

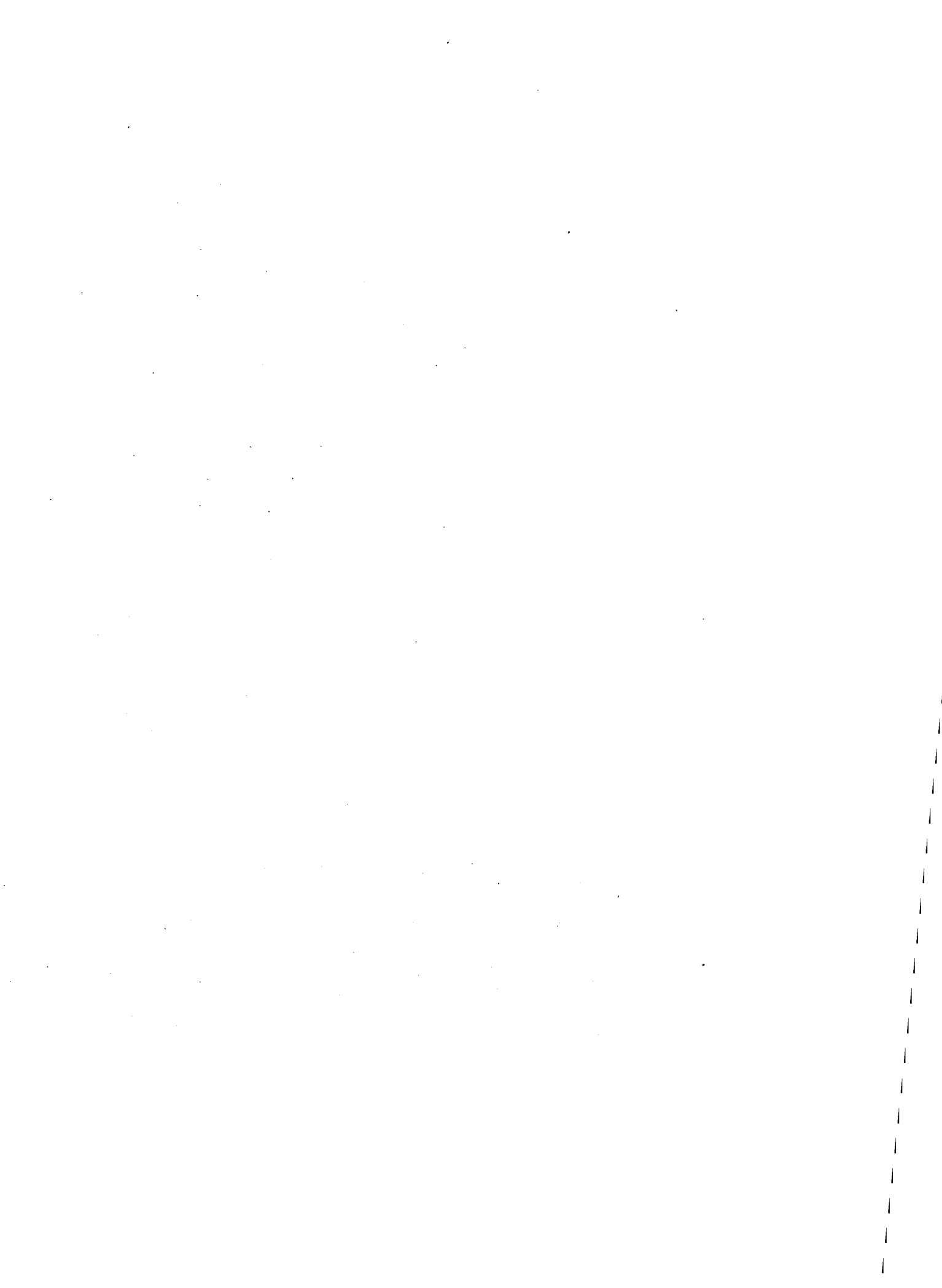
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OPENNESS VERSUS SECRECY IN ADOPTIVE PARENTHOOD

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

PH.D. 1984

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OPENNESS VERSUS SECRECY IN
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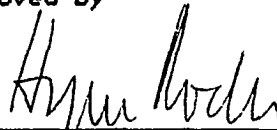
by

Shirley Burry Geissinger

A Dissertation Submitted to
the faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
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Approved by



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APPROVAL PAGE

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April 25, 1984
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In recent years there has been much debate about providing adult adoptees access to information from their original birth certificates and to other background information once considered to be confidential. The overall purpose of this study was to investigate adoptive parents' attitudes about this debate. More specifically, three purposes of the study were (a) to determine how well a proposed set of independent variables explained the variability in adoptive parents' attitudes toward openness of background information about adoptees (b) to provide descriptive information about adoptive parents and their attitudes about the open birth record issue and (c) to analyze important relationships identified in the research.

The 131 adoptive parents who participated in the study were selected from three North Carolina adoption agencies and one Minnesota agency. These parents had adopted infants 2 years of age or less between the years 1960 and 1980. A 15-page questionnaire was sent to each of the participants. Eighty-six percent of the 151 parents who initially agreed to participate in the study returned completed questionnaires to the researcher.

Factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were the principal statistical procedures employed. Results from these analyses indicated that communication about adoption between parents and between parent and child, parent's impression of agency position regarding background information about the child at the time of adoption, and the adoption agency itself were statistically significant variables in explaining the

variance in adoptive parents' responses about the open birth record issue.

Parents' responses on the open record index revealed that parents' average scores tended to be in the direction of openness regarding access to background information about adoptees. A large majority of the parents believed that adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain information about their medical background and social histories. They also believed that parents should receive much nonidentifying information about their children at the time of adoption and should share this with their children by the time they reach adulthood. Finally, they did not believe that opening adoption records would weaken their relationship with their children or make them feel less like the "real" parents to their children.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Societal Influences.....	1
Role Ambiguity.....	2
Research Questions.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Conceptual Definitions and Clarification.....	7
Hypotheses.....	10
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	14
Confidentiality in Adoption.....	15
Adoption Outcome.....	22
Psychological Issues.....	29
Adoptive Parent Role.....	31
Need for Present Research.....	33
III. METHOD AND PROCEDURE.....	37
Research Design.....	37
Description of Variables.....	38
Sample Selection.....	41
Implementing the Survey.....	43
Sample Characteristics.....	45
Data Analysis.....	47
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	50
Factor Analyses.....	51
Multiple Regression Analyses.....	61
Adoptive Parents' Responses to Open Birth Record Issue.....	66

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	71
Discussion.....	72
Limitations of the Study.....	83
Future Research.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90
APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE.....	97
APPENDIX B. FORM LETTERS.....	113

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. Sample Composition and Questionnaire Response rate.....	44
2. Demographic Characteristics of Adoptive Parents.....	46
3. Characteristics of the Oldest Adoptee in Each Family.....	48
4. Number of Children in Adoptive Families.....	48
5. Empathy, Communication, Acknowledgement-of-Difference Indexes Factor Analysis.....	52
6. Factors Derived from Independent Variable Indexes.....	55
7. Open Record Index Factor Analysis.....	60
8. Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Adoptive Parents' Responses to Open Birth Record Issue.....	64
9. Adoptive Parents' Responses to Items from Open Record Index.....	67
10. Adoptive Parents' Responses to Issues of Age, Consent, and Information.....	69

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Adoption has been described as an adaptive mechanism (Payne-Price, 1981) that provides solutions for individuals and families. Children who need families, couples and individuals who desire children but are unable to bear them, and birth parents who are unable to care for the children born to them can all benefit from this arrangement. Although the specific customs associated with adoption vary widely among societies, the underlying rationale for adoption is cross-culturally rather consistent. Adoption is a world-wide phenomenon which generally serves the following functions: to promote the welfare of children, to provide heirs, to confer parental status (Goody, 1969; Weinstein, 1968), and to legitimize children in societies in which birth out of wedlock is stigmatizing (Weinstein, 1968).

Societal Influences

Adoptive parenthood, like parenthood in general, has been associated with a variety of responsibilities and duties to provide for the welfare and development of children. For many years adoptive parents were led to believe that the only difference between adoptive parenthood and biological parenthood was in the way one obtained a child. One either bore a child, or adopted a child, and from that point on parenthood was essentially the same.

Early adoption policies and laws furthered the notion of creating through adoption what appeared to be equivalent to a biological family. Physically matching the adoptive child to the adoptive parents was a procedure which at one time received considerable attention by adoption agencies (Schapiro, 1956). Sealing the original birth certificate and producing an amended version that replaced the names of the birth parents with the names of the adoptive parents was another such procedure. The object seemed to be to mirror the biologically based nuclear family as closely as possible (Katz, 1982).

The role of the adoptive parent has been influenced by many factors. Attitudes about infertility, illegitimacy, and the importance placed upon parenthood in society are issues which have considerable impact on the role of adoptive parents. Adoption laws, agency policies, and agency workers' attitudes about adoption also are important influences on adoptive parents' views of what it means to be an adoptive parent. Societal notions about adoption and the basis of parenthood have subtle effects on the views of adoptive parents (Krugman, 1964).

Role Ambiguity

Krugman (1964) has noted the confusion that exists in society about who the "real" parents to an adopted child are believed to be. Krugman conducted a small survey asking, "Who are the real parents to an adopted child?" While nine participants concluded that the one who gave birth to the child was the real parent,

nineteen responded that the people who cared for the child and brought him up were the real parents...For the group of nine respondents, it appeared that real parenthood was completely linked to the biological fact of birth. For the other group of 19, real

parenthood was linked to the existence of parenting behavior (p.352).

Krugman stressed that the way in which this question is answered by the primary groups involved and by concerned professionals will be a "determining factor not only in handling of many specific issues of adoptive family living.....but in theoretical formulations concerning adoption" (p.353) and adoption practices.

Adoption terminology not only reflects ideas society has about adoption but also influences perceptions about adoption, particularly for those directly involved. The many terms used to describe the parenthood of those who relinquish children for adoption--real, natural, true, biological, genetic, blood, original, birth--reflect the ambiguity that Krugman examined (1964). Kirk noted in 1959 that there was no word in common use which identified parents who had adopted children. Since that time the terms "adoptive parent" and "adopters" have been incorporated into the language. In the past five years, the terms "birth mother", "birth father", and "birth parents" have become the usual terms used to describe parents who relinquish children. However, the other terms listed to describe these parents continue to be used to some degree, particularly in the mass media and in certain professions such as the law.

Since the late 1950's, increasing attention has been given to some of the problems and issues unique to adoptive parents (Burgess, 1976; Kirk, 1959, 1964, 1981; Krugman, 1964; Rautman, 1963; Rowe, 1982; Sorosky, Baran, & Pannor, 1978). Jaffee and Fanshel (1979)

proposed that adoptive parents must contend with an identity resolution problem parallel to that facing their child, namely, the need to develop a feeling of entitlement to their child, a problem

with which parents who have been able to procreate need not struggle. (p. 314)

Kirk (1959) described what he viewed as the dilemma of adoptive parenthood as the need both to integrate family members into a cohesive unit and at the same time acknowledge that the adopted child has a different biological past. Kirk (1959) claims that adoptive parent roles are neither adequately defined nor fully sanctioned. Because of the lack of a clear definition of adoptive parenthood, which Kirk (1959) referred to as role handicap, he theorized that adoptive parents cope with their role in one of two ways. One is through the "acknowledgement-of-difference" mechanism, which is characterized by parents' open communication about adoption to the child, a high level of empathy with the adoptee status, and acknowledgement of the birth parents. The "rejection-of-difference" mechanism is one in which adoptive parents "deny that their situation is different from that of biological parents" (Kirk, 1981, p. 49).

Research Questions

The role of the adoptive parent seldom has been the primary focus of adoption studies. Such studies have generally focused on child placement and adjustment issues. Adoption outcome studies, however, have indicated that parents who are warm, accepting, and open foster the healthy development of their children (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1979; Lawder, Lower, Andrews, Sherman, & Hill, 1969; Witmer, Herzog, Weintein, & Sullivan, 1963). Communication appears to be particularly important in the adoption process, and outcome studies have shown that adoptive parents commonly have problems communicating with their children about

adoption. Adoptees' sense of well-being and adjustment seems to be related to their perception that the adoptive parents have shared background information openly and in a nonjudgmental way (Jaffee, 1974; Kornitzer, 1968; McWhinnie, 1967; Raynor, 1980; Sorosky et al., 1978; Triseliotis, 1974). Research is needed to learn more about adoption issues from the adoptive parents' perspective.

The general purpose of this research was to investigate the role of adoptive parenthood and changing notions of secrecy in adoption. The overall research question to be asked was: What factors are important in influencing adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue? Within the framework of this principal question, additional questions may be asked: Do adoptive parents' attitudes toward open birth records reflect their way of coping with the adoptive parent role? Do their attitudes reflect their capacity to communicate and empathize about adoption with their children? What impact do the impressions about the child's background, given by the agency at the time of adoption, have on adoptive parents' attitudes toward opening sealed records? How does the degree of satisfaction in the role of adoptive parent influence attitudes on secrecy issues in adoption? What influence do adoptive parents' feelings of entitlement to their adopted children have on their attitudes concerning the open birth record issue? What part does being informed about child development and the open birth record issue have upon adoptive parents' views?

The dependent variable, adoptive parents' attitudes toward open records, was assessed through parents' responses to 18 statements about open birth records. The independent variables included three variables

from Kirk's Shared Fate Theory: acknowledgement-of-difference, communication, and empathy. These variables were measured using adaptations of Kirk's indexes for assessing these variables. In addition, the variables, entitlement, parent's perception of agency position regarding background information at the time of adoption, and satisfaction in the role of adoptive parent, were incorporated into the study. Two variables regarding adoptive parent's knowledge about child development and open birth records also were included. Demographic variables to be incorporated into the study were presence of biological children in the family, sex of the parent, and age and sex of the adopted child.

Theoretical Framework

Kirk's (1964, 1981) theoretical framework provided the basis for a major portion of this research about adoptive parents' attitudes concerning disclosure of background information of adoptees. The general emphasis on adoptive parents' communication about adoption and empathy with the adoptee's status is consistent with findings from many adoption outcome studies. Acceptance of the adoptive parent status also has been reported in adoption studies as an important variable in adoptive parent relations. Kirk's indexes of communication, acknowledgement-of-difference, and empathy were the basis for revised indexes to measure each of these variables for this study. In a more general way, Kirk's theory, along with symbolic interaction theory, acknowledges the importance of role taking in human behavior. The condition of role handicap (Kirk, 1964) or role-strain (Goode, 1960) appears to be a useful concept in the study of adoptive parenthood.

Burr, Leigh, Day, and Constantine (1979) have proposed that "the perceived quality of role enactment in a relationship influences the satisfaction individuals in the relationship have" (p.69). The independent variable of satisfaction in the adoptive parent role will indicate to some extent the amount of role handicap a parent may feel. It is recognized that other factors may be reflected in the satisfaction in the adoptive parent role such as the parents' self-esteem and the personal characteristics of the adoptee. The assumption made for this study is that role conflict, strain, and confusion will be reflected in dissatisfaction in the adoptive parent role, whereas feelings of competence and lack of strain will be reflected in satisfaction in the adoptive role. Satisfaction in the adoptive parent role will be expected to be positively related to parents' favorable attitudes to open birth record.

Conceptual Definitions and Clarification

The concept of entitlement, the feeling by adoptive parents that their adopted child truly belongs to them, has been emphasized as a potentially important variable in understanding adoptive parents' attitudes (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Kirk, 1981; Krugman, 1964). Jaffee and Fanshel speculated that parents who did not feel entitlement to their child would lack security and would be more likely to indulge in "as if" relationships which Kirk described as the rejection-of-difference mode of coping. Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) made the assumption that parents who had resolved the problem of entitlement would have overcome any doubts about their worthiness as parents

particularly as it relates to infertility issues. According to Jaffee and Fanshel, three areas related to the entitlement concept are parents' risk-taking behavior, manner of coping with the normal process of separation, and socializing patterns. Raynor (1980) has found that parents' feelings of likeness between themselves and their adopted children seem to be associated with their sense of entitlement to their adopted children. In addition Kirk (1981) has indicated that parents' myth-making--explaining adoption circumstances through story telling--could be viewed as a means of attempting to establish a sense of entitlement to their children rather than a denial-of-difference as he had earlier suggested (1964).

Adoption agencies no doubt have considerable influence on adoptive parent applicants' and new adoptive parents' attitudes and ideas about adoption. The applicants' awe of the adoption professionals' potential to bestow or withhold a child is understandably impressive. New adoptive parents' vulnerable situation may place them in a position where they are easily influenced by adoption workers' attitudes and agency policy regarding background information about the adopted child. One of the aims of this study was to learn what impact this early exposure to a particular agency point of view had on adoptive parents' present attitudes toward the open birth record issue. Adoptive parents' impressions of agency position reflecting the importance of children's background information was expected to be associated with positive attitudes toward the open birth record issue.

Knowledge of child development and open birth record issues were considered to be important variables to consider when attempting to

explain variations in adoptive parents' attitudes toward open birth records. There is some evidence that adoptive parents' knowledge about birth record issues decreases their anxiety and results in more positive attitudes (Digiulio, 1979; Sorosky et al., 1978). Pre-adoption panel discussions by adult adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents have been described as beneficial to adoptive parent applicants. They have been helped to understand some of the aspects of the open birth record issue and to air some of their concerns (Eldridge, personal communication, 1983). The projection regarding knowledge of child development for this study was the following: Parents who indicate a high degree of knowledge, through participation in information-gathering experiences, would be more aware of developmental needs of their children, particularly issues of identity development, and would have more positive attitudes about open records.

Demographic variables included in the study were the age of the adoptee, sex of the parent and adoptee, and presence of biological children in the adoptive family. These were considered to be potentially important variables in explaining variations in adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue.

The influence of the age of the adoptee, at the time of the study, on parents' attitudes may be viewed in different ways. One could speculate that adoptive parents of young children may feel very protective of their children and indicate less positive attitudes about opening records than parents of older children. On the other hand, parents of older children may be fearful of their children's possible search for background information in the near future and be less

positive about opening records than parents of young children. The expected finding from this study was that adoptive parents of younger children would indicate more positive attitudes about open birth records than parents of older children.

The sex of the parent and the adoptee were considered to be potentially helpful in explaining variations of adoptive parents' attitudes about open records. The basis for this assertion was that protective behavior toward girls may influence adoptive parents to be less positive about open records than adoptive parents of boys. Also mothers' close attachment to their children through the primary caregiver role was expected to be a factor in mothers' less positive attitudes about open records.

Finally, adoptive parents who have biological children as well as adopted children may feel more secure in their parenting role and are less likely to have unresolved infertility conflicts than are parents who have no biological children. Parents of both biological and adopted children are expected to have more positive attitudes about open records.

Hypotheses

A multivariate approach was taken to examine the variables which influence adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue. Twelve independent variables were selected as potentially important to understanding the variability of adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue. Two hypotheses were formulated to indicate the expected relationships and findings among the variables.

Hypothesis 1: The twelve independent variables (acknowledgement-of-difference, communication, empathy, entitlement, satisfaction in the adoptive parent role, knowledge about child development, knowledge about birth record issues, adoptive parent's impression of agency position, age of adoptee, the sex of adoptive parent and adoptee, and presence of biological children in the adoptive family) together will explain a significant proportion of the variance in the dependent variable (parents' attitudes toward open birth record issues).

Hypothesis 2: Each of the twelve independent variables will be related to parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue and will be statistically significant in explaining variance in the dependent variable when controlling for the other independent variables.

To amplify Hypothesis 2, the following relationships were expected to occur when controlling for the other independent variables:

1. Adoptive parents who share adoption information with their children in an accepting and open way will be likely to indicate more positive attitudes about open records than adoptive parents who do not share information in this manner.

2. Adoptive parents who are empathetic towards their child's adoptive status will identify with the child's need to know about heritage and background and will be likely to have more positive attitudes about open records than parents who are not empathetic.

3. Adoptive parents who feel the child truly belongs to them (entitlement) will be likely to have more positive attitudes about open birth records than parents who do not indicate a sense of entitlement.

4. Adoptive parents who have acknowledged that adoptive parenthood has some unique features, including acknowledgement of the child's biological past, will be likely to have more positive attitudes about the open birth record issue than parents who deny differences.

5. Adoptive parents who were given the impression by the adoption agency that background information would be important to the child will be likely to indicate more positive attitudes about open records than parents who were not given this impression.

6. Adoptive parents who are satisfied with their role as adoptive parents will be likely to indicate more positive attitudes about open records than are parents who are not satisfied.

7. Adoptive parents who are knowledgeable about open birth record issues will be less threatened and, therefore, will be likely to indicate more positive attitudes about open records than less knowledgeable parents.

8. Adoptive parents who are knowledgeable about child development and parenting issues will be likely to know the developmental needs of their child including identity development, and will be more likely to indicate positive attitudes about open records than less knowledgeable parents.

9. The presence of biological children in the family will be associated with adoptive parents' positive attitudes about open birth records. Adoptive parents who also have biological children may be more secure in their parenting role and less likely to have unresolved infertility conflicts than adoptive parents of adoptive children only.

10. Adoptive parents of young children will be likely to indicate

more positive attitudes about the open birth record issue than parents of older adoptees.

11. Adoptive fathers and mothers may vary in their attitudes on open records. Fathers are expected to have more positive attitudes about open records than mothers.

12. Adoptive parents of males will indicate more positive attitudes about the open birth record issue than will parents of females.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adoption is a complex phenomenon and consequently the study of adoption is complicated. Watson (1979) described adoption as "a legal act, a social process, and a condition of life for those who are directly involved"(p. 11). Three distinct parties are involved in adoption--adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents. In addition, adoption agency workers, agency policies, and adoption laws are aspects of adoption which must be considered as potentially important to the understanding of adoption issues. Finally, confidentiality issues in adoption make this area of study more difficult.

Adoption can be studied from many perspectives: law, sociology, social work, psychology, family, and human development. Most studies on adoption, however, have been conducted by social workers and psychologists. Pringle (1967) concluded in her review of adoption research from 1948 to 1965 that "so far research has not produced very many facts; much of the evidence is inconclusive or, worse still, contradictory" (p.22). What follows is a review of the literature focusing on research and policy issues related to adoption since 1965, although some earlier historical information is included in order to provide the context for current policy questions about the confidentiality of adoption records.

The review will concentrate on four general areas of adoption:

confidentiality, psychological issues, the role of the adoptive parent, and the development of adoptees. Particular attention will be given to adoptive parents' communication of adoption and background information to their children.

Confidentiality in Adoption

Confidentiality has been considered an important aspect of adoption in Western societies, particularly when children have been adopted at a young age. "The Western ideal is to completely sever the links between the adoptee and his original family and for natural parents and adoptees to remain unknown to each other" (Benet, 1976, p. 14). Severing these links makes the newly formed family appear to be a biological family which has been assumed to be the ideal in Western culture. However, not all kinds of adoptions are confidential in nature. Independent adoptions and adoption by relatives, where secrecy is not considered to be an issue, have comprised a sizable portion of adoptions in the United States.

About two-thirds of all adoptions are relative adoptions in which a step-parent or close relative gains legal sanction for a parenting arrangement that allows the child to remain with his extended family. Most of the current concerns in adoption are related to the remaining third, adoptions in which a child has been completely separated from his family of origin and placed with people who are initially strangers (Watson, 1979, p. 11).

The degree of secrecy surrounding adoption has varied among Western societies and in the United States as adoption laws and practices evolved. For example, several Western countries--Scotland, Finland, Israel, and England--provide adult adoptees access to their original birth records. Information that is considered confidential during

adoptees' younger years is made available to them when they become adults.

Confidentiality was not an issue during the early development of adoption law in the United States. De facto adoption was a common practice long before the first modern adoption law in the English-speaking world was passed in Massachusetts in 1851 (Benet, 1976). This early law was "to assure that adoption is in the children's interest and that they are adopted by persons who are able and willing to provide adequately for their care" (Witmer et al., 1963, p.43). Confidentiality in adoption did not appear to be an important issue until the early 1900s when child welfare concerns were receiving considerable public attention. Thousands of children were in need of homes due to the high rate of maternal mortality, the lack of birth control, and the economic hardship of parents (Slingerland, 1919). The field of social work emerged as an identifiable profession at that time, and adoption services were established. Confidentiality was viewed as one of the ways of making adoption more acceptable to the public. In 1917 Minnesota passed the first adoption law which provided for the protection of court records from public inspection and the revision of birth certificates (Jones, 1976). Social workers and adoptive parents were influential in promoting legislation in the 1930s and 1940s which sealed original birth records. "In 1939 about one third of the states provided for safeguarding the records of adoption from public inspection; and nearly one third made no mention of keeping records at all" (Brooks & Brooks, 1939, p. 132). By 1950 most states had passed adoption legislation sealing birth records.

The chief reasons given for sealing birth records focused on issues surrounding the stigma of illegitimacy, the need for anonymity of persons involved in adoption, and the need for completely severing adoptees' ties to the birth parents in order for the child to achieve a new identity with the adoptive parents (Watson, 1979). Theories of human development were used as a basis for sealing birth records. In the 1920s behaviorists' emphasis on the importance of environment in influencing human development was an argument used to justify sealing hereditary information (viewed as unimportant) about the adoptee. Watson (1979) points to the impact of psychoanalytic thought in the 1940s and 1950s which increased the emphasis on the confidential nature of the adoptive placement and the secrecy around the child's birth parents. The child was to be rooted in the new family as early and completely as possible with a single family identity.

Secrecy in adoption, of which the sealed birth record is one part, is currently a much debated issue. "The basic assumptions underlying the guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality are being challenged from both legal and psychological perspectives" (Jones, 1976, p.2). Opening sealed adoption records, including the original birth certificate, has received considerable attention in recent years (Derdyn, 1979). A legislative review on sealed adoption records indicated that 34 states were in the process of considering various changes in adoption laws in the years 1979-1980 (Harrington, 1981). Most of the changes under consideration were in the direction of providing opportunities for adult adoptees to obtain information regarding their origins and medical and social histories. There are 15

states permitting adult adoptees access to identifying information about their birth families through various systems: an intermediary system allowing information to be passed to the adoption parties through a mediator, a state registry system listing those interested in exchanging information with other adoption parties, the release of the original birth certificate on demand, and the release of court records on demand (Harrington, 1981). These changes are producing much debate and deliberation about their effects on the parties involved in the adoption process. The question of how the rights of all parties in adoption--adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents--can be recognized and respected is a basic consideration in the open birth record issue.

Why should the policy of secrecy, once accepted as beneficial to the parties involved in adoption, now be under scrutiny? Researchers who studied adoptive families in Great Britain in the 1960s began to question the benefits of the secretive nature of adoption, particularly for adoptees (Kornitzer, 1968; McWhinnie, 1967; Sants, 1964). Kornitzer (1968) stated that her research "gives some reason for disquiet about the long-term effect on a child of his ignorance about his genealogical and biological inheritance" (p. 219). More recent studies have indicated a need for a less secretive approach to adoption for a healthier atmosphere in adoptive families and for the benefit of individuals involved in the adoption process (Benet, 1976; Kirk, 1981; Simpson, Timm & McCubbin, 1981; Sorosky et al., 1978; Triseliotis, 1973).

Theories of human development, such as Erikson's psychosocial

theory, have been used to challenge the policy of sealing birth records. Erikson's theory emphasizes the importance of one's sense of heritage as well as the immediate environment in the development of identity (Sorosky et al., 1978). Lifton (1976) stated that adoptees lack psychosocial and psychohistorical dimensions which leave them identity-deficient. Adoptees have "neither a sense of continuity nor wholeness nor fidelity, all of which Erikson emphasizes as important to identity formation" (Lifton, 1976, p. 4). There has been continued concern about the psychological well-being of adoptees by the psychological and medical community (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1981; Sorosky et al., 1978), and adoptees themselves report their need for knowledge of their past in order to feel a sense of completeness about themselves (Ehrlich, 1977; Fisher, 1975; Lifton, 1975).

Adult adoptees brought adoption issues to the public's attention in the 1970s. They claimed that their basic right to knowledge about themselves, including medical and genetic histories, was denied by the sealed record legislation. Support and search groups were organized to meet the needs and concerns of adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents. Many of these groups testified in favor of adoption reform before legislatures.

Changing social mores about illegitimacy have helped to bring about a reevaluation of sealed record legislation. No longer is illegitimacy seen by many as justification for sealing records. Two views on this matter are, first, that illegitimacy is no longer as stigmatizing as it once was (Sparks, 1982), especially to the child, and second, that sealed records do not protect adopted children from the association with

illegitimacy since adopted children generally are assumed to be born to unwed mothers.

The legal profession recently has addressed the sealed record debate in numerous articles about the rights of parties in adoption, particularly the birth mother's rights and the adoptee's interests (Katz, 1982; Sparks, 1982; Tartanella, 1982). There appears to be consensus on the need for new legislation reflecting changing ideas of adoption and considering all the parties in adoption (Katz, 1982).

What do these changing notions of secrecy in adoption mean to adoptive parents? Some adoptive parents advocate opening records as a way of helping their older children cope with identity issues (North Carolina Legislative Research Commission, 1981; Sorosky et al., 1978), whereas other adoptive parents are fearful and anxious about these changes (Campbell, 1979; Digiulio, 1979; Geissinger, in press). Bertocci (1978) has stressed the importance of learning about the adoptive parents' attitudes regarding open records. Of the three parties in the adoption process, adoptive parents appear to be the most satisfied with the status quo (Dubanoski et al., 1978).

Only a few studies have begun to uncover the important issues regarding open birth records to the parties involved in the adoption process (Depp, 1982; Simpson et al., 1981; Sorosky et al., 1978; Digiulio, 1979). Most of these studies have been descriptive case studies using small samples. A recent study of 41 adult adoptees (Simpson et al., 1981) who had initiated searches into their biological backgrounds was conducted in Minnesota after the 1977 passage of the Open Birth Record Law. This study revealed that 77% of the adoptees

reported positive relationships with their adoptive parents. This finding contradicted earlier research findings (Raynor, 1980; Triseliotis, 1974) that adoptees who searched reported unsatisfactory relationships with their adoptive parents. Adoptees in the Simpson et al. (1981) study stated that the major reasons for their initiating searches were desire for information about genetics and genealogy, and because of "natural" curiosity.

Two studies illustrate how adoption agencies provided services to adoptive parties concerned with open record issues. The first study consisted of adoptive parents who felt threatened by the open birth record issue (Digiulio, 1979). Adoptive parents in Digiulio's study, who participated in five weekly informative sessions on topics related to open birth records, generally became more receptive and less threatened by open birth record issues. The second study involved 21 adoptive parents, birth parents, and adult adoptees who had experienced reunions (Depp, 1982). Depp concluded from her small study that adoptive parents did not experience a change in their relationships with their adopted children after the reunion. Birth parents reported that they felt better about their decision to relinquish their child. Adoptees indicated that a reunion helped them to a better sense of self identity and a greater appreciation for their adoptive parents as their "real" parents.

Sorosky, Baran, and Pannor have studied the adoption triangle-- birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees--extensively through questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of letters sent to them (Sorosky et al., 1975, 1976, 1978; Pannor et al., 1978). This group of

researchers, a psychiatrist and two social workers, was the first to study the participants of reunions and to focus attention on birth parents. They revealed that birth parents continue to be interested in the welfare of the children they released for adoption, and many favor legislation which would provide adoptees the opportunity to seek information about their past (Pannor et al., 1978). Even though these studies have been descriptive in nature, they have provided the groundwork for understanding some of the participants, issues and problems in the adoption process.

Adoption Outcome

The research on adoption generally has focused on factors related to the successful placement of children, the outcome of adopted children in terms of physical and emotional development, and the adjustment of adoptive parents (Weinstein, 1968). Throughout the 1970s and into the present, adoption outcome and followup studies have continued to be a significant part of adoption research even though Pringle (1967) questions whether research on the success rate and adoption outcome are reasonable exercises.

Is it really meaningful to seek to establish an overall 'success rate' for adoptions? This question is rarely asked about biological families nor, indeed, do generally acceptable criteria exist according to which judgments could be made (Pringle, 1967, p.26).

There is agreement, however, that adoption can be a feasible and beneficial way to provide homes and families for children in need (Benet, 1976; Joe, 1979; Tizard, 1977; Burgess, 1976).

In a review of adoption research from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, Pringle (1967) concluded that there were three areas

of common agreement found in the literature.

The first relates to age at placement: there is a consensus on the desirability of early placement but no agreement as yet as to what is an early or optimal age; this ranges from the first few weeks of life up to the first or second year (Pringle, 1967, p.22).

"The second area of agreement relates also to eventual outcomes: All investigators have found that the personal qualities of the adoptive parents are of paramount importance" (p. 23). Attitudes of adoptive parents toward the child, feelings about adoption in general, attitudes about illegitimacy, and reasons for not having biological children have been found to be more important than age, income and social class of adoptive parents. The third area of agreement in the literature was the difficulty adoptive parents have in talking with their children about adoption.

Recent research supports these areas of common agreement. Lawder et al.'s (1969) followup study of 200 adoptive families concluded that child background variables by themselves (age of child at placement, sex and health of child, number of foster homes prior to placement) were not predictive of later social and psychological functioning of the child.

"The intervening experience of living in a certain kind of family appears to determine whether or not these background factors will be important for later functioning" (Lawder et al., 1969, p. 120). The factors found to be the most important to satisfactory child development were adoptive parents' (1) satisfaction in the parental role, (2) acceptance of the adoptive parent role and, (3) warmth and affection toward the child. "The overriding feature of these findings is the unmistakable predominance of parent characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors over child factors as determinants of later adoption

functioning" (p. 120). One problem area noted by the researchers of this study was adoptive parents' difficulty communicating with their adopted children about adoption issues.

Jaffee and Fanshel (1970), in their study of 100 families, did not find a relationship between age at placement and subsequent adjustment of the child. However, all children in the study were three years of age or younger at time of placement. The way parents dealt with revelation of adoption to the child was found to be a reflection of a more basic underlying orientation to child rearing in general. Only one aspect of revelation was associated with adoptive outcome.

"Adoptees who showed marked curiosity about their biological past and desired to learn more about it than their adoptive parents knew or were willing to divulge tended to manifest a more problematic adjustment in a variety of life-space areas (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970, p.312).

The researchers found that only 12% of the adoptive parents accurately shared with their children all the information about the adoption as they knew it. What revelation means to adoptive parents in emotional and psychological terms, the nature and strengths of fears associated with it, and what impact this has upon the adoptee are important questions raised by Jaffee and Fanshel. Continued agency service to adoptive families was advocated as a way of helping adoptive parents deal with revelation and socialization issues and of helping adoptees with difficulties.

One of the concepts which Jaffee and Fanshel thought was important to adoption outcome was the ability of adoptive parents to feel a sense of entitlement to their child. This was viewed as a primary task with implications for adoptive parents' sense of identity and security in the

adoptive parent role. Unfortunately, they were not successful in their attempts to measure this concept.

A limitation of Jaffee and Fanshel's study was the inability to include the adoptees themselves in the assessment of outcomes. Inclusion of adoptees had been in the original design of the study, but over half of the adoptive parents refused to allow their children, now in their twenties, to participate. Responses from the small sample of adoptees were excluded from the analysis. The assessment of adoptees' adjustment was therefore based on adoptive parents' reports rather than on direct assessment of the adoptees.

In a later study, Jaffee (1974) compared the responses of adoptees who had participated in the earlier study described above (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970) to their adoptive parents' responses. There was general agreement in the assessment of early adjustment of the adoptee but considerably

different accounts of how the topic of adoption had been treated in their families and how adoptees had reacted....About one-fourth of the adopters but only about one-tenth of the adoptees reported that the latter had been given full and truthful information about their biological parents' marital status and socio-personal traits (p. 218).

There also was disagreement about whether the adoptees were satisfied with the information given about their birth families and whether adoptees had expressed an interest to learn more. Fifty-two percent of the adoptees indicated that they wanted more information compared to only twenty-one percent of the adopters who perceived that their child wanted more information. Jaffee (1974) noted that

The closeness and meaningfulness of that relationship may well be compromised, if not severely eroded, if the adopted child feels an absence of openness and trust when he fails to receive the

information about his preadoptive past that he perceives he has requested (p. 219).

Hoopes, Sherwan, Lawder, Andrews, and Lower (1969) conducted a study which compared 100 adopted school age children with 100 natural children on the variables of intelligence, school achievement, teachers' ratings and personality measures. They found that there was no evidence of increased incidence of emotional disturbances or psychopathology in the sample of 100 adopted children than in the 100 children in the control group. Parental warmth and affect were found to be important factors in a child's adjustment. Ease of communication with the child about adoption was less significant in influencing outcome than had been expected. A child who came to adoption from a background of emotional deprivation and multiple mothers was more likely to have greater problems in later adjustment than a child who did not come from such a background.

Kornitzer (1968) carried out a large followup study of 500 adoptive families consisting of 664 adoptees in Great Britain in the years 1954 to 1965. Mail survey and personal interview methods were used. The main focus of the study was the success or failure of adoption, although questions about the popularity of adoption and reevaluation of basic ideas about adoption were included. Kornitzer commented that the study evolved into a focus on what people feel and think about adoption. She concluded that in general adoption as practiced in Britain appeared to be successful but she also uncovered a major problem:

There was a considerable element of self-deception and downright mental and emotional dishonesty in many adoptive situations--and that this had been strengthened, if not created, by adoption agencies acting in all good faith and by the actual shaping of the law and regulations, through a too easy acceptance of the need for

secrecy in certain directions and without study of the psychological drawbacks of this kind of thinking and of these measures. (Kornitzer, 1968, pp. 222-223)

Truthfulness about the adoption situation, acknowledgement of the adoptive status, and an openness about discussing adoption issues were found to be essential to a good adoption and to adoptees' sense of belonging and identity. Kornitzer (1968) acknowledged adult adoptees' need to know about their origins and questioned whether it was time to consider how and in what circumstances they can be given this information. The impact of community attitudes on adoption success was noted.

Raynor's (1980) descriptive study of 164 adult adoptees and their adoptive parents was planned to compare the outcome of adoptions where parents were first foster parents to the children they adopted compared to adoptions where the parents were not foster parents to their children prior to adoption. Raynor found that a large proportion of the subjects, adoptees and adopters, felt that adoption had been a satisfying experience and "little difference was found in the ultimate satisfaction of direct adopters and foster parent adopters" (p.14). Findings which were pertinent to the present study focused on the area of revelation. The value of adopters' early explanations of adoption to adoptees was reinforced. Nevertheless, adoptive parents indicated a common problem communicating with their children about their background and birth parents.

Very striking indeed was the sense of insecurity in adoptive parents when it came to talking about background and birth parents. Even when things had gone well, and they had a close relationship with the young adult they had brought up from infancy, they still feared the power of the birthmother to wean him away and felt they might lose his affection. They 'told' the child because they

realised they must, but they too often failed to explain adoption in ways that made any sense to the young child growing up and they failed to pass on background information which would have helped to increase the child's good self-image. Often they 'forgot' or distorted the information given them by their agency, even when the agency had taken the precaution of giving them this in writing, and it was evident that social workers have greatly underestimated the difficulty adopters have in explaining the facts to their children (Raynor, 1980, p. 147-148).

Triseliotis (1973) personally conducted 70 nondirected interviews with adult adoptees who had requested their original birth certificates from Register House in Edinburgh, Scotland. His aim was to identify circumstances of adoptees who seek information about their origins, to establish reasons for the search, and to learn about adoptees' past and current life situations. Triseliotis found that "for most numbers of adoptees the impulse to search was in response to some deeply felt psychological need and rarely to a matter-of-fact attitude" (p. 154). Two groups of adoptees were identified: (1) those who wanted to meet their birth parents and (2) those who only wanted background information. Those who wanted to meet their birth parents were characterized by the following factors. They were over ten years of age when told of their adoption, had been provided little background genealogical information, and what was revealed was often revealed in a hostile way. These adoptees were generally unhappy individuals who had negative self images and unsatisfactory home relationships. By contrast, the second group of adoptees, who wanted only background information, were characterized by earlier receipt of information about adoption, better self-image, and satisfactory family relationships. Types of information desired by all adoptees were circumstances of their adoption, why they were surrendered, and social and personal

characteristics of their birth parents.

Adult adoptees interviewed by Triseliotis (p. 41) "would have generally welcomed not only more frankness but also more discussion about their adoptive situation" with their parents. "Secrecy and evasiveness gave many the feeling that adoption was something shameful" (p. 156). They wished that parents had filled in the details of their past gradually during their formative years.

Triseliotis identified three main tasks for adoptive parents which are important to establishing a solid child-parent relationship: first, the parents' acceptance of their condition of infertility; second, the acceptance of the reality of adoptive parenthood; and third, the parents' acceptance and recognition of the adopted child as their own.

Psychological Issues

Hoopes et al. (1969) in reviewing a number of studies found that "adoptive families appear proportionately more frequently than natural in the caseloads of child guidance clinics and other psychological facilities" (p.3). Percentages from 3 to 13% of the clients were from adoptive families compared to 1-2% of adoptees who are represented in the general population. Pringle concluded that there is "little doubt that related to their prevalence in the population, a greater number of adopted than non-adopted children are referred to psychological services" (1967, p.24). Rickarby, Lee, Said, and Egan (1981) found that 8% of the total referrals to child and family centers over a 12 month period were from adoptive families compared to 2.9% adoptees in the general population in a suburb of Sydney.

Various explanations have been suggested for these findings. A self-selection process may account for a larger percentage of adopted children referred for psychological help than from the general population. Higher socioeconomic groups are more likely to use these services than lower socioeconomic groups, and adoptive families tend to be from higher socioeconomic brackets (Kadushin, 1966). Adoptive parents' familiarity in working with professionals through their adoption experience, and thus the greater likelihood that they would seek agency help, has been suggested as an explanation for higher referral rates. However, Kadushin (1966) reported that referral rates for adoptees from independent adoptions are similar to those from agencies. Another explanation has been that parents, teachers, doctors, and social agencies may be more likely to admit behavior difficulties in adopted children than non-adopted, rationalizing that heredity is to blame (Pringle, 1967). A number of researchers (Eldred et al., 1967; Kirk, 1964; Kornitzer, 1968; Rickarby et al., 1981) have pointed to problems within the adoptive family as possible reasons for a higher incidence of psychological referrals. Bonding issues, motivations for adoption by adopters, and psychiatric illness of the parents have been suggested as possible reasons.

Sants (1964) pointed to the significance of genealogical knowledge as an influence in the mental health of individuals. Wellisch first used the term genealogical bewilderment in 1952 to refer to the "adoption stress" children are subjected to as a result of their adopted status (Sants, 1964). Sants described genealogical bewilderment as a state of confusion and uncertainty resulting from the lack of or

questionable knowledge of one's natural parents. Self-image and self-esteem may be affected by this confused state.

In the adoption of children there is in most cases an implicit attempt to transplant the child from his natural family into his substitute family. The purpose of this study is to suggest that such a graft can never be completely carried out: roots in the natural family can never be severed without trace (Sants, 1964, p. 140).

Sants argued that all children need to know their natural origins and that "within the intricacies of family life, secrets cannot be indefinitely kept without giving rise to suspicion and consequent deteriorating relationships" (p.140).

Through a literature review of studies on adoptees' psychological needs and interviews with adult adoptees, Sorosky, Pannor, and Baran (1975, p.24) concluded

that adoptees are more vulnerable than the population at large to development of identity problems in late adolescence and young adulthood because of the greater likelihood of encountering difficulties in the working through of psychosexual, psychosocial, and psychohistorical aspects of personality development

Adoptive Parent Role

Research in the area of adoptive parenthood is scant. H. David Kirk has provided the main body of research about adoptive parenthood from a psycho-social perspective. Kirk has pioneered the study of adoption beginning with studies to assess attitudes about adoption of the general population in the 50s, to the development of a theory of adoptive relations in 1959 which was expanded into the Shared Fate Theory (Kirk,1964). Kirk (1981) has illustrated his theory of adoptive relations by means of a seven-point concatenated theory. Kaplan defined a concatenated theory as one

whose component laws enter into a network of relations so as to

constitute an identifiable configuration or pattern. Most typically, they converge on some central point, each specifying one of the factors which plays a part in the phenomenon which the theory is to explain. (Kirk, 1981, pp.49, 50)

Kirk (1981, p. 50) claimed that "a set of interconnected tendency statements which culminates in the explanation of rejection-of-difference type behaviors does provide such a theory". The following is a brief description of the main points of Kirk's theory of adoptive relations.

Kirk (1981) contended that couples entering adoption commonly face circumstances which place them in a vulnerable position. Involuntary childlessness, dependence on outsiders (agency or private adoption) for a child, uncertainty about their status, and less enthusiasm by kin for adoption than the birth of a biological child are the underlying conditions which result in role-handicap status. This status later is reinforced by cultural messages which imply that adopters' motives and experiences are not equivalent to those of natural parents. Kirk maintained that role handicap is carried into family relations because adoptive parents desire exclusive parenthood which conflicts with the prescription to explain adoption to the child.

Coping with role handicap can be managed in one of two ways, either by adoptive parents' denying that the adoptive situation is different from biological parenthood (rejection-of-difference) or by affirming the unique aspects of adoption (acknowledgement-of-difference). Kirk explains the importance of the interpersonal skills of empathy and communication to establish cohesiveness in families that are not regulated by tradition. Kirk contends that acknowledgement-of-difference coping, which acknowledges the birth

parents, background of the adoptee, and adoption issues, is conducive to good interpersonal communication, order, and stability. On the other hand, Kirk contended that rejection-of-difference does not further integration and leads to poor communication.

Need for Present Research

Even though research has been carried out on various areas of adoption, little research has been done in the area of adoptive parenthood. This represents a significant deficiency in the body of adoption literature. Many studies have identified qualities of adoptive parents which have been associated with positive adoption outcomes--empathy, openness, acceptance of adoption--but few attempts have been made to investigate these qualities from the perspective of the adoptive parents. In addition, studies have indicated that adoptive parents have notable difficulty communicating to their children about the circumstances of their adoption and about their backgrounds. Increasing evidence indicates the importance of adoptees' knowledge of their heritage and biological past to their self-image and development. Attempts need to be made to understand the dynamics of adoptive parenthood, particularly in the area of adoptive parents' communication of adoption information to their children. What part has the traditional confidential approach to adoption had in inhibiting parents' communication of adoption issues to their children?

The methodology in much of the adoption research has been of the case study and descriptive types with relatively small numbers of subjects in the samples studied. There is a need to obtain larger, more representative samples of individuals from the populations of adoptees,

birth parents, and adoptive parents. In addition, the testing of theories and hypotheses about adoption should be incorporated into adoption research.

Kirk's early "Shared Fate Theory" (1964) of adoptive parenthood has been used in a number of studies by researchers other than Kirk, but none of the populations studied was adoptive parents. One sample studied was from a college student population (Demboski & Johnson, 1969), and adoptive parent applicants were the subjects in two other studies (Bohman, 1970; Carroll, 1968). Clearly, there is a need to use this theoretical framework to analyze adoptive parenthood and to determine its applicability for understanding various aspects of adoption.

Kirk's work has not been without criticism. Early formulations of his work were criticized because of jumping "somewhat prematurely from propositions to implications of proof with lack of empirical evidence" (Maas, 1959, p.328). Later criticism questioned whether an adoptive relations theory had been tested or whether it had been formulated from a number of studies which Kirk had completed over a period of years (Weinstein, 1966). Nevertheless, these same researchers acknowledge the importance of Kirk's ideas to the potential understanding of adoption issues.

In 1963-1964 Kirk conducted a large scale study of 632 adoptive mothers in Nova Scotia to test revised indexes of empathy, communication, acknowledgement-of-difference, and trust. Kirk found that mothers who scored high on one index tended to also score high on the other indexes indicating a high correlation among the indexes. These

indexes appeared to discriminate between adoptive parents with acknowledgement-of-difference coping strategies and rejection-of-difference coping strategies. How useful these indexes would be in attempting to understand adoptive parents' attitudes about open birth records was one question addressed in the research reported here.

Adoptive parents and adoptees both are influenced by societal attitudes about adoption. Kirk (1959) and Dembroski & Johnson's (1969) studies have recognized how the public's perceptions of adoption potentially affect adoptive parents' and adoptees' perceptions of themselves and adoption in general. Additional work needs to be done to determine what attitudes and myths about adoption the public holds. Singer et al. (1982) in a study on children's beliefs about adoption, refer to the "negative stereotypes about adoption that pervade our society" (p. 286) and that may be influential in adopted children's self-perception and adjustment. Investigation into these stereotypes would provide a basis for understanding some of the public's attitudes about adoption. Singer et al. (1982) pointed to the need to "educate the general public about adoption so as to eliminate the stigma which society attaches to this family status" (p. 292). Even though this research does not tap public perceptions about adoption, it does study adoptive parents' perceptions about adoption and their role as adoptive parents.

A final aspect of research that has been neglected in adoption studies concerns the importance of our legal system and laws on family structure and relationships. Sussman (1983) stressed that family

researchers miss reality if they "examine a behavioral issue or problem and ignore the possible explanatory power which may be attributed to the law and its endemic legal systems" (p.19). Also Sussman points to the need to "consider law and its impact and the reciprocal effects of family upon law and legal processes" (p.19). Adoptive families and those interested in adoption are especially aware of the impact of laws and agency practices on the adoption process. In practical terms laws and agency practices influence how adoption takes place, determine who is the primary client, and decide who will receive children. In subtle ways laws and practices influence the public's and individual's views on adoption. Confidentiality in adoption has not only had considerable impact on adoption practices and policies, but also has appeared to foster an atmosphere of secrecy surrounding adoption in general. This research, to study adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue, acknowledges the importance of incorporating into the research legal aspects of adoption.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The purposes of this research were to determine how well the independent variables explained the variability in parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue, to provide descriptive information about adoptive parenthood, and to analyze important relationships within the multivariate question. The survey method was selected as the means of data collection. A mail survey was chosen because of practical reasons of limited time and financial resources and because it provided anonymity to the participants. Anonymity was considered to be particularly important to participants in this research because of the sensitivity of some items in the questionnaire and because of the tradition of confidentiality in adoption.

An 80-item questionnaire was designed to assess various aspects and attitudes about adoptive parenthood and adoption issues and to collect descriptive information about the adoptive parents. The questionnaire is included in Appendix A. Most of the items from the questionnaire were used to calculate index scores for each of the independent variables (communication, empathy, acknowledgement-of-difference, entitlement, adoptive parent satisfaction, and parents' impression of agency position) and the dependent variable (adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue). Assessment of the two information variables were through multiple-choice questions and

checklists. Demographic data such as age and sex of children and parents and presence of biological children in the adoptive family were provided by the parents. Several open-ended questions were included at the end of the questionnaire which provided parents with the opportunity to share their thoughts about adoption issues with the researcher.

The questionnaire was designed to form a 5 1/2 by 8 1/2 inch booklet consisting of 14 pages with the printing reduced to 77% of the original size (Dillman, 1978). No participants commented negatively about the reduced size of the print. The questionnaire was given preliminary testing for clarity and content validity by 13 adoptive parents' completing and evaluating it. In addition, 3 social workers evaluated the questionnaire and provided helpful suggestions to the researcher. Revisions of the questionnaire consisted of improving the wording of several items and clarifying the initial instructions. Three adoptive parents perused the final version of the questionnaire with the researcher.

Description of Variables

Dependent variable

The open birth record issue focuses on whether adult adoptees should have access to background information about their adoption including information from their original birth certificates. The open birth record issue is one aspect of the larger issue of secrecy in adoption. Attitude about the open birth record issue was the dependent variable for this study. This variable was measured by participants' responses to 18 statements about the open birth record issue. (See

Appendix A, questions 38-57) These statements refer to reasons, opinions, and beliefs about the open birth record issue. A five-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was used to measure the participants' response to each item. Answers to items 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 53, and 55 were reversed for scoring purposes. These scores were summed and then divided by the number of items in the index to obtain an index score of adoptive parents' attitudes on the open birth record issue for each subject (range from 1-5). High scores on the items and the composite measure indicated positive attitudes (supportive of openness) about open birth records and low scores indicated negative attitudes about open birth records (supportive of secrecy).

Independent variables

Three variables (acknowledgement-of-difference, empathy, and communication) were each measured by three sets of six statements. These statements were based on adaptations of Kirk's indexes of these three concepts. Parents responded to these statements using a five-point scale for each item. The scores from each of the six items for each index were added and then divided by the number of index items to obtain an index score (from 1-5) for each variable. For all variables a high score indicated a greater degree of the variable measured; a low score indicated a low degree of the variable measured. The variables, entitlement, adoptive parent satisfaction, and parent's impression of agency position were measured in the same way except that the entitlement index contained seven items and the adoptive parent's satisfaction index contained only five items.

1. The acknowledgement-of-difference variable is the coping approach of adoptive parents that acknowledges the uniqueness of adoptive parenting and the biological past of the adopted child. Questionnaire items 13-18 assessed this variable.

2. The empathy variable refers to the ability of adoptive parents to be sensitive to their child's adopted status. Questionnaire items 1-6 assessed this variable.

3. The communication variable refers to the adoptive parents' communication about adoption with their child and their feelings about this communication. Items 7-12 assessed this variable.

4. The entitlement variable refers to adoptive parents' feelings that the adoptive child truly belongs to them. Aspects of entitlement such as feelings of likeness, protectiveness vs. independence, and fear of loss were included in the seven items used to measure this variable. Items 19-22 and 24-26 measured this variable. Codes of the answers from items 19, 22, and 24 were reversed for scoring purposes.

5. The adoptive parent satisfaction variable was measured by adoptive parents' responses to five statements about their adoptive parent experience. Items 33-37 measured this variable and answers to items 33 and 37 were reversed for scoring purposes.

6. Agency position refers to parent's impressions of the adoption agency position regarding background information of the child at the time the child was adopted. Six statements (items 27-32) assessed parents' impressions of agency position about the importance and degree of background information. Answers from items 27 and 30 were reversed for scoring purposes.

7. The birth record information variable refers to parents' perception of how aware they were of the birth record issue and how they became informed about this issue. Two multiple choice items (59, 61) were used to determine how aware parents were of the issue. A third item (60) was a checklist where parents indicated their sources of information. A sum of the scores for the two questions using a three-point Likert scale plus the sum from the checklist provided a composite score (range 2-12) for birth record information.

8. The child development information variable refers to the subjects' exposure to child development and parenting information. A checklist (item 64) of six sources of child development and parenting information assessed this variable. Each source received a score of 1; the scores were summed to obtain a measure for this variable from 0-6.

Sample Selection

Four adoption agencies, Guilford County Social Services of North Carolina, Orange County Social Services of North Carolina, the Children's Home Society of North Carolina, and Lutheran Social Services of Minneapolis were selected as sources for the adoptive parent sample. Reasons for their selection were that they were large agencies that had placed many infants for adoption, they were generally accessible because of their location or previous contact with the researcher, and they indicated some interest in the research. Each of the four agencies contacted--three through personal interviews and one by telephone--agreed to participate in the study.

Because of confidentiality issues in adoption, adoption agencies usually do not provide names of adoptive parents from their files

directly to researchers. For this reason the following procedures were used. Names of parents, who had adopted infants two years of age or younger between the years 1960-1980, were systematically selected from agency files by agency personnel working in the three agencies and by the researcher in one agency. The Children's Home Society and Lutheran Social Services files were organized in a way that allowed for selections of adoptive parents to be made in May of each of the 20 years. Orange County and Guilford County Social Services files were organized differently so that selections could not be made in May of each year. A selection process which was compatible with their filing system and which met the criteria for the study was planned by the agencies. Fifty couples were selected plus possible replacements in each of the agencies.

Each agency sent a cover letter to their selected adoptive parents explaining their support for the research along with the researcher's letter requesting adoptive parents' participation in the study. In addition, postcards were included which adoptive parents were requested to return directly to the researcher with their consent to participate, their address, and interest in obtaining the results of the study. The adoptive parents who returned the cards made up the sample for the study. Questionnaires were sent directly to each adoptive parent.

The Children's Home Society and Orange County Social Services agencies were able to contact nearly all of the 50 adoptive couples selected from their files. However, approximately half of the letters sent to the adoptive parents selected from Guilford County and Lutheran Social Services were returned to the agencies because of incorrect

addresses. Lutheran Social Services replaced 20 couples who were unable to be contacted with 20 new couples who had been selected as possible replacements during the initial selection process. Only eight letters from this new group were returned to the agency. Guilford County Social Services sent letters to eight new couples to replace the 19 couples who were unable to be contacted. Of this group two letters were returned to the agency. Table 1 indicates the sample composition from the agencies and the questionnaire response rates.

Implementing the Survey

Implementation of the survey was complicated by the need to involve four adoption agencies in the selection of the adoptive parent sample, and in the contacting of adoptive parents for participation in the study. In addition, adoptive parents' responses were sent to the researcher over a 3-month period of time. The initial contact with adoptive parents was to have been in the second week of November 1983. However, because of each agency's work schedule, this was not possible. As a result, each agency sent the initial letters to adoptive parents requesting their participation during four different weeks in November.

Most of the questionnaires were sent to adoptive parents in two large mailings, one in the first week of December 1983 and the second in the first week of January 1984. No questionnaires were mailed between December 10 and January 4 because of the holiday season. The remainder of the questionnaires was sent to adoptive parents as their cards, which indicated their agreement to participate in the study, were received by the researcher. The last of the 151 questionnaires was mailed in the second week of February 1984.

Table 1
Sample Composition and Questionnaire Response Rate

	Children's Home Society	Orange County Social Services	Guilford County Social Services	Lutheran Social Services	Total
Number of Adoptive Parents Contacted to Participate-- Initial Sampling Frame	96	102	74	84	356
Number of Adoptive Parents Who Agreed to Participate in the Study	52	47	25	29	151
Number of Adoptive Parents Who Returned Questionnaires	51	42	16	22	131
Questionnaire Response Rate: Initial Sampling Frame	53%	41%	22%	26%	37%
Questionnaire Response Rate: Parents Who Agreed to Participate	98%	89%	64%	76%	86%

Sixty follow-up letters were sent approximately four weeks after the questionnaires were sent to those parents who had not returned the questionnaires. Nine second follow-up letters were sent approximately four weeks after the first follow-up letter. In summary, 91 questionnaires were returned with no follow-up letter, 38 were returned from the group who had been sent the first follow-up letter, and two were returned from the group who had been sent second follow-up letters. A total of 131 questionnaires had been received by the last day of February.

Sample Characteristics

The adoptive parent sample consisted of 131 parents who had adopted infants two years of age or younger during the years 1960-1980 from one of the four agencies described below. Orange and Guilford County Social Services, and the Children's Home Society are located in North Carolina whose laws permanently seal original birth certificates of adoptees. Information from these certificates may be released only by court order. Lutheran Social Services is located in Minneapolis. Minnesota passed a law in 1977 providing for the exchange of information, once considered confidential, to parties in adoption through an intermediary system. Orange and Guilford Social Services are public state agencies; Children's Home Society and Lutheran Social Services are private agencies.

Characteristics of the adoptive parent sample are displayed in Table 2. Adoptive fathers (N=60) as well as mothers (N=71) were well represented in the sample. This almost exclusively white sample of adoptive parents had an average 15.75 years of education and average

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of Adoptive Parents

	Adoptive Mothers (N=71) %	Adoptive Fathers (N=60) %
Age:		
29-39 years old	31	33
40-49 years old	48	40
50-59 years old	18	23
60-over years old	3	3
X=43.56		
S.D.=7.20		
Race:		
White	99	99
Black	1	1
Marital Status		
Married	96	98
Divorced, Separated, Widowed	4	2
Years of Education:		
9 to 12 years	28	22
13 to 16 years	52	32
17 to 20 years	18	30
21 to 26 years	2	17
X=15.76		
S.D.=3.34		
Family Yearly Income:		
\$10,000 to \$19,999	11	7
\$20,000 to \$29,999	21	20
\$30,000 to \$39,999	25	32
\$40,000 to \$49,999	18	15
\$50,000 and over	24	27
X=38,000		
S.D.=13,000		
Work Status		
Homemaker	35	0
Professional	28	50
Managerial, Administrative	3	13
Sales, Clerical	27	18
Blue Collar	3	13
Service Worker	3	2
Retired, Unemployed, Disabled	1	3
Adoption Agency		
Children's Home Society	38	40
Orange County Social Services	31	33
Guilford County Social Services	13	12
Lutheran Social Services	18	15
Presence of Biological Children		
Yes	69	70
No	31	30

total family income of \$38,000. Approximately 46% of the sample identified their work as professional, administrative, or managerial and 19% were full-time homemakers. Nearly 30% of the parents had both biological and adopted children and 97% indicated that they continued to be married to the spouse with whom they had adopted children.

Adoptive parents were instructed to respond to some of the items in the questionnaire with reference to the first child they adopted. Characteristics of the oldest adoptee in each family are given in Table 3. Approximately half of these children were 10 years of age or younger at the time of the study. The distribution of adopted and biological children in the families of the adoptive parent sample are provided in Table 4.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires were coded and transferred directly to computer cards for analysis. All cards were verified for accuracy by checking the data on the cards with the questionnaires. Additional checks for accuracy of the data were made from the computer data file print-out and frequency analysis.

Descriptive analyses of the data provided information about frequencies, distributions, means, and percentages of participants' responses on single questionnaire items and on their combined index scores. In addition, demographic and general characteristics of adoptive parents were determined. Cross-tabulation tables provided additional descriptive data on combinations of variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to obtain an overview of the relationships of the items from the questionnaire measuring the

Table 3

Characteristics of Oldest Adoptee in Each Family

Age at Time of Study	
3 to 6 years	29 (22%)
7 to 10 years	36 (28)%
11 to 14 years	28 (21%)
15 to 18 years	23 (18%)
19 to 24 years	15 (12%)
Sex	
Female	68 (52%)
Male	63 (48%)

Table 4

Number of Children in Adoptive Families

	Female	Male	Total
Adopted Children	125 (55%)	104 (45%)	229 (100%)
Biological Children	18 (36%)	32 (64%)	50 (100%)
	144 (51%)	136 (49%)	279 (100%)

independent variables with items measuring the dependent variable.

Factor analysis was the statistical procedure used to analyze the adequacy of the composite measures used in the study and to identify a set of factors from the data. Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical technique used to both condense and summarize information contained in a number of original variables and "to search for and define the fundamental constructs or dimensions assumed to underlie original variables" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Grabowsky, 1979, p. 218). Factor analysis also may function as a tool to help identify appropriate variables for further analysis. A new set or a smaller number of variables may be created "to partially or completely replace the original set of variables for inclusion in subsequent regression, correlation or discriminant analysis" (Hair et al., 1979, p.219).

In this study multiple regression analysis was the statistical procedure utilized for hypothesis testing and for understanding the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Important aspects of this analysis were to explain the variance in parents' responses to the open birth record issue and to obtain the best prediction equation.

CHAPTER 1V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purposes of the adoptive parent study were threefold: first, to determine how well the set of independent variables explained the variability in adoptive parents' attitudes regarding openness of background information about adoptees; second, to provide descriptive information about adoptive parenthood; and third, to analyze important relationships identified in the research.

Factor analysis, multiple regression, and Pearson correlation coefficients were the statistical procedures used to explore the relationships among the variables. When factor analysis was employed, principal component analysis with orthogonal extraction of factors and varimax rotation were selected as suitable choices for this research. Factors selected through orthogonal extraction are assumed to be independent of other factors in the analysis. This reduces the problem of multicollinearity among factors for regression analysis. The purpose of the varimax rotation was to clarify the factors in the final factor solution. Factor loadings of less than .40 were not included for interpretation of the factors.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was the technique used for determining the regression equations for this study. In this analysis independent variables are added one at a time, in steps, starting with the single variable making the greatest contribution to explaining the variance in the dependent variable. Additional variables are added

based on their contribution to the understanding of the dependent variable and contribution to the regression equation. A final solution is reached when additional variables do not improve the regression equation.

Factor Analysis

Adaptations of Kirk's Indexes

One of the first steps in the data analysis was to test the validity of the concepts proposed by Kirk (1964) in his Shared Fate Theory. Eighteen items constituting Kirk's indexes of empathy, communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference were entered into a factor analysis. Table 5 presents the factor loadings of the items on the 5 identified factors. The 6 items of the empathy index were distributed among factor 1 (parents' concern about birth parent and adoptee needs), factor 2 (communication with spouse and concern for adoptees' feelings), and factor 5 (concern for adoptees' feelings and concealment of reasons for relinquishment). Communication items were distributed among four factors that identified different aspects of communication in relation to adoption. Acknowledgement-of-difference items were divided between factor 1 and factor 2. This analysis indicated that, for this sample, responses to the items from Kirk's indexes did not cluster together under three single factors of empathy, communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference but instead they formed five separate factors. Kirk's three indexes appeared to contain items which were interrelated in a pattern different than his conceptual configuration.

Table 5

Empathy, Communication, Acknowledgement-of-Difference Indexes

	Factor Analysis				
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Empathy Index					
Wondered what words about adoption mean to child.		.6767			
Imagine how child feels (or will feel) about adoption.		.5092			.4082
Thought some day child may worry about background.	.4954				
Wished understood adoption from adoptee point of view.					.5603
Considered that child may wonder if looks like birth parents.	.4315				
Wondered whether child subject to negative criticism about adoption.		.4332			
Communication Index					
How important that you tell child he/she adopted.				.7884	
How important that you talk with child about difference between birth and adoption.				.7245	
How respond if child asked reasons for relinquishment.					-.6756
How feel about talking with child about adoption.		-.4559	.4905		
How often asked by child about birth mother or birth father.			.7654		
How often asked about circumstances of birth.			.7936		

Table 5--continued

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Acknowledgement-of-Difference Index					
Wondered if birth mother thinks about child.	.7849				
Wondered if birth father thinks about child.	.8024				
Wondered if child may some day want to meet birth parents.	.6286				
Wondered about current medical condition of birth parents.	.7327				
How often talked about adoption with spouse in past year.		.8066			
How often talked about adoption with spouse in past 4 years.		.8277			

Adoptive Parent Satisfaction, Entitlement, Parents' Impression of Agency Position, and Kirk's Indexes

In the development of this study, six composite indexes were formulated to measure the independent variables: adoptive parent satisfaction, parents' impression of agency position regarding background information at the time of adoption, entitlement, communication, empathy, and acknowledgement-of-difference. The 37 items from these measures were inserted into a factor analysis. Twelve factors related to adoptive parenthood were identified from these items instead of the six variables originally proposed. Table 6 presents the 12 factors with the items that had factor loadings of .40 or higher. The same five factors, identified from the earlier factor analysis of items from Kirk's indexes, reappeared in this second analysis. Four were slightly modified by the inclusion or deletion of items (factors 2, 6, 10, 12) and factor 1 was unchanged.

An attempt was made to name the factors according to an underlying concept that was assessed by the items constituting the factors. Some concepts were more easily identified and named than others. For example, factors 2, 6, and 10 dealing with communication issues and factors 4 and 7 dealing with parent's impressions of agency position regarding background information were more easily named than factor 8 (independence and understand adoptee status and need).

The 12 factors identified can be related to findings in adoption literature to some degree. Factor 8 ties issues of empathy and understanding of adoptee's needs to adoptive parent's acceptance of independence of the adult adoptee (Jaffee, 1974). The importance of

Table 6

Factors Derived from Independent Variable Indexes

Factor Items	Factor Loadings
Factor 1: Birth Parent--Adoptee Needs	
Child worry about background.	.4319
Child--resemblance to birth parents.	.4321
If birth mother thinks about child.	.7875
If birth father thinks about child.	.8330
If adoptee wants to meet birth parents.	.5897
Current medical condition of birth parents.	.7583
Factor 2: Communication with Spouse--Adoptees' Feelings	
What adoption means to adoptee.	.6751
Imagine how adoptee feels about adoption.	.5403
Past year talked with spouse (friend) about adoption.	.8383
Past 4 years talked with spouse (friend) about adoption.	.8405
Factor 3: Satisfactions & Expectations of Adoption	
Child acts responsibly for age.	.4738
Wished had not adopted child.	.8315
Biological parenting more rewarding than adoptive parenting.	.4129
Adoptive parenthood not lived up to expectations.	.8328
Parent to adopted child rewarding experience.	.6267
Factor 4: Impression of Agency Position--Importance of Information	
Little information about birth parents needed.	.4698
Background information one day important to child.	.4275
Adoptive parents' heritage sufficient for child.	.8395
Child's past set aside--totally new beginning at adoption.	.6929
Factor 5: Parent Satisfaction & Discipline	
Difficult to discipline child because adopted.	.7354
Have been a good parent to child.	.6788
Parent to biological child more satisfying than adopted child.	.5403
Factor 6: Parent-adoptee Communication & Affection of Adoptee	
How comfortable talking about adoption issues with child.	.4098
How often asked by child about birth parents.	.7710
How often asked by child about adoption circumstances.	.7534
Adoptive parents concerned about losing affection of child.	.4544
Factor 7: Agency--Degree of Information & Fostering Independence	
Let child attempt difficult tasks.	.6858
Less I know about birth parents the better.	.5447
Little information about birth parents all that is needed.	.4930
Should provide much non-identifying information.	.6924

Table 6--continued

Factor Items	Factor Loadings
Factor 8: Independence & Understand Adoptee Status and Needs.	
Wished understood adoption from adoptee's point of view.	.5109
Difficult time when son/daughter becomes adult and independent.	-.7352
Background information may some day be important to adoptee.	.4870
Factor 9: Expectations of Adoptee & Entitlement	
Child acts responsibly for age.	.6274
Child has lived up to educational potential expected.	.8490
Child resembles adoptive parents--appearance or manner.	.4500
Factor 10: Adoption Discussion & Resemblance	
Important that you tell child he/she adopted.	.6324
Important that you explain difference adoption and birth.	.7177
Child resembles adoptive parents--appearance or manner.	.4007
Factor 11: Parent Satisfaction & Adoptee Belonging	
Feel child truly belongs.	.6920
Parent to adopted child rewarding experience.	.4075
Factor 12: Concealment--Reasons for Relinquishment	
How respond if asked for reasons for relinquishment	-.8074

communication about adoption which was identified by Kirk (1964), Triseliotis (1973), Raynor (1980), and Rowe (1982) are linked to feelings of empathy and entitlement in factors 2, 6, 10.

Factors 3 (satisfactions and expectations of adoption), 5 (parent satisfaction and discipline), 9 (expectations of adoptee and entitlement) and 11 (parent satisfaction and adoptee belonging) seem to focus on the relationship of feelings about adoptive parenthood to feelings of entitlement to the adoptee. These complex psychological concepts have been considered to be important to the understanding of adoption but have been difficult to measure (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Lawder et al., 1969). These identified factors may provide groundwork for further investigation into this area.

Factors 1 (birth parent-adoptee needs) and 12 (concealment-reasons for relinquishment) focus on the acknowledgement of the adoptive status of the adoptee and recognition of all the parties in adoption (Kirk, 1964, 1981). Adoptive parents may conceal information about the relinquishment of their child for various reasons. Parents may deny the adoptive status of their child and either do not remember the reasons for relinquishment or view them as unimportant to the child. Some adoptive parents are uncomfortable with the reasons for relinquishment and fear that this knowledge could be damaging to their child and therefore conceal this information. Finally, adoptive parents may conceal information believing that they are protecting the birth parents.

An evaluation of the factor analysis led to the decision to substitute the 12 newly formed factors for the original set of

independent variables for subsequent regression analysis. The factor analysis of the index items provided an empirical basis for the formulation and selection of new independent variables which were considered to be potentially more useful in accounting for the variance in parents' responses to the open birth record issue. The 12 factors identified accounted for 69% of the variance in the 37 items submitted to the factor analysis. An orthogonal factor solution produced factors which were not correlated to each other and therefore were appropriate variables for subsequent multiple regression analysis.

Twelve factor scores were computed for adoptive parents in the study based on their responses to the 37 items which had been factor analyzed. These scores were used as the independent variables in future multiple regression analyses to explain the variance of parent's responses on the open record index.

Factor analysis was a useful statistical technique for analyzing the adequacy of the composite measures and for identifying underlying concepts in the data. Results of these factor analyses may be helpful for future adoption research and for the development and revision of various indexes pertaining to adoption issues. One of the caveats about the factor analyses however, was the lack of clarity in some of the factors identified and the associated difficulty in appropriately naming these factors.

Open Birth Record Index

The purpose of the final factor analysis was to determine whether the 18 items constituting the open record index, developed by the

researcher, measured a unified concept regarding the open record issue or whether a number of different concepts would emerge from the analysis.

Table 7 presents the results of this analysis. Three factors were identified with one clearly predominating. Fourteen of the 18 index items had high factor loadings of .47 or higher on factor 1 (beliefs, concerns, and opinions regarding the open record issue). This confirmed the idea that a common concept had been tapped by these items and provided evidence that the open record items were appropriate for obtaining composite measures of adoptive parents' attitudes regarding the open birth record issue.

Factor 1 (beliefs and concerns) focused on adoptive parents' beliefs concerning adoption laws regarding access of background information (items 38, 47, 53), about the impact of opening records (items 40, 41, 44, 50, 52, 54, 55), about rights of parties in adoption (items 45, 46), and about adoptees' need for birth record information (item 48). Factor 2 (kinds of information) centered on the adoptive parents' need for nonidentifying information (item 40) and adoptees' need for medical information about their backgrounds and social histories (items 42, 43). Factor 3 (who should have access) identified a more complicated concept which concerns access and revelation of adoption information. There is a negative relationship between adoptive parents' sharing adoption information and their belief that birth parents should have access to information about adoptees. Parents who rank low on sharing information indicate a high score on birth parents access to information about adoptees. This may indicate that some adoptive parents feel the need to

Table 7
Open Record Index
Factor Analysis

Open Record Items	Factor 1 Concerns- Beliefs	Factor 2 Kinds of Information	Factor 3 Who Access
38. Adoption laws should permanently seal the original birth certificate.	.7297		
39. Adoptive parents should be provided much non-identifying information.		.6231	
40. Parent-adoptivee relationship strengthened if adoptees allowed access to records.	.6604		
41. Better for everyone if birth records remained sealed.	.7710		
42. Adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain medical information.		.8763	
43. Adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain social histories.	.4735	.6918	
44. Opening birth records may be harmful to adult adoptees.	.6163		
45. Adult adoptees have a basic right to their birth records.	.8079		
46. Privacy of birth mother more important than adoptee's need for birth records.	.8496		
47. All states should have laws providing adult adoptees' access to birth records.	.7289		
48. Some adult adoptees need birth record information for their well-being.	.6834		
49. Parents should share all non-identifying information with adoptees.			-.7864
50. Parent-adoptivee relationship weakened if adults allowed access to records.	.6265		
51. Birth parents should not be allowed to obtain information about adoptees.			.4848
52. Parents will feel less like "real parents" if records opened.	.6316		
53. Adult adoptees should be allowed by law to search for birth parents.	.7995		
54. Institution of adoption will be weakened if adoptees allowed access.	.8060		
55. More open approach better than confidential approach in adoption.	.7534		

protect the birth parents through concealment of information on the one hand and an openness to allow birth parents to have access to information about adoptees if they so choose on the other.

Two items about the open birth record issue were included in the factor analysis but were not included in the open record index. Parents were asked at what age and with whose consent adoptees should have access to birth record information (items 56 and 57 in the questionnaire). Both of these items had high factor loadings on factor 1, .7267 and .6164 respectively (not shown in Table 7).

Multiple Regression Analyses

Preliminary regression analyses provided a limited understanding of the data. A multiple regression analysis of the dependent variable, openness of background information, on Kirk's indexes of empathy, communication and acknowledgement-of-difference indicated that none of the indexes was statistically significant in explaining variations in the dependent variable.

Hypothesis 1 (that the original set of independent variables would account for a significant proportion of the variance in parents' responses to the open record issue) and Hypothesis 2 (that each independent variable would be related to parents' responses on open records and statistically significant in explaining variation in parents' responses when the other independent variables were controlled) were tested by the following analysis. A stepwise multiple regression analysis of the dependent variable (parents' attitudes regarding the open record issue) on the original set of independent variables

(acknowledgement-of-difference, communication, empathy, entitlement, adoptive parent satisfaction, parent's impression of agency position, child development information, awareness of the open record issue, sex of the parent, presence of biological children, age and sex of the adoptee) was executed. This analysis indicated that a significant proportion of the variance of parents' responses on the open record index was accounted for by this set of independent variables, supporting Hypothesis 1 ($r=.3616$, $p<.001$). Approximately 13% ($R^2=.1307$) of the variance in parents' responses was explained in this analysis. Hypothesis 2 was not supported by this analysis. Only parent's impression of agency position, communication, and awareness of the open record issue were found to be positively and statistically significantly related to parents' responses ($p<.05$). Adoptive parent satisfaction, entitlement, empathy, acknowledgement-of-difference, child development information, sex of the parent, presence of biological children, and sex and age of the oldest adopted child were found not to be statistically significantly related to parents' responses to the open record issue.

Additional analyses proved to be helpful in accounting for more of the variance in the dependent variable. A regression analysis was performed in which the 12 factors identified earlier were substituted for the set of original independent variables. A stepwise multiple regression analysis, using these 12 factors as the independent variables, provided a slightly better regression equation. Approximately 16% of the variability in parents' responses was explained by three factors: factor 2 (communication with spouse and adoptees' feelings), factor 4 (parent's impression of agency position), and factor

6 (parent-adoptive communication and affection of adoptee). All three variables were positively related to parents' attitudes regarding open birth records and were statistically significant ($p < .05$). These variables were similar to the variables (communication, parent's impression of agency position, awareness) found to be statistically significant in the earlier regression using the original set of independent variables.

A final regression analysis was computed based on earlier regression findings which pointed to the importance of adoptive parents' impressions of agency position. The inclusion of the four adoption agencies as dummy variables in the regression analysis was considered to be a logical step to further understand the impact of the agencies along with the other independent variables on adoptive parents' attitudes regarding the open birth record issue.

Table 8 presents the results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis of the dependent variable on the independent variables: factors 2 and 6 (communication issues), factor 4 (parent's impression of agency position) and the agency dummy variables. Lutheran Social Services of Minneapolis was selected as the reference category for the agency dummy variables and was therefore excluded from the regression equation. This was an appropriate selection because Lutheran Social Services has characteristics which distinguish it from the other three agencies. It is the only agency not located in North Carolina and is in a state which has laws providing for the exchange of information through an intermediary system which differs from North Carolina's closed record law.

Table 8
 Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis
 For Adoptive Parents' Responses
 To Open Birth Record Issue

Variable	b	BETA	STD.ER.	F
Factor 2 (Communication with Spouse & Adoptee's Feelings)	.1344	.1845	.0615	4.774**
Factor 6 (Parent-child Communication & Adoptee Affection)	.1594	.2160	.0612	6.780**
Factor 4 (Impression of Agency Position)	.1956	.2636	.0612	9.522**
D1 (Children's Home Society)	-.7620	-.4999	.1772	18.494***
D2 (Orange County Social Services)	-.5412	-.3380	.1864	8.435**
D3 (Guilford County Social Services)	-.4533	-.2036	.2331	3.783*
CONSTANT	3.863			
*p<.055		$R^2 = .2926$	F=7.5845***	
**p<.05		$R^2 \text{ adj.} = .2541$		
***p<.0001		SEest=.6459		

All six of the independent variables were found to be statistically significant in accounting for variance in parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue. Communication with spouse and adoptees' feelings (.1344), communication between parent and adoptee and adoptee affection (.1594), and parents' impression of agency position (.1956) were positively related to parents' attitudes regarding open records. The dummy variables for the Children's Home Society (-.7620), Orange County Social Services (-.5412), Guilford County Social Services (-.4533) indicated a negative relationship with the dependent variable. Parents from these agencies indicated less positive attitudes towards the open birth record issue than parents of Lutheran Social Services, the reference category. Parents' mean scores on the open birth record index from the different agencies were the following: Lutheran Social Services, (3.86); Guilford County Social Services, (3.41); Orange County Social Services, (3.32); and the Children's Home Society, (3.10).

Examination of the Beta weights revealed that agency variables, Children's Home Society and Orange County Social Services, were the two most important variables related to parents' attitudes towards open records, followed by parent's impression of agency position. The remaining three variables ranked in order from most to least important were parent-adoptee communication and adoptees' affection, Guilford County Social Services, and communication with spouse and adoptees' feelings.

Inclusion of the agency variables in the multiple regression model increased the coefficient of determination from R^2 of .1609 when agency was not included to R^2 of .2926 when agency variables were included.

Approximately 29% of the variability in parents' attitudes towards open birth records can be accounted for by the independent variables included in the latter regression. The adjusted R^2 of .2541 indicates that when taking into account the number of independent variables, 25% of the variability in parents' responses can be explained.

Adoptive Parents' Responses to Open Birth Record Items

One of the purposes of this study was to provide descriptive information about adoptive parenthood. The open birth record issue has received public attention through growing numbers of adult adoptee support groups, debates in state legislatures, court proceedings where the sealed birth record is an issue, and through the media's focus on sometimes informative and sometimes sensational reports about adoption. Adoptive parents' points of view regarding the complicated issues involved in the open birth record debate have seldom been examined and reported by researchers or by the media.

Adoptive parents' responses to the 18 items, which together constituted the open record index, are displayed in Table 9. Strongly agree and agree scores were combined for presentation in the table as were strongly disagree and disagree scores. Also the questionnaire statements were condensed for brevity. Appendix A contains the complete wording of the questionnaire statements.

Examination of Table 9 reveals considerable variation in adoptive parents' responses to the open birth record items. On only seven items was there a majority opinion and all were in the direction of openness regarding adoptees' access to background information. There was greatest agreement among parents (94%) that adoptees should be allowed

Table 9
 Adoptive Parent Responses to Items from
 Open Birth Record Index

	Agree %	Uncertain %	Disagree %
38. Adoption laws should permanently seal the original birth certificate.	32	25	44
39. Adoptive parents should be provided with much non-identifying information.	87	2	11
40. Parent-adoptivee relationship strengthened if adoptees allowed access to records.	23	39	38
41. Better for everyone in adoption if birth records remained sealed.	27	24	48
42. Adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain medical information.	94	3	3
43. Adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain social histories.	71	12	17
44. Opening birth records may be harmful to adult adoptees.	42	30	28
45. Adult adoptees have a basic right to their birth records.	45	29	26
46. Privacy of birth mother more important than adoptees need for birth records.	43	33	24
47. All states should have laws providing adult adoptees access to records.	39	30	30
48. Some adult adoptees need birth record information for well-being.	57	22	22
49. Parents should share all non-identifying information with adoptees.	92	6	3
50. Parent-adoptivee relationship weakened if adult allowed access to records.	14	21	64
51. Birth parents should not be allowed to information about adoptees.	48	21	31
52. Parents will feel less like "real parents" if records are opened.	21	14	65
53. Adult adoptees should be allowed by law to search for birth parents.	41	32	27
54. Institution of adoption will be weakened if adoptees allowed access to records.	36	24	41
55. More open approach better than more confidential approach in adoption.	35	23	42

^aPercentages may not add up to %100 because of rounding error.

to obtain information about their medical backgrounds. A large majority of parents (71%) agreed with item 43 that adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain social histories. More than half of the parents (57%) acknowledged that some adoptees may need information, once considered confidential, for their sense of well-being and identity. There was considerable agreement that adoptive parents should receive much non-identifying information about the child at the time of adoption and that this information should be shared with the adoptee by the time he or she reaches adulthood. Items 50 and 52 pertain to the impact of opening birth records on the parent-child relationship and on parents' perceptions of themselves as the "real parents". Approximately 64% of the parents disagreed that the parent-adoptee relationship would be weakened or that adoptive parents would feel less like the "real parents" if adult adoptees were allowed access to birth record information.

Table 10 presents parents' responses to 3 questions. At what age should adoptees have access to birth record information? Whose consent should be required to obtain access to birth record information? What information should be available to adult adoptees? A comparison of parents' responses to items 38 and 47 from Table 9 with parents' responses to the age and consent items in Table 10 revealed the following: Even though approximately 30% of the adoptive parents disagreed that states should provide adoptees access to birth record information, only 22% responded that adoptees should never have access to birth record information at any age and only 15% responded that there should be no access regardless of consent. A majority of the parents

Table 10
 Adoptive Parents' Responses to Issues of
 Age, Consent, and Information
 (N=131)

56. At what age should adoptees have access to birth record information?

Age 16 or older	2%
Age 18 or older	23%
Age 21 or older	45%
Age 30 or older	7%
Never	22%

57. Whose consent should be required for adult adoptees to obtain birth records?

No Access	15%
Adoptive and Birth Parents	42%
Birth Parents only	21%
Adoptive Parent only	6%
Access--No Consent Required	16%

58. What information should be available to adult adoptees?

Selected Non-identifying	17%
All Non-identifying	72%
Reasons for Relinquishment	36%
Medical Update of Birth Parents--Non-identifying	66%
Social Update of Birth Parents--Non-identifying	55%

believed that all non-identifying information, including current medical and social updates on birth parents, should be available to adult adoptees. However, only 36% of the parents believed that the reasons for adoptees' relinquishment should be provided.

Adoptive parents generally indicated support for more openness regarding background information about adult adoptees. The mean score for parents' responses on the open birth record index was 3.34 on a five-point scale indicating a slightly favorable attitude regarding access of background information. Substantial variation and some uncertainty was expressed in their responses to the birth record items. Parents' responses on a number of items revealed their ambiguity about this complex issue. For example, while 57% of the parents acknowledged that some adults need birth record information for their sense of well-being and identity, only 39% agreed that all states should have laws providing adult adoptees access to birth record information.

CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusions

Adoptive parenthood has been a neglected area in family research mainly because, until recently, the role of parents of adopted children was assumed to be identical to the role of parents of biological children. Even though a few researchers (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Kirk, 1964, 1981; Krugman, 1964; Raynor, 1980) have provided valuable insight into some aspects of adoptive parenthood, many questions remain. Little is known about parents' perceptions and feelings about secrecy issues and confidentiality in adoption.

In the meager published accounts about adoptive parents' attitudes concerning the open record debate, adoptive parents have expressed a wide range of views. Some adoptive parents have indicated unequivocally that the records should remain sealed, some have indicated that under certain circumstances records should be opened, and still others state that adoptees should have access to this information when they reach adulthood. Why parents respond so differently to this issue was at the center of this research. The purpose of this study was to identify a set of factors which would help explain these variations and to gain a better understanding of adoptive parenthood through this exploration. Descriptive information about adoptive parents themselves, and their responses to items measuring the open record issue, were viewed as potentially important contributions to the adoption literature.

Two multivariate procedures were utilized in the study. Factor

analysis investigated the adequacy of the seven composite indexes, six for the independent variables and one for the dependent variable, used in this study, and pointed to an alternate set of independent variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine how well the set of independent variables accounted for variance in parents' responses to the open record issue.

The sample for this study consisted of 131 adoptive parents from four adoption agencies, three located in North Carolina and one located in Minnesota. Parents selected for this sample had adopted children 2 years of age or less during the years 1960 to 1980. A mail survey was the method used to collect data from the parents. Each participant was sent a 15-page questionnaire which included items that measured the dependent variable (attitudes about the open record issue) and the independent variables (communication, empathy, acknowledgement-of-difference, adoptive parent satisfaction, parent's perception of agency position regarding background information, entitlement, child development information, and awareness of the open record debate). Demographic information was collected for descriptive purposes and also provided data for four additional independent variables (sex of parent, sex and present age of oldest adoptee, and presence of biological children).

Discussion

The adoptive parent study consisted of four major parts: analysis of the composite measures developed by Kirk (1964, 1981) and modified by the researcher, testing the initial hypotheses, determining the best

regression equation for understanding the data, and providing descriptive data about adoptive parents and their responses to the open record issue.

Evaluation of Empathy, Communication, and Acknowledgement-of-Difference

Indexes

Kirk's Shared Fate Theory (1964) suggests that parents deal with adoptive parenthood by using one of two coping strategies. The first is the acknowledgement that adoptive parenthood has unique features, and the second is the denial of difference between biological and adoptive parenthood. Kirk suggested that the first strategy was beneficial to the integration and well-being of family members while the second was detrimental to the family. Kirk formulated three indexes: empathy, communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference, which he claims are integral to understanding these coping strategies. Kirk maintains that parents who evidence high levels of empathy for their child's adoptive status, openness in communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference would show high levels of integration in the adoptive family, while parents who evidence low levels of empathy, openness in communication, and denial of difference would indicate less positive integration. Kirk's theory has been criticized because of the lack of empirical evidence supporting it. These indexes, with some modification, were incorporated into the research as independent variables to determine their impact on parents' responses to the open birth record issue, and also to evaluate their effectiveness as composite measures.

Factor analysis of items constituting the indexes revealed that

they did not cluster into the three categories of empathy, communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference. Of the five factors identified, two consisted of only communication items. Empathy and acknowledgement-of-difference items were more interrelated than were communication items with the other index items. Further analysis of the indexes in a stepwise multiple regression analysis with the dependent variable, the open record index, was not productive. None of the indexes was statistically significant in explaining parents' responses on the open record index.

In conclusion, Kirk's indexes of empathy, communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference were shown not to be adequate composite measures in themselves. However, factors 2 and 6, which consisted of some of the items from Kirk's indexes were found to be statistically significant variables in the final regression equation. Kirk has identified meaningful concepts for consideration in understanding adoptive parenthood, but the indexes he has formulated need revision.

Independent Variable Indexes

Earlier presentation of the second factor analysis of 37 items from the questionnaire, which constituted 6 indexes, identified 12 rather than 6 factors. Adoptive parent satisfaction items tended to group together, and parents' impressions of agency position grouped together on 2 factors. Items from the entitlement index were distributed among 8 factors, denoting a particular lack of unity. Jaffee and Fanshel (1970) also had difficulty assessing the concept of entitlement in an earlier adoption study. A conclusion based on this analysis was that the new

set of 12 factors should replace the original variables for further analysis.

Dependent Variable Index

The open record index, formulated by the researcher, was shown to be an adequate composite measure of adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue. The open record index may be considered nearly unidimensional because of the concentration of items on the first factor. Factor analysis of the 18 open record items revealed that 14 items had high factor loadings on factor 1 (beliefs, concerns, and opinions about the open record issue). The additional factors identified dealt with degree and kind of background information in factor 2, and the question of who should have access to information in factor 3. The conclusion from this analysis was that the open record index was shown to be a satisfactory composite measure of parents' attitudes about the open record issue for this study.

Testing the Initial Hypotheses

In the formulation of this study, hypotheses were proposed based on the available information from the literature and exploratory interviews with adoptive parents and social workers. Hypothesis 1 stated that the 12 independent variables (acknowledgement-of difference, communication, empathy, entitlement, adoptive parent satisfaction, knowledge about child development, awareness of the open birth record issue, parent's perception of agency position regarding background information, age and sex of the oldest adoptee, the sex of the parent

and presence of biological children in the adoptive family) together would account for a significant proportion of the explained variance in adoptive parents' responses to the open birth record issue. Hypothesis 2 stated that each of the 12 independent variables would be statistically significant in accounting for variance in parents' responses to the open record index when the other independent variables were controlled.

Results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that a significant proportion of the variance in parents' responses to the open record index was explained by the set of 12 independent variables ($r=.36$, $p<.001$). Approximately 13% ($R^2=.1307$) of the variation in parents' responses to the open record issue was explained by this set of variables. Hypothesis 1 was supported by this finding.

Hypothesis 2, however, was not supported by the findings from the analysis. Only the variables communication, awareness, and parent's impression of agency position were found to be positively and significantly related to parents' responses on the open record index. Parents who perceived that the agencies where they adopted their children believed that background information was important were more likely to have favorable responses to the open record issue than parents who perceived that the adoption agencies did not regard background information as important. Empathy, entitlement, adoptive parent satisfaction, knowledge about child development, acknowledgement-of-difference, age and sex of the oldest adoptee, sex of the adoptive parent, and presence of biological children were found not to be statistically significant in understanding parents' responses to

questions of openness regarding information about adoptees' backgrounds.

An earlier study by the researcher (Geissinger, in press) reported similar findings for several variables. Presence of biological children, sex of the parent, and age of adoptee were found not be significant variables in accounting for variance in parents' responses on the open record issue.

Determining the Regression Equation

Factor analysis of the 37 items from the 6 indexes identified 12 factors; these 12 factors were substituted for the original variables in a stepwise multiple regression. Results from this analysis indicated that factors 2, 4, and 6 were statistically significant in explaining parents' responses on the open record index ($r=.40$, $p<.001$). These factors identified concepts which were similar to the variables found to be statistically significant in the regression with the original set of independent variables--communication and parent's impression of agency position. This analysis resulted in accounting for approximately 16% ($R^2=.1615$) of the variability in parents' responses on the open record index, only 3% more than the original regression.

The final regression analysis included the three factors found to be significant in the earlier regression and the adoption agency variables. Results from this analysis indicated that the three factors and two agency variables, Children's Home Society, and Orange County Social Services, were statistically significantly related to parents' response on the open record issue ($p<.05$). The significance level for Guilford County Social Services was .054. The small number of adoptive

parents from this agency (N=16) may have influenced the outcome of the analysis on the Guilford County Social Services variable.

Factors 2, 4, and 6 were positively related to parents' responses to the open birth record issue. Factor 2 focused on parents' empathy toward the adoptive status and communication about adoption with spouse or close friend. Factor 6 focused on communication about adoption between the parent and child and parent's confidence in the child's affection. Factor 4 centered on parents' impression of agency position regarding the importance of background information about the adoptee at the time of adoption.

Many previous adoption studies (Jaffee & Fanshel, 1970; Kirk, 1964, 1981; Lawder et al., 1969; McWhinnie, 1967; Kornitzer, 1968; Triseliotis, 1973) have identified communication issues in adoption as important, and often problematic, to parties in adoption. Findings from this study underscored the importance of parents' communication about adoption with their children and their spouses to the understanding of their responses to the open birth record issue. Communication was shown to be a complex phenomenon related to parents' empathy towards the adoptive status and their feelings of confidence about their child's affection. Openness of communication appeared to be related to parents' acknowledgement of their child's adoptive status and to parents' feelings of security in the parent-child relationship. Basically this finding is supportive of Kirk's Shared Fate Theory (1964, 1981) which stresses empathy, communication, and acknowledgement-of-difference as essential elements in the understanding of adoptive parenthood.

The influence that adoption agencies have had on adoptive parents'

perceptions regarding disclosure and secrecy issues has been a largely unexplored area. Adoptive parent applicants have informally expressed their feelings of vulnerability and stress during the time they are being considered for approval by the agency, and during the time that they are waiting for a child. Applicants and new adoptive parents may be particularly impressionable during this emotional period. Agencies generally provide counseling and some form of preparation for parenthood for their clients. Whether agency policies and views regarding background information of adoptees are transmitted, either intentionally or unintentionally, to adoptive parents had not been studied prior to this study.

Results from this study have provided initial insight into this area of agencies' influence on adoptive parents. Factor 4 centered on parents' impression of agency position regarding the importance of background information at the time they adopted their child. Questionnaire items constituting factor 4 inquired about parents' perceptions of agencies' positions regarding the importance of various kinds of background information: information about the birth mother, importance of background information to the child, and the importance of acknowledging the child's biological heritage. That factor 4 was found to be a significant variable lends support to the influence of agencies upon parents' attitudes to the open record issue. However, there may be an alternative explanation. Adoptive parents may have attributed their personally arrived at positions, consciously or unconsciously, to the adoption agency as a way of justifying their views.

The impact of the adoption agency itself as an influence on parents' attitudes about the open record issue was found to be considerable. Having adopted from a particular agency was significantly related to parents' attitude on the open record issue. Parents' mean scores on the open record index, from most favorable to least favorable, were Lutheran Social Services (3.86), Guilford Social Services (3.41), Orange County Social Services (3.32) and Children's Home Society (3.10). Why agencies appear to influence parents' responses to the open record issue may be explained in two different ways. First, agencies may impart a particular point of view, regarding secrecy and disclosure issues, as they work with applicants and new adoptive parents. Second, agencies in their selection processes may tend to choose adoptive parents who either conform to the agencies' point of view or choose parents for other reasons which are correlated with attitudes regarding secrecy issues.

When considering both the adoption agency variables and the parents' impression of agency position variable regarding background information, it seems reasonable to conclude that agencies are likely to have some influence on adoptive parents' views. There are many reasons for this influence. Adoptive parents may be understandably influenced by the agency which bestows upon them a long-awaited child. Parents are likely to turn to professionals, whom they believe to be the experts in adoption, for answers to difficult questions. Adoptive parents, unlike parents of biological children, may not have easily accessible adoptive parent role-models or supports to whom they may turn for answers or guidance and therefore turn to agencies.

It is noteworthy that parents from Lutheran Social Services, the only agency located in a state that has legislation providing for the exchange of information among the parties in adoption, had the highest mean scores on the open record index, indicating the greatest degree of openness among all the parents. Larger social influences, such as adoption legislation, may foster as well as reflect more openness with regard to access of adoption information. Whether there is a difference in the degree of openness of parents who adopted before passage of the more liberal access law in 1977, compared to parents who adopted after 1977, is a question for future research.

Descriptive Data about Adoptive Parents

Adoptive parents in this almost exclusively white sample were well educated and were predominantly in the middle to upper-middle socioeconomic classes. The average age of parents from this sample, composed of 71 mothers and 60 fathers, was 44 years. Approximately one third of the parents had both biological and adopted children. The age of the oldest adopted child in each of the families was between 3 and 24 years. This group of adoptive parents rated themselves as very satisfied with adoptive parenthood with a mean score of 4.55 on the five-point adoptive parent satisfaction index. Ninety-two percent of the parents indicated that they were aware of the open record debate, chiefly through the mass media.

The open record index consisted of 18 items about beliefs, concerns, and opinions regarding the open birth record issue. The mean open record index score for this sample of adoptive parents was 3.34 on

a 5-point scale indicating some openness regarding access to background information. Ninety-four percent of the parents believed that adoptees should be allowed to obtain information about their medical background while 71% believed that adoptees should be allowed to obtain information about their social histories. There was considerable agreement that adoptive parents should be given much nonidentifying information about the child at the time of adoption and that this information should be passed along to the child by the time he or she reaches adulthood. Adoptive parents, however, did not believe that adult adoptees should be able to learn about the reasons for their relinquishment for adoption. This was a separate item and was not contained in the open record index.

Generally, adoptive parents did not believe that the parent-child relationship would be weakened or that they would feel less like the "real parents" to their children if birth records were opened. However, more reservation was expressed about the impact of open records on the institution of adoption with 36% believing that the institution would be weakened, 40% believing it would not be weakened, and the remainder uncertain. Approximately 39% of the parents believed that all states should have laws providing for access to background information, while 30% disagreed and 30% were uncertain.

Parents' responses to the items about the age and consent for access to birth record information revealed that 77% of the parents believed that adoptees should have access to this information at adulthood. The consent that was most agreed upon (42%) was access to birth record information with the consent of adoptive parents and birth parents.

An overall evaluation of parents' responses to the open birth record issue reveals considerable variation, ambiguity, and uncertainty, even though a tendency towards openness was evident. Adoptive parents clearly indicated the importance of obtaining and sharing nonidentifying information with their children. Less clear was adoptive parents' perceived role regarding disclosure of information of a more confidential nature and of their role as advocates for their children. Many parents agreed that adult adoptees have a basic right to birth record information and that some adult adoptees need this information for their sense of well-being, but fewer parents agreed to changes in the law which would allow such access. Adoptive parents appeared to have recognized a potential need of their adopted children for access to birth record information. This issue was complicated, however, by adoptive parents' uncertainty as to how changes in the law providing for access would affect the parties in adoption and the institution of adoption itself.

Limitations of the Study

Sample

Confidentiality issues in adoption, which prohibited adoption agencies from releasing the names of adoptive parents, complicated the sample selection process. A procedure was devised where the agencies selected names of adoptive parents from their files, contacted them about the study, and requested that the parents who agreed to participate in the study contact the researcher directly. In three agencies the selection of names from the files was carried out by agency

personnel; the selection process was therefore not directly supervised by the researcher. Selection criteria and procedural guidelines for systematically selecting the sample were provided to the agencies, but implementing the selection process was necessarily left to each agency.

The major problem encountered in gathering the sample was outdated addresses of parents selected for the sample who had adopted children over a 20-year span from 1960 to 1980. Nearly half of the letters from two agencies were not able to be delivered. Replacements were sent for many of the undelivered letters but what effect this had on the representativeness of the sample is not known. Also this resulted in obtaining a smaller number of parents for the sample than had been planned in the design of the study. Another factor, which may have influenced the representativeness of the sample, was the self-selection of individuals participating in the study. Whether parents who participated in the study were different in particular ways from those who decided not to participate cannot be assessed. For example, whether parents who participated in the study were more satisfied with their adoption experience than parents who did not respond is a valid question.

A final consideration concerning the sample deals with the selection of adoptive parent couples rather than individuals from the adoption agency files. This method was chosen for economic reasons. Adoptive parents were individually sent questionnaires and were instructed to complete them separately. The concern, however, is whether adoptive parent couples share similar views about adoption issues which would have resulted in less variation in parents' responses to questionnaire

items. The selection of individual adoptive parents rather than couples would be a suggestion for future research.

Self-Reported Data

One of the often cited criticisms of survey research is the possibility that participants respond to the survey items in socially acceptable ways rather than revealing their own personal opinions, behaviors, and beliefs. This is an appropriate consideration for this study, not only because of the design of the study but also because of the sensitive issues that were covered. In addition, whether adoptive parents' experience of participating in the selection process for adoption somehow influenced them to respond in particular way is another consideration.

Limited Theoretical Base

Few researchers have studied adoptive parents and therefore the body of published literature is limited. Kirk's Shared Fate Theory (1964, 1981) was the only theoretical framework available which focused exclusively on adoptive parenthood. This provided useful insight into some aspects of adoptive parenthood. Kirk's indexes and framework were useful tools in formulating major parts of this research. However, additional research and theory about adoption would have been beneficial, particularly in the development of the indexes measuring the independent variables.

Research Instruments

Kirk's indexes of empathy, acknowledgement-of-difference, and communication have been used to a limited degree by other researchers. The remainder of the measures--adoptive parent satisfaction, parent's perception of agency position, entitlement, awareness of the open birth record issue, and child development information--were developed by the researcher. More refined and tested instruments may have been better able to assess the independent variables.

Future Research

Suggestions for future research derived from this study may be divided into two categories. The first category focuses on additional analyses of the data from this study, on revising the instruments, and on expanding the sample to include a more heterogeneous group of adoptive parents. The second category presents research ideas beyond this study.

It would be of interest, in future analyses of the data from this study, to address the following questions. What impact does the length of time between marriage and the adoption of the first child have on parents' attitudes about the open record issue? Do parents of only one adopted child respond differently to the open record issue than parents of more than one child? Do parents who adopted children from Lutheran Social Services before more liberal legislation was passed in 1977 differ from those who adopted children after this change? Finally, do the parents from the four agencies differ in their responses on the significant variables in the final regression equation and on demographic characteristics such as income level, occupation, and

occupation?

In addition, further development and refinement of the instruments to assess the concepts of empathy, communication, entitlement, and acknowledgement-of-difference is needed. Factor analysis was beneficial in pointing out the shortcomings of these composite measures and pointed to some revisions of the indexes which would improve them for future use.

The adoptive parent sample included only two black adoptive parents. Future research of adoptive parents' attitudes about the open birth record issue should include, if possible, parents of different races and socioeconomic classes.

Last, the inclusion of the agency variables in the final regression analysis evolved from the earlier findings in the study. Even though the potential impact of the agency was recognized in the formulation of the study and in the variable, parent's impression of agency position, the agencies themselves were not included in the hypotheses formulated for this study. Future research should include the agency variables, using another adoptive parent sample, to test their significance in influencing adoptive parents' attitudes regarding issues of secrecy and openness in adoption.

The second category of suggestions projects research beyond the focus of this adoptive parent study related to the open birth record issue. Questions about what the other parties in adoption--adoptees and birth parents--think about the open record issue are of great importance since many states are considering legislation to change current adoption laws. Also, what effects do different kinds of legislation have on the

parties in adoption and on the institution of adoption? What have been the outcomes of searches and reunions to all the parties in adoption? In addition, an investigation into open adoption, where confidentiality between birth parents and adoptive parents is not considered to be important, may provide new insight into openness versus secrecy issues in adoption. A qualitative approach may provide a basis for further study in this area.

An investigation into the adoption process of agencies would be most useful. What role the agencies see themselves playing, what services they offer to birth parents, adoptive parents and adoptees, and how much contact they continue to have with the parties in adoption would help in the understanding of agency functioning. It would be interesting to learn what role agencies believe they should have regarding conveying information, which had been kept in confidence by the agencies, to parties in adoption if the laws were changed providing for access to such information.

A study which attempts to understand some of the psychological issues in adoptive families appears to be a needed study. What impact does self-esteem of the members of the family have on communication within the family and a sense of integration? How do the parties in adoption deal with feelings of loss, separation, and deprivation? Most parties in adoption are confronted with these issues. For adoptive parents' infertility, acknowledgement of the biological parents of the adopted child, and independence of their child in adulthood are important issues which may foster feelings of loss, separation, and deprivation. Birth parents must deal with their loss and separation

from the children they relinquish for adoption and with the deprivation they feel because of their inability to be caregivers to their children. Adoptees deal with the realization that their parents are not their biological parents and that they are unlikely to be able to learn about their heritage easily. These circumstances may cause adoptees to feel a sense of deprivation, separation, and loss.

Last, what impact do societal attitudes about adoption have on the parties in adoption?. What are these attitudes and how are they displayed? How do the media present adoption issues? Do stereotypes about adoption have an influence on adoptees' sense of well-being and worth?

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APPENDIX A
Questionnaire

ADOPTIVE PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following items are about a number of aspects of adoption.

Please respond with reference to the oldest child adopted from the agency which contacted you about this study.

It is important that you answer all the questions marking only the one answer that most closely represents your response to each question. (Circle the number of your answer for each statement)

Since the adoption of your child have you:

1. Wondered what your words about adoption mean to your adopted child?
 1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN

2. Tried to imagine how your child feels (or will feel) about being adopted?
 1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN

3. Thought that some day your child might worry about his/her background?
 1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN

4. Wished that you might understand adoption from the point of view of your child?
 1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN

5. Considered that your child may wonder whether he/she looks like the birth parents?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

6. Wondered whether your child has been or will be subjected to negative comments about adoption?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

How important do you believe the following items are? (Please circle the number of your answer for each statement.)

7. That you tell your child that he/she has been adopted?

1. NOT IMPORTANT
2. SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT
3. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
4. IMPORTANT
5. VERY IMPORTANT

8. That you talk with your adopted child about the difference between birth and adoption?

1. NOT IMPORTANT
2. SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT
3. SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
4. IMPORTANT
5. VERY IMPORTANT

9. How would you respond if your child personally asked for the reason(s) why his/her birth parents did not keep him/her?

1. WOULD NOT TELL THE REASONS BUT WOULD MAKE UP A STORY
2. WOULD TELL THE CHILD THAT THIS NEED NOT BE HIS/HER CONCERN
3. WOULD CHANGE THE SUBJECT
4. TELL SOME OF THE REASONS BUT HIDE ANY NEGATIVE FACTS
5. TELL THE REASONS AS YOU KNOW THEM

10. Many adoptive parents have expressed difficulty in talking with their children about adoption issues. How do you feel about talking with your child about his/her adoption?

1. TENSE
2. UNEASY
3. SLIGHT DISCOMFORT

4. AT EASE
5. COMFORTABLE

11. How often have you personally been asked by your child for information about either the birth mother or birth father?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

12. How often has your child asked about the circumstances of his/her birth such as birth weight, time of birth, place of birth, ethnic background?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

Since the adoption became legalized have you:

13. Wondered whether the birth mother ever thinks about the child?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

14. Wondered whether the birth father ever thinks about the child?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

15. Wondered whether the child may someday want to meet the birth parents?

1. NEVER
2. SELDOM
3. OCCASIONALLY
4. FREQUENTLY
5. OFTEN

16. Wondered about the current medical condition of the birth parents?

1. NEVER

2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN
17. During the past year, how often have you and your spouse talked together about your child's adoption?
1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN
18. During the past four years, how often have you and your spouse talked together about your child's adoption?
1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN
19. I feel that my adopted child truly "belongs" to me.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
20. There are times when I feel that I let my child attempt tasks that are too difficult for him/her.
1. NEVER
 2. SELDOM
 3. OCCASIONALLY
 4. FREQUENTLY
 5. OFTEN
21. At times it is difficult for me to discipline my child because he/she is adopted.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
22. My child tends to act in a responsible way for his/her age.
1. STRONGLY AGREE

2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
23. My child has so far lived up to the educational potential that I expected.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
24. My adopted child tends to resemble me or my spouse either in appearance or behavior traits.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
25. Adoptive parents seem to be more concerned about losing the affection of their adopted children than are biological parents of their children.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
26. One of the most difficult times of parenthood is when your son/daughter reaches adulthood and independence.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

When you adopted your child ideas about adoption were probably conveyed to you. The following are a few items about this. (Please circle the number of your answer for each statement)

27. When I adopted my child the impression I was given by the agency was that they should provide me with much non-identifying information about the birth parents including information about their social histories such as ethnic heritage, religion, and talents.

1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
28. When I adopted my child the impression I was given by the agency was that the less I knew about the birth parents the better.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
29. When I adopted my child the impression I got from the agency was that a little information about the birth parents such as hair and eye color, education, and age was all I needed to know about the birth parents.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
30. When I adopted my child the impression I was given by the agency was that the background information provided would one day be important to the child.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
31. When I adopted my child the impression I was given by the agency was that my social history and heritage and that of my spouse would be sufficient for the child.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
32. When I adopted my child the impression I was given by the agency was that the child's past was to be set aside and a totally new beginning, just as the child was born to me, was to take place.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE

3. UNCERTAIN
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

The following items are about your experience as an an adoptive parent.

33. Most of the time I believe that I have been a good parent to my adopted child.

1. STRONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. UNCERTAIN
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

34. There are times when I wish I had not adopted my child.

1. STRONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. UNCERTAIN
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

35. Being an adoptive parent has not lived up to my expectations of being a parent.

1. STRONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. UNCERTAIN
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

36. I believe being a parent to a biological child rather than an adopted child would be more satisfying.

1. STRONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. UNCERTAIN
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

37. Being a parent to my adopted child has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life.

1. STONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. UNCERTAIN
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

Next are statements regarding access of information to adult adoptees.

38. Adoption laws should permanently seal the original birth certificates of adoptees.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
39. Adoptive parents should be provided with all nonidentifying information about their child such as birth parents' medical history, talents, and ethnic background when the child is adopted.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
40. The adoptive parent-adoptee relationship may be strengthened if adult adoptees are allowed access to birth record information.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
41. It would be better for everyone involved in the adoption process if birth records would remain sealed so that adoptive families would be more like biological families.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
42. Adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain information about their medical backgrounds.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
43. Adult adoptees should be allowed to obtain information about their social histories.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE

3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
44. Information obtained from opening original birth certificates may be harmful to the welfare of adult adoptees.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
45. Adult adoptees have a basic right to the information on their original birth certificate.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
46. I believe the privacy of the birth mother is more important than adoptees' need for birth record information.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
47. All states should have laws providing adult adoptees access to birth record information.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
48. Some adult adoptees need the information that is in their original birth records for their sense of well-being and identity.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
49. Adoptive parents should gradually share all the nonidentifying information they have with their adopted child by the time the child reaches adulthood.

1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
50. I believe that the adoptive parent-adoptee relationship will be weakened if adult adoptees are allowed access to their birth records.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
51. Birth parents should not be allowed to obtain information about the children they surrendered for adoption, even when these children become adults.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
52. Adoptive parents will feel less like the "real" parents to their adopted children if birth records were opened.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
53. Adult adoptees should be allowed by law to search for their birth parents.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
54. The institution of adoption will be weakened if adult adoptees are allowed access to their birth records.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

55. A more open approach regarding adoption information would be better for adoptive families than a more confidential approach.
1. STRONGLY AGREE
 2. AGREE
 3. UNCERTAIN
 4. DISAGREE
 5. STRONGLY DISAGREE
56. At what age should adoptees have access to birth record information? (Circle one answer)
1. BEFORE AGE 16
 2. AGE 16 OR OLDER
 3. AGE 18 OR OLDER
 4. AGE 21 OR OLDER
 5. AGE 30 OR OLDER
 6. NEVER
57. Whose consent should be required in order for adult adoptees to obtain access to birth record information? (Circle one answer)
1. NO ACCESS TO RECORDS REGARDLESS OF CONSENT.
 2. ACCESS WITH CONSENT OF BOTH ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND BIRTH PARENTS.
 3. ACCESS WITH CONSENT OF BIRTH PARENTS ONLY.
 4. ACCESS WITH CONSENT OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS ONLY.
 5. ACCESS WITH NO CONSENT REQUIRED.
58. What information should be available to adult adoptees? (Circle each item which you think adoptees should have)
1. SELECTED NONIDENTIFYING INFORMATION--NEGATIVE ASPECTS ELIMINATED.
 2. ALL NONIDENTIFYING INFORMATION.
 3. THE REASONS HE/SHE WAS RELINQUISHED FOR ADOPTION.
 4. CURRENT MEDICAL UP-DATE OF BIRTH FAMILY--NONIDENTIFYING.
 5. CURRENT GENERAL UP-DATE OF BIRTH PARENTS--KINDS OF WORK, INTERESTS, WELL-BEING--NONIDENTIFYING.
 6. ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE

A number of state legislatures are presently considering changes in the adoption law. These changes would allow adult adoptees under various conditions access to information about their birth families which is presently unavailable to them through sealed record legislation. Some states have already passed such legislation.

59. How aware have you been of this debate regarding sealed records?
1. NOT AT ALL AWARE
 2. SOMEWHAT AWARE
 3. WELL AWARE

60. If so, how did you learn about the issues involved?
(Circle the number of those sources which were informative to you)

1. MASS MEDIA--TELEVISION, NEWSPAPERS, RADIO.
2. ADOPTION AGENCY--LETTERS, INFORMATIVE MEETINGS.
3. DISCUSSION WITH ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKERS.
4. THROUGH ADOPTIVE PARENT GROUP, SUPPORT GROUP, OR OTHER GROUP MEETINGS.
5. THROUGH READING ARTICLES OR BOOKS
6. OTHER (WRITE IN)

61. How informed do you believe you are to evaluate the issues involved in the sealed adoption record debate?

1. NOT INFORMED
2. SOMEWHAT INFORMED
3. WELL INFORMED

62. Would you like to participate in an adoptive parents' group to become better informed about the open birth record issue and to be able to discuss this issue with other parents?

1. NO
2. YES
3. HAVE ALREADY OR ARE PRESENTLY PARTICIPATING IN SUCH A GROUP.

63. Would you like to participate in an informal adoptive parents' group to discuss common areas of interest to adoptive parents?

1. NO
2. YES
3. HAVE ALREADY OR ARE PRESENTLY PARTICIPATING IN SUCH A GROUP.

Our ideas of what it means to be a parent and our knowledge of child development come from many sources.

64. Circle the different sources of child development information that have been important to you.

1. CHILD DEVELOPMENT, CHILD PSYCHOLOGY, OR PARENTING CLASSES IN HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE.
2. WORKSHOPS OR LECTURES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT
3. PARENT SUPPORT GROUP
4. BOOKS AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT
5. PARENTS AND FRIENDS
6. PROFESSIONALS (Circle which ones)
 - A. PEDIATRICIAN
 - B. MINISTER OR PRIEST
 - C. SOCIAL WORKER

We would like some information about your children.

65. Would you please list the ages of your adopted children at this time. Also would you tell us how old your child was when you adopted him/her. (write ages in the appropriate blanks)

1. FEMALE PRESENT AGE AGE AT ADOPTION

2. MALE PRESENT AGE AGE AT ADOPTION

66. Would you please list the ages of your biological children. (Write ages in the appropriate blanks)

1. FEMALE PRESENT AGE

2. MALE PRESENT AGE

Last we would like the following information.

67. Your sex. (Circle the number of your answer)

1. FEMALE

2. MALE

68. Your race. (Fill in) _____

69. Your present marital status. (Circle number)

1. MARRIED TO THE SPOUSE WITH WHOM I ADOPTED CHILDREN

2. DIVORCED

3. SEPARATED

4. WIDOWED

5. REMARRIED

6. OTHER (Specify) _____

70. What were the circumstances that led to your decision to adopt a child?

1. UNABLE TO PRODUCE A CHILD BECAUSE OF INFERTILITY PROBLEMS.

2. UNABLE TO PRODUCE A CHILD BECAUSE OF PREGNANCY COMPLICATIONS SUCH AS MISCARRIAGES.

3. DEATH OF A CHILD

4. DESIRE FOR A CHILD OF THE OPPOSITE SEX FROM MY BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN.

5. DESIRE TO REAR ANOTHER CHILD EVEN THOUGH I HAVE BIOLOGICAL

CHILDREN.

6. OTHER (Specify) _____
71. Your birth year. (Fill in) _____
72. Number of years of education. _____
73. Kind of work you do. _____
74. Are you employed outside the home? (Circle your answer)
1. NO
 2. YES (PART-TIME)
 3. YES (FULL-TIME)
75. Is your spouse employed outside the home?
1. NO
 2. YES
 3. NOT MARRIED
76. Family income. (Before taxes)
1. Less than \$10,000
 2. \$10,000 to \$19,999
 3. \$20,000 to \$29,999
 4. \$30,000 to \$39,999
 5. \$40,000 to \$49,999
 6. \$50,000 and over
77. In what year were you married to the spouse with whom you adopted children? (Fill in) _____
78. If you had the opportunity to talk with a prospective adoptive couple, what would you tell them about adoptive parenthood?

79. Some adoptive parents who have been unable to produce children indicate that infertility issues have been difficult to resolve. Have you found this to be true? Could you describe some of your feelings about this and describe circumstances and events which cause you to think over this area?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about adoptive parenthood? If so, please use this space for that purpose. Also, any comments you wish to make that you think may help us in future efforts to understand issues of importance to adoptive parents will be appreciated.

Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B
Form Letters



The Children's Home Society of North Carolina, Inc.

114

Administrative Office: 740 Chestnut Street
Mrs. G. Allen Mebane, President

P.O. Box 6587

Greensboro, N.C. 27405

Telephone (919) 274-1538

Miss Ruth McCracken, Executive Director

November 1983

Dear Friends:

The Children's Home Society has been planning, for several months, with Mrs. Shirley Geissinger regarding participation in a research project in connection with her advanced degree at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Mrs. Geissinger is an adoptive parent herself and her research centers on adoptive family relationships and attitudes.

Mrs. Geissinger has approached four adoption agencies asking for their participation. The Children's Home Society has agreed to participate along with two public agencies here in North Carolina and another private adoption agency in Minnesota. Mrs. Geissinger has met with me and with other members of our professional staff.

We have agreed to be in touch with 50 CHS families who have adopted young children during the period 1960-1980. We have randomly sampled our families and you and your family have been selected. We have not shared your name or address with Mrs. Geissinger but we have agreed to be in touch with you in order to give you the opportunity to decide whether or not you wish to participate in this project. If you do wish to participate, we ask that you return the enclosed postcard directly to Mrs. Geissinger who will then send a questionnaire to be completed by each of you as adoptive parents.

We have carefully reviewed the questionnaire and we believe that the information which Mrs. Geissinger is seeking, when the project is completed and the final report is made, will be most helpful to us as we constantly strive to improve our adoption service. It is our hope that you will feel that you wish to participate but, of course, the decision is yours.



AREA OFFICES: Asheville, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Greenville, Jacksonville, Raleigh and Wilmington

A United Way Service

Founded in 1902



Our agreement with Mrs. Geissinger is that she will share the results of her study, not only with the agencies but also with the adoptive parents who participate if they so desire. The Children's Home Society enthusiastically endorses this research project and we are glad that you are one of the CHS families who will be given the opportunity to participate if you wish to do so.

Sincerely yours,

(Miss) Ruth McCracken
Executive Director

RMcC/dz
Enclosures

Orange County Department of Social Services

300 W. TRYON STREET
HILLSBOROUGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27278

116

November 10, 1983

BOARD:
JANICE SCHOPLER, CHAIRPERSON
SAM ENGLISH
SHIRLEY MARSHALL
DR. THOMAS DENTON
R.J. MURPHY, M.D.

DIRECTOR:
THOMAS M. WARD

TELEPHONE:
HILLSBOROUGH OFFICE 988-4501, 967-9251
HILLSBOROUGH OFFICE 732-8361, 732-8181
CHAPEL HILL OFFICE 829-0446

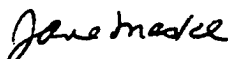
Dear Adoptive Parents,

We have recently been asked by Shirley Geissinger, a doctoral candidate at UNC-G, to provide a random sample of adoptive parents we have worked with in the past to aid her in her research.

We are supportive of Mrs. Geissinger's project, as we feel that adoptive families and professionals alike will benefit from research about the adoption process.

We have maintained confidentiality and have not given out your name or address. We encourage you to participate in this study, although you are not obligated to do so.

With best regards,

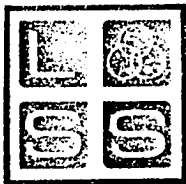


Mrs. Jane Maske,
Adoption Worker



Thomas M. Ward,
Director

JM: jk



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MINNESOTA

November 30, 1983

Dear Adoptive Parents:

I am writing to ask for your consideration in participating in a research project which will focus on the views and concerns of adoptive parents. As adoptive parents, you are our best resource for information regarding adoption practices and policies. Therefore, your contribution is very important.

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research project is entirely up to you. I want to assure you that only you will forward your name and address to the researcher. Please review the enclosed materials. If you are willing to participate in the project, complete the enclosed form and send it directly to Mrs. Shirley Geissinger. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for giving this research project your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Eldridge".

Patricia Eldridge, ACSW
Director, Adoption Counseling Services

PE/rn

Enclosure



GUILFORD COUNTY

November 29, 1983

The Guilford County Department of Social Services, along with several other agencies, has agreed to assist Mrs. Shirley Geissinger with research she is doing in relation to adoption. Please see her letter enclosed. We support Mrs. Geissinger's efforts and are sending this letter to a random sample of families with whom we have placed a child between 1960 and 1980.

To protect your right to privacy, this correspondence is being mailed to you by the Guilford County Department of Social Services so that you will have an opportunity to make your own choice about participating in the study.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Helen D. Alspaugh
Supervisor of Adoption Services

HDA:rs
Enclosure

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Post Office Box 3388 • Greensboro, N.C. 27402 • 373-3701
Post Office Box 1142 • High Point, N.C. 27261 • 886-4831

FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER

Department of Child Development and Family Relations

University of North Carolina

GREENSBORO, N. C. 27412

November 14, 1983

119

Dear Adoptive Parents,

As an adoptive parent and a researcher in child development and the family, I have been particularly interested in the area of adoption. Adoption issues have recently received considerable attention in the media. However, adoption has received little study by researchers in fields concerned with the family. Clearly there is a need to learn about adoption processes and their impact on individuals and families. I am writing this letter to you to ask for your participation in a study which focuses on the views and concerns of adoptive parents. Increased knowledge in this area may help provide a basis for informed decision-making by legislators and policy makers and for more informed adoptive families.

Four adoption agencies have agreed to contact adoptive parents concerning participation in this study. Your participation will provide valuable information. Fathers and mothers who agree to participate will each receive a questionnaire which is to be completed individually and returned to me. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of obtaining the views of fathers as well as mothers in research about the family and I encourage fathers to participate.

Parents who agree to be a part of this study should return to me the enclosed postcard with their names and addresses. Participation in this study is of course voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call. The telephone number is (919) 933-0705. Also, if you would like for me to share the findings of this study with you, please indicate this on the postcard.

Adoption issues can touch sensitive areas. In order to assure complete confidentiality no names or identifying marks will be placed on the questionnaires.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Shirley Geissinger

FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER

120

Department of Child Development and Family Relations

University of North Carolina

GREENSBORO, N. C. 27412

January 4, 1984

In December a questionnaire concerning adoptive parenthood was sent to you. Your questionnaire has not been received by us at this time. If you have already completed and returned it please accept our thanks. If not, now that the busy holiday season is past, please take a little time to do so.

Your agreement to participate in this study is very much appreciated. If you recall, your name was randomly selected from the agency which contacted you about our study. It is extremely important that we are able to include your responses to the questionnaire in the study.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me, collect (919-933-0705) and I will get another one in the mail to you.

Sincerely yours,

Shirley Geissinger

FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER

Department of Child Development and Family Relations

University of North Carolina

GREENSBORO, N. C. 27412

January 31, 1984

In December I wrote to you seeking your opinions on issues concerning adoptive parenthood. Your agreement to participate in this study is very much appreciated. As of today we have not yet received your questionnaires. If you have already completed and returned them, please accept our thanks.

This research was undertaken because of the lack of knowledge in this area of adoption. Increased understanding of adoptive parenthood could be beneficial to adoptees, adoptive parents, adoption agencies, and policy-making bodies.

I am writing to you again because of the significance each questionnaire has to the usefulness of this study. Your name was selected through a scientific sampling process. In order for the results of this study to be representative of adoptive parents from the four agencies participating in the study, it is essential that each person in the sample return his or her questionnaire.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaires, or they got misplaced, please call me, collect (919-933-0705) and I will get one in the mail to you.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Sincerely yours,

Shirley Geissinger