a sense of self (Waterman, 1993). According to Ryan and Deci (2005) "...finding oneself within a social world has become among the most salient and difficult of life's challenges" (p. 254).

Young people who are adopted face the challenge of developing a sense of self as adopted persons. Grotevant (1997) refers to this developmental process as adoptive identity formation. During adolescence, in particular, young people begin to *reflect* on the meaning of being adopted and *integrate* their thoughts and experiences into coherent adoptive identity narratives (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000). Adoptive identity surfaces when adoptees reflect on what it means to be raised by adoptive parents while being genetically related to birth parents—particularly when birth parents are the primary source of prenatal, medical, and placement history and access to birth relatives, such as birth siblings. Adoptive identity also surfaces when adoptees manage family boundaries or competing loyalties; respond to public perceptions about adoption or contact with birth relatives; and interact with others about complex personal issues such searching as for birth relatives or birth parents' placement decisions.

Approximately 2.5% of young people in the U.S. are adopted, representing 3.8% of households with children (Kreider, 2003). At the same time nearly two-thirds of Americans report that a family member or close friend was adopted, had adopted, or

had placed a child for adoption (Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption with The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002). Taken together, these factors highlight the need to study adoptive identity formation from the perspective of young people within the context of their family relationships.

Age and Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

Adolescence through emerging adulthood, the latter of which begins in the late teens and extends through the 20s (Arnett, 2000; 2007), is proposed to be the salient developmental period for identity formation (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Erikson, 1968; Grotevant, 1993; McAdams, 1985; Marcia, 1980). In a comprehensive review of age-related changes in autobiographical reasoning, Habermas and Bluck (2000) demonstrated that the transition into adolescence is associated with increasing levels of narrative identity work. Age is, therefore, expected to be associated with narrative adoptive identity during adolescence. Specific social cognitive skills necessary to tell coherent identity narratives emerge in adolescence (i.e. the ability to sequence events; to make causal connections between events, actions, thoughts, and personal development; and to summarize, interpret, and create thematically rich stories). It is much less clear, however, whether age continues to play a differential role in identity formation during emerging adulthood. Studies have indicated that life and work experiences, in contrast to age differences, are associated with individual differences in emerging adulthood (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008).

Research on age and identity formation during emerging adulthood using identity status and narrative frameworks is mixed (see Lewis, 2003, for a review of age differences and identity statuses). Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, and Vollebergh (1999) found

that older college students had higher levels of identity exploration compared to younger, while van Hoof (1999) reported no substantive evidence of difference due to age. Using a life story approach, McAdams (2006) found that college seniors had higher levels of personal growth and narrative complexity in written guided narrative autobiographies compared to college freshman, but results were not statistically significant. McAdams (2006) and McLean and Pratt (2006) found that emerging adult narrative identity was associated with individual change over time, but it is not clear whether these results would extend to individual or rank order age differences.

The current study offers a unique opportunity to test whether older age confers developmental advantages in terms of narrative adoptive identity formation during emerging adulthood. There is significant age variation in the sample examined in this study (21 to 30 years). Further, Dunbar & Grotevant (2004) found significant age-related differences in the composition of adoptive identity narrative typologies during adolescence.

Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact and Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

Research has shown that parents' influence on child and adolescent outcomes is associated with parents' facilitation of children's social interactions outside of the family (Parke et al, 2003; Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989). Research has established associations between parents' facilitation of social interactions and children's academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes, particularly in the realms of education, peer relationships, religion, and neighborhood resources. Parents' involvement in children's social interactions has been associated with children's academic outcomes (Connors & Epstein, 1995), religious and community involvement and academic achievement (Elder

& Conger, 2000), and competence with peers (Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989). There have been few studies, however, that examine associations between parents' facilitation of children's social interactions and identity formation. Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin (2004; 2006) found that family ethnic socialization (FES) was significantly associated with ethnic identity formation in adolescents from Mexican-origin, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Salvadorian immigrant communities. The authors collected "overt" items, defined as deliberate or planned socialization, and "covert" items, defined as daily events that were unplanned, to create a measure of FES. FES included items related to parents' facilitation of social interactions outside the family, such as involving youth in ethnically specific social activities.

The current study is unique in examining whether adoptive parents' efforts to facilitate social interactions with birth relatives on behalf of their adolescent adopted children is associated with higher levels of narrative adoptive identity during adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Factors Linking Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact to Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

The fundamental premise of this study is that adoptive identity forms over time as adoptive parents facilitate social interactions meaningful to children, specifically adoptive parents' facilitation of contact with birth relatives, even when—and perhaps precisely because—such interactions are emotionally-charged.

Young people who have been adopted experience a range of emotions as a consequence of contact with birth family members. Grotevant et al. (2007) found that adolescents who had met their birthmothers reported feeling pleasure, happiness, or

contentment (27%); anxiety or apprehension (24%); and, joy, elation, or extreme happiness (14%) after the meetings. Research shows that emotional experiences generally lead to conversational sharing. People who experience emotions generally tell the story of their experiences to others, repeatedly, sharing them most often with family (Rimé 1995; Rimé 2007). In a research review, Rimé, Philippot, Mequita and Boca (1992) found that participants ($n = 913$) reported sharing well over 90 percent of the 1,384 emotional experiences reported, with no difference in the proportion of events shared based on age, gender, or the valence (positive or negative) of emotional experiences. Participants were asked to describe a specific type of emotional experience (e.g. joy, sadness) and to report how often they had talked about the experience with others. Results were replicated with daily diary (Rimé, Philippot, Finkenauer, Legast, Morrkesn, & Tornqvist, 1994) and experimental studies (Luminet, Bouts, Manstead, & Rimé, 1994; Rimé, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998).

Previous research (Neil, 2007; Wrobel, Kohler, Grotevant, & McRoy, 2003) suggests that contact, particularly face-to-face contact, and conversation about adoption are associated, but this has not been tested within the framework of a model of narrative adoptive identity formation. In a study of U.K. adoptive and birth families designed to better understand the interpersonal dynamics involved in different types of contact arrangements, Neil (2007) found:

...face-to-face meetings necessitated an open dialogue with the [adopted] child. Parents needed to talk to their child before and after meetings, and children's concrete experiences of their birth family often prompted them to ask more questions or open up discussion. (p. 12)

Conversation plays a critical role in narrative identity formation. Young people use conversation to reconstruct past events in order to develop a coherent sense of identity (Polkinghorne, 1988). McAdams (1990) refers to this process as the development of a sense of unity and purpose. Young people selectively “...recast the past in face of present and future—and future in face of past and present...in order to build their own theories...about the history and course of life...into a coherent historical unit” (p.168). Narrative identity formation involves telling coherent stories in order to create and communicate a sense of meaning and identity. People rehearse, recall, and invent information consistent with meaning and neglect or forget information that is inconsistent (Pasupathi, 2001; Riessman, 1993). By the time young people reach emerging adulthood, they are expected to be able to construct coherent identity narratives (Erikson, 1968; Habermas & Bluck, 2000).

Conversations about adoption between adoptive parents and their adopted children, sparked by emotions, are likely to be particularly important during adolescence, when adoptees are beginning to construct identity narratives (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1985). Through conversations with adoptive parents—conversations prompted by meaningful emotional experiences—young people should be better able to construct coherent adoptive identity narratives.

The experience of emotion motivates young people to engage in conversation and identity exploration, reshaping and expressing emotion along the way as a means of organizing identity narratives to convey meaning to the self and others (Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004). (See Lichtwarck-Aschoff, van Geert, Bosma, & Kunnen, 2008, for a review of research on emotion as a mechanism of identity formation.) Negative

emotions, such as feelings of conflict which result from mismatches between identity commitments and the environment (Bosma & Kunnen 2001; Kunnen, 2006) or between identity standards and dissonant feedback parents provide to adolescents (Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke 1997) have been shown to provoke identity formation. Also, diversity of emotional expression (Haviland & Goldston, 1992; Haviland & Kramer, 1991) and positive emotional expression, such as perceptions of one's competence and maturity experienced during daily encounters with friend and parents (Vleioras, Van Geert, and Bosma, 2007) are associated with identity formation. Ethnographic identity research suggests that emotions of all stripes "...provide a means by which a person is able to work toward self-knowledge" (Lupton, 1998, p. 22).

Research using affect theories, outside the mainstream of identity research, also demonstrates that positive feelings and purposeful positive emotional expression play a key role in processes integral to narrative identity formation.

...the presence of positive feelings has been found to cue positive material in memory, making access to such thoughts easier, and thus making it more likely that positive material will "come to mind" ...material in mind is organized and accessible in terms of its positive affective tone, and that people spontaneously use positive affect as a way to organize their thoughts...Thus the evidence indicates that...common positive feelings are fundamentally involved in cognitive organization and processing. (Isen, 2004, p. 418)

Using a "discrete emotions theory of personality" (Magai and McFadden, 1995; Tomkins, 1987), which proposes that on-going social relationships contribute to affective personality organization, Magai (1999) found that intense interpersonal

emotional social interactions, such as marriage, divorce, or death of a loved one, were associated with identity formation. McLean and Pratt (2006) found that expressions of optimism at age 19 was associated with more sophisticated forms of narrative (identity) meaning-making at age 23. Affect theorists have also shown that emotions lead to active identity exploration (Armstrong, 1973; Fridja, Manstead, & Bem, 2000).

Young people experience emotion as a consequence of contact with birth relatives, but there are other sources of emotion as well, such as adoption-related interactions with adoptive parents, romantic partners, and friends; community perceptions of adoption and media portrayals of adoption or adoptees (Miall & March, 2005); dealing with adoption-related medical or health issues (Perry, 2006); and interactions with institutions, such as adoption agencies, churches, schools, around adoption issues. The way young people interpret and give meaning to adoption-related emotional experiences and the way they label their emotions (e.g. joy, anxiety, elation, apprehension) changes as they share, reshape, and reinterpret them in conversation with parents and others (Bellelli, 1995). Reshaped emotions, in the form of current emotional expression about adoption, is integral to the interpretative process of narrative adoptive identity formation, serving as a tool to organize narrative and to convey the meaning of interpersonal experiences to others and to the self. As such, emotional expression should become increasingly associated with narrative identity as young people mature over time (Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004).

In summary, I propose that adoptive parents' facilitation of contact is associated with conversation about adoption. In turn, conversation about adoption is expected to be associated with adolescent narrative adoptive identity formation. Conversation about

adoption should also provide opportunities for young people to reflect on the meaning of emotions experienced primarily, but not exclusively, as a consequence of contact. Through conversation about adoption young people reshape emotions into current emotional expression about adoption. The meaning of emotions and events surrounding them are shaped as young people share their experiences with others, particularly with their adoptive parents. In turn, current emotional expression about adoption should help young people organize their adoption stories, leading to more coherent adoptive identity narratives; narratives that express their unique sense of meaning about the experience of being adopted persons (see Figure 1).

Narrative Adoptive Identity

Three dimensions of narrative adoptive identity are examined in the current study: two dimensions of *narrative coherence*, (a) internal consistency and (b) flexibility, and one dimension of *exploration*, (c) depth of adoptive identity exploration. These dimensions were drawn from two earlier-developed systems: the narrative coding system of the Family Narrative Consortium (Fiese, et al., 1999), and the coding system for assessing identity exploration (Grotevant & Cooper, 1981).

Narrative coherence refers to the *structure* of stories (Fiese & Sameroff, 1999). In the current study, adoption stories are personal stories, with unique individual themes, about the meaning and experience of adoption and being connected to adoptive and birth relatives. They contain descriptions of personal goals, beliefs, values, and significant life events related to adoption. Consistent with narrative identity research, the adoption stories in the current study were evaluated for internal consistency and flexibility. *Internally consistent narratives* contain examples and other structural tools

that support personal themes. *Flexible narratives* demonstrate perspective-taking. “As we formulate more mature life stories in early and later adulthood, we realize that other people have their own stories—both similar to and different from ours—that we live within a historical and social matrix with its own narrative parameters” (McAdams, 1990, p. 170). Narrative coherence provides a window into variation in individual identity development. Individuals whose adoption stories are more coherent are thought to be farther along in identity formation as compared to those with less coherent stories. Adoption stories are unique from individual to individual, but the structure shares common properties, such as narrative coherence. *Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration* in narrative indicates that a unique and personal sense of adoptive identity is developing over time. Coherence is evaluated in narrative identity studies (Singer, 2004). Identity exploration is evaluated in most identity status studies (Marcia, 1993). McLean & Pratt (2006) found convergence in these two approaches when comparing turning point stories for level of meaning-making to results from an identity status questionnaire. Individuals with a low level of exploration told life stories that lacked coherence or meaning.

In summary, this dissertation has three research goals.

- (a) Examine the association between age and narrative adoptive identity during emerging adulthood.
- (b) Test whether adoptive parents’ facilitation of contact with adoptees’ birth relatives during adolescence is positively associated with adolescent narrative adoptive identity, controlling for age and gender. Age and gender are expected to be associated with identity formation during adolescence.

(c) Evaluate the proposed model of narrative adoptive identity formation (see Figure 1). Conversation about adoption in the past year and adolescent current emotional expression about adoption are proposed to account for the proposed association between adoptive parents' facilitation of contact and adolescent narrative adoptive identity. In addition, the association between current emotional expression about adoption and narrative adoptive identity should grow stronger as identity forms over time so the strength of the association should be greater during emerging adulthood compared to adolescence (model 4). Finally, two alternative models with cross-lag paths are tested. First, adolescent current emotional expression about adoption is evaluated as a predictor of emerging adult adoptive identity (model 5). Second, adolescent adoptive identity is evaluated as a predictor of emerging adult current emotional expression about adoption (model 6).

METHODS

Participants

The sample consists of 184 adoptive families participating in Waves 2 and 3 of the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998). At Wave 1, 190 adoptive families participated in MTARP. Six families were excluded from these analyses because adoptees in those families did not participate at Waves 2 and 3. At Wave 1, adoptive families were recruited through 35 adoption agencies located in all regions of the U.S. Adoption agencies received training on how to randomly sample target adopted children in families with varying levels of contact between adoptive and birth family members. Target children met the following criteria: (a) adoptees were

between four and twelve years old, (b) the adoption took place before the adoptee's first birthday, (c) the adoptive parents remained married post-adoption, and (d) the adoption had not been international, transracial or "special needs." Wave 2 data were collected between 1995 and 2000. Wave 3 data were collected between 2006 and 2007.

At Wave 1 adoptees were 4 to 12 years of age ($M = 7.8$ years), at Wave 2 they were 11 to 20 years of age ($M = 15.68$ years), and at Wave 3 they were 21 to 30 years of age ($M = 24.95$ years). There were 96 males and 88 females. The children were placed for adoption at a mean age of four weeks and a median age of two weeks. Ninety-five percent were placed within 12 weeks. Approximately 20% of adoptees participating at Wave 3 were married. Most (75%) lived in their own place and paid all or the majority of their housing expenses. About half (52%) had at most a high school diploma or GED, 14% had at most an AA degree, 30% had at most a bachelor's degree, and 4% had an advanced degree. One-third was attending school full or part time. Four percent had served or were serving in the military.

Adoptive parents were White (97%) and Catholic or Protestant (93%). Three-quarters of adoptive families reported family incomes of \$50,000 or more at Wave 2. Adoptive mothers' mean age was 47 ($SD = 3.51$) and adoptive fathers' mean age was 49 ($SD = 3.74$) at Wave 2. Almost all adoptive parents had completed high school, and a majority had completed college. All adoptive parents were married at Wave 1. By Wave 2, 11 adoptive couples had divorced or separated, and three were widowed.

Procedures

At Waves 1 and 2, family members were interviewed separately in their homes for three to five hours, where they also signed consent forms and completed

questionnaires. Interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy. Procedures at Waves 1 & 2 have been published in detail elsewhere (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998; Grotevant, Perry, & McRoy, 2005).

At Wave 3, a secure online data collection system was designed for the emerging adult participants. Each participant was assigned a unique user name and password allowing access to a secure interactive online menu. Individualized menus made it possible for participants to easily locate and navigate the consent process, interviews, and questionnaires. Interviewers scheduled the first online interview by telephone or email. Interviewers “met” participants online for two or three confidential secure interviews (chats) lasting one to three hours each. After completing all interviews, a participant was given access to the first questionnaire through the individualized menu. As each questionnaire was completed the next questionnaire automatically became available until all 11 questionnaires were completed. Participants were compensated \$75 for completing interviews and \$75 for completing questionnaires. The University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board approved consent procedures, including online data collection procedures. Thirty (18%) emerging adults completed telephone interviews rather than online chats. Reasons stated included lack of internet access, discomfort communicating in an electronic format, and lack of time. Eighteen participants completed questionnaires using a paper format rather than online.

Demographic Variables

The Wave 2 Adoptive Parent Demographic Questionnaire included questions about age, education, occupation, income, ethnicity, religion, and family composition.

The Wave 2 Adolescent and Wave 3 Emerging Adult Demographic Questionnaires included questions about living arrangements, relationships, and work and school history.

Interview Coding Process for Narrative Adoptive Identity and Current Emotional Expression about Adoption

Dimensions of narrative adoptive identity and current emotional expression about adoption were rated from the Adoption sections of the Wave 2 adolescent and Wave 3 emerging adult interviews. The interviews elicited discussion of the participant's experiences, feelings, knowledge and attitudes about his or her adoption, adoptive identity, adoptive family situation, birth parents, and issues specific to the level of contact in his or her adoption. Interview questions at Waves 2 and 3 were very similar, but Wave 3 questions were revised to reflect the experiences of emerging adults as compared to adolescents.

Coding required a moderate to high level of inference, depending on the dimension. Coders assessed all assigned interview material before choosing codes. Coders were graduate students in family social science with backgrounds in adoption studies. Coder training involved group sessions plus individual homework. Weekly coder training meetings were used to: (a) maintain coder adherence to coder manuals, (b) reinforce training, and (c) ensure consensus meetings were performed on a timely basis. Reliability was monitored throughout the coding process using percent exact agreement. Coders were required to attain 80 percent agreement or better on at least two criterion transcripts before coding independently. Coders assigned codes and resolved differences using the Manual for Coding Identity in Adopted Adolescents (Grotevant,

Dunbar, and Kohler, 1999) at Wave 2 and the Manual for Coding Adoptive Identity in Emerging Adults (Von Korff, Grotevant & Friese, 2007) at Wave 3. See the Appendix for a copy of the Wave 3 Manual and additional procedures used in its development.

At Wave 2, all interviews were coded independently by two coders (weighted kappas ranged from $\kappa_w = .46$ to $\kappa_w = .60$). At Wave 3, 40% of interviews were coded independently by two coders (weighted kappas ranged from $\kappa_w = .68$ to $\kappa_w = .78$). Kappa coefficients of .41 to .60 are considered moderate, and coefficient of .61 to .80 are considered substantive (Landis & Koch, 1977). Weighted kappas fully correct for chance agreement while also adjusting for the degree of disagreement between coders (Cohen, 1968).

Indicators for Adoptive Identity

Two latent variables, adolescent narrative adoptive identity and emerging adult narrative adoptive identity, were specified using three variables each collected at Waves 2 & 3:

Internal consistency: A narrative is highly internally consistent when it includes examples that support personal theories or themes, and synthesizing statements that pull the narrative together. A narrative lacks internal consistency when it has few or no examples, lacks synthesizing statements, or includes contradictions that are unexplained or unrecognized. An example of a Wave 3 emerging adult's personal theme is, "It is important to recognize distinctions between adoptive and biological parents," and an example of one statement that supports this personal theme is, "...don't be threatened if your child wants to find his/her biological parents. They may be naturally curious and

they aren't looking to replace you.” (5 pt scale, with higher scores reflecting greater consistency)

Flexibility is the degree to which participants view issues as others might see them. Participants with flexible narratives consider the complex nature of issues and relationships, such as, “Yeah, there was, you know, just growing up, I’ve kind of tried to put it all behind me and realize that, yeah, he’s [birthfather] made his mistakes. He’s got his own demons” (Wave 3, emerging adult). Inflexible participants adhere rigidly to their story-line and consider relationships from one vantage point, their own: (5 point scale, higher scores indicates higher flexibility)

Depth of adoptive identity exploration is the degree participants reflect on the meaning of adoption or being adopted or are actively engaged in a process of gathering information or decision-making. Statements include: contrasting past and present thinking; contrasting one’s own role, ideas, thoughts, or actions with those of others; reflecting on the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted; gathering information on any aspect of adoption or being adopted; and, describing the process of making a decision, experimenting, or questioning an issue related to adoption or being adopted. (5 point scale at Wave 3, 4 point scale at Wave 2, higher scores indicate higher levels of exploration)

Current Emotional Expression about Adoption.

Adolescent and emerging adult current emotional expression about adoption was coded from the Adoption sections of the adolescent and emerging adulthood interviews. Emotional expression captures the degree of current positive and negative emotion participants express about: 1) adoption and being adopted, 2) adoptive family members

and connections with adoptive family, related to adoption issues, and 3) birth family members and connections with birth family, related to adoption issues. Current emotional expression about adoption is the sum of positive and negative affect about adoption, two dimensions that include, but are not limited to, expression of the level of comfort when talking about adoption with family members, friends, peers, and other people; feelings regarding connections with adoptive or birth family; feelings about adoptive and birth family members; feelings about being adopted; and considerations of adoption in general.

There were compelling theoretical and empirical reasons to combine positive and negative emotional expression. The expression of positive emotions is not necessarily “good” and the expression of negative emotions “bad” (Colombetti, 2005). Expressing negative emotion is adaptive in certain situations, allowing adoptees to deal effectively with events and social interactions. Evolutionary theory suggests that important events (intimacy, threat, abandonment, etc.) signal emotions related to processes that are most adaptive for dealing with the event. Constructivist theory, as well, suggests that the interpretation of emotion and emotional expression depends on socio-cultural experience (Harré, 1986; Lupton, 1998). Higher scores indicate higher levels of current emotional expression about adoption. Lower scores indicate neutral or no current emotional expression about adoption. (9 point scale)

Indicators for Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact

Adoptive parents' facilitation of contact was specified using three Wave 2 variables: (a) frequency of contact taking place among all adoptive and birth family members, reported by adoptive mothers, (b) adoptive mother's contact with birth family

members, and (c) adoptive father's contact with birth family members. Adoptive mothers and fathers each reported types of contact taking place during the preceding year. Types of contact included letters/emails, telephone calls, photos, gifts, face-to-face meetings, extended visits and other, such as sharing videos. A type of contact was assigned a "1" if it had occurred at least once during the past year and a "0" if not. Scores were summed for each adoptive parent. This approach was taken because contact involving higher levels of interaction, such as face-to-face meetings, necessarily involve more types of contact. For all three variables, scores were not included if adoptive parents reported excluding adoptees from contact. Higher scores indicate higher levels of adoptive parents' facilitation of contact.

Indicators for Conversation about Adoption

Conversation about adoption was specified using two Wave 2 variables: (a) adoptive mother's report of the frequency of conversation about adoption with the adopted adolescent taking place in the past year, and (b) adoptive father's report of the frequency of conversation about adoption with the adopted adolescent taking place in the past year. Scores ranged from "no conversation in the past year" to "12 or more conversations in the past year" (6 point scale).

Data Analysis Plan

Statistical analyses for the present study were conducted using *Mplus* version 5.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2008). Prior to conducting analyses, data were screened for normality, outliers, linearity, homoscedasticity, ill-scaling, and multicollinearity, as recommended by Klein (2005). Parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood-robust (MLR), which provides standard errors and a chi-square test statistic robust to

non-normality (Yuan & Bentler, 2000). Goodness of fit was evaluated using four indices (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The chi square statistic should be relatively low in comparison to the degrees of freedom (Kline, 2005). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) should be between .05 and .08 for an acceptable fit, and .05 or less for a good fit (McDonald & Ho, 2002). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), which is sometimes referred to as the non-normed fit index (NNFI), should be .90 or greater for acceptable fit and .95 or greater for good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The relative fit of nested structural equation models was tested using a scaled chi-square difference test (Satorra, 2000).

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the fit of the indicators to latent variables. The measurement models showed excellent fit to the data. Residuals for indicators of adoptive identity were covaried across waves. Gender was dummy coded, “0” = male and “1” = female. Correlations are presented in Table 1.

Participant quotes, included for purposes of illustration in the Method and Discussion sections, have been altered in a few instances in order to protect participant identities. All identifiers were removed.

Missing Values Analysis

Data from 184 families were available for these analyses, with complete data on all study variables for 107 families. Missing data were due to adopted adolescents (19%), adoptive fathers (16%), and adoptive mothers (9%) who did not complete interviews at Wave 2 and emerging adults (10%) who did not complete Wave 3 interviews. A series of t-tests revealed no significant differences on study outcomes for indicator variables. Nevertheless, to examine whether missing data biased results, the

structural equation models were tested with and without listwise deletion of missing data. The pattern of findings was the same, although significance levels were relatively lower in the models with listwise deletion due to the smaller sample size.

Analyses should use all available data when missing data are unrelated to study outcomes (Enders & Bandalos, 2001; Schafer & Graham, 2002). *Mplus* handles missing data by adjusting model parameter estimates using full-information maximum-likelihood estimation (FIML; Muthén & Shedden, 1999; Schafer & Graham, 2002). *Mplus* obtains reliable estimates if the proportion of available data for each study variable and between each pair of variables is at least .10 (Muthén & Shedden, 1999; Schafer & Graham, 2002). In the present study proportions ranged from .71 to .91 and most were above .81. Results are reported for *Mplus* analyses using FIML.

RESULTS

Age and Emerging Adult Narrative Adoptive Identity

The purpose of this analysis was to test whether age is associated with narrative adoptive identity during emerging adulthood. The hypothesized structural model showed a good fit to the data $\chi^2(2) = 2.32$; $p = .68$; RMSEA < .001, CFI = 1.00, and TLI = 1.02. There were, however, no significant associations between age and emerging adult narrative adoptive identity, $\beta = .02$, ($t = 0.22$) or between gender and emerging adult adoptive identity, $\beta = .09$, ($t = 1.09$). In the remaining analyses, therefore, age was only included as a predictor of narrative adoptive identity in *adolescence*, as previously discussed.

Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact and Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

The purpose of this analysis was to test whether adoptive parent facilitation of contact during adolescence is positively associated with adolescent narrative adoptive identity, controlling for effects of age and gender on adolescent narrative adoptive identity. Standardized estimates and t-values for the estimated structural model are shown in Figure 2. Correlations between adoptive parents' facilitation of contact and age and gender were negligible and are not shown. The hypothesized structural model showed a good fit to the data (see fit statistics for Model 1 in Table 2).

The model accounted for 21% of variability in adolescent narrative adoptive identity and 28% of variability in emerging adult narrative adoptive identity. There was a significant association between adoptive parents' facilitation of contact and adolescent narrative adoptive identity, $\beta = .29$, ($t = 3.89$). There was also a significant indirect effect from adoptive parents' facilitation of contact through adolescent narrative adoptive identity to emerging adult narrative adoptive identity, $\beta = .15$, ($t = 2.99$). Narrative adoptive identity showed significant consistency in relative rank order between adolescence and emerging adulthood, $\beta = .53$, ($t = 7.05$).

There were significant associations between adolescent narrative adoptive identity and gender, $\beta = .21$, ($t = 2.71$), and adolescent narrative adoptive identity and age, $\beta = .31$, ($t = 4.67$). Adolescent females had higher levels of narrative adoptive identity than males and older adolescents had higher levels of adoptive identity than younger adolescents. There were also significant, albeit modest, indirect effects of gender through adolescent narrative adoptive identity to emerging adult narrative

adoptive identity, $\beta = .11$, ($t = 2.67$); and of age through adolescent adoptive identity to emerging adult adoptive identity, $\beta = .17$, ($t = 4.24$).

Factors Linking Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact to Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

The purpose of this analysis was to test the proposed theoretically-based model of narrative adoptive identity formation. Standardized estimates and t-values for the estimated structural model are shown in Figure 3. The hypothesized model showed a good fit to the data (see fit statistics for model 3 in Table 2). All hypothesized paths except the path from gender to adolescent narrative adoptive identity were statistically significant.

The path from adoptive parents' facilitation of contact to adolescent narrative adoptive identity was constrained to zero in model 3. The decision to trim the path in model 3 was based on non-significant results of the scaled chi-square difference test comparing model 3 to model 2 ($\Delta\chi^2 = .39$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = .53$). Model 2 contained the all paths estimated in model 3 plus the path from adoptive parents' facilitation of contact to adolescent narrative adoptive identity.

In model 3 the estimated structural model accounted for 50% of the variability in adolescent narrative adoptive identity, 44% of variability in emerging adult narrative adoptive identity, 29% of the variability in conversation about adoption in the past year, 23% of the variability in adolescent current emotional expression about adoption, and 11% of the variability in emerging adult current emotional expression about adoption.

As hypothesized, there were significant and substantive associations between adoptive parents' facilitation of contact and conversation about adoption, $\beta = .54$, ($t =$

5.15) and between conversation about adoption and adolescent narrative adoptive identity, $\beta = .30$, ($t = 2.63$). There were also significant indirect effects from adoptive parents' facilitation of contact through conversation about adoption to adolescent narrative adoptive identity, $\beta = .18$, ($t = 2.54$) and to adolescent current emotional expression about adoption, $\beta = .26$, ($t = 2.93$).

Narrative adoptive identity showed significant consistency in relative rank order between adolescence and emerging adulthood $\beta = .30$, ($t = 3.71$). Consistent with model 1, there was a significant association between age and adolescent adoptive identity, $\beta = .31$, ($t = 4.49$), but the association between gender and adolescent adoptive identity was no longer significant, $\beta = .09$, ($t = 1.36$). Correlations among age, gender, and other Wave 2 (adolescent) factors were not significant; however, the correlation between gender and adolescent current emotional expression about adoption approached significance ($r = .06$, $t = 1.75$).

To test whether the strength of the association between current emotional expression about adoption and narrative adoptive identity was greater during emerging adulthood compared to adolescence, the path from current emotional expression in adolescence to narrative adoptive identity in adolescence was constrained to equal to the path from current emotional expression in emerging adulthood to narrative adoptive identity in emerging adulthood. The estimated model showed a good fit to the data (see fit statistics for model 4 in Table 2). The scaled chi-square difference test comparing model 4 to model 3 was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = .3.98$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = .046$) providing evidence that the association between emotional expression and narrative adoption identity was significantly stronger during emerging adulthood.

Two alternative models were compared to Model 3. Model 5 tested a cross-lag association from adolescent current emotional expression about adoption to emerging adult narrative adoptive identity. Model 6 tested a cross-lag association from adolescent narrative adoptive identity to emerging adult current emotional expression about adoption. The fit of each model was compared to model 3 using AIC results (Klein, 2005) since the alternative models were not nested in model 3. Model 3 had a comparatively better fit, supporting the adoption of model 3 as the final model (see fit statistics in Table 2).

DISCUSSION

This dissertation is significant in testing a model of narrative adoptive identity formation with participants from a large ($n = 184$ adoptive families) national sample of adoptive mothers, adoptive fathers, and adoptees (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998). Adoptees were interviewed during adolescence ($M = 15.7$ years of age) and emerging adulthood ($M = 24.95$ years of age), spanning the seminal period of identity formation when adoptees face the challenge of developing a coherent sense of self (Erikson, 1963; Grotevant, 1993; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1985).

Results of the present study support the central premise of the proposed theoretical model of narrative adoptive identity—identity formation is positively associated with both conversation about adoption and current emotional expression about adoption, sparked by meaningful adoption-related social interactions, specifically adoptive parents' facilitation of contact with children's birth relatives. Adoptive identity appears to form over time as adoptive parents facilitate adoption-related social interactions that are emotionally charged and meaningful to adopted children.

Age and Narrative Adoptive Identity

Age was *not* significantly associated with adoptive identity during *emerging adulthood*. Although identity formation is a lifelong task (Erikson, 1968), it is possible that age differences are no longer associated with variation in levels of narrative adoptive identity formation once young people reach emerging adulthood. The effect of age differences on adoptive identity may diminish or disappear in the normal course of development as young people acquire the necessary social and cognitive skills (Habermas & Bluck, 2000), but it is not possible to make this claim based on non-significant findings.

Future research on narrative identity would benefit by considering the potential for interactions between age and the attainment of adult responsibilities. Young people in industrialized societies have increasingly postponed stabilizing influences, such as marriage, parenting, or employment, in favor of exploratory influences, such as post-secondary education. There may be benefits to identity formation if adult responsibilities are postponed for a time, but costs if adult responsibilities are taken on prematurely or postponed for too long a time. It will be important to study whether engaging in new types of adoption-related social interactions during emerging adulthood, such as searching for birth relatives, has implications for the timing of developmental transitions, such as marriage, child-bearing, or employment.

Consistent with Dunbar's (2003) study on adoptive identity typologies, *adolescent* age and gender were significantly associated with *adolescent* narrative adoptive identity in model 1 (see Figure 2) and were included as predictors of adolescent narrative adoptive identity in the proposed model (see Figures 1 & 3).

However, gender was no longer significantly associated with adolescent narrative adoptive identity once adolescent current emotional expression about adoption was included. It appears that the effect of gender on adolescent narrative adoptive identity operates through adolescent current emotional expression about adoption, with females expressing higher levels of emotion about adoption than males, when controlling for other factors (although the correlation between gender and adolescent current emotional expression about adoption did not reach statistical significance). This may be a useful avenue for additional research.

There were significant indirect effects of adolescent age on emerging adult narrative adoptive identity through adolescent narrative adoptive identity. The indirect effect represents the part of the direct effect of age on adolescent adoptive identity that is transmitted to emerging adults. In model 1, for example, age was expected to increase by $.17 SD$ for every unit increase in emerging adult adoptive identity, via its prior effect on adolescent adoptive identity. Although statistically significant, this effect is relatively modest.

Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact and Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

In model 1 (Figure 2) adoptive parents' facilitation of contact was significantly associated with adolescent narrative adoptive identity formation, controlling for age and gender. Specifically, higher levels of contact during adolescence were associated with higher levels of adolescent narrative adoptive identity. This relationship was sustained over and above variations in participants' age and gender. Female adolescents had higher levels of narrative adoptive identity than males, and older adolescents had higher levels of narrative adoptive identity than younger.

These results are consistent with emerging literature on family ethnic socialization. Ethnic identity has been associated with parent's facilitation of interactions with extended family members, such as grandparents who have specific knowledge about cultural traditions (House, Stiffman, & Brown, 2006) and with adoptive parents' active efforts to incorporate ethnically specific activities into daily family life on behalf of their transracially adopted children (Lee & Quintana, 2005). Nevertheless, the present study is unique in linking parents' facilitation of social interactions to identity formation through conversation and emotional expression, as the next section will show.

Factors Linking Adoptive Parents' Facilitation of Contact to Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation

The central hypotheses of this dissertation were supported. Higher levels of adoptive parents' facilitation of contact with birth relatives were associated with increased opportunities for (a) adoptive parents and adolescents to engage in conversation about adoption within the adoptive family and (b) adolescents and emerging adults to express higher levels of current emotional expression about adoption. As hypothesized, contact and conversation were essential to the process of shaping emotional expression and the events associated with them into meaningful and coherent adoptive identity narratives.

Emotions are most likely to occur in the course of meaningful social interactions (Berscheid, 1983/2002; Guerrero & Andersen, 2000). Research has demonstrated (Harris, 2004; Luminet et al. 1994; Rimé, 1995; Rimé et al., 1994; Rimé et al., 1992) that conversational sharing takes place as a consequence of emotional experiences, such

as the high levels of emotions associated with contact with birth relatives (Grotevant et al., 2007; Neil 2004a, Neil 2004b). Narrative research and affect theory suggest that conversation and emotional expression are critical to the process of narrative identity formation (Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004; Fridja, Manstead, & Bem, 2000; Isen, 2004; Magai & McFadden, 1995). Adoptive parents' facilitation of contact appears to create opportunities for adoptive parents to talk with their adolescent children about adoption. A large body of theory and empirical research shows that conversation, and related forms of self-expression, shapes recollections and narrative identity (Bellelli, 1995; Berger & Kellner, 1964; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Conversation helps young people construct, organize, and interpret the meaning of life events. Meaningful conversations about adoption are more likely to take place when social interactions and emotions set them into motion. Interactions with birth relatives provide one example of a powerful day-to-day social context for adoption-related narrative exchange.

As illustration, consider Mandy, an MTARP adoptive mother who facilitated contact with her daughter's [Nadine] birth mother, Calley. Mandy reported that contact provided frequent opportunities to talk with Nadine about adoption. Mandy and Nadine talked at least once a month, when Nadine had been thinking about Calley or when letters or presents from Calley arrived. Contact, Mandy reported, gave her opportunities to articulate her values and expectations about relationships to Nadine,

...[contact] has also given us a real open door to talk about relationships and how God intended the relationships to be. So it has probably been a positive thing that it kept communication with us going as she turns a teenager.

Mandy also articulated that contact played a role in her daughter's developing identity.

Because Calley's still is a part of her, whether she is around or not. You know, I can't pretend that I gave birth to the children, because I didn't. I can't tell them things about them that I don't know....There's been [years] of her knowing who the birthmother is and finding out information about herself and I think that's changed uh she loves her birthmom and I think that's great. She sees the warts with it too so that I that's part of Nadine's maturity.

Does Adoptive Identity Formation Matter to Adolescent and Emerging Adult Development?

Narrative adoptive identity is not itself a measure of mental health. Yet, it may have implications for healthy developmental transitions during adolescence and emerging adulthood. As illustration, consider the following quotes from Brooke, a 27 year old MTARP participant whose adoptive parents reported facilitating high levels of contact and conversation about adoption with Brooke.

I feel it's [adoption] given me a lot. A complete sense of perspective that not a lot of children and young adults, or adults have for that matter. It has allowed me to be completely accepting of others' families, and be able to see issues within families that I wouldn't have normally been aware of. Or really even cared about. People who have known me for a while have asked the question, nature or nurture...I'm a prime example. a product of both. I like the view point it gives me.

Ok here's my story about that...maybe I already mentioned but I don't think so. So the first night that I met [my birthparents] Alicia and Will, after they left and my parents and I reflected a little on the evening, I went into my

room and shut the door. Ready for some of my own time to reflect. As I'm sitting on the edge of my bed I all of a sudden get this feeling of the deepest love I had ever felt. Like a warm wave enveloping me, like god, the higher power telling, showing me that love is all encompassing, and powerful. That I had received it. The circle complete. It was pretty damn amazing, probably lasted a minute or two. And then passed. I have never felt anything like it since.

I talk [with my adoptive parents] about how drama filled the b [birth] family is and I'm glad I'm on the outside, yet on the inside. That I can be there for everyone, but then leave, and go to my respective [adoptive family] family...who isn't perfect either.

A consistent and flexible adoptive identity narrative, replete with exploration, and facilitated by high levels of affect about adoption, signals that something of deep concern is at issue. These acts and thoughts imply personal commitment. Time is being invested in reflection or action, in expressing emotion about adoption, and in subsequently turning these experiences into a coherent narrative about the self as an adopted person. While some adoptees find that adoption is an important aspect of the self, others do not. Undertaking adoptive identity formation, especially if it entails coming to terms with relatively intense emotional experiences, may play an important role in emotional development over time. As one of Lupton's (1998) participants said during her ethnographic study of emotion: "So I guess emotions come from what is important, or seems important...we all see what is important differently" (p. 53). Coherent adoptive identity narratives are not simply shared memories – a trip down memory lane – they indicate a commitment to find personal meaning and purpose in

emotions connected to relationships—or lack thereof. Narrative adoptive identity formation, including the use of emotional expression to create coherence, may help to shape and broaden perceptions of family, a person's place in family, and their emotional relationships with adoptive parents and others.

The transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood involves increased opportunities to interact with new people in diverse environments, outside of the immediate family sphere. In Western societies in particular, young people are expected to develop skills required for telling coherent life stories (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Social interactions (e.g. college admission applications, job interviews, and interactions with new work colleagues, roommates, friends, and romantic partners) involve new emotional experiences and require life story conversation. As described, narratives about adoptive identity may be particularly useful in these situations, especially when adoption issues arise. Thoburn (2004) and Wrobel et al. (2003) have demonstrated that the needs of adoptees change as they mature and, as a result, communication patterns within adoptive families may change as well. Coherent adoptive identity narratives are likely to make it easier for adolescents to negotiate changing family communication patterns as they transition into emerging adulthood. Values, beliefs, and goals are central to one's identity and are also implicated in emotional expression and related processes. Adolescents with high levels of adoptive identity narrate flexible, coherent, and reflective stories about adoption and adoptive relationships, which may give them the capacity to develop emotionally flexible and close relationships with others in the future (Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004; Lewis & Ferrari, 2001).

Strengths and Limitations

Analyses did not establish causal relationships. Previous research using this sample (Von Korff, Grotevant, & Rueter, 2007) found substantial rank order consistency in adoptive parents' facilitation of contact from the time adoptees were in middle childhood to adolescence ($r = .73$), suggesting that narrative adoptive identity formation probably did not contribute in substantive ways to adoptive parents' facilitation of contact during adolescence.

Results in this report are limited to adoptees who were voluntarily placed during infancy and whose adoptions were not international, transracial or "special needs."

Data collected and coded for this dissertation are used to measure *rank-order* (relative ordering of people over time) consistency and change. These data do not permit an evaluation of mean-level or individual-level (within person over time) continuity and change.

Participants were asked to talk specifically about adoption. This approach differs from a life story approach to narrative (McLean & Pratt, 2006) in which participants are asked to select the experiences that are most important to them. In the latter approach, identity topics vary within and across data collection waves. On the other hand, MTARP participants were encouraged to tell their unique adoption stories and, in fact, reported an extraordinarily wide variety of adoption themes and content.

Significance of this Report

Recent changes in adoption practice which encourage contact between adoptive and birth family members have affected adoptive and birth families—changing family interaction patterns, roles, expectations, loyalties—and highlighting adoptive identity

issues for many adoptees. Prior to the 1980s, confidential adoption, which precludes the exchange of identifying information and contact between adoptive and birth family members, was expected to fulfill the best interests of adoptees (Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit, 1973; Leon, 2002) and contact was rare (Carp, 1998). Despite legislation enacted from the 1920s through the 1960s that helps maintain the practice of confidential placement, most domestic placements currently offer contact as an option, particularly when birthparents have chosen to place a child voluntarily (Melosh, 2002). Berry, Cavazos Dylla, Barth, and Needell (1998) found that over half of the 764 participants who had adopted children in California between July 1988 and June 1989 had some level of contact with birth parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings four years after adoption. Adoptive parents' facilitation of contact with birth relatives plays a significant and meaningful role in a child's immediate relational context with implications for subsequent narrative adoptive identity formation.

There are an estimated 1.4 million adopted children (87% of all adopted children) under the age of 18 who were born in the United States (Kreider, 2003) and for whom contact is an option. Of course, contact also takes place after the age of 18. Contact is also an emerging issue in international adoption (Larson, 2007), special needs adoption (Neil & Howe, 2004a), and foster care (Neil, Beek, & Schofield, 2003). This report will be useful to adoptive and birth family members as they consider the range of options available in terms of facilitating adoption-related social interactions, such as contact, on behalf of their children.

This study may help shed light on mechanisms and experiences that lead to continuity in narrative adoptive identity—providing young people with a sense of ego

identity (self sameness) in relation to others in the social world—and change (Bruner, 1990; McAdams, 1996; Pals, 2001). First, the report found convergence between identity exploration and narrative coherence, two different approaches used in identity research. These results may provide opportunities to bring these two arms of identity research together. Second, the report examines links between the formation of ego identity (i.e. the sense of being the same person through time and within one’s immediate community; Erikson, 1968) and personal identity (i.e. the sense that identity is unique to one’s social or family context) and meaningful socio-relational contexts (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Côté & Levine, 2002; Kroger, 2000). Third, the study includes reports from individuals other than adolescents and identity goals other than individuation (Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Fourth, the report examined the role of emotional expression in identity formation (Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2004; Pals, 2001; Singer, 2004, Whitbourne, 2001). Contact—and the possibility of contact with birth relatives—evokes intense emotions (Grotevant et al., 2007) which makes contact and adoption an important venue for studying emotional expression and narrative adoptive identity formation. This approach is consistent with Erikson’s (1968) view that identity formation has contextual, rational, and affective bases (Hoare, 2002). Finally, the report addressed important methodological gaps by using structural equation modeling to reduce measurement error, and by using a national sample and longitudinal data (Schwartz, 2005).

Implications for Practice and Research

Adoptive parents set a course early in their child’s development regarding facilitation of contact with birth relatives. If feasible, parents may want to keep the door

to contact open. Brodzinsky (2005) stands on solid theoretical and empirical ground in suggesting that adoptive parents should practice communicative openness, defined as,

...a willingness of individuals [adoptive parents] to consider the meaning of adoption in their lives, to share that meaning with others, to explore adoption related issues in the context of family life, to acknowledge and support the child's dual connection to two families, and perhaps to facilitate contact between these two family systems in one form or another (p. 149).

Clearly, the quality of parent-child interaction plays a role in narrative adoptive identity formation. This perspective is consistent with Kirk's notion of shared fate (1964), in underscoring that parenting adopted children requires specific skills and responsibilities related to being adoptive family members. In their seminal work on parent-child relationships and identity formation, Grotevant and Cooper (1985, 1986, 1998) and Grotevant (1987) demonstrated that warm and supportive interactions between parents and adolescents, in which children are encouraged to express their views and ideas, are associated with higher levels of adolescent identity exploration. Research has also demonstrated that the extent to which conversation is helpful to adolescent identity formation (Fivish, 2001; Fivish & Buckner, 2003) and adoptees psychological adjustment (Rueter & Koerner, 2008) may depend on conversational styles. Studies on the patterns of family narrative have found that family reminiscing helps children become storytellers and theory builders (Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, & Smith, 1992). This research underscores the importance of parent-child relationships and family interactions patterns in children's developmental outcomes.

Nevertheless, results of the present study suggest that communicative openness may be put to best effect, at least in terms of narrative adoptive identity formation, in the context of adoptive parents' willingness to actively facilitate adoption-related social interactions that are meaningful to children. Adoption-related social interactions appear to serve as an important catalyst for adoption-related conversation, setting the stage for the potential positive outcomes of communicative openness.

These results should not be interpreted to suggest that contact is the only form of social interactions adoptive parents use to facilitate narrative adoptive identity formation. Contact is only one type of adoption-related social interaction. Further, the contact examined in these analyses was actively facilitated by adoptive parents, and family members participated in it *voluntarily*. Many adoptive parents in this study, as well as the birth relatives interacting with them, were pioneers in negotiating the complexities of contact arrangements. Research has established that the nature of contact should vary according to the needs of individual children, their families, and the type of adoptive placement (e.g. domestic, international, special needs). Contact is a dynamic and transactional phenomenon (Neil and Howe, 2004b) "...a complex dance in which the roles and needs of the participants change over time, affecting the kinship network as a whole" (Grotevant et al., 2005, p. 182). In some circumstances it is not possible or appropriate for adoptive parents to facilitate contact, although recent research indicates that with appropriate guidance and support contact may be feasible in many more situations than previously assumed (Neil & Howe, 2004a, Neil & Howe, 2004a) and there is no evidence that contact is deleterious to the mental health of children (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998; Neil, 2007) or adolescents (Von Korff, Grotevant

& McRoy, 2006). On the other hand, adoptive parents' facilitation of contact appears to give adoptive parents opportunities to engage in adoption-related parent-child interactions, highlighting the importance of studying the quality of such interactions.

Adoptive parents' facilitation of contact may be associated with adoptive parents' identity formation; parents are engaging in conversation about adoption, experiencing adoption-related emotions, and expressing emotions about adoption along with their children— possibly creating adoptive parent identity narratives. In a study unrelated to child outcomes, Grotevant, Fravel, Gorall, & Piper (1999) found that adoptive parents experiencing contact with birth relatives had more coherent narratives as compared to those experiencing less contact. It will be important to examine whether adoptive parents' facilitation of contact leads to high levels of adoptive parents' communicative openness over time.

Contact is only one type of meaningful adoption-related social interaction available to adoptive parents. Adoptive parents can and do facilitate many types, such as forming life-long and life-changing ties and friendships with families and cultural institutions associated with the ethnic or racial background of newly adopted children, with adoptive families, and with adoption agencies who deliver adoption support and educational services. Results of the present study suggest several key elements that appear to be integral to adoption-related social interactions associated with narrative adoptive identity formation: (a) adoptive parents' are actively involved as facilitators, (b) social interactions start when children are relatively young, and (c) social interactions are emotionally meaningful to young people. One gauge of meaningfulness might be the degree to which social interactions enter into the warp and weave of

everyday adoptive family life through conversation, most likely sparked by the inevitable emotions that enter into our lives when we develop important relationships. Adoption professionals may be helpful in providing support, training, and programmatic activities that focus on adoption-related social interactions, with contact being one such type. Future research should examine the many ways adoptive parents integrate different types of adoption-related social interactions that enhance narrative adoptive identity formation into their daily family lives.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-order Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	-						
2. Gender	.01	--					
Adoptive identity (AD)							
3. Flexibility	.24	.20	--				
4. Depth of exploration	.26	.19	.55	--			
5. Internal consistency	.26	.16	.56	.76	--		
Adoptive identity (EA)							
6. Flexibility	.05	.12	.22	.38	.40	--	
7. Depth of exploration	-.04	.08	.35	.48	.44	.72	--
8. Internal consistency	-.01	.04	.23	.38	.29	.69	.73
AP facilitation of contact							
9. AM contact	-.04	-.06	.10	.23	.14	.29	.29
10. AF contact	-.07	-.05	.06	.21	.14	.30	.28
11. AFAM contact	-.06	.02	.11	.27	.17	.28	.31
Conversation about adoption past year							
12. AM conversation	-.05	.05	.09	.21	.20	.14	.17
13. AF conversation	-.03	.07	.18	.24	.21	.03	.20
14. Current emotional expression (AD)	.06	.18	.24	.57	.43	.28	.30
15. Current emotional expression (EA)	-.13	.16	.27	.40	.43	.51	.60
<u>M</u>	15.68	.48	3.32	2.49	3.45	2.79	2.94
<u>SD</u>	1.99	0.50	0.96	0.95	0.93	1.20	1.27

Note: Correlations .15 or greater are significant at $p < .05$ and correlations greater than .20 are significant at $p < .01$. AD = adolescence; EA = emerging adulthood; AP = adoptive parents; AM = adoptive mother; AF = adoptive father; AFAM = adoptive family.

Table 1 (continued).

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-order Correlations

Variable	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Age								
2. Gender								
Adoptive identity (AD)								
3. Flexibility								
4. Depth of exploration								
5. Internal consistency								
Adoptive identity (EA)								
6. Flexibility								
7. Depth of exploration								
8. Internal consistency	--							
AP facilitation of contact								
9. AM contact	.30	--						
10. AF contact	.31	.89	--					
11. AFAM contact	.34	.90	.89	--				
Conversation about adoption past year								
12. AM conversation	.15	.28	.26	.30	--			
13. AF conversation	.08	.15	.18	.22	.31	--		
14. Current emotional expression (AD)	.29	.27	.30	.30	.12	.30		
15. Current emotional expression (EA)	.46	.23	.27	.26	.12	.15	.32	
<u>M</u>	3.06	1.92	1.81	0.98	3.54	3.18	2.32	2.25
<u>SD</u>	1.26	2.37	2.27	1.18	1.04	1.18	0.79	0.86

Note: Correlations .15 or greater are significant at $p < .05$ and correlations greater than .20 are significant at $p < .01$. AD = adolescence; EA = emerging adulthood; AP = adoptive parents; AM = adoptive mother; AF = adoptive father; AFAM = adoptive family.

Table 2

Fit Statistics for Structural Equation Models

Model	<i>df</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	AIC	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	<i>p</i>
1	36	48.38	.08	.99	.98	.043	4848	-	-	-
2	75	110.43	<.01	.97	.96	.051	6445	-	-	-
3 vs. 2	76	110.83	<.01	.97	.96	.050	6443	.39	1	.53
4 vs. 3	77	114.81	<.01	.97	.96	.052	6445	3.98	1	<.05
5 vs. 3	76	161.35	<.01	.93	.90	.078	6492	50.52	-	-
6 vs. 3	76	142.76	<.01	.94	.92	.069	6474	31.93	-	-

Note. Relative fit of nested models was tested with the scaled chi-square difference tests for nested models (Satorra, 2000); CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean square error of approximation, AIC = Akaike Information Criteria.

Model 1: Model included adoptive parents' facilitation of contact, age, and adolescent narrative adoptive identity (see Figure 2).

Model 2: Estimated a direct path from adoptive parents' facilitation of contact to adolescent adoptive identity plus all paths in model 3.

Model 3: Final proposed model of narrative adoptive identity formation (see Figure 3).

Model 4: Tested whether the association between current emotional expression about adoption and narrative adoptive identity was stronger in emerging adulthood compared to adolescence (constrained two paths to equality).

Model 5: Tested one cross lag path: adolescent emotional expression about adoption to emerging adult narrative adoptive identity.

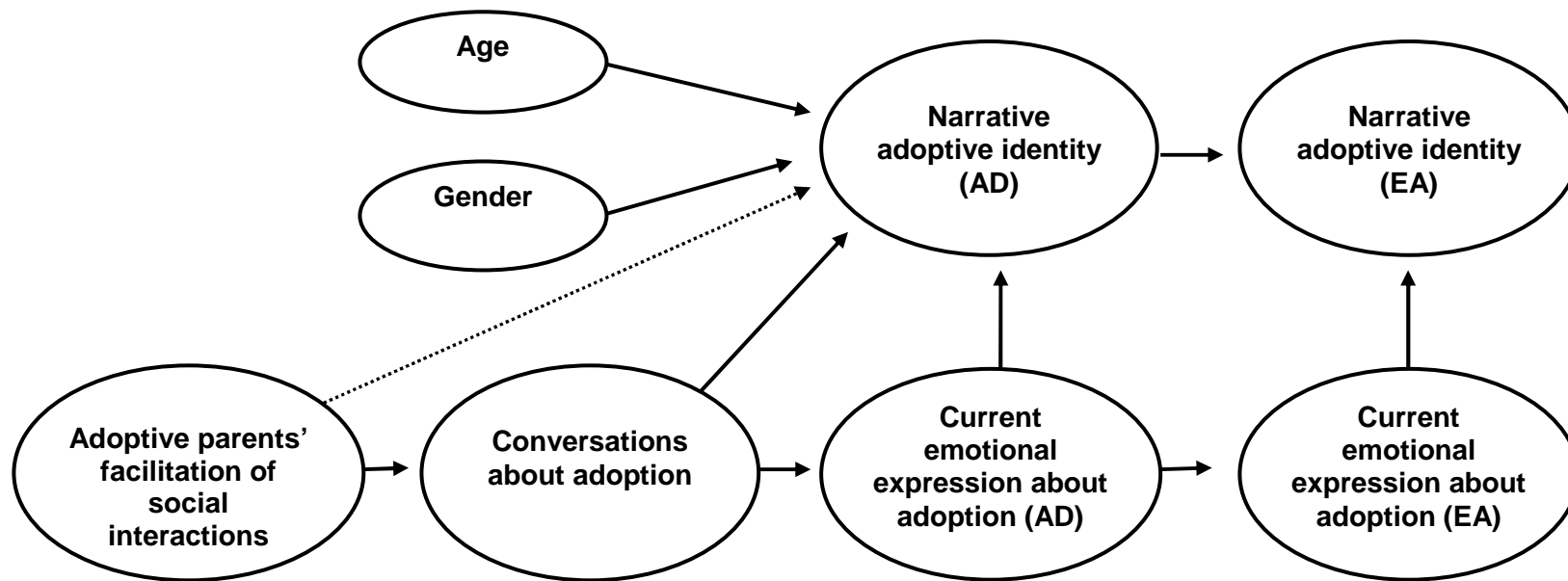
Model 6: Tested one cross lag path: adolescent narrative adoptive identity to emerging adult current emotional expression about adoption.

Table 3

Factor Loading for Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation (Model 3, Figure 3)

Factors and indicators	Factor loadings
Adolescent adoptive identity	
Depth of exploration	.92
Flexibility	.61
Internal consistency	.83
Emerging adult adoptive identity	
Depth of exploration	.89
Flexibility	.82
Internal consistency	.81
Adoptive parents' facilitation of contact	
Adoptive mother	.95
Adoptive father	.94
Adoptive family	.95
Conversation about adoption	
Adoptive mother	.51
Adoptive father	.51

Figure 1. Proposed Theoretical Model of Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation.



Note. AD = adolescence; EA = emerging adulthood.

Figure 2. Model of Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation, with standardized coefficients and t-values (Model 1).

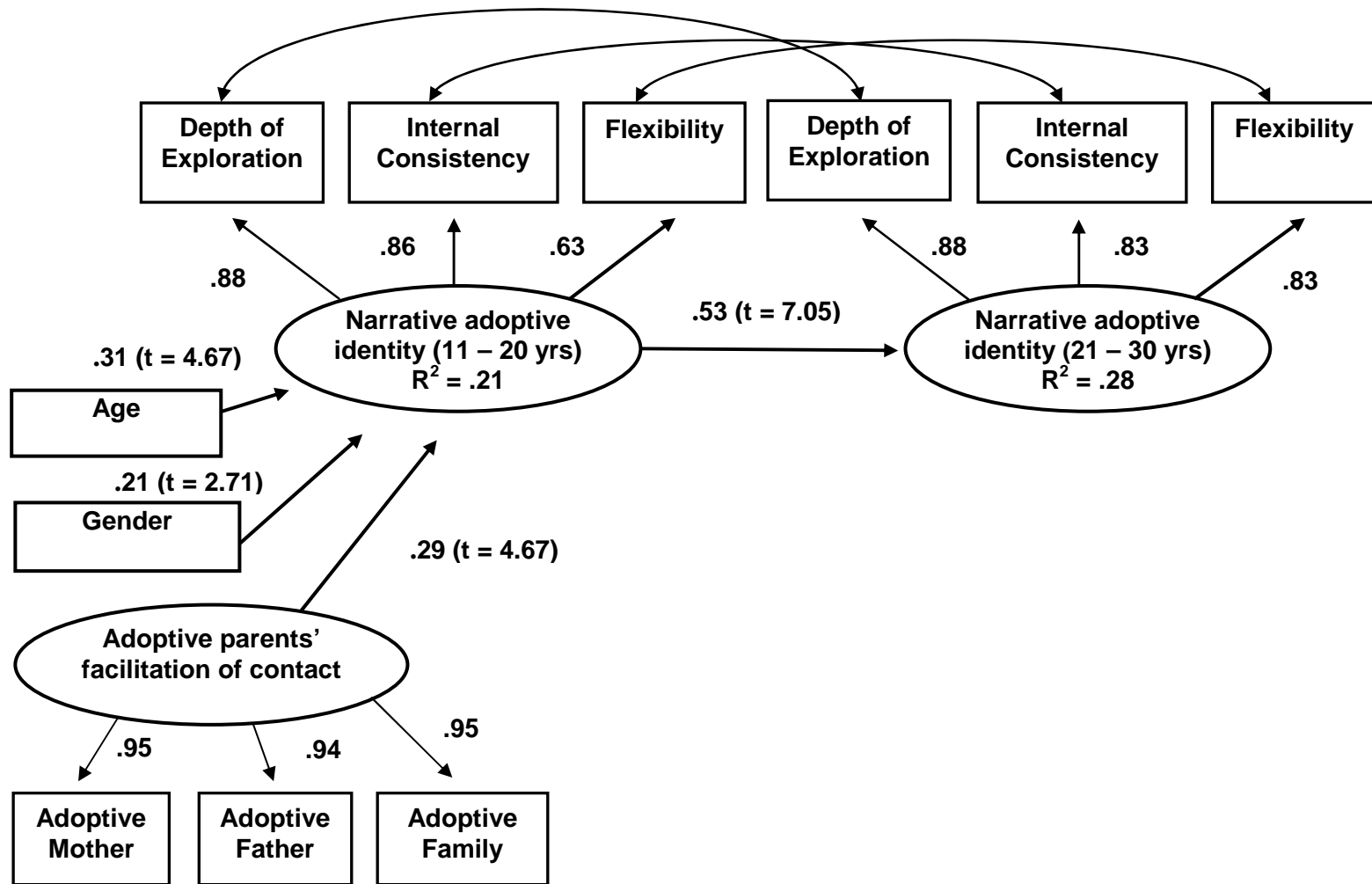
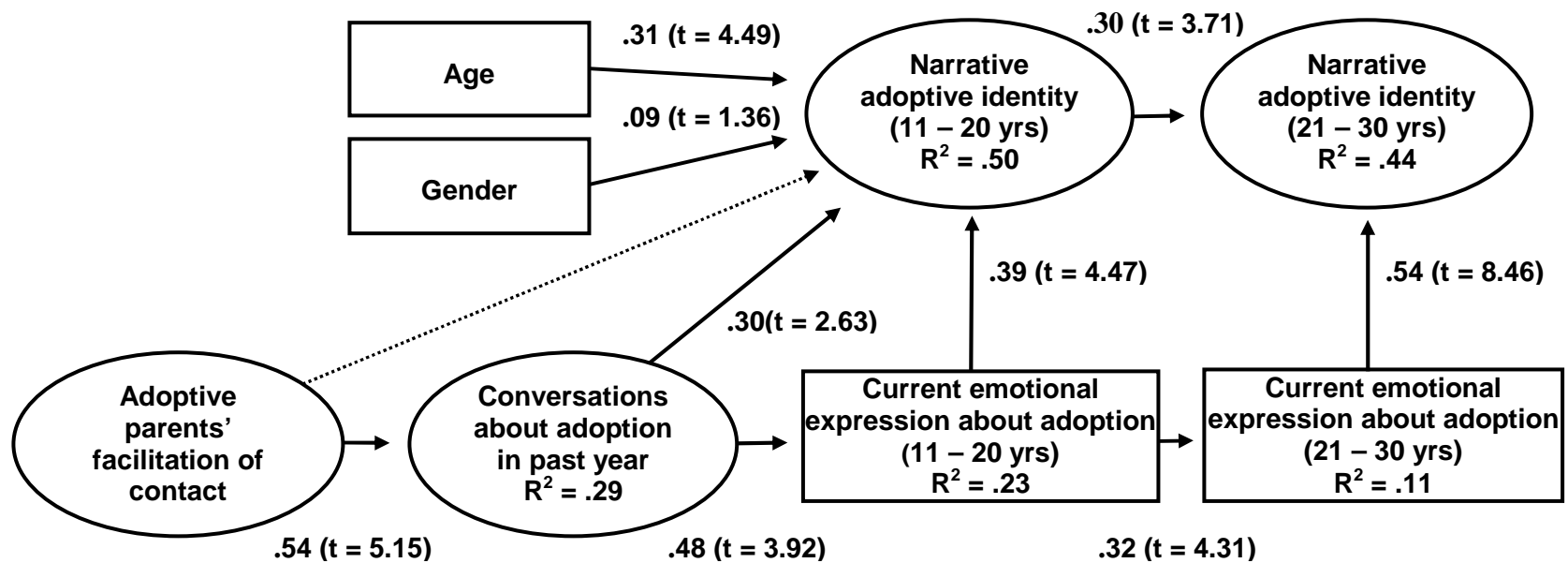


Figure 3. Model of Narrative Adoptive Identity Formation, with standardized coefficients and t-values (Model 3; see Table 3 for indicators and factor loadings).



Note. Correlations are not shown for ease of presentation.

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APPENDIX

Manual for Coding Narrative Adoptive Identity in Emerging Adulthood Minnesota / Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP) Von Korff, Grotevant, & Friese, 2007

The original Manual contains examples at each level for each dimension. Most examples have been removed from this version to protect participant confidentiality.

This manual provides guidelines for coding dimensions of adoptive identity and current emotional expression about adoption. It was created for Wave 3 of the Minnesota / Texas Adoption Research Project, in which adopted emerging adults in 190 adoptive families were interviewed about adoption and adoptive identity.

This Manual was developed as follows: first, authors read and discussed materials on the theoretical background of the dimensions and reviewed the Wave 2 coding process. Second, authors recoded Wave 2 adolescent participant transcripts until they were able to reliably replicate Wave 2 codes. Third, authors clarified and edited dimension descriptions to ensure they were appropriate for emerging adults. Fourth, authors coded approximately 30 Wave 3 transcripts in the process of: (a) identifying at least one example for each level of each dimension; (b) incorporating examples, and the descriptions justifying them, into the Coding Manual; (c) ensuring a high level of coder reliability; (d) defining and writing coding procedures; (e) adding examples and procedures to the Coding Manual as issues arose with newly coded transcripts; and, (e) developing a large number of criterion transcripts to use to train the full coding team.

Guidelines for coding narrative adoptive identity (Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration, Flexibility and Internal Consistency) and current emotional expression about Adoption (Positive Affect about Adoption and Negative Affect about Adoption) were based on the Wave 2 Manual for Coding Identity in Adopted Adolescents (Grotevant, Dunbar, and Kohler, 1999). Guidelines for coding Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration were adapted from the identity coding manual of Grotevant and Cooper (1981) and the identity status manual of Marcia (1964).

Guidelines on coding narrative coherence of the adoption story, specifically Flexibility and Internal Consistency were adapted from the Codebook for the Family Story Collaborative Project (Fiese, Sameroff, Grotevant, Wamboldt, Dickstein, & Fravel, 1995). Brief background information about each of these systems and selected references are provided on the last page of this Manual.

Coder Expectations

1. Coders are expected to understand and adhere to all MTARP confidentiality guidelines and procedures.
2. Coders are expected to attend training and on-going coder group meetings. Coders must reliably code at least two transcripts before coding independently.

On-going coder training requires your input and participation. Coder meetings will take place while transcripts are being coded. Meetings help establish and maintain reliability and validity. Meetings will include on-going training activities such as: coding selected sections of transcripts, identifying appropriate dimension examples to add to the Manual, and discussing ongoing coding and consensus issues or problems.

3. Coders are expected to follow all procedures outlined in this Manual. If an aspect of coding is not working for you please bring it to the coder group meeting for discussion.
4. Coders are expected to complete coding and consensus as scheduled (You will find a copy of your coding schedule in your folder). If you cannot complete your coding assignments as outlined on your coding schedule, please notify the coding supervisor in advance.
5. Coders will receive feedback about their coding as a result of random W3 reliability checks. Reliability checks will take place as described in MTARP consensus and reliability procedures.

Coding Procedures

Materials Needed

Manual for Coding Adoptive Identity
Electronic Transcript
Electronic Code Sheet template

Where to Find Documents

Copies of transcripts and a code sheet template will be placed in your coding folder on the network drive. Go to: \mtarp\projects\adoptive identity coding\ to locate your folder. Your coder number is: _____.

Where To Save Electronic Documents

1. Save highlighted transcripts in your "W3 Transcripts Coded" subfolder in your folder. Coded transcripts are named: [ID] [your coder number] Adoptive Identity Coded Transcript.doc.

example: **10204 14-106 Adoptive Identity Coded Transcript.doc**

2. Save completed code sheets in your "W3 Coding Sheets" subfolder in your folder. Code sheets are named [ID] [your coder number] Adoptive Identity Codesheet.doc.

example: **10204 14-106 Adoptive Identity Codesheet.doc**

4. Save your transcript and codes sheet frequently as you work so you do not lose your work.
Be sure you fill in all items on the code sheet: codes, highlights, coder id, your name, and the participant's identification number.

Virtual Private Network

You can work on the network drive offsite using Virtual Private Network (VPN), which offer a secure connection protecting the confidentiality of our participant data.

Special Instructions for Jump Drives Users

If you are using a jump drive to code offsite you will need to bring it in to the office periodically to have new transcripts loaded on and completed transcripts and code sheets loaded off to the network.

Your completed code sheets and transcripts will be saved on the network in your folder's appropriate subfolders and removed from your jump drive.

Coding Procedure - continued

Highlighting Passages

1. Locate the sections of the transcript to code. In the adoption section questions 1 through 94. In the Religion section questions 11 – 13 and in the School/Work section question 24. Hereafter these sections are referred to as “the transcript”.
2. Open this Manual to the description of the dimension you plan to highlight and code. Read the transcript thoroughly before coding to gain a sense of the whole.
3. Read the transcript thoroughly as you proceed. Highlight passages in the order listed below. Highlight all passages in the transcript relevant to the dimension.

Use the colors shown below to highlight passages.

Positive Affect = light blue
Negative Affect = light gray
Flexibility = bright pink
Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration = yellow
Internal Consistency = bright green

Hint: Code Positive and Negative Affect first. Code Flexibility, Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration, and Internal Consistency in order, respectively. In any event, do not code the last two dimensions in combination with other dimensions.

4. Copy highlighted passages into the appropriate boxes on the code sheet. Type the appropriate question number next to the passage.
5. For Flexibility, Internal Consistency, and Depth of Exploration: Note on your code sheet the reasons for choosing the passages and their intensity. For example you might type "*high flex*", "*rigid*" "*no expl*," "*high expl*," "*contradiction*," "*personal example*," or "*synthesizing statement*". It may also helpful to provide a rationale for your coding decisions.
6. Rarely, a statement will fit more than one dimension. In those rare cases, highlight the text in one color, add the word DOUBLECODE in caps to the end of the text and highlight it using the color of the second dimension. DOUBLECODE. Include the word DOUBLECODE when you copy and paste into the code sheet so we have a record of what text was used more than once and where it was used.

Coding Procedures - continued

Assigning Codes

1. Compare your evidence to the dimension descriptions and examples in this Manual each time you code. Referring to the Manual will help prevent coder drift. The Manual provides examples at each code level for each dimension. Each example includes all the relevant passages that were found in the transcript for that dimension.
2. Age of the participant should not be considered in choosing codes. Dimension descriptions and examples apply to all transcripts, independent of the age of the participant.
3. Length of the transcript should not be considered in choosing codes. Apply dimension descriptions and examples independent of the length of the transcript (see #8, below, if there is insufficient data to code).
4. Avoid using personal experiences or bias as undocumented “evidence” when you code. Your coding will be more accurate if you are aware of your assumptions and biases.
5. Assign codes based on all the evidence. Weigh evidence -- as defined by this Manual -- as a whole. One or two very intense statement may outweigh frequent statements of lower intensity. On the other hand, frequent statements indicating the absence of a dimension may outweigh a moderately or highly intense statement.
6. What if you have trouble choosing a code? Note the reasons you are having trouble and bring the issue to the coding team meeting for discussion. We may want to add examples to this Manual or have the transcript coded by several members of the team – some transcripts will be more challenging to code than others.
7. If evidence suggests a code is on the borderline between two codes, choose the code farther away from the middle of the range. For example, choose a “4” if the evidence suggests the code is either a “3” or “4.”
8. On rare occasions, a transcript will yield no information on a dimension. Code it “88” on the coding sheet.

Coder and Consensus Training¹

Coders will code the same transcript prior to our weekly meeting and come ready to share results, including codes, coding sheets, and coding rationale. Coding rationale should be based on the Coding Manual.

It is essential to refer to the Coding Manual while coding and consensing each and every transcript in order to internalize the constructs, definitions, and examples.

The purpose of this task is to understand each other's rationale for selecting specific passages and assigning codes. It is not a competition to get the "right" codes. If we strive together to understand each other's rationale we will reach a group decision "a group think" about choosing passages and codes that is thoroughly grounded in the Coding Manual. It is important that coders be willing to listen to the rationale behind coding decisions and work to learn from the experience. This process will help coders better understand variables and develop a sense of ownership. These factors work together to build confidence in coding ability.

Coders will refer to the Coding Manual to explain their rationale and to resolve differences. There are two types of differences to resolve: 1) choice of passages, and 2) choice of codes. If the Coding Manual does not clearly address the situation, the Coding Team Supervisor will revise the Coding Manual accordingly. Revisions will be limited to: 1) making coding decisions more explicit, 2) clarifying existing language, 3) adding examples, or 4) decisions about how to handle new situations. We will not change the meaning of dimensions or code levels. If you get stuck on an issue during consensus, please refer the issue to the Coding Team Supervisor for evaluation.

You may find that some dimensions descriptions in the Coding Manual do not match your personal definitions. You must willingly set aside your personal definitions and base decisions on the coding manual. In order to be valid and reliable all dimensions must be rated in the same manner by all coders.

Consensus allows coders to practice and receive feedback regarding their coding skills. By meeting together regularly, we will practice coding skills together. This helps ensure that we continue to apply the coding system correctly and consistently as outlined in the Coding Manual.

Coding will be frustrating at times. You will never completely master the skill of coding. Coding is similar to any activity, such as playing a musical instrument or sport. It is not possible to reach and maintain a level of excellence without continual practice. Excellent musicians or basketball players occasionally have an off day, miss a basket or play a

¹ This section was adapted from the Rural Family Business Team Research Coding Manual.

wrong note. That is the reality of attempting to master a skill. Coding must be developed and maintained through study and practice.

Consensus Coding Behavior

The purpose of consensus meetings is to reach a common understanding of the coding manual. Because, by definition, consensus involves discussing codes where coders initially disagreed, these meetings have potential for interpersonal conflict. You can help reduce conflict by entering consensus with an open mind and working with other coders to better understand the Coding Manual. Remember, points of disagreement offer potential for learning. The process of clarifying differences will lead to insights— those ‘ah-ha’ experiences that help improve reliability and validity.

Effective Consensus Behavior

1. Be tolerant of individual differences in consensus meeting styles.
2. Be open to the other person’s point of view and ask for your partner's input or opinion.
3. Do not give up before explaining your point of view.
- 4 **Refer to the Coding Manual for all explanations and decisions.**
- 5 Gently remind your partner to refer to the codebook when comments are not relevant to dimension descriptions. Be aware that your personal views or experiences might be influencing you.
- 5 Get personal conversations out of the way before starting the meeting.
7. Be respectful of the other person’s scores. Express your opinions as your own, not in a manner that tells the other person what they should be thinking.
8. Do not take score decisions personally. Look at consensus meetings as a way to sharpen your coding skills. Explain your thought process and refer to the Coding Manual; consensus is an opportunity to reinforce your understanding of the Coding Manual.
9. If there are two very different views, you might not be able to reach consensus, in these cases document your thinking and refer the transcript to the Coding Supervisor

Ineffective Consensus Behavior

1. Changing a score without having appropriate evidence or reasoning.
2. Not using the manual to reach consensus.
3. Showing up late or not being prepared.
4. Being unable to justify your decision, but not letting go.
5. Using the “barter system” to arrive at score decisions, i.e., trading scores with your consensus partner.
6. Taking too long on a single piece of evidence. Getting stuck.
7. Interrupting your consensus partner.
8. Taking score decisions personally instead of trying to gain a greater understanding of the coding system.

You are strongly encouraged to contact the Coding Supervisor to discuss any issue related to AI coding, such as ideas for coder training or issues related to group dynamics, assignments, due dates, consensus – anything! Please do not sit on an issue that is bothering you. The process will be more satisfying for you and for others if problems are resolved as soon as possible.

Dimension Descriptions and Examples

Positive and Negative Affect

Positive and negative affect are two separate dimensions that capture the degree of current affect the participant expresses about: 1) adoption and being adopted, 2) adoptive family members and connections with adoptive family, and 3) birth family members and connections with birth family.

Aspects of positive and negative affect include, but are not limited to the participant's expressions of his or her:

- level of comfort when talking about adoption with family members, friends, peers, and other people;
- feelings regarding connections with the birthfamily, such as liking or disliking to spend time together;
- feelings regarding connections with the adoptive family, such as liking or disliking to spend time together;
- feelings about birth family members;
- feelings about adoptive family members;
- feelings about being adopted; and,
- considerations of adoption in general as positive or negative.

Code positive and negative affect separately: High levels of one dimension do not imply low levels of the other. Participants will have a variety of feelings of varying intensity about their adoptions. For example, a participant might express strong positive feelings about one member of her birthfamily "I love my birthmother" while at the same time expressing negative feelings about another member of her birthfamily "I don't feel comfortable talking with him." The positive feelings do not cancel out the negative feelings. The feelings are coded separately. Neutral feelings or absence of feeling may be double-coded as positive and negative affect.

Strong words: Examples of words identifying strong positive affect include, but are not limited to, **respect, joy, excited, love, blessed, grateful, happy, and wonderful**. Examples of words identifying strong negative affect include, but are not limited to, **angry, mad, sad, ashamed, upset, afraid, resentful, and worried**.

Absence of feelings: The absence of expressed positive (or negative) feelings may be indicated by an inability to think of positive (or negative) aspects of adoption or by no positive (or negative) comments.

Time period: Current affect. Current affect will usually be stated using the present tense, but participants sometimes use the past tense to describe current affect when they are telling stories about past events.

It was surprisingly less comfortable than what I had expected

I was so grateful my mom arranged the meeting.

Statements such as these are current affect if the event took place recently (i.e. in the past year) unless you find evidence that the participant's affect subsequently changed. It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between current, past, and even future affect. If you are not certain whether to include a statement and it will influence your coding, bring it to the coding supervisor for discussion.

Positive Affect: 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Negative Affect: 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Low scores are anchored by neutrality or absence of feeling and high scores are anchored by intense feelings about adoption.

Frequency, intensity, and breadth: Assign higher codes when you find: 1) more frequent examples of expressed feeling, 2) use of strong feeling words (see previous page), and 3) examples that cover more than one of the three areas: a) adoption and being adopted, b) adoptive family members and connections with adoptive family, and c) birth family members and connections with birth family.

How to Code Ambiguous affect statements:

Include ambiguous affect statements as evidence to help determine a code only when you find evidence elsewhere in the transcript that clearly supports an interpretation of the ambiguous statement. For example, in the examples listed in #1, below, you might also find, respectively, "*I am blessed to have my adoptive family,*" and "*I enjoy being with her.*" In the example listed in #2, below, you might also find "*I am blessed that he has come into my life.*" Examples: the participant does not state explicitly a feeling about adoption, but makes a statement that includes:

1. ...a positive or negative adjective in reference to the self and adoption. For example, "*I had a much better life with my adopted family*" or "*We are close.*"
2. ...a feeling someone else has about the participant (i.e. again referring to the self). For example, "*He loves us*" or "*He loves me.*" Although people rarely say "*I enjoy feeling loved*" we cannot assume being loved evokes pleasant feelings; it may evoke unpleasant and confusing feelings, or no feelings at all.

Statements that are not affect:

He is kind and thoughtful or She is mad at him.

Descriptions of other people and their feelings are not expressions of a participant's affect.

It was really scary when I first met her.

Code current, not past affect

I would really love to have the opportunity to....

Do not code affect based on conditional "uncertain" future events

Examples of Positive Affect

Code of 1

No, low or reluctant/non-definitive positive emotions or moderate affect limited to adoptive family (i.e. no affect about adoption, being adopted, or birth family)

W3 Transcript 1

- 3. *They are completely comfortable for me*
- 88. *My (adoptive) family has been wonderful.*

W3 Transcript 2

- 3: *There is very little that I can't talk to my (adoptive) parents about without feeling comfortable*
- 70: *It is never something that has bothered me.*
- 85: *Everything is family first (adoptive family) and I like that.*

Code of 2

Moderate Affect

Moderately positive emotions expressed

W3 Transcript 3

- 1. *I am thrilled [about having adoption information]*
- 9. *He [husband] understands how I feel ... He is very supportive and I know I can talk to him any time I need to.**
- 83. *I know it [adoption] was the best thing for me*

W3 Transcript 4

- 3. *that makes me feel better afterwards.*
- 8. *how lucky we got.*
- 9. *They are comfortable because we are on the same team.*
- 11. *My respect for her (birthmother) has increased...impressed that she knew to give me up.**
- 61. *nothing bothers me much about it all.*
- 86. *I really care about my (adoptive family) brother though.*
- 13.R. *...I got so lucky a pick as my adoptive family.*

Code of 3

Moderately Strong

Mixture of moderately positive and strong positive emotions expressed

W3 Transcript 5

- 3. *Very comfortable, I have no problem talking about adoption*
- 5. *I was relieved! And excited because now I know my [adoption] story in full*
- 9. *Very comfortable*

84. *My family is wonderful*
84. *I love my family*
12R. *I am glad that I was adopted through a spiritual organization*

W3 Transcript 6

3. *It is very comfortable.*
3. *She is very open with me and I am with her as well.*
11. *I value her opinions*
27. *It is nice that he looks at me as his daughter.*
43. *I really like my dad's youngest brother.*
44. *He is just a great person who is fun to talk with.*
61. *but overall he is a wonderful person.*
12R. *I had a much better life ... (due to adoption)*

Code of 4

Strong Affect

Strong positive emotions expressed

W3 Transcript 7 (high 4)

27. *I like him*
27. *I admire him for it*
44. *really cares about me.*
69. *I now feel like that void has been filled*
70. *I don't feel that connection and attachment like I do for my (adoptive) family*
92. *Anyone that has ever placed a child up for adoption I admire*
12R. *I was blessed with a wonderful family (adoptive)*
24WS. *I am forever grateful and truly respect her for putting my well being before her own*

W3 transcript 8

1: *well it's a comforting thought to know that you are loved enough to be given up and enough to be taken in*
1. *She is a good person and I wouldn't mind having her as a mom*
11: *It feels natural.*
13: *It's kind of wonderful*
66: *I love both of them so it's a very happy situation*
67: *go to great lengths to help me feel comfortable and happy and loved...I never had a doubt I've been smothered with it*
90: *Well I think adoption is a wonderful thing. You're making sure that a child is with a loving family and nothing is more important than that.*

Code of 5

Very Strong Affect

Very Strong positive emotions expressed

W3 Transcript 9

5: *I love both of my parents and I know morally what is right and wrong now and what I hope to have for my future*

7: *and I am happy I was adopted rather than the alternative.*

7. *Which I am grateful for.**

26: *I'm happy now that I can see her more and stuff and I have more flexibility to spend time with her*

I am glad for the change but also now I am a lot older and on my own so I guess it took that.

42: *It doesn't bother me,*

61: *I am very satisfied about being adopted*

69: *And lucky for me I had two parents that supported my relationship with my birth family.*

71: *I love her*

84: *help us realize how much we all loved each other and how much we meant to each other.*

I am grateful because it help us all grow and love each other and appreciate each other more.

90: *I am grateful for being a adopted it was a wonderful experience that I think helped me grow in many areas in life such as relationships and responsibility. It was in all a great experience.*

12R. *I look at it as a blessing that I have two families that love me and care about me now.*

Examples of Negative Affect

Code of 1

No Affect

No/minimal negative emotions expressed about adoption; neutrality (adoption is matter-of-fact; no negative emotion tied to adoptive status or adoptive identity).

W3 Transcript 1

42. *It doesn't bother me.*

61. *I am not worried or unhappy with the adoption*

Code of 2

Low Affect

Reluctant/non-definitive emotions expressed

W3 transcript 2 (low 2)

61. *I just worry that my birthparents don't want to know who I am*

W3 Transcript 3

27. *Sometimes too much.*

40. Sometimes it gets to be too much.
61. The only thing I worry about is having to adopt my own someday.
67. Holidays can be stressful.
67. I am sure to be more stressed.

W3 transcript 4

2. I really don't like to talk to them about it, I feel that we have our family and that's that; it doesn't matter to me
7. I never really feel fully open talking with either my birth parents or parents about it; I'm worried about hurting someone's feeling, etc

Code of 3

Moderate Affect

Moderately negative emotions expressed (e.g. the participant may express some sadness about his/her adoptive identity or status or some dissatisfaction with his/her connections with birth family).

W3 transcript 5

3. with my father they are strained, frustrating *
61. Mary's extreme emotionalism bothers me and the only thing that worries me is my dad and my brother's feelings about the situation*

W3 transcript 6

61. I am hurt that my birthfather wants no part in my life. It's hard to accept that from someone who is your own blood.
61. I guess the only thing I worry about is not ever hearing the full story of my adoption.*

Code of 4

Moderately Strong

Mixture of moderately negative and strong negative emotions expressed

W3 Transcript 7

Removed

W3 Transcript 8

Removed

Code of 5

Strong Affect

Strong negative emotions expressed

W3 Transcript 9 (This is the high end of five - not all fives need to reach this level of intensity)
removed

Flexibility

Brief Description: flexibility is the degree the participant is able to view issues as others might see them. Focus primarily on issues related to adoption or being adopted.

- Flexibility involves recognition that there is more than one side to a story. It should be coded from all aspects of the narrative, including descriptions of actions, thoughts, and emotions. Participants presenting a highly flexible story are willing to consider the complex nature of issues and relationships, and to acknowledge that their personal view is not the only valid one.
- Inflexible participants adhere rigidly to their story-line and assume that relationships are to be considered from only one vantage point, their own.

Time period: not applicable

Range: The range is 1(low) to 5 (high).

anchors: Consider flexibility in light of these anchors (e.g. choose a higher code if you find more evidence for high anchors, as compared to low anchors). It is not necessary for a narrative to possess all anchors in order to receive a higher or lower code.

	Highest	Lowest
"lens" is	Able to perspective-take	Personalizes; assumes own standard
	Multiple sides to issues and relationships	Issues and relationships are seen as unidimensional

Note: Flexibility is the ability to take another person's point of view. It is not simply the participant's ability to change his or her own point of view over time; she or he must also recognize someone else's perspective in the process. There must be evidence that the participant views issues as others might see them.

Examples of Flexibility

Code of 1 Low Flexibility

Individual narrative strongly adheres to one rigid perspective OR narrative lacks perspective-taking.

W3 transcript 1

70. *They chose for me not to be a part of their lives, I am honoring their wishes.*
Remainder removed

Rationale: These statements are rigid. There is very little recognition of alternate views.

Code of 2 Moderately Low

Individual narrative adheres to one perspective with minimal recognition of alternative views OR narrative has minimal perspective-taking.

W3 transcript 2
removed

Rationale: This participant has minimal recognition of alternatives, makes rigid statement, and views the world through his/her own lens.

Code of 3 Moderate

Individual clearly recognizes more than one perspective. A minor rigid statement or two may exist if the narrative as a whole is consistent with a level 3 code.

W3 transcript 3
removed

Code of 4 Moderately High

Individual elaborates two or more perspectives to issue. A rigid statement or two may exist if the narrative as a whole is consistent with a level 4 code.

W3 transcript 1
removed

Elaborating two or more perspectives to issue.

Three examples of perspective-taking

Perspective-taking (changes view by taking perspective of his/her parents)

Multiple sides to issues

Code of 5 High

Individual integrates and resolves two or more perspectives. A rigid statement or two may exist if the narrative as a whole is consistent with a level 5 code.

W3 transcript 2
removed

Elaborating two or more perspectives to issue.

Elaborates and resolves perspectives

Two example of perspective-taking

Elaborates and resolves perspectives

High levels of perspective-taking

Elaborates and resolves perspectives

High level of perspective-taking

Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration

Brief description: depth of adoptive identity exploration is the degree to which a participant reflects on the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted.

Highlight passages when the participant:

- Indicates little or no exploration has taken place
- Contrasts past and present thinking about adoption or being adopted
- Contrasts own role, ideas, thoughts, or actions about adoption or being adopted with others
- Reflects on the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted
- Describes gathering information on any aspect of adoption or being adopted
- Describes the process of making a decision, experimenting, or questioning an issue related to adoption or being adopted

Range: The range is 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Time period: Current and past exploration.

Examples of passages indicative of little or no depth of adoptive exploration:

States lack of interest in thinking, reflecting, or investigating the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted

I do not know. I do not think about it.

...if I had the desire to find my birthparents, I don't know, maybe that would throw some things off because I would maybe have to go to another state or country to meet them, but (pause) I don't know.

Examples of depth of adoptive identity exploration:

Contrasts past and present thinking about adoption or being adopted

"I used to think X, but now I think Y because..."

"She [birthmother] is a lot like me in an astonishing amount of ways. It's funny because I believed that your environment had more to do with your behavior than genetics but looking at my birthmother and our similarities I really rethink that particular argument."

Contrasts own role, ideas, thoughts, or actions about adoption or being adopted with those of others

"My mother searched for her parents and wasn't impressed with them. She was also adopted (Adoptive mother that is). She didn't really feel complete without knowing them I think but I am not the sum of my parts genetically I am here and that's all I need"

Contrasts own role, ideas, thoughts, or actions about adoption or being adopted with those of others - continued

"We are like....mother and son when I am with her [birthmother] in person. It feels natural. But when I am at a distance she feels more like a favored aunt. Part of the family but distant."

Reflects on the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted

[Being adopted] has helped me develop beliefs within my religion, and it's just brought it all together as a whole."

"We are a family, and my being adopted and my brother being adopted makes the family, and so, if we weren't adopted, we probably wouldn't be here, and there would be no family, right?"

Participant actively gathered information on any aspect of adoption or being adopted

"I contacted the agency and they said they could set me up anytime to connect with her [birthmother]."

"My partner is pretty open to adopting a child cause I asked her and she thought adoption was an option for us"

Describes the process of making a decision, experimenting, or questioning an issue related to adoption or being adopted

"I'm still deciding if I want to search for my birthparents. They might expect me to call them mom or dad – I wouldn't like that. Taking it as just friends would probably work. It would be hard, though, if they expected more than I wanted to deal with I guess. But I would like to see them, just to kind of be, like, whole. I don't know what I'm trying to say – emotional connection, maybe. Just to have that connection that is there."

Examples of statements that are NOT moderate or high levels of depth of exploration:

States a conclusion without also describing the meaning or implication of adoption or being adopted

she [birthmother] is kind and funny very smart except that she is kind of lazy...same as me. She'll take the shorter path which is one of my faults. She looks a bit like me a lot of the same features same body type. (Contrasts are superficial – low reflection. Compare this example to the contrast examples listed above and on the previous page.)

If [adoptive parents] chose to withhold something then they must have had good reason. I am satisfied by what I have been told (no depth - also no flexibility).

I've considered it but I don't think that I need more information (conclusion without reflection)

Describes engaging in adoption-related activities without contrast, reflection, investigation, questioning, etc.

I am usually invited or I am the one that asks if we can get together [to visit birth family members] (very low depth - initiated getting together, but no other evidence)

I was at [birthmother] house for thanksgiving and over dinner we were chatting about what it was like for her at the time of my conception and subsequent birth. She described the fear and sadness she felt after giving me up. (No depth of exploration – description)

Depth of Adoptive Identity Code Level Examples

Code of 1

No or little depth of adoptive identity exploration

Little or no depth of exploration has taken place. There will be many statements that indicate lack of interest in thinking, reflecting, or investigating the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted (see page 26).

W3 transcript 1

removed

W3 transcript 2

removed

There is one low depth statement within #8, but most statements indicate lack of exploration.

Code of 2

Limited depth of adoptive identity exploration

Limited (low) depth of thinking, reflecting, or investigating the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted (see examples of depth of exploration on pages 26-27).

Little (low) depth is usually, but not always, accompanied by lack of exploration statements. One high or moderate depth statement is possible if it is offset by many statements indicating lack of exploration. Many information gathering statements may also be sufficient to assign a code of 2.

W3 transcript 3 (example with low depth)
removed

Rationale: *This transcript includes low depth statements (5, 69, 70) and information gathering/lack of exploration (11).*

W3 transcript 4 (example with one high depth and many lack of exploration statements)
removed

Rationale: *The transcript has multiple passages indicating no interest or willingness to explore adoptive identity and one high depth statement (90). The transcript receives a code of two instead of one because of the one high depth statement.*

W3 transcript 5 (example with many active information gathering statements)
removed

Rationale: *Although no reflection/contrast statements and lack of exploration, these active information gathering statements are sufficient for a code of 2.*

Code of 3

Moderate depth of adoptive identity exploration

Moderate depth of thinking, reflecting, or investigating the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted. There will be a mix of low to moderate contrast, reflection, or processing depth statements (see examples of depth of exploration on pages 26-27).

There will be few, if any, lack of exploration statements (see page 26). Lack of contrast, reflection, or processing depth of exploration statements may be offset by a high number of information-gathering statements.

W3 Transcript 6

removed

(contrasts past and present)

contrasts self and other people)

(contrast past present)

(moderate reflection)

(reflection)

Rationale: *There is only one lack of interest in exploration statement (2) and it is accompanied by low to moderate depth statements (4, 17, 26, 67, 24 & 89).*

Code of 4

Mixture of moderate and high depth of adoptive identity exploration

Moderate to high depth of thinking, reflecting, or investigating the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted. There will be a mix of moderate to high contrast, reflection, or processing depth statements There will rarely be lack of exploration statements . Lack of contrast, reflection, or processing depth of exploration statements may be offset by a very high number of information-gathering statements.

W3 transcript 7

Removed

reflection

questioning

reflection and decision-making

Decision-making

Reflection

Decision-making

Rationale: Moderate to high level depth statements

W3 transcript 8

removed

High-level information gathering – not a high level of reflection

.Reflection

Information gathering (the description is not depth)

Reflection/role contrast

Reflection and contrast

contrast

Rationale: moderate to high level depth statements

Code of 5

High depth of adoptive identity exploration

High depth of thinking, reflecting, or investigating the meaning or implications of adoption or being adopted. There will be high contrast, reflection, or processing depth statements (see examples of depth of exploration on pages 26-27). There will be no lack of exploration statements (see page 26). Reflection type statements may be augmented by information-gathering statements.

W3 transcript 9

removed

Rationale: Many very high depth statements, augmented by information gathering.

W3 transcript 10

removed

Rationale: Many very high depth of adoptive identity statements

Internal Consistency of the Narrative

Brief description: Internal consistency ranges from a theory about adoption that is full of holes with little rationale to a well-supported theory.

A narrative is highly internally consistent when it includes personal and general examples that support theories or themes about adoption and includes synthesizing statements that pull the narrative together (weaving together contradictions, and personal and general examples). Narratives high in internal consistency may contain contradictions, but they are recognized. A narrative lacks internal consistency when it has few or no personal or general examples, lacks synthesizing statements, or includes contradictions that are not explained or recognized.

Coding Instructions:

1. **Identify at least one key theme (or point) about adoption from the transcript.**
Identifying themes will help you evaluate the narrative for internal consistency. (How consistent is the participant's narrative about adoption with his or her theme(s)?) If the narrative contains at least one theme (or point) about adoption, select it and type it on your codesheet, and proceed. If there are no themes (or points), assign a code of one.

How to find adoption themes: Adoption themes are usually, but not always, readily apparent after reading the transcripts several times. Occasionally a transcript does not contain a readily identifiable theme, but does contain a series of points about adoption. In these cases, evaluate the narrative as these points appear. **Adoption themes assist you in evaluating the narrative for internal consistency; they have no other purpose.**

2. **Highlight the following elements to help you assign the level of internal consistency:**
 - a. Examples that support the themes or points. Are they vague or detailed?
 - b. Statements that contradict the themes and are not recognized or explained. Are there multiple unrecognized contradictions? Are the contradictions significant in scope or not?
 - c. Synthesizing statements such as recognized and explained contradictions or other statements that weave (pull together) personal and general examples.
3. Use code level descriptors, shown on the next page, to assign codes.

Anchors: Consider internal consistency in light of these anchors (e.g. choose a higher code if you find more evidence for high anchors, as compared to low anchors). It is not necessary for a narrative to possess all anchors in order to receive a higher or lower code.

High	Low
Recognized contradictions	Unrecognized contradictions
Explained contradictions	Unexplained contradiction
Detailed examples	Vague examples
Personal examples	Few personal details
Generalized examples	No generalized examples
Synthesizing explanations	Absence of synthesizing explanations

Special Note about Contradictions: Interviewers did not always ask participants to expand or explain behavior. Personal theories are inherently complicated. It is possible for a highly internally consistent narrative to have what may seem like unexplained contradictory behavior because a participant did not have an opportunity to explain his or her behavior. Do not infer contradictions between theory and personal examples of behavior if there is not clear evidence of contradictions.

Range: one (low) to five (high)

Time period: Not applicable

Code Level Descriptions

Code of 1

No adoption theory or points can be identified. If a theory or points are identified, there will be: 1) few or no personal/general examples and no synthesizing statements, **and/or** 2) multiple unrecognized contradictions.

Code of 2

Unsupported adoption theory

An adoption theory or points may be identified, but there will be few personal/general examples. There will be few, if any, synthesizing statements. Examples will tend to be simplistic (e.g., advice to prospective adoptive parents would be to “go for it”) when prompted by the interviewer. The narrative may include unrecognized contradictions.

Code of 3

Limited Support for adoption theory

Adoption theory is consistently supported with personal/general examples. Personal examples will range from simple to moderately detailed. Synthesizing, if present, will be simple. Unrecognized contradictions may exist IF balanced by elements required of a code of 3.

Code of 4

Adoption theory Supported: Emerging Internal Consistency:

Adoption theory is consistently supported with personal/general examples. There will be one or more moderately detailed example(s). One or more synthesizing statements (weaving together or making connections among the personal/examples and/or recognized contradictions) are present, but they are **not** consistently found in the narrative. Unrecognized contradictions may exist IF balanced by elements required of code of 4.

Code of 5

Adoption Theory Well Supported: Developed Internal Consistency

Adoption theory is consistently supported with personal/general examples. There will at least a few highly detailed examples. Synthesizing statements (weaving together or making connections among the personal/examples and/or recognized contradictions) are present. Contradictions should be recognized or insignificant in scope.

Examples of Internal Consistency

Use code level descriptors, not examples, to assign codes. Examples are provided in order to give you an idea of theories and points that have been used in the past to help evaluate internal consistency in specific transcripts. Do not expect to find these theories or points in the transcripts you code. Theories and points vary from transcript to transcript.

Code of 1 example

W3 transcript 1

Theory: Difficult to find a theory - maybe adoption makes him closer to parents???

No clear theory or points, few examples, no synthesizing, and multiple unrecognized contradictions.

W3 transcript 2

Theory: ??? God has a plan and puts you in a family for a purpose, but does not know what it is yet. If you have a family you love you do not need to be meet your birthparents

No personal examples or synthesizing.

Code of 2 example

W3 transcript 3

Theory: medical and genetic information are important: information/contact is necessary to gain information. Many unrecognized contradictions with few personal details or synthesizing explanations

Code of 3 example

W3 transcript 4

Theory: Differences among family members due to adoption are an important part of a family dynamic. Consistent detailed personal examples, moderately strong synthesizing statement, and unexplained contradictions

W3 transcript 5

Theory: Openness requires being willing to rethink things. Consistent detailed personal examples, moderately strong synthesizing statement and unexplained contradictions

Code of 4 example

W3 transcript 6

Theory: The “blood” relationship with a birthparent rivals the importance of the relationship with the adoptive parent but it needs to be supported through regular contact.

Consistent personal and synthesizing statements

6. *Well yes my birth mom and I are very close we pretty much can tell each other everything not to say I love her more or anything I just think because we are blood we have a connection that can't be built.*

42. *Honestly I don't know I guess I have my own life now and he [birthfather] isn't apart of it that sounds kind of harsh but we don't have anything that we have bonded with he doesn't try and neither do I.*

71. *Well the fact that she is my mom by blood and I love her and now she has my sister and I want to see her grow plus I want my mom to see when I get married and have kids I guess just want to have her be a part of my life is all*

71. *I guess the fact that he wasn't very responsive to me in the first place and the fact that our relationship isn't very strong so I guess I just kind of gave up on it seeing that he was never proactive to get to know me.*

Code of 5

W3 transcript 8 example

Removed

Theory: It is important to recognize distinctions between adoptive and biological parents.

Many personal and general examples that are woven together with synthesizing statements.

Background Information

Depth of Adoptive Identity Exploration Coding: This manual incorporates material from the Wave 2 Identity Coding Manual for Adopted Adolescents (Grotevant, Dunbar, & Kohler, 1999), which incorporated material from the Identity Status Manual of James E. Marcia (1964), while expanding the content and scope of the original manual. The information adapted here is taken from:

Grotevant, H. D., & Cooper, C. R. (1981). Assessing adolescent identity in the areas of occupation, religion, politics, friendships, dating, and sex roles: Manual for administration and coding of the interviewer. JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 11, 52 (Ms. No. 2295).

Narrative coherence coding was developed in part through The Family Story Collaborative Project (FSCP), a synergistic efforts of a group of family researchers who were brought together under the auspices of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Network on Early Childhood Transition. The participants brought to the FSCP a variety of perspectives, some grounded in family systems theory, some in human development, and some in family therapy.