PREDICTORS OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF ADOPTION AMONG U.S. WOMEN BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

A Thesis

by

CHRISTINE ELIZABETH KLUCSARITS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2007

Major Subject: Sociology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee, Dudley L. Poston, Jr.
Committee Members, Barbara Finlay
William Alex McIntosh
Head of Department, Mark Fossett

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ABSTRACT

Predictors of the Likelihood of Adoption Among U.S. Women

by Race and Ethnicity. (May 2007)

Christine Elizabeth Klucsarits, B.A., The College of New Jersey

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Dudley L. Poston, Jr.

This thesis utilizes a series of seven logistic regression models to examine the predictors of the likelihood of adoption among U.S. women based on the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6. The individual characteristics that have been found most influential in determining adoption behavior in past studies were examined, including age at the time of the interview, parity, fecundity status, and socioeconomic status. A special focus was placed upon the relationship between the race and ethnicity of a woman and her adoption behavior, which has received limited attention in the adoption literature.

The results of this analysis suggest that the main determinants of adoption are undergoing change. While findings on the relationship between a woman's age and her likelihood of adoption are consistent with past research, the relationships of parity, marital status, fecundity status and socioeconomic status with adoption behavior each exhibit surprising developments. Additionally, the results of this analysis reveal that race and ethnicity are important variables in terms of the adoption behavior of U.S. women. The implications of these results, as well as the need for more comprehensive adoption data, are also discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Adoption is a topic that is both interesting and relevant for demographic analysis for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it affects the lives of a significant number of people in a very complex manner (Carp 2002). Second, the laws surrounding adoption, as well as the manner in which adoption is generally regarded by society, provide insight into the norms and values assigned to and associated with family and kinship. After all, the United States is "a nation that sanctifies blood kinship" (Carp 2002: 2), and so adoption can be thought to be a "subversive challenge" to this "core tenet of American kinship ideology" that genes and bloodlines determine the strongest familial attachments, while any other type of relationship is a lesser connection (Gailey 2000: 296). Finally, because adoption is essentially a complex undertaking designed to match children in need of homes to the best families possible, it is extremely important to both recognize and understand adoption trends so that this system might be as effective and efficient as possible.

Prior to the nineteenth century, the institution of adoption was virtually nonexistent in the United States. While, prior to the official formation of the U.S., missionary groups in the British colonies were known to attempt to "adopt" Native American children, these endeavors were usually unsuccessful once the indigenous groups came to understand the exact terms of the adoption, particularly the exclusive

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This thesis follows the style of the *American Sociological Review*.

possession of the children by the missionaries (Gailey 2000: 299). Inheritance was based exclusively on blood lineage as it had been back in England, superseding any legal necessity to provide a means for childless individuals to secure unrelated heirs. Furthermore, most dependent children were dealt with via indentured servitude or apprenticeship; those who were too young were often housed in an almshouse until they were of a suitable age for labor. There was also a practice known as "informal transfer" whereby dependent children would be sent to substitute families, often on farms or plantations with a substantial need for child labor. In fact, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, no comprehensive adoption laws existed; petitions for formal adoption were usually handled on a case-by-case basis. However, as the number of dependent children increased, these methods became inadequate. This prompted the development of an official adoption law in Massachusetts in 1851, both the first comprehensive adoption statute and the first instance in which the interests of the child were given weight (Sokoloff 1993: 18). All other states in the union had followed suit by 1931 (Simon and Altstein 2002: 39). During the late 1940s to 1950s, the practice unofficially expanded to include intercountry (and thus transracial) adoptions when, as Gailey explains, "as part of the US postwar de-Nazification program and public relations efforts to paint the US military occupation as a friendly and healing force," many German and other European war orphans were relocated to families in the United States, relocations that frequently entailed both religious and racial matching (2000: 299). The adoption statues of each state were extended to officially include transracial adoption by 1985 (Simon and Altstein 2002: 39).

Clearly, the institution of adoption has undergone considerable development over time. In addition to a shift in focus from potential benefits for adopters to the best interests of the adoptees, there have been increases in the diversity of those interested in adopting a child. Infertile and subfecund white couples have been joined as potential adopters by singles, gays and lesbians, both individuals and couples of color, those simply looking to complete their family, and those motivated to adopt for purely humanitarian reasons. Transracial and transcultural adoptions are no longer uncommon. These changes and developments in the pool of potential adopters are some of the reasons that adoption is so interesting to laypeople and the media. Sometimes, it is the less common forms of adoption that attract the most attention. Gailey notes that both intercountry adoption and domestic transracial adoption attract "disproportionate media coverage and thereby [help] to shape adoption discourse far beyond the actual numbers involved" (2000: 295). Unfortunately, the effect is not always positive, such as when the media coverage results in "sweeping, wrongheaded generalizations" which can have results ranging from "stigmatizing adoptive families, to making would-be parents wonder if adoption is a reasonable option." Oftentimes, other countries will even begin to question whether institutionalization is better or safer for these children then allowing them to be adopted (Pertman 2005).

Consequently, adoption research is even more relevant, especially with such high stakes as the futures of children in need of homes, a group that comprises one of the more vulnerable segments of society. While a wealth of information is available on topics such as guidance for prospective adoptive parents or the effects of adoption on

children, demographic research per se on adoption is fairly limited. Within the demographic literature, there are several studies examining the characteristics of adopters; they have concluded that adoption behavior tends to be based on age, parity, fecundity status, and socioeconomic status (Bachrach 1983; Bachrach 1986; Poston and Cullen 1986; Mosher and Bachrach 1996). But there are gaps in the literature. These include any extensive investigation into the links between adoption and the race and ethnicity of the adoptive parents and children. Though race and ethnicity have been addressed in some of the demographic adoption literature, it has only been in a limited way, such as distinguishing between the behavior of blacks and nonblacks (Bachrach, London, and Maza 1991; Mosher and Bachrach 1996). Differences do exist between racial and ethnic categories in terms of adoptive behavior and characteristics; these differences simply have not been explored in much depth, or in any depth at all for individuals of most races besides whites and African Americans. Likewise, little is known about how the well-documented relationships between adoptive behavior and age, parity, fecundity status, and socioeconomic status vary according to the race and ethnicity of the adoptive parent. However, as the United States is a country in which race and ethnicity are associated with a history of discrimination, it is of the utmost importance to understand the manner in which they function as determining factors among potential adopters and the society at large in which these potential adopters exist.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze recent and current developments in adoption trends. Specifically, it examines the characteristics of female adopters in the United States, and gives particular emphasis to the effects of race and ethnicity on a

woman's likelihood of adoption; these are two topics that have received limited or no attention as predictors in previous adoption research. The newly available data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) Cycle Six are used; this is one of the "only available sources of nationally representative information on adoption" (Mosher and Bachrach 1996: 8).

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II reviews previous literature pertaining to this topic, especially the history of race and adoption in the US, and the primary variables that have been found to predict the likelihood of adoption among US women. Chapter III offers a description of the data and introduces the logistic models to be estimated, as well as the hypotheses to be tested. Chapter IV analyzes the results of the logistic models. Finally, Chapter V provides a summary of the results, examines their significance, and explores some of the implications for future research on adoption as well as for the institution of adoption as a whole.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study of the likelihood of adoption should include attention to the racial and ethnic components and how they have changed over the decades, discussion of how race and ethnicity has shaped decisions in adoption court cases and legislation, and a review of previous demographic investigations of adoption and adoption behaviors. This chapter includes each of these elements.

The History of Adoption

To truly understand how race and ethnicity is related to a woman's act of adopting a child, it is necessary to examine how the institution of adoption developed, and when and how race and ethnicity became critical both in terms of the adoptive parents and their adoptive children.

As mentioned previously, the cultural legacy born by the United States as a former colony of England dictated that inheritance be based exclusively on blood lineage, eliminating the necessity to provide laws whereby childless individuals could secure unrelated heirs. Instead, most dependent children were dealt with via indentured servitude or apprenticeship as they had been in England (Carp 2002; Bussiere 1998; Sokoloff 1993). However, it was not long before the U.S. departed from this method of managing dependent children in favor of adoption-like circumstances, even though England would not pass its first adoption statute until 1926 (Carp 2002: 3). This different approach in the U.S. was due partly to a more tolerant attitude toward

nonconsanguine families, which resulted, ironically, from the British practice of taking unrelated children into homes as apprentices in a manner similar to today's foster care. In fact, it was not unheard of for informal adoptions to result from such arrangements in Colonial America, particularly in Puritan Massachusetts or Dutch New York. By the early nineteenth century, adoption was a recognized practice utilized by female managers of orphan asylums to place children in homes instead of into indentured servitude, but it was by no means the "preferred system of child care" (Carp 2002: 3). Even when children were adopted into families, they were rarely treated as better than servants. Consequently, it was believed that uniting children with their blood relatives was the best possible placement, with adoption used only when the former was infeasible (Carp 2002: 4).

The U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century experienced both an increase in immigration and urbanization, the unfortunate result of which was significant urban and rural poverty. Simultaneously, the number of formal adoptions increased. At this point, adoptions consisted primarily of private petitions by individual couples, many of whom sought to change their children's names to legalize informal adoptions. The number of children living in poverty was hardly affected by such adoptions. Thus, there was pressure on public almshouses and private orphanages to absorb these children at low costs and to ultimately turn them out as fully-functioning members of society. Eventually, the failure of the institutions along these lines led to families taking on orphan children. But there was a need for a large number of families willing to take in these children (Carp 2002: 4-5). Families were found initially on farms in New York,

Connecticut, and Pennsylvania (Sokoloff 1993: 20) where farmers often had a need for additional child laborers. Soon, many thousands of children were also shipped from the northeast by train out west to the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas (Carp 2002: 5) in a process known as "informal transfer" (Sokoloff 1993: 18) on "orphan trains" (Carp 2002: 5). These placements resulted in an unknown number of adoptions. However, "the origins of America's first adoption laws [are often attributed to] the increase in the number of middle-class farmers desiring to legalize the addition of [these] children to their families" (Carp 2002: 5). The very first adoption statutes were passed in Mississippi in 1846, followed by Texas in 1850 (Carp 2002: 5). However, these statutes did little more than provide a legal procedure for adopting a child, and offered virtually nothing in the way of regulations or standards. It is for this reason that the adoptions provided for under these statutes are often referred to as adoption by "deed" (Carp 2002: 5; Bussiere 1998: 5).

Carp (2002) shows how the development of adoption over time may be viewed according to five main "watersheds." Though all are very significant to the history of adoption, the fourth and fifth have the most consequential implications for race and ethnicity. The first watershed follows shortly after the passing of the first adoption statutes and came about in 1851 with the authorization by the Massachusetts legislature of "An Act to Provide for the Adoption of Children." This piece of legislation is often regarded as both the first *comprehensive* adoption statute and the first instance in which the interests of the child were given weight (Sokoloff 1993: 18). Judges were now able to determine the adequacy of prospective adoptive parents and to analyze whether

situations seemed "fit and proper" for adoption to occur (Bussiere 1998: 5), while the adoptive children were released from all legal obligations to their biological parents (Carp 2002: 6). Furthermore, it provided a legislative model for the other states, with twenty-four states passing similar laws over the next twenty-five years (Carp 2002: 6) and all other states in the union following suit by 1931 (Simon and Altstein 2002: 39).

The second watershed took place during the Progressive Era of 1900-1917, a period which featured "the growth of sectarian child welfare institutions, the professionalization of social workers, the standardization of adoption procedures, and an expanded state role in regulating adoptions" (Carp 2002: 7). Importantly, this was the period when adoption became a popular topic of discussion, with features in well-known women's magazines encouraging women to adopt children as part of their civic duty and stressing the ability of a mother's love to override hereditary differences. It was during this period that individuals began to lobby state legislatures for child welfare reform. This led to the development of the 1917 Children's Code of Minnesota, the first state law requiring that all prospective adoptive homes be investigated for their suitability, and providing that there be a six-month probationary residence period for each adoption (Carp 2002: 7-8). It was also during this period that the U.S. Children's Bureau was established, which "quickly became the leading institution for providing the public with information about adoption" (Carp 2002: 9). This was followed by the founding of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in 1921, an organization that would play a key role in the development of adoption standards (Carp 2002: 9). Despite the increase in legislation and regulations, the process of adoption did not shed the stigma that

nonconsanguine relationships were socially unacceptable, tainted, or inherently flawed, and that adoptive children themselves were illegitimate and subject to "bad heredity" (Carp 2002: 9). These stigma were so pervasive that infertility had yet to become a significant motivator for couples to adopt. One attempt to combat this problem was "matching," a process whereby adoption agencies would try to place children with families of similar physical, ethnic, racial, religious, and intellectual traits (Carp 2002: 10). Over the course of the rest of the century, this method became an item of great debate both in and out of the courtroom.

> The third watershed in adoption history was World War II, during which: …adoption was transformed by a series of external circumstances—wartime necessity, economic changes, new ideas in social work, postwar affluence, an increase in the number of children available for adoption, repudiation of the standard of the "unadoptable" child, more liberal attitudes on race, and strong demand by childless couples for adopted children. The changes of the war years affected birth parents' age, education, occupation, and marital status; adopted children's age and birth status; and adoptive parents' child preferences and motivations for adopting (Carp 2002: 12).

Essentially, the institution now underwent a transformation. A very important element of this transformation was the decrease in eugenic stigma that occurred because of advances in scientific and medical research. Generally, the changes that took place caused an increase in the rate of adoptions, especially as parenthood became seen as patriotic and childlessness as shameful. As a result, between 1937 and 1965, the annual

number of adoptions grew from 16,000 to 142,000 (Carp 2002: 12-13).

Though the third watershed included broadening of the definition of the "adoptable" child, it was the fourth watershed in which the greatest change took place regarding the types of children sought for adoption. This watershed began after the war, when social workers decided that essentially any child in need of a family and for whom a family could be found was an "adoptable" child. This new definition extended to disabled, minority, older, and foreign-born children (Carp 2002: 13-14). Thus, race and ethnicity finally came to the forefront as serious factors in adoption. These were factors that had not been recognized in the previous adoptions between white couples and white children. Despite the fact that the civil rights movement was still a decade or so away, it was becoming more and more common for adoption agencies to provide services to African-American children. In fact, in 1958 occurred what Ishizawa and colleagues describe as "the first domestic 'transracial' project," an effort on the part of the CWLA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to promote the adoption of American-Indian children by non-Indian parents (2006: 1209). Nearly 400 children were placed via this program, most of whom into non-Indian homes (Silverman 1993: 105). It was also around this time that the practice of adoption unofficially expanded to include intercountry adoptions in an effort to accommodate the thousands of foreign children left without homes following World War II (Simon and Altstein 2002; Stolley 1993). Gailey explains that during the late 1940s to 1950s, "as part of the US postwar de-Nazification program and public relations efforts to paint the US military occupation as a friendly and healing force," many German and other European war orphans were relocated to

families in the United States (2000: 299). These relocations frequently entailed both religious and racial matching—a rather simple task when dealing with European orphans, but considerably more difficult (and even discouraged) when trying to place Japanese orphans. Most of these early intercountry/transracial adoptions were mainly available to white military families. In fact, as Gailey points out, intercountry adoptions essentially "traced the pathway of postwar U.S. military occupation" up until the Vietnam War (2000: 301). In other words, the adoption of children from a given country by U.S. citizens was always close behind U.S. military involvement in that country, making it very hard to separate the act of adoption from military efforts to instill American values on the people of the occupied nations (Gailey 2000). This period technically constituted the first upsurge in intercountry adoptions, followed by a similar surge after the Korean War (Carp 2002; Silverman 1993). Yet the upsurge which followed the Korean War was notable in that it represented the first time in history that "relatively large numbers of Western couples—mostly in the United States—were adopting children racially and culturally different from themselves" (Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994: 9). Accordingly, the color hierarchy was extended beyond simply black and white to include "yellow," and the distinction between black and "yellow" was quite salient. Korean or mixed white and Korean children could be placed for adoption in the U.S., but children of black soldiers could not (Gailey 2000: 300). Echoes of Asian children being acceptable in the U.S., but not black children, are still evident throughout the institution today. One needs only to look to popular culture and advertising, where images of "little adoptees with their White parents can now be found everywhere"

(Shiao, Tuan, and Rienzi 2004: 3), whereas the same can not be said of little African American children.

It was not long after this fourth watershed that the fifth, and arguably the most critical, came about. While this watershed was notably characterized by the movement toward open adoption and adoption rights, more applicable to this thesis is the manner in which it also continued the placement of previously "unadoptable" children, particularly African Americans and children with special needs. However, such placements were accompanied by an interesting discovery: in an effort to procure homes for as many of these newly-adoptable children as possible, social workers found there were some *white* families requesting *black* children for adoption, and others at least accepting them when petitioned by caseworkers (Carp 2002: 15). Finally, the race of the prospective adoptive parents was assigned the status of a variable in efforts to place children. This began a movement during which thousands of black babies were placed with white families, giving momentum to the transracial adoption movement which had started with the war orphans of World War II. This momentum was increased by a revision of the CWLA's adoption standards in order to discourage the use of racial background as a determinant in itself when selecting a home for a child. Ultimately, the number of transracial adoptions peaked at 2,574 in 1971. Yet soon thereafter, transracial adoption began to be both challenged and denounced by individuals both inside and outside the social work profession, and was condemned as "cultural genocide" by the National Association of Black Social Workers (Silverman 1993: 105-106). Questions arose among black social workers as to whether transracial adoption placements were overriding efforts at finding

black homes for black children; concerns grew that transracial adoption was "diminishing and destroying the integrity of [the black] community" (Silverman 1993: 105). The argument had an effect and the number of transracial adoptions fell to 831 by 1975. An unfortunate consequence was that child welfare workers would opt to keep African-American children in foster homes even when transracial placements were available (Carp 2002: 15-16). Similarly, concerns arose about the welfare of Native American culture. The transracial adoptions of the Native American children promoted in 1958 were now, with the resurgence of Indian consciousness, more as "a final contemptuous form of robbery" (Simon and Altstein 2002: 31). This resulted in the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, which worked to keep Native American families and tribes "together and within their native environments" (Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994) by essentially preventing any adoption of Native American children by non-Native American parents, except in very select circumstances (Ishizawa et al. 2006: 1209). This was thought to promote the best interests of Native American children as well as the stability and security of the tribes and families (Bussiere 1998: 18).

Ironically, these anti-transracial adoption acts came at a time when the population of adoptable children in the U.S. was changing dramatically: there occurred a unique combination of factors including the sexual revolution of the 1960s, a new tendency for whites to delay childbearing, the legalization of abortion, greater access to birth control, and a reduce in the stigma attributed to unwed motherhood. All of these led to a steep decline in the number of healthy white infants available for adoption (Carp 2002; Gailey 2000; Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994; Sokoloff 1993). In fact, some

adoption agencies stopped taking requests for white babies altogether (Carp 2002: 16; Sokoloff 1993). One of the consequences was that the overall number of nonrelated adoptions fell considerably, by 41,500 over 5 years (Carp 2002: 16). This decline forced adoption agencies to reevaluate their racial and ethnic ideologies in order to maintain their role in the process, and this meant reevaluating transracial adoption despite the backlash (Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994: 1). One particular result was a heightened interest in intercountry adoption (Carp 2002; Bussiere 1998). However, the most popular countries of origin for these adoptions included South Korea, Colombia, India, the Philippines, and Guatemala, all countries from which children were considered "acceptably colored" within the U.S. racial hierarchy (Gailey 2000: 302). This made it very apparent that the lack of white babies did not necessarily force white prospective adoptive parents to challenge their concepts of race, but simply to seek out "white" alternatives. Yet agencies needed a means to stay competitive even when these alternatives were unavailable, and this necessitated revising their commitment to the matching concept. At this point in time, however, the matching concept was more than just a common agency practice; the entire institution of adoption was virtually operating under the legacy of this process which had begun so many years ago ostensibly to combat stigma and "ensure against adoptive failure" (Simon and Altstein 2002: 2). By now, many states had embraced the idea that potential parents and their adoptive children should be matched on as many characteristics—physical, intellectual, emotional, and cultural—as possible. The specifics of these requirements had been written into their adoption statutes. In fact, as explained by Simon and Altstein, "so

ingrained was the matching idea that its assumptions, especially those relating to religion and race, were operationalized into law under the rubric of a 'child's best interests'" (2002: 2). This meant that even though by 1971 the CWLA had reworded its position on matching such that it consisted more of "broad guidelines rather than precise definitions," this diminishing of the matching process was not enough to usurp it as a "classic principle of adoption practice" (Simon and Altstein 2002: 6). Thus, concerns grew into the 1980s and early 1990s that both adoption policies and practices across the country were still favoring placements according to race and ethnicity (Brooks et al. 1999: 167). Additionally, it was believed that matching policies were specifically delaying placements for children of color, resulting in a "disproportionate number of these children [languishing] for long periods in foster care or institutional settings" (Ishizawa et al. 2006: 1210). To address these concerns, Congress passed the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1995 (MEPA), which was later amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996. Under MEPA, any agency or entity that receives federal assistance is prohibited from delaying or denying the placement of a child on the basis of race, color, or national origin of either the adoptive parent or of the child, with the exclusion of Native American children (Ishizawa et al. 2006: 12010). Furthermore, states are required to put significant effort toward recruiting racial and ethnic minority adoptive parents (Bussiere 1998: 20). Most adoption agencies and organizations have followed suit, with many embracing the attitude of the CWLA that race should neither be a primary consideration in adoption placements nor disregarded entirely (Clemetson and Nixon 2006).

The passage of legislation such as MEPA worked to alleviate unnecessary delays in the placement of children based on racial or ethnic considerations, but it did so without much clarity regarding the degree to which race may be a factor before officially constituting unlawful discrimination (Brooks et al. 1999: 171). It also does not explicitly state whether a transracial adoption is to be regarded as an ideal solution, a viable option, or a last resort. Simon and Altstein address this issue by explaining:

> Very few, if any, responsible organizations or individuals support transracial adoption as a placement of first choice. Were there sufficient black families for all black children, Hispanic families for Hispanic children, Asian families for Asian children, and so forth, there probably would be no need for transracial adoption. An increase in efforts to locate minority families and especially black families for these children should be welcomed and supported by all reasonable people (2002: 31-32).

Unfortunately, there are not enough of these families; thus, efforts to locate minority families and transracial placements persevere.

Race and Ethnicity in the Legal Structure of Adoption

Though an important mode of family formation, adoption is a legal process at its core, whereby "a child's legal rights and duties toward his natural parents are terminated and similar rights and duties are created toward the child's adoptive parents" (Simon and Altstein 2002: 39). Because the race and ethnicity of the potential adoptive parents, the adoptable children, and the match or lack thereof between the two are such sensitive and pressing issues within the context of adoptions, they have become legal issues, and

subsequently the focus of numerous court cases. While "in the best interests of the child" has been the veritable mantra for deciding adoption cases over the years, the dimension of race further complicates the hotly debated and often ambiguous principle. Historically unequipped to come to satisfactory child welfare-based conclusions on their own, courts have relied heavily on the advice and recommendations of social workers to determine the competency of prospective adoptive parents. However, as Simon and Altstein explain, "the final decision as to whether it is in the child's best interest to permit prospective adoptive parents to adopt the child remains within the exclusive discretion of the presiding judge" (2002: 39). In cases where race or ethnicity is a central issue, this decision is also subject to the various statutes and case laws constituting the legal structure for adoption in the United States. Depending on the type and specifics of the adoption, any combination of state, federal, and international law may be involved (Bussiere 1998: 4). Simon and colleagues provide an excellent picture of the adoption legal structure:

> The legal structure for adoption consists of the adoption statutes, case law interpreting those statutes, and—perhaps most important—the placement practices of the public and private adoption agencies whose role it is, first, to provide services to parents who wish to place children for adoption and, second, to choose adoptive homes in which those children will be placed (1994: 15-16).

While these are statutes that outline adoption procedures, dictate who can adopt, and determine when a child is adoptable (Bussiere 1998: 4), this description illustrates the three technical levels to the legal structure for adoption. Thus, when any changes are

made on one level, resistance from the other two may make actual developments slow to take place and enforce. For instance, because the matching concept pervaded all three levels of this legal structure, the rewording of statutes deemphasizing the role of race and ethnicity in placements may not necessarily dictate immediate changes in practice by adoption agencies. Likewise, there may be significant variation in the interpretation of a given statute from case to case. This is further complicated by the fact that each state has its own statute, so variation in the type and interpretation of statutes exists not only in each state, but across the country (Bussiere 1998).

Transracial adoption finds itself at the center of such discrepancies because the laws surrounding it have changed considerably over time. But the interpretations of these laws have brought about much legal debate. In fact, interracial adoption was still illegal in many states up until the 1960s, though it is significant to note that oftentimes it was considered an "acceptable exception" for non-Asian Americans to adopt Asian war orphans (Ishizawa et al. 2006: 1209). Regardless, it was not until 1985 that every state officially included transracial adoption in its statute (Simon and Altstein 2002: 39). Even then, because it is often considered both a "highly charged racial issue and a rallying point symbolic of historical grievances," many adoption agencies are reluctant to actively offer support or encouragement to this particular type of child placement despite what the statutes may say in an effort not to draw attention to themselves (Simon and Altstein 2002: 13).

Decisions regarding child placement in court cases involving racial or ethnic factors have ranged from one extreme to the other, due partly to variation from court to

court and community to community in terms of racial and ethnic biases and prejudices. Generally, there has been "significant progress toward an approach where the primary focus is on the child's best interests *aside* from any considerations of race" (Simon and Altstein 2002: 51). Ultimately, what the history of adoption and the role of race and ethnicity within the legal structure of adoption have revealed is that both the race of the potential adoptive parents and the race of adoptable children are critical variables in the bigger picture of adoption behavior.

Specifically in relation to this thesis, the legacy of race in the history of adoption explains why different doors may open and close according to the race and ethnicity of potential adoptive parents. In the words of Ishizawa and colleagues, "the decision by prospective parents to adopt a child of a different race is most likely conditioned by their ideology of race in America and their personal experiences and understandings of it," personal experiences, and understandings that vary considerably based on the race ethnicity of these parents (2006: 1212). Such variation based on race and ethnicity may influence whether individuals elect to participate in or forgo participating in the adoption process altogether, and may dictate the types of experiences they have if they do choose to pursue adoption. The influence of race and ethnicity may affect the proclivities of racial or ethnic subgroups to adopt; that is, more- or less-educated racial subgroups may feel differently towards adoption than their similarly-educated racial counterparts, and thus may have different likelihoods of adopting. Likewise, racial subgroups of varying incomes, marital statuses, or fecundity statuses may have a higher or lower likelihood of adopting than their racial counterparts based on the interaction of race and these other

characteristics in the adoption process. This variation by race and ethnicity in these characteristics predicting of adoption is exactly what this thesis explores. However, in order to determine which factors should be considered in an examination of predictors of the likelihood of adoption, the literature on previous demographic work relating to adoption must be consulted. This is addressed in the next section.

Previous Demographic Work on Adoption

A number of prior studies have examined the characteristics of adopters. Most have found that adoption behavior tends to be based on age, parity, fecundity status, and socioeconomic status (Bachrach 1983; Bachrach 1986; Poston and Cullen 1986; Mosher and Bachrach 1996). For instance, Bachrach (1983) utilized data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), Cycle 2 to identify the most prominent characteristics of individuals who had adopted children other than stepchildren. The data used in her study were collected from ever-married women and single mothers 15 to 44 years of age. Unfortunately, this meant that never-married men and women were excluded, as well as women under 15 or over 44 years of age at the time of the interview. Bachrach pointed out, however, that (at that time) "such adoptions [were] still relatively rare" (1983: 860). The results of her study revealed that whether a woman was sterile, her parity, and her age at interview were all strongly associated with the likelihood of adopting. More specifically, "older women were more likely to have adopted than younger women, women with no births were more likely and women with two or more births less likely to have adopted than women with one birth, and women who were sterile for noncontraceptive reasons were more likely to have adopted than

other women" (1983: 862). Additionally, older women were more likely to have adopted than younger women, though Bachrach emphasized that since data on age at the time of adoption were not available, the statistical significance of age at the time of interview does not necessarily mean that older women have a greater propensity to adopt, but may reflect "the fact that older women have had a longer period of time in which to adopt" (1983: 861). Her results also indicated that the percentage of adopters was higher among the currently married (as compared to the previously married), but she found no statistically significant difference based on race. Finally, while women with incomes above the poverty level were more likely to have adopted than those with lower incomes, no statistically significant difference was found for the socioeconomic status indicator of educational attainment (1983: 861).

Poston and Cullen used the same data in their 1986 study, but also incorporated the results from both Cycle 1 and Cycle 3 for the purpose of comparison. They, too, concluded that "childless women, older women (between the ages of 35-44), and noncontraceptively sterile or subfecund women" were much more likely to have adopted a child (1986: 246). Also, they found a negative relationship between the number of biological children a woman had had and her odds of having adopted (1986: 246). Then, in their 1989 study, they again utilized the three cycles of NSFG data, but instead examined the *propensity* of women to adopt. This study was restricted to currently married non-Hispanic white women between the ages of 15 and 44. It is important to note for later discussion that this ethnic exclusion was used "because of the racial and ethnic differences in adoption behavior and voluntary and involuntary childlessness"

(1989: 169). Ultimately, parity was revealed to be the most important determinant in terms of the propensity to adopt, though fecundity status and age were also significant (as is the case with actual adopters). However, there was no way to connect whether having this propensity to adopt actually led to adoption-seeking or actual adoption behavior. Yet it is noteworthy that the same characteristics continue to come up again and again.

Though their work focused on the process of "adoption seeking" in the United States rather than having had completed an adoption, Bachrach, London and Maza also had similar findings in their 1991 study. They distinguished the concept of *adoption seeking* from actually adopting or having the propensity to adopt, defining it as "behavior that is intended to result in the adoption of a child" (1991: 705). Focusing on adoption seeking was intended to "investigate the circumstances that lead individuals to explore this alternative means of family formation, independent of whether an adoption occurs" (1991: 705). This study utilized the NSFG, Cycle 4, which included data from women aged 15-44 of all marital statuses, thus no longer limited to ever-married women and single mothers. Additionally, the study considered the effect of race on adoption seeking, though "race" in this instance meant either "black" or "nonblack." The investigators found statistically significant relationships among nonblack participants for fecundity status, having had one or more child deaths, having had two or more pregnancy losses, childlessness, whether a woman had ever sought infertility services, whether a woman desired more children than she expected to have, and whether a woman was currently or previously married; all of these increased the likelihood that a

woman had ever sought adoption. Additionally, age at interview was positively related to the likelihood of having sought adoption. However, there were considerably fewer significant relationships among black participants: one or more child deaths, having ever sought infertility services, educational attainment (specifically having "some college"), and age at interview were the only variables found to be significantly related to the likelihood of having sought adoption. Interestingly, no significant relationship was detected for nonblacks between educational attainment and having sought adoption, and Hispanic origin was not found to be significant among blacks or nonblacks. Despite these results, Bachrach, London and Maza concluded that simply exhibiting these factors was "not sufficient for seeking to occur," since among groups of women doing so, only about half actually ever sought adoption (1991: 715).

In a vein similar to Poston and Cullen's analysis focusing on propensity (1989) and Bachrach, London, and Maza's work on adoption seeking (1991), several surveys in recent years have sought to uncover attitudes toward adoption (Tyebjee 2003; Harris Interactive 2002; Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997). While attitudes clearly do not always predict behavior, they can provide insight about the particular characteristics associated with positive or negative inclinations and feelings toward adoption. The most comprehensive was the Benchmark Adoption Survey conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates to provide the "first in-depth look at American public attitudes toward the institution of adoption and the members of the adoption triad" (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997: ii). The survey was based on telephone interviews administered to a representative sample of 1,554 adults living in the

continental U.S., aged 18 and older, as well as an oversample of 50 African Americans (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997: iii). It provided a wealth of significant results about the common predictors of adoption and adoption attitudes such as education, race, and marital status. For instance, the results revealed a positive relationship between education and expressing support for adoption; individuals with a college degree were notably more likely than those with only a high school education to express unqualified support for adoption. Additionally, white individuals were three times as likely as African Americans to express unqualified support for adoption, while African Americans were considerably more likely to hold less-than-favorable opinions of adoption than Whites. Furthermore, married individuals were more likely to express unqualified support for adoption than unmarried individuals. Very interestingly, adoption attitudes were not found to vary according to age or family size (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997: 3). This result is contrary to most of the literature on adoption behavior, which finds a positive relationship between both age and parity with the likelihood of having adopted (Bachrach 1983; Bachrach 1986; Poston and Cullen 1986; Mosher and Bachrach 1996). The survey also revealed that African Americans have a higher likelihood of holding negative views of individuals who place their children for adoption compared to their white counterparts, typically disapproving of decisions to place children for adoption and finding such actions to be irresponsible, uncaring, and selfish (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997). Such attitudes could be a product of less personal experience with adoption, since only one in three blacks, as compared to nearly two in three whites, indicated having had personal experience with

adoption; and having personal experience was found to be positively related with favorable attitudes toward adoption (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997: 11). These attitudes could also be a function of the higher tendency of African Americans to conduct informal and related adoptions (Simon and Altstein 2002; Chandra et al. 1999; Mosher and Bachrach 1996; Stolley 1993) These are adoptions in which parental responsibility is assumed for a child without obtaining legal approval (Stolley 1993: 28-29) or in which a prior relationship existed between the adoptive parents and child (Bachrach 1986: 243-244), such as stepparent adoptions or adoptions by other non-parent relatives (Stolley 1993: 29). It is possible that the prevalence of these types of adoptive relationships makes putting one's child up for adoption seem unnecessary or like "giving up."

The National Adoption Attitudes Survey data also found relationships between race and attitudes toward adoption. The data revealed that Hispanics have a higher likelihood of considering adoption than both African American and white individuals, but that African Americans are more likely than either Hispanics or whites to consider adopting a child from foster care (Harris Interactive 2002). However, the findings differed regarding the relationship between adoption attitudes and both age and education: the data did not reveal education or income to be major factors in considering adopting, and yet did observe a connection between age and having considered adopting (Harris Interactive 2002).

A third survey was conducted by the Field Research Institute in California, and differed considerably in its scale from the first two, focusing only on 1,011 California

residents aged 18 and older selected via random digit dialing. Regardless, it produced some results similar to the Benchmark Adoption Survey, observing that whites generally held more positive views toward adoption than African Americans or Hispanics (Tyebjee 2003: 690). Additionally, it seemed that individuals who "preferred to speak Spanish, were not U.S. citizens, and were foreign born, which are all possible correlates of being a recent immigrant, [had] less definitively formed attitudes toward foster care" (Tyebjee 2003: 704). This could be due, however, to a shorter period of time during which the respondents became acquainted with the child welfare system in this country.

Chandra, Abma, Maza, and Bachrach (1999) conducted a more recent investigation into characteristics of adopters, utilizing four cycles of the NSFG: 1973, 1982, 1988, and 1995. Their results indicated that "older women, nulliparous women, women with fecundity impairment, and women who have used infertility services were more likely to have considered adoption, to have taken concrete steps toward adoption, and to have actually adopted a child" (Chandra et al. 1999: 1). Again, we see support for the variables of age, parity, and fecundity status. Furthermore, a positive relationship was found between the prevalence of adoption with education and income. Interestingly, Chandra and colleague's study also identified the most common factors among individuals seeking adoption who ultimately take steps toward adoption, finding these women to typically be currently married, of a racial/ethnic group other than non-Hispanic black, and having used infertility services at some point (2006: 5). Yet despite the fact that factors relating to infertility were significant variables, Chandra and colleagues pointed out that both this report and other NSFG analyses have suggested that the relationship between

infertility and interest in adoption may be weakening (2006: 10).

Halifax and Villeneuve-Gokalp (2005) also conducted a study on the characteristics of adopters, though their research centered on adoption in France. Their data were taken from a survey based on application files for adoptions that had been completed. They revealed that the overwhelming majority of adopters are couples, followed distantly by a small percentage of women not living with a partner; adoptions by men not living with a partner were rare or nonexistent. Their analysis suggests that both sex and marital status are important variables. Age, parity, and fecundity status also surfaced as prominent characteristics, as did occupation: 34% of female adopters were managers and professionals, and 18% were white collar workers (2005: 3). While these results are not directly applicable to the U.S., they are useful for revealing how the more common characteristics of adopters even transcend national boundaries.

As is apparent from several of these studies, support for variables of socioeconomic status in relation to having adopted is less consistent, but certainly present in the literature. In her analysis of 1987 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) data, Stolley observed a positive relationship between both education and income and having adopted, especially in terms of unrelated adoptions. She also found the data to suggest a relationship between related adoption and lower educational or income levels (Stolley 1993: 38). Ishizawa and colleagues' research on the construction of interracial families through intercountry adoption revealed that the majority of adoptive parents in their study had a college degree and came from financially well-off homes (2006: 1215). However, it is important to note that because this study focused only on intercountry adoptions, these

parents technically represent a specific subpopulation of adoptive parents with potentially unique defining characteristics, and thus should not be considered representative of all adoptive parents.

It is evident that particular characteristics of adopters have been found to be significant time and time again, namely age, parity, fecundity status, marital status, and certain indicators of socioeconomic status such as education and income (though results for these are inconsistent). However, there remain specific gaps in the literature. These include any extensive investigation into the links between race or ethnicity and the act of having adopted. Though race and ethnicity have been addressed in some of the demographic literature, it has been in a limited way. For instance, Bachrach, London, and Maza (1991) distinguished between the adoption seeking behavior of blacks and nonblacks. Similarly, Mosher and Bachrach (1996) pointed out that certain characteristics are significantly related with adoption among white adopters but not among black adopters, such as higher levels of income and education. Stolley acknowledged that "although never-married white and black women are similar in their rates of adopting children…, unrelated adoptions are more common among white women while related adoptions appear to be somewhat more common among blacks" (1993: 37-38). Several other studies also made note of this higher likelihood for black families to adopt to a relative compared to their white counterparts (Simon and Altstein 2002; Chandra et al. 1999; Mosher and Bachrach 1996). Stolley also noted that Hispanic women are much less likely than both black and white women to have ever adopted (1993: 38). Other, nonexclusively-demographic studies also mention race. For

example, Sokoloff explained that black, Hispanic, and Asian women in the United States rarely place their babies for adoption (1993: 23).

Research Questions

Thus, it is clear that differences exist between racial and ethnic categories in terms of adoptive behavior and characteristics. These differences have not been explored in much depth, or in any depth at all for certain racial groups besides whites and African Americans. In some cases, the lack of literature on these potential variables may stem from a dearth of relevant data. Subsequently, this thesis will seek to address these voids in the literature by making use of the newly available NSFG Cycle 6 data to analyze the effect of race and ethnicity on a woman's likelihood of adoption. This research will be guided by the following questions:

(1) What are the most common characteristics of U.S. women who have adopted?

(2) Are race and ethnicity significant predictors of adoption among US women?

(3) Do predictors of adoption differ among women of particular races or ethnicities?

In the next chapter of this thesis, a number of hypotheses are formulated. Additionally, the data are discussed in some detail, as well as the logistic models that have been constructed to test the hypotheses.

CHAPTER III

HYPOTHESES, DATA, AND METHODS

This chapter incorporates the information provided by the literature into a number of hypotheses. Then, it addresses the more technical aspects of the thesis by describing the data in detail. Finally, it explains the methods that are utilized in this analysis and outlines the logistic models that have been constructed to test the hypotheses.

Hypotheses

Based on the review of the literature, it appears that in addition to significant relationships between age, parity, fecundity status, marital status, and certain indicators of socioeconomic status and adoption behavior, there are also relationships between the race and ethnicity of individuals and their adoptive behavior. Consequently, I have developed seven hypotheses:

1. Age will be positively related to whether a woman has adopted.
2. Parity will be negatively related to whether a woman has adopted.
3. Infertility and subfecundity will be positively related to whether a woman has adopted.
4. Women with higher educational attainment will have a higher likelihood of having adopted.
5. Income will have a positive relationship with whether a woman has adopted.

6. Socioeconomic status indicators will vary in their significance by race and ethnicity.
7. Infertility and subfecundity will have significant positive relationships with whether a white woman has adopted, but not with whether an African American, Asian, Mexican or non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic woman has adopted.

Description of the Data

A common feature of all types of adoption research—whether focused on domestic adoption or transracial adoption, whether qualitative or quantitative—is the lack of adequate data with which to measure adoption and adoption behavior (Flango and Caskey, 2005; Harris Interactive 2002; Chandra et al. 1999; Stolley 1993; Poston and Cullen 1989; Poston and Cullen 1986; Bachrach 1983). Part of this deficit stems from the facts that adoption can be formal or informal, related or unrelated, and domestic or intercountry. Furthermore, it is not unusual for these categories to intersect. As a result, it is very difficult to keep track of all the adoptions that occur. The number of intercountry adoptions is easier to count because a child adopted abroad requires a particular type of immigrant visa to enter the United States. As a result, the U.S. can easily determine how many such visas are issued per year, as well as the sending countries from which the children arrive. These data are released for each fiscal year on the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs website (http://travel.state.gov) under the subheading "Children and Family." For the fiscal year of 2006, 20,679 children were adopted via intercountry adoption, a number slightly down from 22,728 in

fiscal year 2005.

While intercountry statistics for the United States may be fairly easy to obtain, the same can not be said for statistics on domestic adoption. Since each state operates with virtual independence under its own adoption laws and statutes, the manner in which adoptions are recorded or reported varies. As described by Stolley (1993), "despite the importance of adoption to many groups, it remains an under-researched area and a topic on which the data are incomplete" and on which "no comprehensive national data…are collected by the federal government." This was not always the case. From 1944 through 1975, the Children's Bureau (later the National Center for Social Statistics) collected voluntarily reported state summary statistics on finalized adoptions that were typically gathered from court records (Flango and Caskey 2005). However, the dissolution of the NCSS meant the concomitant dissolution of such collection efforts. Consequently, a number of both government-sponsored and private endeavors attempted to gather much-needed data on adoption. These efforts include the Voluntary Cooperative Information System conducted by the Administration for Children and Families, the National Center for State Courts' Adoption Information Improvement Project, and those of the National Committee for Adoption. Unfortunately, the degrees of completeness of each are varied and questionable, while the methods and definitions utilized to gather data often differed from state to state (Chandra et al. 1999; Stolley 1993). This veritable lack of complete and reliable data became a serious problem, as Flango and Caskey explain:

> Everyone from policy makers, adoption agencies, social workers, attorneys health professionals, advocacy groups, and even researchers have stated the need

> for complete and accurate information on adoptions. Adoption information is critical to policy formulation, to planning, and to allocate scarce personnel and financial resources at all levels of government (2005: 24).

In response to the acute need for comprehensive adoption data, Congress mandated in 1986 that the government must resume its collection of national adoption data by October 1991 via the development of a national reporting system on adoption and foster care (Simon and Altstein 2002; Stolley 1993). This amendment to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act established the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). Since 1995, this system has required the reporting of public agency adoptions and encouraged the reporting of private and individually-arranged adoptions (Flango and Caskey 2005; Chandra et al. 1999).

Today, there are a number of sources of adoption data, and they continue to grow and change over time to address additional research needs and to make concerted efforts at obtaining more complete data on the subject. In fact, "researchers can now find an immense and rapidly growing array of archival datasets to study a variety of adoption-related questions," many of which are characterized by the ease at which they may be accessed (Feigelman et al. 1998). For instance, larger survey-based efforts like the National Health Interview Survey, the National Survey of Families and Households, or the National Center for Health Statistic's National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) all include sections on adoption. The 2000 Census was described as "the most comprehensive data source on adoption available since 1975" by Ishizawa and his colleagues (2006). The National Data Analysis System operated by the Child Welfare

League of America also operates one of the most comprehensive and current databases of child welfare-related data for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Though data are collected annually, due to processing time, they are usually available 1-2 years after the current year. For fiscal year 2003, the most recent year in which data are available, the number of children adopted through public child welfare agencies (as reported by state child welfare agencies) was 49,919 (Child Welfare League of America 2005). Typically, these adoptions are not step-child or kinship adoptions, but are unrelated adoptions. In conjunction with the 21,616 children adopted from abroad that year (Bureau of Consular Affairs 2006), a total of 71,535 formal, unrelated adoptions took place in fiscal year 2003. In light of such a considerable number, it becomes of the utmost importance to consider questions previously unanswerable due to a lack of data, such as how race and ethnicity affect the types of characteristics involved in predicting the likelihood of adoption amongst U.S. women. Because previous work did not examine these relationships, it is possible that the population of potential adopters is different (and perhaps larger) than is typically believed. Consequently, any significant relationships between race and ethnicity and the likelihood of adoption may lend insight into important adoption trends. A knowledge of these trends may lead to a means of forcing agencies and the American public to expand their notion of acceptable adoptive parents, which may well benefit waiting children in the long run.

This thesis utilizes the National Survey of Family Growth Cycle 6. The NSFG is "an ongoing series of sample surveys designed to provide current information about childbearing, contraception, and related aspects of maternal and child health for the

United States" (Lepowski, Mosher, and Davis 2006: 4). Cycle 6 was conducted in 2002 and early 2003, and is the latest and largest version of the survey to date. Its main strength as a data source on adoption, according to Bachrach (1986), "lies in the wealth of information it provides on the characteristics of women who adopt babies and who place babies for adoption," making it ideal for this thesis. Likewise, Chandra and her colleagues praise the way the NSFG has proved to be "a valuable source of data for studying the individual-level determinants of adoption and adoptive relinquishment, and for documenting trends in aspects of adoption for which no other national data are available" (1999: 2). The data, collected from interviews administered to a nationally representative sample of 12,571 women and men ages 15-44, can be used to estimate the number of individuals with particular characteristics in the U.S. household population. This thesis will specifically utilize the responses from the 6,967 females aged 18-44 surveyed. Even with such a large sample, adoption statistics derived from the data have fairly large sampling errors, resulting from the relatively few women who have actually adopted a child (Bachrach 1986): out of the 6,967 women who responded to adoption-related questions, only 201 indicated that they adopted a child, a number which includes both related and unrelated formal adoptions. Breaking the sample of women down further into racial and ethnic subgroups places additional limitations on the capacity of a given model to provide accurate and valid statistical analyses.

It is important to note that the survey sample for the NSFG is not a "scale model" of the population; instead, particular groups were selected at different rates in order to overrepresent some of the smaller groups in the sample. Consequently, to be able to

make accurate inferences from the data, "sampling weights" must be utilized. "'Sampling weights' adjust for these different sample rates, response rates, and coverage rates so that unbiased national estimates can be made from the sample" (Lepowski, Mosher, and Davis 2006: 2). Put differently, the sampling weight for a given respondent indicates the number of persons in the population represented by that individual. In order to account for the sampling weights, Stata's *svy* (survey) command will be employed so that all estimates presented in this thesis are based on the weighted data.

Definition of the Dependent Variable

Each of the analyses to be conducted in this thesis will utilize a single dependent variable, whether or not a woman in the U.S. has ever adopted a child. This binary variable was constructed from the NSFG variable *everadpt*, which measures a woman's experience with adoption (whether she had adopted, had not adopted but was in the process of trying to adopt a particular child, or had never adopted and was not attempting to adopt a particular child). These data were not the result of a single survey question, but rather a series of questions on nonbiological children that the woman considered herself to have raised. This series was included for the first time in Cycle IV of the NSFG, conducted in 1995 (Chandra et al. 1999). The results of this series were recoded into the variable describing the woman's experience with adoption. In turn, I recoded this variable for my research such that both women in the process of trying to adopt and women who had never adopted and were not attempting to do so were included as never having adopted.

Table 1 highlights the percentage of women in this sample who have ever

adopted a child according to selected characteristics. The characteristics associated with women who have adopted in the U.S. include being at least 35 years old, having ever been married, sterility, a parity of 2, a high school education, having never used infertility services of any sort, and being a non-Hispanic White.

Description of the Independent Variables

The independent variables used in this thesis were selected in part to represent the predictors of adoption behavior found to be significant in the literature—namely, measures of age, parity, fecundity status, marital status, and socioeconomic status—as well as to represent and investigate those predictors whose presence within the literature thus far has been relatively fleeting, such as race and ethnicity. Though Halifax and Villeneuve-Gokalp (2005) suggest a connection between occupation type and having adopted, this variable could not be included because the NSFG does not have such a question. The following list (see Table 2) presents each of the independent variables that are included in the first part of my analysis. Additionally, Table 2 outlines all the variables that are included in the first logistic model by the predictor of adoption behavior each is meant to operationalize.

1. *Age*: This variable represents the age of the respondent at the time of the interview, and is one of the variables consistently found to have a significant relationship in past studies with the adoption behavior of women. A positive relationship between age and adoption behavior may indicate that women who are getting older suddenly wish for children, but without the inclination to go through a pregnancy. However, it is important to note that because this variable

Table 1. Percent of women 18-44 years of age who have ever adopted a child, according to selected characteristics in 2002 (Total Sample = 6,967)				
Selected Characteristics	Number of Sample Cases	Number of Women in Population (Thousands)	Number Who Ever Adopted a Child	Percentage Who Ever Adopted a Child
Age at Interview				
18-24 years	1,839	13,855	9	0.11
25-29 years	1,296	9,252	25	0.27
30-34 years	1,354	10,266	40	0.65
35-39 years	1,269	10,851	61	1.19
40-44 years	1,209	11,515	66	1.42
Parity at Interview				
0 births	2,577	19,986	51	0.77
1 birth	1,499	11,013	37	0.62
2 births	1,601	13,393	63	1.20
3 births	828	7,140	25	0.43
4 births	308	2,776	14	0.33
5 or more births	154	1,427	11	0.28
Parity at Average Age of 1st Adoption				
0 births	2,888	22,427	58	0.85
1 birth	1,624	12,278	46	0.87
2 births	1,497	12,746	56	1.01
3 births	636	5,479	25	0.59
4 births	226	2,018	10	0.17
5 or more births	96	791	6	0.14
Marital Status at Interview				
Ever Married	4,124	35,843	152	2.99
Never Married	2,843	19,891	49	0.64
Fecundity Status at Interview				
Sterile (surgical and nonsurgical)	1,806	15,845	99	1.82
Impaired Fecundity (subfecund or long interval)	722	5,657	31	0.57
Fecund	4,439	34,237	71	1.24
Ever used infertility services?				
Yes	845	48,427	61	1.39
No	6,122	7,307	140	2.23
Educational Attainment				
Less than high school degree	1,045	7,368	37	0.52
High school graduate (diploma or GED)	2,156	17,122	70	1.49
Some college but no degree	1,621	13,109	45	0.81
Associate or Bachelor's degree	1,724	14,591	37	0.54
Graduate or Professional degree	421	3,539	12	0.26

Table 1 Continued.				
Selected Characteristics	Number of Sample Cases	Number of Women in Population (Thousands)	Number Who Ever Adopted a Child	Percentage Who Ever Adopted a Child
Income at Interview				
Under $19,999	2,087	14,340	60	0.92
$20,000-$39,000	2,063	15,728	58	0.81
$40,000-$59,999	1,184	10,562	33	0.72
$60,000-$74,999	570	5,066	18	0.51
More than $75,000	1,063	10,038	32	0.67
Race				
American Indian or Alaskan Native	225	1,515	6	0.07
Asian	219	1,833	4	0.09
Black or African American	1,526	8,457	64	0.70
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island	44	384	0	0.00
White	4,946	43,514	127	2.78
Hispanic Origin				
Mexican or Mexican-American	851	5,215	17	0.25
Hispanic or Latin (non-Mexican)	593	2,959	16	0.16
Non-Hispanic	5,519	47,544	168	3.22

represents the age of the woman *at the time of the interview*, it is likely that a positive relationship with having adopted simply represents the greater amount of opportunity had by older women to have adopted a child, and not an increased propensity to adopt over time. There is another important issue with the *age* variable. Though the expanded age range of women in the NSFG sample is an overall useful improvement, in studies such as this it presents a unique problem: women under a certain age are not very likely to have adopted, and may even be prohibited by law from adopting. For this reason, the sample in this study was restricted to women who were at least 18 years of age (the youngest age at which

Table 2. Analysis 1 Variables According to Predictor of Adoption Behavior	
Predictor	**Variables**
Age	***ager***: R's age at interview
Parity	***parity***: Number of babies born alive to R. ***parityaaa***: Number of babies born alive to R at the average age of 1st adoption.
Fecundity Status	***sterile***: Is R sterile (surgically or nonsurgically)? ***impfec***: Is R subfecund or long interval (infertile for 36+ months)? (***fecund*** – R is fecund = reference group) ***infever***: R has ever used infertility services of any kind.
Marital Status	***yesmarry***: R has ever been married.
Socioeconomic Status	***hischgrad***: R is a high school graduate (diploma or GED). ***somecoll***: R has some college, but no degree. ***asbach***: R has an Associate degree or Bachelor's degree.. ***gradprof***: R has a graduate or professional degree. (***lthisch*** – R has less than a high school degree or GED = reference group) ***inc20to39***: R's total family income is between $20,000 and $39,999. ***inc40to59***: R's total family income is between $40,000 and $59,999. ***inc60to74***: R's total family income is between $60,000 and $74,999. ***incmore75***: R's total family income is more than $75,000. (***incund19*** – R's total family income is under $19,999 = reference group)
Race	***black***: R is black or African American. ***asian***: R is Asian. ***indnat***: R is an American Indian or Alaska Native. (***white*** – R is white = reference group)
Ethnicity	***mexican***: R is Mexican or Mexican-American. ***othhislat***: R is a member of a non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latino group. (***nonhislat*** – non-Hispanic or Latino = reference group)

a woman reported having adopted a child).

2. *Parity*: This variable represents the number of biological children born to the respondent at the time of the interview. Though it has been consistently found to

be statistically significant in the literature on the adoption behavior of women, *parity* suffers from the simultaneity bias, a problem acknowledged in a couple of prior studies (Chandra 1999; Bachrach 1986). Consequently, though a negative relationship between the number of biological children born to a woman and having adopted a child may seem to suggest that women with more children are less likely to adopt, this is not necessarily the case; it could be that women adopt a child and then proceed to have biological children, or that some women have biological children and then proceed to adopt. In other words, a woman's parity does not directly indicate her adoption behavior, despite its statistical significance. To remedy this problem, a new variable was constructed to represent parity at the average age of first adoption. In this manner, it becomes possible to see if having a certain number of children is actually related to a woman's decision to adopt a child. The construction of this variable entailed first determining the average age at first adoption. For 77.59 percent of cases in which adoption occurred, the century month was available for the date the child first began to live with the respondent. A century month is calculated by the following formula (National Center for Health Statistics 2002):

Century Month = (Year of Interest – 1900) * 12 + Month of Interest

Also available was the century month for the mother's date of birth. In order to determine the age of a woman at her first adoption, the following formula was utilized (National Center for Health Statistics 2002):

(Century Month Child Came – Century Month of Respondent's Birth)/12

The results for each adopter were then averaged, providing the average age at first adoption: 382.98 century months, which translates to about 31.915 years, or roughly 31 years and 11 months. The pregnancy history of each respondent was examined against this average age of first adoption in order to determine how many children each woman had given birth to by this point in her life.

While this variable represents an improvement over the regular measure of parity in the sense that it provides a clearer picture of the relationship between the number of biological children a woman has and whether or not she adopts, it presents a whole new type of problem altogether: not every respondent in the sample has reached the average age of adoption. Thus, for example, a woman who currently has 0 children but is only 22 may be misrepresented by this variable as she still has many years in which to bear children before the average age of first adoption. Likewise, a woman who is currently pregnant and under the age of 31 may also be misrepresented, since her pregnancy (not yet a live birth) could not be counted toward parity at the average age of adoption due to the possibility that the birth may face complications. In an effort to rectify this situation, the first analysis was run once with the original measure of parity, and once with the variable measuring parity at the average age of first adoption, in order to assess the extent of any difference in both the impact of these variables, as well as any other significant relationships in the model.

3. *Fecundity Status*: The variable *fecund* was recoded into a dummy variable in order to assess the relationship between various fecundity statuses and whether a

woman has adopted.

a. *Sterile* is a dummy variable in which 1 indicates that a woman is sterile and 0 indicates that she is not.

b. *Impfecd* is a dummy variable in which 1 indicates that a woman has impaired fecundity and 0 indicates that she does not. "Impaired fecundity" in this case means either that she is subfecund or long interval. "Subfecundity" is a state in which "it would be difficult, but not impossible, to conceive or deliver a child" or in which a doctor "has advised [a woman] never to become pregnant (again)" (Poston and Cullen 1996: 245). A woman is considered "long interval" if she has not been pregnant for 36 or more months without having used any form of contraception (Poston and Cullen 1996).

c. *Fecund* is a dummy variable in which 1 indicates that a woman is fecund and 0 indicates that she is not. This is the reference variable, and hence it was left out of the regression.

4. *Infever*: The variable *infever* is another measure of fecundity status. It is a dummy variable in which 1 represents a woman who has ever used infertility services of any sort and 0 represents a woman who has never used any infertility services.

5. *Yesmarry*: This variable was included as an indicator of marital status. It is a dummy variable in which 1 represents a woman who has ever been married, while 0 represents a woman who has never been married. This variable was selected as the indicator of marital status as opposed to a variable that specified

whether the woman was currently married, separated, divorced, widowed, or single because, like the *parity* variable, this item suffers from the simultaneity bias. Subsequently, it was determined that more important than her current marital status is distinguishing between whether a woman has ever been married, and investigating whether having been married is related to whether or not she has ever adopted.

6. *Educational Attainment*: The variable *hieduc* was utilized to construct a series of dummy variables representing the respondent's educational attainment. It was included as an indicator of socioeconomic status. Like parity and marital status, the educational attainment is measured at the time of the interview, which means it is also likely to suffer from the simultaneity bias. Without a manner of determining the woman's education at the time of adoption, the following dummy variables were constructed and utilized instead:
    a. *Lthisch* is variable in which 1 represents a woman who has less than a high school education, and 0 otherwise represents a woman who has more than a high school education. This is the reference variable for this series of dummy variables and thus was left out of the regression.
    b. *Hischgrad* is a variable in which 1 represents a woman with a high school degree (either diploma or GED), while 0 otherwise represents a woman with more or less than a high school diploma.
    c. *Somecoll* is a variable in which 1 represents a woman with some college but no degree, and 0 otherwise represents a woman with less or more than some

college but no degree.

d. *Asbach* is a variable in which 1 represents a woman who has either an Associate degree or a Bachelor's degree, and 0 otherwise represents a woman with less or more than an Associate degree or Bachelor's degree.

e. *Gradprof* is a variable in which 1 represents a woman with a graduate or professional degree, and 0 represents a woman with less than a graduate or professional degree.

7. *Income*: A measure of the respondents' income was included as a second measure of socioeconomic status. It was recoded into dummy variables in order to determine whether being in a particular income bracket had a significant relationship with whether or not a woman had adopted. The dummy variables are as follows:

   a. *Incund19* is a variable in which 1 indicates that a woman's total family income at the time of the interview was less than or equal to $19,999, and 0 indicates that her income was greater than $19,999. Because this is the reference variable for this series of dummy variables, it was left out of the regression.

   b. *Inc20to39* is a variable in which 1 represents a total family income of $20,000 to $39,999, while 0 represents a total family income of other than $20,000 to $39,999.

   c. *Inc40to50* is a variable in which 1 indicates a total family income of $40,000 to $59,999, and 0 indicates a total family income of other than $40,000 to

$59,999.

d. *Inc60to74* is a variable in which 1 represents a total family income of $60,000 to $74,999, and 0 represents a total family income of other than $60,000 to $74,999.

e. *Incmore75* is a variable in which 1 indicates a total family income greater than or equal to $75,000, while 0 indicates a total family income less than $75,000.

8. *Race*: Cycle 6 of the NSFG includes data on five separate racial categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, and White. Due to limitations in sample size, the *race* variable was recoded into four dummy variables, leaving out the category of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, which only had 44 cases between the ages of 18 and 44, none of whom had ever adopted a child. The dummy variables are as follows:

   a. *Asian* is a variable coded 1 if the respondent is Asian and 0 if the respondent is not Asian.

   b. *Black* is a variable coded 1 if the respondent is Black or African American and 0 if the respondent is not Black or African American.

   c. *Indnat* is a variable coded 1 if the respondent is American Indian or Alaska Native and 0 if the respondent is not American Indian or Alaska Native.

   d. *White* is a variable coded 1if the respondent is White and 0 if the respondent is non-White. Because it is the reference variable, it was left out of the

regression.

9. *Ethnicity*: The NSFG also includes data on Hispanic or Latin origin, as well as whether a Hispanic individual is specifically Mexican or Mexican-American. Subsequently, these data were recoded into three dummy variables:
    a. *Mexican* is a variable in which 1 indicates that a woman is Mexican or Mexican-American and 0 indicates that a woman is not Mexican or Mexican-American.
    b. *Othhislat* is a variable in which 1 represents that a woman is of a non-Mexican or Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin origin, while 0 represents that a woman is not of a non-Mexican or Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin origin.
    c. *Nonhislat* is a variable in which 1 indicates that a woman is not of a Hispanic or Latin origin, while 0 indicates that a woman is of a Hispanic or Latin origin.

Methods

This thesis contains two sets of analysis. In the first, multivariate logistic regression is used to determine which of the independent variables has a statistically significant relationship with have adopted. Logistic regression was utilized because it is the most effective and appropriate choice for predicting dependent variables that are dichotomous. Prior to running this regression, the tolerance of each independent variable was examined, with each sufficiently above 0.35. This regression was run once

with the original measure of parity and once with the measure of parity at average age of first adoption (see previous discussion).

The second set of analyses considers each of the variables of race and ethnicity independently. This entailed running a regression with many of the same independent variables as the first analysis, but specific for each group of women. To begin with, the initial population of women was subdivided into "Hispanic or Latin" and "Non-Hispanic or Latin." Then, to examine how the predictors of adoption are related to race, the group of non-Hispanic or Latin women was further subdivided into "white," "black or African American," and "Asian." Unfortunately, there were not enough women in the "American Indian or Alaska Native" category to retain this as its own model. A regression equation was then estimated for each of these subgroups. In order to examine the relationship between the predictors of adoption and ethnicity, the "Hispanic or Latin" subgroup was further divided into Mexicans/Mexican-American women and non-Mexican Hispanic/Latin women. Each of these equations was estimated using Stata's "svy, subpop(*race or ethnicity variable*)" command. In total, this part of the thesis consisted of five separate regressions. Each regression included most of the measures of age, parity, fecundity status, marital status, and socioeconomic status, but did not include the additional variables of race and ethnicity. This allowed for an examination of the magnitude of the coefficients in order to learn about the dynamics of adoption between different groups of women, such as Mexican/Mexican-American adoption versus non-Hispanic adoption, non-Mexican Hispanic/Latin adoption verses non-Hispanic adoption, as well as Mexican/Mexican-American adoption versus non-Mexican Hispanic/Latin

adoption. Since the majority of prior research has considered white, non-Hispanic women, this analysis provides a means for assessing the effects of each of these variables on the other predictors of adoption.

This chapter has introduced the hypotheses that will be tested by the seven logistic models. It also addressed the data and methods that will be utilized in the construction of these models. The next chapter of this thesis analyzes the results of all seven logistic models. It supplies the necessary evidence to determine whether or not the hypotheses have been supported.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE LOGISTIC MODELS

This chapter of the thesis analyzes the results of seven logistic regression models. For each model, the statistically significant results are interpreted. These results provide the necessary evidence to determine whether or not the hypotheses outlined previously in chapter III are supported by the data.

Logistic Models 1-2

As described in the previous chapter, the first analysis consisted of two models: the full model utilizing the newly recoded "parity at average age of first adoption" variable, and the full model utilizing the original "parity at the time of the interview" variable. This allowed me to determine which variables are statistically significant predictors of having adopted a child, as well as the effects (if any) of the original parity variable's simultaneity bias on the significance of the model. The tolerances of each of the independent variables utilized in these models were examined; the tolerances for every variable were sufficiently above 0.35, a rough "rule of thumb" for minimum tolerances. The results of both models can be found in Table 3.

In the first model, age at the time of the interview is statistically significant ($t = 6.83$; $p<0.001$). Its *b* coefficient of 0.086 indicates that, holding all other independent variables constant, for each additional year in age at the time of the interview, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child increase by 0.086. In terms of the odds ratio (the exponentiated values of the logit coefficients), for every additional year of age,

other things being equal, the odds of having adopted a child are multiplied by 1.09: that is, the odds of having adopted a child increase by 9%.

Having ever received infertility services is also significant in this first model ($t = 4.79$; $p<0.001$). Its *b* coefficient of 1.37 means that for U.S. women ages 18 to 44 who have ever received infertility services, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child are 1.37 higher than those for women who have never received infertility services, controlling for all other independent variables. In terms of the odds ratio, this means that the odds of having adopted a child are almost four times higher for women who have ever received infertility services compared to women who have never received infertility services. Or, in other words, having received fertility services versus not having received infertility services increase the odds of having adopted by 294%.

The last statistically significant variable in model 1 is having an associate or bachelor's degree as the highest completed level of education ($t = -2.34$; $p<0.05$). Its *b* coefficient indicates that for U.S. women ages 18 to 44 who have an associate or bachelor's degree, there is a 64% decrease in the odds of having adopted a child compared to women with less than a high school degree.

The statistically significant variables in the second model are exactly the same as in the first model: age at the time of the interview, having ever received infertility services, and having an associate or bachelor's degree. In fact, each of the *b* coefficients is within 0.05 of its counterpart in model 1. Thus, the interpretations of each significant variable are identical to those in the first model. However, what is interesting about these two models is the fact that neither a woman's parity at the average age of first

Table 3. *b* Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Models 1 and 2 Predicting the Odds of Ever Having Adopted, Women 18-44 Years of Age				
	Model 1		**Model 2**	
	b coef.	odds ratio	*b* coef.	odds ratio
Age at the time of the interview	0.09***	1.09***	0.08***	1.09***
Parity at the average age of 1st adoption	0.13	1.13	-	-
Parity at the time of the interview	-	-	0.07	1.07
Sterile	0.23	1.26	0.28	1.32
Impaired fecundity	0.16	1.17	0.16	1.17
Ever received infertility services	1.37***	3.94***	1.34***	3.84***
Ever been married	-0.01	0.99	0.01	1.01
High school graduate (diploma or GED)	0.07	1.08	0.05	1.05
Some college education, no degree	-0.28	0.75	-0.31	0.73
Associate or bachelor's degree	-1.01*	0.36*	-1.06*	0.35*
Graduate or professional degree	-0.48	0.62	-0.55	0.58
Total income from $20,000 to $39,999	-0.19	0.83	-0.20	0.81
Total income from $40,000 to $59,999	-0.01	0.99	-0.03	0.97
Total income from $60,000 to $74,999	0.44	1.55	0.42	1.53
Total income greater than $75,000	0.03	1.03	0.00	1.00
Black or African American	0.34	1.41	0.36	1.43
Asian	0.11	1.12	0.11	1.12
American Indian or Alaska Native	-0.21	0.81	-0.18	0.83
Mexican or Mexican-American	-0.18	0.83	-0.18	0.83
Non-Mexican/ Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin	-0.25	0.78	-0.24	0.78
constant	-6.60	-	-6.47	-

*p<0.05 ***p<0.001

adoption, nor her parity at the time of the interview, were found to be significant. As it stands, the results of the first two models do not seem to suggest that the simultaneity bias of the parity variable has any effect at all on the results of the logistic regression. This will be discussed further in the last chapter.

Logistic Models 3-5

Models 3 through 5 focus on the likelihood of adoption according to the race of the woman: non-Hispanic or Latin white, non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American, or Asian. As with models 1 and 2, the tolerances of all the independent variables in each of these models were calculated and examined. In this case, the educational attainment dummy variables did not have a tolerance above 0.35 in either the non-Hispanic or Latin white model, nor the Asian model, thus representing strong multicollinearity. This could well have resulted in higher-than-acceptable standard errors, possibly leading to the identification of no relationship between one or more of these education variables and having adopted a child when, in fact, a relationship might actually exist. Consequently, the reference group in the Asian model was switched from "less than a high school education" to "graduate or professional degree." This produced tolerances satisfactorily above 0.35. However, this did not improve the tolerances in the non-Hispanic or Latin white model. Accordingly,, educational attainment was recoded into a new dummy series that combined the 5-category education series into a 3-category education series: high school degree or less; some college education but no degree; and associate, bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree. This resulted in tolerances that were sufficiently above 0.35. Aside from these education variables, each of these three

models included all of the predictors utilized in the full model, with the obvious exception of the race and ethnicity variables.

Model 3 (see Table 4) focuses specifically on the adoption behavior of non-Hispanic or Latin white women. As was the case in the first two models, age at the time of the interview was statistically significant ($t = 5.31$; $p<0.001$). This means that, holding all other independent variables constant, for each additional year in age at the time of the interview, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child increase by 0.10. Interpreting this coefficient in terms of its odds ratio, for every additional year of age, other things being equal, the odds of having adopted a child are multiplied by 1.10, or increase by 10%.

Also similar to the first two models, having ever received infertility services was found to be significant in this model ($t = 4.13$; $p<0.001$). Its slope indicates that for U.S. non-Hispanic or Latin white women ages 18 to 44 who have ever received infertility services, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child are 1.52 higher than those for women who have never received infertility services, controlling for all other independent variables. In terms of the odds ratio, this means that the odds of having adopted a child are 4.58 times (358%) higher for women who have ever received infertility services than for women who have never received infertility services.

The next statistically significant variable in the third model was having an associate, bachelor's graduate, or professional degree as the highest level of educational attainment ($t = -3.18$; $p<0.01$). Its *b* coefficient is interpreted to mean that for U.S. non-Hispanic or Latin white women ages 18 to 44 who have an associate, bachelor's,

Table 4. *b* Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Models 3-5 Predicting the Odds of Ever Having Adopted, Women 18-44 Years of Age, by Race						
	Model 3: Non-Hispanic White		**Model 4: Non-Hispanic Black**		**Model 5: Asian**	
	b coef.	odds ratio	*b* coef.	odds ratio	*b* coef.	odds ratio
Age at the time of the interview	0.10***	1.10***	0.11***	1.11***	0.46	1.59
Parity at the average age of 1st adoption	0.20	1.23	-0.06	0.94	1.89	6.63
Sterile	0.55	1.73	-0.69^	0.50^	-	-
Impaired fecundity	0.57	1.78	-0.94^	0.39^	-	-
Ever received infertility services	1.52***	4.58***	0.79	2.21	-	-
Ever been married	-0.23	0.80	0.23	1.26	-0.06	0.94
Less than high school degree	-	-	-	-	27.38***	7.82 e+11***
High school graduate (diploma or GED)	-	-	0.14	1.15	-	-
Some college education, no degree	-0.58	0.56	0.52	1.68	23.23	1.22e+10
Associate or bachelor's degree	-	-	-0.43	0.65	-	-
Graduate or professional degree	-	-	0.74	2.10	-	-
Associate, bachelor's, grad., or prof. degree#	-1.13**	0.32**	-	-	-	-
Inc. from $20,000 to $39,999	-0.69^	0.50^	0.06	1.06	-2.67	0.07
Inc. from $40,000 to $59,999	-0.13	0.88	-0.51	0.60	-	-
Inc. from $60,000 to $74,999	0.32	1.38	-0.06	0.95	-	-
Inc. greater than $75,000	-0.14	0.87	-0.60	0.55	-0.42	0.65
constant	-6.83	-	-6.51	-	-38.00	-

^p<0.10 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

only used in non-Hispanic white model

graduate, or professional degree, there is a 68% decrease in the odds of having adopted a child compared to similar women with a high school degree or less.

The last statistically significant variable in Model 3 was having a total family income between $20,000 and $39,999, which results in predicted log odds of having adopted a child that are 0.69 lower than for U.S. non-Hispanic or Latin white women ages 18-44 with a total family income less than $19,999, or a decrease in the odds of 50%.

Model 4 (see Table 4) focuses on the adoption behavior of non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American women. In this model, age at the time of the interview was statistically significant ($t = 5.03$; $p<0.001$). Holding all other independent variables constant, for each additional year in age at the time of the interview, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child increase by 0.11. In terms of the odds ratio, this means that for every additional year of age, other things being equal, the odds of having adopted a child increase by 11%.

Sterility and impaired fecundity were also significant in this model. The slope of the *sterile* variable indicates that for non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American women in the U.S. ages 18 to 44 who are sterile, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child are 0.69 *lower* than those for their fecund counterparts. This also translates as a 50% decrease in the odds of having adopted a child. In terms of impaired fecundity, the slope reveals that non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American women with impaired fecundity are 51% less likely to have adopted a child than similar women who are fecund.

Model 5 (see Table 5) examines the adoption behavior of Asian women. This

was a particularly troublesome model with regard to the prediction of adoption behavior because only 4 Asian women in the sample reported having ever adopted. Additionally, a number of variables had to be dropped from this model owing to a lack of variation for the dependent variable within one or more categories of the independent variables. In this case, it is said that the observations were predicted perfectly (Long and Freese 2006: 140). The variables dropped were those representing being sterile, having impaired fecundity, having ever sought infertility services, having a high school diploma or GED, having an associate or bachelor's degree, having an income between $40,000 and $59,999, and having an income between $60,000 and $74,999. Ultimately, even the statistically significant results of this regression model are not likely to be very meaningful. The only variable to fall into this category was having less than a high school degree ($t = 11.17$; $p<0.001$), which was interpreted to mean that for Asian women ages 18 to 44 who have less than a high school degree, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child are 27.38 higher than those for similar women who have a graduate or professional degree. In terms of the odds ratio, this represents an unreasonable increase in the odds of having adopted a child of 781,999,999,999%. This result alone is enough to flag this equation as not being very meaningful.

Logistic Models 6-7

Models 6 and 7 focus on the predictors of adoption according to the ethnicity of the woman: Mexican or Mexican-American, and non-Mexican or Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin. Like the previous race models, each of these included all of the predictors utilized in the full model, with the obvious exception of the race and ethnicity

Table 5. *b* Coefficients and Odds Ratios for Logistic Regression Models 6 and 7 Predicting the Odds of Ever Having Adopted, Women 18-44 Years of Age, by Ethnicity				
	Model 6: Mexican		**Model 7: Non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin**	
	b coef.	odds ratio	*b* coef.	odds ratio
Age at the time of the interview	0.08	1.09	0.06	1.06
Parity at average age of 1st adoption	0.05	1.05	0.39**	1.47**
Sterile	0.75	2.12	-0.60	0.55
Impaired fecundity	0.37	1.45	0.25	1.28
Ever received infertility services	1.01	2.76	1.00	2.71
Ever been married	0.35	1.42	-0.37	0.69
High school graduate (diploma or GED)	0.32	1.38	-3.26	0.62
Some college education, no degree	-1.17^	0.31^	-0.39*	0.04*
Associate or bachelor's degree	-0.07	0.93	-0.39	0.68
Graduate or professional degree	-0.08	0.92	1.99	0.68
Total income from $20,000 to $39,999	0.19	1.20	2.39*	7.31*
Total income from $40,000 to $59,999	0.65	1.92	1.26*	10.94*
Total income from $60,000 to $74,999	0.67	1.95	2.77	3.51
Total income greater than $75,000	1.40	4.04	-6.96**	15.96**
constant	-7.55	-	0.06	-

^p<0.10 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

variables. Tolerance levels for all of the variables in both models were calculated and examined. All the independent variables had tolerances sufficiently above the "rule of thumb" level of 0.35.

In the sixth model (see Table 5), the sample was limited to women of Mexican and Mexican-American descent. The only variable found to be significant in this model was having some college education, but no degree, as the highest completed level of education ($t = -1.79$; $p<0.10$). The slope indicates that for Mexican or Mexican-American women in the U.S. ages 18 to 44 who have some college education but no college degree, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child are 1.17 lower than those for women who have less than a high school degree. This also translates as a 69% decrease in the odds of having adopted a child if a woman has some college education but no degree as opposed to less than a high school degree.

Model 7 (see Table 5) examines the adoption behavior of non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin women (referred in this analysis as "other Hispanic/Latin women"). This model produces the most statistically significant relationships: parity at the average age of first adoption ($t = 2.74$; $p<0.01$); having some college education but no college degree ($t = -2.50$; $p<0.05$); and having a total family income between $20,000 and $39,999 ($t = 2.47$; $p<0.05$), $40,000 and $59,999 ($t = 2.37$; $p<0.05$), or greater than $75,000 ($t = 2.76$; $p<0.01$) were all found to be significantly related to whether other Hispanic/Latin women had ever adopted a child. These relationships are interpreted as follows: for each additional biological child at the average age of first adoption, holding all other independent variables constant, the odds of an other Hispanic/Latin woman having adopted a child are multiplied by 1.47, or increase by 47%.

The slope for having attended some college but not having received a degree indicates that for other Hispanic/Latin women ages 18 to 44 who have some college

education but have not received a degree, the predicted log odds of having adopted a child are 0.39 lower than those for women who have less than a high school degree, which represents a 96% decrease in the odds of having adopted a child as opposed to women who have less than a high school education.

The relationship between having a total family income of $20,000 to $39,999 and having adopted a child reveals that, holding all other independent variables constant, being an other Hispanic/Latin woman aged 18 to 44 with a total family income between $20,000 and $39,999 results in an odds ratio of having adopted that is 631% higher than non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin woman with a total family income less than $19,999. Similarly, a total family income between $40,000 and $59,999 results in predicted log odds of having adopted a child that are 1.26 higher than for an other Hispanic/Latin woman with a total family income less than $19,999, or an increase in the odds of 994%. Finally, a total family income greater than $75,000 results in predicted log odds of having adopted a child that are 6.96 lower than for an other Hispanic/Latin woman with a total family income less than $19,999, which is the equivalent of an increase in the odds of 1496%.

Testing the Hypotheses

In chapter III, a number of hypotheses were proposed according to expected relationships between age, parity, fecundity status, marital status, and certain indicators of socioeconomic status and adoption behavior. Relationships between these indicators and the race and ethnicity of female adopters were also hypothesized. It is now possible to take the results presented in this chapter and determine whether or not the hypotheses

were supported:

1. Age at the time of interview was positively related to whether a woman has adopted, and was found to be statistically significant in four separate models. This hypothesis was supported more frequently than any other. The full model, the full model with the original parity variable substituted, the non-Hispanic or Latin white model, and the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American model all exhibited statistically significant relationships between age and whether or not a woman had adopted.
2. Parity at the average age of first adoption was never found to have a negative relationship with whether a woman had adopted, and was in fact exhibited a positive significant relationship in the non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin model.
3. Interestingly, the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American model was the only one to exhibit any statistically significant relationships between the fecundity status dummy variables and having adopted a child, and its relationship was negative, as opposed to the positive relationship hypothesized. However, the variable representing whether a woman had ever received any infertility services—also an indicator of fecundity status—was found to have a significant positive relationship with whether a woman has adopted in three separate models: the full model, the full model with the original parity variable, and the non-Hispanic or Latin white model.

4. At least one variable from the educational attainment dummy series was found to be significant in every model except the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American model. However, the relationships of the educational attainment variables to whether a woman had adopted were surprising in that they were *negatively* related to the dependent variable: women with higher educational attainment had a *lower* likelihood of having adopted than women with lower educational attainment. Thus, this hypothesis was not supported, and in fact was opposite to the direction predicted.
5. Income was found to have significant relationships with whether a woman has adopted in the non-Hispanic or Latin white and the non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin models. However, the relationships were both positive and negative.
6. The socioeconomic status indicators were found to vary in their significance by race and ethnicity: education variables were found to be statistically significant in all but the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American model, while income variables were significant in the non-Hispanic or Latin white and the non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin models.
7. This final hypothesis was not supported. In fact, the only model in which any of the fecundity status variables were found to be statistically significant was the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American model. Yet it is interesting to note that the variable representing whether a woman had ever

received any infertility services was found to have a significant positive relationship in the non-Hispanic or Latin white models, as well as Models 1 and 2, which may be considered to be predominantly white (see Table 1). Thus, in a sense, the results for this indicator may be seen as confirming the hypothesis. This will be explored further in the discussion (see Chapter V).

The final chapter of this thesis will discuss the results of the tests of these hypotheses in greater depth. It will also examine the implications of the results for future research, as well as for the institution of adoption and the community of potential adopters.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As outlined in the previous chapter, most of the hypotheses proposed and tested in this thesis received at least a modicum of support in the series of logistic regressions estimated, and some considerably more. Consequently, the research reported herein provides evidence that race and ethnicity are important variables in terms of the adoption behavior of U.S. women. This chapter examines this finding as well as others in detail. Then, the implications of these findings will be considered with regard to future adoption research, the community of potential adopters, and the institution of adoption.

In relation to the findings of previous adoption studies, the results of the first analysis in this thesis were quite surprising. It seemed likely, based on the literature, that variables of age, parity, and fecundity status would be significant, while it was less certain, but still probable, that certain indicators of socioeconomic status would also have significant relationships with whether a woman had adopted. However, the results of this thesis were not always consistent with those of other similar studies (see Bachrach 1983; Bachrach 1986; Poston and Cullen 1986; and Mosher and Bachrach 1996). I examine some of these issues according to the independent variables.

Age

Models 1 and 2 were the "full models" in this analysis, representing most closely those analyses run in previous studies. As was the case in the literature, age at the time of the interview was found to be statistically significant in these full models. Of all the

statistically significant results, this is perhaps the easiest to understand: it remains that the older a woman is, the more time she has had during which to adopt a child. Thus, it was not surprising to see that age at the time of interview was not only significant in the full models (Models 1 and 2) and the non-Hispanic or Latin white model (Model 3), but in the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African-American model as well (Model 4). Furthermore, it is possible that with larger samples of Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Mexican, and Non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin women, this relationship would be significant as well. This is a matter for future research (see section below).

Parity

Every model, besides Model 2, utilized the newly recoded "parity at average age of first adoption" variable. However, only one model exhibited a significant relationship between parity and whether a woman had adopted: the non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin model (Model 9). Based on the fact that any differences between the use of parity at the time of interview in Model 2 and parity at the average age of first adoption in Model 1 were negligible, this lack of significance throughout most of the models suggests that using the original parity at the time of interview variable could well have resulted in similar findings. The one significant relationship indicates that the odds of a non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin woman having adopted a child increase by 47% for each additional biological child she has at the average age at first adoption. In other words, every additional biological child the woman has by the time she is age 31 increases by 46 percent the likelihood that she has also adopted a child. In

one sense, this may seem counterintuitive: a woman capable of having a number of her own biological children is not often thought to be a likely candidate for adopting, which has traditionally been associated with subfecund or infertile women. Yet there may be something said for the manner in which an individual who already has children also has access to the resources necessary to raise another child, such as physical objects (e.g. toys and furniture), mental abilities (e.g. experience and parenting skills), and social networks (e.g. knowledge of local daycare facilities and schools). It is also possible for a woman to desire a larger family, but to be disinclined to go through a pregnancy. Though this result may be interpreted as a tendency of non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin women who already have biological children to also adopt, it must not be forgotten that the limited sample size also hampers the ability to identify any relationship between the likelihood to adopt and other characteristics that may be having a significant effect, such as having a particular income or occupation. Ultimately, this is another issue that needs to be taken into consideration for future research (see section below).

Fecundity Status

The results for the indicators of fecundity status were particularly interesting: while having ever received infertility services was significant in three models (the full model, the full model with the original parity variable substituted, and the non-Hispanic or Latin white model), variables from the fecundity status dummy series only exhibited significant relationships with having adopted in the non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American model, and actually were *negatively* related to having adopted. This appears

counter to my hypothesis. Additionally, it prompts two questions: why would receiving infertility services matter when fecundity status does not, and why would being sterile or having impaired fecundity make an individual *less likely* to have adopted? One possible explanation for the first question is that a change has taken place in the trends of family formation in the U.S. In the past, being subfecund or infertile may have been enough to push an individual or couple to adopt a child. In today's society, there are fewer stigmas attached to being childless or "child free," which might mean that individuals or couples who are unable to conceive a child may not feel as obligated to investigate other means of starting a family, such as adoption, as would have been the case in prior generations. Yet individuals who have received infertility services clearly are still interested in starting a family. Thus, it is more likely that these individuals and couples will have adopted a child precisely because they are actually making the effort to have a child, and it is always possible that infertility services are ultimately inefficient or too expensive. This is consistent with a finding by Chandra and her colleagues, who explain that "adoption and adoption demand is more prevalent among...fecundity-impaired women, but many women considering or seeking adoption do not have [this characteristic]" (2006: 1999). In other words, the results of their study as well as other recent analyses using the NSFG data suggest that the relationship between infertility and interest in adoption may be weakening.

Yet this does not explain why being sterile or having impaired fecundity would result in a non-Hispanic or Latin black/African American woman being *less likely* to adopt a child than her fecund counterpart. One possible explanation is that adopting due to

infertility could well be largely a white proclivity, while black/African American women are more likely to adopt related children completely unconnected from any issues they may be experiencing with their fecundity status. This higher tendency of African American women to adopt related children is well-documented (Simon and Altstein 2002; Chandra et al. 1999; Mosher and Bachrach 1996; Stolley 1993). Ultimately, more complete data on the relationship between fertility and adoption among black/African American women are necessary to investigate this further.

Socioeconomic Status

As noted in previous chapters, the variables functioning as indicators of socioeconomic status included a highest level of education completed dummy series (modified slightly for the non-Hispanic or Latin white model) and a total family income dummy series. Education was frequently found to be significantly related to whether a woman had adopted, with at least one statistically significant variable from the dummy series in the full model, the full model with the original parity variable substituted, the non-Hispanic or Latin white model, the Asian model, the Mexican/Mexican-American model, and the non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin model. Yet contrary to my fourth hypothesis, the education variables were all *negatively* related to the likelihood of having adopted. In other words, women with higher educational attainment had a *lower* likelihood of having adopted than women with lower educational attainment. This seems counterintuitive, especially based on the literature which showing a positive relationship between education and expressing support for adoption: individuals with a college degree were notably more likely than those with only a high

school education to express unqualified support for adoption (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1997: 3). Despite higher levels of unqualified support, as well as a positive relationship found to exist between the prevalence of adoption and educational attainment (Chandra et al. 1999: 5), women were found to be less likely to have adopted the more education they had received. Perhaps this is the result of some unforeseen data issue. However, it may also be a reflection of a greater emphasis placed on career by women in contemporary society: women with higher levels of education are more likely to be working in more demanding, higher-paid positions with less leeway for having children.

This negative relationship was particularly surprising when considered against what is known unofficially as the "worthiness scale," a system utilized by adoption agencies to measure the potential of adoptive couples (Simon and Altstein 2002: 12). This is also known as the adoptive parents' preference hierarchy, an industry practice shamelessly confessed to by child welfare staff members across the country. In this hierarchy, heterosexual, two-parent families (especially middle or upper-middle class whites) are the most preferred type of adoptive parents, followed by unmarried heterosexual couples, by single-parent families, and finally by lesbians and gay men (Ryan, Pearlmutter and Groza 2004; Kenyon 2003; Brooks and Goldberg 2001). Within the context of this hierarchy, the opportunity to adopt is often greater for those with a means to redeem themselves for what may otherwise be considered "lesser" qualities by adoption agencies—in other words, nonwhite families who are highly educated and financially well-off are perceived by agencies to be better candidates, despite their lower

rank on the adoption hierarchy. Consequently, it would be expected that a positive and significant relationship should exist between educational attainment and having adopted in the non-white models. The fact that this was not found may be evidence that, with time, the "worthiness scale" is losing some of its influence, perhaps in the interest of placing more dependent children into homes.

Regarding income, it has been proposed that "the costs involved in adoption serve as a barrier to increasing the number of black families that agencies deem eligible to adopt," and that it is usually "more affluent white families [that] have the resources to satisfy the 'means test' criteria established by agencies for status as an adoptive parent, and are better able to absorb the legal fees associated with an adoption" (Simon, Altstein, and Melli 1994: 10-11). However, it was only in the non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin model that income was found to have a positive and significant relationship with whether a woman has adopted on two out of three significant variables, and was actually found to have a negative relationship on the third variable; this also occurred in the non-Hispanic or Latin white model. In other words, while having a total family income between $20,000 and $59,999 increased the odds that an other Hispanic or Latin woman had adopted a child as compared to her counterpart making less than $19,999 a year, having an income greater than $75,000 decreased the likelihood of having adopted. Similarly, having a total family income from $20,000 to $39,999 decreased the likelihood that a non-Hispanic or Latin white woman had adopted a child, compared to her counterpart making less than $19,999. This disparity among the results is consistent with the variable findings on income in the literature: income has

been shown to be positively related (Chandra et al. 1999: 5; Stolley 1993: 38, Bachrach 1983: 861) and unrelated (Harris Interactive 2002) to adoption behavior. However, to my knowledge it has not been found to have a negative relationship: it seems logical that having more money would enable an individual or couple to bring a child into their home. Perhaps this is simply no longer as motivating a factor in today's society. Instead, it may just be that individuals who really want to adopt children find a means to do so, despite their income. Thus, as has become the theme throughout this section of the chapter, more comprehensive and extensive data would be necessary to ascertain the relationship between income and adoption behavior, especially by racial and ethnic group.

It is worthy of note that for non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin women, having adopted was shown to be positively related to total family income (with the exception of having an income greater than $75,000), but negatively related to educational attainment. It would be interesting to investigate the structure and characteristics of adoptive non-Mexican/Mexican-American Hispanic or Latin families. One possibility is that some exemplify a more "traditional" division of labor of gender roles, whereby the male head of the household functions as the breadwinner, while the female head of the household works at home raising the children. This scenario might make adopting additional children a potentially feasible option.

Marital Status

A woman's marital status (in this thesis, having ever been married versus never having been married) was not found to be significantly related to having adopted in any

of the models. There are two main explanations for this unusual result: first, it may be an issue with the data. As Chandra and colleagues discovered in their 1999 study, "the number of never-married sample women who have ever adopted a child is often zero in many of the age groups" (1999: 3). They remedied the situation by focusing their study on ever-married women 18-44 years of age. However, it is also a possibility that marital status is becoming less critical in the adoption process now that there is less stigma attached to single parenthood, and now that gays and lesbians are adopting with growing frequency (and in most states still unable to marry). An increased prevalence in singles adopting may be contributing to a decreased significance of marital status. Once again, further research with more detailed data will be necessary to examine this possible trend.

The Effects of Race and Ethnicity on Adoption Behavior

In the first two models (the full model and the full model with the original parity variable substituted), race and ethnicity dummy series were included to identify any relationships between a particular racial or ethnic group and having adopted. However, not one of these variables was found to be statistically significant. This may be a reflection of the manner in which the majority of adoptions are still conducted by white individuals and couples. It may also simply mean that race is not an important factor in the adoption of children. Regardless, the absence of a significant relationship does not negate the possibility of differences in the predictors of adoption behavior by race and ethnicity. This was confirmed in the second part of the analysis.

Analyzing the way race and ethnicity can affect the significance of predictors in adoptive behavior may be perceived as searching for inherent tendencies within a

specified group of people to behave a certain way with respect to adoption. But this does not appear to be the case. In reality, examining which types of predictors are significant for different groups of individuals reveals an opportunity structure in our society relating to forming a family via adoption. Ishizawa and colleagues contend that different adoption strategies of white and nonwhite parents, particularly with respect to adopting across racial lines, may be a function of "(1) different understandings of race, (2) differences in the ease of adopting children from different countries, and (3) and presence of community and familial transnational networks" (2006: 1218). This same line of thought can be extended to general adoption behavior, that is, whether or not to adopt at all. The decision to adopt is only the first step: based on an individual's race and ethnicity, the actually opportunity to go through with the process can vary extensively, especially at the discretion of a particular adoption agency. It is for this reason that for one racial or ethnic group, income may be significant, while education or parity is more significant for another: those variables that are significant are likely to be the ones most essential in navigating the particular opportunity structure for that group. To better understand these opportunity structures revealed by the differences in the significance of adoption predictors, more comprehensive data are absolutely essential. Without larger samples of non-white adoptive parents, many observed differences are susceptible to sampling error. Furthermore, without larger samples, it is impossible to examine all of the important predictors for each racial and ethnic group: consider the way in which several variables were dropped from the regression equations for Asians. It is still very possible that statistically significant relationships exist for this group, but

the data do not yet permit us to detect and measure them accurately.

Implications

The most important conclusion emerging from the results of this thesis is the fact that significant differences do exist among racial and ethnic groups in terms of adoption behavior, and, importantly, among the predictors that affect that behavior. A variety of characteristics provide the means for different racial and ethnic groups to navigate the opportunity structure of the institution of adoption. Being able to identify with increased statistical certainty exactly which characteristics comprise the best route for which racial and ethnic groups would permit us to understand the current opportunity structures that exist. Such statistical data and results would also enable policy practioners to alter or change them so that more opportunity could exist for greater numbers of adoptions to take place. A better picture of these opportunity structures will make it possible to force both agencies and the American public to expand their pictures of who "acceptable" adoptive parents are, a move that can only benefit waiting children in the long run.

To gain a better understanding of the differences in adoption behavior among racial and ethnic groups entails that more data are not only desired, but are absolutely necessary. The National Survey of Family Growth is on the right track with their comprehensive series of adoption-related questions. What is now needed is a larger sample of adoptive parents. It would be ideal if a survey were to be conducted solely for this purpose. The data produced by such a survey would undoubtedly be put to good use. After all, it is the responsibility of social demographers not only to recognize and analyze trends, but to apply such knowledge whenever possible in ways that might

improve the status quo as well as the quality of life of those living in disadvantaged circumstances. Adoption research is an area in which much potential for such contributions unmistakably still exists, and better, the gathering and development of more comprehensive data would be the first step in the direction of making these contributions a reality.

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VITA

Christine Elizabeth Klucsarits received her Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from The College of New Jersey in 2004, graduating summa cum laude. She entered the Sociology program at Texas A&M University in September 2005, and she received her Master of Science degree in May 2007. Her research interests include demography, family formation, gender, and quantitative methods.

Ms. Klucsarits may be reached at the Department of Sociology, Mail Stop 4351, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 77843-4351.