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The Impact of Adoption Related Language

On the Affective Reactions of Adopted Chinese Girls
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Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Definition and History of Adoption

Adoption has been defined as taking an individual into one’s family through legal means and raising the individual as one’s own child (American Heritage Dictionary, 4th edition, 2000). Additionally, it has been defined as a social construction meant to provide permanence to a parent-child relationship between individuals who are not related biologically (Pertman, 2000). Perhaps showing most sensitivity for the child, Reitz and Watson (1992) defined adoption as a “means of providing some children with security and meeting their developmental needs by legally transferring ongoing parental responsibilities from their birth parents to their adoptive parents; recognizing that in so doing we have created a new kinship network that forever links those two families together through the child, who is shared by both” (pg. 11).

The process of placing children in homes to be raised by adults other than their biological parents is centuries old. Historically, the initial purpose of “adoption” was to serve the needs of the adoptive parents. For example, the majority of American adoptions that took place prior to 1851 were meant to secure heirs for childless individuals or workers for households. In order to secure the child as an heir, the adult(s) went to the State Legislature and got a “special bill” that said, in essence, “Mr. and Mrs. Smith want to adopt Joe Smith” or the adult(s) would go to the Courthouse and “register” the child with the county recorder similar to registering an animal or property (Smith & Miroff,
In 1851, Massachusetts passed the first modern adoption law. Known as the Massachusetts Adoption of Children Act, it was revolutionary in recognizing adoption as a social and legal operation based on the well-being of the child. It additionally inferred that children who were adopted should be raised with love and a sense of belonging. Between 1854 and 1929, over 250,000 children who were considered to be parentless from New York and other Eastern cities were sent by trains to Midwestern and Western cities. Known as the orphan trains, these massive transports of children were based on the theory that Catholic and Jewish immigrant children could be Americanized if taken out of poor urban settings and raised by wealthier Anglo-Protestant families. This process, considered humanitarian by many, set the stage for international adoption (Herman, 2007).

International Adoption

Every year, more than 40,000 children are adopted internationally. In 2007, most internationally adopted children came to the United States from China, Russia, and Guatemala (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2008). Historically, international adoption began after the two World Wars when Americans took in European children who had lost their parents in the wars. The practice of international adoption became more formalized soon after the Korean War when GI's adopted South Korean children they had fathered during the war. While Korea remained the major country for international adoption for many years, China was next to open its doors to adoption. For many years, Chinese female infants had been placed in orphanages, due to Chinese law mandating one child per family. With the growing number of children abandoned in orphanages in China from 1992 to 2000, China surpassed Korea with international adoptions. In 2005, a recorded
55,000 Chinese children were adopted by North American citizens (Pollock, 2005). Based on data from the 2000 U.S. Census, the majority of children adopted from China into the United States were under 6 years of age when the census data were collected (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Additionally research found that 95% of children adopted from China by American citizens are female, 35% are under the age of one year when adopted, and 62% are between the ages of one and four years when adopted (Johnson, Banghan, & Liyao, 1998). Because child abandonment is illegal in China, adoptive families receive a certificate of abandonment which documents that the biological parents relinquished their parental rights through abandonment. The Chinese Adoption Law of the People’s Republic of China, published in November 1998, required married and single applicants for adoption of a child to be between the ages of 30 and 55 years, have a joint income of $10,000 per household member including the adopted child or, if single, $30,000 including the adopted child, along with a clean bill of health. However, China recently modified its adoption laws. Effective May 1, 2007, applicants must have been married for at least the past two years, each parent must have a body mass index of no more than 40, and parents must be between the ages of 30 and 50 years. Additionally, parents who have a “severe facial deformity” or who take medications for psychological conditions including depression and anxiety are banned from adopting children from China. While there are many individuals unhappy with these new restrictions, adoption agencies have explained that China has the right to establish these restrictions (Associated Press, 2006).

While international adoption has certainly not been the norm in child bearing methods, it is becoming an increasingly more common phenomenon. For the first time in
its history, the U.S. Census in 2000 included questions about the adoptive status of children in the home; the census included “adopted son/daughter” for the first time as a category of relationship to the household separate from “natural born daughter/son” and “stepson/stepdaughter.” Furthermore, the definition of “own child” changed to include adopted children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

**Parent Issues Related to Adoption**

As stated earlier, adoption is becoming an increasingly more common phenomenon; however, society still holds a fundamental presumption that the best parents for any given child are his or her biological parents (Singer, Brodzinsky, Ramsay, Steir, & Waters, 1985; The Evans B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 1997; Wegar, 2000). This notion is demonstrated by the fact that biological parents automatically become parents, with no intermediary, whereas adoptive parent(s) must work with an adoption agency and/or an attorney to become parents. Additionally, biological parents recognize that the child is unconditionally theirs, whereas adoptive parents do not necessarily know when and even if they will “receive” a child.

With these observations in mind, researchers have subdivided the adoption process into four phases (Reitz & Watson, 1992). The first phase is the “uncertainty phase” which includes all aspects of the adoption process that occur before the child comes into the adoptive family. While most biological parents have an assumed nine months to prepare for the coming of their child, adoptive parent(s) do not have the security of such a timeline. They may wait for years to receive the phone call that a child is available for them and then have a limited amount of time to “retrieve” this child.
The second phase runs from the time the child enters the adoptive family until the adoption is consummated. This phase is generally experienced as a time of apprehension when parents routinely question whether they can keep their child and whether they are the child's real parent, or whether his or her real parents are those who conceived the child (Smith & Miroff, 1981). These questions underscore the experiences of the adoptive parent(s) and can threaten their feelings of entitlement to their adopted child and the belongingness of this child in the family. First addressed by Jaffee and Fanshel (1970), "entitlement" refers to the adoptive parent's feelings and beliefs that they have both the legal and emotional right to be parents to their adopted child. While the legal right is affirmed in court, the emotional right develops from parents' increasing understanding of their roles as the mother and/or father to the adopted child. Jaffe and Fanshel (1970) conducted a follow-up study of 100 families who had adopted children between 1931 and 1940 through four social agencies in New York City. Clinical interviews were conducted with the parents of the adopted children who had originally been part of a study conducted by the Child Welfare League of America in 1960. These clinical interviews assessed the parents' overall satisfaction, stress, and investment in the adoption experience, their feelings about their inability to procreate children, their attitudes and feelings about their child's adoptive status, and their relationship with the adoptee. Interviewers rated each parent's response on a nine point continuum previously found to be valid and reliable. Results regarding entitlement suggested that it is not necessarily whether or not the adoptive parents feel entitled to their adoptive child but, rather, to what degree they feel entitled. Parents who were found to be either overprotective or neglectful of their child struggled more with feelings of entitlement;
furthermore, parents who displayed anxiety when separated from their child or who were hesitant to discipline their child were found to be more questioning of their rights of entitlement. Finally, results suggested those parents who either talked incessantly about their child’s adoption or who kept the adoption a secret from friends and family appeared to struggle with entitlement issues as well. Very central to the findings was that the more the adoptive parents experienced a sense of entitlement to parent their adoptive child, the more secure the adopted child felt about his or her status within the adoptive family. More recent studies have supported similar findings. Adoption literature has suggested that most adopted children are likely to incorporate their adoptive parents’ stance on the concepts of entitlement. Therefore, it is important for the parents to explore their own feelings about the role they play for their child (Butler, 1989; Whitaker, 1992). Additionally, adoptive parents who continue to significantly question and doubt their right to raise and discipline their adopted child are more likely to experience conflict with this child about boundaries and limits in comparison to adoptive parents who do not continue to significantly question their right to parent (Rosenberg, 1992). Cohen, Coyne, & Duvall (1996) administered a survey addressing entitlement issues to 136 adoptive and non-adoptive families. Results suggested both adoptive and non-adoptive parents who did not develop an adequate sense of entitlement had greater conflict with their child regarding disciplinary issues.

The concept of “claiming” is also integral to the second phase of adoption. “Claiming” has been defined as the mutual process by which the adoptive family and the adopted child grow to feel they belong together; it is making a lifelong commitment that recognizes all the rights, responsibilities, and privileges that come with having a child

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(Anderson, Piantanida, & Anderson, 1993). This may be demonstrated by adoptive parents or their relatives discussing physical similarities between themselves and their adopted child or by giving the adopted child a family name or nickname. Raynor (1980) interviewed 160 adoptive parents and 100 of their adopted children, now young adults. The author found there was a positive correlation between the degree to which adopted children and their adoptive parents perceived themselves as similar to one another in personality, mannerisms, and even physical characteristics and how satisfied both the adoptive parents and the adopted child were with the adoption. Additional literature supplemented these findings suggesting that one of the best predictors of positive outcomes for children in adoptive families is perceived similarities (Lamb, 1999).

The third and fourth phases, described as the accommodation phase and the integration phase, respectively, consist of both the adoptive parents and adopted child adapting and adjusting to life together. When a child enters a family through adoption or as a biological addition, the family balance is changed. It is important for each family member to adjust to the changes and expectations that come with having this new family member (Bourguignon & Watson, 1987; Reitz & Watson, 1992). As stated earlier, adoptive parents go through a markedly different process to "have" a child in comparison to biological parents. Unfortunately, society tends to emphasize these differences, reminding the adoptive parents that their family is not always seen as the "normal" family. Adoption literature suggests that comments such "you are wonderful to take in a child without a home" (Melina, 1998, p. 140) may leave the adoptive parent(s) feeling frustrated because they now feel they must live up to this expectation of being wonderful. Many adoptive parents have commented that when they are commended for their
unselfish and generous act of “rescuing” a child, they interpret this statement as a “rule” that they must never voice frustration about their adopted child. On the other hand, some see the bond between the adopted child and his or her adoptive parents as fragile, unstable, or insincere. This may cause adoptive parents to be hypervigilant and judgmental of their own parenting skills. This undermines the parents efforts at “claiming” their child as rightfully their own and may consciously or unconsciously increase the parents fear that someday their adopted child will be taken away from them (Melina, 1998).

Holditch-Davis, Sandelowski, & Harris, (1999) compared 21 adoptive parents to 19 biological parents in terms of time spent with their infant. Their findings suggested that while fathers, in general, spend less interactive time with their child, adoptive parents share the parent-infant interactions more evenly in comparison to biological parents. Plausible hypotheses for these findings include research that suggests parents, in particular fathers, who have children at age 35 or later are more nurturing and spend more time with their child. This finding is in line with research that suggests individuals become adoptive parents at a later age in comparison to individuals who biologically conceive their child. Another explanation is based on findings that most adoptive parents have struggled with infertility before deciding to adopt, and research suggests that going through fertility treatments increases commitment to parenthood (Sandelowski, Harris, & Holditch-Davis, 1993). Finally, the adoption process is a more equally shared task between the couple as the adoptive mother does not experience the 9 month period of “carrying” the child, breast feeding, and does not experience the hormonal changes that plausibly promote mothering (Whitford-Numan, 1994). Therefore, it is likely that the
couple enters parenthood on a more even playing ground. Additional researchers, Watkins and Fisher (1993), gathered qualitative data from 20 adoptive parents regarding conversations about adoption with their adopted child. They found that, in comparison to adoptive fathers, adoptive mothers were more likely to initiate conversation with their adopted children pertaining to their child coming from a different woman’s “tummy.” In regards to differences from family to family, attachment theorists suggest that children who receive empathic caretaking in infancy, regardless of whether their caretaker is the biological parent, may be more able to foster positive relationships with others later in life. Additionally, positive parent-child interactions are associated with peer popularity, whereas non-supportive parent-child relationships are correlated with aggression and peer rejection (Clark & Ladd, 2000).

*Children’s Issues Related to Adoption*

The adopted child who does not perceive a stable feeling of belongingness, permanence, or identification within his or her adoptive family is more likely to experience ideas such as being bad or not being loved as compared to some of his or her friends who are raised by their biological parents (Pertman, 2000; Rosenberg, 1992). In efforts to understand the internal experiences of the adopted child, Brodzinsky, Singer, and Braff (1984) sampled 200 children between the ages of four and 13 years old, half of whom were adopted. Findings suggested that, before the age of six, the majority of children, those adopted and those not adopted, usually could not differentiate between being adopted and being biologically related to those they called their parents. Anyone who lives with the child is viewed as part of his or her family. However, by the age of six, children were beginning to understand the idea of conception and thus were
beginning to differentiate between birth and adoption. The majority of seven and eight year old adopted children in the study were able to understand that they had two sets of parents, one biological and one adoptive. Additionally, around the age of eight years old, the adopted child began to recognize the feelings of rejection that were innately paired with the adoptive process. Cognitively, the adopted child begins to conceptualize that, in order for the adoption to have taken place, the people who had birthed him or her relinquished their right to parent (Brodzinsky, Singer, & Braff, 1984). Additional literature suggests the adopted child often next wonders what he or she had done that was so horrible for someone to give him or her away and will it happen again. As the adopted child recognizes that he or she actually has two sets of parents, "this upsets a basic belief in the inviolability of the parent-child tie. An adoptee may think, 'If parents are attached to their children the way my adoptive parents are attached to me, how can it be that parents would give a child away?'" (Rosenberg, p. 98).

Unfortunately, in middle childhood, as the adopted child’s understanding of the implications of adoption grows, the positive attitudes about being adopted simultaneously decline. This finding was substantiated by a meta-analysis of 98 international adoption-related studies between 1950 and 2005 (Juffer and Van Ijzendoorn; 2005). This research suggested that children adopted internationally struggled more with identity issues during early and middle childhood in comparison to adolescence and in comparison to the non-adopted control participants. Juffer and Van Ijzendoorn proposed that, for the internationally adopted child, early and middle childhood marks a heightened awareness of racial and cultural differences between adoptive parents and their adopted children. This finding has also been understood within the context of Brodzinsky’s
developmentally-based stress and coping model (Brodzinsky, 1990; Juffer, 2006; Smith & Brodzinsky, 2002). According to this model, adoptive status is inherently paired with a variety of loss-related experiences (e.g. loss of birth parents, loss of ethnic and racial connections). Additionally, the model demonstrates that the cognitive appraisals of adoption may be stressful and painful as the adopted child recognizes that he or she is biologically different from his or her caretakers. Smith and Brodzinsky (2002) sampled 82 adopted children, and found that looking physically different than one’s adoptive parents was a source of significant stress for internationally adopted children. With Brodzinsky’s model in mind, along with the growing number of international adoptions, it is crucial to understand the psyche of adopted children in order to support them as they are trying to understand and adjust to their adoptive status and overcome fears of future loss.

Language and Adoption

Most children start producing words between the ages of 8 and 12 months, and by seven years of age, children are likely learning up to 20 new words a day (O’Grady, 2005). Milestones expected to be reached by age 8 include using complex and compound sentences rather easily, describing events of the past in accurate detail, reading with considerable ease, writing simple compositions, and carrying on conversations at a rather adult level. By age 9, most children understand that objects have uses and can be classified into different categories (i.e. an apple is something to eat and it is a fruit), comprehend more complex adjectives, show improved decision-making skills, and complete more complex school related tasks (Child Development Institute, 2006; Kemp, Lieven, & Tomasello, 2005). For some adopted children, there are hurdles in meeting
language milestones within a target age. Unfortunately, countries that allow international adoption are countries under stress, whether due to war, poverty, overpopulation or natural disasters. Because this stress creates a lack of resources, most children adopted internationally have spent some time in an institutional setting such as an orphanage (Pertman, 2000). Living in an orphanage has been correlated with developmental delays, including language, due to the impoverished conditions, lack of human contact, and lack of nurturance in these orphanages (Kreppner et al., 2007; Mason & Narad, 2005). However, these developmental risks are much larger for children adopted at an older age; research suggested children adopted as infants or young toddlers (who were exposed to English upon their entry to the United States) showed no developmental delays in language in comparison to non-adopted peers. Krakow, Tao, and Roberts (2005) compared two groups of girls adopted from an orphanage in China. The first group was adopted in infancy (9 months old or younger), and the second group was adopted as toddlers (11 to 32 months). The first group demonstrated significantly less language development impairments in comparison to the second group. Additionally, within the second group, the older the child was at age of adoption, the greater the language development impairments. Glennan and Masters (2002) compared language development among children adopted from Eastern Europe in comparison to their age equivalent peers who were not adopted. The adopted children were subdivided into four groups based on age at which they were adopted: 0-12 months; 13-18 months; 19-24 months; and 25-30 months. Results suggested that by 36 months, adopted children demonstrated typical mastery of the English language in comparison to their non-adopted peers. However, comparisons among the adopted children revealed that children adopted
when they were 25 to 30 months old showed significantly more language development delays in comparison to the three other groups of children adopted at younger ages.

Theoretical and Empirical Models of the Importance of Language upon Self Development

Language is one of the primary modes of communication in most cultures; it is a social process that gives way to an exchange of all types of information. Language gives passage to ideas, perceptions, facts, assumptions, and attitudes; it can bring people together and draw them apart. As such, many theorists have provided explanations regarding the impact of language in society. These notions provide a foundation for explaining behaviors, thoughts, and feelings thus, theoretically, leading to a better understanding of one’s self. Given that developing one’s sense of self is a complex and dynamic process, it is important to study the smaller pieces of this bigger picture of the developing self. One such piece is the affective reactions that language choices can elicit.

The current study seeks to examine the impact of language used to characterize adoption on the affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls. With the notion in mind that short term reactions theoretically suggest long term effects, this study is an initial step towards understanding what comprises the developing self of adopted children. Interpersonal theory, theories of inclusion and exclusion, and attachment theory are discussed as a theoretical base for understanding the ways in which language related to adoption issues may impact the affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls. In sum, there appears to be a large gap in the literature related to what specifically impacts adopted children’ sense of self and this study seeks to start filling in this gap.
Interpersonal Theory

“No [person] is an island” (Donne, 1624, p. 1). Implied in this statement is the idea that humans are innately interpersonal creatures. A need for social connectedness is presumably an evolutionary drive growing from other innate desires for survival and reproduction (Ainsworth, 1989). While there are a variety of psychological theories underscoring the interpersonal nature of humans, what they all have in common is an emphasis on the role of the social environment in guiding, shaping, and explaining human personality and, subsequently, human behavior. Harry Stack Sullivan, an interpersonal theorist considered by many to be the father of interpersonal theory, emphasized the role of culture and society in shaping human behaviors (Evans, 1996). Sullivan also proposed his own theory, the theory of interpersonal relations, which posited that interpersonal relationships are the groundwork for creating and shaping personality. Sullivan recognized the importance of biology on human development, but also believed that personality is a product of human interactions. Sullivan believed that personality is only observable within the framework of interpersonal situations and that personality can only be understood through observation and partaking in social interactions (Gold & Bacigalupe, 1998). Sullivan proposed that an infant’s early interactions with a primary caregiver set the template of subsequent interpersonal relationships. Sullivan focused on the ability of the infant and caregiver to pick up on one another’s emotions. For example, Sullivan believed that if the mother was anxious because she perceived the disapproval of her peers, the infant would become aware of his or her mother’s anxiety thus becoming anxious himself or herself.
Sullivan underscored the acquisition of language as “the most important of human tools” (Sullivan 1953: p. 189) as it is a principal means for socialization, and subsequently, language development. With the onset of language, children learn to communicate desires for interpersonal relationships, along with expectations for reactions to approval or disapproval from others. Contemporaries of Sullivan have expanded on the relationship between interconnectedness and language. Caraway (1987) explained that children’s self-concept is formed by those around them, given that, from birth, children are bombarded with both verbal and nonverbal messages assessing their behaviors. Caraway believed that in each message is an appraisal, and children’s perceptions of these appraisals shape their subsequent behavior. Caraway suggested language is the essential vehicle for these transactions. She posited that children need opportunities to convey their feelings about their behavior, ask questions about their behaviors, and discuss their behaviors. Within these communications, children gradually form a sense of self (Caraway, 1987).

*Theories of Social Inclusion and Exclusion*

Historically, social inclusion was a requisite for survival; groups offered security and reproductive rights to their members while those excluded died (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gruter & Masters, 1986; MacDonald, Kingsbury, & Shaw, 2005). While theories related to belongingness formally fall under the umbrella of social psychology, the work of Sullivan provides a springboard to theories of belongingness. Much of Sullivan’s research in the juvenile and preadolescence stages of development focused on ostracism and stereotyping. According to Sullivan’s stages of development, entrance into the juvenile era is marked with a desire for same age playmates and peer socialization.
Sullivan postulated that most children enter the juvenile era around age 6 and move onto the preadolescence stage around age 9. Preadolescent children, usually ages 9 to 12, often form close relationships with a select number of same sex peers (Berndt, 2004). Sullivan defined ostracism as the experience of being outside the valued in-group, and stereotyping as the acknowledgment of assumed differences based on a variety of factors such as gender, race, religion, and social status. Ideally, children in one out-group could band together to make their own in-group. Sullivan coined the term, *lonely one*, for those children who found themselves in many out-groups (Evans, 1996). Sullivan and his colleagues, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann (1950) and Edith Weigert (1960), believed that the *lonely one* suffered intense experiences of inferiority. Sullivan suggested ostracism and stereotyping of a child may have exceedingly damaging effects on the child’s interpersonal development (Evans, 1996). While ostracism and stereotyping can take form in either nonverbal behaviors or language, Sullivan again focused on the verbal nature of ostracism and stereotyping. For example, children exposed to repeated negative stereotypes of their own race or culture were more likely to internalize these stereotypes, perceiving them as true facts. As a result of this, these children often had a decreased sense of self-confidence and self-esteem, and externalized these feelings in acts of frustration and anger (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004).

Baumeister and Leary (1995) provided an extensive review of the literature, detailing over 50 studies linking unmet needs for belongingness to distress, disappointment, anxiety, and loneliness. Furthermore, the review described several studies in which the absence of close social bonds was linked to unhappiness and depression. For example, Ayuduk, Downey, and Kim (2001) administered the Rejection
Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ; Downey and Feldman, 1996), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Ward, Mendelsohn, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961), and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (Levy and Davis, 1988) to 223 college women two weeks prior to their first semester and then again at the end of their first year. Researchers were interested in understanding the impact of rejection sensitivity on depressive symptoms after a partner-initiated breakup. Findings suggested that for women who scored higher on the RSQ, there was a significant increase in depressive symptoms on the BDI in comparison to women who initially reported lower scores on the RSQ. These findings are in line with literature that depicts acts of social exclusion as a signal of low relational value and decreases the likelihood of interpersonal acceptance (Leary, 2005). As stated previously, seeking interpersonal acceptance (i.e. group inclusion) is an innate desire as it historically predicted one’s survival. When an individual perceives being socially excluded, this message is internalized by the excluded person as being unworthy to those who excluded him or her which subsequently decreases one’s self-esteem.

*Attachment Theory*

Bowlby, an English psychoanalyst, researched attachment trends in the early 1950’s and in 1951 was employed by the World Health Organization to study the relationship between an infant and his or her primary caregiver, usually the infant’s mother or a “mother substitute.” Bowlby (1983) proposed that the attachment process serves four different processes: to guarantee physiological needs are met; to facilitate the infant’s relationship to the human breast; to provide opportunities for touch; and to fulfill an infant’s primitive craving to return to the womb. During the first two months of life, the infant does not readily discriminate among caretakers. During this stage, the infant
only focuses on getting his or her needs met, not on who satisfies these needs. Between 2 and 7 months, the infant remains more alert and is able to engage in some reciprocal face-to-face interactions with caregivers. Beginning around 6 or 7 months, most infants engage in reciprocal social interactions with caregivers. Bowlby believed that infants at this stage ideally form an attachment characterized by safety and exploration with their primary caregiver. He coined the term, *proximity seeking*, to describe the infant’s actions of maintaining a connection with a primary caretaker. Furthermore, he believed that the nature of this relationship created an internal working modeling for how relationships work. According to Bowlby, the nature of this internal working model characterized all subsequent relationships the infant would have later in life. Research suggests that securely attached infants show greater understanding of social processes, reciprocity, empathy, conflict resolution, and greater peer competence later in life in comparison to children whose primary attachment was characterized as insecure (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Parks & Waters, 1989).

Literature has found that adopted children do experience a pervasive sense of loss at every life stage (Brodzinsky, Schecter, & Henig, 1993). Despite this, however, ample research suggests adopted children are able to form stable, secure attachments with a primary caregiver and then, subsequently, with others later in life. For example, VanLonden, Juffer, and VanIJzendoorn (2007) assessed attachment styles for 70 internationally adopted children, all of whom had been adopted prior to 12 months of age. Their findings suggested that the majority of these children formed secure attachments with their adoptive parents. In regards to language, research suggests that the content and tone of communication contributes to attachment styles. Infants whose mothers used

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more affirmative feedback, less prohibitions, and more contingent responses were more likely to display secure attachment styles in comparison to infants whose mothers’ word choices were considered to be less sensitive, more critical, and self-focused (Bornstein, Tamis-Le Monda, & Haynes, 1999).

Positive Adoption Language

Spencer (1979) discussed the impact of semantics regarding the experience of adoption. Based on her own experiences as a mother who chose to adopt, Spencer believed word choices have an especially strong impact on the adopted child. She created the concept of positive adoption language to describe her belief that there are specific semantic choices one can use when discussing adoption that are more “emotionally correct” than others. According to Spencer, using positive adoption language opens communication within the family and fosters a sense of emotional and social support in the child’s environment outside the home. Today, most adoption agencies, adoption websites, and adoption literature provide examples of Spencer’s positive adoption language and encourage adoptive parents to utilize these language choices. An example of positive adoption language includes saying “my child” instead of the negative adoption language choice “my adopted child”, as the latter suggests the child is not the parent’s. For the purpose of clarifying who is being referred to in this research study, the terms “adopted child” and/or “adoptive parents” are used; however, as Spencer advocated, it is the belief of many that it is wrong to differentiate among children based on the process by which they joined a family. Appendix A illustrates examples of positive adoption language and negative adoption language to discuss adoptive relationships, along with Spencer’s explanation of the correctness of word choices.
Despite the endorsement of positive adoption language by most adoption agencies, websites, and literature, resources did not reference Spencer as its creator. The resources specified this was the language one “should” use but did not elaborate on the origin of the language nor the reasoning behind the word choices. While Spencer (1979) cited that positive adoption language offers “better” semantic choices, she failed to explain what effects positive or negative language choices related to the experience of being adopted would have on an adopted child. She also presented no empirical support for the use of positive adoption language with adopted children. There currently appears to be a gap between the literature and the available research addressing the effects of adoption language selection. Despite this lack of research, positive adoption language is heavily encouraged as an appropriate way to discuss adoptive relationships.

*Measurement Instruments for Children's Affective Reactions*

No theoretical or empirical literature has been reported regarding the impact of Spencer's positive adoption language on the child's experience of being adopted. Consequently, the current study seeks to shed light on the affective experience of the adopted child when exposed to positive, negative, and neutral language choices related to the experience of being adopted. There is a vast amount of research assessing children’s affective reactions within various domains. However, there appear to be few standardized measures used consistently throughout the available research to assess these affective reactions. Many researchers have constructed their own scales for research purposes. While the overwhelming majority of these scales are Likert-type scales assessing affective reactions on a continuum, the scales have often been tailored to fit the given study and, there is no established reliability or validity. For example, Creasey,
Ottlinger, DeVico, Murray, Harvey, and Hesson-McInnis (1997) assessed children’s affective reactions to a series of vignettes created by the authors in which characters were portrayed as happy, sad, or angry. Participants were then presented with sketches of happy, sad, or angry faces, also created by the authors. For each face, participants completed a five point Likert-type scale anchored on either side by “not at all” or “a whole lot” (Creasey, Ottlinger, DeVico, Murray, Harvey, and Hesson-McInnis, 1997, p. 44). Waibel-Duncan and Sandler (2001) assessed children’s emotional reactions to an upcoming medical exam. Participants were asked to rate their feelings regarding the exam on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from “not at all” to “most” (Waibel-Duncan & Sandler, 2001, p. 53). While the measure was piloted on 15 other participants to ensure appropriate reading level, test-retest reliability and internal consistency remained unknown.

One scale used more consistently than most others to assess affective reactions among children is the Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). The Semantic Differential (SD) was originally created to assess the meaning and emphasis individuals placed on a given stimulus by using bipolar adjective anchors on a Likert scale to rate the stimulus (Carrothers, Gregory, & Gallagher, 2000; Francis, 1987; Goldsmith, McDermott, & Alexander, 2000; & Silverman & Largin, 1993). The idea of using polar adjectives to assess meaning and, subsequently, affect grew out of research conducted in 1934 based on the concept of synesthesia, the term given to the idea that stimuli from several different modalities, visual, auditory, emotional, and verbal, may have shared meanings. Karowski and Odbert (1938) found that when individuals listened to fast music, common adjectives used by participants to describe the music included
“red-hot, bright, and fiery,” whereas when participants listened to slow music, common adjective descriptions included “heavy, blue, and dark.” Furthermore, synesthesia generalized to all types of concepts. For example, if asked to pair feelings with the color blue, participants’ likely responses might include “sad”, “depressed”, “calm”, and “peaceful”. However, if asked to pair the color red with feelings, participants’ likely responses might include “angry”, “energetic”, and “enraged”. These findings led to the idea that polar adjectives placed on a continuum can represent semantic space thus essentially allowing stimuli to be measured semantically (Odbert, Karowski, & Eckerson, 1942). Furthermore, having two bipolar adjectives placed at opposite ends of a continuum greatly reduced the systematic errors of acquiescence and biased self-reporting in comparison to Likert-type scales containing one unipolar adjective. Additionally, the bipolar scales were found to have greater validity and reliability (Friborg, Martinussen, & Rosenvinge, 2006; Tzeng, Ware, & Bharadwaj, 1991).

Stagner and Osgood (1946) adapted a scale utilizing bipolar adjectives to assess social stereotypes (Stagner & Osgood, 1946); this study led to a more formalized creation of what is now known as the **Semantic Differential**. Additional research found that ratings on bipolar adjectives tended to be correlated, and Osgood, Suci, and Tannebaum (1957) determined three dimensions of response that account for the covariation in ratings, Evaluation, Potency, and Activity (EPA). Overtime, the EPA system has been recognized as an effective multivariate approach to assessing affect, and is adaptable to children (Brylinsky & Moore, 1994; Franck & Jackson, 2003; Helwig & Avitable 2004; Kazdin, 1984; Stolberg & Anker, 1983; Thomson & Hartley, 1980).

**Summary**
Research suggests that adoption is a dynamic and progressive event with vast implications. In 2002, findings from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption revealed that almost two thirds of Americans had a “personal experience” with adoption, meaning that they, a family member, or a close friend were adopted, adopted a child, or placed a child for adoption (Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, 2002). With international adoption steadily increasing in popularity over the past 50 years, many researchers aimed their efforts toward understanding the thoughts, behaviors, and feelings of the internationally adopted child. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature exploring the relationship between the use of language regarding the experience of being adopted and its impact on the child. Theories of development suggested language is a powerful tool, largely impacting children’s development. The current research seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the impact of Spencer’s positive adoption language upon children’s affective reactions to a series of vignettes which incorporate positive, negative, and neutral language related to the experience of being adopted.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

Every year, more than 40,000 children are adopted internationally, and, in 2005, a recorded 55,000 Chinese children were adopted by North American citizens (Pollock, 2005). While all adopted children likely experience issues surrounding the loss of biological parents, internationally adopted children face unique challenges given that, in our society, most internationally adopted children are of a different race than their adoptive parents (Jacobson, 2006). Thus, internationally adopted children have the additional challenges to integrating the adoptive experience within their sense of self. The current study seeks to shed light on affective reactions experienced by the child when exposed to vignettes regarding adoptive relationships using positive or negative adoption language. In understanding how language specific to adoption issues impacts affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls, this research seeks to shed light on the complex process of forming one's sense of self. Based on the theoretical notions of interpersonal theory, theories of social inclusion and exclusion, and attachment theory, there is reason to believe the use of language directly influences the affective state of the child and this study may be a first step of long term theory driven studies attempting to better understand the influential social factors that impact adopted children's developing sense of self.

It appears that Spencer's (1979) intention in creating positive adoption language was to provide word choices which emphasize the emotional and social connections
relative to one's adoptive status. While Spencer gives insightful reasoning behind her logic, she did not provide empirical support for her contentions. She also failed to explain what effects positive adoption language or negative adoption language may have on the affective reactions of the adopted child. Currently, no theoretical or empirical literature has been reported with regards to the impact of language choices related to adoption issues.

However, from a theoretical perspective, there is reason to believe that language does impact the psyche of an adopted child. Interpersonal theory, theories of social inclusion and exclusion, along with attachment theory, all provide substantial evidence as to why word choices are important. According to interpersonal theory, language has the ability to express interconnectedness and acceptance which, in turn, develops and validates one's sense of self. Perhaps in facilitating feelings of interconnectedness and acceptance, positive adoption language strengthens the sense of self for the adopted child. Theories of social inclusion and exclusion expand on interpersonal theory and postulate that word choices indicate belongingness which, in turn, shapes self-worth and self-esteem. It may be possible that positive adoption language communicates belongingness for the adopted child and subsequently increases self-esteem and self-worth. Finally, attachment theory proposes that word choices by primary caregivers alter attachment styles in infants. Positive adoption language may likely be an assembly of word choices which increase secure attachments among adopted children and their primary caregiver which subsequently helps the adopted child develop more secure attachments with others. With these theories in mind, the purpose of the current study is to look at the impact of positive adoption language and negative adoption language on adopted children's
affective reactions to such language. As stated previously, there is reason to believe that short-term affective reactions theoretically suggest long term effects.

In the current study, there are two independent variables, the type of adoption language used in adoption related vignettes and the order of presentation of the vignettes. These vignettes were constructed by the examiner to incorporate either Spencer’s positive adoption language, negative adoption language, or neutral adoption language related to the experience of being adopted. Each vignette provides an anecdote of a female individual whom participants are instructed to assume is a Chinese girl adopted by American parents and living in the United States. There will be three orders of presentation for the vignettes using a Latin Square Design to counterbalance for order effects.

The dependent variables of the current study are the total scores for the three Semantic Differential dimensions: Evaluative, Activity, and Potency. The current study will utilize a Semantic Differential measure with 12 sets of bipolar adjectives, with each set anchoring a Likert-type scale. The adjectives selected will be equally distributed to represent the three dimensions of Evaluative, Activity, and Potency, as research suggests that four bipolar sets per dimension yields an adequate assessment of affect (Heise, 1970).

Based on a review of the literature, the following null hypothesis will be tested in the current study at the p < .05 level:

Ho: There are no significant differences between groups based on Adoption Language on the three dimensions of the Semantic Differential.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

The current study will include at least 33 Chinese girls who were born in China and are now living in the United States with parents who are US citizens. The participants will be between the ages of 9 to 12 years old. By age 9 most children understand that objects have uses and can be classified into different categories, comprehend more complex adjectives, demonstrate improved decision-making skills, and complete more complex school related tasks (Child Development Institute, 2006; Kemp, Lieven, & Tomasello, 2005), skills important to participation in this study. The age criteria was also selected based on research suggesting that, for internationally adopted children, early and middle childhood is marked by a heightened awareness of racial and cultural differences between themselves, their parents, and their peers (Juffer & Van Ijzendoorn, 2005). Thus, the girls in this study are more likely to attend to adoption issues when they are raised in conversation. Participants will be recruited through Families with Children from China (FCC), a nationwide organization with local chapters created for families who have adopted children from China to come together for support, as well as to provide resources for prospective parents. Participants will need to show an understanding of the English language in order to respond to the measures of the study. They will need to have been adopted by 18 months of age, as research suggested that children adopted as infants or young toddlers from non-English speaking countries (who
were exposed to English upon their entry to the United States) do not show significant developmental delays in language in comparison to children adopted at a later age from the same countries (Glennan & Masters, 2002; Krakow, Tao, & Roberts, 2005). It is also required that English has been and remains the primary language spoken within the family since the adopted child entered the home. Given that the current study has made the theoretical assumption that language has an impact on the developing self via affective reactions, it is important that participants be at an age, developmentally, that they are cognitively able to listen for social commentary on their adoptive status.

Based on a power analysis by the statistical program G*Power (Buchner, Erdfelder, Faul, 1997), the current study requires 33 participants with alpha at .05 and $f^2$ at .25 (medium effect size). The default effect size chosen by G*Power is $f^2=0.25$ and, while this is an acceptable calculation, a more stringent approach and one recommended by Cohen is to set $f^2$ at 0.15, also considered to be a medium effect size. With alpha at .05 and $f^2$ at 0.15, this power analysis calculated that 51 participants are required for the current study. After reviewing past studies utilizing the Semantic Differential with children in which the sample sizes ranged from 30 to 125 (e.g., Dear & Moore, 1994; Franck, Jackson, Pimentel, & Greenwood, 2003; Kazdin, 1984; Miyahara & Register, 2000; Silverman & Largin, 1993; Stolberg & Anker, 1983; Thomson & Hartely, 1980), and considering the restrictive size of the pool of potential participants, it is the goal of the current study to collect data from a minimum of 33 participants to a maximum of 51 participants.
Design

A counterbalanced design was utilized to determine the order of presentation of the three types of vignettes. A 3 x 3 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) will be used to test for any order effects, both as a main effect and an interaction effect. If no order effect is found, a one-way MANOVA will be run to test the main hypothesis.

Measures

Semantic Differential. The Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) is commonly used to measure reactions to a given stimulus (e.g., a picture, a concept, or a vignette) using a Likert scale with bipolar adjectives. An individual is presented a stimulus (e.g., the word “vacation”) and a number of bipolar adjective pairs (e.g., hot-cold, happy-sad), and asked to quantify his or her association of the stimulus to the provided bipolar adjective continuum. Wherever the individual places the mark on the continuum is thought to represent the quality and intensity of the reaction.

Vacation

Happy                         __________________________________________________________ Sad

Extremely   Quite    Slightly  Neither  Slightly    Quite    Extremely
Happy        Happy     Happy     Happy     nor       Sad      Sad      Sad
Sad

Since its conception, the Semantic Differential has been found to be a reliable and valid assessment with adults, adolescents, and children. In 1997, Anastasi and Urbina reported over 2,000 bibliographic references to the Semantic Differential in the literature. The Semantic Differential has been translated into many different languages for use cross-culturally and has been found to be a more reliable and valid measure in comparison to single anchor and unstandardized Likert-type scales (Ofir, Reddy, &
Bechtel, 1987; Paixio, Oliveira, Page, Uwah, & Carlton, 2001; Rosen, 1959). Osgood et al. (1957) originally chose 50 bipolar adjective pairs (e.g., good-bad) and asked 100 college students to rate 20 different concepts using these adjective pairs. Using Thurstone’s Centroid Factor Method (1947), they found that ratings on bipolar adjective scales tended to be correlated, and three basic dimensions of response appeared to account for over two-thirds of the variance in ratings. These three dimensions, also known as factors or axes, were Evaluative, Activity, and Potency. In other words, the meanings or affect an individual associates with a concept is represented by a point in semantic space along three different axes. Several follow-up studies were conducted to test the generality of the factor structure; these studies varied in subject populations, stimuli judged, method or situation of data collection, and factoring method to analyze the data. These studies have found that, no matter what adjective pairs are selected, it is likely that Evaluative, Activity, or Potency will be identified by factor analysis (Osgood et al., 1957). Immediate test-reliability with the original 100 college students was .85 (Osgood et al., 1957). Tannenbaum (1953) assessed test-retest reliability of the Semantic Differential with six concepts over a five week period with 135 participants. Test-retest coefficients ranged from .87 to .93, with a mean of .91. Norman (1959) assessed test-retest reliability of the Semantic Differential and found that the average test-retest reliability over a four week period was 0.79 for men and women on the Evaluative dimension, 0.75 for women on the Potency dimension, 0.77 for men on the Potency dimension, 0.78 for women on the Activity dimension, and 0.82 for men on the Activity dimension. Grigg (1959) assessed the construct validity of the Semantic Differential with three concepts, the self, the ideal self, and the neurotic self. The measure was
administered to forty-two college students who had recently completed an abnormal psychology course; all students were initially asked to rate themselves for the three concepts. The experimental group received an additional measure assessing the neurotic features of Miss “X.” Construct validity was found to be strong with the coefficient .96. More recent studies have utilized the Semantic Differential as a valid scale for which to base the development of new measures on (Johnson & Blom, 2007).

The Semantic Differential has also proven to be a valid and reliable measurement when working with a younger population (DiVesta, 1966; Francis, 1992; Kazdin, 1984; Maltz, 1963; Silverman & Largin, 1993). For example, the test-retest reliability over a week period was .96 when 25 fourth graders completed the measure in response to seven different concepts (Maltz, 1963). A recent review of instruments used to measure children’s attitudes towards peers with disabilities found the Semantic Differential to yield an internal consistency of .86 (Vignes, Coley, Grandjean, Godeau, & Arnaud, 2008). One common adaptation of the Semantic Differential when used with children is to reduce the Likert scale from a seven step scale to a Likert-type five step scale (Dear & Moore, 1994; Downing, Moed, & Wight, 1961; Maltz, 1963; Stolberg & Anker, 1983).

Each dimension of the Semantic Differential yields its own score which may be analyzed and interpreted separately. In the current study, each vignette will be analyzed and will yield three scores, one for Evaluative, one for Activity, and one for Potency. Research suggests four pairs of bipolar adjectives per dimension are most appropriate (Heise, 1970). Therefore, a total of 12 bipolar adjective pairs, 4 for each dimension, will follow each vignette. Each adjective pair will have five steps (1-5 scale) from which participants will choose their current intensity and quality of affective reaction. To avoid
Running head: ADOPTION LANGUAGE

anchor effects, half of the bipolar adjective pairs will be presented in reverse order and, subsequently, reverse scored. Thus each vignette will yield an Evaluative score ranging from 4 to 20, an Activity score ranging from 4 to 20, and a Potency score ranging from 4 to 20.

**Vignettes.** The examiner created nine sets of vignettes based on examples of Positive Adoption Language and Negative Adoption Language given by Spencer (1979) (see Appendix B). Each set contains three theme-related vignettes, one containing Positive Adoption Language, one containing Negative Adoption Language, and one containing Neutral Adoption Language.

**Demographic Questionnaire.** Participants’ parents will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire prior to their child participating in the current study (see Appendix C for a copy of this questionnaire). Parents will be asked to indicate their child’s current age, birthday, current grade level in school, and age when their child entered their family. The questionnaire also will inquire as to whether there was any significant time period in their child’s life after the adoption when English was not the predominant language spoken. For example, it will be important to know if the family spent significant time abroad in which their child was predominantly exposed to a language other than English, as this may have significantly impacted the child’s English language development. Finally, parents will be asked if they are familiar with Positive Adoption Language and, if so, to what extent.

**Procedure**

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the current study produced reliable and valid findings. First, seven Chinese girls ranging in age from 9.1 to 9.11 years completed...
a pilot study to assess which bipolar adjective pairs were appropriate for use with 9 years old girls or older in the current study. The participants were recruited through a FCC chapter in North Carolina. Each participant had been adopted prior to the age of 18 months and had not been significantly exposed to a language other than English post adoption. The parents signed an informed consent form (see Appendix D) prior to the study being conducted. The participants met with the examiner for approximately one hour and completed a matching task of pairing adjectives with their definitions (see Appendix E). Seventy-four adjectives were pre-selected from a list of adjectives considered to fall into one of the three dimensions (Evaluative, Potency, and Activity) identified by Osgood et al. (1957), most of which had previously been found to be appropriate for children (Franck, Jackson, Pimentel, & Greenwood, 2003; Freeby & Madison, 1989). The examiner used common definitions for the adjectives found in popular dictionaries (American Heritage Dictionary, 4th edition, 2000; Merriam Webster Dictionary, 11th edition, 2004). After all the participants completed the study, the examiner bought them pizza and ice cream. The examiner later scored the responses and eliminated any adjectives which were not correctly matched to their definitions by all the participants. This yielded a list of 19 bipolar adjective pairs across dimensions. Of these adjective pairs, the examiner selected four pairs per dimension which appeared to relate most meaningfully to the content of the vignettes of the current study, as research suggested that using relevant scales reduces the potential for random error and yields more variance (Heise, 1970).

The examiner created three sets of vignettes with each set containing a positive adoption language vignette, a negative adoption language vignette, and a neutral adoption
language vignette. In order to avoid ordering effects, the vignettes will be counterbalanced within each set and among all three sets. (See Appendix F for a copy of the Semantic Differential instrument and its instructions).

The examiner contacted the FCC presidents of the Greater Cincinnati, OH Chapter and the Central Ohio Chapter in Columbus, OH to inquire as to an approximation of how many girls in each chapter are 9 years or older. The president of the Greater Cincinnati FCC estimated that currently there are approximately 20 girls in their chapter who are 9 years or older. The president of the Central Ohio FCC chapter estimated that currently there are approximately 40 to 50 girls in their chapter who are 9 years or older. In anticipation of potentially needing more participants, the examiner also contacted the FCC president in Asheville, NC who estimated that currently there are approximately 20 girls 9 years or older in the Asheville FCC chapter. The Asheville chapter was chosen because of accessibility to the chapter. The same methodology for data collection will be used in all locations. The current study will be reviewed by Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board for approval. Upon receiving IRB permission to conduct the study, the examiner will notify the participating FCC chapter presidents who will, in turn, send e-mail notifications to FCC members to recruit participants for the study (see Appendix G). The email will provide parents with a brief description of the current study, the examiner’s phone number and e-mail address, and the examiner’s dissertation chair’s phone number and e-mail address. If the parent(s) are willing to allow their child to participate or have any questions about the current study, they will be asked to contact the examiner at the provided phone number or e-mail address. The examiner will also ask the FCC presidents for a list of member contact information in
order to contact the parents directly. The examiner will try to arrange scheduling so that approximately the same number of participants will attend each administration of the current study. A system will be created to send out reminders of the scheduled study. In Cincinnati, OH, the study will take place in a conference room at Xavier University's library, and in Columbus, OH, the study will take place in a conference room at The Ohio State University library.

Upon arrival for the study, parents will be given two copies of the informed consent form, one for them to keep for their own records and one to put in an identified box which the examiner will collect at the end of the study (see Appendix H for a copy of the informed consent form). The parents will then be given the demographic form to complete. The form will be coded so it can be matched with the child's Semantic Differential response form. After the parents complete the demographic form, they will return it to the examiner. Next, the examiner will meet in a separate area with the group of participants whose parents have given consent. First, the girls will be given two copies of an informed consent form, one for them to keep for their own records and one to put in an identified box which the examiner will collect at the end of the study (see Appendix I for a copy of the informed consent form). The girls will be given an envelope which includes the instructions, an example vignette, and the Semantic Differential Measure. Each participant's booklet will be coded by number in order to later match the child's responses with her parent's demographic questionnaire. The participants will be instructed not to open their envelope until the study is ready to begin. When all participants are ready, the examiner will play a videotape for the participants that will begin with the examiner reading aloud the instructions and the example vignette. The
examiner will answer any questions of the participants. Once the participants understand the directions of the task, the videotape will continue with the Semantic Differential measure. Participants will be able to see the vignette typed out on the screen while also listening to the examiner read the vignette aloud. They can also choose to read along with the written copy in their envelope. It is anticipated that each administration of the scale will take approximately 30 minutes. In order to debrief the participants and their parent(s), a sign-up sheet will be passed around to the parents who may provide their name and email address or phone number if they would like the examiner to send them a summary of the results of the study.
Chapter IV

Proposed Analyses

The purpose of the current study is to measure the affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls to vignettes with adoption themes which utilize positive, negative, and neutral adoption language. The independent variable of Adoption Language has three levels: positive, negative, and neutral adoption language. The independent variable of Order of Presentation of the vignettes, which serves as a control in the study, was determined by a counterbalanced design such that these three orders will be presented: Order 1 (Sets 1 [positive language], 2 [negative language], and 3 [neutral language]), Order 2 (Sets 2 [negative language], 3 [neutral language], and 1 [positive language]), and Order 3 (Sets 3 [neutral language], 1 [positive language], and 2 [negative language]).

There are three dependent variables, Evaluative, Potency, and Activity dimension scores on the Semantic Differential measure. In order to test for a main and/or interaction effect for Order of Presentation, a 3X3 MANOVA will be used, with p < .05. Although not anticipated, if there is a significant main and/or interaction effect for Order of Presentation, the appropriate univariate F tests will be completed to determine group differences for each main effect and interaction effect. Then the impact of these effects on the individual dependent variables will be assessed through post hoc analyses. If there are no significant order effects, a one-way MANOVA will be run to test the main hypothesis. The null hypothesis states that there are no significant differences between groups based on Adoption Language on the three dimensions of the Semantic Differential.
In order to test this hypothesis, a one-way MANOVA will be run. If the overall MANOVA is significant, post hoc analyses will be used to determine where the significance lies between groups and to assess the impact of these groups differences on the individual dependent variables.
References


Bornstein, M. H., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., & Haynes, M. O. (1999). First words in the second year: Continuity, stability, and models of concurrent and predictive


http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/language_development.shtml


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## Appendix A

### Examples of Spencer's Adoption Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Adoption Language</th>
<th>Positive Adoption Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is adopted</strong> Infers the adoption is still taking place and the child is not yet part of the family; the adoption is a condition with which the family members cope with</td>
<td><strong>Was adopted</strong> Indicates the adoption process itself is complete and the child is a member of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adoptive parent</strong> Does not indicate the tie of responsibility of the parent and implies a conditional parenthood that may be temporary or tentative</td>
<td><strong>Parent</strong> Indicates the child will share the family name, family home, and family love of the parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real father</strong></td>
<td><strong>Birth father</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural father</strong> Infers the biological father is the only, original father and the adoptive relationships are artificial and tentative</td>
<td><strong>Biological father</strong> Does not infer the adoptive fathers is not a real father; nor does it infer that the child is not the adoptive father’s own child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real mother</strong></td>
<td><strong>Birth mother</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural mother</strong> Infers the biological mothers is the only, original mother and the adoptive relationships are artificial and tentative</td>
<td><strong>Biological mother</strong> Does not infer the adoptive mother is not a real mother nor does it infer the child is not the adoptive mother’s own child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign adoption</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intercountry adoption</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alien adoption</strong></td>
<td><strong>International adoption</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign/alien child</strong> Infers the adopted child is, as a human, strange, unfamiliar, and unknown</td>
<td><strong>Child from abroad</strong> Clearly defines that the child was living in a country other than the country in which their adoptive parents are raising the child; does not attach a stigma to this concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Given up/away</th>
<th>Voluntary surrender (legal term)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned</td>
<td>Child placed in adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child put up for adoption</td>
<td>Arranging for an adoption plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The child’s biological parents were not able to make a permanent placement plan for their child that was in the child’s best interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted sister or brother</td>
<td>Sister or brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate</td>
<td>Born to unmarried parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Born outside of marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted Child</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real child</td>
<td>Birth child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiates between how the biologically conceived child and the adopted child came to be in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion/reunite</td>
<td>Make contact with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows child to more readily comprehend that he or she may have two different sets of parents and they are not mutually exclusive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Pilot Study 2 Vignettes

1. Sarah was eating lunch at her new school when her classmate asked, “Are you adopted?” (Negative Adoption Language)

2. Ralph, his wife, Julie, and their two children were attending a school carnival when they ran into one of Ralph’s coworkers, Jim. Ralph introduced Jim and said, “This is my wife, Julie, and my two daughters, Tara and Rebecca.” (Positive Adoption Language)

3. Theresa came home from school and told her parents that she learned about adoption in her class. Theresa’s parents asked her what she thought about the class. Theresa said, “It was okay. A classmate asked me if I was put up for adoption when I was a baby.” (Negative Adoption Language)

4. Lisa and her mom were shopping at Gap Kids. While Lisa was trying on clothes in the dressing room, a woman approached her mom and said, “I noticed your daughter is Chinese; I’m interested in adopting a child from China. When did you arrange for the adoption of your daughter?” (Positive Adoption Language)

5. Elaine and her daughter went to storytelling time at the library. One of the librarians asked Elaine, “Does your daughter know who her real parents are?” (Negative Adoption Language)

6. Lily was swimming in the pool during her friend’s birthday party when another girl approached Lily and asked, “Were you adopted?” (Positive Adoption Language)
7. When John’s fourth grade class had a substitute for the day, the class got to watch movies all day instead of doing school work. After school that day, John came home and told his mom, “We watched a movie today about a family reunion. Will Nadine have a reunion with her parents in China?” (Negative Adoption Language)

8. Holly and her dad went to the aquarium to see the new turtle exhibit. At the aquarium, they learned that more than 30 different types of turtles live in China. Holly asked her dad, “Do animals adopt other animals?” (Neutral Adoption Language)

9. Rachael and her daughter, Megan, were shopping at Target for school supplies. When Megan was choosing new notebooks, a woman approached Rachael and said, “I noticed your daughter is Asian; I’m interested in adopting a child from China.” (Neutral Adoption Language)

10. Sasha’s brother came home from school one day and told his mom that his fifth grade class was studying the history of China. He asked his mom “Will Sasha ever make contact with her parents in China?” (Positive Adoption Language)

11. Penny’s mom was a chaperone at the end of the year party. She was talking to Penny’s teacher about adoption and the teacher asked her, “Does Penny know who her birth parents are?” (Positive Adoption Language)

12. Dan, his wife, Kristin, and their two children, Maddy and Caroline, were spending a hot summer day at the local pool. Dan saw one of his golfing buddies, Andy. Dan introduced Andy and said, “This is my family.” (Neutral Adoption Language)

13. At lunch time, Olivia and her friends were talking about the places they were born. Olivia said, “I was born in China.” (Neutral Adoption Language)

14. Colin and his sister, Maggie, went to an IMAX movie about elephants in Africa and Asia. Colin asked his mom, “Will we ever go to China?” (Neutral Adoption Language)
15. Lindsay and the rest of her grade five classmates went on a field trip to the local hospital. When she got home, she said to her mom “I saw a pamphlet hanging on the wall that talked about foreign adoption.” (Negative Adoption Language)

16. Rick and his daughter went to the movie theatre on Saturday to see a new Disney movie. After the movie his daughter asked him, “Was the movie’s main character adopted like me?” He answered, “Yes, the character’s biological parents lived in China.” (Positive Adoption Language)

17. Jen and her eight year old daughter, Andrea, were at the floral shop looking for seeds to plant in the spring. When Andrea was playing with the florist’s cat, a woman approached Jen and said, “I noticed your daughter is Chinese; I’m interested in adopting a child from China. When was your daughter given up?” (Negative Adoption Language)

18. Sabrina’s social studies class was studying adoption, Sabrina’s teacher said “adoption happens all over the world in many different countries.” (Neutral Adoption Language)

19. Tom was attending his daughter’s ballet recital. When his daughter came on stage, the couple sitting next to Tom asked him if his daughter was born in China. Then they said to Tom, “We have a daughter who was born in China, and her natural parents live in a province in northern China.” (Negative Adoption Language)

20. Megan came home one day after school and said to her dad, “We studied international adoption in class today and it was very interesting.” (Positive Adoption Language)

21. Paul was in second grade while his sister, Stephanie, was in first grade. Since they had the same lunch period in the cafeteria, they often sat together. One day Paul’s
classmate asked him “is the girl you sometimes sit with at lunch your sister?” (Neutral Adoption Language)

22. Mike and his daughter went to the zoo. At the panda exhibit, his daughter asked a zoo guide where the baby red panda’s parents were. The guide said, “This baby red panda was born in China 3 months ago and her parents still live there.” (Neutral Adoption Language)

23. Bobby and his sister were playing in the sandbox at their daycare center. Another boy walked over to the sandbox and asked, “Can I play too?” When they said “yes”, the boy sat down and asked Bobby, “is she your own sister?” (Positive Adoption Language)

24. Ana and her babysitter were getting ice cream after school. Ana’s friend saw them getting ice cream and ran over to them. She told Ana that she is going to be a big sister soon. Ana then said, “When I was a little baby, my parents came to China after they talked to a special agency person and arranged to be my parents.” (Positive Adoption Language)

25. Claire was watching TV at home on a Saturday morning. During one of the commercials, Claire saw a movie preview about a Chinese girl coming to live in America after she was adopted. (Neutral Adoption Language)

26. John, his wife, Margaret, and their two children, Katie and Mackenzie were leaving the movie theatre on Friday night when they ran into John’s college friend, Mark. John introduced Mark and said, “This is my wife, Margaret, my daughter, Katie, and my adopted daughter, Mackenzie.” (Negative Adoption Language)

27. It was nap time at Beth’s school; her brother, Will, was in the same class. Earlier in the day, the class learned how to use chopsticks to eat snacks. As they were getting ready for their nap, Will’s friend asked him, “is Beth your adopted sister?” (Negative Adoption Language)
Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

What is your child’s current age?

What is your child’s current grade in school?

What age was your child when she entered your family?

Is English the primary language spoken in your home? If not, please describe.

Since your child entered your family, has she been significantly exposed to any language other than English? If so, please describe.

Are you familiar with the concept of Positive Adoption Language? If so, how did you learn about it? Do you use Positive Adoption Language?
I am currently a third year doctoral student in the psychology program at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. As you know, I am studying to be a clinical psychologist and am working on my dissertation. I am interested in learning about language and adoption. Right now, I am asking your daughter to complete a study which will help me when later designing my formal study.

Your daughter will be asked to complete a matching task between adjectives and their definitions. This should take approximately one hour and then we will go out for pizza and ice cream. The answers that your daughter provides will be kept confidential. When my dissertation is finished, I would be happy to make a copy for you if you would like. I do not anticipate any risks related to this study, and your daughter can stop participating at any point if she feels uncomfortable. We will still go out for pizza and ice cream!

By returning this form to me, I will assume that you are willing to allow me to ask your daughter to help in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 513 484-4076 or jjacob04@yahoo.com.

Julia Jacobs
Appendix E

Pilot Study 1 Matching Task

Hello,

Thank you very much for filling out these papers. I am in school too, just like you. When you get to college sometimes you have weird homework. My homework is to have you complete the papers under this one. This homework is not going to your teachers so it doesn't matter if you get any right or wrong. The important part is that you try your best. And if you don't know the right answer, take your best guess. Take as much time as you want on each page and you can take a break between pages if you want. If you feel uncomfortable at any point and want to stop, that is okay too. We will still go out for pizza and ice cream!

If you have any questions, you can ask me them now. Also, please write your birthday on the line below.

__________________________________________________________

Thanks!

Julia (Summer’s sister)
Match the definition on the right to the correct word on the left. Write this number of the definition on the line next to the word it describes. An example is done for you.

- Good
- Bad
- Happy
- Sad
- Beautiful
- Ugly
- Important
- Unimportant
- Right
- Wrong
- Friendly
- Unfriendly
- Nice
- Mean
- Fair
- Unfair
- Smart
- Stupid
- Wise
- Foolish
- Clean
- Dirty
- Wet
- Dry
- Interesting
- Boring
- Credible
- Not credible
- Understandable
- Not understandable
- Likeable
- Unlikeable
- Normal
- Strange
- Success
- Fail

1. To remove dirt from something; spotless; tidy
2. Not able to be believed
3. Able to be believed
4. Attracting and holding your attention and interest
5. Covered with water or another liquid
6. Peculiar; different; weird; not usual
7. Hard to get along with; not kind
8. Nasty; rude; not nice
9. Not holding your attention; not interesting
10. Messy; covered with dirt; filthy
11. Cute; pretty; good looking; attractive
12. One sided; unreasonable; not fair
13. Average; ordinary; regular; usual; typical
14. Incorrect; not right; not accurate
15. Not showing good sense; not wise; doing something dumb
16. Know what is said; clear; able to get the meaning
17. Well liked; easy to be enjoyed; popular
18. Triumph; victory; achieve
19. Not favored; not liked; not easy to be enjoyed
20. Something that the law says you can or have to do; correct
21. Filled with grief or sorrow; unhappy
22. Nice to others; kind
23. Being pleased or glad; enjoying something
24. Fall short; not successful; lose
25. Impartial; just; objective; reasonable; equal
26. Slow to learn or understand; not smart; dumb
27. Something that is awful; terrible; not good; undesirable
28. Unattractive; not pretty; repulsive
29. Intelligent; witty; bright; clever
30. Don’t know what is said; not able to get the meaning
31. Use your intelligence and experience in a smart way
32. Something that is pleasant and enjoyable; great; not bad
33. Rainless; parched; not wet
34. Having a lot of value or worth; significant; meaningful
35. Pleasing or comforting; thoughtful; courteous
36. Not having a lot of worth or value; not significant
Match the definition on the right to the correct word on the left. Write this number of the definition on the line next to the word it describes. An example is done for you.

__Active__ 1. Feeling pestered or bothered by someone or something
__Passive__ 2. Scared; frightened
__Quiet__ 3. Not clever; not sharp
__Loud__ 4. Fearless; not afraid; daring
__Moving__ 5. Having a high temperature; warm
__Still__ 6. Feeling made fun of or tormented
__Brave__ 7. Timid; not at ease with people
__Afraid__ 8. Delighted; pleased; not feeling bothered
__Sharp__ 9. Not certain of your abilities; not confident
__Dull__ 10. Moving; doing something; energetic
__Hot__ 11. Tight; stiff; anxious; showing tension
__Cold__ 12. Quick thinker; could cut you
__Relaxed__ 13. Making a loud sound; noisy
__Tense__ 14. Extraverted; wanting to enjoy the company of others
__Teased__ 15. Changing places or positions; relocating
__Not teased__ 16. Loose; easy going; at ease
__Annoyed__ 17. Dormant; not moving; not active
__Glad__ 18. Sure; certain of your abilities
__Outgoing__ 19. Not made fun of
__Shy__ 20. Having a low temperature; cold
__Confident__ 21. Stationary; not moving
__Unsure__ 22. Not making a lot of noise; silent
Match the definition on the right to the correct word on the left. Write this number of the definition on the line next to the word it describes. An example is done for you.

| Strong   | 1. Orderly; organized; not messy |
| Weak     | 2. Dense; great in width and depth |
| Big      | 3. Not feeling well; suffering from an illness or disease |
| Little   | 4. Takes a great deal of physical or mental effort; stiff |
| Heavy    | 5. Free from disease or illness; physically or mentally well |
| Light    | 6. Overweight |
| Hard     | 7. Does not weigh a lot |
| Fat      | 8. Powerful; muscular; mighty; sturdy; having strength |
| Skinny   | 9. Small in width and depth |
| Thick    | 10. Fragile; powerless; frail; having little strength |
| Thin     | 11. Tiny; not large; small |
| Neat     | 12. Squishy; delicate; not hard or stiff |
| Sloppy   | 13. Weighs a lot |
| Healthy  | 14. Slim; lean slender |
| Messy    | 15. Of great size; large; huge |
|          | 16. Messy; disorderly |
Appendix F

Copy of the Current Study

Form 1

On each page of this booklet, you will find different short stories and 12 lines after each story. On each side of the lines there are opposite adjectives (for example, happy-sad, annoyed-glad, or hard-soft) and then under the lines there are different ratings (very, somewhat, and not) for each adjective.

I am going to ask you to watch a videotape where you will hear my voice reading each story and the adjectives after them. On the video, I am saying exactly what is in your booklet so you can follow along. After each story, I will ask you how the story makes you feel using the adjectives in your booklet. Each story has the same adjectives after it. You will circle which rating most matches how you feel. For example, if the story made you feel “very happy” you would circle that one but if the story made you feel “somewhat sad” you would circle that one. Usually, people think that the word “very” is the same as “a lot” and the word “somewhat” means like “a medium amount or a little.” There are no right or wrong answers and it’s possible that the story makes you feel “not happy and not sad” in which case you would circle that one. The most important part is to just be honest about how the story makes you feel. Be careful not to skip any.

Each story is about a girl. In some stories the girl is talking and in other stories, someone else that knows the girl is talking. The girls in each story are similar to you. They were bom in China and were adopted when they were small babies by people from America. Each girl lives in a city just like yours and is about the same age as you.

Here is an example for you. Read the story and circle which rating most matches how you feel.

Hannah got her math test back from her teacher. Her teacher said to Hannah, “You got a C on your test but I know that you studied very hard for the test and tried your best.” As you listen to Hannah’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Good &amp; Not</th>
<th>Bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Not</td>
<td>Not Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any questions?
Lily was swimming in the pool during her friend’s birthday party when another girl approached Lily and asked, “Were you placed for adoption?” As you listen to Lily’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Sad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>Happy Happy</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp; Not Sad</td>
<td>Somewhat Sad</td>
<td>Very Sad</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp; Not Right</td>
<td>Somewhat Right</td>
<td>Very Right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Somewhat Confident</td>
<td>Not Confident &amp; Not Unsure</td>
<td>Somewhat Unsure</td>
<td>Very Unsure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Somewhat Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Annoyed &amp; Not Glad</td>
<td>Somewhat Glad</td>
<td>Very Glad</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharp</td>
<td>Somewhat Sharp</td>
<td>Not Sharp &amp; Not Dull</td>
<td>Somewhat Dull</td>
<td>Very Dull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Not Strong &amp; Not Weak</td>
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<td>Somewhat Neat</td>
<td>Very Neat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
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<td>Not Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
<td>Somewhat Healthy</td>
<td>Very Healthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Sarah was eating lunch at her new school when her classmate asked her, “Were you abandoned by your parents?”

As you listen to Sarah’s story, how do you feel?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
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<th>Very Sad</th>
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<td>Very Strange</td>
</tr>
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<td>Very Beautiful</td>
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<td>Very Unsure</td>
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<td>Very Healthy</td>
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</table>
Holly and her dad went to the aquarium to see the new turtle exhibit. At the aquarium, they learned that more than 30 different types of turtles live in China. Holly asked her dad, “Do animals adopt other animals?”

As you listen to Holly’s story, how do you feel?

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Elaine and her daughter went to storytelling time at the library. One of the librarians asked Elaine, “Does your daughter know who her real parents are?” As you listen to Elaine’s story, how do you feel?

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At lunch time, Olivia and her friends were talking about the places they were born. Olivia said, "I was born in China."

As you listen to Olivia's story, how do you feel?

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Penny's mom was a chaperone at the end of the year party. She was talking to Penny's teacher about adoption and the teacher asked her, "Does Penny know who her birth parents are?" As you listen to Penny's story, how do you feel?

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Sabrina and her dad were at the mall when they ran into her dad’s coworker. Sabrina’s dad introduced her to him and she said, “Nice to meet you.” As you listen to Sabrina’s story, how do you feel?

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Mr. Smith introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Smith said, “This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my daughter, Megan.”

As you listen to Megan’s story, how do you feel?

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| Ugly           |            | Beautiful   | Unsure      | Glad        | Dull       | Relaxed     | Weak       | Neat       | Soft       | Healthy    |
|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Very Ugly      | Somewhat Ugly | Not Ugly & | Somewhat Beautiful | Very Beautiful |            |           |             |             |            |            |            |            |

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Mr. Williams introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Williams said, "This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my adopted daughter, Lindsay." As you listen to Lindsay's story, how do you feel?

| Happy      | Sad       | Wrong     | Right     | Normal    | Strange   | Ugly       | Beautiful  | Confident  | Unsure     | Annoyed   | Glad      | Sharp     | Dull      | Tense     | Relaxed   | Strong     | Weak      | Sloppy     | Neat      | Hard      | Soft      | Sick      | Healthy   |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Very Happy | Somewhat Happy Not Happy & Sad | Very Sad | | | | Very Ugly | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wrong      | Very Wrong Somewhat Wrong Not Wrong & Not Right | Very Right | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Normal     | Very Normal Somewhat Normal Not Normal & Not Strange | Very Strange | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ugly       | Very Ugly Somewhat Ugly Not Ugly & Not Beautiful | Very Beautiful | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Confident  | Very Confident Somewhat Confident Not Confident & Not Unsure | Very Unsure | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annoyed    | Very Annoyed Somewhat Annoyed Not Annoyed & Not Glad | Very Glad | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sharp      | Very Sharp Somewhat Sharp Not Sharp & Not Dull | Very Dull | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tense      | Very Tense Somewhat Tense Not Tense & Not Relaxed | Very Relaxed | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strong     | Very Strong Somewhat Strong Not Strong & Not Weak | Very Weak | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sloppy     | Very Sloppy Somewhat Sloppy Not Sloppy & Not Neat | Very Neat | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sick       | Very Sick Somewhat Sick Not Sick & Not Healthy | Very Healthy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
On each page of this booklet, you will find different short stories and 12 lines after each story. On each side of the lines there are opposite adjectives (for example, happy-sad, annoyed-glad, or hard-soft) and then under the lines there are different ratings (very, somewhat, and not) for each adjective.

I am going to ask you to watch a videotape where you will hear my voice reading each story and the adjectives after them. On the video, I am saying exactly what is in your booklet so you can follow along. After each story, I will ask you how the story makes you feel using the adjectives in your booklet. Each story has the same adjectives after it. You will circle which rating most matches how you feel. For example, if the story made you feel “very happy” you would circle that one but if the story made you feel “somewhat sad” you would circle that one. Usually, people think that the word “very” is the same as “a lot” and the word “somewhat” means like “a medium amount or a little.” There are no right or wrong answers and it’s possible that the story makes you feel “not happy and not sad” in which case you would circle that one. The most important part is to just be honest about how the story makes you feel. Be careful not to skip any.

Each story is about a girl. In some stories the girl is talking and in other stories, someone else that knows the girl is talking. The girls in each story are similar to you. They were born in China and were adopted when they were small babies by people from America. Each girl lives in a city just like yours and is about the same age as you.

Here is an example for you. Read the story and circle which rating most matches how you feel.

Hannah got her math test back from her teacher. Her teacher said to Hannah, “You got a C on your test but I know that you studied very hard for the test and tried your best.” As you listen to Hannah’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
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Do you have any questions?
Elaine and her daughter went to storytelling time at the library. One of the librarians asked Elaine, "Does your daughter know who her real parents are?" As you listen to Elaine's story, how do you feel?

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At lunch time Olivia and her friends were talking about the places they were born. Olivia said, “I was born in China.”

As you listen to Olivia’s story, how do you feel?

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Penny's mom was a chaperone at the end of the year party. She was talking to Penny's teacher about adoption and the teacher asked her, "Does Penny know who her birth parents are?" As you listen to Penny's story, how do you feel?

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Sabrina and her dad were at the mall when they ran into her dad’s coworker. Sabrina’s dad introduced her to him and she said, “Nice to meet you.” As you listen to Sabrina’s story, how do you feel?

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<th>Very Happy &amp; Not Sad</th>
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<th>Very Normal &amp; Not Strange</th>
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<th>Very Sharp &amp; Not Dull</th>
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<th>Very Tense &amp; Relaxed</th>
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<th>Very Sick &amp; Not Healthy</th>
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</table>
Mr. Smith introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Williams said, “This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my daughter, Megan.”

As you listen to Megan’s story, how do you feel?

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<th>Somewhat Sad</th>
<th>Very Sad</th>
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<td>Very Right</td>
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<td>Not Normal &amp; Not Strange</td>
<td>Somewhat Strange</td>
<td>Very Strange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ugly</td>
<td>Very Ugly</td>
<td>Somewhat Ugly</td>
<td>Not Ugly &amp; Not Beautiful</td>
<td>Somewhat Beautiful</td>
<td>Very Beautiful</td>
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<td>Not Confident &amp; Not Unsure</td>
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<td>Very Unsure</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sick</td>
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<td>Not Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
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</table>
Mr. Williams introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Williams said, “This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my adopted daughter, Lindsay.” As you listen to Lindsay’s story, how do you feel?

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<td>Sick Sick</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
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<td>Very Sick</td>
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</table>
Lily was swimming in the pool during her friend's birthday party when another girl approached Lily and asked, "Were you placed for adoption?" As you listen to Lily's story, how do you feel?

<table>
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</table>

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Sarah was eating lunch at her new school when her classmate asked her, "Were you abandoned by your parents?"

As you listen to Sarah's story, how do you feel?

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<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sloppy</td>
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<td>Sloppy &amp;</td>
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<td>Not</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>Sick &amp;</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Holly and her dad went to the aquarium to see the new turtle exhibit. At the aquarium, they learned that more than 30 different types of turtles live in China. Holly asked her dad, "Do animals adopt other animals?"

As you listen to Holly's story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Somewhat Happy</th>
<th>Not Happy</th>
<th>Somewhat Happy &amp; Not Sad</th>
<th>Very Happy &amp; Sad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrong</td>
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<td>Not Wrong</td>
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<td>Very Wrong &amp; Right</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Somewhat Ugly &amp; Not Beautiful</td>
<td>Very Ugly &amp; Beautiful</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Somewhat Confident</td>
<td>Not Confident</td>
<td>Somewhat Confident &amp; Not Unsure</td>
<td>Very Confident &amp; Unsure</td>
<td>Very Unsure</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Very Annoyed</td>
<td>Somewhat Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Somewhat Annoyed &amp; Not Glad</td>
<td>Very Annoyed &amp; Glad</td>
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<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Somewhat Sharp &amp; Not Dull</td>
<td>Very Sharp &amp; Dull</td>
<td>Very Dull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Somewhat Tense &amp; Relaxed</td>
<td>Very Tense &amp; Relaxed</td>
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<td>Very Strong &amp; Weak</td>
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<td>Somewhat Sick</td>
<td>Not Sick</td>
<td>Somewhat Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
<td>Very Sick &amp; Healthy</td>
<td>Very Healthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On each page of this booklet, you will find different short stories and 12 lines after each story. On each side of the lines there are opposite adjectives (for example, happy-sad, annoyed-glad, or hard-soft) and then under the lines there are different ratings (very, somewhat, and not) for each adjective.

I am going to ask you to watch a videotape where you will hear my voice reading each story and the adjectives after them. On the video, I am saying exactly what is in your booklet so you can follow along. After each story, I will ask you how the story makes you feel using the adjectives in your booklet. Each story has the same adjectives after it. You will circle which rating most matches how you feel. For example, if the story made you feel “very happy” you would circle that one but if the story made you feel “somewhat sad” you would circle that one. Usually, people think that the word “very” is the same as “a lot” and the word “somewhat” means like “a medium amount or a little.” There are no right or wrong answers and it’s possible that the story makes you feel “not happy and not sad” in which case you would circle that one. The most important part is to just be honest about how the story makes you feel. Be careful not to skip any.

Each story is about a girl. In some stories the girl is talking and in other stories, someone else that knows the girl is talking. The girls in each story are similar to you. They were born in China and were adopted when they were small babies by people from America. Each girl lives in a city just like yours and is about the same age as you.

Here is an example for you. Read the story and circle which rating most matches how you feel.

Hannah got her math test back from her teacher. Her teacher said to Hannah, “You got a C on your test but I know that you studied very hard for the test and tried your best.” As you listen to Hannah’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
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<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good &amp;</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Not Bad</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any questions?
Sabrina and her dad were at the mall when they ran into her dad's coworker. Sabrina's dad introduced her to him and she said, “Nice to meet you.” As you listen to Sabrina's story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Not Normal &amp; Not Strange</td>
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<td>Strange</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Not Ugly &amp; Not Beautiful</td>
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<td>Very Beautiful</td>
<td>Beautiful</td>
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<td>Somewhat Confident</td>
<td>Not Confident &amp; Not Unsure</td>
<td>Somewhat Unsure</td>
<td>Very Confident</td>
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<td>Somewhat Glad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharp</td>
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<td>Not Sharp &amp; Not Dull</td>
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<td>Sick</td>
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<td>Not Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
<td>Somewhat Healthy</td>
<td>Very Sick</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
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</table>
Mr. Smith introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Smith said, “This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my daughter, Megan.”

As you listen to Megan’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
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<td>Not Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
<td>Somewhat Healthy</td>
<td>Very Healthy</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
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</table>
Mr. Williams introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Williams said, "This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my adopted daughter, Lindsay." As you listen to Lindsay's story, how do you feel?

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<th>Very Not Confident &amp; Not Unsure</th>
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<th>Somewhat Not Annoyed &amp; Not Glad</th>
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<tr>
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</table>
Lily was swimming in the pool during her friend’s birthday party when another girl approached Lily and asked, “Were you placed for adoption?” As you listen to Lily’s story, how do you feel?

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<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Very Healthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Sarah was eating lunch at her new school when her classmate asked her, “Were you abandoned by your parents?”

As you listen to Sarah’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
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<td>Very Sad</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Very Strange</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Not Confident &amp; Not Unsure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharp</td>
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<td>Very Sick</td>
<td>Not Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
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</table>
Holly and her dad went to the aquarium to see the new turtle exhibit. At the aquarium, they learned that more than 30 different types of turtles live in China. Holly asked her dad, "Do animals adopt other animals?"

As you listen to Holly's story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Somewhat Happy</th>
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<th>Very Sad</th>
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<td>Somewhat Sick</td>
<td>Not Sick &amp; Not Healthy</td>
<td>Somewhat Healthy</td>
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</table>
Elaine and her daughter went to storytelling time at the library. One of the librarians asked Elaine, “Does your daughter know who her real parents are?” As you listen to Elaine’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
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<td>Sick</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
At lunch time, Olivia and her friends were talking about the places they were born. Olivia said, “I was born in China.”

As you listen to Olivia’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
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<th>Somewhat Happy</th>
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Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Penny's mom was a chaperone at the end of the year party. She was talking to Penny's teacher about adoption and the teacher asked her, “Does Penny know who her birth parents are?” As you listen to Penny’s story, how do you feel?

<table>
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Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Dear FCC Parent,

I am a Doctoral candidate in the psychology department at Xavier University and am working on my dissertation. I am also a member of FCC in Asheville, North Carolina where my parents and younger sister live. When formulating my dissertation topic a couple years ago, I decided that I would really like to deepen my understanding of adoption related issues and hopefully, one day, specialize in working with adoptive families. I am also excited to be contributing to the field of adoption related studies and I hope my research may help adoptive families in the future.

In order to pursue my study, I need your help. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Xavier University and is considered to present minimal to no risk to the participating girls. I am asking your permission to include your daughter as a participant in my study. I will be presenting examples of social interactions regarding adoption in a series of vignettes and asking your daughter to rate her feelings about the vignettes using a list of adjectives. Afterwards I will be available to answer any questions and you may elect to have the results sent to you when the study is completed.

If you have any questions, please contact myself or my Dissertation Chair, Christine Dacey, PhD. at Dacey@xavier.edu or 513 745-1033.

Thank you,

Julia Jacobs

JACOBSJ1@xavier.edu
Appendix H

Parent Informed Consent Form

Language and Adoption Issues Study

My name is Julia Jacobs and I am currently a doctoral student in the psychology program at Xavier University. I am studying to be a clinical psychologist and as part of my studies, I must complete a dissertation (which is a research study). I am interested in learning more about how adopted Chinese girls feel about language choices used when discussing adoption. My sister is Chinese and was adopted when she was fourteen months old and I was 16 years old. Based on many of my family's experiences, I think there is still much to learn regarding adoption issues. My study will provide an opportunity to learn more about this understudied population (Adopted Chinese girls). I would very much like to complete this study and I need your help. By allowing your child to participate in this study, you will also allow me the opportunity to complete my degree and provide much needed information concerning adopted Chinese girls.

In order to participate in this study, your child will listen to and read a few vignettes; she will then be asked to rate her feelings about these vignettes. This should take between 30 and 45 minutes to complete. The responses that your child provides will be kept confidential. All forms completed by your child will be assigned a study identification number with no names included. You may receive a summary of the results of the study once it is completed. There are no foreseeable risks related to this study. Your child will have the right to refuse or discontinue participation in the study at any point if she feels uncomfortable. Withdrawing from the study will not result in any penalties (anything bad happening) to you or your child.

If you do want your child to help in this study, please sign the form below and place it in the envelope marked "Information Form." If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Julia Jacobs, M.A., principal investigator (513 484-4076) or JACOBSJ1@xavier.edu or Dr. Christine Dacey, Xavier University faculty advisor (513 745-1033) or dacey@xavier.edu.
I understand the nature of this project and I give my child, __________________________, permission to take part in this project.

______________________________  __________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature     Date

______________________________
Parent/Guardian Name Printed
Appendix I

Child Informed Consent Form

Language and Adoption Issues Study

My name is Julia Jacobs and I am a graduate student at Xavier University where I am studying psychology. My sister was adopted from China and I am trying to learn more about how adopted Chinese girls feel about language choices related to adoption issues and this study will allow me to do this. By participating in this study, you will help me learn more about how you feel.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be listening to and reading short stories about other adopted Chinese girls and then rate how you feel about these stories. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer honestly. Please be sure to fill out every rating; do not skip any. A complete form will help me better understand you and how you feel about language choices related to adoption issues. The answers that you provide will not be shared with your parents or other people in FCC. Your answers will be private and you are not required to write your name on any of the forms.

Participation in this study is voluntary, meaning that you have the right to not take part in the study. If you feel uncomfortable about any part of the study and you feel that you would like to stop, you may do so. You will not get into trouble for deciding to stop participating in the study.

Do you have any questions or concerns? Please feel free to ask questions now or while you are completing the forms.

If you would like to participate in this study, please print and sign your name below.

_________________________________________  _______________________________
Signature                                      Name printed

_________________________________________
Witness Signature                            Date
Chapter V: Dissertation

Abstract

Positive Adoption Language, as proposed by Spencer (1979), is the recommended model utilized by adoption-related professionals; however, there is no known empirical support for this model. The present study investigated the affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls, as measured by the Semantic Differential, when they were exposed to positive, negative and neutral language regarding adoptive relationships, using Spencer’s approach. The 33 participants ranged in age from 9 to 12 years, were adopted by the age of 18 months, and had not been significantly exposed to any language other than English since they joined their adoptive family. Repeated measures ANOVA’s suggested neutral language yielded the most favorable affective reactions from participants; positive language yielded somewhat less favorable affective reactions than neutral, and negative language yielded the least favorable affective reactions from the participants. These findings suggest semantic choices regarding an individual’s adoptive status may affect the individual’s current affective state and may have greater implications on the individual’s sense of self.
The Affective Reactions of Adopted Chinese Girls to Adoption Related Language

Every year, more than 40,000 children are adopted internationally. Over the past five years, most internationally adopted children came to the United States from China, Russia, and Guatemala and, in 2008, a recorded 3,911 Chinese children were adopted by U.S. citizens (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2009). While all adopted children likely experience issues surrounding the loss of biological parents, internationally adopted children face unique challenges given that, in our society, most internationally adopted children are of a different race than their adoptive parents (Jacobson, 2006). Thus, internationally adopted children seem to have an additional challenge with regard to integrating the adoptive experience within their sense of self.

Children's Issues Related to Adoption

Exploring children's understanding of adoption, Brodzinsky, Singer, and Braff (1984) sampled 200 children between the ages of four and 13 years, half of whom were adopted. Specifically, children were assessed regarding their comprehension of the adoption experience, their view of adoption motives, and their beliefs about the adjustment of adopted and non-adopted children. Findings suggested that, depending upon their age, children's understanding of "adoption" greatly varied. Around the age of eight years old, the adopted children began to recognize the feelings of rejection that are inherently paired with the adoptive process. More specifically, they began to conceptualize that, in order for the adoption to have taken place, the people who had birthed them relinquished their right to parent.

A meta-analysis of 98 international adoption-related studies between 1950 and 2005 suggested that children adopted from abroad struggled more with identity issues
during early and middle childhood in comparison to adolescence, and in comparison to the non-adopted control participants (Juffer & Van Ijzendoorn, 2005). The findings were understood within the context of Brodzinsky’s developmentally-based stress and coping model (Brodzinsky, 1990; Juffer, 2006; Smith & Brodzinsky, 2002). According to this model, international adoptive status is significantly paired with a variety of loss-related experiences (e.g. loss of birth parents, loss of ethnic and racial connections). Additionally, the model demonstrates that the cognitive appraisals of adoption may be stressful and painful as the adopted child recognizes that he or she is biologically different from his or her caretakers.

Theoretical and Empirical Models of the Importance of Language upon Self Development

Research suggests that adoption is a dynamic and progressive event with important implications. With international adoption steadily increasing in popularity over the past 50 years, many researchers have aimed their efforts toward understanding the thoughts, behaviors, and feelings of the internationally adopted child. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature exploring the relationship between the use of language to describe the experience of being adopted and its impact on the child. Theories of development suggest language is a powerful tool largely impacting children’s development (Bowlby, 1983; Sullivan, 1953).

Interpersonal theory, theories of inclusion and exclusion, and attachment theory all incorporate the significance of verbal interactions on one's sense of self. Harry Stack Sullivan, an interpersonal theorist, underscored the acquisition of language as “the most important of human tools” (Sullivan, 1953, p. 189). With the onset of language, children learn to communicate desires for interpersonal relationships, along with expectations for...
approval or disapproval from others. Contemporaries of Sullivan have expanded on the relationship between interconnectedness, language, and the sense of self. Caraway (1987), for example, explained that children's self-concept is formed by those around them, given that, from birth, children are bombarded with both verbal and nonverbal messages assessing their behaviors. She posited that children need opportunities to convey their feelings about their behavior, ask questions about their behaviors, and discuss their behaviors. Within these communications, children gradually form a sense of self based on the verbal and nonverbal feedback they receive from others (Caraway, 1987).

Much of Sullivan’s research in the juvenile and preadolescence stages of development focused on ostracism and stereotyping in relation to theories of belongingness or inclusion and exclusion. While ostracism and stereotyping can take form in either nonverbal behaviors or language, Sullivan again focused on the verbal nature of ostracism and stereotyping. For example, children exposed to repeated negative stereotypes of their own race or culture were more likely to internalize these stereotypes, perceiving them as true facts. As a result, these children often had a decreased sense of self-confidence and self-esteem and externalized these feelings in acts of frustration and anger (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004). Baumeister and Leary (1995) provided an extensive review of the literature, detailing over 50 studies linking unmet needs for belongingness to distress, disappointment, anxiety, and loneliness. Furthermore, the review described several studies in which the absence of close social bonds was linked to unhappiness and depression. These findings suggest that when an individual perceives being socially excluded, whether verbally or nonverbally, intentionally or unintentionally, a message of
unworthiness is internalized by the excluded person and subsequently decreases his or her self-esteem.

In studying the relationship between an infant and his or her primary caregiver, Bowlby (1983) proposed that the attachment process serves four different processes: to guarantee physiological needs are met; to facilitate the infant’s relationship to the human breast; to provide opportunities for touch; and to fulfill an infant’s primitive craving to return to the womb. Subsequent research suggested that securely attached infants show greater understanding of social processes, reciprocity, empathy, conflict resolution, and greater peer competence later in life in comparison to children whose primary attachment was characterized as insecure (Elicker, Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Parks & Waters, 1989). With regard to language, research suggests that the content and tone of communication contributes to attachment styles. Infants whose mothers used more affirmative feedback, less prohibitions, and more contingent responses were more likely to display secure attachment styles in comparison to infants whose mothers’ word choices were considered to be less sensitive, more critical, and self-focused (Bornstein, Tamis-Le Monda, & Haynes, 1999). There is no research to date that compares the content and tone of verbal communications between adoptive parents and child versus birth parents and child; however, theoretically, it may be expected that positive language choices related to adoption would be most similar to the affirmative feedback and contingent responses characterizing securely attached mother-infant attachment styles.

There is, however, literature suggesting that the language choices used when discussing adoption related issues impact the psyche of the adopted child. Spencer (1979) discussed the impact of semantics regarding the experience of adoption. Based on
her own experiences as a mother who chose to adopt, Spencer believed word choices have an especially strong impact on the adopted child. She created the concept of Positive Adoption Language to describe her belief that there are specific semantic choices one can use when discussing adoption that are more "emotionally correct" than others. According to Spencer, using Positive Adoption Language opens communication within the family and fosters a sense of emotional and social support in the child's environment outside the home. Today, most adoption agencies, adoption websites, and adoption literature provide examples of Spencer's Positive Adoption Language and encourage adoptive parents to utilize these language choices. An example of Positive Adoption Language includes saying "my child" instead of what Spencer considers the more negative semantic choice, "my adopted child," as the latter suggests the child is not the parent's. For the purpose of clarifying who is being referred to in the present study, the terms "adopted child" and/or "adoptive parents" are used; however, as Spencer advocated, it is the belief of many that it is wrong to differentiate among children based on the process by which they joined a family. Appendix A illustrates examples of Positive Adoption Language and Negative Adoption language, along with Spencer's explanation of the correctness of word choices. Despite the endorsement of Positive Adoption Language by most adoption agencies, websites, and adoption related literature, Spencer's name is rarely cited as its creator, and most often, Positive Adoption Language is specified as the language one "should" use but there is no elaboration on the reasoning behind the word choices. Although Spencer (1979) cited that Positive Adoption Language offers "better" semantic choices, she failed to explain what effects positive or negative language choices related to the experience of being adopted would have on an
adopted child. She also presented no empirical support for the use of Positive Adoption Language with adopted children. There currently appears to be a gap between the conceptual literature and the available empirical research addressing the effects of adoption language selection. Despite this lack of research, Positive Adoption Language is heavily encouraged as an appropriate way to discuss adoptive relationships.

The current study sought to provide empirical evidence regarding the impact of Spencer's Positive Adoption Language upon adopted children's affective reactions. Previous research had indicated that living in an orphanage is correlated with developmental delays, including language, due to the impoverished conditions, lack of human contact and lack of nurturance in these orphanages (Kreppner et al., 2007; Mason & Narad, 2005). The research suggested these developmental risks are much larger for children adopted at 25 months or older (Glennan and Masters (2002); Krakow, Tao, & Roberts, 2005). Consequently, since language comprehension of the vignettes and the Semantic Differential scales was important to participation in this study, only children adopted by the age of 18 months were included. Based on the theoretical notions of interpersonal theory, theories of social inclusion and exclusion, and attachment theory, there is reason to believe the use of language directly influences the affective state of the child and this study may be a first step of theory driven studies attempting to better understand the long term influential social factors that impact adopted children's developing sense of self. As such, it was expected that there would be significant differences on the three dimensions of the Semantic Differential among groups based on type of Adoption Language (Positive, Negative, Neutral).
Method

Participants

As members of the Families with Children from China (FCC), the parents of approximately 117 adopted Chinese girls between the ages of 9 and 12 were sent information about this study through email and/or voicemail. Of these 117 potential participants, the parents of 34 children responded affirmatively to the request for their daughters’ participation in the current study. Parents’ of three potential participants specifically declined to have their daughter participate and the remainder of the parents did not respond to the request for participation. It is unknown as to what proportion of parents may not have received the email and/or phone messages due to various circumstances such as email “spam filters” automatically deleting mass emails. Of the 34 participants who completed the current study, 33 met full inclusion criteria: 1) they were adopted at 18 months of age or earlier by American citizens and 2) English was the primary language spoken in their home since adoption. One participant was excluded from the current study because she had been adopted by American citizens when she was 7 years old.

Participants ranged in age from 9.4 to 12.6 years ($M = 10.97$, $SD = 1.09$) and were adopted prior to the age of 18 months ($M = 11.08$, $SD = 2.49$). Participants ranged in current school grade from 3rd to 7th grade ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.10$). All of the participants’ parents stated that English was the primary language in their home; however, 15 participants were “significantly” exposed to a language other than English since they entered their adoptive family. Examples parents provided regarding “significant” exposure to another language included weekend Chinese language classes and/or learning.
another language in school. All of these participants were still considered to meet inclusion criteria given that their exposure to another language was not considered as interfering with their understanding of the concepts and vocabulary used in the current study. Sixty-eight percent of the participant’s parents stated that they were familiar with Spencer’s Positive Adoption Language to a varied degree. Eight participants (24%) had a sister who also completed the present study. Therefore, the 33 participants represented 29 families. Eight participants (24%) had a Chinese sibling, either older than 12 or younger than 9, who was also adopted but not included in the study due to their age. Two participants (6%) had a sibling who was biologically conceived by their parents and 15 participants (45%) did not have any siblings. Demographic information is presented in Table 1.

**Measures**

The *Demographic Questionnaire* was developed specifically for this study to obtain information of current age, age when adopted, current grade level, confirmation that English is the primary language spoken in the family, exposure to a language other than English, and parents’ familiarity with Positive Adoption Language.

The *Semantic Differential* (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) is commonly used to measure reactions to a given stimulus (e.g., a picture, a concept, or a vignette) using a Likert scale with bipolar adjectives. An individual is presented a stimulus (e.g., the word “vacation”) and a number of bipolar adjective pairs (e.g., hot-cold, happy-sad), and asked to quantify his or her association of the stimulus to the provided bipolar adjective continuum. Wherever the individual places the mark on the continuum is thought to represent the quality and intensity of the reaction. Osgood et al. (1957) found
that ratings on bipolar adjective scales tended to be correlated, and three basic dimensions of response appeared to account for over two-thirds of the variance in ratings. These three dimensions, also known as factors or axes, were labeled Evaluative, Activity, and Potency (EPA). Overtime, the EPA system has been recognized as an effective multivariate approach to assessing affect, and has been found to be adaptable to children (Brylinsky & Moore, 1994; Franck & Jackson, 2003; Helwig & Avitable, 2004; Kazdin, 1984; Stolberg & Anker, 1983; Thomson & Hartley, 1980).

In the current study, the stimuli of the Semantic Differential were three theme-related sets of vignettes created by the examiner based on examples of Positive Adoption Language and Negative Adoption Language given by Spencer (1979) (see Appendix B). Each set contained three vignettes, one using Positive Adoption Language, one Negative Adoption Language, and one Neutral Adoption Language. Thus the Semantic Differential used in the current study consisted of a total of nine vignettes. A pilot study had been conducted by the examiner to support the type of language (Positive, Negative or Neutral) portrayed in each vignette. Three themes that characterized situations adopted children are likely to experience quite frequently were chosen from Spencer’s (1979) Positive Adoption Language. The themes utilized were 1) the process by which the child came to be adopted (i.e., “placed for adoption” vs. “abandoned”), 2) the status of the child’s biological parents (i.e., “birth parents” vs. “real parents”) and 3) the child’s status in the adoptive family (i.e., “my daughter” vs. “my adopted daughter”). Thus the nine vignettes were organized into three groups of three vignettes, based upon type of language and theme.
Heise (1970) suggested that the use of four pairs of bipolar adjectives is most appropriate to measure affective reactions to each of the three dimensions of the Semantic Differential. Therefore, in the current study, a total of 12 bipolar adjective pairs, four for each dimension, was used to measure the affective reactions for each of the nine vignettes. These adjective pairs were determined to be at the appropriate language level for use in the current study, based upon a pilot study conducted by the examiner with 9 year old Chinese girls who matched the inclusion criteria for this study, and upon previous research suggesting they were appropriate for children (Franck, Jackson, Pimentel, & Greenwood, 2003; Freeby & Madison, 1989). The 12 bipolar adjective pairs chosen were as follows: Evaluative included happy-sad; right-wrong; normal-strange; beautiful-ugly; Potency included confident-unsure; glad-annoyed; sharp-dull; relaxed-tense; Activity included strong-weak; neat-sloppy; hard-soft; and healthy-sick. To avoid anchor effects, half of the adjective pairs were placed on a five point Likert-type scale, with “1” indicating an unfavorable affective reaction and “5” indicating a favorable affective reaction (e.g., with the bipolar adjective pair of “happy-sad,” 1=very sad; 2=somewhat sad; 3=not sad and not happy; 4=somewhat happy; 5=very happy). The other half of the bipolar adjective pairs were presented in reverse order with “1” indicating a favorable affective reaction and “5” indicating an unfavorable affective reaction, and were then, subsequently, reverse scored. The participants were given the directions “as you listen to (character’s name) story, how do you feel?” For example, if the first vignette was about a girl named Hannah, participants were asked to respond to the question “as you listen to Hannah’s story, how do you feel?” on each of the 12 Likert-type scales to indicate their current intensity and quality of affective reaction to the
vignette. Thus each vignette yielded three scores, an Evaluative, an Activity, and a Potency score, with each score having a possible range from 4 to 20. Each set of vignettes yielded a Positive, Negative, and Neutral score for each dimension (i.e., each set of vignettes yielded an Evaluative Positive, Evaluative Negative and Evaluative Neutral score; Potency Positive, Potency Negative, and Potency Neutral score; and Activity Positive, Activity Negative, and Activity Neutral score). The overall score for each EPA dimension was a combined score of each of the three sets of vignettes, with a possible range from 12 to 60. Higher scores indicated more favorable affective reactions.

Thus the Semantic Differential measure for the current study consisted of nine vignettes, each followed by the same 12 bipolar adjective pairs. Each vignette was typed at the top of a separate 11x8 sheet of blank paper with the subsequent 12 bipolar adjective pairs and their corresponding Likert-type scales typed below each vignette (see Appendix C for an example). Each vignette was also video recorded by the examiner; on the videotape, the screen displayed a typed copy of each vignette while the examiner’s voice could be heard reading the vignette aloud. The auditory element was included to 1) ensure that participants who may not have read a word correctly on the study would hear the correct pronunciation of the word and 2) to replicate similar conditions under which participants would most likely be exposed to language related to their adoptive status.

Procedure

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix D).

There are approximately 50 Chinese girls between the ages of 9 and 12 in the Greater Cincinnati Chapter of Families with Children from China (GC-FCC) (G.M. Klei,
Initially, parents of potential participants in GC-FCC received an e-mail from the examiner that had been forwarded by the GC-FCC President requesting their daughter’s participation in the current study. Because no parents responded to this initial email, the examiner contacted parents individually by phone or email. The parents of 21 girls (approximately 42%) agreed to allow their daughter(s) to complete the current study, while three parents declined and the remaining 27 did not respond to the examiner’s voicemail or email. As stated previously, it is not known whether these parents failed to receive the voicemail and/or email because it was filtered through something such as “spam mail” or chose not to respond to the request. There are approximately 40 to 50 Chinese girls between the ages of 9 and 12 in the Columbus Chapter of FCC (G. Rigelhaupt, C-FCC President, personal communication, May 31, 2008). Based upon the same basic recruitment procedure as used with the GC-FCC, the parents of six girls (12-15%) agreed to allow their daughter(s) to participate in the current study, while no parents directly declined their daughters’ participation in the study. The examiner contacted the President of the FCC chapter in Asheville, North Carolina where there are approximately 12 Chinese girls between the ages of 9 to 12 (M. Meadows, Asheville-FCC President, personal communication, May 31, 2008). The Asheville FCC President forwarded the email from the examiner to the parents of these girls. The parents of five girls (approximately 42%) allowed their daughter(s) to participate in the current study. Finally, the examiner contacted the FCC President of the Louisville, Kentucky chapter who agreed to forward the email from the examiner to the parents of approximately 10 girls who were between the ages of 9 and 12 (K. Eads, Louisville-FCC President, personal communication, May
The parents of two girls (approximately 20%) responded and allowed their daughter(s) to complete the current study.

In each of the cities, the examiner met with participants either individually or in small groups of two to four at locations convenient to the participants and their parents. For example, the examiner met with many Columbus-FCC participants at a local Columbus Church which volunteered its building for Columbus FCC meetings. Upon arrival, the parents were handed a folder containing the Parent Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E), the Child Informed Consent Form (see Appendix F), the Demographic Questionnaire, and a copy of the study. Each Demographic Questionnaire and accompanying copy of the study had the same participant number placed, respectively, at the top left corner of the first page in order to later match demographic information to completed measures while preserving confidentiality. Parents and participants were reminded that their names would not appear on any parts of the study, other than on the signed informed consent forms. After the parent and child each completed the Informed Consent forms, they were instructed to place the two forms in a small bin provided by the examiner. Each parent was then instructed to hand the copy of the study to his or her child; this process enabled the examiner to avoid seeing the participant number designated for a specific parent/child. At this point, the parents completed the Demographic Questionnaire while the participants completed the study in a separate room. The participants were reminded that, if at any point they became uncomfortable, they could either stop participating and/or their parents could join them for the remainder of the study. This did not occur, however, and all participants completed the study. After parents completed the Demographic Questionnaire, they were instructed to deposit it in
another small bin provided by the examiner. After the participants completed the study, they too were instructed to deposit their copy in a small bin provided by the examiner.

Three different forms, Forms 1, 2, and 3, were created in which the order of presentation of the three themed sets of vignettes was varied to counterbalance for possible order effects. Eleven participants completed each of the three forms. For group administrations, all participants completed the same version so that they could follow along with the video recording. Participants turned their packets to the first page of the Semantic Differential and the examiner began the videotape created for the current study. On the videotape, the examiner first read aloud the instructions given and provided an example vignette and bipolar adjective pair. At this point, the participants asked any questions they had pertaining to the study. After all questions were answered, the participants simultaneously read the first vignette presented in their packet and/or listened to the examiner's voice on the videotape as she read aloud the same vignette. The participants then completed the Likert-type scales provided for each of the 12 bipolar adjective pairs. This process was repeated for each of the nine vignettes. If participants had questions during this process, the videotape was stopped so that all participants could resume at the same point. Questions did not occur frequently; however, those that did arise usually pertained to the relevance of various “Potency” and “Activity” bipolar adjective pairs. For example, many participants asked “What do ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ have to do with the story?” or “How are ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ feelings?” In response, the examiner acknowledged that some of the bipolar adjective pairs seemed confusing or irrelevant to the story but asked participants to try and decide which, if at all, one adjective in the pair felt more favorable in comparison to its opposite and reminded them that there were no
“right” or “wrong” answers. After each vignette, the examiner asked the participants to double check that they had not left any responses blank before continuing on to the next vignette. As a result, all forms were fully completed by all participants.

Following the completion of the assessment measures, the examiner asked the participants if they had any remaining questions and spent time debriefing participants on the purpose of the study. The extent and nature of this debriefing varied from participant to participant, depending on her age and nature of questions. Frequently, the participants’ parents would join this conversation as they had their own questions or reactions to experiences their daughters’ may have had in the past regarding exposure to Positive or Negative Adoption Language. If the parents wanted to receive the results of the study, they were instructed to record their email address and phone numbers in a log provided by the examiner. In fact, all parents elected to receive the results of the study.

Results

The purpose of the current study was to assess the impact of Spencer’s Positive Adoption Language upon adopted Chinese girls’ affective reactions to a series of vignettes which incorporated Positive, Negative, and Neutral Adoption Language related to the experience of being adopted. The order of the vignettes was counterbalanced to control for possible order effects. To statistically test for order effects, a 3 (Form 1, 2, 3) X 3 Positive, Negative, Neutral Adoption Language) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed to test for differences on the three dimensions of the Semantic Differential. Results of the MANOVA indicated that there was no significant main effect for Form for the EPA scores, $F(18, 44) = 1.24, p = .28$. Consequently, the study proceeded with one independent variable (Adoption Language) and three dependent
variables (Evaluation, Potency, and Activity dimensions of the Semantic Differential) used in the design. The means and standard deviations for the EPA dimensions of the Semantic Differential are presented in Table 3.

A one-way MANOVA had initially been proposed to test the multivariate hypotheses; however, the more appropriate univariate design of three one-way ANOVA's with Repeated Measures was utilized. In calculating effect sizes, eta squared was used when running paired samples t-tests while partial eta squared was used when running ANOVA's. To address potential errors due to multiple ANOVA comparisons, Bonferroni's correction was calculated and applied, and the resulting p value was set at $p < .017$. It was anticipated that there would be significant differences on the three dimensions of the Semantic Differential, based on type of Adoption Language (Positive, Negative, Neutral). The results of the ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the types of adoption language for the Evaluation dimension, $F(2, 31) = 58.68$, $p < .0005$. The partial eta squared statistic ($\eta_p^2 = .79$) indicated a large effect size (see Table 3). The results of the ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the types of adoption language for the Potency dimension, $F(2, 31) = 14.99$, $p < .0005$. The partial eta squared effect size ($\eta_p^2 = .49$) indicated a large effect size (see Table 3). Finally, the results of the ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference among the types of adoption language for the Activity dimension, $F(2, 31) = 33.80$, $p < .0005$. The partial eta squared statistic ($\eta_p^2 = .69$) indicated a large effect size (see Table 3).

Multiple paired samples t-tests were then conducted to probe the significant differences among the three types of Adoption Language for each dependent measure. To
control for the increased chance of Type II error that can occur with multiple comparisons, the Bonferroni correction was applied and $p$ was set at .006). T-test results are presented in Table 4, and indicate statistically significant differences for all of the multiple comparisons. For each dimension, the scores produced for vignettes using Neutral Adoption Language (Evaluative: $M = 43.48, SD = 5.78$; Potency: $M = 41.12, SD = 6.03$; Activity: $M = 41.94, SD = 6.28$) were found to be significantly greater in comparison to scores produced for vignettes using Positive Adoption Language (Evaluative: $M = 35.03, SD = 5.75$; Potency: $M = 37.09, SD = 4.48$; Activity: $M = 34.91, SD = 5.83$) and in comparison to scores produced for vignettes using Negative Adoption Language (Evaluative: $M = 29.61, SD = 6.60$; Potency: $M = 34.09, SD = 4.69$; Activity: $M = 30.03, SD = 6.83$) (e.g., "Evaluative Neutral" was significantly greater than "Evaluative Positive" and "Evaluative Negative"). Additionally, for each dimension, scores produced for vignettes using Positive Adoption Language were found to be significantly greater in comparison to scores produced for vignettes using Negative Adoption Language.

The relationships between the three dependent measures (Evaluative, Potency, and Activity dimensions of the Semantic Differential) were assessed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients (see Table 5). There were strong significant correlations ($p < .05$) among all three dimensions for the vignettes containing Positive, Negative, and Neutral Adoption Language.

Post hoc Analyses

Post hoc analyses were conducted to assess whether participants’ EPA responses, were impacted by Adoption Language and by Vignette Theme (i.e., Vignette Theme 1:...
the process by which the child came to be adopted {"placed for adoption" vs. "abandoned"}; Vignette Theme 2: the status of the child’s biological parents {"birth parents" vs. "real parents"}; and Vignette Theme 3: the child’s status in the adoptive family {"my daughter" vs. "my adopted daughter"} (e.g., did participants’ responses to the Positive Adoption Language vignette of Theme 1 yield significantly different Evaluative scores in comparison to the Positive Adoption Language vignette of Theme 2). The means and standard deviations of the EPA scores based on Vignette Theme and type of Adoption Language, are presented in Table 6. Three one-way ANOVA’s with repeated measures were conducted for each of the dimensions (EPA) of the Semantic Differential (p< .006 for multiple comparisons). Results indicated that of the nine ANOVA’s run, four indicated statistically significant differences on EPA scores based on Vignette Themes, grouped by Adoption Language (see Table 7). First, there was a statistically significant difference among participants’ responses on the Evaluative dimension across Vignette Themes using Positive Adoption Language, F (2, 31) = 35.53, p < .0005. The partial eta squared statistic (η^2 = .70) indicated a large effect size. Next, there was a statistically significant difference among participants’ responses on the Potency dimension across Vignette Themes using Positive Adoption Language, F (2, 31) = 9.36, p < .001. The partial eta squared effect size (η^2 = .38) indicated a large effect size. There was a statistically significant difference among participants’ responses on the Activity dimension across Vignette Themes using Positive Adoption Language, F (2, 31) = 18.64, p < .0005. The partial eta squared statistic (η^2 = .55) indicated a large effect size. Next, there was a statistically significant difference among participants’ responses on the Evaluative dimension across Vignette Themes using Negative Adoption Language,
$F (2, 31) = 17.26, p < .0005$. The partial eta squared statistic ($\eta_p^2 = .53$) indicated a large effect size. There were no statistically significant differences among participants’ responses on the Evaluative, Potency, and Activity dimensions across Vignette Themes using Neutral Adoption Language or on the Potency and Activity dimensions across Vignette Themes using Negative Adoption Language.

In order to probe the significant findings with regard to EPA scores within each type of Adoption Language across Vignette Themes, paired sample $t$-tests were conducted. Twelve paired samples $t$-tests were conducted and the results are presented in Table 8. Seven of these 12 paired samples $t$-tests were found to be statistically significant. First, for the three vignettes using Positive Adoption Language (Theme 1 Lilly: “placed for adoption;” Theme 2 Penny: “birth parents;” and Theme 3 Megan: “daughter”), responses to the Vignette Theme of (Megan’s) adoptive status of “my daughter” yielded significantly more favorable reactions in comparison to the vignettes regarding (Lilly’s) process of being “placed for adoption” and (Penny’s) “birth parents” across all three dimensions of the Semantic Differential. Second, for the three vignettes using Negative Adoption Language, (Theme 1 Sarah: “abandoned”; Theme 2 Elaine: “real parents” and Theme 3 Lindsay: “adopted daughter”), responses to the Vignette Theme of (Lindsay’s) “adopted daughter” status and (Elaine’s) biological parents as “real parents” yielded significantly more favorable reactions in comparison with (Sarah’s) process of being “abandoned” on the Evaluative dimension.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls when they were exposed to language regarding adoptive relationships. More
specifically, for adopted Chinese girls between the ages of 9 and 12, the study sought to
determine whether Spencer’s (1979) Positive Adoption Language elicited significantly
more favorable affective reactions than did more Negative and Neutral Adoptive
Language. Because there is no reported empirical research supporting her theory that
Positive Adoption Language should be utilized with children who were adopted, the
current study used the theoretical literature on interpersonal development, inclusion and
exclusion, and attachment as a basis for purporting that language is a powerful tool which
largely impacts children’s development and budding sense of self.

All three clinical hypotheses of the current study were accepted, as it was found
that statistically significant differences did exist among participants’ responses on the
three dimensions (EPA) of the Semantic Differential based on Adoption Language
(Positive, Negative, and Neutral). Participants indicated significantly more “favorable”
affective reactions in response to vignettes containing Positive Adoption Language than
to Negative Adoption language across all three dimensions (EPA) of the Semantic
Differential. In addition and somewhat surprisingly, they expressed significantly more
“favorable” responses to vignettes containing Neutral Adoption Language than Positive
or Negative Adoption language across all three dimensions (EPA) of the Semantic
Differential. In other words, participants’ felt the “worst” in reaction to vignettes
containing Negative Adoption Language, felt “better “ in reaction to vignettes containing
Positive Adoption language, and felt “best” in reaction to vignettes containing Neutral
Adoption Language. Effect sizes were large for all three analyses, ranging from .32 to
.79. The effect size represents the magnitude of the differences between means and,
consequently, the large effect sizes in the current study indicate that a large percentage of
the variance in the dependent variables (EPA dimensions of the Semantic Differential) was accounted for by the independent variable (Adoption Language).

Although Spencer did not provide empirical evidence supporting her beliefs that Positive Adoption Language should be implemented when discussing adoption issues and no known empirical literature exists to date regarding semantic choices regarding adoption concepts, the findings of the current study advocate for more positive language choices when referring to one’s adoptive status in comparison to language that Spencer considers to be the “opposite” or, Negative Adoption Language. Interestingly, during the debriefing session, many participants and/or their parents shared past experiences of being exposed to Negative Adoption Language. For example, in homes with adopted Chinese girls of different ages, participants and parents often received the question from neighbors, friends, acquaintances, and/or strangers, “Are they ‘real’ sisters?” (if asked to clarify, these individuals assumingly meant biologically related siblings). Participants and parents commonly reported being sensitive, confused, and hurt by this question because they felt like they were “real” sisters despite not being biologically related. This study brings to light that certain semantic choices about “family” likely lead adopted children and adoptive parents to feel adversely and perhaps even doubtful and critical of the legitimacy of family members brought together via adoption. For an adopted child, the structure of family is likely a complex concept determined both by biological connections and interpersonal attachments. Language regarding one’s adoptive status can elicit certain feelings that likely impact how these children perceive their place in a family. This study’s findings underscore that Positive Adoption Language has a more favorable effect on adopted children’s feelings and, theoretically, their long term sense of
belongingness, self esteem, and self worth. As the biological connections might not be present for adopted children, language choices are likely critical to fostering a sense of family and interpersonal connection. Ideally, Positive Adoption Language will become more widespread and recognized as an important concept to integrate into one's vocabulary.

In the current study, there are several limitations. Each vignette was developed to include a main character, a Chinese girl who was adopted, who was asked about her adoptive status by a person with whom her connections were less personal (e.g., a stranger, teacher, classmate). In other words, the character did not have an intimate, secure relationship with this individual. It is possible that the current results may reflect the affective reactions elicited by a less personal interaction and that the participants might have felt better if the topic of adoption was discussed within the context of a closer relationship (e.g., parent, close friend, grandparent). Thus, future research might present vignettes representing varying levels of intimacy in the relationships, thus providing a broader context to understand the implications of adoption related language.

Additional findings suggested some inconsistencies among participants’ responses to the Vignette Themes within each type of adoption related language vignette. These findings suggest that not only does the exact phrasing matter when discussing someone’s adoptive status, the type of adoptive experience being addressed is additionally crucial. The vignette using the Negative Adoption Language term “abandoned” (Theme 1-Sarah) yielded significantly more unfavorable responses in comparison to the other two vignettes containing the Negative Adoption Language terms “real parents” (Theme 2-Elaine) and “adopted daughter” (Theme 3- Lindsay). One hypothesis as to why
"abandoned" yielded significantly more unfavorable reactions from participants is that the word "abandoned" may semantically represent the core issue of loss that adopted children face and process throughout their lives (Brodzinsky, 1993) while the concepts of "real parents" and "adopted daughter" may not be as stigmatic or threatening to one's budding sense of self. The vignette using the Positive Adoption Language term "daughter" (Theme 3-Megan) yielded significantly more favorable responses in comparison to the other two vignettes containing the Positive Adoption Language terms "placed for adoption" (Theme 1-Lilly) and "birth parent" (Theme 2-Penny). One hypothesis as to why "daughter" yielded significantly more favorable reactions from participants is perhaps that given the context of this vignette (introducing the child as one's "daughter" in comparison to one's "adopted daughter" (Theme 3-Negative Adoption Language- Lindsay)), "daughter" more closely represented Neutral Adoption Language options in comparison to "placed for adoption" and "birth parents" which are less neutral in nature.

Although a sample size of 33 was deemed statistically appropriate for the current study, it is important to note that the overall response rate (approximately 29%) was low when considering the large pool of potential participants in the area. A meta-analysis of 175 academic studies found the average response rate of participants to be 55.6% (SD = 19.6) (Baruch, 1999). As noted by Baruch (1999), there are several factors to consider when a low response rate is attained; for example, in the current study, participants' parents were contacted indirectly by the examiner (via the President of the FCC), and many parents may have been hesitant to permit their daughter(s) to participate especially if they had already been subjected to negative social interactions based on their adoptive
status. Another factor to consider is that only three parents actually declined to allow their daughters to participate in the study. It is impossible to know how many participants’ parents received those initial recruitment emails and declined participation by not responding versus how many did not receive the emails because they were filtered through some sort of “spam” system, or sent to an incorrect or inactive address. Future studies may consider using an acknowledgement of receipt system when recruiting by e-mail. Due to the sensitive nature of this study for parents of adopted children, the most effective way to recruit participants may be through “word of mouth” by adoptive parents (e.g., through FCC organization) or through more direct contact with the examiner to enable trust to occur.

Additionally, while the videotape of the vignettes provided an additional auditory dimension to the study, it is possible it served as a limitation. Although the examiner attempted to use the same tone of voice when recording each vignette, the tape was not coded by independent reviewers to ensure for consistency throughout the tape. Future studies may want to add this step to control for any potential confounding variables relating to the videotaping process.

Finally, the high intercorrelations among the dependent variables is also considered a limitation of the current study. These findings suggest that three dependent variables were actually measuring the affective reactions along essentially one dimension rather than three different dimensions. Future studies may want to run the appropriate statistical tests before hand in order to assess which bipolar adjective pairs are most highly intercorrelated and therefore eliminate redundancies.
Although it appears that Spencer’s (1979) intention in creating Positive Adoption Language was to provide word choices which emphasize the emotional and social connections relative to one’s adoptive status, she did not provide empirical evidence supporting her beliefs that Positive Adoption Language should be implemented when discussing adoption issues with the adopted child. She also did not postulate what specific effects Positive and Negative Adoption Language choices would have on a child who was adopted. The findings of the current study appear to provide the needed empirical support of her beliefs, and advocate for more positive language choices when referring to one’s adoptive status in comparison to language that Spencer considers to be the “opposite” or, negative. Additionally, the findings suggest that participants felt best when neutral language was used in the given vignettes. As such between 9 and 12 years of age, adopted children feel best when discussing adoption in neutral terms with acquaintances, teachers, and strangers. Future studies will want to explore whether using neutral language with close friends or immediate family also elicits the most favorable affective reactions.
References


Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Demographic Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ current age (years)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.97</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ current grade level in school</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ age at adoption (months)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.08</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
*Descriptive Statistics of Additional Demographic Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants whose primary language spoken is English</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants “significantly” exposed to language other than English</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants with parents familiar with Positive Adoption Language</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants with a sibling also included in the study</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants with a twin sibling in the study</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants with a sibling, also Chinese and adopted, but not included in the study</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants with a sibling biologically conceived by participants’ Adaptive parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Evaluative, Potency, and Activity Dimensions of Semantic Differential and Results of ANOVAs for Type of Adoption Language on EPA scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Differential Dimension</th>
<th>Positive (M)</th>
<th>Negative (M)</th>
<th>Neutral (M)</th>
<th>F(df=31)</th>
<th>Wilks’ Λ</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>35.03 (5.75)</td>
<td>29.61 (6.60)</td>
<td>43.48 (5.78)</td>
<td>58.68</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potency</td>
<td>37.09 (4.48)</td>
<td>34.09 (4.69)</td>
<td>41.12 (6.03)</td>
<td>14.99</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>34.91 (5.83)</td>
<td>30.03 (6.83)</td>
<td>41.94 (6.28)</td>
<td>33.80</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.017
### Table 4

**Results of Paired Samples t-tests for Type of Adoption Language on EPA Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-Po*E-N</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>[3.50, 7.35]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Po*E-Ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-6.86</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>[-10.96, -5.95]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-N*E-Ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-10.92</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>[-16.47, -11.29]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Po*P-N</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>[1.51, 4.49]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Po*P-Ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-3.82</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>[-6.18, -1.88]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-N*P-Ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-5.44</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>[-9.66, -4.40]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Po*A-N</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>[3.20, 6.55]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Po*A-Ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-5.15</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>[-9.81, -4.25]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Ne*A-Ne</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-7.89</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>[14.98, -8.83]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** E = Evaluative; P = Potency; A = Activity; Po = Positive; N = Negative; Ne = Neutral.

CI = Confidence Interval.

* $p < .006$
Table 5

*Correlations among Dependent Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Evaluative</th>
<th>Potency</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.712*</td>
<td>0.844*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potency</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</table>

Note. Correlations for dependent variables (n = 33) are presented.
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)
Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of EPA Scores Based on Vignette Theme and Adoption Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Differential Dimension</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Evaluative M (SD)</th>
<th>Potency M (SD)</th>
<th>Activity M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>10.15 (2.41)</td>
<td>11.33 (2.34)</td>
<td>10.33 (2.48)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>8.39 (2.79)</td>
<td>10.39 (2.87)</td>
<td>8.88 (2.82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14.00 (2.31)</td>
<td>13.18 (2.24)</td>
<td>13.52 (2.65)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>10.21 (2.09)</td>
<td>12.00 (2.24)</td>
<td>10.09 (2.10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>10.27 (2.22)</td>
<td>11.55 (2.35)</td>
<td>9.36 (2.19)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14.36 (2.66)</td>
<td>13.79 (2.45)</td>
<td>14.03 (2.88)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>14.67 (2.91)</td>
<td>14.03 (2.48) 13.97 (2.97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>11.52 (3.38)</td>
<td>12.52 (2.56) 11.45 (3.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15.12 (2.87)</td>
<td>14.39 (2.60) 14.15 (2.87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 Theme 1 refers to the vignettes containing the designated adoption language found in the first of the three sets of vignettes (process by which child came to be adopted). Theme 2 refers to the vignette containing the designated adoption language found in the second of three sets of vignettes (status of child’s biological parents). Theme 3 refers to the vignette containing the designated adoption language found in the third of the three sets of vignettes (child’s adoptive status). The name given in parentheses is the corresponding name to the vignettes found in Appendix F.
Table 7

Results of ANOVAs across Vignette Themes Grouped by Adoption Language on EPA Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Wilks' $A$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\eta_p^2$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Positive</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>35.53</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potency Positive</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Positive</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18.64</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Negative</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>.0005*</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potency Negative</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Negative</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Neutral</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potency Neutral</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Neutral</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.459</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .017
Table 8  

**Results of Paired Samples t-tests Assessing Variance within Vignettes Grouped by Adoption Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>(N)</th>
<th>(df)</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(\eta)</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluative Positive Adoption Language</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Lily)*Theme 2(Penny)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-2.36</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>[-.59, .46]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Lily)*Theme 3(Megan)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-7.564</td>
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<td>.65</td>
<td>[-5.73, -3.30]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2(Penny)*Theme 3(Megan)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.70</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Theme 1(Lily)*Theme 2(Penny)</td>
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<td>.07</td>
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<td>Theme 1(Lily)*Theme 3(Megan)</td>
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<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>[-4.00, -1.40]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-3.881</td>
<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>[-3.10, -.97]</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Lily)* Theme 2(Penny)</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>[-.40, .89]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>32</td>
<td>-5.796</td>
<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>[-4.91, -2.36]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2(Penny)*Theme 3(Megan)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-6.139</td>
<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>[-5.12, -2.59]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Negative Adoption Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Sarah) * Theme 2(Elaine)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-4.834</td>
<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>[-2.67, -1.09]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Sarah) * Theme 3(Lindsay)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-5.248</td>
<td>.0005**</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>[-4.33, -1.91]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2(Elaine) * Theme 3(Lindsay)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-2.250</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>[-2.37, -.12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potency Negative Adoption Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Sarah) * Theme 2(Elaine)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-1.852</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>[-2.42, .12]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1(Sarah) * Theme 3(Lindsay)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-3.054</td>
<td>.005**</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>[-3.54, -.71]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2(Elaine) * Theme 3(Lindsay)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-1.822</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>[-2.05, .11]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Activity Negative Adoption Language

| Theme 1(Sarah) * Theme 2(Elaine) | 33 | 32 | -1.474 | .150 | .07 | [-1.16, .19] |
| Theme 1(Sarah) * Theme 3(Lindsay) | 33 | 32 | -3.324 | .002** | .26 | [-4.15, -1.00] |
| Theme 2(Elaine) * Theme 3(Lindsay) | 33 | 32 | -3.067 | .004** | .23 | [-3.48, -.70] |

### Evaluative Neutral Adoption Language

| Theme 1(Holly) * Theme 2(Olivia) | 33 | 32 | -7.51 | .458 | .02 | [-1.35, .62] |
| Theme 1(Holly) * Theme 3(Sabrina) | 33 | 32 | -2.045 | .049 | .19 | [-2.24, -.00] |
| Theme 2(Olivia) * Theme 3(Sabrina) | 33 | 32 | -1.320 | .196 | .05 | [-1.93, .41] |

### Potency Neutral Adoption Language

| Theme 1(Holly) * Theme 2(Olivia) | 33 | 32 | -1.538 | .134 | .07 | [-1.41, .20] |
| Theme 1(Holly) * Theme 3(Sabrina) | 33 | 32 | -2.973 | .006** | .22 | [-2.04, -.38] |
| Theme 2(Olivia) * Theme 3(Sabrina) | 33 | 32 | -1.373 | .179 | .05 | [-1.51, .29] |

### Activity Neutral Adoption Language

| Theme 1(Holly) * Theme 2(Olivia) | 33 | 32 | -.944 | .352 | .03 | [-1.63, .60] |
| Theme 1(Holly) * Theme 3(Sabrina) | 33 | 32 | -1.179 | .247 | .04 | [-1.74, .46] |
| Theme 2(Olivia) * Theme 3(Sabrina) | 33 | 32 | -.205 | .839 | .00 | [-1.08, 1.32] |

Note. Theme 1 refers to the vignettes containing the designated adoption language found in the first of the three sets of vignettes (process by which child came to be adopted). Theme 2 refers to the vignette containing the designated adoption language found in the second of three sets of vignettes (status of child's biological parents). Theme 3 refers to the vignette containing the designated adoption language found in the third of the three set of vignettes (child's adoptive status). The name given in parentheses is the corresponding name to the vignettes found in Appendix F.
### Appendix A

#### Examples of Spencer’s Adoption Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Adoption Language</th>
<th>Positive Adoption Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is adopted</strong> Infers the adoption is still taking place and the child is not yet part of the family; the adoption is a condition with which the family members cope with</td>
<td><strong>Was adopted</strong> Indicates the adoption process itself is complete and the child is a member of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adoptive parent</strong> Does not indicate the tie of responsibility of the parent and implies a conditional parenthood that may be temporary or tentative</td>
<td><strong>Parent</strong> Indicates the child will share the family name, family home, and family love of the parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real father</strong></td>
<td><strong>Birth father</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural father</strong> Infers the biological father is the only, original father and the adoptive relationships are artificial and tentative</td>
<td><strong>Biological father</strong> Does not infer the adoptive fathers is not a real father; nor does it infer that the child is not the adoptive father’s own child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real mother</strong></td>
<td><strong>Birth mother</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural mother</strong> Infers the biological mothers is the only, original mother and the adoptive relationships are artificial and tentative</td>
<td><strong>Biological mother</strong> Does not infer the adoptive mother is not a real mother nor does it infer the child is not the adoptive mother’s own child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign adoption</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intercountry adoption</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alien adoption</strong></td>
<td><strong>International adoption</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign/alien child</strong> Infers the adopted child is, as a human, strange, unfamiliar, and unknown</td>
<td><strong>Child from abroad</strong> Clearly defines that the child was living in a country other than the country in which their adoptive parents are raising the child; does not attach a stigma to this concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given up/away</td>
<td>Voluntary surrender (legal term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned</td>
<td>Child placed in adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child put up for adoption</td>
<td>Arranging for an adoption plan The child’s biological parents were not able to make a permanent placement plan for their child that was in the child’s best interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted sister or brother</td>
<td>Sister or brother Infers there is no difference how each child became a member of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate</td>
<td>Born to unmarried parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Born outside of marriage Does not carry the same stigma that the child was abandoned by birth parents or that the child has no family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted Child</td>
<td>Child Infers the child is your own even if not biologically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real child</td>
<td>Birth child Differentiates between how the biologically conceived child and the adopted child came to be in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunion/reunite</td>
<td>Make contact with Allows child to more readily comprehend that he or she may have two different sets of parents and they are not mutually exclusive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Positive, Negative, and Neutral Adoption Language Vignettes

Theme 1 (process by which child came to be adopted)

Lily was swimming in the pool during her friend’s birthday party when another girl approached Lily and asked, “Were you placed for adoption?” As you listen to Lily’s story, how do you feel? (Positive)

Sarah was eating lunch at her new school when her classmate asked her, “Were you abandoned by your parents?” As you listen to Sarah’s story, how do you feel? (Negative)

Holly and her dad went to the aquarium to see the new turtle exhibit. At the aquarium, they learned that more than 30 different types of turtles live in China. Holly asked her dad, “Do animals adopt other animals?” As you listen to Holly’s story, how do you feel? (Neutral)

Theme 2 (status of child’s biological parents)

Penny’s mom was a chaperone at the end of the year party. She was talking to Penny’s teacher about adoption and the teacher asked her, “Does Penny know who her birth parents are?” As you listen to Penny’s story, how do you feel? (Positive)

Elaine and her daughter went to storytelling time at the library. One of the librarians asked Elaine, “Does your daughter know who her real parents are?” As you listen to Elaine’s story, how do you feel? (Negative)

At lunch time, Olivia and her friends were talking about the places they were born. Olivia said, “I was born in China.” As you listen to Olivia’s story, how do you feel? (Neutral)

Theme 3 (child’s adoptive status)

Mr. Smith introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Smith said, “This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my daughter, Megan.” As you listen to Megan’s story, how do you feel? (Positive)

Mr. Williams introduced his family to his friend. Mr. Williams said, “This is my wife, Melissa, my son, Dan, and my adopted daughter, Lindsay.” As you listen to Lindsay’s story, how do you feel? (Negative)

Sabrina and her dad were at the mall when they ran into her dad’s coworker. Sabrina’s dad introduced her to him and she said, “Nice to meet you.” As you listen to Sabrina’s story, how do you feel? (Neutral)
Appendix C

Example of Vignette, Semantic Differential, and Likert-type Scale

Lily was swimming in the pool during her friend's birthday party when another girl approached Lily and asked, "Were you placed for adoption?" As you listen to Lily's story, how do you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Ugly</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Annoyed</th>
<th>Sharp</th>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Sloppy</th>
<th>Hard</th>
<th>Sick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>Somewhat Happy</td>
<td>Not Happy</td>
<td>Somewhat Happy</td>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Somewhat Happy</td>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Somewhat Happy</td>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Not Sad</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Not Sad</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Not Sad</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Not Sad</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Not Sad</td>
<td>Not Happy &amp;</td>
<td>Not Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Very Wrong</td>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>Not Wrong</td>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>Very Wrong</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>Very Wrong</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>Very Wrong</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Not Right</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Not Right</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Not Right</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Not Right</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Not Right</td>
<td>Not Wrong &amp;</td>
<td>Not Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Glad</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Glad</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Glad</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Glad</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Glad</td>
<td>Not Annoyed</td>
<td>Not Glad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp</td>
<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Not Dull</td>
<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Not Dull</td>
<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Not Dull</td>
<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Not Dull</td>
<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Not Dull</td>
<td>Not Sharp</td>
<td>Not Dull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Very Tense</td>
<td>Somewhat Tense</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Somewhat Tense</td>
<td>Very Tense</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Somewhat Tense</td>
<td>Very Tense</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Somewhat Tense</td>
<td>Very Tense</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
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<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Not Tense</td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Not Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Not Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
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<td>Healthy</td>
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<td>Not Sick</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>Not Sick</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
December 3, 2008

Ms. Julia Jacobs
3729 Eastern Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45226

Dear Ms. Jacobs:


If you wish to modify your study, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

We wish you success with your research!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kathleen J. Hart, Ph.D.
Interim Chair

KH/dm
Appendix E

Parent Informed Consent Form

Language and Adoption Issues Study

My name is Julia Jacobs and I am currently a doctoral student in the psychology program at Xavier University. I am studying to be a clinical psychologist and as part of my studies, I must complete a dissertation (which is a research study). I am interested in learning more about how adopted Chinese girls feel about language choices used when discussing adoption. My sister is Chinese and was adopted when she was fourteen months old and I was 16 years old. Based on many of my family's experiences, I think there is still much to learn regarding adoption issues. My study will provide an opportunity to learn more about this understudied population (Adopted Chinese girls). I would very much like to complete this study and I need your help. By allowing your child to participate in this study, you will also allow me the opportunity to complete my degree and provide much needed information concerning adopted Chinese girls.

In order to participate in this study, your child will listen to and read a few vignettes; she will then be asked to rate her feelings about these vignettes. This should take between 30 and 45 minutes to complete. The responses that your child provides will be kept confidential. All forms completed by your child will be assigned a study identification number with no names included. You may receive a summary of the results of the study once it is completed. There are no foreseeable risks related to this study. Your child will have the right to refuse or discontinue participation in the study at any point if she feels uncomfortable. Withdrawing from the study will not result in any penalties (anything bad happening) to you or your child.

If you do want your child to help in this study, please sign the form below and place it in the envelope marked “Information Form.” If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Julia Jacobs, M.A., principal investigator (513 484-4076) or JACOBSJ1@xavier.edu or Dr. Christine Dacey, Xavier University faculty advisor (513 745-1033) or dacey@xavier.edu.

I understand the nature of this project and I give my child, ______________________, permission to take part in this project.

______________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature

______________________________________________
Date

______________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Name Printed
Appendix F

Child Informed Consent Form

Language and Adoption Issues Study

My name is Julia Jacobs and I am a graduate student at Xavier University where I am studying psychology. My sister was adopted from China and I am trying to learn more about how adopted Chinese girls feel about language choices related to adoption issues and this study will allow me to do this. By participating in this study, you will help me learn more about how you feel.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be listening to and reading short stories about other adopted Chinese girls and then rate how you feel about these stories. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer honestly. Please be sure to fill out every rating; do not skip any. A complete form will help me better understand you and how you feel about language choices related to adoption issues. The answers that you provide will not be shared with your parents or other people in FCC. Your answers will be private and you are not required to write your name on any of the forms.

Participation in this study is voluntary, meaning that you have the right to not take part in the study. If you feel uncomfortable about any part of the study and you feel that you would like to stop, you may do so. You will not get into trouble for deciding to stop participating in the study.

Do you have any questions or concerns? Please feel free to ask questions now or while you are completing the forms.

If you would like to participate in this study, please print and sign your name below.

_________________________  _______________________
Signature                       Name printed

_________________________  _______________________
Witness Signature               Date
Title: The Impact of Adopted Related Language On the Affective Reactions of Adopted Chinese Girls

**Problem.** Internationally adopted children face unique challenges given that, in our society, most internationally adopted children are of a different race than their adoptive parents (Jacobson, 2006). One such challenge may be semantic choices others use to discuss the adopted child's adoptive status. Spencer (1979) created Positive Adoption Language seemingly to provide word choices which emphasize the emotional and social connections relative to one's adoptive status. Spencer gives insightful reasoning behind her logic but did not provide empirical support for her contentions. She also failed to explain what effects positive adoption language or negative adoption language may have on the affective reactions of the adopted child. Currently, no theoretical or empirical literature has been reported with regards to the impact of language choices related to adoption issues. Thus, we attempted to assess the affective reactions of adopted Chinese girls, as measured by the Semantic Differential, when they were exposed to positive, negative and neutral language regarding adoptive relationships, using Spencer’s approach.

**Method.** We collected data from 33 participants who completed a questionnaire with 9 vignettes (3 Positive Adoption Language, 3 Negative Adoption Language, 3 Neutral Adoption Language) followed by 12 bipolar adjective pairs. This construction followed Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum's (1957) Semantic Differential, comprised of three different dimensions (Evaluative, Potency, and Activity) which allows for measuring seemingly abstract concepts (i.e. affective reactions).

Participants were adopted Chinese girls between the ages of 9 and 12 years old; the mean of this age group was 10.97 (SD = 1.09); English was the primary language spoken at home and all participants had been adopted by the age of 18 months or earlier. Mean age of adoption was 11.08 months (SD = 2.49).

**Findings.** The Evaluative Dimension of the Semantic Differential was comprised of four sets of bipolar adjective pairs (happy-sad; right-wrong; normal-strange; beautiful-strange). The Potency Dimension was comprised of four sets of bipolar adjective pairs (confident-unsure; glad-annoyed; sharp-dull; relaxed-tense). The Activity Dimension was comprised of four sets of bipolar adjective pairs (strong-weak; neat-sloppy; hard-soft; healthy-sick).

A repeated measures ANOVA yielded significant differences among groups (Positive, Negative, and Neutral Adoption Language) for the Evaluative dimension, Wilks' Lambda = .21, F (2, 31) = 58.68, p < .0005. A repeated measures ANOVA yielded significant differences among groups (Positive, Negative, and Neutral Adoption Language) for the Potency dimension, Wilks' Lambda = .51, F (2, 31) = 14.99, p < .0005. A repeated measures ANOVA yielded significant differences among groups (Positive, Negative, and Neutral Adoption Language) for the Activity dimension, Wilks' Lambda = .31, F (2, 31) = 33.80, p < .0005. Follow up t tests found significant differences among the three types of Adoption Language; vignettes containing Neutral Adoption Language were found to yield significantly more favorable affective reactions in comparison to vignettes containing Positive and Negative Adoption Language. Vignettes containing Positive
Adoption Language were found to yield significantly more favorable affective reactions in comparison to vignettes containing Negative Adoption Language.

**Implications.** The findings of the current study appear to provide the needed empirical support of Spencer’s beliefs, and advocate for more positive language choices when referring to one’s adoptive status. The findings also suggest that participants felt best when neutral language was used. It may be that between 9 and 12 years of age, adopted children feel best when discussing adoption in neutral terms, and/or it may be that these children may feel best using neutral language with relative strangers but might feel differently when with close friends or immediate family. Either option emphasizes the sensitive nature of adoption and validates the importance of considering the adopted child’s language preferences. In conclusion, these findings underscore that Positive Adoption Language has an effect on adopted children’s feelings and, theoretically, their long term sense of belongingness, self esteem, and self worth.