THE EFFECT OF ADOPTION STATUS ON WILLINGNESS TO ADOPT

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ABSTRACT

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Currently over 134,000 children in the United States foster care system are awaiting adoption placements. A major hurdle in the search for adoptive placements lies in knowing the type of people who have considered adopting for the purpose of recruiting them as adoptive parents. Data from a national sample of women interviewed in 1995 are analyzed using logistic regression to evaluate determinants of considering adoption of adult adoptees as compared to non-adoptees. Results indicate that are about 2 times more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees. This effect remains essentially unchanged when race, ethnicity, education, marital status, income, fertility and parity are added to the equation. All but two of the predictors (poverty level income and being formerly married) have statistically significant effects. Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have considered adopting, as are more educated respondents. The never married are less likely than the currently married to have considered adoption. Similarly, fecundity is negatively related to be willing to adopt. There is an interaction between age and parity, such that for those with fewer children willingness to adopt increases as age increases. Implications of these findings for recruiting adoptees as adoptive parents are reviewed.

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful little boy, Cole. You are the impetus for my return to graduate school and the completion of this paper. It is my deep love for you and the desire to be an example of a conscientious, dedicated and hardworking individual that finishes what she starts that has been my fuel through out this process. I will always love you!

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The institution of adoption is estimated to affect the lives of over half of all Americans (Harris Interactive, 2002). A landmark survey conducted in 1997 by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute reveals that 6 in 10 Americans report a personal experience with adoption. These experiences vary--whether they themselves, a family member, or a close friend was adopted, had adopted a child or had made an adoption plan for a child--their lives are laced with at least this one common thread. With this being said, it is also important to note that currently over 134,000 children in the United States in foster care are hoping that their experience with adoption will be one in which they find themselves in a loving, responsible and caring adoptive home (Freundlich, 2002). While the abovementioned 134,000 children reflect a decrease of seven percent of 6-10 year olds in foster care from the years 1997 through 2004 it also represents a seven percent increase for 11-18 year olds from the years 1997 through 2004 (Children's Bureau, 1999; 2006). A major hurdle in the search for adoptive placements lies in knowing the type of people who have considered adopting for the purpose of recruiting them as adoptive parents.

Finding permanent adoptive placements is critical to the foster child. Failure to do so is found to result in higher rates of criminal activity, fewer financial resources, lower educational attainment, higher rates of illegitimate births, and lower psychological well-being, all of which place the "aged out"¹ foster child at extreme disadvantage (Barth & Berry, 1988; Freundlich, 2002; Sharma, McGue & Benson, 1996, 1998; Verhulst, Athaus & Bieman, 1990).

¹ Aging out of foster care occurs when a child leaves the care of a foster home because he or she has turned eighteen and is a legal adult.

In an effort to place foster children in good homes and to prevent the "aging out" of foster children the US Government passed, and currently funds, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (P.L. 105-89). One consequence of the passage of the ASFA is that new attention has been focused upon recruiting adoptive parents who are receptive and sensitive to the special needs of those children in foster care awaiting adoption placements. The hope of this new attention is that placements will be maintained and that further disruption within the child's life will be prevented (Barth & Miller, 2000; Freundlich, 2002; Kapp, McDonald & Diamond, 2001; Katz, 1999; Martin, Barbee, Antle, & Sar, 2002; McDonald, Propp & Murphy, 2001).

In the search for appropriate adoptive parents the possibility of a relationship existing between being adopted and an expressed interest in adopting oneself has become of interest. There are two possibilities: adoptees are more apt to consider adopting or they are less apt to consider adopting as compared to non-adoptees. The purpose of this paper is to investigate a corresponding theory for each possibility. Regarding the hypotheses that adoptees are more apt to consider adopting, the reasoning is that they may harbor a need to give back to an institution that provided them with a family. As a result they would be more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees. Support for this hypothesis may be found in the current available research regarding adoptees' attitudes toward their own adoptions, which are overwhelmingly reported as positive by the adoptee (Kadushin, 1970; Nelson, 1985; Peters, Atkins & McKay, 1999; Rosenthal, Groze & Curiel, 1990; Rosenthal & Groze, 1992, 1994).

Further support for the hypothesis that the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption is positive may be found in the literature regarding empathic-

altruism (Batson, 1987; Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley & Birch, 1981; Batson, O'Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas & Isen, 1983; Batson, Dyck, Brandt, Batson, & Powell, 1988; Batson, Batson, Griffitt, Barrientos, & Brandt, 1989; Piliavin & Chang, 1990). It is theorized that adoptees empathize with children who are eligible for adoption because they awaited an adoption placement at one time as well. As a result of this experienced empathy they will be more likely to consider adopting themselves. However, it is dangerous to extrapolate the findings supporting the empathic-altruism hypothesis to an adoptee's consideration of adopting a child of their own because none have investigated if these attitudes lead to a higher or lower propensity to adopt on behalf of the adoptee.

Brodzinsky, Schechter and Henig's (1993) book brings to light the possible negative effects of being adopted. Specifically, they discuss how adoption has the potential to disrupt the identity formation of the adoptee resulting in behavioral and psychological problems. This may in turn negatively affect an adoptees willingness to adopt. They point out the significance that adoption has as a life altering event by stating that it colors the adopted individual's relationship with their parents, sense of self, and intimate relationships for the entirety of their lives. Because sociologists have found that an individual's attitudes can be significantly affected by their personal experiences, the primary objective of this project is to determine if and possibly to what extent the personal experiences of being adopted will influence an individual's reported propensity to adopt (Wilson & Hodges, 1992).

With this in mind I performed six preliminary interviews with adults who had been adopted in infancy asking the lone question, "Would you adopt a child of your own?" In all six interviews the same answer was given: the experience of being adopted has been so traumatic to the development of their identity that they could not possibly relive the experience with an adopted child of their own. This unanimous response leads this researcher to hypothesize that adoptees may be *less* likely to consider adopting a child than the general population, based on the struggle experienced due to not "knowing" one's biological heritage.

Utilizing data from Cycle Five of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) this paper examines two competing hypotheses regarding the influence being adopted may have on an individual's willingness to adopt.² The first is that adoptees are more likely to report considering adopting a child themselves out of an empathic-altruistic motivation to give back to an institution that provided them with a family (Batson et al., 1981; Batson et al., 1983; Batson, 1987; Batson et al., 1988; Batson et al., 1989; Piliavin & Chang, 1990). The second theory hypothesizes that adoptees are less likely to have considered adopting due to the trauma incurred by the struggle of developing an adoptive identity. In order to understand the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption I will begin by outlining the competing hypotheses in more detail. I also discuss eight control variables at greater length to better understand the relationship of the main independent variable (being adopted) and the dependent variable (considering adoption). These variables are race and Hispanic origin, age at time of interview, age at adoption, educational attainment, income, fecundity, parity, and marital status.³ Following the discussion of control variables is the methods chapter where the NSFG is described as

² It is important to note that while there is a more recent version of the NSFG (Cycle 6) it could not be utilized in this study because it is not possible to determine the adoption status of the respondents in this sample.

³It is also important to note that sex is not included as a control variable because the NSFG Cycle 5 interviewed only women.

well as the two exogenous variables and six mediating variables and how they are coded for this project. The analysis plan is also presented, specifying the variables included in each regression model. In the results section, the outcomes of bivariate regression and logistic regression analyses are reported. An interpretation of the results is put forth in the discussion chapter along with a discussion of the limitations of this study.

Chapter II: HYPOTHESES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Competing Hypotheses and Supporting Literature

Hypothesis One: Giving Back, the Role of Empathic Altruism

One of the competing main hypotheses to be investigated in this study asserts that that adoptees are more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees because of a need to "give back." Support for this hypothesis is drawn from the literature on the empathyaltruism hypothesis.

The World Book Dictionary defines empathy as the quality or process of entering fully, through imagination, into another's feelings or motives. In a discussion on empathy with respect to altruism, Piliavin and Chang (1990) describe it as the *vicarious arousal* induced by grasping another's situation. Batson, in combination with numerous other researchers, has consistently found support for the empathy-altruism hypothesis that asserts empathy evokes an altruistic motivation to reduce the needs of others (Batson et al., 1981; Batson et al., 1983; Batson, 1987; Batson et al., 1988; Batson et al., 1989).

Piliavin and Chang (1990) also identify several processes in the development of altruism, one which is of particular interest in relation to a study regarding adoptees. This process is that of modeling. Piliavin and Chang (1990) cite Bandura (1977) and his social learning theory, which claims that behavior can be learned through observing others. These others are referred to as "models." Experimental studies consistenly show that exposing children to generous models result in children displaying greater generosity themselves (Lipscomb, Larrieu, McAllister, & Bregman, 1982; Lipscomb, McAllister & Bregman, 1985; Rushton, 1980). Research also indicates that parents serve as extremely influential models for children with regard to helping behaviors (London, 1970; Rosenthal, 1970; Berkowitz, 1987; Rushton & Campbell, 1977; Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1986).

It is theorized that adoptees are more likely to consider adopting than others for empathic-altruistic reasons. First, their ability to empathize with other adoptees is heightened by their personal experiences with adoption. Because they have been in the situation of needing an adoption placement the vicarious arousal spoken of by Piliavin and Chang (1990) is more easily obtained and, as indicated above, research supports the theory that empathy evokes altruistic motivation (Batson et al., 1981; Batson et al., 1983; Batson, 1987; Batson et al., 1988; Batson et al., 1989). Also, the process of modeling and its importance regarding altruistic behavior is demonstrated (Piliavin & Chang, 1990). It may be theorized that the adoptee is influenced by their adoptive parent(s) [their "model(s)"] and that they learn to be altruistic from them. This may then result in adoptees being more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees. In addition I hypothesize an interaction effect between being adopted and the age at which a child is adopted on their consideration of adopting; the older the child is at the time of adoption the more they will be able to empathize with other children awaiting placements because they are more likely to remember what it was like in their biological families as well as what it is like to await an adoption placement.

Hypothesis Two: Adoption as a Stigma

...a need for a biological connection. I felt like a vacuum there because I was unrelated to people. I didn't have any ties or connections to anyone in this world other than myself. My adoptive parents. Even my wife and children. It's different somehow. I wanted an anchor. To connect me. Make me real. (March, 1995, p. 657) The above quotation from an interviewee is employed here to show the saliency of being adopted as a significant life event "that colors a person's relationship with parents, sense of self, and intimate relationships for life" in the hope of understanding how this may result in adoptees showing a lower propensity to adopt than adults reared by their biological parents (Horner, 2000).

The extent to which being adopted encompasses the adoptee's life is more easily understood within the context of Goffman's (1963) concept of "stigma." According to Goffman a stigmatized individual posseses an attribute that labels them as different and of a less desirable kind (p. 3). The stigma of an adopted individual can be considered a tribal stigma. Like race and sexual orientation, Grotevant (1997) confirms that the adoptive status is "an example of an *assigned* feature of the self that must ultimately be integrated into the person's larger sense of identity" (p. 16). In the situation of adoption, however, there is not only a stigma associated with being an adopted person, but often the adoptive parents are faced with a stigma of infertility.⁴ The social situation that the adoptive individual is a part of and enters into their sense of identity is encompassed and perpetuated through the morals, values, and ideals of that society. In Western society in particular, there are certain expectations of choice and chance in family life that continue to prevail and adoption is considered "other" or outside the norm because it disorders and disrupts these expectations (Melosh, 2002; Tepperman & Wilson, 1993). These expectations are modeled on the biological nuclear family. An example of the importance of biological conception is illustrated by Brodzinsky et al. (1993) in their discussion about a woman named Carole trying to come to terms with her infertility: "What will my

⁴ Not all adoptions take place because of reasons of infertility. However, research on adoption reveals that of all characteristics associated with adopting, infertility has the strongest association.

mother and my grandmother say?...I've let them down. I'll never be able to carry on the strong maternal line if I can't have my own child" (p. 41).

Other examples of the value placed on birthing and rearing one's biological children are demonstrated by the construction of infertility as requiring expensive, physically invasive, highly technologically advanced procedures to remedy the "problem" (Miall, 1994; Scritchfield, 1995). Adoption is also considered by most a "last resort" visited when all other attempts at conceiving have failed (Bachrach, London & Maza, 1991; Miall, 1989). Boston lawyer Sanford N. Katz demonstrates how ingrained the importance of biological parenting is by pointing out that even when adopting, Americans have relied heavily upon the ancient Roman ideal of imitating nature. It has been a popular practice to maintain "...a certain age differentiation between adopters and adoptees," as well as to match "...complexions, hair and eye colorations, body structures, national origin, and even religion" (Katz, 1973, p. 40). The existence of a family standard where biological is more highly valued than adoptive is viewed by researchers such as Melosh and Grotevant as problematic for the adopted individual in terms of his/her identity formation. The stigma that can be associated with being an adoptive parent may also help to inhibit adoptees from considering adoption in that they do not wish to carry the stigma of infertility illustrated by adopting a child.

Grotevant (1997) uses Goffman's (1963) writings on stigma to formulate a psychological model of how the revelation of an individual's adoptive status coupled with their social interactions can lead to problems in the formation of an adoptive identity. Through day-to-day interactions (i.e. socialization) both the adoptive couple (more specifically the adoptive couple that adopts because of infertility) and the adopted

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child (more specifically the child adopted in infancy) learn the expectations of their roles (to resemble a biological family). There are not only the expectations of each other, but there are also the expectations of the society of which they are members.

As mentioned, one of the roles that the adoptee is expected to fulfill is that of the biological child their adoptive parents were unable to conceive. Conversely the adopted parent is expected to fill the role of the biological parent who is able to conceive and raise their biological offspring. The ability of the members of an adoptive family to fulfill the roles of the biological family is a reflection of how good they are at concealing their respected stigmas. Goffman (1963) points out that there are some stigmas that are easier to hide than others (specifically "sterility"). The easier it is to hide the stigma of being an adoptee or an adoptive parent the less the stigma will figure into the individual's relations to strangers and acquaintances. As stated earlier, Americans have relied heavily upon the ancient Roman ideal of imitating nature. In an effort to hide the stigma of adoption, historically there has been an extensive attempt at matching adoptive parents and their adopted children by complexion, eye and hair color, ethnicity, and religion (Katz, 1973, p. 40). The lack of resemblance that exists between the adoptive parents and adopted child may be referred to as stigma-sign. These stigma-signs that may or may not accompany the knowledge of an individual's adoption affect the adoptee's interactions with others.

In Grotevant's (1997) model, with respect to the adoptee, there is an emphasis on a conflict occurring between the expected role of the adoptee (to be the biological child) and the role associated with not being the biological child. The management of the stigma and the conflict of roles is something that occurs through their interactions with others.

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From these interactions emerges the personal identity. Goffman (1963) describes the personal identity as possessing two distinct features. First there exists some type of "identity peg." An example of this is the mental image one brings to mind when a particular person is mentioned. An individual's name is a very common identity peg used, but is also very unreliable, especially for the adoptee because their surname is changed when the adoption takes place, and for many adoptees (especially those with concealed adoption records) their "real" name isn't even on their birth certificate. The second feature of the personal identity is the individual's unique combination of experiences and life history items (p.57). It is in this second feature of the personality that an individual's conflicting roles, their stigma and interactions, become contributing factors to their personal identity's formation.

The interactions the adopted individual has while attempting to fulfill their role as the biological child serve as a vehicle which drives the adopted individual towards a "revelation" in which they discover the stigma surrounding their personal identity. The revelation often first becomes critical during adolescence when issues of identity are most salient. As a result of the personal identity revelation the adoptee becomes increasingly aware of and further develops what Goffman refers to as the "social identity" or an individual's category in society and the attributes society associates with this category (Goffman, 1963, p. 2). Both internal and external attributes are formed and are continually influenced by interactions, as well as by one's personal identity and social identity. Grotevant's (1997) model relies heavily on the above-mentioned relationship between the adoptee's revelation [of the stigma associated with their adoptive status] and their social interactions to explain how identity conflict arises in the adoptee. To support his model he extensively makes use of psychological case studies. I want to expand upon Grotevant's research and examine the adoptee on a sociological level. I hypothesize that the conflict the adoptee experiences in the process of forming their "personal identity" will inhibit their likelihood of considering adopting a child of their own. Also, the adoptee may also hold an aversion to the stigma associated with infertility, and as a result will not consider adopting because of this associated stigma. As mentioned in the section regarding the empathic-altruism hypothesis, I hypothesize an interaction between being adopted and age at time of placement. I contend that adoptees placed in infancy will not posses the memories of the adoptee placed at a later age. It is these memories that trigger the formation of empathy; therefore, adoptees who received their placements in infancy will be less likely to consider adopting than those placed at older ages.

Possible Correlates of Adoption, Literature Review and Hypotheses

As it stands, there are no measures of potential intervening variables from either of the two competing theoretical approaches previously mentioned that might shed light on which theory may have more merit. Therefore, the critical test of the competing hypotheses is the direction (positive or negative) of the direct effect of being adopted on considering adopting. In order to understand the direct effect of being adopted on considering adoption it is necessary to identify and control for variables that might produce a relationship between these two variables for reasons other than those suggested by the two competing theories. There are eight variables identified as possible correlates of being adopted (the main independent variable) and considering adoption (the dependent variable). These variables are race and Hispanic origin, age at time of interview, age at time of adoption, educational attainment, financial resources, marital status, fecundity, and parity.

Race and Hispanic Origin:

The literature provides evidence that indicates being black has a negative effect on being adopted (Adamec & Pierce, 1991). It has also been found by some that being Hispanic inhibits the likelihood of receiving an adoption placement (Children's Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). There has also been some evidence that suggests race affects an individual's propensity to adopt (Adamec & Pierce, 1991; Day, 1979; Hill, 1977; Miller, Fan, Christensen, Grotevant, & van Dulmen, 2000; National Committee for Adoption, 1989).

Historically it has been asserted that black children are much harder to place because there is little demand on the part of black families to adopt (Day, 1979; Hill, 1977; National Committee for Adoption, 1989). Belonging to a minority racial or ethnic group classifies one as a special needs child, and consequently labels one as hard to place (Adamec & Pierce, 1991). According to statistics made available from the American Public Welfare Association (1988) in fiscal year 1985, black children represented 38% of the population of children in substitute care and awaiting adoptive placements. In contrast, only 23% of children who were adopted through public agencies were black. They assert that this statistic is evidence that public agencies experience greater difficulty in placing minority children. However, results found by Gershenson (1984) demonstrate that black families adopt children from public welfare agencies (as opposed to private adoption agencies) at a rate 3 and 1/2 times that of white families. Rosenthal et al. (1990) suggest that the increased difficulty experienced in finding adoption plans for black children reflects the disproportionate number of them referred to foster care, not a lack of interest on the part of the black community. While the number of those adopted from foster care who are African American has grown since these previous studies, they are still disproportionably represented in the foster care system, now accounting for approximately 51% of children awaiting placements (Children's Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Miller et al. (2000) found that race is one of many moderating demographic variables that account for group differences between adoptees and nonadoptees.

There are other researchers who believe the lack of demand for black children to be a misconception for other reasons. Data from the 1987 National Health Interview Survey, and the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) in 1988, demonstrate that adoption rates of white and black women were not significantly different (Bachrach, Adams, Sambrano, & London, 1990). A better way to capture the adoption picture in the black community may be to also examine the rates of informal adoption.

It is not disputed that the frequent use of informal adoption by blacks is *part* of the explanation for their limited use of formal adoption, specifically regarding relinquishment. Informal adoption is said to occur when children are raised by adults who are not their biological or formal adoptive parents (Hill, 1977). Often the informal parent(s) is related to the child, the placement can be temporary or permanent, and is usually in response to the biological parent being unable to care for the child of their own accord (Kalmuss, 1992). Hill (1977) found that often closeness of kin determined who the child was reared by; therefore the most common caretaker tends to be the child's grandmother. Evidence that the rate of relinquishment by white women peaked at 40

percent of all those unmarried births in 1963 and has decreased over time while the rate of relinquishment by unmarried black women has stayed relatively stable at about 1 percent may be an indication of the frequency with which informal adoption has been utilized in the black community (Chandra, Abma, Maza, & Bachrach, 1999). What is under dispute is how the use of informal adoption originated in the black community. Some researchers assert that it is a reaction to the discriminatory practices of public service agencies and social workers. Kalmuss (1992) discusses the lack of black community outreach programs, the low recruitment of black social workers, and the extremely selective screening criteria to which applicants are subject. It has also been substantiated that public welfare agencies and social workers have been less inclined to honor black applicants (Feigelman & Silverman, 1983; Hill, 1977).

There are other researchers who assert the prominent use of informal adoption stems from the traditional African-American model of the family (Sandven & Resnick, 1990). Even though they were unable to bring many things with them when brought to the United States, they did bring with them family ideals and norms and held on to them tenaciously (Hofferth, 1984).

When asked about their preferences when adopting, women interviewed for the NSFG had reported strong preferences with respect to race. Of white women who reported themselves as currently seeking or planning to adopt, 51 percent stated a preference of adopting a white child; however, 73 percent said they *would* accept a child of another race. Similar results were also found for black women; 52 percent of them currently seeking or planning to adopt would prefer to adopt a black child, and 86-89 percent *would* accept a white child or a child of another race (Chandra et al., 1999).

The information regarding how Hispanic origin may affect one's probability of being adopted and/or the willingness of Hispanic adults to adopt is extremely limited. In fact this researcher has not found any research that explicitly examines them. The Children's Bureau of the US Department of Health and Human Services (1999) reported that thirteen percent of foster care adoptions from October 1, 1998 through March 31, 1999 were of Hispanic children and during this same time period of those awaiting placement eleven percent were Hispanic.

What is known regarding adopters is that from 1973 to 1995 the percentage of Hispanic women who ever adopted fell from 1.2 percent to 0.6 percent (Chandra et al., 1999)⁵. However, in 1995 the percentage of Hispanic women who had ever considered adopting (26.8 percent) was comparable to that of white women (25.9) and black women (29.6) (Chandra et al., 1999)⁵. What is interesting is that of those women who answer they are currently seeking or planning to adopt a greater percentage of Hispanic women (58.4) report actually taking steps to adopt than white women (52.6) and black women (34.8) (Chandra et al., 1999)⁵. Although, the significance of these differences was not assessed Camarata (1989) found a lower percentage of Hispanic family applications for adoption were granted as compared to White families. Rosenthal et al. (1990) interpret this to indicate that Hispanics have been faced with many of the same barriers faced by blacks when trying to adopt, and that certain biases in public agencies may be a contributing factor as to why the percentage of Hispanics who have adopted is so low.

⁵ It is important to note that Chandra et al., did not report the significance of this/these difference(s) in the cited publication.

It is important to note that while the "other" category regarding race and Hispanic origin is employed in this analysis, the "other" category is extremely small and accounts for only 3.4 percent of those surveyed. Also, because of the very general "other" label it is uncertain who those "others" are and as a result it may very well be an especially diverse subpopulation. Because the sub-population in question in this analysis (i.e. adoptees) has such a small number of respondents they are nevertheless included.

Based on the above-mentioned literature I hypothesize that due to the age of the sample and the trends of relinquishment of African American mothers that being black has a negative effect on being adopted. Because the Hispanic population in the United States has suffered similar economic hardships to African Americans and have traditionally strong family ties I hypothesize that being Hispanic also has a negative effect on being adopted. I also hypothesize that one's race affects one's willingness to adopt in that African-American women are slightly less willing than Caucasian women to report a willingness to adopt. I also hypothesize based on the previous literature that Hispanics are more likely to report considering adopting than white women. Controlling for being black should strengthen the correlation between adoption and willingness. Therefore, with respect to the "adoption as a significant life event" theory, being black has a suppression effect upon the relationship between being adopted and willingness to adopt. Conversely, with respect to the empathic-altruism theory, by controlling for being black the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption will be partially explained. Also, controlling for being Hispanic, with respect to the "adoption as a significant life event" theory, should reduce the correlation between being adopted and considering adoption, thereby partially explaining the relationship. Controlling for being

Hispanic in regards to the empathic-altruism theory has a suppression effect upon the positive relationship between being adopted and willingness to adopt.

Age at Time of Interview:

The relationship of an individual's age to being adopted can be determined deductively by examining adoption trends in the US over the past 100 years. At its beginnings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries social workers were reluctant to accept infants for adoption placements because they were skeptical that adults would and could in fact accept orphans as their own children because they weren't born to them (Melosh, 2002). Those children who were adopted were generally older in age and had been in foster care for at least a year of their life (Melosh, 2002). They would provide a service to their adoptive parents, usually as a laborer. In exchange for food and shelter and a less stigmatized label in the social order, adoptees worked as farm hands, housekeepers and nannies to name a few. It wasn't long before a dramatic change in social work practice occurred, and accepting infants for placement was no longer the exception but the rule. The adoption alternative became a desirable one, allowing girls to "save" their children from the stigma of being born out of wedlock (Miller, et al., 2000; Hersov, 1990; Chesler, 1989). At its apex in the 1950's and 1960's adoption became known as

"a 'second chance' for all involved: in one bold stroke, it rescued children from illegitimacy, offered a 'fresh start' to 'girls in trouble,' and conferred parenthood on infertile couples longing to join the postwar domestic idyll" (Melosh, 2002, pp. 4).

It is estimated that in 1963, of those unmarried mothers whose pregnancies were carried to full-term, 40 percent of them made an adoption plan for their child (Festinger, 1971). But, the growing rate of relinquishment that Americans witnessed through the 1940's, '50's, and '60's did not persist. Researchers have suggested the legalization of abortion and an increased acceptance of single motherhood as explanations for why fewer and fewer women who have conceived prior to marriage have chosen an adoption plan for their child (Bachrach, Stolley & London, 1992; Chandra, et al., 1999; Daly, 1994; Edwards & Williams, 2000; Holbrook, 1990; Luker, 1996; Rosenthal & Groze, 1994). By 1971, the rate of relinquishment had dropped to 14 percent, and by 1982 it had fallen even lower to 7 percent (Bachrach, 1986). The best estimates to date affirm the current rate of relinquishment of children born to never-married women under 45 years of age to be about 1% (Chandra et al., 1999).

These trends indicate that women born in the late fifties and early sixties may be more likely to have been placed for adoption. In this sample that would be women between the ages of thirty and forty. This leads to the hypothesis that the relationship between age and being adopted is positive; the difference is cross-sectional and emerges due to a cohort effect.

Previous findings regarding the relationship between age and willingness to adopt are inconsistent (Bachrach et al., 1991; Bonham, 1977; Chandra et al., 1999). Bonham (1977) reports that non-sterile women in the age range of 20-24 are most likely to report (51.9 percent) that if they could not have the number of children they intended they would adopt. The percentage of women answering yes to this question declines as the age of the respondent increases with only 31.1 percent of women in the oldest age group (ages 35 to 44) answering yes. Bachrach et al. (1991) report a slightly different age trend. They report that among sterile women, propensity to adopt was higher for women in their late twenties and early thirties than for those in their mid-to-late teens, early twenties, mid-to-late thirties, and early forties. Chandra et al. (1999) have findings that differ as well, reporting likelihood of considering adoption among all women to increase with age. Only 18.4 percent of the women in the youngest cohort (ages 18-24 years) indicated having considered adopting where as 30 percent of those in the oldest cohort (ages 40-44) reported considering it.

To disentangle these reports it is important to note that this relationship may be affected by many other variables including educational attainment, marital status, age at first marriage, labor force participation, fertility, and number of children an individual already has (i.e. parity). I hypothesize that age has a positive effect upon considering adoption. The simple reasoning is that this relationship is a function of time; as a woman gets older she has had more time to contemplate adopting. I also predict that this will be contingent upon the woman's fertility experience; i.e., an interaction effect exists between age and parity. Women who have not borne children will be more likely to consider adoption as they move through their reproductive years and chances of conceiving diminish. Hence an interaction effect of age and parity is hypothesized. *Educational Attainment & Financial Resources:*

Two variables that are highly correlated, educational attainment and financial resources, have been found to have a positive relationship with being adopted and expressing a propensity to adopt. These variables have also been noted to be of supreme importance when studying rates of adoption and the willingness to adopt due to the insight that can be obtained regarding the economic barriers associated with adopting a child.

With respect to the willingness to adopt, researchers have discovered that women who report at least some college education are much more likely to adopt than those with none (Bachrach et al., 1991; Bonham, 1977; Chandra et al, 1999). Bachrach et al. (1991) and Bonham (1977) also found that women who have graduated from college are more likely to adopt than women of any other education level. This relationship may present itself due to the trend of better educated women delaying childbirth and the effects that delaying childbirth has on a woman's fertility (Heck, Schoendorf, Ventura, & Kiely, 1997). Also, the argument can be made that educated individuals may be more aware of the need for homes for relinquished children.

Bonham (1970) and Chandra et al. (1999) also found a positive relationship between income and considering adoption. In Bonham's (1970) study only 33.3 percent of women who had a family income in the lowest income group indicated they would consider adopting, compared to 59.3 percent of women in the highest income group. Chandra et al. (1999) report a similar but weaker trend with 22.2 percent of women in the lowest income group indicating they have considered adoption compared to 29.4 percent of women in the highest income group. An explanation for the positive relationship may be that those with higher incomes have more resources to devote to the acquisition of an adopted child. Figures from the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse indicate that depending on the kind of adoption (i.e. domestic public vs. domestic private vs. domestic independent vs. inter-country private) costs can reach up to \$30,000 per adoption (Internet, 2006).

As stated earlier, women who have at least some college education and have more financial resources are not only more likely to consider adopting but are also more likely to adopt (Bachrach, 1983; Bachrach, 1986; Bachrach, et al., 1990; Bachrach, et al., 1991; Bonham, 1977; Chandra et al., 1999; Daly, 1988; Leahy, 1933). The resources that a family possesses can have dramatic effects on the children being raised within that family and are often identified as life chances. Some of these life chances are associated with education. The higher the educational attainment of the parents and the higher the income the better the schools children go to. Better schools provide students with better teachers, better resources, and more opportunities. This reasoning finds support in the literature as well; adopted children are more likely to have a higher IQ, higher educational attainment, and to be more financially secure than children living with biological parents or stepparents (Anderson, 1992; Bachrach, 1983; Fergusson, Linskey & Horwood, 1995).

Given the previous research I hypothesize that positive relationships exist between being adopted and educational attainment as well as financial resources. I also hypothesize positive relationships between the willingness to adopt and both educational attainment and financial resources. Therefore, the path through education and family income is positive. Because the hypothesized relationship between being adopted and willingness is negative in the "adoption as a significant life event" theory, controlling for educational attainment and financial resources should strengthen the negative correlation between adoption and willingness. In other words, it is hypothesized that educational attainment and financial resources will have a suppression effect upon the relationship between being adopted and willingness to adopt. Conversely, based on the empathicaltruism theory the relationship between being adopted and considering adopting is positive. Therefore controlling for educational attainment and financial resources should reduce the positive correlation and partially explain the relationship between being adopted and considering adopting.

Marital Status:

Marital status is a variable that has been many times overlooked or underestimated as having a viable impact on an individual's decision to adopt. As a result the never married woman who considers adopting or who has adopted has not been examined to much of an extent in the literature. This remains the case even though single adoptive parenthood has risen over 30 percent since the 1970's (Stolley, 1993). According to the US department of Health and Human Services, 33 percent of children adopted from Foster Care are adopted by a single parent

(http://statistics.adoption.com/information/adoption-statistics-singleparents.html; 2005).

The question to bear in mind is that if such a huge percentage of adoptions are being granted to single parents, how many more single women are there who have considered it? As single parenthood becomes less stigmatized in American culture and as women are receiving increasing education and obtaining secure financial resources independently, it can be reasoned that adoption may be a viable solution for motherhood without the need of a male partner. The exclusion of never-married women also, whether done advertently or inadvertently, works to discriminate against lesbians. It is estimated by some that approximately 4 percent to 8 percent of the United States population are homosexual (Laumann, Michael & Gagnon, 1994; Sullivan, 1995). As asked by Sullivan (1995), "Can 25 million individuals be automatically excluded from consideration as potential adoptive parents solely on the basis of their sexual orientation?" (p. 2). Unfortunately the latent effect of not including never-married women in a study examining an individual's willingness to adopt does just that.

It is also important to mention that until 1995 the adoption series in the NSFG questionnaire excluded never-married women. Thus far, researchers examining willingness to adopt also examine women who do adopt. The researchers claim that the number of women who are never-married and adopt is too small to include in their samples for analysis. This study is different; the objective is to determine characteristics of women who have considered adopting, not women who have adopted. As a result, this study is not plagued by the problem of small numbers in the sample of women who are never-married and adopt. In fact, the NSFG has data collected on over 4000 nevermarried women. Excluding never-married women would mean cutting the sample by forty percent.

The literature also comes up short regarding the marital status of adopted individuals. Unfortunately, even though pre-adult adoptees have been a "hot" population for empirical study, adult adoptees have not experienced the same attention. Those studies that do exist are limited to two general populations: those that have searched for their biological parents and those adoptees in psychotherapy (Brodzinsky et al., 1993). Rates of marriage of adoptees have not been identifiable as yet. Unlike many of the available studies on adult adoptees that are dependent upon convenience samples secured through support groups focusing on the needs of searching adoptees and those attached to other psychotherapy professionals, the book *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self* (Brodzinsky et al., 1993) examines the adopted individual in adulthood from a different perspective. This book presents a model of normal adjustment to being adopted as it occurs throughout the life span and provides insights into the adoptee's processes related to "seeking and achieving intimacy." Erik Erikson (1959) characterizes an intimate relationship as one that involves warmth, mutuality of feeling, and deep commitment. As an individual develops, intimate relationships emerge. In adulthood these relationships develop out of attachments to a spouse, child, and a career to name just a few examples. Therefore, examination of intimacy in a discussion regarding marriage is crucial.

Of core importance in the development of intimacy is identity. The way in which identity is linked to an individual's ability to achieve intimacy differs for men and women (Brodzinsky et al., 1993). Most men achieve intimacy only after the adolescent identity crisis is resolved. For men, true intimacy usually implies the integration of an established identity with a loved one. For women it's different; most develop a capacity for intimacy and a sense of their identity at about the same time (Gilligan, 1982). Women, in large part, define themselves based on their ability to establish and maintain lasting relationships; their identity is embedded deep within their ability to be intimate. Unlike the general population, this process can be much more difficult for the adopted individual. As indicated earlier, many adoptees identify themselves as struggling with their identity based on their upbringing in an adoptive home. It seems logical to assume that they in turn would struggle with issues relating to intimacy. The result many times is a series of unsuccessful attachments. Brodzinsky et al. (1993) discuss this in reference to an inner crisis that involves many losses (losses of a birth family, personal history linked to that birth family, a loss of status related to the stigma of being an adopted individual) and that due to these losses, particularly the loss of the intimate relationship between the adopted individual and his/her birth mother, there may be reluctance to attempt the forging of new intimate relationships. Based on the observations provided by Brodzinsky et al. (1993); one may conclude that adoptees would be less likely to marry due to their

embedded issues relating to the early losses of their first intimate relationships. For many women, their identity is wrapped up in their ability to form secure and intimate relationships and attachments. If their initial intimate relationships (those with their birth parents) are lost, this in turn is thought to contribute to problems of establishing an identity.

I hypothesize that a woman who is married is more willing to adopt than a woman who is not currently married. I also hypothesize that a woman's adoptive status has a negative effect on her marital status; that is, adoptees are less likely to marry than nonadoptees. So, in the "adoption as a significant life event" theory, the indirect path from adoption to willingness via marriage is negative. Thus controlling for marital status should reduce (i.e., partially explain) the hypothesized relationship between adoption and willingness to adopt. Conversely, with respect to the empathic-altruism theory, controlling for marital status should inflate the hypothesized positive relationship between adoption and willingness to adopt.

Infertility, Parity and Related Variables in Adoption Literature:

Infertility has been defined as the inability to become pregnant following a year of unprotected intercourse (Matthews & Matthews, 1986). Since Leahy's (1933) publication studying the characteristics of adopting individuals, variables relating to infertility have been found to be the those most strongly associated with a couple's and/or woman's decision to adopt. In the past three decades, through the work of Bonham (1977), Bachrach (1983, 1986), Bachrach, London and Maza (1991), and Chandra, Abma, Maza, and Bachrach (1999) they have also been found to be highly associated with a woman's *willingness* to adopt. For example, of those women who had no children in Bonham's (1977) study 62.1% answered that if they could not have the number of children they intended they would adopt, compared to women with one child of which 41.9% answered affirmatively. As the number of children born to the woman (i.e. parity) increased the willingness to adopt decreased. Chandra et al. (1999) found that when compared to fecund women (20.5 percent), women with impaired fecundity were over twice as likely (44.9 percent) to report having considered adoption.

With regard to the relationship between being adopted and one's fecundity status and parity one can only speculate. There has not been any direct research identified that would suggest that adopted women are less fecund than women raised by biological parents. One might argue that fertility, as a genetic factor, may explain the nature of the relationship. In essence, it may be assumed that the biological mother obviously did not have a problem conceiving; in fact she was able to conceive when she did not want to. Therefore, the adoptee may inherit their biological mother's fertility and as a result not have problems with her own fertility.

In conclusion, it is hypothesized that adoptees will be less likely to experience problems of fertility, and because women with problems of infertility are more likely to consider adopting, it is deduced that women who do not have fertility problems will be less likely to consider adopting. So the indirect path from adoption to willingness via fertility is negative. By controlling for fertility the hypothesized negative relationship between being adopted and considering adoption in the "adoption as a significant life event" theory would decrease. Therefore, controlling for fertility will partially explain the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption. Conversely, in the empathic-altruism theory, fertility will suppress the effect of being adopted on considering adopting.

Age at time of adoption

The effect of an individual's age at the time of adoption placement has received much research attention (Rosenthal & Groze, 1992; McDonald, Lieberman, Partridge, & Hornby, 1991; Festinger, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988; Reid, Kagan, Kaminsky, & Helmer, 1987). The age of a child while awaiting an adoption placement has been found to not only significantly affect their probability of receiving an adoption placement but if a placement occurs, age has also been found to effect *outcomes* associated with their placement ((McDonald, Propp & Murphy, 2001; Rosenthal& Groze, 1992; McDonald, Lieberman, Partridge, & Hornby, 1991; Festinger, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988; Reid, Kagan, Kaminsky, & Helmer, 1987).

As mentioned, a child's age has a significant impact upon their chances of receiving an adoption placement. Age is classified along with possessing a handicap, being a member of a sibling group, having emotional and/or behavior problems, or belonging to an ethnic minority group as factors associated with the label of a "special needs child" (Rosenthal, Groze & Curiel, 1990). Adamec and Pierce (1991) define a special needs child as having "conditions or characteristics that make a child difficult to place by the state adoption unit or an adoption agency, some of which have nothing to do with the health or temperament of the child" (pp. 266-267). This label may be a result of the fact that researchers have found adopted children to be more susceptible to a host of problems; hire rates of learning difficulty diagnoses (Taichert & Hawin, 1975), increased occurrences of school-related behavior problems (Brodzinsky, Schecter, Braff, & Singer,

1984), lower academic achievement (Brodenzsky et al., 1984; Stein & Hoopes, 1985), lower social competence (Brodinzsky et al., 1984), and greater problems associated with personality and emotion (Bonham, 1970; Brodinzsky, Radice, Huffman, & Merkler, 1987; Kotsopousous, Cote, Joseph, Pentland, Chryssoula, Sheahan, & Oke, 1988; Lindholm & Tauliatos, 1980). It is also found that the older the child is at the time of their adoption placement the greater the risk of these negative outcomes (McDonald, Propp & Murphy, 2001; Rosenthal& Groze, 1992; McDonald, Lieberman, Partridge, & Hornby, 1991; Festinger, 1986; Barth & Berry, 1988; Reid, Kagan, Kaminsky, & Helmer, 1987). Also, age at the time of placement has a significant positive effect upon disruption of adoptive placements (Zill, 1996; Barth & Berry, 1991; Festinger, 1986; George et al., 1996; Groze, 1986; Partiridge et al., 1986; Smith & Howard, 1991). Barth and Miller (2000) ascertain that this is due to multiple contributing factors which are direct functions of time. These factors include time to absorb the toxic effects of abuse and neglect, increased likelihood of spending time in foster care (Barth & Berry, 1991), and more prolonged exposure to biological families resulting in the development of more resistant habits that hinder their integration into their adoptive families (Smith & Howard, 1994).

Sobol and Daly (1992) discuss the high demand for healthy white infants for adoption placements, noting that they are viewed by the majority of infertile couples as the closest approximation to a biological family they will ever have. Adopting an infant is often considered the next best thing to biological parenting. Although the parents are not able to contribute to the child genetically they are responsible for all the socialization of their child.
The "age at time of adoption" is being utilized here in a supplemental analysis of adoptees. With regard to the effect that age at time of adoption may have on one's considering adoption one can only theorize. The argument is that children adopted at older ages will have more empathy for children in foster care because of their ability to remember what was like before receiving their adoption placement. Therefore, the empathic-altruism theory will apply to children adopted at older ages and the "adoption as a significant life event" applies to those adopted in infancy; the lack of memory of their adoption impedes upon their ability to empathize with a child awaiting an adoption placement. I hypothesize that adoption has a positive effect on willingness to adopt for those adopted at later ages, and a negative effect for those adopted in infancy.

.Hypotheses: An Overview

In summary, it is hypothesized that race/ethnicity (i.e. being of a minority group: black or Hispanic) has a negative effect on being adopted. I also hypothesize that one's race/ethnicity (i.e. being of a minority group: black and Hispanic) affects one's willingness to adopt in that minority women are slightly less willing than Caucasian women to report a willingness to adopt.

Also as a woman ages and enters her reproductive years it is hypothesized her reported willingness to adopt increases. The strength of this relationship depends upon whether or not the woman has borne a child; those who have not borne a child will be more likely to consider adoption as they move through their reproductive years and chances of conceiving diminish; i.e. an interaction effect of age and parity exists.

In addition, it is hypothesized that a positive relationship exists between being adopted and both educational attainment and financial resources. I also hypothesize a positive relationship between the willingness to adopt and both educational attainment and financial resources. Therefore, the path through education and family income is positive.

Furthermore, a woman who is married is expected to be more willing to adopt than a woman who is not currently married. Also, a woman's adoptive status has a negative effect on her marital status; as a result adoptees are less likely to marry than non-adoptees.

In addition, it is hypothesized that adoptees will be less likely to experience problems of infertility, and as indicated by previous research women with problems of infertility are more likely to consider adopting. So the indirect path from adoption to willingness via fertility is positive. And in conclusion it is hypothesized that adoption has a positive effect on willingness to adopt for those adopted at later ages, and a negative effect for those adopted in infancy.

DATA & SAMPLE

To test the hypotheses, this paper employs data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). The NSFG is a national probability sample conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). NCHS is one of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The NSFG has been chosen as the data set for this study based on its ability to fill the many gaps that exist in the other available data on adoption. As indicated by Chandra et al. (1999), "The survey has proved a valuable source of data for studying the individual-level determinants of adoption...and for documenting trends in aspects of adoption for which no other national data are available" (p. 2).

The NSFG has been conducted since 1973 and consists of six cycles and hence six random samples taken from the United States. The survey's main objective is to provide a source of national estimates of factors affecting birth and pregnancy rates in the United States. Cycle 1 of the NSFG interviewing began in 1973 and resulted in the interviewing of 9,797 women 15-44 years of age who were currently or formerly married. Cycle 2, completed in 1976, yielded interviews with 8,611 women 15-44 years of age who were currently or formerly married.

Following the completion of the second cycle the NSFG was redesigned to include never married women, recognizing the national trends of increasing teenage and out-of-wedlock births occurring in the United States. In 1982 Cycle 3 was conducted, resulting in the completed interviews of 7,969 women 15-44 years of age regardless of their marital status. The fourth cycle of the NSFG took place in 1988 and resulted in the completed interviews of 8,450 women ages 15-44 regardless of marital status. The fifth cycle was conducted in 1995; 10,847 women ages 15-44 years and of all marital statuses was studied. Cycle 6, the most recent cycle, was conducted in 2002. This cycle was redesigned to include interviews with both women and men. Although this cycle has been released for public use it is not being employed in this project because the specific adoption status and age at time of adoption for respondents can not be determined from the available data.

As indicated earlier, the NSFG has been recognized since its inception in 1973 as a key tool in examining factors associated with adoption (Chandra et al., 1999). For the purpose of this study only Cycle Five will be utilized. The reason for this is directly linked to the dependent variable "considering adoption." In the first two cycles, the NSFG measured a woman's willingness to adopt by asking married women who expected to have additional children "If it should turn out that you and your husband are not able to have (the one more child/all the children) you expect, would you adopt a child?" Wording the question regarding the respondent's propensity to adopt in a way that infers the situation of infertility, and asking it only of married women is problematic for three reasons. First, current statistics tell us that an increasing number of never-married women are adopting (Feigelman & Silverman, 1997; Shireman, 1996; Stolley, 1993). Utilizing survey information that is limited to ever-married women gives an incomplete picture of the population in the United States that has considered adopting, for to adopt one must by logic first consider adopting. Second, a major objective of this project is to help identify those individuals who are more likely to adopt in hopes that better recruitment strategies can be designed to increase the number of adoption placements of foster children. This also leads to the third reason, which is that previous literature has also identified that

many individuals who adopt foster children do not do so for reasons of infertility, but do so for more altruistic reasons. Constructing the question in such a way that it forces the respondent to place herself in the shoes of a woman with problems of infertility may compromise the results of an analysis examining the effect of infertility on consideration of adoption. Cycle 5 simply asks "Have you ever considered adopting a child?" All women, regardless of marital status or fertility status, are asked if they have ever considered adopting, yielding the most direct measure of the dependent variable within the NSFG and thus the reason for the utilization of Cycle 5 for the analysis.

The contract for Cycle 5 of the NSFG was awarded to the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) of Research Triangle Park, North Carolina in September of 1992. One of the distinguishing features of Cycle 5 is its computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) format. Due to this format an extensive amount of time was given to the writing and programming aspect of the survey as well as extensive pre-testing procedures.

The sample for the NSFG was taken from the 1993 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). The NHIS is a continuous multistage household survey which is conducted by NCHS. The NHIS is designed to cover the United States civilian noninstitutionalized population and collects data for each household member on doctor visits, health conditions, disabilities, hospitalizations, and other health-related issues. In addition, demographic and economic data were collected for each household and its individual members (for complete descriptions of the NHIS design see Potter, Iannachione, Mosher, Mason, & Kavee, 1997).

It is important to note that RTI was provided with all data files associated with the NHIS. To acquire a sufficient number of black and Hispanic women for the NSFG from

the NHIS sample, all households with black and Hispanic women had to be included in the NSFG. Of the white and "other" women respondents in the NHIS sample about 43 percent were chosen for the NSFG sample. The NSFG sample design required at least 10,500 completed interviews. The 1995 NSFG sampling frame included 25,534 women 15-44 years of age in 21,168 households. This sampling frame consisted of 2,684 Hispanic women, 4,042 non-Hispanic black women, and 18,808 women of other races/ethnicities.

In order to achieve the desired sample size of 10,500 women for the NSFG a sample of 14,000 women was chosen from the NHIS. The total number of completed interviews was 10,847 for a response rate of 78.6 percent. The sample size for Hispanic women was 2,097. Of these, 1,926 were located with 1,613 completed interviews. This results in a response rate of 79.5 percent. For non-Hispanic black women the chosen sample size was 3, 205. Of these 2,939 were located and 2,464 were completed for a response rate of 77.8 percent. And finally, the race/ethnicity category of other (including non-Hispanic white) has a sample size of 8,698 with 8,378 women located. There were 6,770 interviews completed for a response rate of 78.8 percent (for complete details of sample sizes, selection probabilities and response rates see Potter et al., 1997).

MEASURES

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable *considering adoption* is measured utilizing three questions in the original questionnaire. The first item was taken from the "current plans to adopt series" where the respondents were asked questions regarding any plans they currently have to adopt *another* child (if they had already adopted a child they were

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considered to be in the "ever adopt" group and were asked not to consider any children they had already adopted). The first question in this series asked specifically "are you seeking to adopt a child"? If the respondent answered no she was then asked if she had ever considered adopting a child. To achieve the most accurate count of respondents who had at one time or another considered adopting a child regardless of any further steps being taken a variable was created that includes all those women who have adopted a child, and/or are currently seeking to adopt a child, and/or merely considered it at one time, but have not adopted previously and are not currently seeking to. "Considered adopting" is a dichotomous variable with ever considered adopting coded as (1) and not ever considered adopting coded as (0). In the total sample (n = 10,847), 2525 (23.3 percent) of respondents have considered adopting a child.

There will also be a supplemental analysis done leaving out those who had already adopted. This will help determine whether including behavior as an indicator of the attitude is biasing the results. We will leave out those who adopted entirely so as not to include them in the "control" group.

Independent Variables

The main independent variable *Adopted* is a recode derived from a series of questions on the respondent's different living situations. The goal of this recode is to exclude individuals who had been adopted by a step-mother or a step-father because the scope of this study only includes the investigation of those adopted by two parents or a single (not married) parent. The first question in the series stated, "First I would like you to start at the very beginning of your life and tell me who you were living with right after you were born." As part of the first living situation series the final question asked was,

"Now I would like to know about any changes in who was responsible for you, such as a parent or guardian moving out, or dying, or re-marrying, or you going to live with a different parent, or any other change. Were there ever any changes in who you lived with before you started living away from parents or guardians?" If the respondent answered yes she would move onto a second living situation series and so on until data on all different living situations were recorded for every respondent. A counter was then created to identify all the respondents who had ever experienced a living situation that consisted of two adoptive parents or a single (not married) adoptive parent. There are 166 (1.5 percent of respondents who fit this definition of an adopted person in this sample. This counter was then recoded into the dichotomous variable where (1) equals adopted and (0) equals not adopted. A further step was also taken in which it was determined if respondents' first living situations after birth were in an adoptive home. To do this the recoded variable was utilized and transformed into a new dummy variable where (1) represents respondents living with adoptive parents right after birth and (0) representing respondents in all other living situations.

Age of respondents is captured by two different recoded⁶ variables, both of which represent the respondent's age at the time of the interview in years. For cross-tabular analysis the variable representing age divides the respondents into three separate cohorts based on their decade of birth: (1) those born in the 1970's, who account for 27 percent of respondents (n = 2933); (2) those born in the 1960's, who account for 36 percent of

⁶ To assist the analyst the original data file includes a number of recodes. There are essentially two types of recodes: (1) those that have been transferred from single questionnaire items with missing data imputed; and (2) those that are based on multiple questionnaire items and that use more intricate knowledge and logic to define. As recommended, whenever possible these recodes are utilized in this study due to their ability to permit internally consistent estimates with NCHS published reports due to their usage of the recodes whenever applicable.

respondents (n = 3882); and (3) those born in the 1950's, accounting for 37 percent of respondents (n = 4032). For regression analysis the variable will be "un-collapsed" and treated as a continuous variable in which the code categories are 14-45. For ease of interpretation of interaction effects in logistic regression age is then centered around the mean age of 30.6.

Race and Hispanic origin is a combination of two recodes: Hispanic origin and Race. The code categories for Hispanic origin are (1) Hispanic and (2) non-Hispanic. The code categories for Race are (1) black (2) white and (3) other. These two variables are combined to produce the code categories (1) Hispanic, accounting for 14.8 percent (n = 1553) of respondents; (2) non-Hispanic white, accounting for 61.8 percent (n = 6483) of respondents; (3) non-Hispanic black, accounting for 23.3 percent (n = 2446) of respondents; and (4) non-Hispanic other, accounting for 3.4 percent (n = 365) of respondents. For cross-tabulation analysis the variable representing race and Hispanic origin remains categorical with (1) representing Hispanics, (2) representing whites and (3) representing blacks and (4) non-Hispanic other. For the logistic regression procedure, categories one through four will be transformed into dummy variables. The variables representing blacks, Hispanics and "others" are utilized with the white respondents as the reference category because white is the modal race/ethnic category in the United Sates.

Marital status was measured in the original questionnaire by asking respondents "what is your current marital status?" and was recoded with imputed missing data. The categorical variable for marital status will be employed in the cross-tabulation analysis with (1) representing married respondents, (2) representing formerly married respondents and (3) representing never married respondents. This variable will be recoded into three dummy variables to be used in the logistic regression procedure in which married will be the reference category because in the context of adoption, that is the typical case and others would be deviations from it. Dummy variables representing those who are never married and formerly married will be utilized. Therefore those respondents who are never married comprise 37 percent (n = 4003) of the sample. Those respondents who are formerly married comprise 14 percent (n = 1553) of the sample and married respondents comprises 49 percent (n = 5291) of the sample.

Highest completed year of school or highest degree received is measured using a recode. Respondents' education level is recoded as (1) less than first grade; (2) first, second, third, or fourth grade; (3) fifth or sixth grade; (4) seventh or eighth grade; (5) ninth grade; (6) tenth grade; (7) eleventh grade; (8) twelfth grade, no diploma (nor GED); (9) high school graduate (high school diploma or GED); (10) some college but no degree; (11) associate degree in college/university; (12) bachelor's degree; (13) master's degree; (14) professional degree; and (15) doctorate degree. For bivariate and logistic regression analysis respondents are divided into three categories with (1) representing those with less than a high school education and 21 percent (n = 2293) of respondents; (2) representing those who are high school graduates who comprise 36 percent (n = 3865) of respondents; and (3) representing those with more than a high school education who comprise 43 percent (n = 4689) of respondents.

Income is measured using a recode. This variable operationalization is borrowed from that utilized in Chandra et al. (1999) to better improve comparability of the two studies. The respondent's combined family income from all sources from the 12 months preceding the interview is used. This total is divided by the weighted average poverty

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threshold income of families whose head of household was under sixty-five years of age, for the specific family size of the respondent's family (based on the 1994 poverty levels defined by the US Census Bureau). The code categories zero to 997 equal the corresponding percentages of the appropriate poverty level, and 998 equals nine hundred ninety-eight percent of poverty or more. For bivariate and logistic regression analysis respondents are divided into three categories: (1) zero to one hundred forty-nine percent of poverty level income, with 26 percent (n = 2795) of respondents; (2) one hundred fifty to two hundred ninety-nine percent of poverty level income, with 32 percent (n = 3509) of respondents; and (3) three hundred or higher percent of poverty level income with 42 percent (n = 4543) of respondents.

Fecundity status is a variable intended to determine a woman's ability to get pregnant and carry a baby to full term. This variable was originally coded as: (1) surgically sterile, contraceptive; (2) surgically sterile, non-contraceptive; (3) sterile, nonsurgical; (4) sub-fecund; (5) long interval; (6) fecund. For the bivariate analysis the categories will be recoded as (1) surgically sterile for contraceptive reasons comprising of 27% of the sample (n = 2883) (2) surgically sterile for non contraceptive reasons and non-surgically sterile comprising of 5 percent (n = 539) of the sample; (3) sub-fecund, comprising 9 percent (n = 930) of the sample; and (3) fecund comprising of 60 percent (n = 6495) of the sample. For logistic regression analysis dummy variables are created for the above categories with those who are fecund utilized as the reference category because they represent the mode.

Parity is a recode designed to identify the total number of babies born alive to the respondent based on internal file records. For the bivariate analysis parity is coded as a

three category ordinal variable with (0) representing respondents who have not experienced a live birth, (1) representing those women who have experienced one live birth and (2) representing women who have experienced two or more live births. For the logistic regression procedure the variable representing parity is transformed into three dummy variables: the first representing those women who have not born children where (1) equals zero births, accounting for 36 percent (n=3936) of respondents and (0) representing individuals with at least one birth; the second variable represents women who have experienced one birth where (1) equals individuals who have experienced one live birth, accounting for 19 percent (n=2072) of respondents and (0) representing all other respondents; and the third representing women who have experienced two or more births where (1) represents individuals who have experienced two or more live births, accounting for 45 percent (n=4839) of respondents. For logistic regression analysis the variables representing childless women and women with two or more live births will be utilized with those women who have experienced one live birth used as the reference category.

Analytic Strategy

First, bivariate results are generated from cross-tabulation analysis to determine those variables associated with both being adopted and considering adopting. The Logistic regression procedure is then used in two separate analyses to examine the predictors of the dependent variable "willingness to adopt" with one analysis including women who have already adopted and the other which excludes women who have already adopted. This is a suitable analytic technique because the dependent variable is a dichotomous variable. The variables used to predict the dependent variable "willingness to adopt" comprise 6 blocks. The first block is the adoption status of the respondent, more specifically it is comprised of a variable representing respondents who have been adopted at birth and a variable representing those respondents adopted at older ages with adoption status being the main independent variable under investigation. Subsequently I want to assess if this is spurious, so the antecedent variables race, Hispanic origin and age make up block two. Block three is comprised of two intervening variables associated with one's current economic situation: income and educational attainment. It is thought that these intervening variables may transmit the effects of adoption status on willingness to adopt via individual socio-economic status. The fourth block in this analysis is devoted to those variables designed to capture the effect of the respondents' marital status on their consideration of adoption. The fifth block consists of fertility-related control variables fecundity status and parity. The sixth block investigates the interaction effect of age and childlessness on the consideration of adoption as well as the interaction of age and having two or more births on willingness to adopt. A likelihood-ratio test will also be employed to compare fit of the complete model with a simpler model with fertility related variables removed.

Bivariate Results

Being Adopted

Frequencies, percentages and significance of Pearson chi-square tests of the relationship of adoption status to all characteristics are presented in Table 1. This table is being employed here to describe the sample of interest, adoptees, and contrast them with those respondents who are not adopted. Table 1 demonstrates that, as the empathic altruism hypothesis asserts, there is a significant association between being adopted and considering adoption (Pearson chi-square = 15.626; $p \le 0.001$). Of all adoptees, 63.9% report not considering adopting and 36.1% report that they have. This is in contrast to non-adoptees, among whom 77% report not considering adoption and only 23% report that they have considered it.

Table 1 also demonstrates that, as expected, the difference in the racial and ethnic composition of adoptees compared to non-adoptees is statistically significant (Pearson chi-square = 21.281; $p \le 0.001$). While "white" is the modal category in both subgroups, "white" accounts for a larger proportion of individuals who are adopted (77.4%) as compared to those who are not adopted (59.6%). Being black and Hispanic illustrate the same trend but in reverse; of those who are adopted only 9.7% are Hispanic, compared to 14.4% of the non-adopted group. Blacks represent only 12% of adoptees while representing 22.7% of those who are not adopted.

Being adopted has a significant relationship with age (Pearson chi-square = 13.881; p ≤ 0.01). The research hypotheses anticipated that women born in the 1950's and 1960's would be more likely to have been adopted based on relinquishment trends.

	Total	Adopted	Not Adopted
	(n=10,847)	(n=166)	(n=10,681)
Propensity to adopt (15.626***)			
Has not considered	8322	63.9% (106)	77% (8216)
considered	2525	36.1% (60)	23% (2465)
Race/Hispainc origin (21.281***)			
Black	2446	12% (20)	22.7% (2426)
Hispainc	1553	9.7% (15)	14.4% (1538)
White	6483	77.4% (120)	59.6% (6363)
Other	365	6.6% (11)	3.3% (354)
Decade of Birth (13.881**)			
1950's	4032	24% (40)	37% (3992)
1960's	3882	47% (78)	36% (3804)
1970's	2933	29% (48)	27% (2885)
Income (2.966)			
0-149 percent	2795	23.5% (39)	25.8% (2756)
150-299 percent	3509	38.6% (64)	32.3% (3445)
300 percent or higher	4543	38% (63)	41.9% (4480)
Education (2.423)			
Some school, no diploma	2293	16.3% (27)	21.2% (2266)
High School grad	3865	37.3% (62)	35.6% (3303)
High School grad, some college	4689	46.4% (77)	43.2% (4612)
Marital Status (8.435*)			
Never married	4003	39.2% (65)	36.9% (3938)
Formerly married	1553	21.1% (35)	14.2% (1518)
Married	5291	39.8% (66)	48.9% (5225)
Fecundity Status (3.120)			
Sterile, contraceptive	2883	25.3% (42)	26.6% (2841)
Sterile, noncontraceptive	539	3.6% (6)	5% (533)
Sub-fecund	930	12% (20)	8.5% (910)
Fecund	6495	59% (98)	59.9% (6397)
Parity (.624)			
0 births	3936	39.2% (65)	36.2% (3871)
1 birth	2072	18.7% (31)	19.1% (2041)
2 or more births	4839	42.2% (70)	44.6% (4769)

Table 1. Percentages and Frequencies of all characteristics by Adoption Status (n = 10,847)

* p <= 0.05; ** p <= 0.01; *** p <= 0.001

Results indicate that of all adopted women in the sample 24% were born in the 1950's, 47% were born in the 1960's, and 29% were born in the 1970's. Of those women in the sample who were not adopted, 37% were born in the 1950's, 36% were born in the 1960's, and 27% were born in the 1970's. Non-adoptees, then, were more likely to have been born in the 1950s, and are consequently somewhat older than adoptees.

Being adopted is also found to have a significant relationship with marital status (Pearson chi-square = 8.435; $p \le 0.05$). This finding shows weak support for the research hypotheses that adopted women are less likely to be married. Results indicate that of all adopted women in the sample 39.8 percent are married compared to 48.9 percent of those women who are not adopted. Also, it is found that 21 percent of adopted women are formerly married as compared to 14 percent of there nonadopted counterparts. A similar trend is found among the never married women; 39 percent of adopted women report never having been married compared to 36.9 percent of those not adopted.

Contrary to expectations, adoption status is not significantly related to income, educational attainment, fecundity status or parity.

Considering Adoption

Frequencies, percentages and significance of Pearson chi-square tests of the relationship between consideration of adoption and all characteristics are presented in Table 2. As previously illustrated in Table 1, there is a significant association between adoption status and considering adoption (Pearson chi-square = 15.626; $p \le 0.001$), gathering support for the empathic altruism hypothesis. Of those who were adopted, 36.1% report having considered adopting, compared to 23% of those who were not adopted.

		Has	Has not	
		Considered	Considered	
	Total	Adopting	Adopting	
	(n=10,847)	(n=2525)	(n=8322)	
Adoption Status (14.781***)				
Adopted	166	36.1% (60)	63.9% (106)	
Not adopted	10,681	23.1% (2465)	76.9% (8216)	
Race/Hispainc origin (3.445)				
Hispainc	1,553	23% (357)	77% (1196)	
White	6,483	22.8% (1480)	77.2% (5003)	
Black	2,446	24.3% (594)	75.7% (1852)	
Race other	365	25.8% (94)	74.2% (271)	
Decade of Birth (296.957***)				
1950's	3,873	29.4% (1140)	70.6% (2733)	
1960's	3,770	25.3% (953)	74.7% (2817)	
1970's	2,839	11.9% (338)	88.1% (2501)	
Income (77.438***)				
0-149 percent	2,795	18.3% (511)	81.7% (2284)	
150-299 percent	3,509	22.3% (784)	77.7% (2725)	
300 percent or higher	4,543	27.1% (1230)	72.9% (3313)	
Education (224.993***)				
Some school, no diploma	2,293	12.3% (283)	87.7% (2010)	
High School grad	3,865	23.4% (906)	76.6% (2959)	
High School grad, some college	4,689	28.5% (1336)	71.5% (3353)	
Marital Status (152.237***)				
Never married	4,003	16.8% (672)	83.2% (3331)	
Formerly married	1,553	25.6% (397)	74.4% (1156)	
Married	5,291	27.5% (1456)	72.5% (3835)	
Fecundity Status (406.536***)				
Sterile, contraceptive	2,883	24.9% (718)	75.1% (2165)	
Sterile, noncontraceptive	539	45.1% (243)	54.9% (296)	
Sub-fecund	930	41.1% (382)	58.9% (548)	
Fecund	6,495	18.2% (1182)	81.8% (5313)	
Parity (14.988***)				
0 births	3,936	22.3% (879)	77.7% (3057)	
1 birth	2,072	26.5% (549)	73.5% (1523)	
2 or more births	4,839	22.7% (1097)	77.3% (3742)	

Table 2. Percentages and Frequencies of All Characteristics by Having Considered Adopting (n = 10,847)

* p <= 0.05; ** p <= 0.01; *** p <= 0.001

The research hypotheses predicted a significant relationship between race/Hispanic origin and considering adoption, specifically that women of minority status would be less likely to have considered adopting than white women. This hypothesis is not supported; consideration of adoption does not vary significantly by race/Hispanic origin.

As anticipated, cross-tabulation analysis does indicate a significant association between considering adoption and decade of birth (Pearson chi-square = 296.957; $p \le$ 0.001); 29.4% of respondents born in the 1950's report having considered adopting compared to 25.3% born in the 1960's and only 11.9% of those born in the 1970's. It is also found, consistent with research hypotheses, that considering adoption is significantly associated with income (Pearson chi-square = 74.438; $p \le 0.001$). Of those women in the lowest income category, 18.3 % report considering adopting compared to 22.3% in the middle category and 27.1% in the highest income category. Also consistent with the research hypotheses, consideration of adoption is found to be significantly associated with education (Pearson chi-square = 224.993; $p \le 0.001$). Of those respondents who have some schooling but do not have a high school diploma 12.3% report having considered adopting. Finally, 28.5% of respondents with a high school diploma and at least some college have considered adopting.

Marital status is also found to have a significant association with considering adopting (Pearson chi-square = 152.237; $p \le 0.001$). Only 16.8% of never married

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women have considered adopting, compared to 25.6% of formerly married respondents and 27.5% of married respondents.

As expected, considering adoption has a significant association with fecundity status (Pearson chi-square = 406.536; $p \le 0.001$). Those women who report being sterile for noncontraceptive reasons represent the largest proportion having considered adoption (45.1%), followed by the sub-fecund women (41.1%). Contrary to expectations those women who report being sterile for contraceptive reasons represent a larger proportion (24.9%) of those who have considered adopting compared to those women who report being fecund (18.2%). It may not be that all women in the contraceptively sterile category don't want to rear children but that they may not want to actually bear the child they rear. In addition, the high proportion of the sub-fecund women reporting having considered adopting may be due to the fact that often times a woman does not become aware of fertility problems until she intends to have a child and therefore as a result of discovering her sub-fecundity, may explore other alternatives to achieve motherhood.

Finally, consistent with the research hypotheses, there is a significant association between considering adoption and parity (Pearson chi-square = 14.988; $p \le 0.001$). Based on the similar logic regarding the hypothesis between considering adoption and fecundity, it was anticipated that those women with no children would have the highest proportion of respondents reporting considering adopting. Results indicate, however, that of those women with no births 22.3% have considered adoption, compared to 26.5% of women who have had at least one birth and 22.7% of women who have experienced 2 or more. Again I speculate that the smaller proportion of women considering adopting in the zero birth category may be because some of these women have chosen to be childless. It may be that the higher proportion found among those women with one live birth is due to a desire for the American standard of 2 children per household.

In summary, the bivariate associations indicate significant positive relationships between being adopted and the dependent variable considering adopting as well as being white and formerly married. The bivariate associations also indicate a significant negative relationship between being adopted and being married. In addition, bivariate results also reveal significant positive relationships between considering adopting and age, income, educational attainment, being married or formerly married, and having one birth. They also reveal significant negative relationships between considering adopting and never being married, being fecund and being childless.

Multivariate Results

In support of the empathic-altruism hypothesis, the bivariate results show that women who were adopted themselves are more likely to consider adopting than are nonadoptees. In an effort to explain and interpret this relationship, logistic regression is used to introduce potential antecedent and intervening variables into the prediction of considering adoption.

The regression of considering adoption on all variables is shown in Table 3. Model 1 indicates the total effect of being adopted in infancy on considering adopting is significantly positive (b = 0.606; p \leq 0.01), lending support for the empathic-altruism hypothesis. In fact, adoptees adopted in infancy are 1.8 times as likely to report considering adopting as non-adoptees⁷. Similarly, model 1 indicates the total effect of being adopted at an older age on considering adopting is also significantly positive (b = 0.671; p \leq 0.01). These adoptees are 1.9 times more likely to consider adopting than nonadoptees.

In Model 2, with the inclusion of antecedent variables for age, race and ethnicity, the effect of being adopted in infancy remains significantly positive and increases marginally to b = 0.731 ($p \le 0.001$). The effect of being adopted at an older age also remains significantly positive and increases marginally to b = 0.824 ($p \le 0.001$). Model 2 also indicates that blacks are slightly more likely to consider adopting (b = 0.125; $p \le$ 0.05) and as women age they too are more likely to consider adopting (b = 0.052; $p \le$ 0.001). Bivariate results did not indicate a significant relationship between considering

⁷ Odds ratios and expected Beta values are presented in a table in the Appendix.

Table 3.	Regression of	Considering	Adopting on	Selected	Variables
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	Model #1	Model #2	Model #3	Model #4	Model #5	Model #6
Intercept	-1.204***	-1.302***	-2.390***	-2.291***	-2.296***	-2.307***
Adopted in infancy	0.606**	0.731***	0.701**	0.706**	0.731***	0.716**
Adopted at an older age	0.671**	0.824***	0.857***	0.864***	0.817***	0.785**
Antecedents						
Black		0.125*	0.258***	0.302***	0.331***	0.302***
Hispanic		0.090	0.274***	0.270***	0.309***	0.292***
Race other		0.194	0.208	0.215	0.201	0.216
Age		0.052***	0.044***	0.038***	0.036***	0.027***
Economic Factors						
Income			0.122***	0.112***	0.030	0.061
Educational attainment			0.334***	0.334***	0.356***	0.334***
Marital Status						
Never married				-0.211***	-0.355***	-0.281***
Formerly married				-0.079	-0.104	-0.092
Fertility Related Variables						
Contraceptively sterile					0.330***	0.364***
Noncontraceptively sterile					1.027***	1.032***
Subfecund					0.966***	0.952***
Childless					0.233***	0.254***
Two or more births					-0.361***	-0.222**
Interaction Effects						
Age X childless						0.037***
Age X two or more births						-0.023*
Chi-square Block	14.165***	329.961***	142.993***	11.205**	308.343***	56.141***
Chi-square Model		344.126***	487.119***	498.324***	806.667***	862.808***
Log Likelihood		11427.420	11284.427	11273.222	10964.878	10908.738
Significant Predictors of Considering Adopting: $p < = 0.05$ $p < = 0.01$ $p < = 0.01$						

n = 10,847

The predictor age is centered around its mean of 30.6

adopting and being black. However, as indicated, being black has a significant positive relationship with considering adoption in the second regression model ($p \le 0.05$). This implies that blacks are slightly younger than whites, therefore indicating a suppression effect. At the same age, blacks are somewhat more likely than whites to consider adoption. Bivariate results did reveal significant relationships between being adopted and age as well as race. The lack of a significant reduction in the coefficients for being adopted in Model 2 indicates that these variables do not account for the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption.

Model 3 includes economic factors and demonstrates significant positive effects for both income (b = 0.122; p \leq 0.001) and educational attainment (b = 0.334; p \leq 0.001). With the inclusion of these variables, the coefficient for being adopted in infancy remains relatively stable (b = 0.701) and significant (p \leq 0.01). Similarly, the coefficient for being adopted at an older age remains relatively stable (b = 0.857; p \leq 0.001). With the inclusion of economic factors the coefficient for being black increases (b = .258) and is now significant at the 0.001 level, indicating that at similar levels of income and educational attainment, blacks are significantly more likely to consider adopting than whites. Also, by including economic factors the coefficient for Hispanic, which was not significant in the prior model, becomes significant. This indicates that Hispanics are significantly more likely to consider adopting (p \leq 0.001) than whites of comparable income and education. The inclusion of economic factors does not produce a significant reduction in the coefficient for being adopted; therefore the variables in Model 3 do not explain the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption. Model 4 represents the inclusion of marital status, which results in little change in the coefficient for being adopted in infancy (b = 0.706) which remains significantly positive at the 0.01 level. The coefficient for being adopted at an older age also remains relatively unchanged (b = .864) and remains significant at the p \leq 0.001 level. There is no significant effect of being formerly married, but being never married is negatively related to the consideration of adoption (b = -0.249; p \leq 0.001). Therefore, consistent with the research hypotheses, never married respondents are significantly less likely to have considered adopting (p \leq 0.001). Adding marital status of respondents does not produce a significant reduction in the coefficient for being adopted; therefore the variables in Model 4 do not account for the relationship between being adopted and considering adoption.

Model 5 includes fertility-related variables, and as anticipated indicates a significant negative effect for having two or more children (b = -0.361; p \leq 0.001) and a significant positive effect for being childless (b = 0.233; p \leq 0.001). In fact, childless women are about 1.2 times as likely to consider adoption as those with one birth. Contrary to expectations, those who are contraceptively sterile (b = 0.330) are significantly more likely (p \leq 0.001) to consider adopting than those who are fecund. Consistent with hypotheses, those who are noncontraceptively sterile (b = 1.027) and those who are subfecund (b = 0.966) are significantly more likely (p \leq 0.001) than those who are fecund to have considered adopting. The inclusion of these variables causes little change in the coefficient for being adopted in infancy (b = 0.731), which is now again significant at the 0.001 level and positive. The coefficient for being adopted at an older age changes only slightly (b = 0.817) and remains significantly positive at the 0.001

level. The inclusion of fertility-related variables now makes the coefficient for income nonsignificant, indicating that fecundity and parity moderate the effect of income on considering adopting. The addition of fertility-related variables does not produce a significant reduction in the coefficient for being adopted; therefore the variables in Model 5 do not help explain the relationship between being adopted and considering adopting.

Model 6 explores the effects of the interactions of age by childlessness and age by having two or more children on considering adoption. Model 6 does show a significant positive effect of the interaction between age and childlessness on considering adopting (b = 0.037; p \leq 0.001). This result indicates that as the age of a respondent increases childlessness has a greater effect on considering adopting. The interaction term yields an odds ratio of 1.037, indicating the effect of being childless increases by .037 with each increase of one year in age.

Model 6 also shows a significant negative effect of age by having two or more children on considering adopting (b = -0.028; p \leq 0.05). This indicates that the odds of considering adoption decrease about three percent more rapidly per year for women with two or more children than for women with one child.

The effect of being adopted in infancy on considering adopting drops only slightly (b = 0.716) and drops in significance level $(p \le 0.01)$. Similarly, the effect being adopted at an older age drops slightly (b = 0.785) and drops in significance level $(p \le 0.01)$. Even thought the significance level of the variables associated with being adopted fluctuate from a significance level of 0.01 and 0.001 throughout the six regression models this fluctuation may be attributed to the small sample size of adoptees in this analysis (Cheng & Powell, 2005). Please see the Discussion Section for a further elaboration. It is

important here to note that the effect of being adopted still remains unexplained even with the inclusion of all variables and adoptees are still over two times more likely to consider adopting than nonadoptees. The only other variables that show a greater log odds of increasing the consideration of adoption are being noncontraceptively sterile (Exp (B) = 2.806) and subfecund (Exp (B) = 2.590). Results from the logistic regression analysis support the empathic-altruism hypothesis; i.e., other things being equal, adoptees are twice as likely to consider adopting as non-adoptees net of the effects of control variables previously found to be associated with both being adopted and considering adoption.

Table 4 represents a logistic regression analysis identical to that presented in Table 3 with the exception of the dependent variable. The dependent variable utilized in the analysis depicted in Table 3 is "has ever considered adopting." This variable was operationalized to include individuals who had adopted a child, individuals who had been excluded from answering the question in the original survey. The logic in operationalizing the dependent variable in this way is that if an individual had indeed already adopted a child then she had obviously considered adopting, therefore she should be included in the analysis. But this may be confounding adoption attitudes with adopting behavior. To determine the robustness of the analysis a second logistic regression analysis was performed in which the dependent variable excluded all individuals who had already adopted a non-related child. There is only one substantial difference between the two separate analyses.

The difference in the analyses is in regards to the variable representing being childless. In Table 3, which included adopters, this variable yields a beta coefficient of 0.233 which

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is significant at the 0.001 level. However, in the regression with adopters removed (Table 4) the beta coefficient is now equal to 0.136 and is no longer significant. In the sixth and final model in Table 4 the coefficient for being childless regains some significance (b = 0.162; $p \le 0.5$). This finding indicates compared to women with one child, of those who have not adopted, childlessness is a weak predictor of the considering adoption.

Despite this difference *the coefficient for being adopted remains relatively constant throughout all six models whether adopters are included in the analyses or not.* In the final model of both analyses being adopted remains a significant predictor of considering adoption at the 0.01 level. Also, adoptees are two times more likely than nonadoptees to consider adopting in both analyses.

In summary, the findings of these analyses lend support to the empathic-altruism hypothesis; the experience of adoption, net of control variables, significantly increases the odds of an individual considering adopting with or without adopters included in the analysis. Conversely, support is not found for the "adoption as a stigma" hypothesis. In addition, it is found that other things being equal, blacks and Hispanics are nearly 1.5 times more likely to consider adopting than whites; older respondents are also more likely to consider adopting as well as those with higher attained levels of education. Married individuals are also found to be more likely to consider adopting as well as the sub-fecund and sterile. Also, those respondents who are childless are 1.3 times as likely to consider adopting as those who have had only one birth. Finally, with the inclusion of controls, income is no longer a significant predictor of considering adopting.

Chapter V: DISCUSSION

The institutions of marriage and family have been undergoing marked changes in the United States over the past years; there has been an increase in the age at marriage (Schoen & Standish, 2001), an increase in the prevalence of cohabitation (Chandra. Martinez, Mosher, Abma, & Jones, 2005), and an increase in single parenthood coupled with a lowering of fertility (Chandra et al., 2005). These trends represent changes in how and when Americans are choosing to form their families. A family form that is not often assumed but represents an important part of family formation is adoption. The number of children awaiting adoption placements in the United States between the ages of 6 and 10 increased by 25 to 28 percent, and for those children ages 11 to 18 the number increased by 39 to 47 percent from 1997 to 2001 (Children's Bureau, 2003). In part because of this increasing number of available children, one of the major challenges has been identifying potential adopters and recruiting them as adoptive parents. The knowledge of how the adoption status of an individual influences their own consideration of adopting could help define the profile of future adopters. This knowledge may have an over-arching benefit of helping to find adoptive placements for over 134,000 children waiting for an adoption plan in the United States' foster care system (Freundlich, 2002).

The aim of this thesis was to investigate if adoptees are more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees due to an empathic and altruistic motivation to help children in the precarious position they once held, *or* if they are less likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees because being adopted was such a significant life-event they are unwilling to experience it vicariously with a child of their own. Also, I aimed to determine if characteristics found by previous researchers to be associated with

considering adoption are also associated with being an adopted adult, and may thus help explain any observed relationship between being adopted and considering adoption. While difference between adoptees and non-adoptees are small, results of biviariate analyses do garner support for the empathic-altruism hypothesis; adoptees are indeed more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees. Bivariate results also indicate that adoptees differ from non-adoptees on some characteristics; they are more likely to be white, born in the late 1960's and early 1970's, and less likely to be married. Furthermore, subsequent logistic regression analysis investigating the effect of being adopted on the consideration of adoption net of controls does not explain the effect of being adopted on considering adoption but does yield interesting results: blacks and Hispanics are more likely to consider adopting than whites; the older the respondent the more likely she was to consider adopting; educational attainment is a significant positive predictor of considering adopting, but income is not; the never married are significantly less likely to consider adopting compared to the married; fecundity is negatively associated with considering adopting; and childless individuals are significantly more likely to consider adopting than those with one or more children. Most interesting is that the effect of being adopted on considering adopting is not explained by any of the abovementioned controls; adoptees remain over two times more likely to consider adopting than non-adoptees, lending support to the empathic-altruism hypothesis.

There are, however, major shortcomings generally associated with the study of adoption and more specifically this paper. First, there has never been a consistently maintained and/or mandatory collection of adoption data in the United States (Stolley, 1993; Zamostny, O'Brien, Baden, & Wiley, 2003). Also, the institution of adoption is one that has historical been entrenched in secrecy. There are many children who have never known that they are adopted. Because of this fact, obtaining a national random sample of all individuals ever adopted is impossible. Not only may some individuals not know they are adopted, but there have also been documented problems regarding selfreport data used to determine adoption status (Miller, Fan & Grotevant, 2005). Miller, Fan and Grotevant suggest a process of triangulation to determine adoption status via multiple measures which is not possible with the NSFG cycle five.

Also, it is important to note that to be adopted is a rare occurrence and, as indicated earlier, the percentage of children being placed for adoption has dwindled to 1% of all births to unwed mothers. As a result, it is difficult to obtain a large sample of adoptees, which is made even more evident by the NSFG which yields an adoptee sample size of 155 accounting for 1.5 percent of all respondents. This figure is consistent, however, with estimates that the number of adoptees in the United States falls somewhere between 2.5 million and 5 million (Hollinger, 1998). The analysis of small sub-samples is problematic in that there is a "sensitivity to misidentified observations and incomplete data information"...as well as ..."underestimation of real effects" (Cheng & Powell, 2005, p. 926). Cheng and Powell point out that this is not all bad; achieving a significant finding from a small sub-sample allows the researcher to exercise greater "leverage" in the assertion that disparities may actually exist.

Also important to note are the problems that arise when one attempts to identify and label an adopted individual. For the sake of this analysis the definition of an adoptee was limited to individuals who reported ever having lived with either two adoptive parents at the same time or one single adoptive parent. This classification purposefully

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omitted those individuals who had been adopted by a step-parent or those who had lived in informal adoptive placements, because it is thought that there would be too much within-group variability to lump them all together. Also, the individual adopted by a stepparent would still have a biological parent present in the home. This is an entirely different family form in and of itself which, collectively, tends to take on characteristics unique to that particular family form. Unfortunately, adopted individuals were not differentiated by age in the reported analysis due to their small sample size; however an interaction effect of being adopted and being adopted in infancy was investigated and not found to be significant. If sample size would permit, it would be beneficial for future research to explore the effect that age at placement has on an adoptee in adulthood and on their consideration of adoption.

Another limitation is the inability to directly asses the theories of empathic altruism and adoption as a significant life event regarding their ability to predict how adoptees choose to form their families. There are no direct measures available in this data that assess how adoptees feel about their adoption placements or their levels of empathy. As a result the relative merits of the theories must be ascertained by simply observing the direction of association between the independent and dependent variables. Future qualitative research may prove helpful in uncovering their explanatory power.

This study is also limited regarding the gender of respondents. Because the fifth cycle of the NSFG only contains information on women, men are necessarily excluded from the analysis. Brodzinsky, Schecter and Henig (1991) posit that the adoption experience may differ significantly by gender. Future research investigating such

differences would prove beneficial in understanding the impact of being adopted on individuals.

Despite the flaws inherent in the sample of population of interest and this study in particular it is imperative that we understand the effects of adoption on the adoptee with respect to their consideration of adoption. Any research regarding the identification of characteristics of possible adopters is beneficial in that this information may be used to more effectively recruit adoptive parents for the thousands of children awaiting adoption plans in the United States today. Also, the finding that adoptees are more likely to adopt than nonadoptees provides support for the empathic-altruism hypothesis. The results of this research suggest that the negative aspects of the experience of adoption aren't sufficient to dissuade adoptees from considering adoption themselves. While the association between being adopted and considering adoption is small it is nonetheless significant and positive. This gives us some confidence that the institution of adoption generally has positive consequences and is a viable and policy worthy investment benefiting some of our countries most needy children.

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APPENDIX

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4	
Predictor	Beta	S.E.	Exp (B)	Beta	S.E.	Exp (B)	Beta	S.E.	Exp (B)	Beta	S.E.	Exp (B)
Intercept	-1.204 ***	0.023	0.300	-1.302 ***	0.031	0.272	-1.302 ***	0.120	0.092	-2.291 ***	0.108	0.101
Adopted in infancy	0.606 **	0.218	1.833	0.731 ***	0.222	2.077	0.701 **	0.223	2.016	0.706 **	0.223	2.027
Adopted at older age	0.671 **	0.244	1.956	0.824 ***	0.248	2.281	0.857 ***	0.250	2.357	0.864 ***	0.250	2.371
Plack				0.125 *	0.057	1 1 2 4	0.258 ***	0.050	1 204	0.302 ***	0.061	1 252
Uispania				0.000	0.057	1.134	0.238	0.039	1.294	0.302 ***	0.001	1.352
Paga other				0.090	0.008	1.094	0.274	0.071	1.313	0.215	0.071	1.310
A go				0.194	0.120	1.214	0.208	0.127	1.251	0.213	0.215	1.240
Age Economic Eastors				0.052	0.005	1.055	0.044	0.005	1.045	0.038	0.058	1.039
Income							0.122 ***	0.033	1 1 2 0	0.112 ***	0.112	1 1 1 9
Educational attainment							0.122 ***	0.035	1.150	0.334 ***	0.334	1.110
Marital Status							0.334	0.055	1.397	0.554	0.554	1.590
Never married										0.211 ***	0.211	0.810
Formerly married										-0.079	-0.079	0.010
Fortility Related Variables										-0.079	-0.079	0.724
Contracentively sterile												
Noncontracentively sterile												
Subfecund												
Childless												
Two or more births												
Interaction Effects												
Age X childlessnes												
Age X two or more births												
Block chi-square	14.165 ***			329.961 ***			142.933 ***			11.205 **		
Model chi-square	14.165 ***			344.126 ***			487.119 ***			498.324 ***		
n	10,847			10,847			10,847			10,847		

Table 4. Beta Values, Standard Errors and Log Odds of Select Variables (n = 10,847)

* p <= 0.05; **p <= 0.01; ***p <= 0.001

		Model 5		Model 6			
Predictor	Beta	SE	Exp (B)	Beta	SE	Exp (B)	
Intercent	-2 296 ***	0.133	0 101	-2 307 ***	0.134	0.100	
mercepi	2.270	0.155	0.101	2.307	0.151	0.100	
Adopted in infancy	0.731 ***	0.226	2.077	0.716 **	0.227	2.046	
Adopted at older age	0.817 ***	0.256	2.264	0.785 **	0.256	2.192	
Antecedents							
Black	0.331 ***	0.062	1.393	0.302 ***	0.063	1.352	
Hispanic	0.309 ***	0.072	1.362	0.292 ***	0.072	1.340	
Race other	0.201	0.129	1.223	0.216	0.130	1.241	
Age	0.036 ***	0.004	1.037	0.027 ***	0.008	1.027	
Economic Factors							
Income	0.030	0.036	1.031	0.061	0.036	1.063	
Educational attainment	0.356 ***	0.037	1.428	0.334 ***	0.037	1.397	
Marital Status							
Never married	-0.355 ***	0.072	0.701	-0.281 ***	0.072	0.755	
Formerly married	-0.104	0.071	0.901	-0.092	0.071	0.912	
Fertility Related Variables							
Contraceptively sterile	0.330 ***	0.068	1.390	0.364 ***	0.067	1.439	
Noncontraceptively sterile	1.027 ***	0.101	2.793	1.032 ***	0.102	2.806	
Subfecund	0.966 ***	0.078	2.627	0.952 ***	0.078	2.590	
Childless	0.233 ***	0.073	1.263	0.254 ***	0.073	1.289	
Two or more births	-0.361 ***	0.069	0.697	-0.222 **	0.075	0.801	
Interaction Effects							
Age X childlessnes				0.037 ***	0.009	1.037	
Age X two or more births				-0.023 *	0.010	0.978	
Block chi-square	308.343 ***			56.141 ***			
Model chi-square	806.667 ***			862.808 ***			
n	10,847			10,847			

Table 4. Beta Values, Standard Errors and Log Odds of Select Variables Cont.

* p <= 0.05; **p <= 0.01; ***p <= 0.001