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Since its establishment in 1996, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute has been a pre-eminent, independent voice for improving adoption for everyone it touches – particularly children – through innovative programs, educational initiatives, research and analysis, and advocacy for better practices, policies and laws.

Adoption by Lesbians and Gays:

A National Survey of Adoption Agency Policies, Practices, and Attitudes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ADOPTION BY LESBIANS AND GAYS:
NEW STUDY SHOWS MOST AGENCIES NOW ACCEPT HOMOSEXUALS AS PARENTS

Considerable controversy surrounds the issue of parenting by gays and lesbians, and it seems certain to escalate. It is a critical component of the debate over whether homosexuals should be permitted to marry, and it continues to divide policymakers in the United States – as well as in Canada and other countries – as they formulate laws and practices relating to workplace benefits, foster care, adoption, and an array of other important social and personal questions.

Even as these discussions proliferate on the legislative and rhetorical levels, however, reality on the ground is outstripping the pace of the debate. That is, a growing number of lesbians and gay men are becoming parents and are living as families every day, irrespective of what the policymakers do or say.

They are becoming mothers and fathers in many ways, but primarily through insemination, surrogacy and adoption. The latter alternative, which is becoming increasingly popular (though that fact is not generally publicized), provides critical insights into the cultural changes taking place in two major ways: demonstrating that the adoption of children by homosexuals is an ongoing, unabated practice; and showing that Americans' attitudes are evolving – as reflected in the fact that more and more agencies are allowing openly gay and lesbian clients to adopt.

Solid research, to help inform and shape the dialogue, has been lacking. There have been studies, for example, finding that homosexuals' parenting capacity and their children's outcomes are comparable to those of heterosexuals. But little is known about two pivotal aspects of the process: What are adoption agency policies and practices toward prospective adoptive parents who are gay or lesbian? And to what extent are agencies placing children with homosexuals?

In an attempt to address these issues and to promote a more informed dialogue on this topic, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute – funded by a generous grant from the Rainbow Endowment – conducted a systematic, nationwide analysis of whether agencies work with lesbian and gay prospective adoptive parents, the extent to which agencies place children with them, and agency staff attitudes regarding adoption by homosexuals.

The most sweeping conclusion that comes out of the research is simply that adoption agencies are increasingly willing to place children with gay and lesbian adults and, consequently, a steadily escalating number of homosexuals are becoming adoptive parents.

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Among the study's principal specific findings are:

- Lesbians and gays are adopting regularly, in notable and growing numbers, at both public and private agencies nationwide.
- Assuming those responding are representative (and the results show they are), 60% of adoption agencies accept applications from homosexuals.
- About 2 in 5 of all agencies in the country have placed children with adoptive parents whom they know to be gay or lesbian.
- Most likely to place children with homosexuals are public, secular private, Jewish- and Lutheran-affiliated agencies, and those focusing on special needs and international adoption.

In addition to the specific findings, the study's results lead to several major conclusions on the levels of policy and practice:

- For lesbians and gay men, the opportunities for becoming adoptive mothers and fathers is significantly greater than is generally portrayed in the media or perceived by the public.
- Though a large and growing number of agencies work with or are willing to work with homosexual clients, they often are unsure about whether or how to reach out to them.
- Because so many homosexuals are becoming adoptive parents, it is important for the sake of their children that agencies develop pre-placement and post-placement services.

Surveys requesting information about agency policies and practices in 1999-2000 were mailed to adoption program directors at all 51 public agencies in the United States, plus 844 private agencies (over half of all those listed in the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse database, randomly chosen within each state). Of those, 307 adoption agencies responded – 277 private and 30 public – representing a statistically strong 41% response rate (eliminating surveys returned as undeliverable, and from agencies not making adoption placements). The margin of error is plus or minus 5%. As a whole, about one-third of the agencies focused primarily on domestic infant/toddler adoptions and one-third on special needs adoptions. International adoptions were provided by approximately one-fifth of the agencies and one-tenth had mixed adoption programs. About half of the private agencies (177) did not have a religious affiliation, while the rest represented a variety of faiths.

In general, the study's results confirm that adoptions by lesbians and gays are occurring regularly and in notable numbers, both at public and private agencies. The research also reveals that the acceptance of applications from homosexual clients, as well as the placement of children with lesbians and gays, is associated with both program type (special needs, private domestic infant, international) and religious affiliation or non-affiliation.

A clear majority of all responding agencies (60%) said they accepted applications from self-identified lesbians and gays in 1999-2000. Acceptance of such applications was associated with the agency's type of placement program, with special needs agencies much more likely to accept applications from homosexuals than all other agency types. The vast majority of special needs programs (85.3%) and

about two-thirds of international (68.2%) and mixed programs (65.7%) accepted applications from lesbians and gays, while almost half of domestic infant/toddler programs (48%) accepted such applications.

There was also a significant difference in the acceptance of adoption applications from homosexuals as a function of the agency's religious affiliation. Jewish-affiliated agencies were universally willing to work with gay and lesbian clients, as were the vast majority of public agencies (90%), private agencies with no religious affiliation (80.2%), and most Lutheran agencies (66.7%). The rest of the agencies were much less willing to accept applications from homosexuals, although a sizable minority of Methodist and Catholic agencies did. About 20% of all agencies said that, on one or more occasions, they had rejected applications from homosexual prospective adoptive parents.

Almost two-thirds of responding agencies had official policies on adoption by gays and lesbians; of those, 33.6% reported a non-discrimination policy. About one-fifth responded that placement decisions were guided by the children's country of origin, and another fifth said that religious beliefs were the basis for rejecting applications from homosexuals. Significantly, of the agencies choosing not to participate in the survey, more than one-third reported in follow-up phone calls that they did not work with homosexual prospective adoptive parents.

About 2 in 5 (39%) of all agencies had placed at least one child with a homosexual adoptive parent in 1999-2000. Because many of these agencies did not keep such statistics – fewer than half (43%) collected information on prospective adoptive parents' sexual orientation – and since it was impossible to estimate the number of such placements they made, only one adoption placement with a homosexual client per year was counted for statistical purposes. Based on this conservative approach, respondents made a total of 1,206 such placements, or 1.3% of their total placements, though it's apparent that the true number must be appreciably higher.

As with the acceptance of applications, adoptive placements of children with lesbians and gays varied as a function of program type and religious affiliation. The majority of special needs (61.5%) and international agencies (51.5%) made placements with homosexual clients. In contrast, fewer than half of the agencies with mixed adoption programs (45.7%) and only a quarter of agencies focusing on domestic infant adoptions (25.5%) made such placements. Public agencies (83.3%), Jewish-affiliated agencies (73.7%), private, secular agencies (55.9%) and Lutheran agencies (53.3%) were significantly more likely to make an adoption placement with a homosexual client than all other types of agencies.

As for informing potential birth parents when making an adoptive placement with lesbian or gay individuals, almost half of the respondents (47%) provided that information as a matter of policy or routine practice. A larger percentage (76.9%) of domestic infant agencies, than special needs and international programs, provided the information to prospective birth parents because the latter agencies have little contact with the child's biological parents during the adoption planning process.

On related issues, the Adoption Institute research found:

- About one-quarter of respondents said prospective birth parents have objected to placing their child with gays or lesbians, or have specifically requested their child not be placed with homosexuals. At the same time, nearly 15% of all agencies said birth parents had requested or chosen lesbian or gay prospective adoptive parents for their child on at least one occasion.
- Though most agencies worked with lesbians and gays, only 19% sought them to be adoptive parents and the vast majority of these (86.6%) relied on word of mouth for recruitment. Outreach efforts were made most often at agencies already willing to work with homosexuals (41.7% of Jewish affiliated, 29.9% of private, non-religiously affiliated, and 20% of public).
- Similarly, adoption agencies focused on children with special needs were the most likely to make outreach efforts (32.1%) to gays and lesbians, followed by international focused agencies (19.7%).
- Nearly half (48%) indicated an interest in receiving training to work with lesbian and gay prospective parents. Most likely to be interested were agencies already working with them: public, non-religiously affiliated, Jewish and Lutheran. Additionally, special needs programs and those with mixed programs were more likely to be interested in training than were those focusing on international and domestic infant adoptions.

Adoption directors' personal attitudes also were associated with the agency's religious affiliations and program types. Directors of agencies focusing on domestic infant adoption were significantly less likely to be accepting of homosexual adoption compared to respondents from other agencies. They also were more likely to believe homosexual clients need greater evaluation, preparation, and/or support when adopting than were adoption directors at agencies focused on special needs or international placements. Respondents from public and non-religiously affiliated private agencies, as well as Jewish agencies, were more accepting of gay and lesbian adoption and less likely to believe that homosexuals needed more intensive evaluation, preparation, and support when adopting a child.

Directors who scored higher on the "acceptance of homosexual adoption" variable, and lower on the "need for greater evaluation and support" variable, worked in agencies that more often accepted adoption applications from lesbians and gays, were more likely to have made a placement with this group, were more likely to have recruited gays and lesbians as prospective applicants, and expressed more desire for training in relation to homosexual adoption.

Conclusion:

The study's findings offer insights into a controversial arena of adoption, as well as into an important issue in the gay and lesbian community. For society, the bottom line is clear: Homosexuals are becoming parents in growing numbers, and adoption agencies are fueling the trend. For homosexuals wishing to become parents, the results paint a more encouraging picture than is often portrayed or perceived by many (if not most) Americans. Although stereotypes and misconceptions still perpetuate policy and practice, from a child-centered perspective, the willingness of adoption agencies to accept gay and lesbian adults as parents means more and more waiting children are moving into permanent, loving families.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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ADOPTION BY GAYS AND LESBIANS:
NEW STUDY SHOWS MOST AGENCIES NOW ACCEPT HOMOSEXUALS AS PARENTS

NEW YORK – Considerable controversy surrounds the issue of parenting by gays and lesbians, and it seems certain to escalate. It is a critical component of the debate over whether homosexuals should be permitted to marry, and it continues to divide policymakers in the United States – as well as in Canada and other countries – as they formulate laws and practices relating to workplace benefits, foster care, adoption, and an array of other important social and personal questions.

Even as these discussions proliferate on the legislative and rhetorical levels, reality on the ground is outstripping the pace of the debate. That is, a growing number of lesbians and gay men are becoming parents and are living as families every day, irrespective of what the policymakers do or say.

In an effort to promote a more informed dialogue on this topic, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute – funded by a generous grant from the Rainbow Endowment – conducted the most extensive systematic, nationwide research to date on the willingness of adoption agencies to work with homosexuals, as well as the extent to which agencies are placing children with parents they know to be lesbian or gay.

The study's findings yield sweeping conclusions that are as significant as they are straightforward:

- A growing majority of adoption agencies (60 percent) accept applications from homosexuals.
- About 40 percent of all agencies already have placed children with gay or lesbian parents.
- Agencies dealing with foster care are the most likely to place children with homosexuals.
- Opportunities to become parents are greater for homosexuals than is generally understood.
- The number of gay- and lesbian-led families formed through adoption is growing steadily.

"Policymakers and professionals dealing with an array of important and controversial issues – from gay and lesbian parenting, to the historic changes occurring in the American family, to questions relating to children's welfare – too often operate on the basis of societal assumptions and preconceived notions," said Adam Pertman, executive director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. "Now, finally, we have solid research to inform the public debate, to help shape improved policies and practices, and to assist us all in better understanding the rapidly shifting realities in our country."

ADOPTION BY GAYS AND LESBIANS:
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The Adoption Institute study is based on surveys mailed to adoption program directors at all 51 public agencies in the United States, plus 844 private agencies (over half of all those listed in the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse database, randomly chosen within each state). The questionnaires asked about policy and practice in 1999-2000. Of those who were sent surveys, 307 responded, representing a statistically strong 41% response rate (eliminating surveys returned as undeliverable, and from agencies not making adoption placements). The margin of error is plus or minus 5%.

Willingness to work with lesbian and gay prospective adoptive parents was found to be a function of two primary agency characteristics: religious affiliation, or lack thereof, and program types (domestic infant, special needs or international). The agencies most willing to place children with lesbian and gay adoptive parents were public (83.3%), secular private (55.9%), Jewish- (72.7%) and Lutheran-affiliated agencies (53.3%), and those focusing on special needs (61.5%) and international adoption (51.5%).

About one-fifth (19%) of the responding agencies said they recruited homosexual adoptive parents or advertised that they were "gay friendly." Moreover, nearly half (48%) of the agencies indicated an interest in receiving training for working with lesbian and gay prospective parents.

"I think the most significant aspect of this research," said Pertman, who wrote the award-winning book *Adoption Nation,* "is that it clearly shows how extensively attitudes in our country are evolving – to the benefit of children everywhere who need permanent, loving homes."

The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute is an independent, non-profit organization with no affiliations to any constituency or interest group. Its objective is to improve the lives of everyone touched by adoption – especially children – by providing accurate, research-based information that will lead to more ethical, effective and informed policies, practices and laws.

To get a complete copy of the study or to arrange an interview with Adam Pertman, Institute Deputy Director Georgia Deoudes or David Brodzinsky, the chief researcher on the project, please email apertman@adoptioninstitute.org or gdeoudes@adoptioninstitute.org, or call 212-269-5080. Our website address is www.adoptioninstitute.org.

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ADOPTION BY LESBIANS AND GAYS: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF ADOPTION AGENCY POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND ATTITUDES

Funded by the Rainbow Endowment

David M. Brodzinsky, Ph.D.[1] and the Staff of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

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Even as these discussions proliferate on the legislative and rhetorical levels, however, reality on the ground is outstripping the pace of the debate. That is, a growing number of lesbians and gay men are becoming parents and are living as families every day, irrespective of what the policymakers do or say.

They are becoming mothers and fathers in many ways, but primarily through insemination, surrogacy and adoption. The latter alternative, which is becoming increasingly popular (though that fact is not generally publicized), provides critical insights into the cultural changes taking place in two major ways: demonstrating that the adoption of children by homosexuals is an ongoing, unabated practice; and showing that Americans' attitudes are evolving – as reflected in the fact that more and more agencies are allowing openly gay and lesbian clients to adopt.

Solid research, to help inform and shape the dialogue, has been lacking. There have been studies, for example, finding that homosexuals' parenting capacity and their children's outcomes are comparable to those of heterosexuals. But little is known about two pivotal aspects of the process: What are adoption agency policies and practices toward prospective adoptive parents who are gay or lesbian? And to what extent are agencies placing children with homosexuals?

In an attempt to address these issues and to promote a more informed dialogue on this topic, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute – funded by a generous grant from the Rainbow Endowment – conducted a systematic, nationwide analysis of whether agencies work with lesbian and gay prospective adoptive parents, the extent to which agencies place children with them, and agency staff attitudes regarding adoption by homosexuals.

The most sweeping conclusion that comes out of the research is simply that adoption agencies are increasingly willing to place children with gay and lesbian adults and, consequently, a steadily escalating number of homosexuals are becoming adoptive parents.

Among the study's principal specific findings are:

- Lesbians and gays are adopting regularly, in notable and growing numbers, at both public and private agencies nationwide.
- Assuming those responding are representative (and the results show they are), 60% of adoption agencies accept applications from homosexuals.

- About 2 in 5 of all agencies in the country have placed children with adoptive parents whom they know to be gay or lesbian.
- Most likely to place children with homosexuals are public, secular private, Jewish- and Lutheran-affiliated agencies, and those focusing on special needs and international adoption.

In addition to the specific findings, the study's results lead to several major conclusions on the levels of policy and practice:

- For lesbians and gay men, the opportunities for becoming adoptive mothers and fathers is significantly greater than is generally portrayed in the media or perceived by the public.
- Though a large and growing number of agencies work with or are willing to work with homosexual clients, they often are unsure about whether or how to reach out to them.
- Because so many homosexuals are becoming adoptive parents, it is important for the sake of their children that agencies develop pre-placement and post-placement services.

Surveys requesting information about agency policies and practices in 1999-2000 were mailed to adoption program directors at all 51 public agencies in the United States, plus 844 private agencies (over half of all those listed in the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse database, randomly chosen within each state). Of those, 307 adoption agencies responded – 277 private and 30 public – representing a statistically strong 41% response rate (eliminating surveys returned as undeliverable, and from agencies not making adoption placements). The margin of error is plus or minus 5%. As a whole, about one-third of the agencies focused primarily on domestic infant/toddler adoptions and one-third on special needs adoptions. International adoptions were provided by approximately one-fifth of the agencies and one-tenth had mixed adoption programs. About half of the private agencies (177) did not have a religious affiliation, while the rest represented a variety of faiths.

In general, the study's results confirm that adoptions by lesbians and gays are occurring regularly and in notable numbers, both at public and private agencies. The research also reveals that the acceptance of applications from homosexual clients, as well as the placement of children with lesbians and gays, is associated with both program type (special needs, private domestic infant, international) and religious affiliation or non-affiliation.

A clear majority of all responding agencies (60%) said they accepted applications from self-identified lesbians and gays in 1999-2000. Acceptance of such applications was associated with the agency's type of placement program, with special needs agencies much more likely to accept applications from homosexuals than all other agency types. The vast majority of special needs programs (85.3%) and about two-thirds of international (68.2%) and mixed programs (65.7%) accepted applications from lesbians and gays, while almost half of domestic infant/toddler programs (48%) accepted such applications.

There was also a significant difference in the acceptance of adoption applications from homosexuals as a function of the agency's religious affiliation. Jewish-affiliated agencies were

universally willing to work with gay and lesbian clients, as were the vast majority of public agencies (90%), private agencies with no religious affiliation (80.2%), and most Lutheran agencies (66.7%). The rest of the agencies were much less willing to accept applications from homosexuals, although a sizable minority of Methodist and Catholic agencies did. About 20% of all agencies said that, on one or more occasions, they had rejected applications from homosexual prospective adoptive parents.

Almost two-thirds of responding agencies had official policies on adoption by gays and lesbians; of those, 33.6% reported a non-discrimination policy. About one-fifth responded that placement decisions were guided by the children's country of origin, and another fifth said that religious beliefs were the basis for rejecting applications from homosexuals. Significantly, of the agencies choosing not to participate in the survey, more than one-third reported in follow-up phone calls that they did not work with homosexual prospective adoptive parents.

About 2 in 5 (39%) of all agencies had placed at least one child with a homosexual adoptive parent in 1999-2000. Because many of these agencies did not keep such statistics – fewer than half (43%) collected information on prospective adoptive parents' sexual orientation – and since it was impossible to estimate the number of such placements they made, only one adoption placement with a homosexual client per year was counted for statistical purposes. Based on this conservative approach, respondents made a total of 1,206 such placements, or 1.3% of their total placements, though it's apparent that the true number must be appreciably higher.

As with the acceptance of applications, adoptive placements of children with lesbians and gays varied as a function of program type and religious affiliation. The majority of special needs (61.5%) and international agencies (51.5%) made placements with homosexual clients. In contrast, fewer than half of the agencies with mixed adoption programs (45.7%) and only a quarter of agencies focusing on domestic infant adoptions (25.5%) made such placements. Public agencies (83.3%), Jewish-affiliated agencies (73.7%), private, secular agencies (55.9%) and Lutheran agencies (53.3%) were significantly more likely to make an adoption placement with a homosexual client than all other types of agencies.

As for informing potential birth parents when making an adoptive placement with lesbian or gay individuals, almost half of the respondents (47%) provided that information as a matter of policy or routine practice. A larger percentage (76.9%) of domestic infant agencies, than special needs and international programs, provided the information to prospective birth parents because the latter agencies have little contact with the child's biological parents during the adoption planning process.

On related issues, the Adoption Institute research found:

- About one-quarter of respondents said prospective birth parents have objected to placing their child with gays or lesbians, or have specifically requested their child not be placed with homosexuals. At the same time, nearly 15% of all agencies said birth parents had requested or chosen lesbian or gay prospective adoptive parents for their child on at least one occasion.

- Though most agencies worked with lesbians and gays, only 19% sought them to be adoptive parents and the vast majority of these (86.6%) relied on word of mouth for recruitment. Outreach efforts were made most often at agencies already willing to work with homosexuals (41.7% of Jewish affiliated, 29.9% of private, non-religiously affiliated, and 20% of public).
- Similarly, adoption agencies focused on children with special needs were the most likely to make outreach efforts (32.1%) to gays and lesbians, followed by international focused agencies (19.7%).
- Nearly half (48%) indicated an interest in receiving training to work with lesbian and gay prospective parents. Most likely to be interested were agencies already working with them: public, non-religiously affiliated, Jewish and Lutheran. Additionally, special needs programs and those with mixed programs were more likely to be interested in training than were those focusing on international and domestic infant adoptions.

Adoption directors' personal attitudes also were associated with the agency's religious affiliations and program types. Directors of agencies focusing on domestic infant adoption were significantly less likely to be accepting of homosexual adoption compared to respondents from other agencies. They also were more likely to believe homosexual clients need greater evaluation, preparation, and/or support when adopting than were adoption directors at agencies focused on special needs or international placements. Respondents from public and non-religiously affiliated private agencies, as well as Jewish agencies, were more accepting of gay and lesbian adoption and less likely to believe that homosexuals needed more intensive evaluation, preparation, and support when adopting a child.

Directors who scored higher on the "acceptance of homosexual adoption" variable, and lower on the "need for greater evaluation and support" variable, worked in agencies that more often accepted adoption applications from lesbians and gays, were more likely to have made a placement with this group, were more likely to have recruited gays and lesbians as prospective applicants, and expressed more desire for training in relation to homosexual adoption.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings offer insights into a controversial arena of adoption, as well as into an important issue in the gay and lesbian community. For society, the bottom line is clear: Homosexuals are becoming parents in growing numbers, and adoption agencies are fueling the trend. For homosexuals wishing to become parents, the results paint a more encouraging picture than is often portrayed or perceived by many (if not most) Americans. Although stereotypes and misconceptions still perpetuate policy and practice, from a child-centered perspective, the willingness of adoption agencies to accept gay and lesbian adults as parents means more and more waiting children are moving into permanent, loving families.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

In the past few decades, considerable controversy has surrounded the issue of children growing up in lesbian- and gay-headed households. Cases such as the gay marriage trial in Hawaii (Baehr v. Miike), as well as child custody cases around the country involving a gay or lesbian parent, have focused the public's attention on societal beliefs and stereotypes regarding the parenting capacity and mental health of homosexuals, as well as the psychological outcomes for children raised by them. More recent cases, such as the challenge to Florida's ban on adoption by lesbians and gay men (Lofton v. Kearney), have extended the nationwide debate about these issues to the practice of adoption.

Although it is widely acknowledged by social casework professionals that lesbian and gay individuals have been adopting children for some time,[2] little is known about adoption agency policy and practice in this area, or about the extent to which such placements are being made. The debate about adoption by homosexuals, as well as the development of best practice standards, requires sound empirical data and a thorough understanding of the parameters influencing such placements.

In an attempt to address these issues and to promote a more informed dialogue on this controversial topic, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, funded by a generous grant from the Rainbow Endowment, conducted a systematic, nationwide analysis of how agencies handle interest by lesbians and gay men in adopting children, the extent to which agencies are making placements, and agency staff attitudes regarding adoption by homosexuals. We intended that this research would serve two broad purposes: to help sharpen and inform the debate among various professional groups regarding the policy and practice of placing children in lesbian- and gay-headed households; and to gauge interest among social casework professionals in creating more effective pre- and post-placement services for this group of adoptive families.

CHANGING NATURE OF ADOPTION PRACTICE

In the past 30 years or so, adoption has become a very complex social service practice and an increasingly visible and accepted means of family formation.[3] Prior to the 1970s, most adoptions in the United States involved the placement of healthy, newborn, Caucasian babies with middle- to upper-middle-class, infertile, Caucasian couples. Since then, however, the characteristics of children being adopted have changed dramatically. Because far fewer, never-married Caucasian women are relinquishing their infants for adoption, there are significantly fewer babies available for adoption today. Consequently, Americans are adopting more varied types of children, including older ones with "special needs" from the foster care system, as well as children from other countries. In fact, in 2001, Americans adopted about 50,000 children from the foster care system, and in 2002, they adopted more than 20,000 children from abroad – both historic highs. Furthermore, adoption placements across racial lines, although controversial, also are increasingly common today, both in domestic and intercountry adoption.

Dramatic changes also have taken place in the characteristics of adoptive parents, most significantly among foster care adopters. As noted, most adoptive parents in the past were

relatively affluent, married, infertile, Caucasian couples, and free of any apparent form of disability. Adoption agencies routinely "screened out" those who did not meet these criteria, including single adults, low-income individuals, fertile couples, members of minority groups, older adults, disabled individuals, foster parents and, gays and lesbians. Today, however, adoption agency policy and practice has moved in the direction of "screening in" as many different types of adoption applicants as possible. For example, public agencies now have no income criteria for adoptive parents and often provide financial and medical subsidies for special-needs children, enabling working-class, low-income and foster families to adopt children, especially youngsters who otherwise might not be placed in permanent homes. In addition, most public and private agencies now permit single, older and disabled adults – as well as fertile couples – to adopt children. In fact, there has been a major shift in the philosophy and practice of recruiting and processing adoption applications. Whereas in the past the adoption process, including the home study, served primarily as a means of assessing the suitability of the couple for adoptive parenthood, today this process serves primarily as a means of supporting and preparing adults for understanding and taking on the responsibilities associated with parenting an adopted child.

Of the many groups of individuals who were prevented, or at least discouraged, from adopting children in the past, one group continues to experience particularly significant barriers to adoptive parenthood: lesbians and gays. Although the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), which serves as the professional organization setting standards for excellence for adoption practice in the United States, has stated that adoptive "applicants should be assessed on the basis of their abilities to successfully parent a child needing family membership and not on their ... sexual orientation,"[4] many adoption agencies, caseworkers and judges remain opposed to placing children with homosexual parents.

BARRIERS TO ADOPTION BY LESBIANS AND GAYS

A few states in the U.S. have statutory barriers to homosexual adoption.[5] Florida's prohibition applies to all gays and lesbians, Mississippi's to gay couples, and Utah's to unmarried adults living together in a sexual relationship. There also are statutory bans on "second parent" adoptions in most states, prohibiting a homosexual (and an unmarried heterosexual) individual from adopting a partner's biological or adopted child. In addition, in a number of states, legislatures have introduced bills that seek to impose further restrictions on adoption and/or foster care by gays and lesbians.[6] Furthermore, although most state adoption statutes are silent on the issue or allow homosexuals to adopt children, there is often resistance to granting adoption petitions by local judiciary. Finally, lesbians and gays who seek to adopt from other countries are often confronted with regulations preventing adoption agencies from placing children with them. For example, China recently has required agencies to submit documentation affirming that the prospective adoptive parents are not homosexual.

One fundamental barrier to homosexual adoption and parenting stems from some Americans' personal and religious beliefs, as well as homophobic attitudes within our culture - often rooted in conservative religious doctrine teaching that homosexuality is deviant and sinful.

These beliefs and attitudes, as well as the myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions that derive from social prejudice and institutionalized discrimination against lesbians and gays, influence state legislators, the judiciary, social casework professionals, and others who are involved in the adoption process.

Stereotypes affecting policy and practice around gay and lesbian adoption include the notion that homosexuals do not wish to bear or raise children. Yet a sizable number of gay and lesbian adults have biological children -- from marriage, artificial insemination and surrogacy.[7] In addition, recent research on childless gay men and lesbians has found that the majority would like to become parents.[8] Thus, contrary to what many people believe, a sizable percentage of homosexual individuals either already are, or want to be, mothers and fathers.

Barriers to homosexual parenting and adoption also reflect a number of assumptions about the mental health and parenting capacity of lesbian and gay adults, as well as the outcomes for children raised by them.[9] For example, opponents of such adoptions have often maintained that lesbians and gay men are emotionally disturbed and are more likely than heterosexuals to sexually abuse children. In addition, critics assert that homosexuals do not possess adequate knowledge, skills, or personality characteristics to raise children, and that their lifestyle is inconsistent with forming a stable family environment. Finally, opposition to adoption by homosexuals also has been based on the view that children raised in lesbian- and gay-headed households are more likely to experience serious psychological problems and to become homosexual themselves.

RESEARCH ON PARENTING BY LESBIANS AND GAYS

Recently, several reviews of research have been published on the mental health and parenting capacity of lesbians and gays, as well as on the psychological outcomes of children raised by these individuals.[10] The findings of this growing body of research are consistent, leading to the following conclusions:[11]

- Homosexual parents are no more likely to be emotionally disturbed than their heterosexual counterparts. Specifically, no differences have been found between lesbian mothers and divorced, single-parent mothers in depression, self-esteem, and general psychological well being.
- No link has been found between homosexuality and child sexual abuse.
- Homosexual parents have not been shown to be deficient in parenting knowledge, skills and/or behavior. Lesbian mothers display levels of warmth and child-focused behavior comparable to that of heterosexual mothers. Furthermore, research has found no differences in parenting attitudes of gay versus heterosexual fathers.
- Homosexual couples establish co-parenting relationships that are at least as effective as their heterosexual counterparts. In fact, lesbian couples tend to share childrearing and domestic responsibilities more equally than heterosexual wives and husbands, and lesbian parents of children who are not theirs biologically generally are more involved in their care and display greater parenting skills than do heterosexual fathers. The findings comparing non-biological

lesbian co-parents and heterosexual fathers probably have more to do with gender role behavior, however, than sexual orientation.[12]

- Children raised by homosexual parents display no significant differences compared to children raised by heterosexual parents in depression, anxiety, self-esteem, conduct problems, intellectual functioning, or many other areas of social and psychological adjustment.
- Children raised by lesbian and gay parents report experiencing periodic homophobic teasing that, at times, is stressful. The fact that these youngsters sometimes experience teasing or ridicule, and yet do not show evidence of increased adjustment difficulties, suggests that they possess considerable internal resiliency and/or strong support systems.[13]
- Being raised by homosexual parents does not increase the risk for gender identity problems. Children in lesbian-headed households do appear to display less-traditional sex-typed dress, play, and behavior than children raised by parents who are heterosexual, but these indicators are well within the normal range and are not indicative of adjustment problems.
- Adolescents and young adults raised in lesbian and gay households are no more likely to self-identify as homosexual than those raised in heterosexual households. However, they do report experiencing more same-sex attraction and same-sex experiences than similar age individuals raised by heterosexual parents.

In summary, the findings on homosexual parenthood provide little, if any, evidence in support of the beliefs that lesbian and gay adults are unfit to be parents, or that children raised by them will display greater adjustment difficulties or will be more likely to self-identify as homosexual than children raised in heterosexual households. In fact, professional organizations, like the American Academy of Pediatrics, support co-parent adoption by same sex couples.[14] The differences that have been found do suggest that growing up with homosexual parents is likely to increase children's egalitarian beliefs and tolerance for diversity, as well as to foster less rigid sex-typed aspirations and behavior. Although critics of lesbian and gay parenting may view these differences as deficits, experts such as Stacey and Biblarz conclude that they are not social concerns and that the primary reasons parental sexual orientation is an issue is societal homophobia and discrimination.[15]

There are, however, some limitations in the general area of research on gay and lesbian parenting. First, the research field is still quite new, and has focused on a relatively limited group of individuals. For example, most research has studied lesbians and gays who became parents in the context of previous heterosexual relationships, with only a few studies of homosexual parenthood in those identified as lesbian or gay prior to the child's conception, and no empirical studies of lesbian and gay adoptive parenthood. Furthermore, the vast majority of research has focused on lesbian-headed households, as well as on homosexuals who are Caucasian, relatively affluent and living in major metropolitan areas. In addition, most studies have used relatively small, "convenience" samples rather than sampling randomly from gay and lesbian parent populations, and have not followed the research participants longitudinally. Moreover, the research has primarily explored questions related to family structure – i.e., comparing groups of children raised in heterosexual versus homosexual households on measures of psychological adjustment – rather than family process.

Children of lesbian and gay parents, like youngsters being raised by heterosexual parents, are a highly diverse group of individuals. Although most of them show healthy patterns of adjustment, it is to be expected that some will not. Perhaps because of the highly politicized nature of this area of inquiry, there has been virtually no research as of yet on those family process factors that increase or decrease the risk for adjustment problems in this group of individuals and families. Understanding the diversity in developmental pathways for children raised by lesbian and gay parents will require larger and more varied samples, as well as a commitment to follow these individuals longitudinally.

In conclusion, although the research on lesbian and gay parenting has some conceptual and methodological limitations, overall the empirical literature shows that children parented by homosexuals typically show normal patterns of development and do not appear to be at greater risk for psychological problems than their peers raised in heterosexual households. These findings suggest there is no reason, from a mental health perspective, for adoption agencies to prohibit or discourage lesbians and gays from becoming adoptive parents.

ADOPTION BY HOMOSEXUALS: AGENCY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

As noted previously, the Child Welfare League of America recommends that homosexual adoptive applicants be assessed the same way as any others. Although it is widely recognized among child welfare professionals that lesbian and gay adults have been adopting children for years, considerable uncertainly remains about the extent to which agencies support and make this type of placement.

Recent research by Brodzinsky and Patterson sheds light on some of these issues.[16] Their study investigated the willingness of adoption agencies to accept applications from self-identified lesbians and gays, the extent to which adoption placements were being made with this group, and the types of agencies most often involved in such placements. The researchers conducted a nationwide mail survey of 214 private and public adoption agencies' practices during 1995-1996 and found that during the two-year study target period:

Acceptance of Applications

- Nearly two-thirds of agencies (63%) accepted adoption applications from lesbians and gays.
- Acceptance of adoption applications was associated with the agency's religious affiliation, with public agencies (100%) and private, non-religiously affiliated agencies (77.2%), as well as agencies affiliated with the Jewish faith (91.7%), more likely to accept adoption applications from lesbians and gay men than agencies affiliated with Catholicism (13.6%) and more fundamentalist Christian beliefs (0%). Agencies affiliated with Protestant beliefs fell in between the other agencies in their willingness to work with this group of prospective adoptive applicants (41.7%).
- Acceptance of adoption applications also varied as a function of the type of adoption program run by the agency. Agencies focusing on special needs adoptions (87%) were more likely to accept applications from homosexuals than agencies focusing on international adoption (69%), domestic infant adoption (47.6%), or ones with highly varied adoption programs (66.5%).

Placement

- More than one-third (37.7%) of all agencies made at least one adoption placement with an individual who self-identified as either lesbian or gay.
- Placement of children with lesbian and gay adults varied as a function of the agency's religious affiliation, with public agencies (70%) most likely to make such placements, followed by private, non-religiously affiliated agencies (46.5%), Jewish agencies (41.7%) and Protestant agencies (20.8%). None of the Catholic or fundamentalist Christian agencies made any placements with self-identified homosexuals.
- Placement of children with lesbian and gay adults also was associated with the type of adoption program run by the agency, with those focusing on special needs children (59.5%) most likely to make placements with this group of adoptive parents, followed by agencies focusing on international adoption (40.5%), ones with a mixed adoption program (35.3%), and agencies focusing on domestic infant placements (22.6%).

Outreach

- About one-sixth (16%) of agencies reported reaching out to the gay and lesbian community for prospective adoptive parents.
- Agency outreach efforts were associated with the religious affiliation (or non-affiliation) of the agency, with public agencies (40%) much more likely than all others to reach out to the gay and lesbian community, followed by private, non-religiously affiliated agencies (18.9%), Jewish-affiliated agencies (16.7%) and Protestant agencies (12.5%). No Catholic or fundamentalist Christian agencies conducted outreach to gays and lesbians.
- Outreach efforts also varied as a function of the type of program, with agencies focusing on special needs placements (37.7%) more likely to make outreach efforts than those with mixed adoption programs (11.8%), international adoption programs (7.1%) or domestic infant adoption programs (7.1%).

Taken as a whole, the findings suggest that many agencies are willing to work with lesbian and gay prospective adoptive parents. More than one-third reported having made at least one adoption placement with gays or lesbians in the two-year period studied. A much smaller percentage, however, reported making active efforts to recruit homosexuals as prospective adoptive parents.

Although the results of this study provide the first empirical data on agency practices concerning such adoptions, a number of methodological issues potentially limit the study's conclusions. Most important, the return rate for the survey was only 26% and, because of limited resources, the researchers reported that they were unable to follow up with agencies that failed to respond to the initial mailed survey. Although the number of agencies in the sample was considerable, and varied widely in terms of their size, geographical location, religious affiliation and program focus, the low response rate could have produced an unrepresentative pattern of findings. Furthermore, because the researchers had relatively little information about the non-responders, it was not possible to determine if agencies that chose not to complete the survey were unsupportive of lesbian and gay adoption. If that was the case, the figures reported may significantly overestimate the percentage of agencies that accept adoption applications or make

placements with lesbians and gays.

GOALS OF THE STUDY

Because of the relative lack of information on adoption by lesbians and gays, and the ongoing controversy regarding this type of placement, the Rainbow Foundation funded the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute to explore the agency practice issues Brodzinsky and Patterson first studied. Consequently, our goal was to expand their research in the following ways:

1) Collect data from a larger number of agencies across the country.
2) Improve the response rate for the agencies sampled.
3) Collect more detailed information on non-responding agencies.
4) Gather more detailed information on agency policies regarding acceptance and processing of adoption applications by gays and lesbians.
5) Collect more detailed information on agency outreach efforts to the homosexual community.
6) Gather information on the training needs of agencies around adoption by gays and lesbians.
7) Develop a more detailed series of questions focusing on respondents' attitudes and beliefs regarding parenting and adoption by lesbians and gays, as well as attitudes and beliefs regarding the outcomes for children parented by homosexuals.

METHODOLOGY

SURVEY SAMPLE

Adoption agencies were identified from the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) database (2001). The database included a total of 1,692 adoption agencies – 1,641 private and 51 public (all states and the District of Columbia). Surveys were mailed to adoption program directors from 820 private agencies – half of the listed agencies, randomly chosen within each state – plus all 51 public agencies. After the returned surveys were examined, an additional 24 surveys were sent to private agencies randomly selected from those states that were underrepresented in the initially collected survey data. As a result, 895 agencies were targeted for inclusion in the study, 51.4% of the private adoption agencies and 100% of the public agencies in the database.

The response rate was 41.2%, an acceptable rate of return for mailed survey research, and an improvement over the previous research. Three hundred and seven adoption agencies responded to the survey, 277 private and 30 public. An additional 106 questionnaires were undeliverable because the adoption agency had either moved or no longer existed, and another 44 agencies reported that they no longer made adoption placements; these groups were excluded from the response rate calculation. The margin of error is plus or minus 5%.

Public and private agencies in nearly all states, plus the District of Columbia, returned surveys; New Mexico and Mississippi were the only exceptions. Figure 1 illustrates the strong

agency representation within most states. Arizona, Iowa, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia, however, were under-represented in the sample – with less than a 25% response rate – while Alaska and Vermont were over-represented – with more than a 75% response rate. On average, approximately 40% of the agencies in each state provided information.

Figure 1: Number of Respondent Adoption Agencies by State

STATE	# OF AGENCIES	% OF AGENCIES	STATE	# OF AGENCIES	% OF AGENCIES
AK	4	100%	MS	0	0%
AL	4	44%	MT	2	67%
AR	1	9%	NC	5	45%
AZ	9	53%	ND	3	38%
CA	30	56%	NE	2	40%
CO	9	47%	NH	2	33%
CT	6	40%	NJ	12	57%
DC	4	44%	NM	0	0%
DE	5	55%	NV	2	33%
FL	13	33%	NY	18	34%
GA	10	63%	OH	7	21%
HI	3	43%	OK	5	36%
IA	2	14%	OR	7	50%
ID	2	33%	PA	22	32%
IL	13	52%	RI	4	50%
IN	11	52%	SC	3	30%
KS	9	47%	SD	2	33%
KY	6	40%	TN	4	19%
LA	3	25%	TX	11	35%
MA	10	38%	UT	6	38%
MD	4	22%	VA	13	45%
ME	5	71%	VT	7	78%
MI	16	26%	WA	7	64%
MN	8	35%	WI	6	50%
MO	9	32%	WV	1	20%
			WY	1	33%

PROCEDURES AND RESEARCH FORMAT

The research team sent questionnaires to adoption program directors, asking them to respond anonymously and return the survey in a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Several months after the initial mailing, a follow up letter was sent to the agencies that had not responded. Included in the follow up letter was a request for agencies that had decided not to participate in the research to provide information explaining that decision. The final stage of data collection involved telephoning agencies that had not responded to previous requests.

About 50% of the non-responding agencies were contacted directly by telephone. In the other cases, telephone messages were left but were not returned. Two points need to be made regarding the telephone contact. First, a sizable minority of those agencies contacted reported that they had never received a copy of the initial survey or the follow up letter, suggesting the strong possibility that a number of non-respondents -- with whom we had no contact -- may also have failed to receive the survey. If so, the return rate may underestimate the extent of agency cooperation in the research, since those that were not aware of the existence of the study could not make an informed decision about whether to participate. Second, in 35 cases, data was collected by telephone. Because this procedure offered the respondents no anonymity, they were not asked to respond to the last section of the survey focusing on personal attitudes regarding parenting and adoption by homosexuals. Even with regard to their agencies' adoption policies and practices, respondents were told they could decline to respond to any question that made them feel uncomfortable, which occasionally they did.

In summary, the data collection procedure involved three steps: an initial mailing of the questionnaire to 895 adoption program directors, a follow up letter several months later to those that had not responded and, finally, phone calls to non-responding agencies. In the last phase, some agencies provided the information when contacted by telephone and others forwarded the survey information by mail. When possible, information was collected regarding the reason for agency nonparticipation.

The questionnaire was designed to identify current adoption agency policies and practices in regard to applications from and placements with gays and lesbians, as well as respondents' attitudes about parenting and adoption by homosexual individuals. Questionnaires requested information about agency policies and practices in the two-year period covering 1999-2000. The survey (Attachment 1) consisted of 18 questions addressing the following issues:

1) Agency type (public or private).
2) Agency religious affiliation, if any.
3) Total number of adoption placements completed in 1999 and 2000.
4) Percentage of placements involving domestic infants and toddlers, special needs children, and children from other countries.
5) Awareness of state law on adoption by homosexuals.
6) Awareness of state law regarding second-parent adoption.
7) Official policy regarding gay and lesbian adoption, and if one exists, the nature of that policy.

8) Agency involvement in international adoption, and if it exists, the countries from which placements are made.
9) Willingness to accept adoption applications from openly identified lesbian and gay individuals.
10) Number of placements made with individuals who self-identified as lesbian or gay.
11) Policy and practices regarding collecting information about an applicant's sexual orientation.
12) What the agency would do if, during the course of the adoption application process, it became apparent that the applicant was homosexual, even though she or he had not acknowledged it.
13) Whether the agency had ever rejected an application from a gay or lesbian individual, and if so, for what reasons.
14) Whether the agency recruits applicants from the gay and lesbian community as parenting resources for children needing to be adopted, and if so, by what means.
15) Whether the agency was interested in receiving in-service training related to working with homosexual prospective adoptive parents, and if so, in what areas the training would be most useful.
16) Whether the agency, as a matter of policy or routine practice, informs prospective birth parents when the adoption plan involves their child's placement with a gay or lesbian individual.
17) Whether the agency has had instances in which prospective birth parents have requested placement of their child with a gay or lesbian individual or couple, and if so, how often this has occurred.
18) Whether the agency has had instances in which prospective birth parents specifically have requested that their child not be placed with homosexuals, and if so, how often this has occurred.

Finally, respondents also were asked to fill out an 18-item questionnaire focusing on their personal attitudes and beliefs related to lesbian and gay parenting and adoption. Each statement was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

- Four items dealt with psychological outcomes for children raised by homosexuals (e.g., adopted children are likely to have more problems getting along with peers than children adopted by heterosexual individuals).
- Five items focused on the mental health and parenting capacity of lesbians and gays (e.g., do they have the same capacity for being sensitive and caring adoptive parents as heterosexual individuals).
- Three items focused on whether homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children (e.g., adoption by homosexuals should be prohibited by law).
- Six items dealt with agency practices in relation to adoption by lesbians and gays (e.g., a child should be placed for adoption with gay and lesbian individuals only if the agency cannot find suitable heterosexual individuals willing to adopt the child).

SURVEY RESULTS

AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS

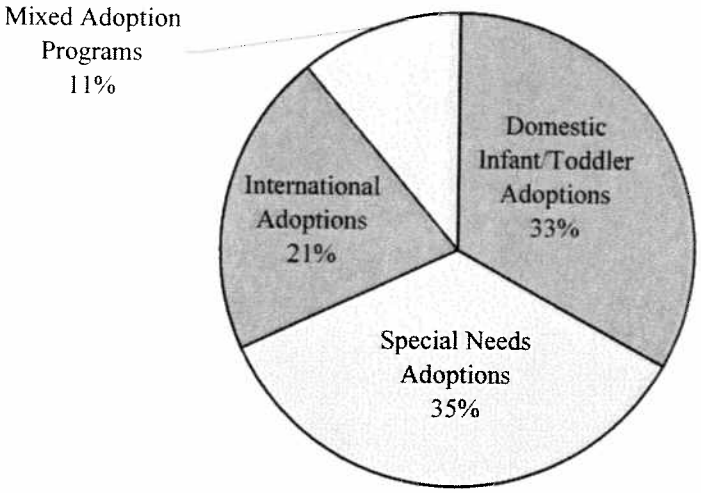
As noted previously, adoption program directors from 277 private agencies and 30 public agencies responded to the survey.[17] The size of the adoption programs was highly variable across agencies. The average number of adoption placements during the two years from 1999-2000 made by public agencies was 2,050.3, while the average number of placements made by private agencies was 116.8.[18] The nature of the adoption programs run by the agencies also varied. Figure 2 shows the percentage of adoptions involving domestic infants/toddlers, domestic special needs children, and internationally placed children for the public and private agencies. As expected, public state agencies almost exclusively placed special needs children, with only a small percentage of U.S. infant placements. In contrast, private agencies were actively involved in all three types of adoption, with a slightly higher percentage of placements focusing on domestic infants.

Figure 2: Percentage of Adoption Placements by Program Type for Public and Private Adoption Agencies

	Domestic Infants	Special Needs	International
Public	5.1%	94.9%	0.0%
Private	39.6%	32.9%	27.6%

As a whole, about a third of the agencies focused primarily on domestic infant/toddler adoptions and a third on special needs adoptions. International adoptions were provided by approximately one fifth of the agencies and one tenth of the agencies had mixed adoption programs.

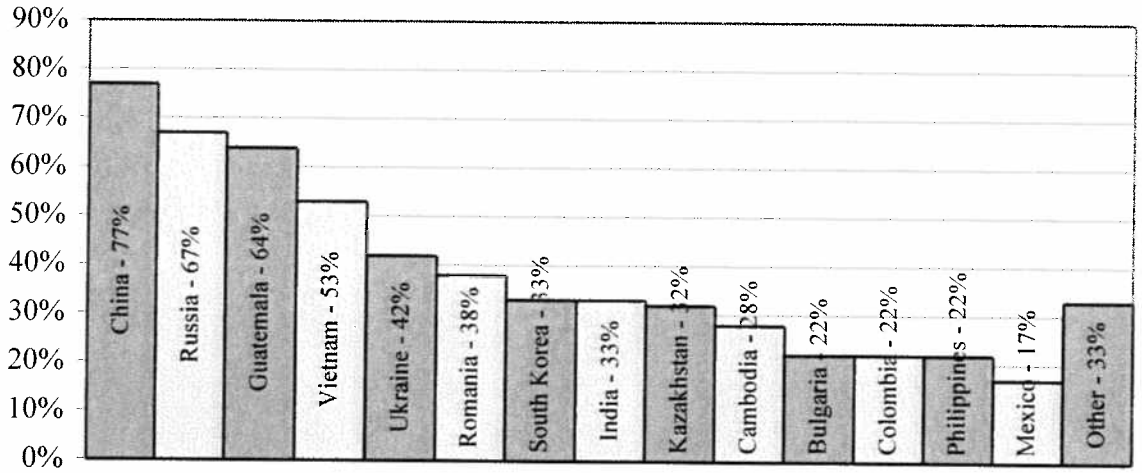
Figure 3: Primary Focus of Adoption Agencies



For purposes of subsequent statistical analyses, an agency was designated as domestic infant/toddler focused if more than 50% of its placements involved this group. Similarly, agencies were designated as either special needs focused or internationally focused if more than 50% of the placements involved these types of children. Finally, if no single category of children represented a majority of placements, the agency was designated as having a mixed adoption program.

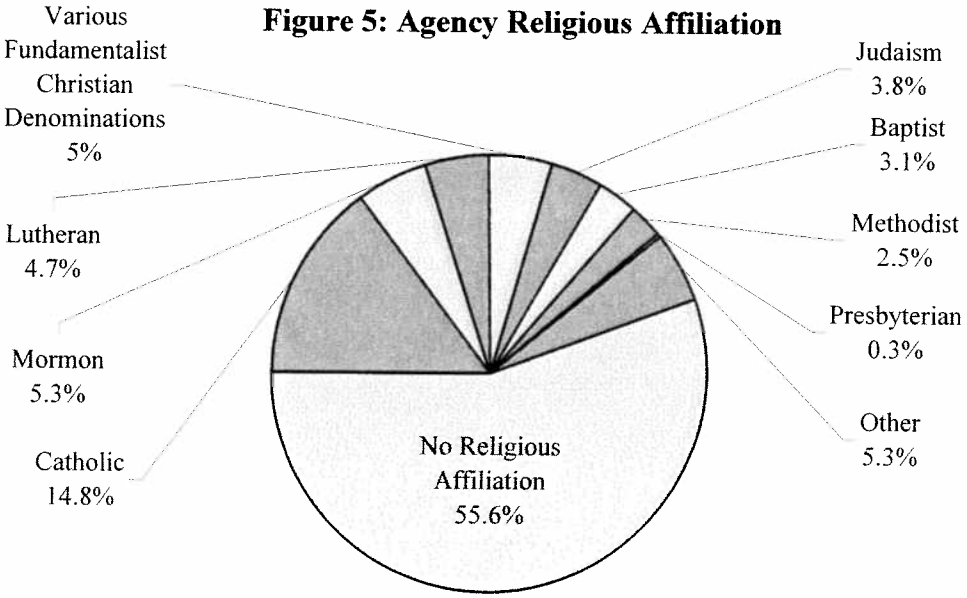
Agencies involved in international adoption worked with a wide range of countries. Listed below are the percentages of private agencies involved in international adoption placing children from various countries.

Figure 4: Countries From Which International Adoption Agencies Place Children



Finally, over half of all agencies did not have a religious affiliation, while the rest represented a variety of faiths, the largest percentage of which was Catholic.

Figure 5: Agency Religious Affiliation



NONPARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

One of the study's goals was to collect information on non-participating agencies to enable more accurate interpretation of the findings. As noted previously, in the follow up letter and telephone contacts, researchers asked agency directors who declined to participate the reasons for their decision. One hundred twenty agencies, representing 25% of the nonparticipating agencies, provided such information. Figure 6 presents information on the reasons offered for non-participation. Adoption directors from the remaining 341 non-participating agencies either did not respond to requests for information regarding their decision, or indicated that they were uncomfortable responding to the question.

Figure 6: Reasons for Nonparticipation in the Research	
Agency Does Not Make Adoption Placements	36.7%
Agency Does Not Work With Homosexual Clients	34.1%
Interested But Agency Director Too Busy	13.3%
No Reason Given; Not Interested In The Study	12.5%
Incomplete Data from Returned Survey	3.0%

Over a third of the non-participating adoption directors indicated they did not respond to the survey because their agencies did not work with homosexual clients. In the vast majority of these cases, this policy was connected to the agency's religious affiliation. In a few cases, however, respondents indicated that their agencies only placed children internationally and that the countries they worked with prohibited placement of children with homosexuals.

A slightly greater percentage of the non-participants declined to fill out the questionnaire because their agencies were not directly involved in making adoption placements. In some cases, the agency's adoption program had closed; in others, the agency only did home studies; in a few instances, the agency was an administrative office only and the adoptions were conducted through affiliated offices that were also included in the database. Another 13.3% of the non-participating adoption directors reported that they were interested in the study but could not respond because they were too busy or because their adoption program was so large that they had no way of knowing whether a prospective adoptive parent was lesbian or gay. State agencies accounted for many of these cases. In addition, 12.5% of the non-participating adoption directors simply stated that they were not interested in filling out the survey, but gave no specific reason. Finally, included in the non-participants were four agencies (3%) that returned the survey with very incomplete data.

As noted previously, in calculating our return rate, we eliminated those non-participating agencies that did not make adoption placements. For some of our analyses, however, we included information from those non-participating agencies reporting that they did not work with homosexual clients, which increased our return rate. For example, when agencies declined to participate in the study because they did not make adoption placements with gay or lesbian individuals, the following assumptions were made:

- They were unwilling to accept adoption applications from these individuals.
- They made no placements with self-identified lesbians and gays during the study period.
- They would reject any application submitted by self-identified lesbians or gays.
- They did not recruit homosexuals as prospective adoptive parents.
- They were uninterested in training related to homosexual parenting and adoption.

Based on these assumptions, we included information on these additional 41 nonparticipating agencies in all data analyses related to these areas of inquiry, which increased our overall return rate to 46.7% for these critical analyses.

AWARENESS OF ADOPTION LAW

Adoption agency directors were asked to indicate their states' legal status of adoption by lesbians and gays. At the time the study was carried out, only Florida, Mississippi, and Utah had statutory bans on or prohibitive barriers to homosexual adoption. Nonetheless, 17 adoption directors (5.4%) from other states incorrectly reported that lesbians and gays were barred from adopting children in their states. In addition, another 31 respondents (9.9%) were unsure of their states' law on adoption by homosexuals. A disproportionate number of agencies with adoption directors who either incorrectly reported or were unsure of such legal status were from Pennsylvania. Several Pennsylvania adoption professionals noted that recent judicial rulings have created some confusion regarding the legality of adoption by homosexuals.

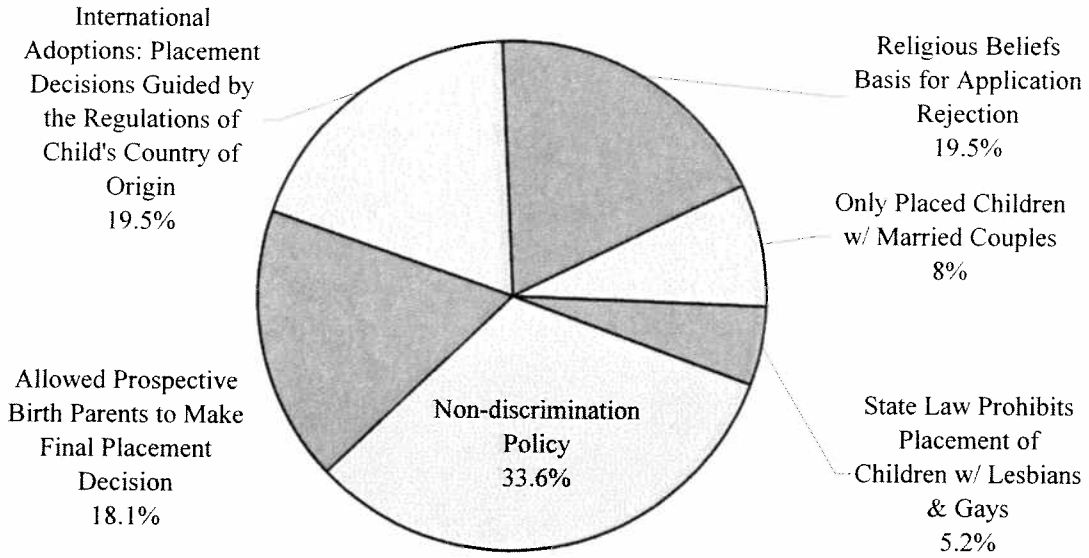
AGENCY POLICY REGARDING HOMOSEXUAL ADOPTION

The survey asked whether agencies had any official policy regarding adoption by gay and lesbian individuals, and if so, its nature. Respondents were asked to select one or more policy guidelines – three representing affirmative policy guidelines, and three representing policies associated with rejection of such adoptions:

- Accept such applications, nondiscrimination policy.
- Accept such applications, but prospective birth parents make final choice of adoptive families.
- Accept such applications, but adoption placements guided by regulations set forth by child's country of origin.
- Reject such applications, inconsistent with agency's religious affiliation.
- Reject such applications, prohibited by state law.
- Reject such applications, placements made only with married couples.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of adoption directors responded that their agencies had specific policies regarding adoption by homosexuals. As Figure 7 shows, the policies for these agencies varied, with the primary factors being other countries' regulations and religious beliefs.[19]

Figure 7: Agency Policy Regarding Homosexual Adoptions



ACCEPTANCE OF ADOPTION APPLICATIONS FROM HOMOSEXUALS

Respondents were asked whether their agencies accepted adoption applications from self-identified homosexual individuals, as well as from lesbian and gay couples. Sixty percent of adoption directors indicated their agencies accepted adoption applications from individual lesbians and gays, with only a slightly smaller percentage reporting acceptance of applications from homosexual couples (59.2%).[20]

Acceptance of applications from homosexuals was associated with the agency's type of placement program. Figure 8 presents the percentage of agencies that accept adoption applications from homosexuals as a function of the agency's adoption program focus.[i] Special needs agencies were much more likely to accept applications from homosexuals than all other agency types, whereas agencies focusing on the placement of infants were the least likely to accept such applications.[21,22]

Figure 8: Willingness of Agencies to Accept Adoption Applications from Lesbians as a Function of Adoption Program Focus

	Infant/Toddler	Special Needs	International	Mixed
Yes	48.0%	85.3%	68.2%	65.7%
No	52.0%	14.7%	31.8%	34.3%

i A very similar pattern of findings was noted for placement with individual gay men and lesbians, as well as lesbian and gay couples; consequently, the data will not be reported separately.

There was also a significant difference in the acceptance of adoption applications from homosexuals as a function of the agency's religious affiliation.[23] Figure 9 shows that Jewish-affiliated agencies were universally willing to work with homosexuals clients, as were the vast majority of public and private agencies with no religious affiliation, and the majority of Lutheran agencies. The rest of the agencies were much less willing to accept applications from these individuals, although a sizable minority of Methodist and Catholic agencies did. No agencies associated with fundamentalist Christian beliefs or the Baptist church, and only one Mormon agency respondent, reported a willingness to accept applications from homosexuals.

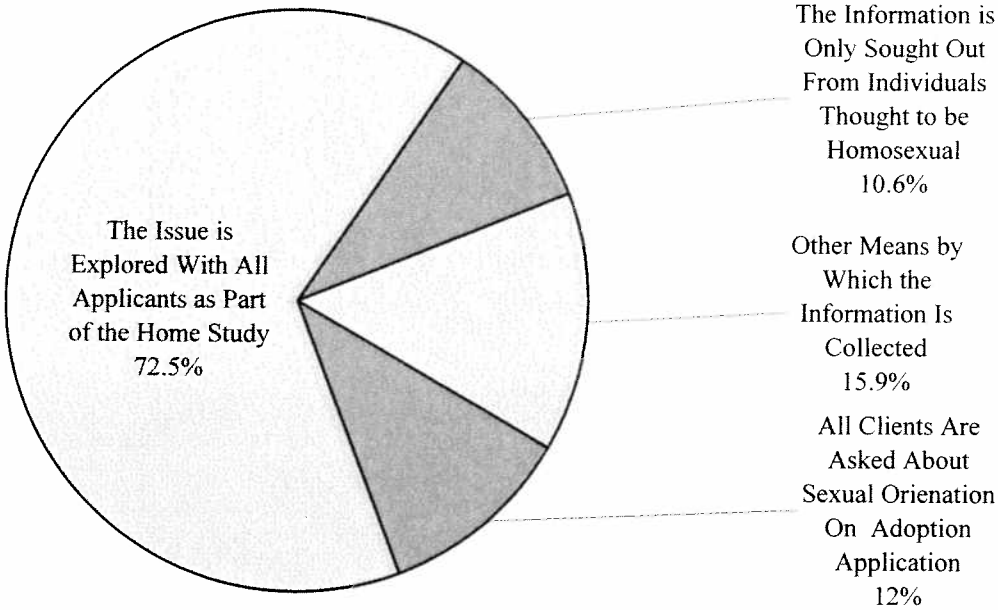
Figure 9: Agencies Accepting Applications from Lesbians by Religious Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Yes (%)	No (%)
Public	90.0	10.0
Private, Nonaffiliated	80.2	19.8
Jewish	100.0	0.0
Lutheran	66.7	33.3
Baptist	0.0	100.0
Catholic	27.7	72.3
Mormon	5.9	94.1
Methodist	37.5	62.5
Christian Fundamentalist	0.0	100.0
Other	17.6	82.4

SEXUAL ORIENTATION INFORMATION COLLECTION

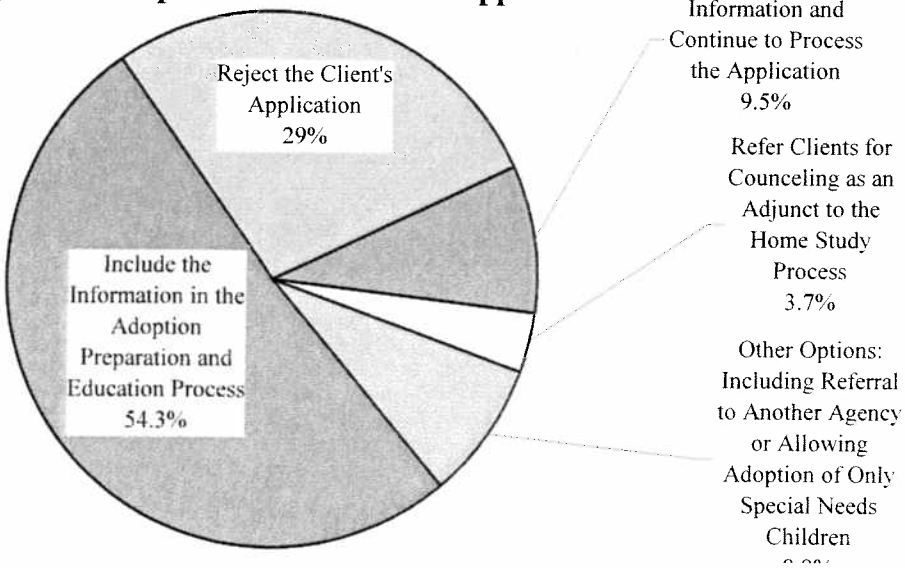
When asked whether their agencies collected information on prospective adoptive parents' sexual orientation, 42.9% of adoption directors responded affirmatively. Figure 10 shows that nearly three-quarters of these agencies explore sexual orientation with all applicants during the homestudy.[24]

Figure 10: Sexual Orientation Information Collection



Respondents were asked what their agencies would do if, during the course of the adoption application process or home study, it became apparent an applicant was homosexual, even though she or he had not acknowledged it. Figure 11 shows that more than half responded that they would include the information in the preparation process and over one-quarter would reject the client's application.[25]

Figure 11: Response to Homosexual Applicants



REJECTION OF HOMOSEXUAL APPLICANTS

About 20% of all respondents said their agencies, on one or more occasions, had rejected applications from gay or lesbian individuals or couples. When asked the reasons for the rejections, the following were noted:[26]

- Unrealistic expectations (31.8%).
- Psychological problems (31.8%).
- Questionable motives for adopting (24.6%).
- Relationship problems (24.6%).
- Placement with homosexuals violates agency policy (23.2%).
- Applicant' lifestyle incompatible with adoption (20.3%).
- Placement with homosexuals prohibited by country of origin (20.3%).
- Sexual orientation of applicant incompatible with adoption (14.5%).
- Placement with homosexuals prohibited by state law (13.1%).
- Lack of adequate social support (11.6%).
- Financial problems (8.7%).
- Placement with homosexuals violates community standards (4.3%).
- Medical problems of applicant (2.9%).

PLACEMENT PRACTICES OF AGENCIES IN RELATION TO LESBIANS AND GAYS

Over the two-year period of 1999 and 2000, responding agencies reported making a total of 91,118 adoption placements, 1,206 of which (1.3%) were with self-identified lesbians and gays. It should be noted, however, that this figure is almost assuredly an underestimate. For many agencies, especially private ones with large adoption programs, as well as for state adoption agencies, respondents noted that although their organizations had made such placements, it was impossible to estimate how many were with gay or lesbian individuals. In such cases, for statistical purposes, only one adoption placement with a homosexual client per year was counted. A more detailed discussion of the underestimation of homosexual adoption in this study can be found below. Because respondents often were unsure of the exact number of adoption placements made by their agencies with lesbians and gays, our strategy was to determine the percentage of agencies that made at least one such placement during the 1999-2000 study period. Approximately 39% of all agencies made such a placement.

Figure 12 shows that adoptive placements of children with lesbians and gays varied as a function of program type. A significant majority of agencies focusing on special needs adoptions, as well as slight majority of agencies focusing on international adoptions made placements with homosexual clients. In contrast, few than half of the agencies with mixed adoption programs and only a quarter of agencies focusing on domestic infant adoptions made such placements.[27]

Figure 12: Percentage of Agencies that Made at Least One Adoption Placement with a Lesbian or Gay Individual or Couple as a Function of Adoption Program Focus				
	Infant/Toddler	**Special Needs**	**International**	**Mixed**
Yes	25.5%	61.5%	51.5%	45.7%
No	74.5%	38.5%	48.5%	54.3%

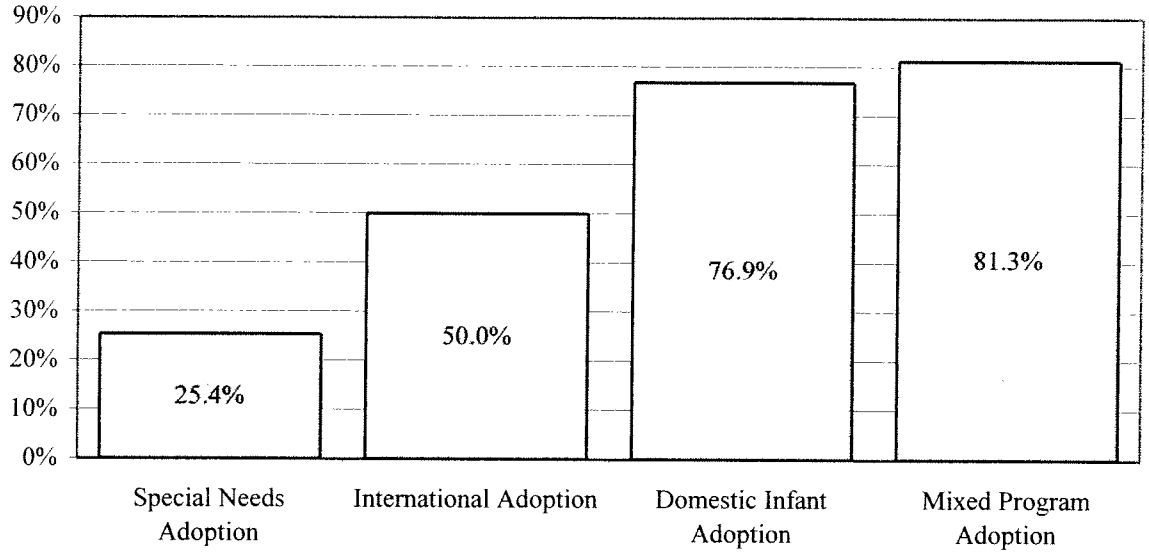
Placement of children with lesbian and gay individuals also was associated with the agency's religious affiliation. Figure 13 shows that Jewish-affiliated agencies, public agencies, and private, secular agencies were significantly more likely to make an adoption placement with a homosexual client than all other types of agencies.[28] Although less likely to make such placements than the three types noted above, the percentage of Lutheran agencies allowing homosexual adoptions was substantial and greater than the remaining Christian affiliated agencies.

Figure 13: Percentage of Agencies that Made at Least One Adoption Placement with a Lesbian or Gay Individual as a Function of Agency Religious Affiliation		
	Yes	**No**
Public	83.3%	16.7%
Private, Nonaffiliated	55.9%	44.1%
Jewish	72.7%	27.3%
Lutheran	53.3%	46.7%
Baptist	0.0%	100.0%
Catholic	2.0%	98.0%
Mormon	0.0%	100.0%
Methodist	0.0%	100.0%
Christian Fundamentalist	0.0%	100.0%
Other	11.8%	88.2%

INFORMATION SHARING WITH PROSPECTIVE BIRTH PARENTS

Almost half of the respondents (47%) stated that, as a matter of policy or routine practice, they informed potential birth parents when making an adoptive placement with lesbian or gay individuals. Figure 14 shows the percentages of agencies providing this information with the prospective birth parents according to program type.

Figure 14: Placement with Homosexuals - Information Sharing With Prospective Birth Parents



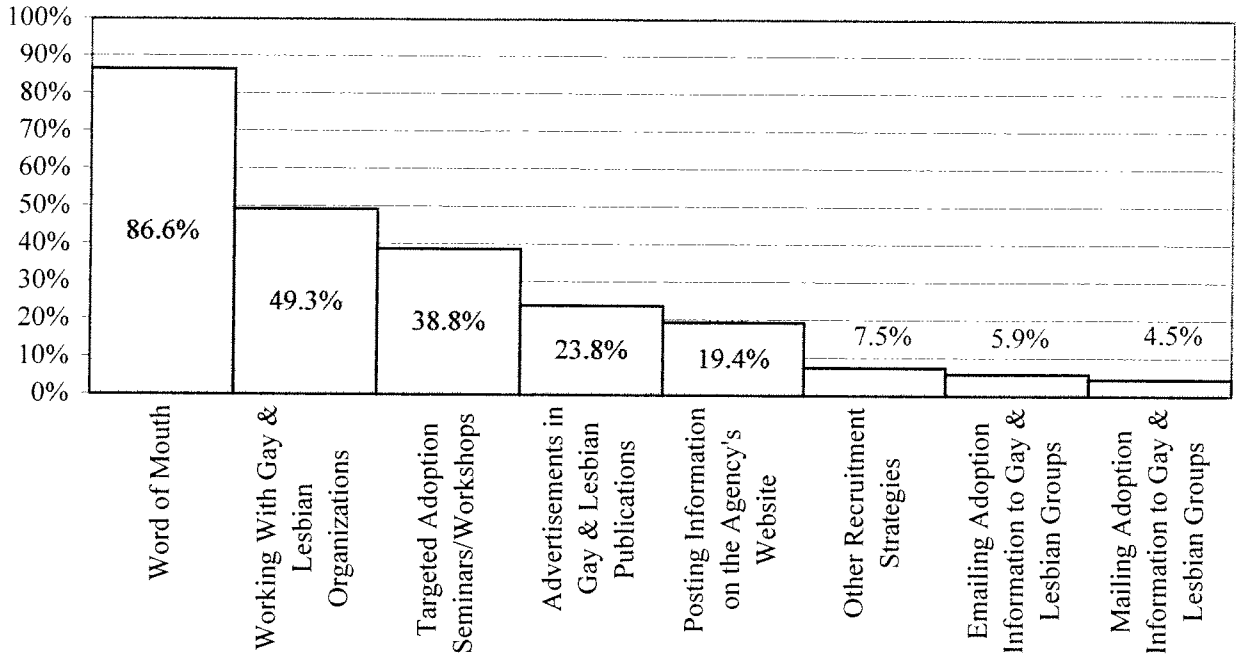
These variations are likely a function of the fact that in the vast majority of special needs and international placements, agencies have little contact with the child's biological parents during the adoption planning process.

Respondents also were asked whether they have had instances when parents contemplating adoption for their child have requested placement with gay or lesbian individuals, or have chosen such individuals as their child's adoptive parents from various alternative families presented by the agency. Nearly 15% of agencies noted that at one or more times, such requests or choices have been made; 69% of these agency directors reporting that the situation occurred infrequently, 22% occasionally, and 9% often. Finally, respondents were asked whether there have been instances in which prospective birth parents have objected to the placement of their child with gay or lesbian individuals, or have specifically requested that their child not be placed with such individuals. Nearly 26% of respondents indicated that their agency has had such experiences; 46% of these agency directors reporting that happened infrequently, 35% occasionally, and 19% often.

RECRUITMENT OF LESBIAN AND GAY ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Fewer than one-fifth (19%) of adoption directors reported that their agencies made outreach efforts to recruit adoptive parent applicants from the lesbian and gay community. For those agencies that recruited homosexual individuals as prospective adoptive parents, a range of methods was employed, as shown in Figure 15, though by far the most prevalent was word of mouth.[29]

Figure 15: Recruitment of Lesbian and Gay Adoptive Parents



Active recruitment of gay and lesbian prospective adoptive parents varied as a function of the agency's program. Figure 16 shows that agencies focusing on special needs adoptions were more likely to recruit homosexual individuals as parenting resources than were the other three types of agencies.[30]

Figure 16: Percentage of Agencies Making Outreach Efforts to Lesbians and Gay Men as a Function of Adoption Program Focus

	Infant/Toddler	Special Needs	International	Mixed
Yes	14.7%	32.1%	19.7%	11.4%
No	85.3%	67.9%	80.3%	88.6%

Recruitment of prospective adoptive parents from the homosexual community also was associated with the agency's religious affiliation.[31] Figure 17 shows that Jewish-affiliated agencies, as well as public agencies and private, nonaffiliated agencies made some effort to reach out to lesbians and gays. In contrast, all other agencies associated with an organized religion displayed either minimal or no interest in such recruitment.

Figure 17: Percentage of Agencies Making Outreach Efforts to Lesbians and Gay Men as a Function of Agency Religious Affiliation		
	Yes	**No**
Public	20.0%	80.0%
Private, Nonaffiliated	29.9%	70.1%
Jewish	41.7%	58.3%
Lutheran	0.0%	100.0%
Baptist	0.0%	100.0%
Catholic	4.3%	95.7%
Mormon	0.0%	100.0%
Methodist	0.0%	100.0%
Christian Fundamentalist	0.0%	100.0%
Other	5.9%	94.1%

TRAINING IN WORKING WITH LESBIAN AND GAY PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

Respondents were asked whether their agency would be interested in receiving in-service training for working with prospective adoptive parents who are lesbian or gay, either in written form or through didactic workshops. Nearly half (48%) of the agencies indicated a desire for such training. Figure 18 shows that those agencies with predominately special needs adoption programs and those with mixed adoption programs were more likely to be interested in training than agencies focusing on domestic infant adoptions and international adoptions.[32]

Figure 18: Percentage of Agencies Interested in Training Related to Homosexual Adoption as a Function of Adoption Program Focus				
	Infant/Toddler	**Special Needs**	**International**	**Mixed**
Yes	42.2%	71.6%	39.4%	60.0%
No	57.8%	28.4%	60.6%	40.0%

In addition, interest in training varied as a function of the agency's religious affiliation.[33] Figure 19 shows that respondents from Jewish-affiliated agencies expressed the greatest interest in such training, followed by respondents from state agencies; private, secular agencies; and Lutheran-affiliated agencies. The remainder of the agencies displayed minimal or no interest. Furthermore, as would be expected, interest in training was greater among those agencies expressing a willingness to accept adoption applications from lesbian and gay individuals (74.4%) and those agencies that had already made at least one adoption placement with this group (77.6%), compared to those agencies that expressed no interest in working with homosexual clients (8%) or had not placed any children for such adoptions during the study period (27.9%).

Figure 19: Percentage of Agencies Interested in Training Related to Homosexual Adoption as a Function of Agency Religious Affiliation		
	Yes	**No**
Public	66.7%	33.3%
Private, Nonaffiliated	64.4%	35.6%
Jewish	83.3%	16.7%
Lutheran	53.3%	46.7%
Baptist	10.0%	90.0%
Catholic	23.4%	76.6%
Mormon	0.0%	100.0%
Methodist	25.0%	75.0%
Christian Fundamentalist	0.0%	100.0%
Other	11.8%	88.2%

Finally, adoption program directors were asked to indicate which training topics in relation to homosexual adoption would be particularly useful for agency staff. Figure 20 provides a list of the topics most frequently endorsed by the respondents.

Figure 20: Training Topics of Interest in Relation to Adoption by Lesbians and Gays	
Psychological Issues in Children Raised by Homosexuals	88.7%
Social Casework Issues in Working with Homosexual Clients	88.1%
Psychological Issues in Adoptive Parenting by Homosexuals	81.5%
Attitudes, Biases, and Stereotypes About Homosexuality	75.0%
Legal Issues in Adoption by Homosexuals	68.5%
Other Issues	3.0%

ATTITUDES REGARDING ADOPTION AND PARENTING BY HOMOSEXUAL ADULTS

The questionnaire measuring respondent's personal attitudes and beliefs regarding adoption and parenting by homosexuals comprised two subscales; the first, labeled "acceptance of homosexual adoption," consisted of 10 items; and the second, labeled "need for greater evaluation and support," consisted of 6 items.[34] There was a strong negative correlation between the mean scores across the items for subscales 1 and 2, indicating that respondents who had more favorable views regarding parenting and adoption by gays and lesbian were less likely to believe that these individuals required more intensive evaluation, preparation, and support by the agency.[35] Figure 21 provides the specific items associated with each subscale.

Figure 21
Items Associated with "Acceptance of Homosexual Adoption" (Subscale 1) and "Need for Greater Evaluation and Support" (Subscale 2)

Subscale 1: Acceptance of Lesbian and Gay Parenting

1) Gay and lesbian individuals should be permitted to adopt children.
2) It is preferable to maintain a child in a long-term foster placement than have the youngster be adopted by a gay or lesbian individual.
3) Gay and lesbian individuals have the same capacity for being sensitive and caring adoptive parents as heterosexual individuals.
4) Adoption by homosexuals should be prohibited by law.
5) Adoption agencies should discourage gay and lesbian individuals from becoming adoptive parents.
6) Gay and lesbian individuals who are motivated to become parents probably make as good adoptive parents as heterosexual individuals.
7) Gay and lesbian individuals are likely to have greater difficulty meeting the psychological needs of adopted children than parents who are heterosexual.
8) Adopted children of gay and lesbian individuals are more likely to become homosexual than adopted children of heterosexual individuals.
9) Adoption agencies should actively recruit gay and lesbian individuals as prospective adoptive parents.
10) Homosexual individuals who wish to become parents through adoption are no more likely to have psychological problems than heterosexual adoption applicants.

Subscale 2: Need for Greater Evaluation and Support

11) To be successful adoptive parents, gay and lesbian applicants require more preparation and education than heterosexual adoption applicants.
12) A child should be placed for adoption with gay and lesbian individuals only if the agency cannot find suitable heterosexual individuals to adopt the child.
13) Gay and lesbian individuals are likely to have greater difficulty meeting the psychological needs of adopted children than parents who are heterosexual.
14) To be successful adoptive parents, gay and lesbian individuals are likely to require more support and professional help than heterosexual adoptive parents.
15) When gay or lesbian individuals apply for adoption, it is important to do a more in-depth evaluation before approving them for adoption than if the individuals were heterosexual.
16) An adoptive parent's sexual orientation is a relevant factor that should be considered in planning an adoption placement.

Figure 22 shows that respondents' scores reflecting "acceptance of homosexual adoption" and "need for greater evaluation and support" were associated with the agency's adoption program. Adoption directors of agencies focusing on domestic infant adoption were significantly less likely to be accepting of homosexual adoption compared to respondents from other agencies.[36] They also were more likely to believe that homosexual clients need greater evaluation, preparation, and/or support when adopting a child than were adoption directors whose agencies focused on special needs placements or international placements. Respondents whose agencies had mixed adoption programs fell in between the other groups, but were not significantly different from them in terms of their rating on this variable.[37]

Figure 22: Mean Scores for Acceptance of Gay/Lesbian Adoption, and Need for Intensive Evaluation and Support, as a Function of Adoption Program Type

	Infant/Toddler	Special Needs	International	Mixed
Accept	3.53	4.34	4.15	4.16
Need	2.87	2.15	2.34	2.41

Accept = Acceptance of Gay & Lesbian Adoption
Need = Need for Intensive Evaluation & Support

Adoption directors' responses to the questionnaire also were associated with their agencies' religious affiliations. Figure 23 indicates that respondents from public and non-religiously affiliated private agencies, as well as Jewish agencies, were more accepting of gay and lesbian adoption[38] and less likely to believe that homosexuals needed more intensive evaluation, preparation, and support when adopting a child[39] than were respondents from agencies affiliated with Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Mormon, and fundamentalist Christian churches.

Figure 23: Mean Scores for Acceptance of Gay/Lesbian Adoption, and Need for Greater Evaluation and Support, as a Function of Agency Religious Affiliation		
	Accept	**Need**
Public	4.52	2.05
Private, Nonaffiliated	4.36	2.16
Jewish	4.36	2.30
Lutheran	3.95	2.65
Baptist	2.88	3.21
Catholic	3.58	2.97
Mormon	1.71	3.88
Methodist	2.85	3.86
Christian Fundamentalist	2.25	3.83
Other	3.50	2.87

Accept = Acceptance of Gay & Lesbian Adoption
Need = Need for Greater Evaluation & Support

Finally, respondents' attitudes regarding "acceptance of homosexual adoption," as well as "need for greater evaluation and support" were examined as a function of whether their agencies accepted adoption applications from self-identified gays and lesbians, made at least one adoption placement with this group during the target period, recruited prospective adoptive parents from the homosexual community, and expressed interest in training in relation to homosexual adoption. Figure 24 shows that adoption directors who scored higher on the "acceptance of homosexual adoption" variable, and lower on the "need for greater evaluation and support" variable, worked in agencies that more often accepted lesbian and gay adoption applications,[40] were more likely to have made a placement with this group,[41] were more likely to have recruited gays and lesbians as prospective applicants,[42] and expressed more desire for training in relation to homosexual adoption.[43]

Figure 24: Mean Scores for "Acceptance of Homosexual Adoption" and "Need for Greater Evaluation and Support" as a Function of Agency Adoption Practices in Relation to Homosexual Adoption		
	Accept	**Need**
Accept G/L Applications		
Yes	4.41	2.13
No	3.10	3.22
Made G/L Placement		
Yes	4.49	2.09
No	3.59	2.80
Recruit G/L Parents		
Yes	4.67	1.93
No	3.80	2.63
Interest G/L Training		
Yes	4.47	2.10
No	3.37	2.96

Accept = Acceptance of Homosexual Adoption
Need = Need for Greater Evaluation & Support

DISCUSSION

The goal of the study was to examine nationwide trends in adoption agency policies and practices toward lesbian and gay prospective adoptive parents. We sought to replicate and extend the work of Brodzinsky and Patterson[44] by increasing the number of agencies included in the study, improving the overall return rate for the survey data, gathering more information on the nonparticipating agencies, and elaborating on agency practices in this area.

Of the 895 surveys mailed to agencies, 307 completed questionnaires were returned – 277 from private agencies and 30 from public agencies. Eliminating mailed surveys that were returned as undeliverable, as well as those from agencies reporting that they did not make adoption placements, the response rate slightly exceeded 41%, a significant improvement over the return rate reported by Brodzinsky and Patterson and reasonable for a mailed survey research study. Furthermore, as noted previously, the response rate increased to nearly 47% for some of the more crucial analyses when information from some non-participating agencies was included. In short, the current study collected data from a large number of adoption agencies across the United States, public and private, large and small in scope, with varying types of programs and wide representation of religious affiliations.

The study's results confirm that adoptions of children by lesbians and gays are occurring regularly and in noteworthy numbers across the country, both at public and private agencies.[45] Slightly over 60% of respondents indicated that their agencies were willing to accept adoption applications from gays and lesbians, and 39% reported that their agencies had made at least one

adoption placement with a homosexual individual or couple in 1999 or 2000. These figures are very consistent with the ones reported by Brodzinsky and Patterson.[46] Given our success in increasing the return rate from 26% to nearly 47% in the current study (for these specific analyses), we are confident these data are reliable and valid indicators of the nationwide trend in adoption agency acceptance of applications from and placement with lesbians and gays.

What our data cannot determine is the actual number of adoption placements being made with homosexuals. Very few agencies reported that they keep such statistics. In fact, only about 43% of respondents indicated that their agencies collected information about an applicant's sexual orientation at all. Our study found that, conservatively, 1.3% of all adoption placements were made with self-identified lesbians or gays (compared to 1.6% reported by Brodzinsky and Patterson). As discussed above, this figure clearly underestimates the number of such placements, especially by public agencies and larger private ones.

Many respondents noted that, although they were aware their agencies had made placements with homosexual individuals during the target period – because of the large size of their adoption programs, or because the agencies did not keep specific statistics on such placements – they could not provide an estimate of the number of children placed with homosexuals. In such cases, for statistical purposes, we assumed only one adoption placement was made with a homosexual individual or couple during the target period. For public agencies and larger private agencies, this assumption is extremely conservative. While it accurately represents the fact that the agency made adoption placements with gays and lesbians, and thus the percentage of responding agencies that did, it does not capture the extent of this practice over the two-year period.

Furthermore, there are other reasons to believe that the 1.3 percent figure greatly underestimates the extent of adoption by homosexuals in the United States. Because of homophobia and heterosexist attitudes, some lesbians and gays choose to withhold information regarding their sexual orientation when they submit applications to adoption agencies. With the growing acceptance of single adoptive parenthood in the United States, as well as the sensitivity among many social casework professionals regarding exploring issues of sexual orientation during the home study process, agency placement personnel often have no basis for knowing an unmarried applicant's sexual orientation. In addition, this study, like the one conducted by Brodzinsky and Patterson, focused only on adoptions facilitated by licensed public and private agencies. Many lesbians and gays, however, choose to pursue adoption through private placement, with attorneys facilitating the process, rather than through adoption agencies. The thousands of independent adoptions that occur each year are not represented in our statistics.

Finally, although approximately 60% of public agencies responded to our survey, respondents from several states with very large adoption placement programs did not return questionnaires. Since the vast majority of public agency placements involve special needs children, and the data suggest agencies focusing on special needs placements are the most likely to accept adoption applications from and make placements with lesbians and gays, the percentage of adoptions by homosexuals reported here is undoubtedly a significant underestimate.

The results also point out a clear disparity between the percentage of agencies indicating that they accept adoption applications from homosexual clients (60%), the percentage that made at least one adoption placement with this group during the target period (39%), and the

percentage that actively recruited lesbians and gays as prospective parents (19%). Several possible explanations account for this finding.

First, agency policies regarding adoption by lesbians and gays may not be well disseminated to the homosexual community. Only a small percentage of agencies reported that they actively target lesbians and gay men as potential parenting resources in their advertisements, training seminars and websites. Many agencies willing to accept adoption applications from homosexuals may not openly advertise that policy because they do not want to create controversy and/or alienate possible funding sources. Such agencies are likely to have a passive approach to adoption by homosexuals. In other words, lesbians and gays may be accepted but not actively sought out by these agencies as prospective adoptive parents. As a result, homosexuals who wish to adopt may assume that their sexual orientation would automatically eliminate them as applicants at most agencies. If so, they may be reluctant to apply, may choose not to reveal their sexual orientation, or may apply only to agencies that have developed a reputation, probably through word of mouth, as being "gay friendly."

Additionally, the disparity between the percentage of agencies willing to accept adoption applications from lesbians and gays compared to the percentage of agencies that have made such placements could reflect a difference between formal policy and the attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of the casework personnel who process applications. Caseworkers who oppose such adoptions for any reason could ignore agency policy and prevent placements with this group.

Finally, the data on willingness to accept adoption applications could be somewhat inflated by a "politically correct" response bias. In other words, some respondents may have sought to portray their agencies as being anti-discriminatory and open to all potential applicants, regardless of sexual orientation, even though their agencies do not support adoption by lesbians and gays.

Our results, like those of Brodzinsky and Patterson, indicate that placements with lesbians and gays differ as a function of the agency's adoption program and religious affiliation. Generally, agencies focusing on special needs adoptions are much more willing to accept adoption applications from homosexual clients than all other types of agencies. These agencies also make more efforts to recruit prospective parents from the homosexual community, and make more adoption placements with lesbians and gays, than other agencies. In addition, the attitudes of adoption directors from special needs agencies are more positive about and supportive of adoption and parenting by homosexuals than are the attitudes of directors from other agencies. Over the years, special needs agencies have been the most aggressive in expanding the boundaries of who is approved as an adoptive parent. With the growing number of children lingering in foster care, agencies have increasingly become more inclusive in their adoption policies, allowing certain groups to adopt (e.g., older adults, low-income families, foster parents, disabled individuals, single adults, homosexuals), who in the past were precluded from doing so.

In contrast, agencies focusing on the placement of domestic infants and toddlers were found to be the least likely to have policies and practices supportive of homosexual adoption. Several factors may account for this finding. First, more and more prospective birth parents are choosing the families who adopt their children. As a result, although an agency may be willing to accept an adoption application from lesbians or gays, birth parents' choices may well reduce the

number of actual such placements. In fact, 26% of all agencies reported that at one or more times, pregnant women (and their partners, when involved) have specifically requested that the agency not place their child with a homosexual. [In contrast, 15% of all agencies indicated that at one or more times, expectant parents have requested, or approved of, plans to place their child with lesbians or gays.] Second, many infant-oriented adoption agencies also are affiliated with the Catholic Church, as well as other Christian denominations that have very conservative beliefs about homosexuality. In most cases, these agencies reported little interest in working with lesbian and gay adults.

The situation for agencies focusing on intercountry adoption is more complicated. No sending nation has a policy specifically allowing the placement of children with lesbians and gays. In fact, many either specifically prohibit such placements or have regulations that indirectly impede such placements (e.g., requiring that the adoptive parents be married) or are silent on the issue. Yet, more than two-thirds of the international agencies in our study reported they were willing to accept adoption applications from lesbian and gay clients, and half of these agencies made at least one placement of a child with a homosexual individual or couple. Furthermore, adoption directors from these agencies had very positive attitudes and beliefs regarding adoption and parenting by lesbian and gay individuals. These results are very similar to those reported by Brodzinsky and Patterson[47] and suggest many intercountry agencies likely have a "don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding such placements. As Brodzinsky and Patterson have noted, however, these agencies appear to be faced with an ethical dilemma involving the choice between adhering to the cultural values, standards and regulations of a child's birth country – which in many cases would preclude homosexual placement – and the desire to find a stable and nurturing home environment for a child in need, regardless of the adoptive parents' sexual orientation. To date, there has been relatively little discussion in the professional adoption community regarding this issue, nor of possible ways for agencies to deal with the dilemma.

Our results also indicate that agency policies and practices regarding placement of children with lesbians and gays are related to religious affiliation (or lack thereof). Public agencies and private, nonreligiously affiliated agencies, as well as agencies associated with Judaism and the Lutheran church, generally reported policies and practices that were quite supportive of adoption by homosexuals. In contrast, agencies associated with other Christian denominations showed little, if any, support for adoption by lesbians and gays. These results are consistent with those reported by Brodzinsky and Patterson[50] and point out some of the religiously based barriers to adoption by homosexuals.

Although many public and private agencies appear to be supportive of adoption by lesbians and gays, very few reported attempting to recruit prospective adoptive parents from the homosexual community. Those agencies that did report some type of recruiting effort indicated that word of mouth was by far the most common means of outreach. Efforts to work directly with homosexual organizations and advocacy groups, as well as targeted educational seminars at adoption conferences, also were relatively common strategies employed by the agencies. Interestingly, only a small percentage of agencies reported openly acknowledging their willingness to work with homosexual clients in their printed brochures and on their websites. This finding may reflect a desire by agencies to remain quiet about their policies toward

homosexual clients because of societal homophobia and/or fear of alienating possible funding sources. However, the study did not explore the reasons some agencies do not reach out to the lesbian and gay community, and did not ask why different outreach options were chosen. Casual feedback provided by some of the respondents indicated that many were interested in working with homosexual clients but were unsure about the best means of outreach. This finding suggests agencies may desire training specifically geared toward recruitment of lesbian and gay adoptive parents.

In fact, nearly half (48%) of the agencies indicated a desire for other sorts of training pertaining to adoption by homosexuals. As would be expected, interest in such training was related to the agency's adoption program and religious affiliation. Special needs agencies were much more interested than were agencies focusing on infant or international adoption. Interest from agencies with a mixed adoption program fell in between the others. In addition, agencies affiliated with Judaism, as well as a majority of public agencies, private, non-religiously affiliated agencies, and Lutheran agencies were very interested in such training. In contrast, agencies affiliated with Catholic, Methodist, Mormon and fundamentalist Christian beliefs reported little or no interest. When asked what areas of training would be most useful for agency personnel, respondents reported a high degree of interest in the following areas:

- Psychological issues in children raised by lesbians and gays.
- Psychological issues in parenting by homosexual adults.
- Social casework issues in homosexual adoption.
- Attitudes, biases, and stereotypes related to homosexuality.
- Legal issues in homosexual adoption.

While there is considerable interest in this area, little systematic training on adoption by gays and lesbians is currently being offered to social service caseworkers and mental health professionals.

Another area explored in this study was adoption directors' awareness of laws concerning adoption by lesbians and gay men. At the time the data were collected, only Florida, Mississippi and Utah had some type of prohibition on adoption by homosexuals. Our results, however, indicated that slightly more than 5% of respondents incorrectly reported that homosexuals were prohibited from adopting children in their states, and another 10% indicated they were unsure of their states' laws. These results are similar to those reported by Brodzinsky and Patterson.[51] In addition, nearly 20% of respondents were uncertain of their states' legal standards regarding second-parent adoptions. These findings probably can be accounted for by the ambiguity, frequent challenges and amendments to such laws. These results indicate the need for education of adoption agency personnel regarding the legal status of adoption by homosexuals in their states.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In evaluating the research results, readers are advised to consider the following limitations. The first is sample representativeness. As noted previously, half of the listed private agencies in each state were randomly chosen for inclusion in the study, as were all state agencies (including the District of Columbia's). However, only 41% of the agencies returned completed surveys. Although this figure is reasonable for mailed survey research, it leaves open the possibility that the results are skewed by the disposition of the participating versus non-participating agencies. To assess whether the findings reflecting support for adoption by homosexuals are inflated because agencies with more conservative attitudes chose not to participate, one of the study goals was to collect data on the non-participating agencies. Toward this end, we asked adoption directors who declined to participate in the study the reasons for their decision in our follow-up communication.

Such information was collected from 120 respondents, or 25% of the non-participating agencies. As noted previously, more than one-third noted that their non-participation was because their agency did not work with lesbian and gay clients. In most cases, this decision was related to the agency's religious affiliation, although in some cases it had to do with the policy of sending countries. Whenever possible, we used a conservative data analytic strategy and included information from these 41 non-participating agencies in compiling statistics.

It is possible that many of the other non-participating agencies that did not respond to our follow-up also had policies and practices that were unsupportive of placements with homosexuals. An examination of the names of the nonparticipating agencies indicated many had religious affiliations with either the Catholic, Baptist, Methodist or Mormon churches – religious denominations that findings show were not usually supportive of adoption by homosexuals.

Failure to participate in the study, however, was not only a result of an agency's lack of support for such adoptions. Our data indicated the most common reason for not participating was that the agency no longer made adoption placements or only conducted home studies. Nearly 37% of the non-participating agencies that responded to our follow-up query fell into this category. Additionally, 13% of respondents indicated they were interested in the study but were simply too busy to fill out the questionnaire, and another 13% gave no specific reason for not participating or noted that the agency's policy was not to respond to mailed questionnaires.

In short, it is clear that there were many possible reasons for an agency not to participate in the study and that conservative attitudes and policies about homosexuality were unlikely to be the dominant factors. Thus, given the random sampling survey distribution, coupled with the large number of agencies that were sampled and that eventually responded to the survey, the results appear highly representative of the nationwide trends in adoption agency interest and willingness to work with prospective gay and lesbian adoptive parents.

A second limitation of the study is that it focused only on the policies and practices of licensed agencies and excluded the large number of independent adoption placements being made each year nationwide. As noted previously, many lesbians and gays choose independent adoption, typically with the help of an attorney. Unfortunately, this study does not provide

information on such adoption placements. Future research needs to explore the extent of adoption by lesbians and gays through independent placements.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A number of conclusions and implications can be drawn from the study findings. On a broad sociological level, the clear picture is of a growing willingness by adoption agencies to place children with gay and lesbian adults – and an accompanying desire by an escalating number of homosexuals to become adoptive parents. The consequences for our country presumably are significant if the trend continues, though an analysis of these consequences is outside the scope of this study. Further research appears to be warranted, however.

We are able to draw some conclusions on the levels of policy and practice. First, for lesbian and gay individuals who wish to become adoptive parents, the results suggest a more encouraging picture than is often portrayed. Although homophobia and heterosexist attitudes undoubtedly influence the policies and practices of many adoption agencies,[52] the majority of public and private agencies say they are willing to work with homosexual clients. This willingness, however, is not always evident in agency brochures, advertisements, and websites. The research therefore indicates lesbians and gays who are interested in adoption should not only carefully review written policies and practices before selecting a particular agency, but also should talk with personnel and others who have worked with the agency before making a determination about applying.

Second, although many agencies appear willing to work with homosexual clients, they often are unsure about whether, or how, to reach out to them. Concern about offending community standards, violating religious doctrine and/or alienating possible funding sources evidently leads many of these agencies to have, at most, a low-key approach to recruiting homosexuals as prospective adoptive parents. Even those agencies that do recruit rely, for the most part, on word of mouth, which is likely to be an ineffective means of reaching the broader homosexual community. Those agencies that wish to reach out to gays and lesbians as prospective adoptive parents appear to need much more education and training in developing strategies for successfully doing so.[53]

The passive approach to working with homosexuals, including agencies that employ a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, raises a number of problems in relation to both pre-placement and post-placement services for homosexual clients. If agency personnel do not know that a prospective adoptive parent is homosexual, or choose not to address this issue with the client – even though they know or suspect that he or she is gay – then a variety of important issues may never be adequately addressed even though they potentially impact the child, parents and family as a whole. For example, a relevant question to be raised with lesbian or gay clients would be how they expect their sexual orientation to impact their child over the course of the youngster's developing years. Do they plan to tell the child about their homosexuality and, if so, when? How do they plan to help their child deal with homophobic attitudes and behavior of extended family

members, peers, teachers, and others? To what extent do the clients' extended family, friends and co-workers know about their sexual orientation, and what level of support have they received from these individuals? Just as caseworkers explore adoption-related expectations and support with all adoptive parents during the pre-placement period, they need to explore the unique aspects of homosexual adoptive family life with lesbian and gay clients. Unless adoption agency personnel who want to work with homosexuals are aware of their clients' sexual orientation, and create an atmosphere of understanding and support, it is unlikely that these issues will be discussed in an open and forthright manner. In the long run, failure to address them may well increase the risk of adjustment difficulties for the child, parents and family.

Providing adequate pre- and post-placement services for gay and lesbian adoptive parents is related to the issue of caseworker training in areas related to homosexual adoption examined in this study. Almost half (48%) of respondents indicated a desire for increased staff training in this area. Creating a sensitive and accepting environment for processing applications from lesbian and gay clients – for those agencies that wish to do so – and providing the necessary pre- and post-placement support services for them and their children, requires training in at least the following areas:

- The legal status of adoption by homosexuals in the agency's state, including the legal status of second-parent adoption.
- Strategies for reaching out to the lesbian and gay community as a way of providing information about adoption opportunities.
- Sensitivity to the myths, stereotypes and prejudices that surround homosexuality.
- Awareness of staff's own thoughts, beliefs, feelings and biases regarding homosexuality.
- Tolerance and acceptance of lesbian and gay individuals as potential adoptive parents.
- Sensitivity in addressing issues related to homosexuality in the application and home study process.
- Psychological issues related to homosexual adoptive parenting and the impact on children being raised by lesbians or gays.
- Pre- and post-placement services needed to meet the unique needs of homosexual adoptive parents and their children.

In addition to these general areas of training, caseworkers need to explore a variety of issues with their homosexual clients, either in the pre-placement period or as part of post-adoption services offered by the agency. Some of these issues include:

- The client's sexual orientation. Although individuals are not legally required to reveal their sexual orientations, it is extremely important that agency staff do everything possible to create an environment in which prospective adoptive parents feel comfortable enough to voluntarily share such information. A client's homosexuality is a relevant factor in the adoption process, not as a determining factor in relation to a placement, but as an issue related to pre-placement preparation and post-adoption services. Unless homosexual clients

reveal their sexual orientation, they may not receive the type of preparation and support that will increase the chances of a healthy and stable child placement.

- The extent to which the applicants have told family, friends, co-workers and the community about their sexual orientation. Individuals who have not told important people in their lives about their sexual orientation may well seek to have their children keep the secret, too, which places a heavy burden on the children and may distort their relationships with others.
- The support received from family, friends, co-workers and others. Individuals who are exposed to homophobic attitudes and behavior of family members, and others with whom they have reasonably frequent contact, may need to take special steps to prepare and protect their children from prejudicial and stigmatizing experiences.
- The partner's role. The caseworker should explore the role of the adoptive parent's partner – whether or not both partners will be adopting the child – and, if state law precludes this, what role the non-adopting partner will play in the child's life. Additionally, in states that do not allow second-parent adoption, the couple needs to take appropriate actions to protect the child in the event the adoptive parent dies, is incapacitated, or leaves for any reason.
- Consideration of when and how they will explain their sexual orientation to their children. To date, there exists no universal agreement among mental health professionals regarding the most appropriate time to share this information with children.
- How parents will help their children with the additional sense of difference. Homosexual adoptive parents need to consider how to help their child cope with any teasing and rejection they experience. While research suggests that children of lesbian and gays do experience periodic teasing because of their parents' sexual orientation, it does not generally lead to serious adjustment or developmental problems.

Finally, in cases in which adoption placements with homosexual individuals or couples involves older children, caseworkers need to consider the following issues related to the children's preparation. In each case, the children's developmental level and history will play a crucial role in preparing them for the adoption placements.

- The children's understanding about homosexuality, along with their attitudes, beliefs and feelings about lesbians and gays.
- Whether the children should be informed that the prospective adoptive parents are homosexual, and if so, who should provide the information – the caseworker, a mental health professional or the parents themselves – and how. Moreover, caseworkers need to consider at what age this preparation makes sense from a developmental perspective.
- The stage of the adoption process at which the adults' homosexuality should be disclosed to the children – e.g., before any contact is made or only after the children have become comfortable with the prospective adoptive parents.

- The children's positive and negative feelings about being raised by a homosexual individual or couple, and whether their expectations are realistic. Additionally, whether the caseworker or others should prepare the children for the biases, teasing and other such realities of living with lesbian or gay parents.
- The children's feelings about being placed with lesbian or gay adoptive parents, and the steps that should be taken if the children reject such a placement.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study, as well as the research by Brodzinsky and Patterson, confirms what many adoption professionals have known for some time; namely, that growing numbers of lesbians and gays are adopting children across the country. Our research provides new and more detailed information on the policies and practices of licensed adoption agencies in relation to homosexual adoption. But there are a number of questions related to agency policy and practice that have not been addressed empirically, and that have important implications for adoption by lesbians and gays.

For example, what are the factors determining the approach agencies utilize for such adoptions? Although we have speculated about why an agency may assume a "low key" approach to the placement of children with homosexual clients – particularly concerns about violating community standards and religious doctrine, as well as fears about alienating potential funding sources – this issue needs to be examined empirically. Additionally, the question of whether a lack of active outreach to the gay and lesbian community contributes to fewer adoptions by homosexuals or less disclosure needs to be considered. So, too, does the issue of the extent and type of training that agencies are providing their staffs about adoption by homosexuals, and the effectiveness of the training.

Research on lesbian and gay perspectives on the adoption process would also be valuable in understanding barriers to the placement of children, as well as to understanding the factors that facilitate the process. In addition, it is important to gather feedback about adoption preparation and support directly from homosexual clients. And, in order to meet the mental health needs of lesbian and gay adoptive parents and their children, it is important to begin gathering data on adoption outcomes. Although the available research on homosexual parents suggests little reason to believe their children will display increased adjustment problems compared to children parented by heterosexual adoptive parents, this issue needs to be explored empirically.

Finally, and perhaps most important from a psychological perspective, research is needed to examine those individual, family and environmental factors related to the variability that is likely to be found in the adjustment patterns of children growing up in lesbian- and gay-headed adoptive households. Just as in heterosexual households, most of the children raised by homosexual adoptive parents appear likely to adjust well, while in some cases significant problems may emerge. In order to provide appropriate support services, we need to understand the myriad factors underlying adjustment variability.

ENDNOTES

1. David M. Brodzinsky is Associate Professor of Clinical and Developmental Psychology at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He also is on the Board of Directors of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute.

2. See Sullivan (1995)

3. For an overview of recent trends in adoption practice see Bachrach, Stolley, & London (1992); Brodzinsky & Pinderhughes (2002); Brodzinsky, Smith, & Brodzinsky (1998); Stolley, (1993); Miller, et al. (2001).

4. See Appendix A and B in Sullivan (1995) for a description of the CWLA standards and policy regarding adoption by gay and lesbian individuals.

5. See Appell (2001) for a recent discussion of legal issues in adoption by homosexuals.

6. Personal communication with Leslie Cooper, ACLU staff attorney, May, 2002.

7. See Martin (1993), Patterson (1994, 1995, 2002), and Patterson & Friel (2000) for a discussion of trends in parenting among gay and lesbian individuals.

8. See Beers (1996), Sbordone (1993), and Morris et al., (2000) for information on parenting motivation among gay men and lesbian women.

9. See Cameron & Cameron (1996), Cameron, Cameron, & Landess (1997), and Wardle (1997) for the case against parenting and adoption by homosexual individuals.

10. See Adams (1996), Allen & Burrell (1996), Parks (1998), Patterson (1995; 1997; 2002), Stacey & Biblarz (2001), Tasker & Golombok (1997), and Victor & Fish (1995).

11. Our views and conclusions about lesbian and gay parenting derive primarily, but not exclusively, from the following research and review articles: Adams (1996); Allen & Burrell (1996); Bailey et al. (1995); Bigner & Jackson (1989, 1992); Bozett (1987a, 1987b); Brewaeys et al. (1997); Chan et al.(1998); Chan et al. (1998); Flaks et al. (1995); Gantrell et al.(1996); Gantrell et al. (1999); Golombok et al. (1983); Golombok & Tasker (1996); Golombok et al.(1997); Gonsiorek (1991); Gottman (1990); Green (1978); Green et al. (1986); Hoeffer (1981); Huggins (1989); Kirkpatrick, et al. (1981); Koepke et al. (1992); Kurdek (1993); Kweskin & Cook (1982); McCandlish (1987); Miller et al. (1981); Parks (1998); Patterson (1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2002); Patterson & Chan (1997); Rand et al. (1982); Stacey & Biblarz (2001); Tasker & Golombok (1995, 1997); Thompson et al. (1971).

12. See Stacey & Biblarz (2001) for a discussion of this issue.

13. See Stacey & Biblarz (2001) for a discussion of this issue.

14. American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement, Coparent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same Sex Parents, February 2002, http://www.aap.org/policy/020008.html.

15. See Stacey & Biblarz (2001) for a discussion of the relationship between parental sexual orientation and societal homophobic attitudes and discriminatory behavior.

16. See Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri (2002) for more details about this study.

17. Seventy-four % of the respondents were female, 14 % were male, and 12 % declined to identify their gender. The average age of respondents was 46.9 years. The average number of years of experience in the adoption field for these individuals was 14.4.

18. Standard deviation for public agencies was 2,967.4 and range of placements was from 60 to 13,556; standard deviation for private agencies was 205.3 and range of placements was from 0 to 1,800.

19. Because some respondents indicated more than one policy guideline for their agency governing adoption by lesbians and gays, the total percentage exceeds 100 %.

20. As noted previously, this statistic, and others reported below, when appropriate, include data from those agencies that declined to participate because they did not make adoption placements with homosexuals, either because of religious objections or because of a desire to be in compliance with the regulations set forth by the "placing" country.

21. This result does not include data from the nonparticipating agencies that indicated an unwillingness to work with lesbians and gay men. As a result, the mean percentage of agencies willing to work with homosexuals represented in Figure 8 is somewhat inflated (66.8%) compared to the figure reported earlier (60.6%), which did include data from these agencies. We could not include data from the nonparticipating agencies in this analysis because of a lack of information regarding the nature of their adoption programs.

22. $\chi 2\ (3) = 33.34,\ p < .0001$

23. $\chi 2\ (9) = 143.54,\ p < .0001$

24. Because a respondent could indicate more than one means of collecting this information, the total percentage exceeds 100 %.

25. Because the respondent could provide more than one answer to the question, the total percentage exceeds 100 %.
26. Because respondents could indicate more than one reason for rejecting any one application, as well as different reasons for rejecting different applications, the total percentage exceeds 100%.

27. $\chi 2$ (3) = 33.47, $p < .0001$

28. $\chi 2$ (9) = 143.54, $p < .0001$

29. Because an agency often used more than one strategy to recruit lesbian and gay adoptive parents, the total percentage across the various strategies exceeds 100 %.

30. $\chi 2$ (3) = 12.30, $p < .01$

31. $\chi 2$ (9) = 41.15, $p < .0001$

32. $\chi 2$ (3) = 16.23, $p < .005$

33. $\chi 2$ (9) = 43.56, $p < .0001$

34. The 18 item questionnaire was subjected to a principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation. Two factors were extracted from the analysis, accounting for 70.3% of the variance. The first factor, composed of 10 items, was labeled "acceptance of homosexual parenting," and accounted for 63.6% of the variance. The second factor, composed of 6 items, was labeled "need for greater evaluation and support" and accounted for another 6.7% of the variance. To be included in a factor, an item had to have a factor score greater than .50. Because of this criterion, three items were eliminated from the attitude measure and from all subsequent analyses. One item loaded on both factors.

35. $r = -.83$, $p < .0001$

36. $F(3, 257) = 12.27$, $p < .0001$

37. $F(3, 257) = 10.80$, $p < .0001$

38. $F(9, 251) = 26.11$, $p < .0001$

39. $F(9, 249) = 14.62$, $p < .0001$

40. $t(259) = 12.59$, $p < .0001$ (Accept); $t(257) = 10.57$, $p < .0001$ (Need)

41. t (259) = 8.29, $p < .0001$ (Accept); t (257) = 6.77, $p < .0001$ (Need)

42. t (259) = 6.62, $p < .0001$ (Accept); t (257) = 5.64, $p < .0001$ (Need)

43. t (257) = 10.53, $p < .0001$ (Accept); t (255) = 8.34, $p < .0001$ (Need)

44. See Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri (2002)

45. See Brodzinsky, et al. (2002), Martin (1993), Patterson (1995, 1996), and Sullivan (1995) for discussions regarding nationwide trends in adoption by lesbian and gay individuals.

46. See Brodzinsky, et al. (2002)

47. See Brodzinsky, et al. (2002)

50. See Brodzinsky, et al. (2002)

51. See Brodzinsky, et al. (2002)

52. See Brooks & Goldberg (2001), Brodzinsky et al., (2002), Patterson (1995, 1996), & Sullivan (1995).

53. See Beers (1996), Morris et al (2000), and Sbordone (1993) for data on the prevalence of interest in parenthood among lesbians and gay men.

54. This item did not load on either of the two factors, and so was eliminated from further analyses.

55. This item did not load on either of the two factors, and so was eliminated from further analyses.

56. This item did not load on either of the two factors, and so was eliminated from further analyses.

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ATTACHMENT 1

ADOPTION PRACTICE SURVEY

ID _____

Age of Respondent _____ Gender: Male ____ Female ____
Years of Experience in the Adoption Field _____ Respondent's Age _____

1. Agency Type (check one): Public ____ Private ____

2. Does your agency have a religious affiliation? Yes ____ No ____

   If yes, please check which affiliation applies:

   Baptist ____ Catholic ____ Fundamentalist Christian ____
   Episcopalian ____ Jewish ____ Lutheran ____
   Methodist ____ Mormon ____ Presbyterian ____
   Other, please specify _____

3. Please indicate the number of adoption placements your agency completed in 1999 and 2000.

   1999 _____ 2000_____

4. Of the total number of adoption placements your agency completed in 1999 and 2000, what percentage were of the following type: (total percentage should equal 100% per year)

Domestic Infant/Toddler (non-special needs)	1999 _____	2000 _____
Domestic Special Needs	1999 _____	2000 _____
International	1999 _____	2000 _____

5. Does your state prohibit adoption placements with gay and lesbian individuals and couples?

   Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure _____

6. Does your state permit second parent adoption? In other words, can two unmarried individuals living with one another, adopt a child together?

Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure _____

7. Does your agency have any official policy regarding adoption by gay and lesbian individuals or couples?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which of the following applies (check more than one if appropriate):

Accept such applications, nondiscriminatory policy _____
Accept such applications, but birth parents make final choice of adoptive family _____
Accept such applications, but adoption placements guided by regulations set forth by child's country of origin _____
Reject such applications, inconsistent with agency's religious affiliation ____
Reject such applications, prohibited by state law ____
Reject such applications, placements made only with married couples _____

8. Is your agency involved in international adoption?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please check which countries your agency works with (check all the apply):

China _____ Russia _____ South Korea _____ Guatemala _____ Romania _____
Vietnam _____ Ukraine _____ India _____ Colombia _____ Kazakhstan _____
Bulgaria _____ Philippines _____ Cambodia _____ Mexico _____
Other (please specify) _____

9. Does your agency accept applications for adoption placement by **openly** identified?

Single lesbian women	Yes ____	No ____
Single gay men	Yes ____	No ____
Lesbian Couples	Yes ____	No ____
Gay Male Couples	Yes ____	No ____

If yes, how many placements were made by your agency with individuals or couples who **openly self-identified** as either gay or lesbian (estimate, if necessary):

1999 _____ 2000 _____

10. Does your agency collect information about an applicant's sexual orientation?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which of the following procedures do you use to accomplish this goal (check all that apply):

Ask directly of all individuals on the adoption application form _____
Ask directly of only those individuals thought to be homosexual _____
Explore issue with all applicants as part of the home study _____
Explore issue only with those applicants thought to be homosexual as part of the home study _____
Other, please specify _____
_____

11. If during the course of the adoption process or home study, it became apparent that the applicant was homosexual, even though they had not acknowledged their sexual orientation, what steps would the agency take?

Reject application _____
Ignore the information and continue to process the application _____
Include the issue of the applicant's sexual orientation in the preparation and education process _____
Refer the applicant to counseling as an adjunct to the home study process _____
Other, please specify _____
_____

12. Has your agency ever rejected applications from gay or lesbian individuals or couples?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what were the reasons for rejection (please check all the apply):

Sexual orientation incompatible with adoption _____
Questionable motives for adoption _____

Psychological problems _____
Lifestyle of applicant(s) incompatible with adoption _____
Lack of social/emotional support _____
Relationship problems with partner _____
Inadequate financial resources _____
Unrealistic expectations regarding adoption _____
Homosexual adoption inconsistent with agency policy _____
Homosexual adoption inconsistent with community standards _____
Homosexual adoption prohibited by state law _____
Other, please specify _____
_____

13. Does your agency recruit applicants from the gay and lesbian community as parenting resources for children needing to be adopted?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which of the following methods are used to recruit prospective adoptive parents from the gay and lesbian community (check all that apply):

Adoption seminars or workshops targeting this group _____
Advertisements in gay and lesbian publications/magazines _____
Information about gay and lesbian adoption included on the agency's website _____
Emails to gay and lesbian websites _____
Mailings targeting this group _____
Word of mouth _____
Working with gay and lesbian organizations and advocacy groups _____
Other, please specify _____
_____

14. Would your agency be interested in receiving in-service training in working with prospective adoptive parents who are gay or lesbians, either in the form of written material or through didactic workshops?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which of the follow areas would be most useful for your agency staff (choose more than one if desired):

Legal issues in adoption by homosexuals _____

Social casework issues in working with gay and lesbian individuals _____
Psychological issues in adoptive parenting by gay and lesbian individuals _____
Psychological issues in children raised by gay and lesbian individuals _____
Attitudes, biases, and stereotypes about homosexuality and parenting by homosexuals _____
Others, please specify _____
_____

15. Does your agency, as a matter of policy or routine practice, inform the birth parents when the adoption plan involves placement of their child with gay or lesbian individuals or couples?

Yes _____ No _____

16. Have you had instances when birth parents have requested placement of their child with gay or lesbian individuals, or chosen such individuals as the child's adoptive parents from various alternative families presented by the agency?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, how often has this happened?

Often _____ Occasionally _____ Infrequently _____

17. Have you had instances when birth parents have objected to the placement of their child with gay or lesbian individuals or couples, or have specifically requested that their child not be placed with homosexuals?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, how often has this happened?

Often _____ Occasionally _____ Infrequently _____

Please respond to each of the following statements on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree

18. Gay and lesbian individuals should be permitted to adopt children.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

19. It is preferable to maintain a child in a long-term foster placement than have the youngster be adopted by a gay or lesbian individual or couple.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

20. To be successful adoptive parents, gay and lesbian applicants require more preparation and education as part of the home study than heterosexual applicants.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

21. A child should be placed for adoption with gay and lesbian individuals only if the agency cannot find suitable heterosexual individuals who are willing to adopt the child.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

22. Gay and lesbian individuals have the same capacity for being sensitive and caring adoptive parents as heterosexual individuals

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

23. Adopted children of gay and lesbian individuals are likely to have more problems getting along with peers than children adopted by heterosexual individuals.[48]

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

24. Adoption by homosexuals should be prohibited by law.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

25. Adoption agencies should discourage gay and lesbian individuals from becoming parents.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

26. Gay and lesbian individuals who are motivated to become parents probably make as good adoptive parents as heterosexual individuals.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

27. Adopted children of gay and lesbian individuals are no more likely to have psychological problems than children raised by heterosexual parents.[48]

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

28. Gay and lesbian individuals are likely to have greater difficulty meeting the psychological needs of adopted children than parents who are heterosexual.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

29. To be successful adoptive parents, gay and lesbian individuals are likely to require more support and professional help than heterosexual individuals.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

30. Adopted children of gay and lesbian individuals are more likely to become homosexual than adopted children of heterosexual individuals.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

31. Adoption agencies should actively recruit gay and lesbian individuals as prospective adoptive parents.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

32. When a gay or lesbian individual or couple applies for adoption, it is important to do a more in-depth evaluation of their personality, adjustment patterns, and psychological history before approving them for adoption than if the individual or couple were heterosexual.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

33. An adoptive parent's sexual orientation is a relevant factor that should be considered in planning an adoption placement.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

34. Children of gay and lesbian adoptive parents are more likely to need mental health counseling than children of heterosexual adoptive parents.[48]

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

35. Homosexual individuals who wish to become parents through adoption are no more likely to have psychological problems than heterosexual adoption applicants.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Uncertain ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___