The Role of the Adoption Marketplace in Shaping the Racial Distribution of Adoptive Placements

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Abstract
In this paper I argue that the decision to adopt a non-White child is not only related to individual-level choices but also to external market forces. In this marketplace, children are valued by their race and parents are valued according to their family structure. Under these market conditions, non-White children and non-traditional homosexual and single adoptive parents have the least value. The 2000 Census provides a unique opportunity to examine how a child's race and an adoptive parent's family structure interact to shape adoptive placements at the national level. Based on a nationally representative sample (N=65,476) of adoptive families, I show that high value White children are the most likely to be placed with high value heterosexual married parents whereas lower-value non-White children are more likely to be placed with lower valued non-traditional adoptive parents. Black children have the lowest status in the adoption marketplace and are the most likely to be placed with similarly low-status single and homosexual adoptive parents.

Introduction

In adoption families are formed by legal decree rather than through biological ties. Although the love that adoptive parents feel for his or her child is no doubt the same as the love that a biological parent feels for his or her child, the process of forming a family greatly differs. In some respects prospective adoptive parents face more decisions when having children through adoption than parents who have children biologically, including whether they want to adopt a child of the same race or of a different race, the age, and the sex of the child. These decisions have already been determined for most parents who have biological children – the race of the child will be a mixture of the mother and father, the child will be a newborn, and barring medical intervention these parents have no say over the sex of the baby. Because adoptive parents face so many choices, in this regard adoption can be positioned as a type of 'natural experiment' that illustrates how social factors shape this decision making process (Haugaard, 2003).

Perceived racial and ethic boundaries shape how children are valued in the adoption marketplace. Quiroz (2007) argues that the popularity of adoption programs from Latin America

and East Asia suggest that while White American adoptive parents are open to adopting across race, they are more likely to adopt Hispanic and Asian children over U.S.-born African American children. She notes that the most popular international sending countries – Russia, Korea, China, and Guatemala – have traditionally placed White or "honorary White" (Bonilla-Silva, 2004) children. On the other hand, Black children are among the least likely to be adopted by White parents (Dorow, 2006; Rothman, 2005). This openness to adopting non-Black minority children supports the argument that American racial boundaries may be moving closer to a Black/non-Black dichotomy, versus a White/non-White boundary (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Lee & Bean, 2007; Yancey, 2003).

Racially differentiated costs and waiting times associated with adoptive placements provide further evidence of this black/non-black divide. For example, the costs associated with adopting a White newborn are often twice as high as adopting a Black or biracial child of the same health and age (Goodwin, 2009; Rothman, 2005). Waiting times are another form of currency reflecting children's value in the adoption marketplace. Because of the relative shortage of White babies per the number of White adoption-seeking parents, the waiting times for these infants can stretch out to several years. However, the waiting time to complete the adoption of a Black infant is significantly shorter (Quiroz, 2007).

Researchers have found that White gay and lesbian parents are more likely to adopt across race than White heterosexual married parents (see Fisher 2003:349). Some scholars, drawing on a social interactionist approach (Blumer, 1986; Longmore, 1998), have attributed this phenomenon to the fact that gay and lesbians occupy a marginalized social location as sexual minorities that makes them more likely to identify with racial minorities (Goldberg, 2009). Others have focused on the fact gays and lesbians are more likely to be exposed to alternative

families and people from different backgrounds, therefore fostering a greater willingness to adopt across race (Rosenfeld, 2007). While it is possible that gay and lesbians may be more open to adopting across race, there is no theoretical basis for why the social location of heterosexual single adoptive parents might make them more likely to adopt a non-White child. Although some have attributed this phenomenon to individual-level choices, I show how market restrictions against single and homosexual prospective adopters shape the likelihood of transracial placements.

Background

Adoption as a Kinship Marketplace

The thought of adoption operating under market principles is understandably discomforting. Children are said to be priceless (Zelizer, 1985) and should not be valued and exchanged in a marketplace like stocks or other commodities. However, past research indicates that market forces can shape even the most intimate family decisions (Almeling, 2007; Wilson, 1987). Wilson's (1987) work on marriage markets is particularly instructive. According to Wilson, the decrease in economic opportunities compounded with the increase in incarceration of African American males has resulted in a shrinking supply of economically stable "marriageable men" (1987: 91). Empirical studies testing the marriageable male hypothesis support Wilson's theory that market forces shape marriage decisions (Harknett & McLanahan, 2004). Almeling's (2007) work on the valuation of eggs and sperm in assisted reproductive technology shows how market forces can even shape family formation. In this marketplace, eggs and sperm are differentially valued according to the genetic markers of the donors, such that donors with high demand characteristics are able to command a higher price.

Zelizer (1985) details how the market value of children eligible for adoption evolved. In the early twentieth century, older children were in the highest demand because they could provide the greatest economic utility to the adopting family by working on the farm or in the factories. However, as parenthood took on an increasingly central role in people's lives (Beck-Gernsheim, 2003), adoptive parents sought out infants and young children to fulfill an emotional not economic need. As the value of children shifted from economic to sentimental utility, babies and toddlers were the most valuable commodities and the market price for a twentieth century baby "was set by smiles, dimples and curls" (Zelizer, 1985:171).

The clear preference for White children among White women suggests that those seeking to adopt want a child who does not look visibly different. An adopted child who is of the same race as his or her parents can blend in 'as if the child were begotten' (Herman, 2008; Modell, 1994). For transracial adoptive families, racial difference signals biological difference (Fisher, 2003; Samuels, 2009). This visible racial difference can unsettle the foundation of American kinship. Schneider (1968) underscores the emphasis on biological connections in American kinship, stating "children are said to look like their parents, or to 'take after' one or another parent or grandparent; these are the confirming signs of the common biological identity" (1968:116). Thus, according to Schneider, kinship bonds are grounded in this "common biological identity." In other words, families are supposed to look alike – that is how you know they are a family.

Based on the cultural emphasis on biological connections, it makes sense that a parent considering adoption may initially want his or her adoptive family to resemble a biological family. In fact, research suggests that Black, Hispanic, and Asian adoptive parents rarely adopt across race, partially because they have many different options to adopt within race (Ishizawa et

al., 2006). Since race is a "master status" (Hughes, 1945), adopting a child of a different race is a clear indicator of difference and many families may not want to have to deal with the challenges of race on top of the complexities of adoption.

Despite the complications associated with transracial adoption (Tuan, 2008) it is clear that many families are willing to face these challenges. Data from the US Census shows that one in six adoptive parents is a different race than their child (Kreider, 2003) and the number of transracial placements is likely to continue to rise. Part of this trend is attributable to the rise in the number of international adoptions (Child Welfare League of America, 2007; US Department of State, 2009). In addition, a growing number of non-White children are adopted through private domestic adoptions and the US Foster Care System (Fisher, 2003; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

Researchers have focused on the ways in which the adoption marketplace values children, but little to no research has examined how prospective parents are also segmented. International adoption program laws and birthmother preferences restrict the market options of non-traditional applicants. Many countries that place their children abroad bar single (and homosexual couples applying as singles) from adopting. Or if they do allow single parents to adopt, they limit these parents to adopting children who are generally older, or have medical conditions. For example, according to the information listed on the website of a large North East adoption agency, single female applicants are accepted into only a handful of programs and most of these dictate that only school age children will be available for adoption. International adoption programs are even more restrictive for single men, making it harder for single males and gay couples applying as single to adopt. For example, in Columbian adoption, single men

can adopt but only are eligible to adopt children age seven and older (Wide Horizons for Children, 2009).

Of note, over the past ten years several popular international adoption programs have either closed or drastically curtailed the number of children sent abroad each year. For example, Guatemala suspended international adoption in 2008 and adoptions from Vietnam ceased in 2009 (U.S. Department of State, 2010). Together, these programs used to place more than six thousand children each year in the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Although China has an active international program the waiting times have grown up to four to five years to adopt a healthy Chinese girl (Children's Home Society and Family Services, 2010). Furthermore, in 2007 China enacted strict regulations that limit foreign adoptions to married couples without any history of receiving treatment for mental health issues (including depression) and with body mass indices below thirty-five (US Department of State, 2009). Wait times have grown so long for Korea that many adoption agencies have suspended their Korea adoption program or have limited applications to Korean-heritage applicants or parents who would be willing to adopt an older child with a medical condition (Holt International Adoptions, 2010).

Because of the restrictive nature of country-specific adoption laws, many single and homosexual adoptive parents are more likely to consider the domestic adoption of a US-born child. Although most private domestic adoption agencies and adoption attorneys work with single and homosexual couples, there is still no guarantee that they will be chosen by a birthmother. As the birthmother selects the adoptive parents, single and gay adopters may face greater market restrictions by having to 'compete' with married, heterosexual couples. However, the competition may not be as severe for U.S.-born Black or other non-White children, leading single and homosexual adoptive parents to pursue transracial placements.

Researchers have argued that White gay and lesbian couples are more likely to adopt non-White children than their heterosexual counterparts (Goldberg, 2009; Rosenfeld, 2007). Although the disproportionate number of transracial adoptive placements among homosexual couples may stem from their greater openness to adopting across race, my research examines how structural aspects of the adoption marketplace shape individual-level decisions. It may be that these 'non-traditional' prospective adoptive parents have fewer options available to them and therefore are steered towards adopting non-White children. These restrictions are likely to contribute to observed national patterns. Yet, little research has examined the relationship between these market forces and the distribution of adoptive placements. Through an analysis of nationally representative data on the composition of adoptive families, my research bridges this gap.

Methods

In 2000, for the first time the US Census asked households to distinguish between adoptive families and biological families, providing researchers with the opportunity to study this unique family form. Because the Census also includes individual level data on race, ethnicity, and nativity, it is possible to piece together the racial composition of adoptive families. The rich combination of information on race, ethnicity, adoptive status and family structure make the 2000 Census the leading source of national data on adoptive families (Kreider, 2003).

My analyses are based on a five percent subsample of the 2000 Census. Because the focus of this study is on the distribution of adoptive placements *within* adoptive families, I limit my analysis to households who have at least one adopted child younger than eighteen living in

the household (N=65,476) For families who have more than one adopted child (about 20% of the cases), analyses are based on the youngest adopted child in the family.

Race and Ethnicity

I use multiple Census variables to identify the race of each family member (Hirschman, Alba & Farley, 2000). Based on measures identifying race and Hispanic background, I create a race variable with six categories: non-Hispanic White, Black, Hispanic (any race), Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or individuals who are more than one race. I deliberately include a separate category for American Indians because the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) outlines unique laws pertaining to the adoption of American Indian children (Limb, 2004).

Out of the more than 65,000 adopted children in the sample, there were 238 children who did not fit within this racial category. Originally I created a separate "other" group for members of this category. However, because I am interested in understanding how racial matching is shaped by the adoption marketplace, the "other" categorization was too ambiguous to draw any meaningful conclusions about the group. Thus, based on their relatively small sample size and the fact that I could not distinguish their racial backgrounds, I decided to drop them from the sample. In addition, there were sixty-three adoptive parents who fit under the "other" category and I dropped them from the sample as well. Of note, in a separate analysis not included in this paper I included these dropped cases in the models and they did not substantially change the outcome of the results.

Family Structure

The Census includes individual level data about family interrelationships[1] that makes it possible to identify the type of union between householders. Based on this detailed information, I create a variable for family structure that notes whether the adoptive parents are married, single (never married), or divorced, separated, or widowed. Of note, in the 2000 Census, married same sex couples were not included in official marriage tabulations and if a same sex couple designated their relationship as married, reviewers thought that this was most likely based on an error and the data was discarded (Keen, 2009). However, the household roster does allow me to identify unmarried household partners, including those who are same sex (see Simmons & O'Connell, 2003).

Based on these variables, I was able to identify a small number of same-sex adoptive households (n=583). Same-sex adoptive households had to fit the following three criteria: first, the head of householder and the other adult in the household had to be the same gender; second, the head of householder had to list the other adult as an unmarried partner, as opposed to a friend or roommate; third, both adults had to identify that they were the adoptive parents to the child.

Since the Census does not specifically ask about the sexual orientation of each household member, we can only infer sexual orientation through family structure (Simmons & O'Connell, 2003). These criteria most likely underestimate the prevalence of gay and lesbian adoptive parents. Some gay and lesbian adoptive parents may be never married singles or divorced. However, in the Census, it is not possible to distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual single adoptive parents. In addition, it is possible that some homosexual parents are raising children adopted from previous heterosexual partnerships before the parent 'came out' (see Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Yet in some ways, this distinction is not as consequential for the purposes of this study.

[1] See http://usa.ipums.org/usa/paper5/paper5.shtml for more details.

Because the focus of the study is how children come to be placed in different adoptive families, I am specifically interested in gay and lesbian adoptive parents who present themselves as homosexual partners and the options that are available to them as they adopt. Albeit, it is not clear if parents who identify themselves as homosexual unmarried partners on the US Census would also identify themselves as unmarried partners to an adoption agency. But research shows that many adoption agencies are open to gay and lesbian prospective adopters (Matthews & Cramer, 2006) and given the due diligence of the home study aspect of the adoption process, it would be difficult for homosexual applicants to hide their partnership.

Among the same-sex adoptive parent households that I identified, it is likely that the majority of adopted children in this group were adopted under the existing partnership. This inference is based on the fact that the median age of the adopted child is six years old. Given the relatively young age of the children in this group, it is unlikely that the same sex adoptive parents would have had time to complete the adoption, complete a post-adoption evaluation, get divorced or separate from a previous partner and then meet a new partner, and form a new household where both parents are the legal adoptive parents of the child in the span of a few years.

However, the reader should be aware of the limitations of using Census data. Since the focus of the Census is not on adoption, the questionnaire does not ask valuable information about the age that the child was adopted. While we know the age of the child at the time of the Census, we cannot be sure when the child was adopted into the family. Although children adopted internationally tend to fit a similar country profile in terms of the age at placement, there is still a good deal of variation. There is also a great deal of variation among US-born domestic adoptees.

Many are placed as newborns and infants but others may be adopted through foster care as older children (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

Despite the limitations of the data, the Census is one of the few national sources of data available to explore the interplay between family structure and the racial distribution of adoptive placements. The strength of the data is its detailed information on the family structure and race of each member of the adoptive household. In addition, the Census is the only source of American data that includes such a large number of adoptive families. Compared with other nationally representative surveys that have examined adoptive families (Fiegleman, 1997; Hamilton, et al. 2007; Miller, 2003), the Census includes tens of thousands more adoptive families.

I use this statistical power to provide an in-depth examination of the market aspects of the adoption matching process (Spar, 2006). I show how in the adoption marketplace White children are the most valued and the most likely to be adopted whereas non-White children (especially Black children) are among the least valued and the least likely to be adopted (Goodwin, 2008; Krawiec, 2009; Quiroz, 2007). Moreover, my research indicates that adoptive parents are differentially valued as well. I show how program restrictions that bar 'non-traditional' parents and favor heterosexual married parents are key factors in shaping the racial distribution of adoptive placements.

Results

Table 1 provides a frequency distribution by race of adopted children and adoptive parents in the United States. Although the majority of adopted children and parents are White, there are far more White adoptive parents than White adopted children. Whereas about sixty

percent of adopted children are White, over seventy percent of adoptive parents are White. The disproportionate number of White adoptive parents relative to White adopted children reflects the shortage of White children in the adoption marketplace. Given that the number of healthy White infants born to single mothers and relinquished for adoption has decreased from ten percent to less than one percent over the last thirty years (Bachrach, 1991), the number of White adoptive parents outnumbers the 'supply' of White adoptable children.

[Table 1 about here]

For Hispanics, Asians, and multiracials, there is an opposite trend. There are more Hispanic and Asian adopted children than Hispanic and Asian adoptive parents. The difference is most pronounced among Asians, with almost three times as many Asian adoptees than Asian adoptive parents (7.1% vs. 2.5%). The large number of Asian and Hispanic adopted children also reflects the growth of international adoptive placements. Since 1990, the number of international placements has more than doubled, climbing from 9,050 in 1991 to a high of 22,884 in 2004 (Evan B. Donaldson Institute, 2009; US Department of State, 2009). During the 1990s, when many of the children in the sample were most likely adopted, the top 'sending' countries to the United States were China, Guatemala, Russia, Korea, and the Philippines, suggesting that many Hispanic and Asian children hailed from these countries (U.S. Department of State).

Although adoptions from Ethiopia are currently among the fastest growing international adoption programs, this phenomenon is quite recent. In the 1990s there were only a handful of African and Ethiopian adoptions each year and the number did not start increasing until the early 2000s (Evan B. Donaldson Institute, 2009, US Department of State, 2009). Based on these factors, it is unlikely that many Black children in the sample were adopted internationally. In

fact, in a separate analysis I found that out only about one percent of Black adopted children were born in Africa (n=102).

Table 1 also illustrates the family structure of adoptive parents. Almost four out of five (79%) adopted children live in households with married adoptive parents. About six percent of adopted children are in households raised by single (never married) adoptive parent. There is a small subset of children raised by same-sex adoptive parents. Lastly, about fourteen percent of adopted children grow up in households with divorced, separated or widowed parents. It is possible that some of the divorced adoptive parents adopted their children while previously married, or it may be that they adopted as a single divorced parent. Although I include this group in my analyses, I advise caution with these data since it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about this group of adoptive families.

While Table 1 shows the percentage of adopted children by race relative to the percent of adoptive parents by race, it is not clear if parents of the same race adopt these children. In order to explore this pattern, Table 2 illustrates the racial distribution of adopted children by the race of the adoptive parent.

[Table 2 about here]

As shown in Table 2, it is clear that the majority of adoptive parents – regardless of race – chose to adopt a child of the same racial background. Nineteen out of twenty Black adoptive parents adopt a Black child. Likewise, about seventeen out of twenty Hispanic and Asian adoptive parents adopt a child of the same heritage. These figures are in line with prior research that has found that parents from these groups are most likely to adopt children of the same race (Ishizawa, et al. 2006). In contrast, about eighty-two percent of White parents adopt a White child. Although the majority of White parents choose to adopt within race, to put this number in

perspective, it is important to underscore that almost one in five White adoptive parents adopt a child of another race. The percentage of transracial placements among White adoptive parents is significantly higher than that of Black, Hispanic, or Asian adoptive parents.

Although a significant proportion of White parents adopt across race, it is important to note that these parents are much more likely to adopt a Hispanic or Asian child than a Black child. Table 2 shows that about six percent of white adoptive parents adopt a Hispanic or Asian child but less than two percent of White adoptive parents adopt a Black child. This pattern suggests that White adoptive parents are open to adopting a non-white children but there is still more hesitancy surrounding adopting Black children.

Because the race of the adoptive parent is measured by the race only one parent (the head of householder), I thought that this factor maybe biasing my results. It is possible that while the head of householder may not be the same race as the adopted child, a second adoptive parent could be of the same heritage. This may be especially plausible for Asians, Hispanics and multiracials, as prior research has found members of these groups are the likeliest to form interracial unions (Kalmijin, 1998). In an auxiliary analysis, I tabulated the race of the head of householder with the race of the second adoptive parent (if applicable). For two parent adoptive families, about three out of four (73% of) couples were of the same race. While there were some White head of householders with non-White partners of the same race of their adoptive child, the numbers were not large enough to significantly affect the outcome[2].

Although there is a strong relationship between the race of the adoptive parent and the race of the adopted child, these figures only tell one part of the story. As shown in Table 3, there is also a strong connection between an adoptive parent's family structure and the race of the child he or she adopts. I argue that the racial distribution of these placements reflects the

[2] Results available upon request.

valuation of children and parents in the adoption marketplace. Married parents have the greatest number of options when adopting and more easily qualify to adopt from domestic and international programs that place White children. In contrast, single and homosexual prospective adopters have the least number of options available to them. These structural aspects of the adoption marketplace contribute to these racial patterns. For example fewer than one in ten married parents adopt a Black child. Instead, they are overwhelming adopted by single, divorced, and homosexual adoptive parents.

[Table 3 about here]

Compared to married adopters, a greater percentage of 'non-traditional' families are also more likely to adopt Hispanic and Asian children. For example, more than thirty-eight percent of gay and lesbian adoptive couples adopted an Asian or Hispanic child, compared with fewer than twenty percent of married adoptive parents. Single parents are also more likely to adopt non-White children. In fact, as shown in Table 3, single adoptive parents are the most likely to adopt a Black child. One reason for the high proportion of White children among married adoptive parents is that in the general population, marriage is concentrated among White adults (Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Sweeny 2002; McLanahan 2004). In order to 'control' for this effect, in the next table I limit my analysis to White adoptive parents.

Table 4 shows that White married couples are the most likely to adopt White children. Although some White married couples do adopt across race, these transracial placements are concentrated among Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial children. The high proportion of Asian and Hispanic children adopted by White parents suggests that Asian and Hispanic children are in greater demand among White parents than Black children. One reason for this demand may be

that there is less perceived social distance between Whites and Asians and Whites and Hispanics than between Blacks and Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Lee and Bean, 2005; Yancey, 2003).

[Table 4 about here]

Although small proportions of White homosexual and single parents adopt Black children, they do so at greater rates compared to White married parents. For example, more than three times as many White homosexual parents adopt Black children than married White parents (5.64% vs. 1.63%). Some have argued that White homosexual couples may be more open to adopting non-White children than their heterosexual married counterparts (Goldberg, 2009; Rosenfeld, 2007). Although it is possible that White gay parents having been marginalized by their sexual orientation may be more willing to take on the complexities of adopting a non-White child, it may also be that these parents have fewer choices when pursuing an adoption. Domestic adoption programs that place the majority of White children can directly or indirectly exclude 'non-traditional' parents. White American birthmothers are able to pick among many waiting adoptive parents competing for the chance to adopt a healthy White newborn. Although some women making an adoption plan may be open to selecting same sex parents, others may not. Facing greater obstacles, these 'non-traditional' parents may then seek out a non-White child to adopt since these children are often in greater supply and less frequent demand.

It is interesting to note that the racial distribution of adoptive placements among White gay and lesbian adopters mirrors that of White single adoptive parents. About seventy percent homosexual and single parents adopt Black children, five percent adopt White children and twenty-percent adopt Hispanic and Asian children. Given the restrictions and obstacles facing both these groups, the fact that they adopt non-White children at similar rates provides further evidence that there are structural factors shaping adoption decisions. Although researchers have

argued that given their unique social location gay and lesbian adoptive parents may be more open to adopting across race (Goldberg, 2009), there is not the same theoretical basis in the literature indicating why single adopters would be more open to adopting across race. Rather, it is more likely that these adoption decisions are largely shaped by the structure of the adoption marketplace that places restrictions on adoptive parents according to their family structure. These White parents may be more open to adopting non-White children, but it may also be that they have fewer choices if they want to become adoptive parents.

In Table 5, I present further evidence that the racial distribution of adoptive placements is shaped by how parents and children are valued in the adoption marketplace. Using multivariate logistic regression analysis, I show how the odds of adopting White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian child are related to both the adoptive parents' family structure and race. In separate models, I predict the odds of adopting a White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian child. Model 1 examines the odds of adopting a White, Black, Hispanic, or Asian child by the adoptive parents' family structure. Model 2 includes additional controls for the race of the adoptive parent. Although I tested additional control measures for parents' socioeconomic status, I found that they were largely unrelated to the race of the adopted child. While there is evidence that higher SES individuals are more likely to adopt (Hamilton, et al. 2007), once parents have already decided to adopt, SES is not a strong predictor of the race of the child adoptive parents choose.

[Table 5 about here]

As shown in Table 5, there is a strong relationship between an adoptive parent's family structure and the race of the child he or she adopts. For White children, results from Model 1 indicate that single adoptive parents have only one fifth the odds of adopting a White child compared to married adoptive parents, whereas gay and lesbian couples and divorced couples

have about half the odds of adopting a White child. However, the low likelihood of a single adoptive parent adopting a White child may also stem from the fact that single adoptive parents are likely to be non-White. Once additional controls are added for the race of the adoptive parent, the data indicate a different relationship. As shown in Model 2, homosexual couples and single adoptive parents have similarly low odds (about 0.50) of adopting a White child. Results from Model 2 underscore the fact that non-White parents are unlikely to adopt a White child (Ishizawa, et al., 2006). Compared to White parents, non-White parents have more than *ninety-five* percent reduced odds of adopting a White child. Comparatively, multiracial adoptive parents have slightly increased odds but these are still incredibly low.

Whereas married couples are more likely than non-married couples to adopt White children, there is an opposite pattern for non-White children. For Black children, these results are especially pronounced. As shown in Model 1, single, divorced, and gay and lesbian couples are more likely to adopt Black children than married couples. Single adoptive parents have more than seven times the odds of adopting a Black child. However, part of this effect is attributed to the fact that single adoptive parents are more likely to be Black. Once controlling for the race of the adoptive parents, single adoptive parents have about the same odds as adopting a Black child as homosexual adoptive parents (about two and one half times the odds).

Race is also a powerful determinant for adoptive placements. Black parents are, by far, the most likely to adopt Black children and have more than *eight hundred times* the odds of adopting a Black child compared to White adoptive parents. Multiracial individuals are also more likely to adopt a Black child than White adoptive parents. With eighty-percent lower odds than White adoptive parents, Asians are the least likely to adopt a Black child.

Results for Hispanic children show that same-sex couples and single adopters have about one and a half times the odds of adopting a Hispanic child compared to a married couple. Of note, adding covariates for parent's race does not significantly alter these results. Hispanic parents are the most likely to adopt Hispanic children, with more than one hundred times the odds compared to White parents. Multiracial parents are also more likely to adopt Hispanic children than White parents.

For Asian adopted children, gay and lesbians have higher odds of adopting these children than married couples. In contrast, single parents have lower odds of adopting Asian children. Yet, once accounting for the race of the adoptive parent, same-sex adoptive couples and single adoptive parents have similar odds of adopting an Asian child compared to married parents (about 1.60 times the odds). It is important to note that during the 1990s – when the majority of Asian children from the 2000 Census were adopted – gay and lesbian parents could adopt from China by applying as single parents. This option is no longer available. In fact, today, China has some of the most restrictive program criteria for adoptive parents, not only banning single applicants but also parents who have health issues (Great Wall of China Adoptions). Prospective parents who are overweight or have sought treatment for mental health related issues are not allowed to apply (Adoption.com, 2009).

Taken together, what is most striking about these results is the similarity between gay and lesbian, and single adopter's odds of adopting White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian children. Figure 1 further illustrates this similarity. Once controlling for the race of the adoptive parent, homosexual and single adopters have almost the identical odds of adopting a child from each race. Both groups have about half the odds of adopting a White child compared to a married couple and about two and a half times the odds of adopting a Black child. In other words,

compared to married adoptive parents, same sex and single adoptive parents are less likely to adopt White children, and more likely to adopt non-White children. Moreover, gay and lesbian, and single adoptive parents have the highest odds of adopting Black children compared to married parents.

[Figure 1 about here]

My results indicate that the race of a child a parent chooses to adopt is at least partially rooted in structural factors. In the adoption marketplace, single and homosexual applicants face similar program restrictions. Perhaps initially hoping to adopt a White child, gay and lesbian adopters and single parent adopters may find that this path is not open to them. In the adoption marketplace, parents from these groups are not as valued compared to heterosexual married parents. Rather, the program restrictions, legal hurdles, and additional scrutiny make it clear that gays, lesbians, and single parent adopters are 'second tier' in the adoption marketplace. While some do manage to adopt higher demand White children, my results make clear that these parents are more likely than their married counterparts to adopt non-White children.

Although these parents may be more accepting and open to adopting across race, I argue that this is only part of the story. There is no basis in the literature to believe that single White adoptive parents (at least some of whom are heterosexual) would be more open to seek out adopting non-White children than White married parents. Rather, it is more likely that homosexual and single adoptive parents adopt non-White children because those are the children that are available for them to adopt. In the adoption marketplace, non-traditional families and non-White children are both seen as somehow inferior. Non-White children are in the greatest supply but least demand. Non-traditional families have to compete with married heterosexual

families for children to adopt. These differential valuations shape the racial distribution of adoptive placements.

Discussion and Conclusion

In sum, this paper has shown that the racial distribution of adoptive placements is deeply rooted in the structural aspects of the adoption marketplace. In this marketplace, both children and parents are valued. Children are valued according to their race while parents are valued according to their family structure. Based on these differential valuations, high demand White children are more likely to be placed with highly valued married heterosexual parents. In contrast, non-traditional single and same-sex adoptive parents are likely to be placed with lower demand non-White children. These results show that the number of transracial adoptive placements is concentrated among parents who have the fewest options.

Previous scholars writing about gay and lesbian kinship have argued that homosexual families are more likely to have a fluid sense of kinship (Weston, 1990) and a greater degree of openness towards interracial partnerships (Rosenfeld, 2007). Some have even suggested that these experiences contribute to the fact that gay and lesbian adoptive parents are more likely to adopt across race (Goldberg, 2009). However, this paper shows that these decisions are strongly affected by the structure of the adoption marketplace. Non-traditional families are more likely to adopt non-White children because laws, program restrictions, and birth mother preferences restrict their ability to adopt White children.

The effect of market restrictions is even more apparent when comparing adoption patterns between homosexual and single parent adopters. As illustrated by my multivariate analyses and the corresponding figure, these two groups have strikingly similar odds of adopting

White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian children. If gay and lesbian adopters, based on their social location and marginalized position, are more inclined to adopt non-White children than heterosexual couples, then why do they have the same odds of adopting non-White children as single adoptive parents? Presumably, single (heterosexual) adoptive parents do not share a similarly marginalized position that would make them more willing to adopt across race than married adoptive parents. Rather, this paper has argued that structural factors play an integral role in shaping these patterns.

Of course, personal willingness to adopt across race does matter. Some parents hoping to adopt a same race child may decide to drop out of the adoption process once realizing that this option is not available. Indeed, a national survey of child-bearing age women finds that three out of four women that ever took steps to adopt never actually adopted a child (Jones, 2008). And of course, prospective adoptive parents have this option. But for many prospective adoptive parents, adoption may be one of the few options left to parenthood. According to the National Survey of Family Growth (Jones, 2008), more than three quarters of women seeking to adopt a child have experienced problems with fertility. Other researchers have found that adoptive mothers have ten times the odds of using infertility services (Chandra, et al., 1999). Perhaps having exhausted potential assisted reproductive technology options (Bartholet, 1999; Charis, 2005), many adoptive parents may then consider adoption. Along each step, these would-be parents may find themselves reevaluating definitions of kinship, family, and belonging. In doing so, racial difference may become less of an issue as would-be adoptive parents meet other transracial adoptive families and get excited about the prospect becoming mothers and fathers.

Lastly, I want to reiterate an important point I raised in the introduction to this paper. Even though I argue that transracially adopted children are among the least valued in the

adoption marketplace, I am in no way suggesting that adoptive parents do not value or love these children as much as they would if they shared the same racial backgrounds. Furthermore, while I argue that the adoption marketplace segments non-traditional families as inferior, I am not at all implying that gay or lesbian, and single adoptive parents are inferior in their parenting skills. In my research and in my life I have witnessed the strong family bonds among adoptive families of all constellations. Although there are certainly additional complexities that surround transracial (Samuels, 2009) and gay and lesbian adoptions (Matthews & Cramer, 2006), I have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of adoptive parents love, value and do their best for their children. Instead, my focus is on how the adoption marketplace shapes and picks who those children are.

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Table 1. Race and Nativity of Adopted Children and Adoptive Parents in US Households

	Adopted Child	Adoptive Parent
	%	%
Race		
Non-hispanic white	61.45	73.10
Black	13.49	12.49
Hispanic, any race	13.10	9.32
Asian	7.12	2.47
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.46	1.26
More than one race	3.37	1.36
Family Structure		
Married	na	79.00
Gay or lesbian couple	na	0.89
Single	na	6.12
Divorced	na	13.98
Total	65,476	65,476

Analyses are based on the youngest adopted child <18 in the household
Data from 5% subsample of 2000 Census

Table 2. Racial Distribution of Adoptive Placements by Parent's Race

	Race of Adoptive Parent					
Race of Adopted Child	**White**	**Black**	**Hispanic**	**Asian**	**Am. Indian**	**Multiracial**
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
White	81.92	1.00	8.58	4.46	15.38	25.11
Black	1.83	94.75	1.83	0.37	1.69	8.45
Hispanic	6.13	1.33	87.73	2.79	5.57	10.02
Asian	6.55	0.20	0.69	86.75	0.85	6.53
American Indian	0.66	0.23	0.36	0.25	70.58	1.91
Multiracial	2.91	2.48	0.80	5.39	5.93	47.97
N	47,865	8,177	6,105	1,615	826	888

Divorced category includes separated and widowed adoptive parents

Data from 5% subsample of 2000 Census

Table 3. Racial Distribution of Adoptive Placements by Parent's Family Structure

	Family Structure			
Race of Adopted Child	**Married**	**Gay/Lesbian**	**Single**	**Divorced**
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**
White	82.33	51.46	27.69	52.33
Black	9.20	15.61	42.78	24.76
Hispanic	12.60	17.67	18.01	13.52
Asian	7.71	10.29	5.86	4.10
American Indian	1.33	1.54	2.17	1.89
Multiracial	3.36	3.43	3.49	3.40
N	51,729	583	4,009	9,155

Divorced category includes separated and widowed adoptive parents
Data from 5% subsample of 2000 Census

Table 4. The Relationship Between Family Structure and an Adopted Child's Race for WHITE Adoptive Parents

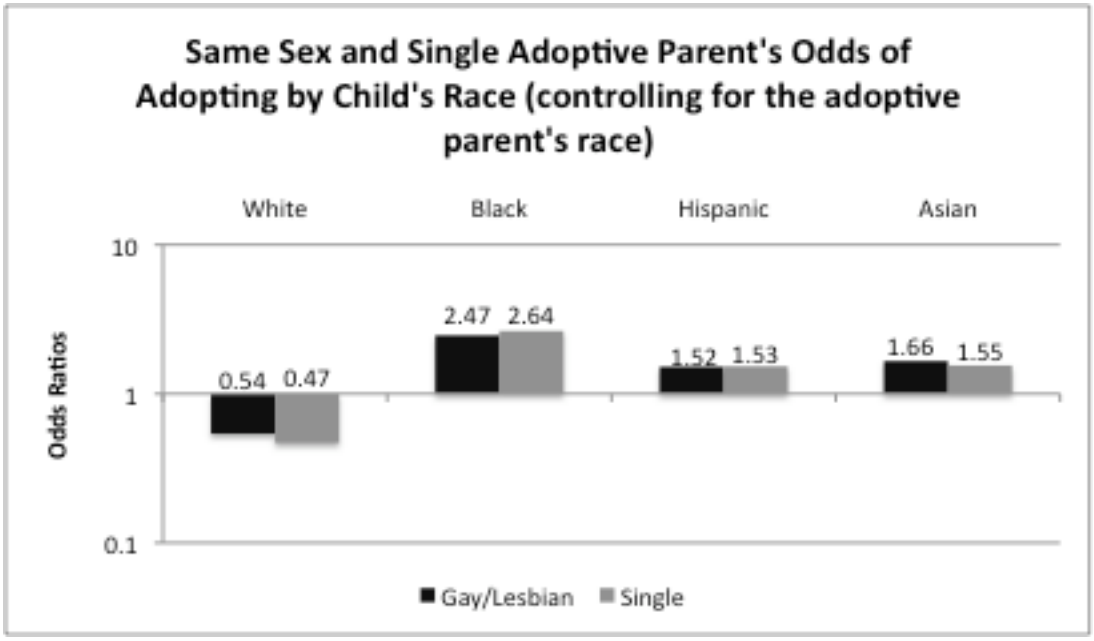
Race of Adopted Child	White Adoptive Parents' Family Structure			
	Married	Gay/Lesbian	Single	Divorced
	%	%	%	%
White	82.33	71.08	69.73	83.03
Black	1.63	5.64	4.49	2.33
Hispanic	5.96	8.33	9.83	6.19
Asian	6.61	11.27	10.94	4.60
American Indian	0.65	0.49	0.78	0.70
Multiracial	2.83	3.19	4.23	3.13
N	40,331	408	1,536	5,590

Divorced category includes separated and widowed adoptive parents
Data from 5% subsample of 2000 Census

Table 5. Logistic Regression Estimates of Adopting a Child by Parent's Race and Family structure (odds ratios)

	White Adopted Child				Black Adopted Child			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	e^b	*se*	e^b	*se*	e^b	*se*	e^b	*se*
Family Structure								
Married (ref)								
Gay or lesbian couple	0.55	0.05 ***	0.54	0.06 ***	1.83	0.21 ***	2.47	0.54 ***
Single/Never Married	0.20	0.01 ***	0.47	0.02 ***	7.34	0.26 ***	2.64	0.21 ***
Divorced/Separated	0.57	0.01 ***	1.00	0.03	3.25	0.09 ***	1.65	0.11 ***
Parent's Race								
White (ref)								
Black			0.00	0.00 ***			836.04	50.64 ***
Hispanic			0.02	0.00 ***			0.90	0.09
Asian			0.04	0.00 ***			0.20	0.08 ***
American Indian			0.04	0.00 ***			0.80	0.21
Multiracial			0.08	0.01 ***			4.55	0.57 ***

	Hispanic Adopted Child				Asian Adopted Child			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	e^b	*se*	e^b	*se*	e^b	*se*	e^b	*se*
Family Structure								
Married (ref)								
Gay or lesbian couple	1.49	0.16 ***	1.52	0.06 **	1.37	0.19 *	1.66	0.26 ***
Single/Never Married	1.52	0.07 ***	1.53	0.02 ***	0.74	0.05 ***	1.55	0.13 ***
Divorced/Separated	1.09	0.04 *	1.03	0.03	0.51	0.02 ***	0.66	0.04 ***
Parent's Race								
White (ref)								
Black			0.19	0.02 ***			0.03	0.01 ***
Hispanic			107.31	4.67 ***			0.10	0.02
Asian			0.44	0.07 ***			93.18	7.09 ***
American Indian			0.87	0.13			0.12	0.05
Multiracial			1.66	0.19 ***			0.99	0.14


Same Sex and Single Adoptive Parent's Odds of Adopting by Child's Race (controlling for the adoptive parent's race)
White
Black
Hispanic
Asian
10
1
0.1
Odds Ratios
0.54
0.47
2.47
2.64
1.52
1.53
1.66
1.55
Gay/Lesbian
Single