

A profile of childrearing characteristics of adoptive parents

Investigating parenting styles of adoptive parents

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Abstract

The aim of the current research is to investigate the parenting style of adoptive parents. 63 adoptive parents, who adopted children who are now 5-10 years old, filled in an online *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSQD). All of them were classified as belonging to the authoritative style. Relevant topics about adoption and parenting were discussed.

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Introduction

Definition of terms

Adoption:

Adoption refers to “a legal act that transfers parental rights and responsibilities from the parents who gave birth to the child to those who are adopting the child”. It is a relationship forged between parents and children by law rather than by means of reproduction (McGowan, 1996).

Parenting styles:

Parenting styles describe how parents behave towards their children. There are different approaches to describe parenting. In this thesis, the classical framework suggested by the clinical and developmental psychologist Baumrind is used. She identified three prototypic patterns of parenting based on four parental behavior dimensions, namely control, maturity demands, communication and nurturance. The three prototypic patterns of parenting are descriptively summarized as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles (Baumrind, 1967).

Background and aim

There is a fair amount of research about the topic of adoption. Some of the research studies are about the theory behind and the policy (Triseliotis, Shireman, & Hundleby, 1997), some about the system and matching process (Blackstone, Buck, Hakim, & Spiegel, 2008), and quite a lot of research centers around the child that is adopted, for example about his or her understanding of adoption (David M Brodzinsky, Singer, & Braff, 1984), whether adopted children have a higher risk for attention difficulties and aggressive behavior (Rosnati, Montiroso, & Barni, 2008), and learning difficulties (Wadsworth, DeFries, Fulker, & Plomin, 1995), to name but a few. There has been research about the family system as well, such as those that investigated the psychological risks associated with adoption for the parents and children (David M Brodzinsky, 1987). However, there is not much research that is solely about the parenting beliefs, behaviors or styles of adoptive parents.

The aim of this research project is to explore more regarding the adoptive parents. The original plan was to examine and compare the parenting styles of adoptive parents and biological parents. As this was not feasible, focus is only put on the adoptive parents. So the aim is to investigate the parenting styles of adoptive parents. Hopefully this exploratory data will be a first step toward understanding the parenting styles of adoptive parents.

Literature review

International legal framework of intercountry adoptions

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption of 1993 is the principal international treaty regulating intercountry adoption. Besides Norway, it has been ratified by the following EU Member States and accession Countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

The document was specifically drafted to set detailed and legally binding international standards defining an agreed system of supervision, channels of communication and effective relationships between the authorities in the country of origin and the state receiving the adopted child. It is important to have shared principles and common transparent procedures. The aim of the Convention has been clearly pointed out in Article 1 of the article. It is “to establish safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights as recognized by international law” (ChildONEurope Secretariat, 2007).

Legal framework of adoption in Norway

The legal framework for adoption in Norway is constituted of The Act on Adoption and governmental regulations and guidelines.

The current Norwegian Adoption Act was passed on 28 February 1986 and came into force on 1 January 1987. It replaced the former Adoption Act of 1917. To give an overview, The Act is divided into five chapters, (1) conditions for adoption; (2) anonymous adoption, duty to provide information; (3) effects of adoption; (4) issues relating to private international law; and (5) commencement, amendments to other acts.

According to the Act on Adoption, the authorities have specified two sets of regulations in year 1999. One of them is applicable to placement of children in domestic adoption and one regarding requirements relating to organizations that arrange the placement of children in

intercountry adoption (the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (Bufdir), 2002). The main points of the adoption act will be elaborated in the 'Process of adoption' section.

Adoption in Norway

There are two types of adoption, national adoption and intercountry adoption. The most common type of national adoption is the adoption of stepchildren, while there are also cases of adoption of foster children (the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (Bufdir), 2002), and adoptions where the parents ask the authorities for help to find adoptive parents for their child. In this thesis, the focus is on intercountry adoption, meaning that the adoptive children come from a country other than Norway.

In Scandinavia, intercountry adoptions began at the end of the 1960s (Dalen, 1999). For Norway, most adoptive children came from Asia from the 1960s to the 1980s. Towards the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, more adoptive children came from Latin America. For a period of time, Colombia was the largest donor country (The former Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 1998). In 2012, 457 children were adopted in Norway, which is 7 per cent less than 2011. If we look at the trend, the number of inter-country adoptions continued to fall. It was 22 per cent lower than in 2011, and was at its lowest since the early 1970s. The reason may be that fewer children were released for adoption for other countries. Among the intercountry-adopted children, 51 of them were from China, which amount to 22% of the total number. Next, 17% came from Columbia and 13% were from South Korea (Statistics Norway, 2013a).

Adoptive children

For the adoptive children, it was well-documented that they would have a number of loss issues. They may include the loss of birth parents and of other family ties, of siblings (if any), of genetic and health information, of country of origin, of first language and of cultural heritage, etc (J. Johnstone, 2007). There have also been quite a number of studies on the different aspects of the development of adopted children.

Physical growth

Nutritional deficits have an impact on a child's development (Wachs, 2000). At least some of the institutions for abandoned children are not up to standard, and there have been some research evidence that suggested that children who are adopted show growth and developmental delays (Miller & Hendrie, 2000). However, other research has demonstrated that children's physical growth shows some differential plasticity, for example, international adoption leads to a considerable catch-up of both height and weight, although the same effect is not found for head circumference. The same paper also suggested that there is a correlation between a later age of arrival and a less complete catch-up of height and weight (Marinus H Van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Juffer, 2007).

Behavioral/ psychological development

One study involved 186 adoptive couples and 195 biological couples (with the adopted child between 7 to 11 years old). The couples filled in an assessment tool called the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). It was found that the adopted children were perceived by their parents to be having more total and externalizing problems than their non-adopted counterparts.

Externalizing problems mean problems that are manifested in children's outward behavior and reflect the child negatively acting on the external world, instead of internally towards him or herself (Eisenberg et al., 2001). The adopted children were also more likely to demonstrate attention difficulties and aggressive behaviors (Rosnati et al., 2008). In clinical settings, it has been found that adopted children and adolescents were significantly overrepresented in mental health settings (Ingersoll, 1997). Adopted children were more likely to be classified as neurologically impaired, perceptually impaired, or emotionally disturbed (David M.

Brodzinsky & Steiger, 1991). Another study found that adopted children were more likely to be diagnosed as having attention deficit disorders (ADD: DSM-III diagnosis for “hyperactivity”) (Deutsch et al., 1982).

However, other researchers have suggested that the overrepresentation of adopted children in clinical settings might be due to referral bias. The National Council for Adoption of the United States suggested that adoptive parents were quite used to healthcare services and professional help. They may have a heightened awareness of their children’s potential adjustment problems. So, they were more likely to seek help for even the normal developmental problems (Adoption, 1989). In fact, there have been researches that challenge the deficiency model of adopted children. They argued that adopted children and their parents are not necessarily at greater risk for negative outcomes (Borders, Black, & Pasley, 1998). Other researchers made an effort to reconcile the conflicting results in this aspect. Haugaard (1998) postulated three models to try to explain the contradictory results of previous studies. In model 1, adoption has a general negative influence on the child’s adjustment. In model 2, adoption has no negative influence on adjustment; but there is presence of some seriously disturbed adopted children; while in model 3, adoption has a small general negative influence, and there is presence of some seriously disturbed adopted children. However, the researcher noted that there was insufficient data in the current research literature to evaluate which of the above three models represents the adjustment of adopted children most accurately (Haugaard, 1998). So, there is no conclusive result at the moment. Despite this, his attempt reminds us to be critical about the one-sided picture which is often presented in the body of research now.

Learning

Some studies have shown that adopted children often develop learning difficulties (Wadsworth et al., 1995), and such difficulties seem to be more prevalent among adopted children than in the normal population (Silver, 1989). A meta-analysis which involved 62 studies concluded that adopted children did not differ from their non-adopted counterparts in IQ, but their school performance and language abilities lagged behind. There is also a higher incidence rate of learning problems (Marinus H. van Ijzendoorn, Juffer, & Poelhuis, 2005). In Scandinavia, it was shown that as a group, adopted children had lower school performances than Norwegian-born children. But it is important to notice that there was a considerable disparity within the group (Dalen, 2002).

Trust and attachment

Another potential problematic area for adoptive children is their trust and attachment. Attachment was hypothesized to be an evolutionarily advantageous need to form close emotional bonds with one's significant others (Bowlby, 2008). According to attachment theory, a child would aim at maintaining proximity to the attachment figure when there is both real or perceived stress and danger. The exact behaviors of the child may vary, but the goal is constant. Based on what kind of strategies the child uses when he or she faces stressful situations, his or her attachment patterns can be classified into the secure, insecure (avoidant or ambivalent) or insecure-disorganized group. Children who are securely-attached seek contact with their significant others when they are upset. Also, they are easily comforted. In contrast, children who are insecurely attached show some signs of resistance or avoidance (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 2014). Of the three attachment types, disorganized attachment is seen as the most insecure type of attachment. When children who are disorganized face a stressful situation, they usually show a breakdown of a consistent attachment strategy (Main & Hesse, 1990).

Adopted children are hypothesized to be at risk of insecure attachment due to their background of institutional care, and possible maltreatment and neglect. There have been a number of studies about this topic. One of them compared children who spent at least 8 months in a Romanian orphanage with 2 comparison groups; 1 group of nonadopted children and another group of children who were adopted before 4 months of age. Children who spent at least 8 months in a Romanian orphanage showed significantly more insecure attachment than the children in the other 2 groups (Chisholm, 1998). It was found that the insecure attachment was not linked to any aspect of their institutional environment. Instead it was related to specific child and family characteristics. Children who spent at least 8 months in a Romanian orphanage also displayed significantly more indiscriminately friendly behavior. Indiscriminate friendliness means that the child is affectionate and friendly toward all adults, including strangers. This is to be contrasted with normal children, who show fear or caution towards strangers. In other words, for children with indiscriminate friendliness, their behavior toward other adults cannot be discriminated from the behavior toward his or her caregivers (Tizard, 1977).

Despite the higher incidence rate of insecure attachment amongst adopted children, early adoption seems to be an effective intervention for insecure attachment. According to a study employing meta-analyses, children who are adopted are less often disorganized attached when comparing to institutionalized children. From the same piece of research, it was also shown that although children who were adopted after their first birthday showed less attachment security than their non-adopted counterparts, children who were adopted before 12 months of age were actually as securely attached as the children who were not adopted (biologically-born children) (van den Dries, Juffer, van IJzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2009). So, there are some discrepancies as to what age is critical for a child's attachment development.

Groza and Demchuk's typology

Groza and Demchuk attempted to classify children who had been previously institutionalized into 3 typologies. It was based on observations of children adopted from institutions in Romania. The children's condition upon arrival and their later development was observed. The researchers then discussed with scholars, medical practitioners, psychologists, social workers, and adoptive parents in countries like Norway, Iceland, the Netherlands, Spain, Romania, India, Ukraine and the United States in order to refine the typology. The three typologies are resilient children, children who recover and children with challenges.

The first group, resilient children, refers to children who 'succeed' despite having quite a bit of problems initially. They do not present important impairments at arrival. It was estimated that between one fifth and one third of the intercountry-adopted children fall within this category. The second group of children presents more significant impairments upon arrival due to early adversity. They have some initial challenges or difficulties in their development, but over time they respond positively to their family environment. That is why they are called "wounded wonders". The percentage of "wounded wonders" varies from one research to another. It ranges from 33% to 60-70%. Finally, there is a group of children who continue to have significant difficulties after a period of time spent in their adoptive families, although they may have made much progress in a lot of areas as well. These children are labeled "children with challenges". According to some research, 10% to 33% of intercountry adopted children can be categorized into the "children with challenges" group. A minority of these

children (estimated to be less than or equal to 5%) will show profound disabilities; while the rest of them will need a great deal of care services and help.

Comparing with analyses done only with statistical parameters, Groza and Demchuk's typology offers a more intuitive perspective to understanding intercountry adopted children. The typology is also easier for parents and other people who work with the child to understand. They can identify which group a child belongs to relatively easily (Groza & Demchuk, 2006).

Adoptive parents

To know about the adoptive parents in Norway, perhaps it is helpful to learn about the general process of adoption so as to get a sense of what they have to go through before a child arrives. Below is an outline of the adoption process as described by the research partner of the project, Adopsjonsforum.

Process of adoption

After an applicant decides to adopt, the first step is to contact the child welfare service and one of the three accredited adoption agencies in Norway. The three agencies are Verdens barn, Adopsjonsforum and InorAdopt. All of them are regulated by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat). Exceptions can be made for applicants who plan to adopt a child from his or her own country of origin, or from a country with which he or she has special and strong ties or connections. In that case, Bufetat would be responsible for handling the adoption process instead. But in general, the applicant should submit two applications; one for the adoption agency and the other for the Norwegian authorities.

With the child's best interest in mind, the authorities will begin an assessment process that focus on the applicant's family circumstances and parenting skills. The main aim is to ensure that the adopted child will go to a safe and good home. The assessment normally consists of home visits and interviews. The findings will be summarized in a report, which will be translated and sent with the application abroad.

At around the same time, some of the applicants enroll in an adoption preparation course that is offered by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat). It is considered a prerequisite by at least some of the countries of origin. It may take different forms, including introductions, group discussions, tasks for couples and movies, etc. Amongst others, the following topics are discussed: the reasons for adoption, the child's background, family history, the journey to meet the child and the first time with the child, life in an adoptive family and waiting time (Bufdir, 2013).

After the approval from the Norwegian authorities, the adoption agency works with the applicant to find a country for adoption. One must note that it is not possible to choose the gender of the adoptee. The applicant prepares the required documents (usually involving some translation and certification) and sends them abroad with the assistance of the adoption agency.

Next comes a long waiting time. The total processing time varies from case to case and from country to country. A trend of increasing waiting time has been observed. This may be partly due to an improved international legislation for adoption. Also, domestic adoption is increasing in some of the partner countries. In 2011, the processing time is over four years in average.

At last, most of the applicants receive a positive response. Information of the child will reach the applicant. It may consist of different contents depending on the country of origin. For most countries, a health report, a psychologist's report, a teacher's report and/or a social worker's report may be attached. In addition, some pictures of the child might be included. Finally, the couple and the adopted child meet one another.

About the issue of post-adoption services, the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption requires that the member states offer a range of general functions, for example the provision of counselling. However, due to financial reasons, Norwegian adoption agencies like Adopsjonsforum can no longer offer counselling service to their members (Adopsjonsforum, 2013). So parents have to look elsewhere for the service.

There is a rather expensive fee associated with an international adoption. Most of the costs have to be paid by the applicants themselves. But applicants do receive an "adoption support" from the government. If the applicant have been employed and have had a pensionable income for at least six of the past ten months, and if the annual income exceeds at least half of the national insurance basic amount, then he or she is eligible for parental benefit. Even the applicant is not eligible for parental benefit while adopting children under the age of 15; he or she will be given a lump-sum grant for each adopted child. This also applies to male applicant who solely applies for an adoption. However, the adoption of the child of a spouse does not qualify a person for a lump-sum grant.

Some rules and practicalities regarding adoption in Norway

Below is a summary of some of the rules and practicalities about adoption in Norway. The information was found from the website of Adopsjonsforum and the circular of intercountry adoption with guidelines for approval (Adopsjonsforum, 2013; Familiedepartementet, 1998).

In order to adopt a foreign child, the parent must meet the requirements in both countries - Norway and the child's home country. Usually, if one is able to get approval from the Norwegian authorities, he or she would have no problem with the child's home country. Below are some of the main points of the adoption law in Norway.

The adoption act requires that those who adopt together should be a married couple. In 2013, the Norwegian authorities signaled that it will eventually be possible for cohabiting couples to adopt, but according to the experience of Adopsjonsforum, most of the countries require that the applicants be married. Norwegian authorities require that the couple's cohabitation or marriage must have lasted for at least 2 years. Documentation from the national register is necessary.

Theoretically the adoption act allows people who are single to adopt. However, the rejection rate is slightly higher for single applicants than couples. The success rate may be higher if the applicant has a special connection to the child, for example through kinship and foster relationships.

Buudir has a rather restrictive practice regarding the adoption of a relative's child or other known children. A thorough documentation of the child's background is required. Approval is usually not granted if the child can get adequate care from other relatives in his or her country of residence.

Before 2008, homosexual applicants can only adopt stepchildren, and one partner may adopt the other partner's children in certain circumstances. In 2008, there was an amendment in the adoption act which allows same-sex couples to apply for adoption. However, as mentioned above, adoption agencies must adhere to both the Norwegian laws and regulations and those of the partner countries. Due to different attitudes to homosexuality, almost no country

accepts applications from same-sex couples. The exception is Brazil, where they allow same-sex couples to apply for adoption since 2012.

Statistically, over 90 per cent of applicants are approved by the Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat). Two of the most common reasons for rejection from the Norwegian authorities are advanced age and health conditions.

According to the adoption act, the minimum age for adoption is 25 and there is no upper age limit. In practice, applicants over 45 years of age are seldom granted the right to adopt. Exceptions can be made for special circumstances, for example if the applicant is applying for adoption of a second child. The upper age limit may also be waived if the applicant wants to adopt the siblings of the children who are already in the family; or if the applicant wants to adopt slightly older children.

Regarding health conditions, adoptive applicants must be in good health both physically and mentally. In the case where the applicant has a disease, the authorities will consider whether the disease is likely to have an impact on the applicants' ability and opportunity to give the child adequate care and safety in the long term. If the applicant have had a serious illness, but is treated and has achieved a satisfactory result, an asymptomatic period may be required before adoption can be granted.

Economy is not a decisive factor in determining the right to adopt. The applicants do not necessarily have to have a high income, but they should have an economy situation that is safe and stable. This is to ensure that there will be secure funding so that the child can grow up in a safe condition.

Applicants should also beware that there should at least be a 2-year age difference between the adopted child and the oldest child that applicant already have. Bufetat does not normally permit adoption before the family's last child has reached the age of 2 years.

Despite adoption agencies like Adopsjonsforum encourage the adoption of older children; Bufetat has a rather strict attitude towards adoption of older children. This may be due to some literature suggesting that adoption of older children bears negative consequences.

Studies on adoptive parents

Although there have been a number of studies comparing adopted and non-adopted children, less research is on the parental factors. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, parents have a place in the microsystem because they immediately and directly impact the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For adopted children, their most important resource should be their adoptive parents. With this in mind, this thesis seeks to find out more about parenting the adopted child. Some scholars offered some invaluable advice on family adjustment. For example, it has been found that adoptive parents who acknowledge their difference from biological families are more empathic and communicative with their adopted children concerning adoption-related issues. This will in turn facilitate healthier parent-child relationships and a more stable family life (Kirk, 1964). Similarly, there have been advocations against strongly denying differences or overemphasizing differences when discussing adoptions in the family (David M Brodzinsky, 1987). Also, it is of utmost importance that there is openness in communication in the family, while a psychological barrier between the biological and the adoptive families should be avoided (Butler, 1989). Other researchers urged for sensible and realistic expectations (Bornstein, 2002). Besides unrealistic expectations, it has been noticed that if the adoptive parents have little mental flexibility or empathy, insufficient preparation, or if they have conjugal problems, which mean that the couple expects the adopted child to save the marriage; problems are likely to arise (ChildONEurope Secretariat, 2007).

However, there is not much research on parental styles. In the following, some differences between adoptive parenthood and biological parenthood will be pointed out.

First, adoptive parents undergo a unique parenthood identity formation process.

Approximately 95% of newly married couples want and expect to have a child biologically (Glick, 1977). Infertility may be a major motivating factor for adoption. In these cases, adoptive parents may have to confront and resolve the loss of fertility, of the experience of having a baby, of having the chance to bond with a newborn, and of knowledge of their adoptive child's life before adoption (Schooler & Norris, 2002). Among these, the loss of fertility has been most studied. Infertility may pose significant psychological problems, especially problems relating to self-image and the sense of masculinity or femininity (Shapiro, 1982).

Although it has been suggested that infertility resolution is not a necessary prerequisite for the couple's readiness to adopt (Lorber & Greenfield, 1989), some couples who choose to adopt a child because of infertility have to 'let go' of their biological parenthood identity before they can identify themselves as adoptive parents (Daly, 1988). Other researchers claimed that adoptive parents may feel disappointed in themselves and a real or perceived disappointment to their own parents if the mental conflicts surrounding adoption are not resolved (Blum, 1983). On the other side of the coin, the adoptive parents' deprivation of parental experience may make them more appreciative of the rewards associated with parenthood. They may be more willing to deal with the stress and challenges involved in the transition to parenthood (Levy-Shiff, Goldshmidt, & Har-Even, 1991).

Another difference in the transition to parenthood for adoptive and biological parents is that only adoptive parents require some sort of approval from another party, usually the authorities and or an adoption agency, before they become parents.

As opposed to pregnancy, the time frame of adoption can vary a lot. As mentioned above, the processing time is over four years on average in year 2011 (Adopsjonsforum, 2013). During the adoption process, the parents may have to deal with the associated uncertainty and hence their stress level may be increased. But research results fail to support the hypothesis that there are adverse effects from transitional stresses.(Levy-Shiff, Bar, & Har-Even, 1990). On the other hand, this might be viewed as an extra preparation for parenthood that biological parents do not have. This beneficial effect may be even more prominent in the cases of adoption of children with special needs (Glidden, 1991).

Biological parents usually have at least a few role models that they can look up to. For instance, they may talk to their parents and grandparents about their parenting experiences. But for adoptive parents, it is very likely that it is more difficult to find someone who has the experience of adopting a child. So, there may be more stress involved in the transition to adoptive parenthood, because adoptive parents may not have a good idea as to what to expect, both about the process of adoption and the functioning of the adoptive family.

Adoption is still relatively uncommon in the society and there may be social stigma associated with it. Some people may think that adoptive parents are not 'real parents', or that adoption is the 'second-best way' to parenthood or that adopted children are not as good as biological children because of their unknown genetic past (Miall, 1987). Adoptive parents may share the feeling of being scrutinized and are therefore afraid of talking about some of their parenting

challenges with outsiders (Jocelyn Johnstone & Gibbs, 2012). As a result, adoptive parents may receive less support from their families, friends and the community that they live in. Comparing the adoptive mother-infant pair and biological mother-infant pair, it was found that there are more similarities than differences in the way family members interacted with one another. For instance, there were similar levels of warm, supportive communication and parental control in adoptive and nonadoptive families (Rueter, Keyes, Iacono, & McGue, 2009). In spite of this, interracial adoptive mother-infant pairs did show a higher incidence of insecure attachment (Singer, Brodzinsky, Ramsay, Steir, & Waters, 1985). Other factors, such as previous experience of neglect increases the risk of having attachment security problems (Chisholm, Carter, Ames, & Morison, 1995). While many adoptive parents have some knowledge of attachment related issues before they adopt a child, it was found that they often 'do not know about the range of typical post-adoption attachment behaviors nor the strategies for promoting healthy attachment' (Costello, 2005). More about attachment will be discussed in the next section.

Last but not least, previous research found that adoptive parents have higher than average income level and educational level (Bachrach, 1983). Another research have found that when compared with biological parents, adoptive parents allocate more personal, economic, cultural, and social resources to their children (Gibson, 2009). This may or may not have an effect on the parenting style.

Because of the above differences, it is hypothesized that there may be differences in childrearing characteristics between parents who have adopted children and parents who have biological children. This thesis seeks to be the first step in testing the above hypothesis by investigating the parenting styles of adoptive parents.

Parenting

Earlier researches on parenting

People have long been interested in finding out ‘the best way’ to raise a child. So, there has been quite a lot of research on parenting, especially on how the behaviors of the parents influence the development of the child, or how the two influence one another. There have been different views on parenting.

Behaviorist Watson focused on control and advised that parents should treat children with respect, but with relative emotional detachment (Watson, 1928). Like other behaviorists, his views on people were quite mechanical. He believed that a child can be ‘molded’ to become a useful tool of the society. In order to do so, parents should exercise both behavioral control and psychological control. What parents should not do is to bond with the child emotionally, or else the child will be spoiled.

In contrast, there were advocates who cautioned against control. For example, the Scottish educator A.S. Neill supported a child-centered approach (Neill, 1962). He proposed that children have a right to freedom. Parents or teachers should not determine how the child should live his or her own life. In fact, parents should not impose anything on the child. They should not tell the child what to do or how to behave. They should allow the child to make his or her own choices without fear. Children should be allowed to express themselves freely.

There were also theorists who stood in the middle ground. For example, Baldwin identified two major childrearing dimensions, namely control and democracy (Baldwin, 1948). Control was defined as having clear restrictions, while democracy was defined as having an open communication. Mutual agreements are often reached between the parent and the child. Baldwin described parenting in terms of the interaction of the two dimensions. He found that when parents are high on control but low on democracy, the child is required to conform without questioning parental authority. The parents do not or seldom discuss with the child before making decisions. As a result, children with this type of parents are usually well-behaved and obedient. But at the same time they might not be good at planning or tenacious. The exact opposite is the parents who are high on democracy but low on control. There might be a lot of communications between the parents and the child. But the restrictions are not so

strict. The child may turn out to be fearless and curious, however at the same time he or she may lack discipline. If parents are low in both control and democracy, there is little interaction between the parents and the child, and the parents do not set clear rules. Consequently, the child will be detached from the parents and may not be as independent as other children. Baldwin argued that it is best if parents are high in both democracy and control. Some conformity is encouraged. But at the same time, there should be enough communication, and a degree of independence should be permitted. In this situation, the child can know his or her boundaries, and simultaneously be sociable and inventive.

Baumrind's findings

One of the most cited researchers on parenting styles is Diana Baumrind, who is a clinical and developmental psychologist at the Institute of Human Development, University of California, Berkeley. Following on Baldwin's work, Baumrind carried out extensive research on childrearing. In 1967, thirty-two pre-school children were observed in the nursery school setting based on five dimensions, namely self-control, exploration, self-reliance, vitality and peer affiliation. Afterwards, they were grouped into three patterns of behaviors. Children who were rated high on mood, self-reliance, and exploration or self-control were grouped into the first pattern called 'mature'. Children who were rated low on mood and peer affiliation, and low on exploration were grouped into the second group called 'withdrawn'. Lastly, children who were observed to be low on self-reliance and low on exploration or control were classified as 'immature'. Afterwards, Baumrind collected data on the parents of the children by means of interviews, home visits and structured observations. Four parental behavior dimensions were measured. They are control, maturity demands, communication and nurturance. After analysis, three prototypic patterns of parental authority that were hypothesized to be linked to the child's self-reliant and explorative behavior emerged. They were descriptively summarized as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Baumrind, 1967). Authoritarian parents emphasize obedience, conformity, and respect for authority. They show relatively little affection or support. Permissive parents set few demands for the child and do not enforce rules. But these parents are warm and accepting. Authoritative parents have firm control in enforcing rules. But they encourage the child's individuality as well. They were also rated high on nurturance. She suggested that, for pre-school children, children with authoritative parents were more sociable and self-motivated compared to children with authoritarian and permissive parents.

Maccoby and Martin's modification of Baumrind's framework

In 1983, Maccoby and Martin reviewed Baumrind's theory and tried to define parenting style by two dimensions. The two dimensions are "parental responsiveness" and "parental demandingness" respectively (E. E. Maccoby, & Martin, J. A. , 1983). "Parental responsiveness" refers to the degree the parent responds to the child's needs, while "parental demandingness" refers to the extent to which the parent expects more mature and responsible behavior from a child. Parents are either high or low on these two dimensions. Four parenting styles can be derived from this two-factor matrix. The first two styles correspond roughly to Baumrind's "authoritative" and "authoritarian" styles. For the "permissive" style, Maccoby and Martin distinguished two different patterns and coined them "indulgent" and "neglecting" respectively.

Authoritarian parents are high on parental demandingness but low on parental responsiveness. In this kind of families, the parents have the authority. They have high expectations of their child. But they are controlling and often do not listen to the child's point of view. Limits and rules may be set without discussion or negotiation with the child. Obedience is valued and challenging the parents is not allowed. Children raised in this kind of family tend to be withdrawn and anxious with their peers.

Indulgent parenting is demonstrated by parents who are low on parental demandingness but high on parental responsiveness. Indulgent parents are lenient and tolerant when it comes to the child's behaviors. Few rules and expectations are set. Authority is virtually non-existent, while freewill is encouraged. The child is allowed to go at his or her own pace. Children of permissive parents were found to be impulsive and rebellious when demands are placed on them. They also demonstrate a lack of social responsibility and independence.

Like indulgent parents, neglecting parents are low on parental demandingness. They let the child do whatever he or she wants. But they are also low on parental responsiveness, meaning that they mostly neglect the child. They may fulfill the child's physical needs. But apart from that, the parents might be quite detached from the child's life. Children of permissive parents are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviors and have poor emotional regulation.

Authoritative parenting was considered to be the ideal child rearing style. Authoritative parents are high on both parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. On the one hand, the parents set high and firm but reasonable standards for the child. On the other hand, there is an open parent-child communication. When the child expresses his or her opinions, the parents respect them and try to reach an agreement. It has been found that this type of parenting is associated with social maturity, good self-control and self esteem when the child grows up.

Factors affecting parenting

In a classic paper, the determinants of parenting were discussed in terms of the personality and personal resources of the parent, the characteristics of the child, and the contextual sources of stress and support (Belsky, 1984). Along this line, the factors affecting parenting will be discussed in this section.

Parent characteristics

Genes

First of all, there is research evidence that suggested genes play a role in the parenting attitudes, specific parenting practices, emotional atmosphere of the home, and parental personality. Parents recruited in the study were identical twins, fraternal twins or adoptive siblings. They were asked to complete questionnaires that assessed parenting attitudes, specific parenting practices, emotional atmosphere of the home, and parental personality. The results suggested modest genetic effects on at least the affect-related aspects of parenting (Losoya, Callor, Rowe, & Goldsmith, 1997). However, there are also recent studies that expressed skepticism regarding the role of genes. In a study involving 300 pairs of adult twins, it was shown that the phenotypic covariation between parenting and personality was mostly due to nongenetic factors (Spinath & O'Connor, 2003).

Parent's attachment

Attachment was postulated to be an evolutionarily advantageous need to form close emotional bonds with one's significant others (Bowlby, 2008). Infants have a need to be of close proximity to caregivers and form bonds with them. Under attachment theory, different types of relationships between human infants and caregivers were categorized, and they have been shown to affect an individual's later emotional stability and emotional development (Bowlby, 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that a parent's attachment to his or her own parents during childhood affects parenting behavior. Research focusing on this topic usually utilizes retrospective reports of parents about their childhood experiences. One of the tools used for this purpose is the Adult Attachment Interview (Hesse, 1999). It is a tool that was intended to predict the quality of the infant-parent attachment relationship as observed in the Ainsworth Strange Situation, and to predict parents' responsiveness to their infants' attachment signals (M. Van IJzendoorn, 1995). The Ainsworth Strange Situation is an infant observation protocol that is carried out in a laboratory. The infant's response to two short separations from, and reunions with his or her parents is observed and analyzed (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). During the Adult Attachment Interview, the interviewees are first asked to describe their attachment-related childhood experiences (especially their early relations with parents or caregivers). Then they are asked to evaluate the influence of these experiences on their own development and current functioning. The responses from these interviews are systematically categorized into one of the three categories; secure-autonomous attachment, insecure-avoidant attachment and preoccupied attachment. An individual is categorized as having a secure-autonomous attachment if he or she appears self-reliant and non-defensive in the interview. He or she values the attachment relationships and experiences; and yet apparently views the relationship experience objectively. An interviewee is put into the insecure-avoidant category if he or she appears to dismiss, devalue, or cut off from the attachment relationships and experiences. They may seem to have forgotten about those experiences and or do not have feelings or emotions attached to those memories. Lastly, an adult is assessed to be having a preoccupied attachment if he or she shows a preoccupation with or by early attachments or attachment-related experiences. They tend to appear confused, incoherent and subjective about their childhood experiences (Hesse, 1999).

Researchers have found a significant relationship between the adult attachment classification of 32 mothers and their 6-year-old children's child attachment classification. They discussed

this result with regard to the mothers' internal working models caring system, which has the dimensions of secure base, rejection, uncertainty, and helplessness (George & Solomon, 1996). In addition, Aviezer and colleagues investigated 48 kibbutz dyads and found that parents with secure attachments are more sensitive to their children than are parents with dismissing or preoccupied attachment (Aviezer, Sagi, Joels, & Ziv, 1999). Similar findings were also reported for teenage mothers. The attachment organizations of 74 teenaged mothers predicted both sensitivity and infant-mother attachments (Ward & Carlson, 1995).

Parents' social cognitions

It has been argued that parents' social cognitions influence their behaviors, and hence, their children's developmental outcomes (Goodnow, 1995), where social cognition can be defined as the cognition and knowledge about people and their doings (Flavell & Miller, 1998). Social cognition encompasses constructs such as beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, attributions, and expectations. A low to moderate correlation between parenting behaviors and the above-mentioned constructs was found (Luster & Okagaki, 2006), and following are some of the examples. Parents who think that mathematics is important are more likely to engage in mathematics-related activities with their children (Musun- Miller & Blevins- Knabe, 1998). Also, if one compares the attitudes toward corporal punishment amongst parents who are mainline Protestant, conservative Protestant, Roman Catholic, and those who are unaffiliated with a religious group, conservative Protestant parents are more likely to see corporal punishment as an effective childrearing strategy. It was hypothesized that it is due to the beliefs in the sinfulness of human nature and the need for punishing sins. (Bartkowski & Ellison, 1995)

Personality

There have been numerous studies about the relationship between personality and parenting. Personality is a topic that human beings started to study since as far as the second century. A Greek physician named Galen posited four types of temperament; melancholy, sanguine, choleric and phlegmatic. It was thought to be connected with imbalances in the 'bodily humors' (Kagan, Snidman, Arcus, & Reznick, 1994). Nowadays, the Big Five model of personality is the most widely recognized modal to categorize personality. The model tries to

incorporate hundreds, if not thousands, of traits. The first factor, Surgency or Extraversion contrasts traits such as talkativeness, assertiveness, and activity level with traits such as silence, passivity, and reserve. It reflects the quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction, activity level, need for stimulation, capacity for joy, control, and assertiveness. Factor II (Agreeableness or Pleasantness) contrasts traits such as kindness, trust, and warmth with traits such as hostility, selfishness, and distrust. It reflects an interpersonal orientation in feelings, thoughts, and actions along a continuum from compassion to antagonism, the high end of which is characterized as cooperative, trusting, and warm. Factor III (Conscientiousness or Dependability) contrasts traits such as organization, thoroughness, and reliability with traits such as carelessness, negligence, and unreliability. This factor reflects the extent to which a person is well organized, responsible, decisive, dependable, hardworking, and even ambitious. Factor IV (Emotional Stability vs. Neuroticism) includes traits such as nervousness, moodiness, and temperamentality. This emotional instability is related to a proneness to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges, maladaptive coping responses, and a perturbable, insecure, and vulnerable orientation to life. Finally, factor V (either labeled as Intellect or Openness to Experience) contrasts traits such as imagination, curiosity, and creativity with traits such as shallowness and imperceptiveness. It means a tendency to have a broad perspective and to approach life in intelligent, creative, philosophical, and inquisitive ways (L. R. Goldberg, 1993) (McCrae & Costa Jr, 1999).

A group of researchers has done a meta-analysis that studies the association between the Big Five personality factors and the three dimensions of parenting, which are warmth, behavioral control, and autonomy support. Thirty studies which involved 5,853 parent-child dyads were analyzed. The general trend found was that lower levels of neuroticism and higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were correlated to more warmth and behavioral control. Also, higher levels of agreeableness and lower levels of neuroticism are related to more autonomy. Both across mother and father reports and across assessment methods of parenting (namely self-report versus observations), effect sizes were robust and significant (Prinzle, Stams, Deković, Reijntjes, & Belsky, 2009).

Researchers have found interesting associations for each of the five factors as well.

One research found that extraversion predicts the parenting behaviors of fathers to a greater extent than that of mothers; while the reverse is true for agreeableness (Belsky, Crnic, & Woodworth, 1995). With regard to openness, it is not surprising that parents who are less

open to new experiences tend to be more protective (Spinath & O'Connor, 2003); when parents are skeptical of the new experiences, they are less likely to let their children try them. One research study linked conscientiousness with more responsiveness and less power assertiveness in mothers (L. A. Clark, Kochanska, & Ready, 2000). However, no correlation was found between conscientiousness and parenting behaviors in another study (Spinath & O'Connor, 2003). The relationship between neuroticism and parenting is perhaps the most researched amongst the Big Five factors. It has been argued that neuroticism was the most consistent predictor of men's and women's parenting (Belsky et al., 1995). Parents who scored high in the neuroticism scale engaged in more power assertive parenting when they were tested in a laboratory setting which was designed to evoke parental discipline (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2003). Higher levels of physical punishment towards the child is associated with higher levels of hostility measured during pregnancy, which is one facet of neuroticism (Kanoy, Ulku-Steiner, Cox, & Burchinal, 2003). Some genetic risk factors for the personality trait neuroticism have been postulated to increase the risk for major depression (Fanous, Gardner, Prescott, Cancro, & Kendler, 2002). The link between depression and parenting will be discussed in the next paragraph. Besides, neuroticism is a reliable predictor of decreased marital satisfaction and divorce (Karney and Bradbury, 1995). The role of marital relationship and parenting will be discussed later in this section.

Depression

In a longitudinal study of African American families, it was found that depression is a predictor of low quality mother-child interaction and less involved parenting (Brody, Murry, Kim, & Brown, 2002). In the meta-analysis done by Lovejoy and colleagues reported a significant association between depression and negative maternal parenting. Several studies have reported that depressed mothers use more hostility, show higher rates of negative interactions, and show impatient use of directives in guiding child behavior (Lovejoy, Graczyk, O'Hare, & Neuman, 2000). At least one study tried to study the role of the gender of the parent. 80 families with fathers and mothers with or without depression were divided into four groups. Their interactions with their 3- to 6-month-old infants were compared to determine how the fathers with and without depression interacted with their infants and how the mothers with and without depression interacted with their infants. It is surprising to find that fathers with and without depression received similar interaction ratings. Depressed

fathers did not seem to behave negatively with their infants, and they received higher ratings than depressed mothers (Field, Hossain, & Malphurs, 1999). On the other hand, depression also predicts more marital conflict and thereby, lower levels of nurturing parenting (Conger et al., 1993). The relationship between marital relations and parenting will be discussed in further detail in a later paragraph.

Childhood trauma

Parents who reported having been abused in childhood were found to be significantly more likely to engage in abusive behaviors towards the next generation. Amongst those parents, the ones who had experienced multiple acts of abuse and at least one physical impact were more likely to become abusive than the other parents (Pears & Capaldi, 2001). These kinds of childhood trauma is the person's parenting because childhood traumas may affect the person's neurodevelopment and lead to cognitive, emotional, and social impairments. That in turn affects how the person parents his or her child (DeGregorio, 2013). However, it is worthy to note that this intergenerational transmission of child abuse does not occur all the time.

Research has shown that approximately one third of the parents who have experienced child abuse and neglect do not go onto abuse their child, one third do, and the remaining third remain vulnerable (Oliver, 1993). Also, it should be noted this intergenerational transmission of child abuse has a complex mechanism behind, for example there are significant interactions between parental history of abuse and consistency of discipline, as well as abuse history, depression and PTSD (Pears & Capaldi, 2001).

Age

Efforts have been made to determine if there is a relationship between parental age and parenting. In the 80s, it was found that children of older parents are in a disadvantaged position when it comes receiving good quality parenting (Morris, 1988). In the 90s, a group of researchers set out to refute that claim. They improved the research methodology (mainly by employing a more representative sample) and found different results as compared with Morris's. They found that there was no significant relationship between maternal age at childbirth and perceived affective quality of mothering. But the same is not true for fathers. There was a significant curvilinear relationship between fathers' age at childbirth and

perceived affective quality of fathering. Becoming a father between 30 and 39 years of age may be related to a higher affective quality of fathering (Finley, 1998). There are researches that look closer at how age affects specific parenting behaviors. Thirty mothers (adolescent and nonadolescent) with their healthy 8-month-old infants were studied. Their interactions were recorded during face-to-face interactions and teaching sessions. During face-to-face interactions, nonadolescent mothers showed more positive affect toward infants. And during teaching, nonadolescent mothers talked more, showed more positive affect toward infants, and demonstrated tasks more often. It was concluded from the study that teaching interactions were strongly associated with maternal age. The researchers hypothesized that this finding may partially explain the observed cognitive deficits in infants of teenage mothers, although one should not neglect the individual differences as extraneous factors such as the mothers' ego development, education, and support. For example, teenage mothers with less education and support and lower ego development may provide less optimal care-giving environments for their infants (Levine, Coll, & Oh, 1985).

There have been some other studies that are not directly about the relationship between parental age and parenting behaviors per se, but nonetheless give an insight to other parenting aspects like perceptions of the parenting role. Perceptions of maternal role were assessed for mothers who were aged 16 to 38. When other demographic factors and psychosocial variables were controlled, increased maternal age was found to be significantly related to greater time commitment to the maternal role, greater satisfaction with parenting and to more optimal observed behavior. (Ragozin, Basham, Crnic, Greenberg, & Robinson, 1982).

Marital relations

A meta-analysis of 68 studies confirmed that there exists a link between marital relations and parent-child relationship quality. Different methods were used to measure marital relations in different studies. They included self-reported and observed measures of marital satisfaction, overt conflict and the strength of the marital alliance. The same went for parenting, which was measured by for example harshness of discipline, within-parent and between-parent consistency, covert control of children, and satisfaction with parenting. Results supported the spillover hypothesis (Erel & Burman, 1995). Spillover, a term adapted from the sociological literature on stress, refers to the direct transfer of mood, affect, or behavior from one setting to another (Oskamp, 1986). Essentially, Erel and his colleagues found that good marital support

was directly linked to maternal sensitivity and reactivity. They found the effect size to be positive and nonhomogeneous with a moderate magnitude (Erel & Burman, 1995). Heineke (1995) also confirmed that marital quality predicted parental responsiveness to the child. However marital relations did not predict the extent to which parents stimulated their infants cognitively and verbally (Heinicke, 1995). Cox and colleagues, on the other hand, noticed that marital closeness predicted fathers' attitudes toward parenting, but not their parenting behavior (Cox, Owen, Lewis, & Henderson, 1989). Spillover effects do not just apply for positive mood or affect. The same is found for the negative affect as well. For instance, greater marital hostility was linked to fathers' higher levels of intrusiveness and also lower levels of positive involvement with the child (Katz & Gottman, 1996).

However, there are exceptions to the spillover effects. In one research, the teaching behaviors of a group of parents were studied. They were also asked to complete a scale of marriage problems to determine their marital satisfaction. Mothers in the slightly discontented group actually used more questions, positive feedback, informational feedback, and verbal task management and intruded less often into their children's learning effort; while fathers with more marital problems used less positive feedback and were more intrusive. It was argued that mothers who were in more conflictual marriages tried to compensate for a less-than-satisfactory marriage by being more involved in teaching their children. At the same time, children of these mothers were more actively responsive to the teaching behaviors than were children of mothers who had a satisfactory marital relationship (Brody, Pellegrini, & Sigel, 1986).

Child characteristics

Characteristics of the child affect parenting behaviors. In a study focusing on fathers' sensitivity and engagement with their children, it was found that fathering behavior is best understood within an ecological, multilevel framework, where one of the factors in the framework is about the temperament of the child. The more temperamentally easy the child is, the more affectionate the father behaved (W. A. Goldberg, Clarke-Stewart, Rice, & Dellis, 2002). Another research aimed at studying the associations between child characteristics and parental involvement. It was revealed that if a child is perceived to be more sociable, the fathers are more involved with them. In the same study, it was also found that there are more

significant associations between perceptions of child temperament and involvement for fathers than for mothers (McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002). Researches that focused on mothers gave very interesting but somewhat conflicting results. In one intensive longitudinal study, the home observations of infant temperament behavior together with the observations of maternal parenting sensitivity suggested that observed infant temperament was related to maternal sensitivity (Seifer, Schiller, Sameroff, Resnick, & Riordan, 1996). Another study on infant temperament chose families in a low socioeconomic status population as subjects. It was revealed that mother-child interaction was significantly correlated with infant temperament, both at 4 months of age and 8 months of age (Zahr, 1990). However, in a study that primarily aimed at assessing the association between the length of maternity leave and the quality of mother-infant interaction, it was observed that amongst other factors (more depressive symptoms, shorter maternity leave), mothers who perceived their infant as having a more difficult temperament expressed less sensitivity, responsiveness and affect towards the infant (R. Clark, Hyde, Essex, & Klein, 1997). A fourth study examined if infant negative emotionality, depression in the caregiver, and marital emotional support are related to the caregiver's reactivity/sensitivity. No direct associations were reported between either maternal depression or infant negative emotionality and maternal reactivity/sensitivity. Yet, the interaction of the two risk factors was found to be highly significant (Pauli-Pott, Mertesacker, Bade, Bauer, & Beckmann, 2000). As the research results are inconsistent, it seems that one cannot draw a simple directional connection between child temperament and parenting. Other factors also play a part in this picture. One study focused on the child's temperament and the mother's teaching effort. It was found that the mother's teaching effort was related to whether her child was difficult or easygoing. Mothers of infant boys who were perceived as difficult reduced their teaching effort; while mothers of infant girls put in more effort when teaching more resistant girls. It was hypothesized that there are mutual influence between the mother and child. Gender stereotypes may also have led mothers to be less assertive toward sons than daughters (E. E. Maccoby, Snow, & Jacklin, 1984). Another research that used multilevel modeling in a population of 8,476 children in 3,762 families established that greater child negativity predicted greater parental negativity. They also found that this effect was amplified when the families had a lower socioeconomic status (SES). So this suggested that environmental influences are at least moderating how parents treat their children (Jenkins, Rasbash, & O'Connor, 2003). Cross-cultural studies investigate childrearing in a broader context. One of them collected children behavioral inhibition data

from both China and Canada. Information on child-rearing attitudes and beliefs were also obtained from the mothers. Although Chinese toddlers were significantly more inhibited, their inhibition was negatively associated with mothers' punishment orientation and positively with mothers' acceptance and encouragement of achievement. The exact opposite is true for the Canadian counterparts. So the same child characteristic can lead to different reactions from mothers in different cultures (Chen et al., 1998).

Contextual sources of stress and support

Lastly, the effects of contextual sources of stress and support on parenting are discussed. In one study, 74 mothers and their 5-year-old children were studied. The mothers completed questionnaires regarding stressors, aspects of parenting and individual psychological status, social support, family functioning, and child behavioral status. Afterwards, the mother-child dyads were observed in interactions in a laboratory setting. It was revealed that minor parenting stresses might be playing a part in influencing the parent-child relationships and might contribute to family dysfunctions. In addition, the mothers' social support moderated the influence of hassles on maternal behavior. However, from the results of the observations, there were no effects of parenting hassles on maternal behaviors (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). Yet, it is worthy to note that the observations were carried out in a laboratory setting, which was not natural for both the mothers and the children. One study that employed naturalistic observational methods investigated 104 married and 99 divorced families. It was found that mothers who were divorced and mothers who were having a higher amount of daily hassles engaged in more controlling and less supportive interaction with their young children (Pett, Vaughan-Cole, & Wampold, 1994). Although fathers may not be the typical caregiver in many families, there has been studies documenting the effects of daily hassles on fathers' involvement with their children. In one such study, the fathers completed a daily hassles scale and a father involvement measure which used a modified time-diary strategy to assess amount of involvement with the children in the family. The findings indicated that fathers' involvement and play interaction with their children was significantly negatively related to their report of daily hassles (Fagan, 2000).

Research design

One of the first things a researcher does is to decide between qualitative and quantitative research design. Qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things, while quantitative research referred to the measures and counts of things (Berg, 2004). The current research seeks to describe the parenting characteristics of adoptive parents by means of objective measurements and numerical analysis of data (Babbie, 2010). So the research adopts a quantitative approach. The data was collected through a survey at one point in time, so the study is cross-sectional in nature (Reis & Judd, 2000). A highly structure method, namely a survey, was used to describe characteristics of adoptive parents. The data was gathered by means of the administration of an online questionnaire.

This is a descriptive research because it serves to describe the current situation without trying to infer causation (Jackson, 2009). It might also part of a deductive research. To differentiate between deductive and inductive research design, Inductive means reasoning from the general to the particular, while deductive means reasoning from the particular to the general (Gulati, 2009). This research might offer data to a bigger research project that compares biological and adoptive parents. The starting point would be the hypothesis 'biological and adoptive parents have different parenting characteristics'. Data would then be collected for both types of parents to prove or disprove the hypothesis. As the reasoning process is from the particular to the general, it would be deductive in nature.

Methods of data collection

Sampling

In quantitative research, the objective is to make conclusions about a specific large group of individuals (a population) by studying a smaller group of individuals (a sample). The researcher should try to select the sample carefully so that the inferences drawn are valid. In other words, the sample should represent the population. This selection of the sample is called 'sampling'. In statistics, a 'population' can be further differentiated into a 'target population' and a 'realistic population'. A 'target population' includes all the people that the researcher aims at studying, while a 'realistic population' refers to the people that the researcher can realistically access. In many cases, there is a discrepancy between the number of individuals in a 'target population' and a 'realistic population' because of time and resources, etc. Ideally, the researcher should choose the individuals randomly in the realistic population, so that the characteristics of the population are well-represented in the sample. But, this is not always possible. In this research, a group of parents who have adopted children (who are now 5-10 years old) in Norway was recruited. Random selection of the subjects was not possible because the population is quite small and not easy to reach. So, it means that one should be cautious about inferring from the sample to the population. Parents were recruited via a Norwegian adoption agency called Adoptionsforum, which is one of Norway's adoption agencies. They are regulated by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat).

Measuring parenting

Among the numerous tools for measuring parenting, Block's (1965) Child Rearing Practices Report is perhaps one of the earliest and most widely-used instruments to assess parenting styles of parents with young children. It consists of 91 items that assess the attitudes, values goals and behaviors of parents (Block, 1965). It employs a research methodology called Q methodology which permits the systematic study of the subjectivity and the communicability of subjective perceptions on a specific topic (Goldman, 1999). The parents have to sort the statements according to their order of preference. Block's Child Rearing Practices Report is

reported to have excellent psychometric properties. However, it has been criticized on a few aspects. Firstly, it contains some determined factors with moderate to low reliabilities. Secondly, it does not adequately tap Baumrind’s typology. Also, it consists of many items that may be inconsistent with the current literature or are outdated (Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995). In view of these, the mentioned researchers developed a new tool called the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) which includes 62 items. Some items were adapted from the Child Rearing Practices Report, while others were created. The sample size was quite large. It consisted of 1251 parents in Utah, USA, who predominately have school-age children, High internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach alphas of .91, .86, and .75,) were reported for the three subscales (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) respectively. A 32-item version was developed by the same researchers using Confirmatory Factor Analysis/Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on responses from 1900 mothers and fathers. No psychometric data were reported. Of the 32 items, 15 items are tapping the authoritative parenting style and 12 items on the authoritarian parenting style respectively; while 5 are about the permissive parenting style. The 15 items about authoritative parenting style can be grouped into 3 subfactors, the connection dimension, the regulation dimension and the autonomy dimension. The 12 items about authoritarian parenting style can also be grouped into 3 subfactors – the physical coercion dimension, the verbal hostility dimension and the non-reasoning/ punitive dimension. All the 5 items about permissive parenting style belong to the indulgent dimension. The following table shows a sample item for each subfactor.

Parenting style	Subfactor	Sample item
Authoritative parenting style	Connection dimension	I give comfort and understanding when my child is upset.
	Regulation dimension	I help my child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging my child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.
	Autonomy dimension	I encourage my child to freely

		express himself/herself even when disagreeing with parents.
Authoritarian parenting style	Physical coercion dimension	I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child.
	Verbal hostility dimension	I scold or criticize when my child's behavior doesn't meet my expectations.
	Non-reasoning/punitive dimension	When my child asks why he/she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.
Permissive parenting style	Indulgent dimension	I give into my child when the child causes a commotion about something.

Table 3.2.1– Sample items for each of the subfactors of the parenting styles

Procedures

During January 2014, 63 informants filled in the online questionnaire after reading the essential information about the project. The online questionnaire included a Norwegian translation of the above-mentioned *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSQD). Each item is answered on a five point likert scale. After the 32 statements, information about the parents' age, gender, educational level, income level, the child's age, gender and original country was also collected.

Demographic information

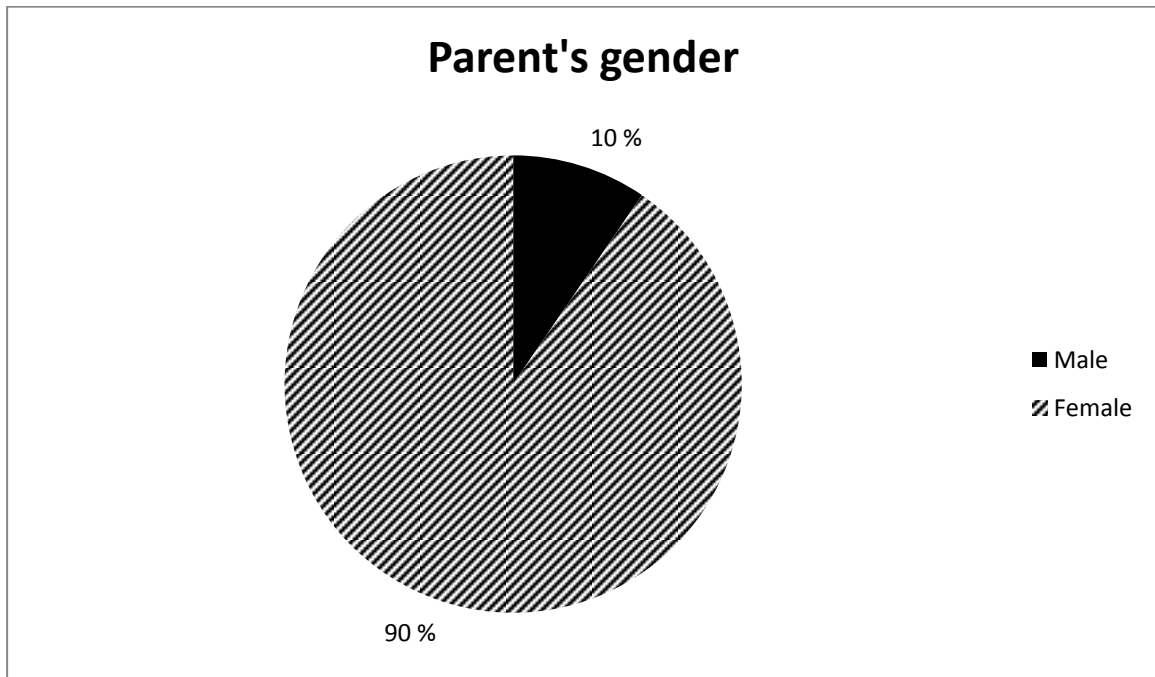


Figure 3.5.1- Parent's gender

A vast majority of the respondents are females.

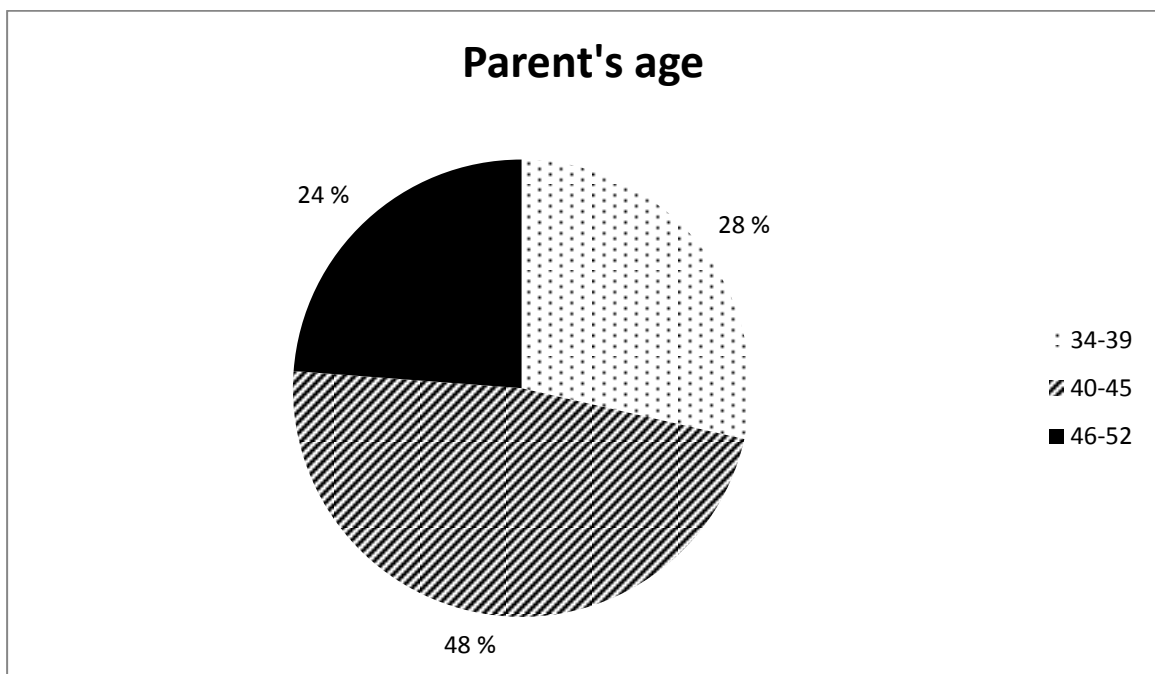


Figure 3.5.2- Parent's age

Nearly half of the parents surveyed were between the age of 40 to 45.

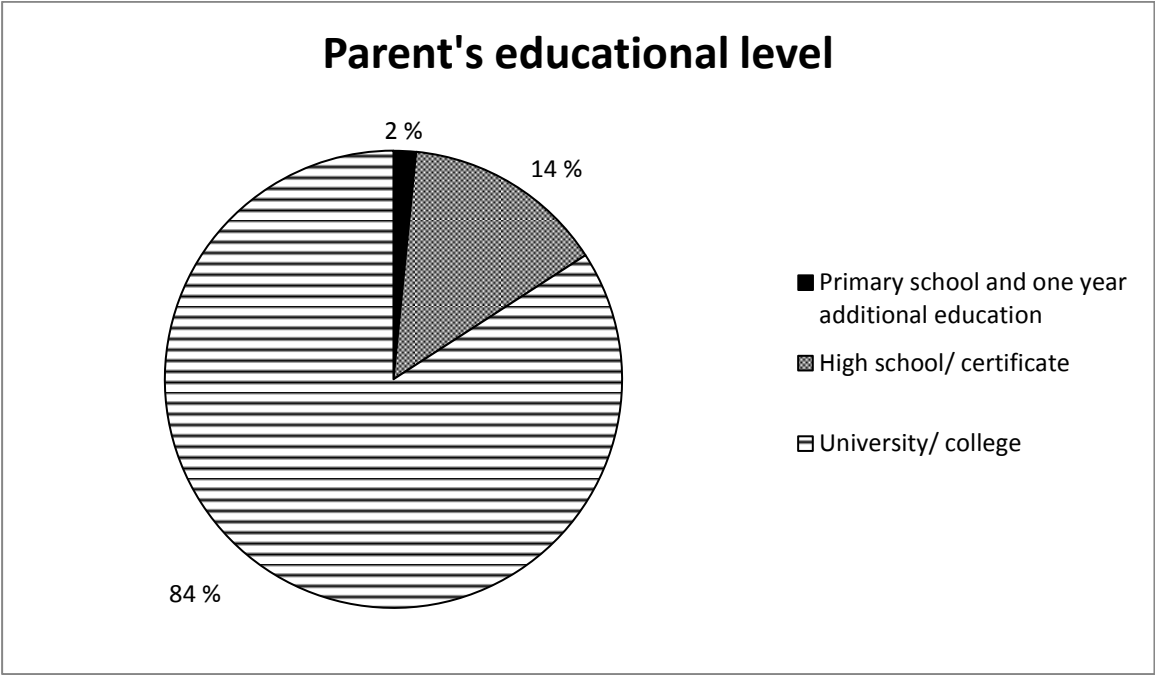


Figure 3.5.3- Parent's educational level

A large majority of the parents surveyed had attained a university or college level of education.

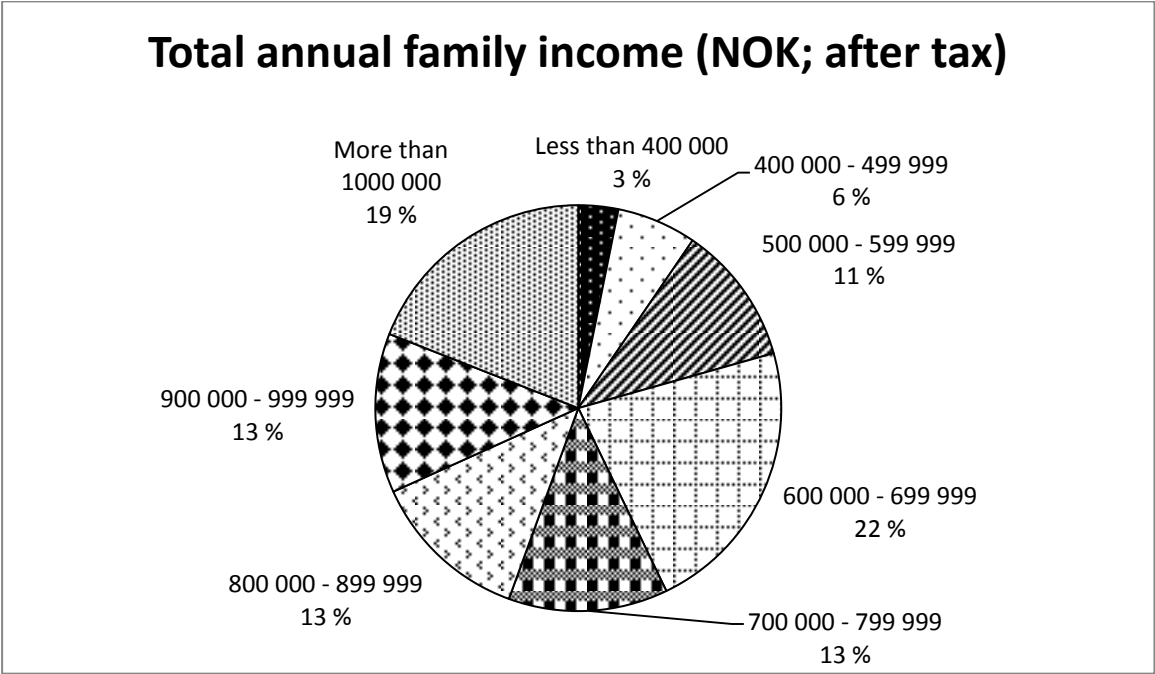


Figure 3.5.4- The total annual family income (after tax)

More than half of the households in this research had an annual income of 700000 NOK or above.

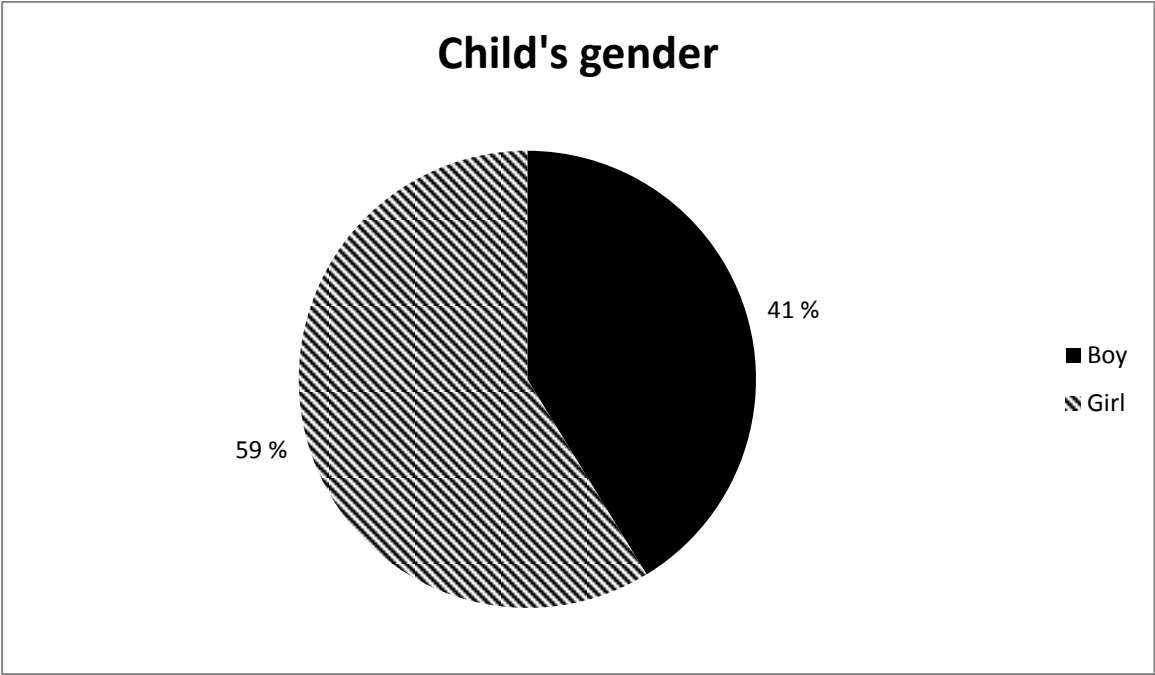


Figure 3.5.5- Child's gender

The distribution of the child's gender is quite even, with slightly more girls than boys.

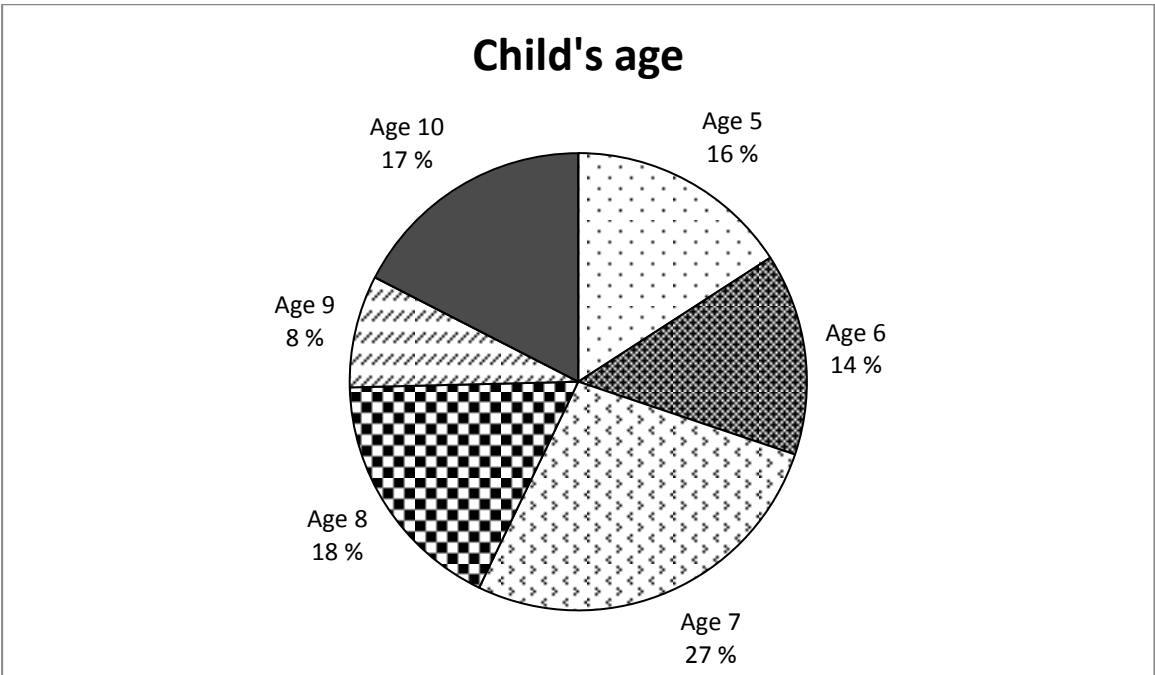


Figure 3.5.6- Child's age

The distribution of the child's age is quite even as well.

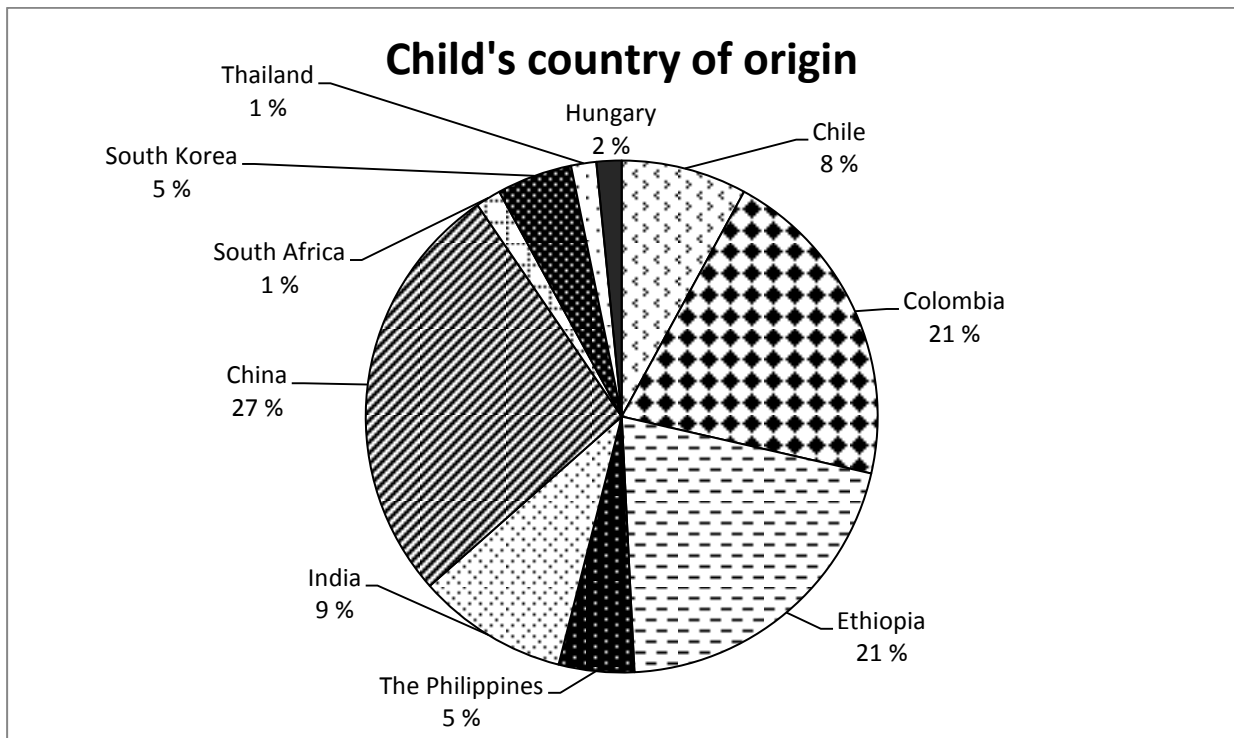


Figure 3.5.7- Child's country of origin

27% of the adopted children came from China, followed by 21% from Columbia and Ethiopia respectively. This sort of resembles the pattern of the national statistics from 2013, except that more children came from South Korea than from Ethiopia.

Data analysis

The scoring key of the PSDQ yielded an overall mean score in each category of parenting style. Based on this score, the parents' parenting style was determined (Robinson et al., 1995). All the data was input into the SPSS system. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data. T-tests, linear regression and ANOVAS were used to find out the possible relationship between the dependent variables (the parents' age, gender, educational level, income level, the child's age, gender and original country) and the independent variable (parenting style).

Ethical issues

This section describes what steps have been taken to address the ethical issues that may arise from this research. Many of the issues are addressed by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). NSD is the Data Protection Official for Research for all the Norwegian universities, university colleges and several hospitals and research institutes. Researches that involve interviews, questionnaires, observations or other means so as to gather, register, process or store information about individuals (i.e. personal data) are likely to be subject to notification by the NSD. As the current project involves a questionnaire to gather data, I was obligated to fill out a notification form and submit it to the Data Protection Official for Research. The data collection process only started upon the clearance and authorization by the NSD. Several issues were highlighted in the guidance sheet by the NSD.

Firstly, information should be gathered and treated anonymously, so that no one will be able to trace the answers. With the help from Adoptionsforum who advertised my research through its newsletter, I was able to reach the adoptive parents without real personal contact. Although some personal information (for example age, gender and family income) was collected from the questionnaire, all the data was stored safely and was destroyed once the data analysis was over. Moreover, even if someone gets his or her hand on the data, he or she should not be able to trace the respondent based on the information. The anonymity is further ensured by the survey being conducted online. Besides providing protection for the participants, anonymity is also a way to encourage honest answers in the questionnaire. As the participants knew that their identity will not be known, they were more likely to answer more truthfully. Social desirability bias was thus reduced.

Secondly, participation in the research was voluntary. In the data collection process, parents were only involved in the study if they agreed to participate voluntarily. They were also informed that by participating, they consented to their answers to be used in the thesis. They could withdraw from the research at any point as they wish. There might be a disadvantage concerning voluntary participation though. As adoptive parents were free to choose whether to participate or not, only those who were highly motivated completed the questionnaire. Thus, the sample might not be completely representative of the population.

The goals and description of the research was communicated in written form and there was no deception. In some other research, some sort of deception is required so that the goal of the research can be reached. In those cases, the researcher may face a dilemma. Fortunately, this is not the case for the current research. All the information was communicated clearly without holding back. On top of that, efforts were made so that the language used in the survey is as neutral as possible.

Results

The results were grouped into the different subfactors and presented as follows: first, here is the table for the first subfactor of the authoritative parenting style- the connection dimension.

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
1. I am responsive to my child’s feelings and needs.	39.68%	58.73%	1.59%	0%	0%
7. I encourage my child to talk about his/her troubles.	47.62%	44.44%	3.17%	4.76%	0%
12. I give comfort and understanding when my child is upset.	63.49%	36.51%	0%	0%	0%
14. I give praise when my child is good.	31.75%	52.38%	12.70%	3.17%	0%
27. I have warm and intimate times together with my child.	9.52%	80.95%	7.94%	0%	1.59%

Table 4.1.1- Results for the connection dimension

The general trend is that the parents who were surveyed gave a high frequency rating (always or very often) for the connection dimension. For example, more than 90% of the parents said that they had warm and intimate times together with their children. One striking finding is that one parent rated that she never had warm and intimate times together with her child.

However, if one look deeper, it is found that the same parent gave an ‘always’ or ‘very often’ rating for statements 1, 7, 12 and 14. It is quite improbable that the same parent who was always responsive to her child’s feelings and needs, and gave comfort and understanding when her child was upset would never have warm and intimate times together with her child. So there is reason to believe that the ‘never’ rating was just a human error.

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
5. I explain to my child how I feel about the child's good and bad behavior.	17.46%	66.67%	11.11%	4.76%	0%
11. I emphasize the reasons for rules.	30.16%	60.32%	9.52%	0%	0%
25. I give my child reasons why rules should be obeyed.	33.33%	58.73%	7.93%	0%	0%
29. I help my child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging my child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.	11.11%	61.90%	15.87%	11.11%	0%
31. I explain the consequences of the child's behavior.	25.40%	52.38%	19.05%	3.17%	0%

Table 4.1.2- Results for the regulation dimension

A similar trend is observed for the regulation dimension, with most parents giving a 'very often' rating, followed by an 'always' rating and an 'about half of the time' rating. The distribution of the rating of statement 29 is a bit more dispersed, with 11.11% of the parents saying that they helped their children to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging their children to talk about the consequences of their own actions. One reason may be that younger children (for example those who are 5 or 6 years old) may still be acquiring the skill to reason about the consequences of good and bad behaviors. So, the parents were not always using this technique of encouraging the child's self-reflection.

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
3. I take my child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.	4.76%	4.86%	38.10%	14.29%	0%
9. I encourage my child to freely express himself/herself even when disagreeing with parents.	34.92%	44.44%	15.87%	4.76%	0%
18. I take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.	19.05%	63.49%	17.46%	0%	0%
21. I show respect for my child's opinions by encouraging my child to express them.	33.33%	57.14%	7.94%	1.59%	0%
22. I allow my child to give input into family rules.	9.52%	44.44%	23.81%	22.22%	0%

Table 4.1.3- Results for the autonomy dimension

Although a similar trend is still observed for the autonomy dimension, the distribution of the ratings is considerably wider than the previous two dimensions. In particular, 14.29% of the parents only once in a while took their child's desires into account before asking the child to do something; and 22.2% of the parents only once in a while allowed their children to give input into family rules. This can be contrasted with statement number 18, where 63.49% of the parents took into account their children's preferences in making plans for the family.

For the first subfactor of the authoritarian parenting style,

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
2. I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child.	0%	0%	0%	3.17%	96.83%
6. I spank when my child is disobedient.	0%	0%	1.59%	0%	98.41%
19. I grab my child when being disobedient.	7.94%	14.29%	11.11%	42.86%	23.81%
32. I slap my child when the child misbehaves.	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 4.1.4- Results for the physical coercion dimension

The vast majority of the parents gave a ‘once in a while’ or a ‘never’ rating for 3 out of the 4 statements in this dimension. Statement 17 ‘I grab my child when being disobedient’ shows a wider distribution of frequency ratings. This might be due to a non-accurate English-to-Norwegian translation, which will be discussed in the limitations section. One parent said that she spanked when her child is disobedient in statement 6. This might also be due to the slight difference between the English word ‘spank’ and the Norwegian phrase ‘gir ris’.

However, there should not be any confusion about ‘fysisk avstraffelse’, which literally means physical punishment. Still 3.17% of the parents said that they used physical punishment as a way of disciplining their children. Readers should notice that corporal punishment is illegal in Norway. The details of which will be deliberated in the discussion section. The fact that parents still gave some of the ‘non-never’ ratings may be due to the anonymity of this survey. Parents knew that their answers would not be traced. So, they were not so affected by the social desirability effect, i.e. they were not afraid of being judged. Therefore they gave their answers truthfully.

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
13. I yell or shout when my child misbehaves.	0%	1.59%	6.35%	87.13%	7.94%
16. I explode in anger towards my child.	0%	0%	1.59%	58.73%	39.68%
23. I scold and criticize to make my child improve.	0%	0%	1.59%	49.21%	49.21%
30. I scold or criticize when my child's behavior doesn't meet my expectations.	0%	0%	7.94%	69.25%	23.81%

Table 4.1.5- Results for the verbal hostility dimension

From the results, it can be noted that verbal hostility occurs more frequently than physical coercion. The majority of the parents in the survey did these acts of verbal hostility 'once in a while'. Although the Norwegian law does protect children from mental harm in addition to physical harm, this topic may be less discussed in the society in general. It is also worthy to note that one parent revealed that he very often yelled or shouted when his child misbehaved.

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
4. When my child asks why he/she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.	0%	17.46%	11.11%	57.14%	14.29%
10. I punish by taking privileges away from my child with little if any explanations.	0%	0%	0%	14.29%	85.71%
26. I use threats as punishment with little or no justification.	0%	0%	0%	11.11%	88.89%
28. I punish by putting our child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations.	0%	0%	0%	3.17%	96.83%

Table 4.1.6- Results for the non-reasoning/ punitive dimension

For the non-reasoning/ punitive dimension, the responses are quite skewed towards the ‘never’ side, except for statement number 4. It shows that at least some of the parents were using the authority as a parent as an explanation instead of a proper justification. It is hypothesized that this statement may receive a higher rating because it has no element of punishment involved. So, it only belongs to the non-reasoning dimension, unlike the other 3 statements, which belong to both the non-reasoning and punitive dimension.

Item	Always	Very often	About half of the time	Once in a while	Never
8. I find it difficult to discipline my child.	0%	1.59%	9.52%	69.84%	19.05%
15. I give into my child when the child causes a commotion about something.	0%	0%	0%	60.32%	39.68%
17. I threaten my child with punishment more often than actually giving it.	0%	1.59%	4.76%	38.10%	55.56%
20. I state punishments to my child and do not actually do them.	0%	0%	1.59%	20.63%	77.78%
24. I spoil my child.	0%	14.29%	28.57%	52.38%	4.76%

Table 4.1.7- Results for the indulgent dimension

Results from this dimension show that the adoptive parents in the survey were generally not very permissive. The ratings for statement number 24 are quite dispersed, possibly because what constitutes ‘spoil’ is subject to interpretation.

Some statistical tests were run to find out if there is any relationship between the 3 parenting scores and various factors (parent’s gender, parent’s age, parent’s educational level, total annual family income, child’s gender, child’s age and child’s country of origin). An alpha level of .05 is used for all the statistical tests.

I. Relationship between parenting style and the parent’s gender

There is no significant difference between the authoritative parenting score of a male parent ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.35$) compared to the authoritative parenting score of a female parent ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.40$), $t(61) = -1.05$, $p = 0.30$

There is no significant difference between the authoritarian parenting score of a male parent ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.16$) compared to the authoritarian parenting score of a female parent ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.22$), $t(61) = 0.76$, $p = 0.45$

There is no significant difference between the permissive parenting score of a male parent ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.20$) compared to the permissive parenting score of a female parent ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.33$), $t(61) = 0.54$, $p = 0.59$

II. Relationship between parenting style and the parent's age

There is no significant relationship between Authoritative score with the parent's age, $\beta = -.02$, $t(-0.15) = 0.88$, $p > 0.05$.

There is no significant relationship between Authoritarian score with the parent's age, $\beta = .05$, $t(-0.41) = 0.68$, $p > 0.05$.

There is no significant relationship between Permissive score with the parent's age, $\beta = -.08$, $t(-0.59) = 0.55$, $p > 0.05$.

III. Relationship between parenting style and the parent's educational level

An analysis of variance showed that the effect of the parent's educational level on the Authoritative score was not significant, $F(2,60) = .03$, $p = .97$.

The effect of the parent's educational level on the Authoritarian score was not significant, $F(2,60) = 1.71$, $p = .19$.

The effect of the parent's educational level on the Permissive score was not significant, $F(2,60) = 1.59$, $p = .21$.

IV. Relationship between parenting style and the family income

An analysis of variance showed that the effect of the family income on the Authoritative score was not significant, $F(7,55) = .69$, $p = .68$.

The effect of the family income on the Authoritarian score was not significant, $F(7,55) = 1.63$, $p = .15$.

The effect of the parent's educational level on the Permissive score was not significant, $F(7,55) = .50$, $p = .83$.

V. Relationship between parenting style and the child's age

Since there are 9 age groups (age 2 to 10), it is more appropriate to use ANOVA instead of regression. According to the analysis, the effect of the child's age on the Authoritative score was not significant, $F(5,57) = .98, p = .44$.

The effect of the child's age on the Authoritarian score was not significant, $F(5,57) = 1.08, p = .38$.

The effect of the child's age on the Permissive score was not significant, $F(5,57) = .12, p = .99$.

VI. Relationship between parenting style and the child's gender

There is no significant difference between the authoritative parenting score towards a male child ($M = 4.11, SD = .42$) compared to the authoritative parenting score towards a female child ($M = 4.01, SD = 0.38$), $t(61) = 1.02, p = .31$

There is no significant difference between the Authoritarian parenting score towards a male child ($M = 1.46, SD = .20$) compared to the Authoritarian parenting score towards a female child ($M = 1.54, SD = .23$), $t(61) = -1.35, p = .18$

There is no significant difference between the permissive parenting score towards a male child ($M = 1.73, SD = .28$) compared to the permissive parenting score towards a female child ($M = 1.79, SD = .35$), $t(61) = -.71, p = .48$

VII. Relationship between parenting style and the child's country of origin

An analysis of variance showed that the effect of the child's country of origin on the Authoritative score was not significant, $F(9,53) = .6, p = .79$.

The effect of the child's country of origin on the Authoritarian score was not significant, $F(9,53) = .93, p = .51$.

The effect of the child's country of origin on the Permissive score was not significant, $F(9,53) = .99, p = .46$.

Discussion

On the demographic information

Some basic demographic information about the adoptive family was collected. A majority of the adoptive families surveyed (79.3%) had an annual total income of more than 600000 NOK, which is considerably higher than the average median income (after tax) for all the households in Norway in 2012, which was NOK 446 000 (Statistics Norway, 2013b).

About education level, 29.8% percent of the Norwegian population aged 16 or above had completed tertiary education as in 2003 (Statistics Norway, 2013d). For the adoptive parents surveyed, a striking 84.1% of them had completed tertiary education or equivalent.

The mean age of the surveyed parents was 42.16 years old. For the whole country, the mean age of the parents at all birth was 30.5 in year 2013 (Statistics Norway, 2013c). But it does not mean a lot as we do not know exactly at what age the parents adopted the children. In addition, data about the adoptive parents' marital relationship would have been useful, because as described in the literature review, the quality of a marital relationship affects parenting. But the aim of the section here is just to give a general picture of the demographic information about the adoptive parents in the study. There is no attempt to draw any causal relationship.

On authoritative parenting style

All the parents in the current study can be categorized in the authoritative parenting style, as the mean score of the authoritative parenting style is larger than that of the authoritarian style that of the permissive style.

	Mothers' mean score	Fathers' mean score
Authoritative style	4.07 (SD = 0.40)	3.89 (SD = 0.35)
Authoritarian style	1.50 (SD = 0.22)	1.57 (SD = 0.16)
Permissive style	1.76 (SD = 0.33)	1.83 (SD = 0.20)

Table 5.2.1- The mean score of the parenting style of the adoptive parents

There have been a lot of studies documenting the consequences of the different parenting styles for the children.

As early as in 1967, Baumrind had suggested that verbal give-and-take and independence granting, together with enforced demands and consistent discipline were associated with stable and assertive behaviors in children (Baumrind & Black, 1967). Since then, a lot of studies focused on the relationship between parenting style and the quality of mother-child attachment. For example, the caregivers' responsiveness to the infants' signals of insecurity when they were 1-year-old were hypothesized to be pivotal in determining the infant's attachment style (secure, avoidant or ambivalent) (Grossmann & Grossmann, 1990). Mothers of 1-year-old children who were securely attached were found to be more 'tender, positive, responsive, and sensitive to their infants'. They were more willing and able to perceive the child's communication attempts. They often interpreted it from the child's point of view, and responded promptly and appropriately according to the child's developmental needs (Ainsworth et al., 2014). On the other hand, mothers of insecure-avoidant infants were observed to be more averse to physical contact. They tended to interact in a more intrusive manner; while mothers of insecure-resistant infants were more unpredictable, and in a way more insensitive (Grossmann & Grossmann, 1990). It is not so say that the infants' attachment style is causing the parent to act in a certain way or vice versa. But there is clearly a relationship between the two. Besides infants, a recent research studied the relationship between parenting style and the quality of mother-child attachment in middle childhood (n = 202; grades 4–6) and adolescence (n = 212; grades 7–11). For both age groups, a consistent positive association was found between the authoritative parenting and secure attachment; while negligent parenting is associated with avoidant attachment. The research also drew associations between psychological autonomy and the child's views of self. Moreover, warm parental involvement might play a role in shaping the children's view of the attachment figure (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003). Back in year 1991, Baumrind was already investigating the relationship between parenting and adolescents' behaviors. She found that authoritative parents who were highly demanding and highly responsive were remarkably successful in protecting their adolescents from problem drug use, and in generating competence. But it is also worthy to note that in the same article, she also remarked that authoritative upbringing, although sufficient, is not a necessary condition to produce competent children (Baumrind, 1991).

There have also been studies on school grades. One such study employed a large sample which consisted of 7836 high school students. After controlling factors like gender, age, parental education, ethnic, and family structure categories, a negative correlation was found between school grades and both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. In contrast, authoritative parenting style was correlated with good grades. Also of interest is that this research made the distinction between 'consistent' and 'inconsistent' families. Students from families which were consistently authoritative, meaning that they scored high on the authoritative scale but low on the authoritarian and permissive scale, had higher school grades than students from families that were inconsistently authoritative. (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). Here is one more research study with a larger sample. 4,100 youngsters who were 14 to 18 years old were asked to rate their parents on 2 dimensions: acceptance/involvement and strictness/supervision. Based on the results, the parents were classified into 4 parenting styles, namely authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful parenting style. Then, the adolescents' psychosocial development, school achievement, internalized distress, and problem behavior were measured. It was found that adolescents who described their parents as authoritative scored highest on measures of psychosocial competence and lowest on measures of psychological and behavioral dysfunctions. The opposite was found for adolescents who characterized their parents as neglectful. Although adolescents who described their parents as authoritarian scored quite well on measures regarding obedience and conformity; they had relatively poorer self-conceptions than the other groups. Adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritarian had a strong sense of self-confidence. But there was a higher frequency of substance abuse and school misconduct among them. They were also less engaged in school (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

Childrearing style is related to prosocial behaviors. In a study, 112 children (6–11 years of age) and both their parents were studied. Fathers and mothers who behaved more authoritatively during a structured task (a puzzle) had children who were rated as more prosocial, helpful and kind by their teachers and peers. The children with authoritative parents were also rated to be more popular. The study concluded that two parental dimensions, authoritative/democratic and authoritarian/restrictive, seemed to be predictive of the child's prosocial behavior (Deković & Janssens, 1992).

A study examined if parenting style and adolescent decision making are related. 262 American undergraduate students completed a parenting scale and a decision-making scale.

The results indicated that adolescents raised by authoritative parents tended to refer to their parents for moral and informational decisions, while adolescents raised by authoritarian, permissive, or neglecting-rejecting parents tended to ask their peers for advice for moral and informational decisions. For social decisions, adolescents referred to their peers regardless of their parents' parenting style. From the study, it was concluded that parental responsiveness was a significant factor in determining the source of adolescent decision-making assistance, but parental demandingness was not (Bednar & Fisher, 2002).

The parenting styles can be applied to other contexts as well, for instance the school climate. An authoritative school style was related to the best results on the children's behavioral outcomes; while the permissive style produced the worst results. The same went for rates of student disengagement and dropout. An authoritative school style produced the best results, while a permissive style was correlated to the worst results for disengagement, with an authoritarian school style producing the worst results for dropout. The article also suggested that the benefits of authoritative parenting were maximized when the whole community (for example home and school) is organized according to authoritative principles. This also permits a smooth transition from an authoritative home to an authoritative school (Pellerin, 2005).

It has been quite challenging to find any evidence that concludes that authoritative parenting has any disadvantages. However, there is research that questioned the universality of the effects of the parenting styles. Baumrind found that for a European American sample, an authoritarian parenting style was associated with negative behavioral outcomes, such as hostility and resistance. Yet, the same was not found in her African American sample (Baumrind, 1972).

Authoritative parenting style for adoptive children

Considering the various advantages of the authoritative parenting style, one may go one step further to claim that the authoritative parenting style is very beneficial for adoptive children. To recapitulate, adopted children were perceived by their parents to be having more total and externalizing problems than non-adopted children (Eisenberg et al., 2001); and they were more likely to demonstrate aggressive behaviors (Rosnati et al., 2008). As it was suggested that some aspects of the authoritative parenting style are associated with stable and assertive behaviors (Baumrind & Black, 1967); and prosocial behaviors (Deković & Janssens, 1992), it

is reasonable to deduce that authoritative parenting style is likely to be helpful in decreasing the adopted children's potential behavioral problems. The same goes for learning. Looking at adopted children as a group, it was found that they had lower school performances (Dalen, 2002). Research showed that authoritative parenting style is correlated with good grades, while a negative correlation was found for both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles (Dornbusch et al., 1987). This is another reason adoptive parents should be advised to practice the authoritative parenting style. In addition, adopted children are hypothesized to be at risk of insecure attachment due to their background of institutional care, and possible maltreatment and neglect (Chisholm, 1998). On the other hand, it has been found that the parents' responsiveness to the infants' signals of insecurity is essential in determining the infant's attachment style (Grossmann & Grossmann, 1990). Considering all these evidence, one can confidently conclude that the authoritative parenting style is advantageous to an adopted child's development.

An attempt to compare the parenting styles of adoptive parents with other parents

It would be best if the same questionnaire can be used on the biological parents matched with various variables so that the results can be validly compared. As this is beyond the scope of the current research, efforts were made to find if there are any norm data of this parenting assessment tool. The data is unfortunately unavailable, so the next best alternative might be to read the results from this study side by side with the results of other similar studies. One study involved mothers and fathers of 28 preschool children who were enrolled in the same preschool program (50% female, age $M = 48$ months, $S.D. = 1.71$). The researchers claimed that families from a reasonable range of socioeconomic levels were included; and the families participating in the study had an average of 2.07 children. The mean age of the fathers was 37.23 years ($S.D. = 5.22$) and mean number of years of education for fathers was 17.48 years ($S.D. = 3.00$). The mean age of the mothers was 33.57 years ($S.D. = 5.34$) and mean number of years of education for mothers was 16.26 years ($S.D. = 2.45$). The ethnicity of the children was 74.1% Caucasian, 22.2% Asian-American, and 3.7% African-American (Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino, 2005). The data from that study is as follows, while the equivalent data from the current study can be found in table 4.1.7 on page 49.

	Mothers' mean score	Fathers' mean score
Authoritative style	4.05 (SD = 0.32)	3.84 (SD = 0.43)
Authoritarian style	2.10 (SD = 0.38)	2.21 (SD = 0.53)
Permissive style	2.08 (SD = 0.45)	2.05 (SD = 0.40)

Table 5.2.2- The mean score of the parenting style of the parents from another study (Winsler et al., 2005)

One must of course be cautious not to compare the results of the two studies directly. There are a lot of differences in the variables, for example the age of the child, and the cultural differences of the parents, etc. So, the current research is only a very preliminary exploration. One needs a carefully-designed research design to compare the parenting style of adoptive parents and biological parents. Efforts should be made to control the possible extraneous variables, such as the parent factors, child factors and environmental factors as discussed in the literature review.

On corporal punishment

From the results, 3.17% of the parents said that they used physical punishment as a way of disciplining their children. Physical punishment is not legal in Norway. Below is a brief history of the development of the relevant laws regarding corporal punishment.

Before year 1972, parents had rights to use moderate physical punishment associated with the upbringing of children. But it ended according to the General Civil Penal Code in 1972. There was an amendment in 1987, which stated that "The child shall not be exposed to physical violence or to treatment which can threaten his physical or mental health". This amendment sought to inform the general public by making corporal punishment more clearly illegal in the Parent and Child Act. So in applying the criminal law, children have the same protection as everyone else from the use of violence. It was not enough just to protect children from "real" pain and "unnecessary" humiliation. Corporal punishment as a way of childrearing was also no longer tolerable.

A case worth mentioning is that a stepfather was accused for breach of section 228 subsection 1 of the Penal Code (assault) because he smacked his stepsons on their bare

bottoms with his hand. In response, the Supreme Court stated that lighter smacks would be permitted.

In year 2010, there was a review of the law, and further amendments to legislation were passed so as to confirm the prohibition of all corporal punishment. The law now states that “The child must not be subjected to violence or in any other way be treated so as to harm or endanger his or her mental or physical health. This shall also apply when violence is carried out in connection with upbringing of the child. Use of violence and frightening of annoying behavior or other inconsiderate conduct towards the child is prohibited.” (the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2014)

Limitations and recommendations

There are numerous limitations in the current study. They will be discussed in the following. Afterwards, some recommendations and future directions will be given.

Theoretical framework

Understanding of parenting styles

Baumrind's framework of parenting style was chosen in this research. But it is not without flaws. Firstly, Baumrind herself found it difficult to match the parenting styles of seven African-American families to the three original classifications (Baumrind, 1972). This hinted that the framework may not be universal to all parents. Furthermore, there have been a lot of comments and criticisms about the framework. As discussed in the literature review section, Maccoby and Martin tried to define parenting style by two dimensions ("parental responsiveness" and "parental demandingness") after reviewing Baumrind's theory. Afterwards, four parenting styles can be derived from this two-factor matrix - "authoritative", "authoritarian", "indulgent" and "neglecting" style. This is one of the more constructive modifications to the original framework. Future research might make use of the more updated framework and create new survey tools if appropriate.

Understanding of parenting in light of a more holistic familial system

This project seeks to find the connection between adoption and parenting. After reading quite a bit of literature about parenting, it became obvious parenting is a part of a complicated familial system. Some of the factors that may affect parenting were discussed in the literature review section. The factors may carry different weight. For example, it has been suggested that the characteristics of the parents themselves are of primary importance because they do

not only directly influence parenting, but also shape other factors that affect parenting (Pauli-Pott et al., 2000). Also, although some factors were shown to be correlated with parenting, how they are related is not always obvious. For instance, when one reads about the spillover phenomenon, which refers to the direct transfer of mood, affect, or behavior from one setting to another (Oskamp, 1986), one may feel that it is an easy concept to understand and apply to different context. For example, it is not difficult to find evidence that marital quality predicts parental responsiveness to the child; and the opposite, that greater marital hostility is related to fathers' higher levels of intrusiveness and also lower levels of positive involvement with the child (Katz & Gottman, 1996). However, one would be wrong if the finish line is drawn here. The relationship is not as simple as that. To illustrate this, there was an interesting experiment which showed that mothers in a slightly discontent marriage used more questions, positive feedback, informational feedback, and verbal task management in their teaching. They also intruded less often into their children's learning effort. Maybe they were trying to compensate for a less-than-satisfactory marriage by being more involved in teaching their children. This in turn may contribute to the more active response of their children, as compared to children of mothers who had a satisfactory marital relationship (Brody et al., 1986). This is just one example to show the complexity of the interaction in a familial system. So, although the current research attempts to investigate many different factors, the design is too simplistic to understand a concept as complex as parenting. It is recommended that future research can be designed in such a way that the complexity and interaction of the familial system can appreciated.

Research method

Below are some of the disadvantages of using the current research method.

Sampling

First of all, the sample size is only 63, which is too small to make a convincing generalization. Random selection of the subjects was not possible because the population is quite small and not easy to reach. Parents were contacted via a Norwegian adoption agency called Adoptionsforum and parents chose to participate in the project voluntarily. One can in no way claim that the sample is random when such sampling method is used. It might be that those who chose to participate in the study share some common characteristics. Thus the sample may not be representative of the whole population. It is noted that there are many more female respondents than male respondents. Therefore the fathers' perspective might not be as represented as the mothers'.

The survey - Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)

In the survey, parents were asked to answer the questions based on a recount on how they parent their children. It is in a way a subjective judgment and is affected by the parents' memory. Although large-scale studies were done with the original Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) to establish the reliability and validity; not as many have been done with the shortened version yet. In addition, despite efforts to ensure a good translation, there might have been discrepancies in the original English version of the PSDQ and the Norwegian version. Below are a few examples. In the first statement,

Original English version	Norwegian version
I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs.	Jeg er oppmerksom og mottakelig overfor mitt barns følelser og behov.

Table 6.1- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 1 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

"Oppmerksom og mottakelig" may sound more passive than the English counterpart. It does not seem to require the parent to act after noticing the child's feelings and needs. For instance, if the parents have the impression that they understand the child's feelings, but do not know

how to handle those feelings, they may answer positively in the Norwegian version, but negatively in the English version.

In statement number 4,

Original English version	Norwegian version
When my child asks why he/she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.	Når barnet mitt spør hvorfor han/hun må gjøre som jeg sier, konstanterer jeg: fordi jeg sier det, eller jeg er din forelder og jeg vil det.

Table 6.2- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 4 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

The Norwegian word "konstanterer" seems to be less commonly used than "state" in the English version. Some parents may interpret it as a stronger form of expression of the same meaning in the English version. So, they may be less likely to put a high rating for this item.

For statement number 5,

Original English version	Norwegian version
I explain to my child how I feel about the child's good and bad behavior.	Jeg forklarer barnet mitt hva jeg synes om både god og dårlig oppførsel.

Table 6.3- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 5 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

The word 'synes' and 'feel' may have slightly different meanings, where the Norwegian version may be interpreted in a more judging way. Also, the word "både" may give an unintended emphasis on 'both the good and the bad behavior'. In addition, "the child's" is omitted in the Norwegian version. This may alter the result in different ways. Hypothetically, if a parent always complains about what other people are doing, but refrains from giving such feedback to his or her child, he or she might give a higher frequency rating when answering the Norwegian version than the English version. However, if a parent is always giving feedback about his or her child's behavior, but not very judging about good and bad behavior

in general, he or she may give a lower frequency rating for the Norwegian version than for the English version.

The translation for statement number 6 is one of the most problematic ones.

Original English version	Norwegian version
I spank when my child is disobedient.	Jeg gir ris når barnet mitt er ulydig.

Table 6.4- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 6 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

The Norwegian verb "ris" has a broader meaning than "spank" in English. It may encompass other forms of punishment, such as verbal punishment. So, parents are more likely to give a higher frequency rating for the Norwegian version than the English version.

For statement number 8,

Original English version	Norwegian version
I find it difficult to discipline my child.	Jeg synes det er vanskelig å sette grenser for barnet mitt.

Table 6.5- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 8 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

"Discipline" and "sette grenser" may mean slightly different things. The word 'discipline' may have more of an element of action than 'å sette grenser', which is just to set limits. So some parents may set a lot of limits but find it difficult to enforce them. In that case, they may have a lower frequency rating because they think that it is not difficult to set the boundaries. On the other side of the coin, some parents may find it difficult to set limits, but quite often discipline the child anyway. They may discipline the child according to intuitive judgment rather than concrete limits, for example. In that circumstance, the frequency rating may be increased.

In statement 19,

Original English version	Norwegian version
I grab my child when being disobedient.	Jeg tar tak i barnet mitt når han/hun er ulydig.

Table 6.6- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 19 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

The Norwegian expression "å ta tak i" seems to imply a less extreme meaning than the English verb 'grab'. Hence, parents may tend to give a higher frequency rating when answering the Norwegian version than the English version.

Lastly, for statement 32,

Original English version	Norwegian version
I slap my child when the child misbehaves.	Jeg fiker til barnet mitt når det oppfører seg dårlig.

Table 6.7- Comparison of the original English version and the Norwegian translation of statement 32 of the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire

The controversial wordings here are "slap" in English and "fiker til" in Norwegian. The Norwegian term may imply a more violent action than the English counterpart. "Å fike til barnet" seems to have a higher chance of causing real physical harm than a more 'casual' slap. So there may be a greater tendency for parents to answer 'never' for the Norwegian statement than the English statement.

Conclusion

In this research, the parenting of adoptive parents was investigated. From the result of the *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSQD), it can be concluded that all of informants can be classified as belonging to the authoritative style. The pattern of their childrearing was described with the help of the dimensions under each parenting style (the connection dimension, the regulation dimension, the autonomy dimension, the physical coercion dimension, the verbal hostility dimension, the non-reasoning/ punitive dimension and the indulgent dimension). It is suggested that future research may employ a more holistic view on parenting and utilize a more updated framework of parenting.

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Appendix:

Online questionnaire (English version)

“A profile of childrearing characteristics of adoptive parents”

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

By answering this survey, you are agreeing to give permission so that the answers will be used in my master’s thesis. You are always anonymous and no one will be able to get back to who answered what.

Background and purpose

The captioned research project will be carried out as part of my special needs education master program at the University of Oslo. This is a request for you to participate in the research study, which intends to investigate the childrearing characteristics of adoptive parents.

What does the study entail?

You will be asked to complete an online-survey based on the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ). The questionnaire includes 32 questions and will take approximately 8 minutes to complete.

Potential disadvantages

There are no foreseeable risks involved.

Voluntary participation

Participation in the study is voluntary. You can withdraw your consent to participate in the study at any time and without stating any particular reason. If you later on wish to withdraw your consent or have questions concerning the study, you may contact Leung Hei Tin (46373462). My supervisor at the University of Oslo is Kristin Vonheim (22858067).

Regards,

Leung Hei Tin

Please rate how often you exhibit this behavior with your child.

1 = Never

2 = Once In a while

3 = About Half of the Time

4 = Very Often

5 = Always

1. I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs.
2. I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child.
3. I take my child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.
4. When my child asks why he/she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.
5. I explain to my child how I feel about the child's good and bad behavior.
6. I spank when my child is disobedient.
7. I encourage my child to talk about his/her troubles.
8. I find it difficult to discipline my child.
9. I encourage my child to freely express himself/herself even when disagreeing with parents.
10. I punish by taking privileges away from my child with little if any explanations.
11. I emphasize the reasons for rules.
12. I give comfort and understanding when my child is upset.
13. I yell or shout when my child misbehaves.
14. I give praise when my child is good.
15. I give into my child when the child causes a commotion about something.
16. I explode in anger towards my child.
17. I threaten my child with punishment more often than actually giving it.
18. I take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.
19. I grab my child when being disobedient.

20. I state punishments to my child and does not actually do them.
21. I show respect for my child's opinions by encouraging my child to express them.
22. I allow my child to give input into family rules.
23. I scold and criticize to make my child improve.
24. I spoil my child.
25. I give my child reasons why rules should be obeyed.
26. I use threats as punishment with little or no justification.
27. I have warm and intimate times together with my child.
28. I punish by putting our child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations.
29. I help my child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging my child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.
30. I scold or criticize when my child's behavior doesn't meet my expectations.
31. I explain the consequences of the child's behavior.
32. I slap my child when the child misbehaves.

Online questionnaire (Norwegian version)

En profil av barneoppdragelsessærtrekk hos adoptivforeldre

Takk for at du tar deg tid til å delta i denne undersøkelsen.

Ved å gjennomføre den gir du tillatelse til at svarene blir brukt i min masteroppgave. Du er hele tiden anonym, og ingen vil kunne finne tilbake til hvem som har svart hva.

Bakgrunn og formål

Dette forskningsprosjektet vil bli gjennomført som en del av mitt masterstudie ved institutt for spesialpedagogikk, Universitetet i Oslo., Studien har til hensikt å undersøke hva som kjennetegner adoptivforeldres syn på barneoppdragelse. Jeg håper derfor du vil delta i studien.

Hva innebærer studien?

Du vil bli bedt om å fylle ut et online-spørreskjema basert på *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)*. Spørreskjemaet inneholder 32 spørsmål og tar ca. 8 minutter å fullføre.

Potensielle ulemper

Det er ingen risiko involvert i å delta i undersøkelsen.

Frivillig deltakelse

Deltakelse i undersøkelsen er frivillig. Du kan trekke tilbake ditt samtykke til å delta i studien når som helst og uten å oppgi noen spesiell grunn. Hvis du senere ønsker å trekke tilbake ditt samtykke eller har spørsmål til studien, kan du kontakte Leung Hei Tin (46373462). Min veileder ved Universitetet i Oslo er Kristin Vonheim (99008824).

Vennlig hilsen
Leung Hei Tin

Vennligst vurder hvor ofte du utviser denne atferden med barnet ditt.

1 = Aldri

2 = En gang i blant

3 = omtrent halve tiden

4 = Veldig ofte

5 = Alltid

1. Jeg er oppmerksom og mottakelig overfor mitt barns følelser og behov.
2. Jeg bruker fysisk avstraffelse som en måte å disiplinere barnet mitt.
3. Jeg tar mitt barns ønsker i betraktning før jeg ber barnet om å gjøre noe.
4. Når barnet mitt spør hvorfor han/hun må gjøre som jeg sier, konstanterer jeg: fordi jeg sier det, eller jeg er din forelder og jeg vil det.
5. Jeg forklarer barnet mitt hva jeg synes om både god og dårlig oppførsel.
6. Jeg gir ris når barnet mitt er ulydig.
7. Jeg oppfordrer mitt barn til å snakke om sine problemer.
8. Jeg synes det er vanskelig å sette grenser for barnet mitt.
9. Jeg oppfordrer mitt barn til å uttrykke seg fritt selv når han/hun er uenig med foreldrene.
10. Jeg straffer ved å ta privilegier fra mitt barn med liten eller ingen forklaring.
11. Jeg understreker hva som er årsakene til regler.
12. Jeg gir trøst og forståelse når barnet mitt er opprørt.
13. Jeg kjefter eller roper når barnet mitt ikke oppfører seg.
14. Jeg gir ros når barnet mitt oppfører seg pent.
15. Jeg gir barnet mitt viljen sin når han/hun lager oppstyr om noe.
16. Jeg eksploderer i sinne mot barnet mitt.
17. Jeg truer barnet mitt med straff oftere enn jeg faktisk gjennomfører det.
18. Jeg tar hensyn til mitt barns ønsker når jeg lager planer for familien.
19. Jeg tar tak i barnet mitt når han/hun er ulydig.

20. Jeg sier jeg vil straffe til mitt barn, men gjør det egentlig ikke.
21. Jeg viser respekt for mitt barns synspunkter ved å oppmuntre mitt barn til gi å uttrykk for dem.
22. Jeg lar mitt barn gi innspill til familiens regler.
23. Jeg skjenner og kritiserer for å gjøre barnet mitt bedre.
24. Jeg skjemma bort barnet mitt.
25. Jeg begrunner hvorfor regler skal følges.
26. Jeg bruker trusler som straff med liten eller ingen begrunnelse.
27. Jeg har varme og intime stunder sammen med barnet mitt.
28. Jeg straffer barnet mitt ved å la det være alene med liten eller ingen forklaringer.
29. Jeg hjelper barnet mitt til å forstå effekten av adferd ved å oppmuntre barnet til å snakke om konsekvensene av sine egne handlinger.
30. Jeg skjenner eller kritiserer når mitt barns oppførsel ikke oppfyller mine forventninger.
31. Jeg forklarer konsekvensene av barnets adferd.
32. Jeg fiker til barnet mitt når det oppfører seg dårlig.