

**PLACING CHILDREN IN NEED WITH GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES:
INFLUENCES ON PLACEMENT DECISIONS**

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Thousands of children throughout the United States are currently awaiting placement with adoptive families. The literature indicates that gay- and lesbian-headed households can well meet the needs of these children. Research suggests that sexual prejudice, religious fundamentalism and attitudes about gay and lesbian adoption may influence practice decisions regarding placement. This dissertation study examined the influences of religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, contact with sexually diverse individuals, and attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents on intent to place children in need with gay and lesbian couples. A random sample of National Association of Social Workers (NASW) members was surveyed; 1000 surveys were distributed and 303 usable surveys were returned. Religious fundamentalism was measured using the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Huntsberger, 2004), sexual prejudice was measured using the Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians (Herek, 1994) and attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive parents was measured using Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents scale (Ryan, 2000). To assess willingness to use gay or lesbian couples as adoptive parents, respondents were asked to rank first and second choices on ten scenarios; two scenarios reflected easy to place children and eight hard to place children. A sizable minority of respondents failed to respond to the scenarios. Those opting out tended to score lower on religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, and held more positive attitudes towards gay and lesbian adoption.

Further, some respondents never included gay or lesbian couples; these respondents tended to score higher on religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, and negative attitudes to gays and lesbian couples as adoptive parents than those choosing at least one gay/lesbian response. Religious fundamentalism predicted sexual prejudice, which predicted negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents. Religious fundamentalism also directly influenced attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive parents. In addition, personal contact with sexually diverse individuals partially influenced sexual prejudice. Overall, the results indicate that some professionals are inappropriately influenced by their personal values.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Thousands of children throughout the United States are currently awaiting placement with adoptive families. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (1997) calls for expedited termination of the parental rights of birth parents; however, the lack of available adoptive homes has made many of these children “legal orphans” (Noonan & Burke, 2005). Social work professionals, child welfare workers, child advocates, and policymakers have identified the need to generate additional placement options for children awaiting adoptive placement. Gay- and lesbian-headed households are among the options being explored.

Researchers (see, for example, Brownlee, Sprakes, Saini, O’Hare, Kortess-Miller, & Graham, 2005; Ryan, 2000) have suggested that sexual prejudice influences decisions regarding placement with families headed by gays and lesbians. Religious affiliation (Mallon, 2000) is also believed to affect placement decisions. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2007) mandate that social work professionals gain and disseminate knowledge about and provide culturally sensitive services to people of diverse backgrounds, including gay, lesbians, bisexual, and transgender individuals. However, little is known about whether professional training translates into a willingness to place children in gay- and lesbian-headed households, and whether this willingness, in turn, is implemented in practice situations.

Based on linkages suggested in the professional literature, I investigated whether religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, social and professional contact with gays and lesbians, and attitudes about gays and lesbians as adoptive parents predicted intent about placing children awaiting adoption with gay- and lesbian-headed families.

Specifically, I developed and tested a model in which sexual prejudice mediated the relationship between religious fundamentalism and attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents on intent to place. I also examined the moderating effects of contact with gay men and lesbians on placement attitudes.

1.1 THE CURRENT CHILD WELFARE CRISIS

Inspired by the rise in reports of child abuse and neglect, the increase in the number of children placed in out-of-home care, and media reports of the failure of family preservation efforts, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was enacted in 1997 (McGowan & Walsh, 2000). ASFA reaffirmed the concept of permanency planning for children; however, the legislation clarified and changed a variety of policies implemented under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (AACWA) of 1980. Among these changes was the establishment of a requirement that the state file petitions for termination of parental rights of children who had been placed in out-of-home care for 15 of the preceding 22 months. Several exceptions to filing petitions for termination of parental rights were permitted, including if the child was placed in kinship care, if there was a compelling reason that the best interest of the child would not be served by termination of parental rights, or if services needed to foster reunification had not been provided (Herring, 2000; Pecora et al., 2000).

Estimates of the number of children in foster care in the United States have consistently exceeded 500,000 (AFCARS, 2009; Pecora, et al., 2000). Further, over one-third of these children have been in out-of-home care for over three years. One half of these children are in kinship care and, therefore, are exempt from the 15 of 22 month rule (AFCARS, 2009; Stein, 2000). The remaining children are at great risk of languishing in the foster care system, with diminished hope for permanence (Stein, 2000).

Youth who do not achieve permanence are at risk for a variety of poor outcomes. Youth who age out of the foster care system are more likely to suffer from homelessness, inability to access health care, unemployment, addiction, mental health problems than youth who are adopted (Atkinson, 2008; Brown & Wilderson, 2010; Yen, Powell, & Kushel, 2009). DeGue and Wisdom (2009) studied a prospective sample of 772 youth who had been removed from their biological families due to maltreatment. They found that placement instability was a significant risk factor for adult criminality. Unrau, Seita, and Putney (2008) found that adults who experienced multiple placements in the foster care system had an increased likelihood to experience significant trust issues and difficulty forming relationships.

Compared to the overall population, a disproportionate number of children of color are reported to child welfare agencies and are subsequently removed from their homes (McRoy, 2006; Potter & Rothschild, 2002; Smith & Devore, 2004). Once removed, African American children are 50% less likely than white children to be reunified with their families of origin (Barth, 1997; McMurtry & Lie, 1992; McRoy, 2006; Wells & Guo, 1999). Latino children have similarly low rates of reunification (Courtney, 1994; Davis, Landsverk, & Newton, 1997; McRoy, 2006).

Children of color are not only less likely than white children to be reunified with their birth parent(s), they are also less likely to achieve permanence following the termination of parental rights (Barth, 1997; McRoy, 2006). In reviews of permanency outcomes of various racial/ethnic groups, African Americans consistently have been found to be the least likely group to be permanently placed (AFCARS, 2009; Kemp & Bondnyi, 2002; Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002). Barth, Courtney, and Berry (1994) found that African American children were significantly less likely to be adopted than Latino or Caucasian children.

In addition to racial factors, age and a diagnosis of behavioral or emotional problems predict permanence for legally free children. Potter and Klein-Rothschild (2002) found that children with emotional or behavioral problems were 89% less likely to achieve permanence than children without a diagnosis. Similarly, older children were significantly less likely to be adopted than younger children (Barth, Courtney & Berry, 1994). Age also interacted with behavioral problems. Older children with behavior problems were among the least likely to be placed in permanent homes, according to Barth and colleagues (1994).

There are Americans who believe that children are best reared in a two-parent heterosexual home. Yet this belief belies two critical facts. First, gay men and lesbians can provide caring, loving, permanent homes to children in need. Second, the number of children in need of permanent homes far exceeds the number of heterosexually married couples who are willing to adopt children with special needs, older children, and children of color (Crawford, 1999).

In 1997, New Jersey became the first state to include language in their adoption statute prohibiting discrimination against potential adoptive couples based on marital status or sexual orientation. Almost all states have followed suit. Until 2004, Florida was the only state to forbid

adoption by single lesbians or gay men (Ryan, Pearlmutter, & Groza, 2004). Oklahoma now forbids lesbians and gay men from adopting either as single parents or couples. In addition, Utah and Mississippi recently passed legislation forbidding same sex couples from adopting, and although single parent adoptions are possible, they are unlikely (Families like Ours, 2006). However, even in states that allow individual gay men or lesbians to adopt, very few allow for joint adoption by lesbian or gay couples (Crawford, 1999; Ryan, et al., 2004). Only nine states currently, by appellate court decision or statute, explicitly allow for second parent adoptions by same sex couples (HRC, 2009).

The current political pendulum's swing to the right has given rise to increased legislative attempts to ban gay men and lesbians from adopting or fostering children. As of this writing, sixteen states are slated to initiate a constitutional amendment or ballot measure in upcoming elections to limit or restrict gay men and lesbians from adopting (HRC, 2009). Conservative religious groups are spearheading these efforts (HRC, 2009).

Although state and federal laws govern adoption, actual practices differ by region (Kreisher, 2002). The cultures of the region and of the agency promote variation in the implementation of existing policies, and little can be done to prevent caseworkers or judges from denying placement. Nearly 40% of adoption placement agencies nationally are unwilling to place children with openly gay or lesbian individuals. In addition, of these 40%, over 60% of the agencies surveyed had never placed children in lesbian or gay male homes (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2003).

Prospective adoptive parents who identify as gay or lesbian may find that when children are placed with them, the youngsters are more likely to have disabling conditions, including severe behavior problems, than children placed with legally married, heterosexual couples

(Kenyon, et al., 2003). Hicks and McDermott (1999) found that lesbians and gay males believed that they were unfairly treated by the child welfare system, as they were only offered the most difficult to place children. Brooks and Goldberg (2001) contended that much of professionals' uncertainty regarding adoptions by gay men and lesbians stems from a lack of information about the effects of such placements on children.

These attitudes influence the pool of potential placements for children in need. As of March 2003, more than 125,000 of the 500,000 children in foster care were in need of adoptive homes (CWLA, 2006). Brooks and Goldberg (2001) suggested that gay and lesbian couples can provide suitable homes for children in need of placement. Leung, Erich, and Kanenberg (2005) found that older children, non-sibling groups, and children who experienced multiple placements prior to adoption actually fared better in gay- and lesbian headed households than in heterosexual households.

In March 2003 the Evan B. Donaldson Institute released a policy analysis discussing adoption by gay men and lesbians. A principal finding was that laws precluding gay men and lesbians from consideration as adoptive parents place thousands of children at tremendous disadvantage. Further, though most states allow for gay and lesbian adoption, individual agencies and workers in these states discriminate against lesbian and gay applicants based on their own biases or the mistaken notion that prohibitions against placement exist (Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri, 2002).

1.2 EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MANDATES ON ISSUES OF DIVERSITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The profession of social work has been uniquely dedicated to the promotion of social justice and an understanding of diversity, including the nature of diversity and the experiences of oppression based on sexual orientation (NASW, 2007). Although early multicultural social work practice referred to work with people of color only; recently, the definition has recently been broadened to include those considered socially different. People living in poverty, people with disabilities, and gay men and lesbians are now included in this expanded definition of diverse populations (Gould, 1995; Pinderhughes, 1995; Van Den Berg & Crisp, 2004).

The NASW Code of Ethics specifically refers to sexual orientation (Section 1.05: Cultural Competence and Social Diversity). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandates inclusion of content about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and families to prepare social work students for competent practice. The knowledge, skills, and values required to achieve practice competence with sexually diverse clients are delineated in the Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards of the Council of Social Work Education and in the Standards for Cultural Competence of the National Association of Social Work (CSWE, 2008; Green, Kiernan-Stern, Bailey, Chambers, Clarididge, Jones, Kitson, Leek, Leisey, Vadas, & Walker, 2005).

Social workers are ethically mandated to develop cultural sensitivity, including the recognition of strengths and an understanding of the political context surrounding families of varied cultures (Deweese, 2001). The profession of social work recognizes the very act of labeling an identity as diverse is a statement about power, since diversity is perceived as a deviation from the dominant group (Comerford, 2005; Pinderhughes, 1995). Social workers are

supposed to understand how diverse populations perceive and respond to lack of power in order to understand the dynamics of privilege and oppression (Pinderhughes, 1995). Social work ethics mandate the translation of this understanding to actions facilitating social change (Hartman & Laird, 1998; Van Soest, 1996b). Specifically, the NASW Code of Ethics (1999) states that “Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.”

Traditionally, issues of multiculturalism and social justice have been taught in macro practice courses (Morris, 2002). However, an understanding of a multicultural perspective is considered essential in preparing micro-level practitioners for culturally sensitive practice, as well (Fellin, 2000). Most social work programs offer a designated diversity course, in addition to integrating diversity content across the curriculum (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 1999). Gutierrez, Fredriksen, and Soifer (1999) found that among a random sample of faculty at MSW programs nationwide, the majority of survey participants considered inclusion on gay and lesbian course content very important or important.

Promoting competent practice with gay and lesbian clients, therefore, requires the inclusion of gay and lesbian content throughout the curriculum. Appleby and Anastas (1998) outlined specific themes to be considered in working with sexually diverse groups, including addressing one’s own sexual prejudice and developing an understanding of gay and lesbian identities as normal variations of sexual identity. More recently, Van Den Berg and Crisp (2004) suggested that social work practitioners be cognizant of within-group diversity in the gay

community, the impact of social welfare policies on gay men and lesbians, and culturally sensitive service models.

Despite the obvious need for training about sexual diversity, students report that they are often ill-prepared to work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations. Hartman and Laird (1998) remarked that although the NASW Code of Ethics and the CSWE accreditation standards mandate training about culturally sensitive practice with sexually diverse clients, this is an aspiration, not an accurate portrayal of the current state of social work education and practice.

1.3 THE CURRENT STUDY

Child welfare historically has grappled with issues of diversity related to the placement of children. The increasing number of children with special issues that deem them “hard to place” has forced child welfare agencies to broaden their definitions of potential adoptive and foster families. Flexible policies now allow single individuals, interracial families, families with limited financial resources, and gay men and lesbians to foster and/or adopt children in need of placement (Brooks & Goldberg, 2001; Cole-Black, 2002; Rodriguez & Meyer, 1990; Rosenthal, Groza, & Curiel, 1990; Ryan, 2000; Ryan, Pearlmutter, & Groza, 2004).

Although the definition of potential adoptive and foster families has expanded, little has been published about the attitudes of social service professionals toward these extended policies. Brooks and Goldberg (2001), Kenyon, Chong, Enkoff-Sage, Hill, Mays, and Rochelle (2003), and Ryan (2000) examined worker attitudes about the inclusion of gay and lesbian foster and adoptive parents. In the focus groups they conducted with agency staff and lesbian and gay adoptive couples, Brooks and Goldberg (2001) found that worker attitudes presented obstacles to

gay men and lesbians attempting to adopt. Kenyon and colleagues (2003) conducted phone interviews with adoption workers in North Carolina and found that nearly one of the respondents held moderate to severe biases against gay men and lesbians as potential adoptive parents. Ryan (2000) surveyed workers employed in eight public child welfare agencies throughout the state of Florida. He found that primary socialization forces, including race, and gender, combined with secondary socialization forces, including professional training, to predict whether child welfare workers would place children in gay male or lesbian homes. He also found that this relationship was mediated by worker attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents.

The above mentioned studies were limited in geographical representation; this study surveyed a national sample of social workers. Further, this study extended Ryan's focus on predictors of professional willingness to place children in gay male- and lesbian-headed households. I examined the impact of religious fundamentalism and prior contact on attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents. In addition, the impact of sexual prejudice on attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents was explored.

The aim of this study was to examine antecedents of social work professionals' attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents. Specifically, I assessed the following:

1. Do the subjective norms (religious fundamentalism and contact with gay men and lesbians) predict willingness to make an adoptive placement with gay men and lesbians?
2. Do religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice predict attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents?

3. Do attitudes toward gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents predict intent to place children in a gay male- or lesbian-headed family?

The study involved a cross sectional survey. Information was obtained through self-administered questionnaires that were mailed to social work professionals. The sample was randomly selected from national mailing lists of members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

1.4 STUDY SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

The profession of social work has been historically dedicated to issues of social justice, including advocacy for oppressed populations. The Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Social Workers mandate that professionals provide culturally-sensitive service to populations-at-risk, including lesbians and gay men (CSWE, 2008; NASW, 2007). Ostensibly, current students and graduates of social work programs understand that lesbians and gay men suffer institutional discrimination, including legal barriers to adoption. Yet, whether such knowledge influences attitudes and/or behaviors is a matter of speculation.

Very few studies have examined the specific attitudes held by social workers toward gay men and lesbians. Further, little research has been conducted on sexual prejudice and social work. Most of this limited research examines this form of prejudice in students; very few studies have looked at practicing social workers. Results of studies with student samples cannot be generalized to practitioners.

Studies regarding the attitudes of social work practitioners working with diverse groups, including gay men and lesbians, are needed to further our understanding of the impact of personal values on professional behavior, especially when professional and personal values are not in concert. This study allowed me to assess potential links among religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, personal contact, and professional practice. Studies such as these allow social work educators and administrators the opportunity to examine influences on professionals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and, if indicated, use this information in designing specific training to counter negative attitudes.

Workers' attitudes about gays and lesbians as adoptive parents influence placement decisions. The understanding of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians can lead to dismantling structural barriers to same sex couples as adoptive parents. The number of children in need of permanent homes far exceeds the number of heterosexually married couples who are willing to adopt children with special needs, older children, and children of color. The breaking down of these barriers leading to the consideration of gay and lesbian couples as adoptive parents can broaden the pool of permanent placement options for children in need.

2.0 GAY MEN AND LESBIANS AS ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Although the number of children in need of permanent homes is great, institutional heterosexism may partially explain the under-utilization of gay men and lesbians as adoptive families. This chapter begins with a discussion of the current child welfare crisis, including its historical antecedents. Next, present day attitudes about gay men and lesbians are reviewed in social and historical context. The chapter also provides an evaluation of current research on gay men and lesbians as parents. Studies of children raised in gay- and lesbian-headed families are also considered.

2.1 THE CURRENT CHILD WELFARE CRISIS

Each year, nearly one million children are investigated and found to be victims of child abuse or neglect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children Youth, and Families, 2007). Of these children, more than half are placed in foster care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children Youth, and Families, 2006). Foster care, by definition, is a last resort intervention that removes children from their biological parents and is intended to be temporary solution until the family is deemed safe or an alternative family is found (Pecora, et al., 1992). The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) affirmed the concept of permanency planning for children, designating permanency as the exit from foster

care via reunification or adoption (Barth, 1997). The act established a requirement that the state file termination petitions for children in out-of-home care for 15 of 22 months. Although foster care is to be temporary in nature, over one-third of these children have been in out-of-home care for over three years (AFSCARS, 2009). One half of these children are in kinship care and, therefore, are exempt from the 15 of 22 month rule (AFCARS, 2009; Stein, 2000). However, those remaining children are at great risk of lingering in the foster care system, with diminished hope for permanence (Stein, 2000).

2.1.1 Historical Antecedents to Current Child Welfare Policies

Best practices in child protection have been long debated in the United States. Across cultures and throughout time, children have been removed from adults who were unable or unwilling to be parents and placed with adults who wanted to care for them or use them for labor. Although there have been massive changes in the approach to child welfare from colonial times, the current approach remains heavily rooted in historical principles. Thus, a thorough understanding of the current crisis in child welfare requires knowledge of its historical antecedents.

During colonial times, poverty was viewed as sinful and social welfare policies reflected that belief. Based on the Elizabethan Poor Laws, colonial leadership essentially categorized the poor into three groupings: able-bodied, impotent, and dependent children. The prevailing religious philosophy was that poverty was sinful and children of the able-bodied but idle, considered the “unworthy poor,” needed to be saved from becoming like their parents. Dependent children with no tangible means of support were apprenticed out to adults who not only presumably taught children skills and cared for their tangible needs, but also provided the added benefit of teaching proper moral values so that they could be saved from the fate of their

idle parents (Trattner, 1999). These apprenticeships were economically and politically sound strategies as well. The state was able to control the minor without having to bear a financial cost and provided workers for an economy that lacked essential labor (Trattner, 1999).

The onset of the industrial revolution saw politics, economics, religious, and philosophic ideologies converging and gave rise to the concept of indoor relief. Influenced by Adam Smith, who proposed that all economic motivation was related to self interest and that individuals were rational creatures, and Malthus, who discussed the “mathematics” of population growth, indoor relief became popular (Galbraith, 1987). Separating men from women in institutional settings, indoor relief became not only a punishment for the poor, but a form of birth control (Trattner, 1999). Children were also committed to these institutions, referred to as almshouses, with adults. They were released only when the overseer felt that they could work, often in servitude, and be economically self sufficient.

In response to a growing awareness of abuses suffered by children residing with criminals and the insane, coupled with the fear that they would not learn the necessary skills to become part of the labor force, children were removed from almshouses. In the mid to late 1800’s, alternative forms of “care” for these children arose. In addition to building separate institutions, “placing out” agencies, including Charles Loring Brace’s Children’s Aid Society, developed (Abramovitz, 1996). With an awareness of the diminished need for urban home workers, Brace collected children in large eastern cities and sent them aboard the “orphan train” to farms in the Midwest that benefited from extra hands (Abramovitz, 1996; Kadushin, 1976).

Influenced by Progressivism, child saving gained popularity in the 1890’s (Katz, 1996). Children were viewed differently and were no longer considered miniature adults (Katz, 1996); it was against this canvas that the 1909 White House Conference on Children, the foundation for

the Children's Bureau, was held. The Conference concluded that poverty was not a reason to remove children from their homes. The Mothers' Pension Laws, followed by perhaps the most important federal legislation assisting children and youth, Title IV of the Social Security Act, allocated funds to families with dependent children and allowed families to maintain custody of their children at home (Abramovitz, 1996; Hacsí, 1995; Kadushin, 1976; Katz, 1996).

Three major pieces of federal child welfare legislation exemplify the change from a child welfare emphasis to a concern for child safety and highlight the historic tension between the rights of children and the rights of parents (Jimenez, 1990; Lindsey, 1994). These Acts are: The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA), the Adoption Assistance and Act of 1980 (AACWA), and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). CAPTA provided financial assistance to prevention and treatment programs and also funded the development of a National Center (Pecora, et al., 1992). An unintended consequence of CAPTA was a dramatic rise in child abuse reports and an unprecedented number of children placed in out of home care (Davidson, 1994; Jimenez, 1990)

Encouraged by the Civil Rights Movement and the move to deinstitutionalize those in care, the foster care system became fodder for public scrutiny (Davidson, 1994). Citing attachment theory, advocates argued that the removal of children from their loved ones could be irrevocably harmful to the emotional well being of the child and promoted family preservation (Davidson, 1994). This perspective helped ground AACWA. The act allowed the disbursement of funds to programs aimed at preventative services and family reunification (Davidson, 1994; Hacsí, 1995; McGowan & Walsh, 2000; Pecora, et al., 1992). This policy's goal was to remedy foster care drift by providing permanence for children with their biological families whenever possible (Samantrai, 1992).

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) made substantive changes to policies which preceded it. The principal change was the requirement that states must file a termination of parental rights (TPR) petition if the child is in out-of-home, non-relative care for 15 of the past 22 months (AFCARS, 2009). Thus, already stressed agencies needed to secure permanent placements for these children. Yet, permanent placements for children whose parental rights have been terminated are influenced by various child characteristics, including race, ethnicity, and age. Each of these characteristics are indicators of likelihood of permanent placement (Needell et al., 2008; Wulczyn, Barth, Yuan, Harden, & Landsverk, 2005; Wulczyn & Lery, 2007; Wulczyn et al., 2007). Age as a significant factor in attaining permanence has been well established in the literature (Barack, 1986; Knapp et al., 1987; Courtney, 1908; McMurty & Lie, 1992, Brooks et al., 2002). Healthy infants are adopted very quickly compared to older children (Guo & Wells, 2003; Wulczyn et al., 2005). The likelihood of permanent placement is shown to diminish as children age (Courtney & Wong, 1996; Wulczyn et al., 2005). McDonald and associates (2007) found that a child's age at time of entry into the foster care system significantly influenced permanency outcome; specifically, older children were less likely to achieve permanence.

Children of color are less likely to achieve permanency than their White counterparts. White and Hispanic children have a shorter stay in foster care than African American children (Wulczyn et al., 2005; Wulczyn et al., 2007). Further, African American children are less likely to be adopted (Courtney & Wong, 1996; Wulczyn et al., 2001). Once removed, African American children are 50% less likely than white children to be reunified with their families of origin (Barth, 1997; McMurty & Lie, 1992; McRoy, 2006; Wells & Guo, 1999). Latino children have similarly low rates of reunification (Courtney, 1994; Davis, Landsverk, & Newton, 1997;

McRoy, 2006). In reviews of permanency outcomes of various racial/ethnic groups, African Americans consistently have been found to be the least likely group to be permanently placed (AFCARS, 2009; Kemp & Bondnyi, 2002; Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002). Barth, Courtney, and Berry (1994) found that African American children were significantly less likely to be adopted than Latino or Caucasian children. MacDonald and colleagues (2007) found that Native and African American children were significantly less likely to be adopted than their Asian and White counterparts.

In addition to age and racial factors, a diagnosis of behavioral or emotional problems predicted permanence for legally free children. Potter and Klein-Rothschild (2002) found that children with emotional or behavioral problems were 89% less likely to achieve permanence than children without a diagnosis. Age also interacted with behavioral problems. Older children with behavior problems were among the least likely to be placed in permanent homes, according to Barth and colleagues (1994). MacDonald and associates (2007) found that children with a past history of sexual abuse were less likely to be adopted.

An unintended consequence of the recent changes in child welfare legislation is the increased number of children whose parental rights have been terminated and therefore, are in need of permanent homes. Gay- and lesbian-headed households can be one solution for these children. However, attitudes about the fitness of sexually diverse families to provide homes to children in need may be questioned. The following provides a context for understanding these attitudes.

2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Public opinion about gay men and lesbians has varied dramatically based on culture and point in time (Scasta, 1998). The forbidding of sexual activity with no potential for procreation must, therefore, be examined within its historic and cultural contexts. At certain points in history, same sex relationships were viewed as normal expressions of human sexuality. In other eras, religious perspectives enforced the view of gay men and lesbians as sinners. From the late nineteenth century through the 1970's, homosexuality was regarded as a diagnosable mental illness. These perspectives are important as they are the antecedents of present day attitudes of social workers and other human service professionals toward gay men and lesbians as potential adoptive parents.

2.2.1 Ancient History

Biblical laws prohibiting sexual contact between men can be traced back to Leviticus. At that point in history, the Israelites' needed to maximize the number of soldiers for their survival; thus, any sexual behavior that potentially limited the population endangered the Israelites. Hence, men "spilling seed" were to receive the death penalty because they threatened the continuity of the Israelites (Scasta, 1998). Women having sex with women, however, was not discussed (Boswell, 1980; Scasta, 1998)

Because they were not vulnerable to a diminishing population, the ancient Greeks and Romans did not view same sex relations as deviant. To the contrary, Socrates and Plato were among poets and philosophers of the day celebrating sexual relations with young men (Boswell,

1980; Scasta, 1998). During the Roman Era, same sex marriage was recorded and laws codified these unions (Boswell, 1980).

By the end of the third century, as Christian influence grew, tolerance toward homosexuality declined and ultimately ended (Scasta, 1998). For example, in the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Constantine expressly forbade homosexual acts; the penalty for the passive partner was death (Boswell, 1980). These laws were extended to both participants under Byzantine rule. However, when the Byzantines were no longer in power, same sex relationships again came to be tolerated and were largely ignored by the Church (Boswell, 1980).

2.2.2 The Medieval Period to the Renaissance

Few laws were enacted against homosexuality during the Middle Ages. Those that were created were, almost exclusively, civil enactments. Passive participants in homosexual acts were exclusively targeted by these decrees. The church occasionally ratified these edicts under duress, but attached either a minor penalty or no penalty at all for infractions (Boswell, 1980). Homosexuality was generally tolerated during this time.

Stating that sex was for procreation and not recreation, St. Thomas Aquinas authored the first edict rendering homosexuality immoral. By the end of the thirteenth century, secular and religious laws converged, imposing sanctions for same sex relations in this world and beyond. Those accused were banished, mutilated, or put to death, and doomed to an eternity of hellfire and damnation (Boswell, 1980; Scasta, 1998). For the next 600 years, homosexuality was perceived as a moral failing (Scasta, 1998). Lesbians were mostly exempt from persecution (Scasta, 1998).

2.2.3 Origins of Homosexuality as Pathology

In 1886, Richard Kraft-Ebing argued that homosexuality was not sinful; instead, same sex relations were perversities due to genetic and environmental factors. During the same time period, Havelock Ellis, a famous sexologist, argued that homosexuality was an inborn trait (Scasta, 1998). Freud also viewed homosexuality as pathology, and believed it was incurable. Freud viewed homoerotic desires as stemming from the pleasure principle. He did not, however, view this “condition” as a reason to deny a student the opportunity to become an analyst (Friedman & Downey, 1998; Scasta, 1998).

Freud’s followers, including Rado and Socarides, extended his view of homosexuality as pathological and referred to same sex attraction as thwarted heterosexuality due to a narcissistic wound occurring before age five (Friedman & Downey, 1998; Scasta, 1998). This wounding not only guaranteed a homosexual identity, but an accompanying personality disturbance. By today’s diagnostic vernacular, these symptoms would indicate either a Borderline or a Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Friedman & Downey, 1998). This line of thinking led to the inclusion of homosexuality as a psychiatric diagnostic category in the first edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (1952).

Traditionalism and McCarthyism marked the fifties in American culture. Not only did the American Psychiatric Association officially list homosexuality as a mental illness, the United States military and the State Department determined that homosexuals constituted a security threat (Faderman, 1982; Johnson, 2004).

2.2.4 Resistance

The oppression of the fifties gave rise to resistance in the sixties (Faderman, 1982; Johnson, 2004; Miller, 1995). The gay liberation movement, while less recognized than the women's movement, civil rights movement, and anti-war movement, benefited from the existence of the other social movements occurring at the same time (Parks, 1999). The pivotal event viewed as sparking the gay liberation movement was the Stonewall Rebellion. Stonewall was a gay bar located in the Greenwich Village section of New York City. The bar was a target of frequent police raids. On the last Friday evening of June of 1969, the police raid was met with mass resistance from the bar patrons. Before the end of the decade, groups taking the name Gay Liberation Front had been created in major cities across the United States; by the end of 1970, there were over 300 Gay Liberation Fronts in America (Faderman, 1982; Miller, 1995).

The increased activism by the gay and lesbian community resulted in continued social progress in the 1970's, but as the decade progressed, contention and division within the lesbian community escalated. Among the victories for the lesbian and gay community was the removal of homosexuality as a codified, diagnosable mental illness in 1973 (Herek, 2004). Radical lesbian feminism emerged during this time, extending the feminist analysis advanced in the 1960's by linking sexism and heterosexuality. Lesbianism became defined as a political act (Miller, 1995). However, radical lesbian feminism was not universally embraced by women in same sex relationships. Working class and older lesbians felt excluded as they often viewed their sexual orientation as diminished by the political rhetoric. Similarly, butch/femme women felt judged by their radical counterparts for their chosen adherence to gender roles. Lesbians of color felt unrecognized as their particular issues were not being addressed (Faderman, 1991).

In the 1980's, the discovery of the AIDS virus and its transmission in the gay community gave rise to a healing among various community factions. Unity replaced the divisiveness of the mid- to late-1970's. The lesbian and gay community coalesced in response to the anti-gay propaganda linking the sin of homosexuality with the disease. In addition, the physical devastation of AIDS, including death, heightened the awareness of lesbians and gays regarding the need for legal partnership protections, including medical decision-making rights and inheritance rights (Miller, 1995).

Concern over the lack of legal protections continued into the 1990's. The conservative anti-gay agenda gained momentum during this decade, mobilizing around the reinstatement of "traditional family values" (Sullivan, 2004). Opposition to the discourse of the "religious right" and the recognition of the need for the formulation of social policies to afford legal protections to gay and lesbian families emerged as the overriding, unifying agenda. Same sex marriage, adoption by same sex couples, and changes in discriminatory child custody laws accompanied cries for changes in policies prohibiting gay and lesbian service in the military, excluding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals from the protection of existing hate crime legislation, and the denying civil employment protections to the community (Belkin & Bateman, 2003; Lind, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Gay and lesbian singers, athletes, actors, and politicians also became more openly visible during this decade (Miller, 1995). Technological advances throughout the 1990's aided lesbian women's ability to connect with one another via the internet; women could now shop for sperm and men for surrogates through the World Wide Web (Luce, 2004; Nip, 2004). The increased visibility of gay men and lesbian women, technological advances, and a keen understanding of the dearth of legal protections for gay men and lesbians, had a significant impact on gay- and lesbian-headed families.

2.3 FAMILIES HEADED BY GAY MALES AND LESBIANS

The definition of the American family is no longer limited to the traditional, heterosexual, two-parent variety. Gay male and lesbian-headed families are included among the diverse constellations now considered to be nuclear family units. Although gay men and lesbians have been rearing children for centuries, these families have become increasingly more visible over the last several decades (Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Steckel, 1987; Tasker, 1999). Research examining gay male and lesbian-headed households is relatively recent and this body of literature remains scant. Compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) has rendered gay men and lesbians invisible and, consequently, gay and lesbian families continue to be rarely considered in the professional literature.

Several studies have explored parenting practices and parenting roles among gay fathers and lesbian mothers. Most of this empirical research examines “planned lesbian and gay families” (Flaks et al., 1995, p.105), referring to children born or adopted in the context of existing same-sex relationships as distinct from parenting in families with children born in the context of heterosexual relationships. Hare and Richards (1993) found that biological/adoptive lesbian mothers whose children were born or adopted in the context of a heterosexual relationship were more likely to be responsible for child care than biological mothers whose children were born or adopted in the context of a lesbian relationship. The researchers noted that in many ways lesbian families with children born within the context of the partnership resembled heterosexual nuclear families and that lesbian families whose children were born in the context of heterosexual relationships resembled heterosexual step-families with regard to parenting roles and responsibilities.

Hand (1991) compared 17 lesbian couples with 17 heterosexual couples, all of whom had children under the age of two. Specifically, Hand was interested in how the couples shared household tasks and parenting, as well as the individual's occupational roles. The principal finding was that lesbian couples were significantly more egalitarian in parenting roles than their heterosexual counterparts.

Chan, Raboy, and Patterson (1998) studied 55 lesbian families and 25 heterosexual families. All families included children, aged 6 through 12, who had been conceived through donor insemination. Recruitment through a single sperm bank yielded participant families who lived in different areas in the United States. The researchers found no significant difference in the allocation of child-rearing tasks between lesbian non-biological mothers and their biological counterparts.

Patterson, Sutfin, and Fulcher (2004) studied the division of labor among lesbian and heterosexual parents. They found that lesbian couples were egalitarian in dividing paid and unpaid labor. In contrast, heterosexual couples were more likely to follow proscribed gender roles, with the men devoting more time to paid employment and the women giving more time to unpaid family work. The best predictor of the division of labor among lesbian parents was the degree to which the partners ascribed to feminist ideology. For heterosexual couples, structural variables, such as number of hours of paid work, served as the best predictor.

Bialescheki and Pearce (1997) explored role negotiations among a sample of lesbian parents with dependent children. The couples based their child care and household responsibilities primarily on personal interest and time constraints. Couples were able to negotiate tasks that were not interesting to them. When time was a factor, couples were able to discuss the option of hiring someone to perform those tasks. The researchers suspected that the

absence of normative roles in lesbian relationships with regard to family and household responsibilities, combined with gender role socialization to attend to the needs of others, contributed to the ease of negotiation between partners.

Much less is known about gay fathers (Greenfield, 2005). Lesbian women have an easier time than gay males if they wish to have biological offspring. While a lesbian can opt for donor insemination with a known or anonymous donor, gay males must either agree to donate sperm and co-parent or opt for surrogacy (Tasker, 2005). Gay men, whose children are conceived in the context of a heterosexual relationship, are at risk of losing custody of the children following the dissolution of their marriage (Patterson, 2000).

Mallon (2004) reported that over 80% of gay men are in committed relationships when they become parents. Bigner and Jacobsen (1989) studied gay fathers and found that their parenting skills were similar to heterosexual fathers. Specifically, they reported that gay fathers, compared with their heterosexual counterparts, are as bonded to their children, provided a similar variety of recreational activities, promoted autonomy with the same frequency, and reported similarly high levels of role satisfaction. In addition, they found that gay fathers were more attentive to their children's needs and more clearly communicated behavioral expectations and the reason for the expected behavior than did heterosexual fathers.

2.4 CHILDREN RAISED IN GAY AND LESBIAN FAMILIES

Much of the research concerning children of gay fathers and lesbian mothers has historically focused on comparing these youth with their counterparts being raised in heterosexual

households. Concerns expressed by the court regarding the fitness of gay and lesbian parents have dictated the research agenda of scholars (Patterson, 1992; Patterson & Redding, 1996). The use of comparison, rather than addressing the unique characteristics of gay- and lesbian-headed families, speaks to the perceived superiority of two-parent, heterosexual families (Clarke, 2002; Sullivan, 2004). More recent research has changed the focus from a deficit model to a focus on the distinctiveness of gay and lesbian families, thereby contributing to an increased awareness of the special challenges they face (Laird, 1999; Parks, 1999).

2.4.1 Comparisons of Children of Lesbian Mothers and Heterosexual Parents

Flaks et al. (1995) matched 15 lesbian-headed families with children ages 3 to 9 who were conceived through donor insemination, with heterosexual households with children of the same age. The families were also matched on the child's gender, age, and birth order, as well as the parents' race, income, and attained educational level. All participants were from the Greater Philadelphia area. Except for the male children of heterosexual parents, the youngsters cognitive functioning was in the high average range or above. The children of same-sex and heterosexual parents did not differ on indicators of behavioral adjustment.

Tasker and Golombok (1997) compared adult children of lesbian mothers with adult children of heterosexual mothers. The adult children of lesbian mothers, compared to those of heterosexual mothers, were more likely to be teased during their childhood, especially about their own sexual orientation. They further reported that their lesbian mothers were sensitive to heterosexism in their childhood environments and helped them strategize about ways to manage prejudice. These strategies included not disclosing their mothers' sexual orientation or telling only those they completely trusted. The researchers reported that 61% of the young adult

children of lesbian mothers had disclosed their mothers' identity to one close friend. Of those choosing to disclose, almost one-third were met with negative responses. Among those choosing not to disclose, approximately one-third reported feeling that their mothers were too open about their sexual orientation and expressed concern that their peers would discover their family situation.

More recently, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter (2003) reported on the quality of parent and child relationships and the social and emotional development of seven year old children living with lesbian-headed families and with heterosexual parents in Southwest England. Drawing from their sample from an on-going longitudinal study, the researchers further segregated the groups into single-parent and two-parent families. Golombok and colleagues (2003) obtained parent and teacher ratings, as well as the children's reports on standardized instruments. They found no significant differences in the social and emotional development of children of lesbian mothers and those with heterosexual parents. Although not significant, greater peer difficulties were reported for children of lesbian mothers, as rated by the mothers; the children's scores, however, reflected no difference.

McCallum and Golombok (2004) compared early adolescent children in 25 lesbian-headed families with their counterparts in 38 single-parent, heterosexual families and 38 two-parent, heterosexual families. The researchers assessed the mothers' psychological states, using a depression scale and an anxiety measure, and the quality of mother-child relationship by interviewing the mothers and children. They also assessed children's socio-emotional development through interviews with mothers and children, and, adolescent peer relationships and social adjustment, via a self-report questionnaire. Finally, they queried the mothers and

teachers about behavioral and/or emotional problems. They found no significant differences in the emotional health or behavioral adjustment of young adolescents.

Wainwright, Russell, and Patterson (2004) looked at a wide array of outcomes for adolescent children of same sex couples. They found that adolescents raised in gay and lesbian households were not significantly different in personal and school adjustment than their counterparts raised in heterosexual households. Specifically, self-esteem, anxiety, depressive symptoms, academic achievement, autonomy, and peer relationships did not differ by family type.

2.4.2 Unique Studies of Children of Lesbian Mothers

Recently, studies that specifically investigate lesbian mothers and their children, without contrasting them to heterosexual parents and their children, have begun to appear in the professional literature. Although I was able to identify a small but growing body of literature about lesbian mothers, I have been unable to locate any that were unique to gay fathers.

Huggins (1989) looked at within group differences among thirty-six children who had lesbian mothers and who were born when their mothers were in heterosexual relationships. She found higher self-esteem scores in children whose fathers were accepting of their mothers' sexual orientation. Conversely, children whose fathers were hostile or rejecting of the mothers' orientation displayed lower self-esteem scores. Huggins also reported that children whose mothers told them of their lesbianism during childhood had higher self-esteem scores than those who learned of their mothers' sexual orientation during adolescence. The sample, however, was small and tests of significance were not reported.

Lewis (1980) was one of the first social workers to study the experiences of children with lesbian mothers. She reported that the children in her study, who were ages 9 to 21, feared disclosing their mothers' sexual orientation lest they would lose friends. It is important to note that Lewis, a clinical social worker, obtained her participants from her clinical practice, and therefore subject to potential bias inherent in using a convenience sample.

Patterson (1995) assessed the division of labor and children's psychosocial adjustment among 26 lesbian families with children ages 4 through 9. Half of the children were male. All children were born to or adopted in the context of the lesbian relationship. Patterson used two standardized measures to assess the children's psychosocial adjustment: The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and the Children's Self View Questionnaire, which is specifically designed for children 3 to 8 years of age. She found that mothers and children reported better psychosocial adjustment when the non-biological mother was viewed as equally sharing parenting tasks. It is important to note that the participants in this study were affluent, well educated, and lived in the San Francisco Bay area, where there is community support for lesbian families.

Patterson (2001) also studied maternal mental health, household composition, and child adjustment using the same sample of lesbian-headed families. The CBCL and the Children's Self View Questionnaire were used to assess child adjustment. Maternal mental health was assessed using the Derogatis Symptom Checklist-Revised and maternal self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. Unlike her earlier study, Patterson included both single-parent lesbian families (19%), families with shared custody arrangements (11%), and two parent families (70%). She found that the mothers' scores on self-esteem and overall psychological adjustment did not vary by household composition. Similarly, the children's

adjustment did not vary by household composition. Patterson did find a significant, negative correlation between the biological mothers' mental health scores on certain subscales (Anger/Hostility, Depression, and Obsessive Compulsiveness) and the child's psychological adjustment, but failed to find a correlation between the non-biological mothers' mental health scores and the child's adjustment.

Hare (1994) studied lesbian families with children who resided in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. The 28 families had a total of 51 children, of whom 36 were born in the context of a heterosexual relationship, 11 were conceived via donor insemination, and the remaining 4 were adopted. The challenges of childrearing included issues of stigma and homophobia. When asked to consider the most substantial difficulty for children raised in lesbian-headed households, 72% of the mothers reported that peer prejudice was the principal challenge facing their children. They identified improved relationships as the major benefit of choosing to parent, especially heightened acceptance by their families of origin and heterosexual peers, and a deepened sense of commitment to their partners.

In an ethnographic study of lesbian stepfamilies, Wright (1998) found that children and adolescents were fearful about being teased or harassed if their mothers' relationship was known. She reported that the children she interviewed maintained a constant level of anxiety, even if they had not experienced any direct homophobia. She concluded that the lack of positive images of lesbian families contributed greatly to the sense of fear and secrecy.

Gartell, Banks, Reed, Hamilton, Rodas, and Deck (2000) interviewed lesbian mothers who conceived through donor insemination, all of whom had participated in the longitudinal National Lesbian Family Study. During the third phase of the study, the children were five years old. When the study began, participating families resided in San Francisco, Boston, or

Metropolitan Washington, DC. At the time of the third wave of data collection, 31% of the original couples had separated and 17% of the families had moved to other areas in the United States. Gartrell et al. (2000) found that 87% of the children related well to their peers, yet, over 18% had already experienced homophobia from peers, teachers, or both.

Van Dam (2004) studied 180 lesbian-headed families about their experiences with stigma with support. She compared mothers who identified as lesbian prior to having children with their partners to those who had children in a prior heterosexual union. She found that mothers who had conceived their children in traditional heterosexual relationships reported significantly less social support. Mothers in both types of families shared concerns regarding the potential for their children to be stigmatized; however, mothers who had their children in the context of a previous heterosexual relationship perceived more stigma than did the mothers who had conceived while in lesbian relationships.

O'Connell (1993), in one of very few studies specifically centered on the experiences of adolescent children of lesbian mothers, reported that children of lesbian mothers concealed their mothers' identity to avoid the experience of discrimination from peers. She interviewed 11 adolescents whose mothers were previously married, but who now identified as lesbian. Based on her interviews, she concluded that children of lesbian mothers will go to great lengths to prevent being stigmatized due to their mothers' sexual orientation. O'Connell (1993) discussed the fear that the adolescent participants felt about losing friends if their mothers' relationship became known. Though almost half of the adolescents disclosed their mothers' sexual orientation to close friends, it took one to five years for them to do so. All participants in this study reported consciously concealing their mothers' sexual orientation from more than one person.

Gershon, Tschann, and Jemerin (1999) also examined the experience of stigma, coping skills, and self-esteem in a sample of 76 adolescent children of lesbian mothers. Nearly 33% of the participants were conceived through donor insemination or were adopted by their mothers while the other 67% were born in the context of heterosexual relationships. The researchers found that adolescents who reported fear of or who experienced stigma at school were less likely to disclose their mothers' identity and had lower self-esteem. Conversely, adolescents who did not fear or experience stigma were likely to disclose their mothers' lesbianism to more people and report increased self-efficacy with regard to their ability to form close friendships with others. Even among the adolescents who perceived a high degree of stigma, those who disclosed their mothers' sexuality, compared to those who did not, reported an increased ability to form close friendships.

Nan Gartrell and Henry Bos (2010) reported on findings from the National Lesbian Family Study, described earlier. As the recruitment period for the study commenced in 1986, (93% retention rate), the participants are now adolescents or young adults. The researchers found that the 17 year olds scored significantly higher on social and academic measures and lower in aggressive and externalizing behavioral issues than their counterparts raised by heterosexual parents. They noted differences in the parenting styles of the lesbian mothers as a partial explanation for the differences. For example, while pregnant, the mothers in the study participated in parenting classes to better prepare for childrearing. In addition, the lesbian mothers reported that they utilized verbal limit setting with their children more frequently than their heterosexual counterparts.

Adults raised in gay and lesbian households have also been studied. Saffron (1998) and, more recently, Goldberg (2007) found that young adults readily discuss the advantages of being

reared by gay and lesbian parents. Among the advantages discussed were being more empathic and tolerant of diverse populations than their peers who were raised in heterosexual households. Additionally, they are less likely to adhere to gender stereotypes (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

2.5 GAY MEN AND LESBIANS CREATING ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Very few studies have been devoted to gay and lesbian adoptive families. In a recent review of the social work literature, Van Voorhis and Wagner (2001) were unable to locate a single study devoted specifically to gay men or lesbians as adoptive parents. Several studies have been published since Van Voorhis and Wagner conducted their review.

Recently, Bennett (2003) studied lesbian families whose children were internationally adopted while the mothers were in a relationship. All 15 couples reported that they equally shared parenting responsibilities and household tasks. She found, however, that despite the egalitarian division of labor and parenting tasks, 12 of the 15 couples reported that the child demonstrated primary attachment to one of the mothers.

Leung, Erich, and Kanenberg (2005) compared family functioning between lesbian and gay adoptive families and heterosexual adoptive families. Family functioning was assessed by the Family Assessment Measure III, the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, and the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist. No significant differences were found between heterosexual and gay and lesbian families in terms of family functioning. Moreover, the researchers found that family functioning scores increased when lesbian and gay couples adopted older children with multiple foster care placements.

Farr, Foreson, and Patterson (2010) studied parenting styles and child development in gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples. Specifically, the researchers investigated the degree to which sexual orientation may be correlated with the development of children adopted in infancy. Data were gathered from parents, teachers, and other caregivers. They found that children reared in lesbian- and gay-headed household fared equally well on measures of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Similarly, Farr they noted no difference in parenting behaviors and couple satisfaction.

2.6 SUMMARY

Over the past several decades, gay- and lesbian-headed families have been acknowledged in social science research. Studies have shown that lesbian and gay parents and their children function in a very similar fashion to heterosexual-headed families. Specifically, children raised by gay or lesbian parents are similar to children raised by heterosexual parents in social and emotional development, cognitive functioning, and school functioning. In other areas, however, research has also shown that gay- and lesbian-headed households and heterosexual-headed households differ, specifically in child rearing practices and the division of household tasks.

Children of gay and lesbian parents have had the unique experience of facing stigma and homophobia. Although parents in same-sex relationships and their adolescent children appear to share concerns regarding the effects of stigma associated with gay and lesbian families, children and adolescents who disclosed their mothers' sexual orientation reported increased confidence in their ability to form close connections with peers. Unfortunately, misconceptions about children raised by gay and lesbian parents and the outcomes of such childrearing arrangements permeate

the attitudes of the American public, including policy makers and social service workers. The dearth of literature examining gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents suggests that these important resources for children are being overlooked.

3.0 THEORY

This chapter reviews Katz's functional theory of attitudes. The functionalist theory suggests a number of variables relevant to understanding and predicting helping professionals' attitudes toward gay and lesbian adoption. These variables, and the research supporting their selection, are discussed in this chapter. The variables include sexual prejudice, religious fundamentalism, personal or professional contact with gays and lesbians, attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents, and intent to place children in need with gays and lesbians.

3.1 THE FUNCTIONAL THEORY OF ATTITUDES

The functional theory of attitudes attempts to understand why people hold the attitudes that they do. The underlying assumption of the functional perspective is that attitudes fill an individual's psychological needs. Individuals hold various attitudes because they derive psychological benefit from doing so. Katz (1960) described attitudes as "the predisposition of the individual to evaluate some symbol or object or aspect of his world in a favorable or unfavorable manner" (p.168). He identified and outlined four major psychological functions of attitudes: adjustment/utilitarian, ego-defensive, value expressive, and knowledge.

The adjustment or utilitarian function of attitudes recognizes that people desire to maximize rewards and avoid aversive consequences. Thus, according to the adjustment

function, the attitude a person holds depend on the individual's historic and present perceptions of the attitudinal object. Attitudes are formed and maintained to elicit maximum benefits and avoid punishment. Hence, when the individual views an attitudinal object as possessing personal or societal value, then the attitude held by the individual toward the object is likely to be positive so that the individual reaps the most benefit. Likewise, if the attitudinal object is perceived as negative, the person will avoid the object due to fear of negative consequences. Thus, if a person is raised with the strong religious belief that homosexuality is a sin, s/he will hold negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians and would avoid contact with sexually diverse individuals.

Katz (1960) next discussed the ego-defensive function. According to this function, the attitudes held by people protect their egos from unacceptable impulses and reduce anxiety. Katz stated that the attitudes held by a person are those that defend the individual's self-image. These attitudes serve as defense mechanisms and function to protect us from our own feelings of inferiority. For example, a heterosexual person who feels inferior may develop a negative attitude towards gay men and lesbians to feel superior.

The third function Katz (1960) described is the value-expressive function. His depiction of this function stressed the importance of self-expression and self-realization. In this function, the individual derives satisfaction from expressing attitudes that speak to her/his core beliefs. People can align themselves with those of like minds through the expression of their attitudes. For example if an individual identifies strongly as a religious fundamentalist, s/he can reinforce that image by adopting values consistent with that belief. Thus, those identifying as fundamentalists would likely cultivate negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians that are in concert with her/his religious beliefs.

The knowledge function is the final function discussed by Katz (1960). Katz states that some attitudes are formed as a result of a need for organization, structure, and meaning. This function is based on the individual's search for organizing perceptions and beliefs to provide clarity and consistency. Accordingly, attitudes are formed to assist the individual in organizing information into an understandable whole by supplying standards of evaluation. Thus, stereotyping provides a tool to bring order to a complex world.

3.2 ATTITUDES, RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, SEXUAL PREJUDICE, AND CONTACT

Herek (1986b) expanded the concepts developed by Katz. Herek (1987a) maintained that the functions served by an attitude reflect an individual's personality traits, the particulars of a situation, and the socially constructed meanings of attitude objects. Further, he discussed the influence of place in time and social environment in attitude formation and change potential.

Attitude change is possible only when one understands the reason the attitude is held (Hullett & Boster, 2001). For example, an attitude serving a utilitarian function is born from past experience with a member of a minority group. This attitude has the potential for change if the individual has different experiences through contact with other members of the same minority group (Herek, 1986b). Similarly, if a person holds an attitude that serves a value expressive function, by definition the motivation for holding this attitude is social acceptance. Thus, a value expressive attitude could be altered through a change in social affiliation.

3.2.1 Sexual Prejudice

As previously discussed, functional theory suggests that prejudice, especially among religious fundamentalists, serves the individual. Previous studies have evaluated prejudicial attitudes serving functions, including racial and sexual prejudice (Herek, 1986b; Dunleavy, 2004). Prejudice against certain groups is facilitated if the attitude is reinforced by others in the referent group (Hullet, 2002).

Gordon Allport (1954), in his seminal work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, defines prejudice as “ an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, and is therefore presumed to have questionable qualities ascribed to that group” (p.7). He argues that, in most instances, prejudice serves some function for the person who holds it. He also argued that prejudice has two essential components: a negative attitude and an overly generalized belief.

The acquisition of prejudice, according to Allport (1954), is learned early in childhood from parents and other socializing forces in the child’s life. The early learning sets the stage for selective perception, whereby a person attends to evidence that perpetuates her/his attitudes and beliefs and ignores evidence that contradicts her/his attitudes and beliefs. In addition, a person will tend to develop attitudes that conform to her/his preexisting values.

Sexual prejudice is defined as negative attitudes held toward others based on sexual orientation (Herek, 2000). Similar to other types of prejudice, sexual prejudice is a negative attitude directed at members of a particular group based on their sexual orientation. In contrast to the term homophobia, which implies fear, sexual prejudice is simply a descriptive term. The professional social work literature, however, tends to use the terms homophobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity, and sexual prejudice interchangeably.

Many adults in the United States continue to hold negative attitudes about gay men and lesbians (Herek & Capitano, 1996; Yang, 1997), though the percentage is declining. The Pew Research Center (2006) reported that slightly more than half of all Americans continue to oppose gay marriage, a decline from 63% reported in 2004. The Center also reported that the majority of Americans continue to believe that gay men and lesbians should not be allowed to adopt children. However, the percentage of those supporting gay and lesbian adoption has increased from 38% in 1999 to 46% in 2006.

Sexual prejudice has been associated with several social and psychological variables, including lower levels of education and residence in rural environments (Herek & Capitano, 1995; Negy & Eisenman; 2005). Being African American, male, older, and lacking prior personal contact with gay men and lesbians have also been shown to correlate with sexual prejudice (Herek & Capitano, 1999; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Horvath & Ryan, 2003). In addition, sexual prejudice is highly correlated with authoritarianism, adherence to a fundamentalist religious doctrine, and political conservatism (Altemeyer, 2003; Herek, 2000; Herek & Glunt, 1993).

Heterosexual men, on average, display more evidence of sexual prejudice than heterosexual females (Herek & Capitano, 1996; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Researchers have posited various ideas about the cause of this gender-based difference. One explanation, offered by Louderback and Whitley (1997), is that lesbian women are often eroticized by heterosexual men. Herek (1986; 1988) contended that men, compared to women, are more threatened and defensive by male homosexuality. Herek and Capitano (1996) suggested that gender influences opportunities to know gay men and lesbians, with women having more opportunity for such contacts, and it is actually previous personal contact that influences sexual prejudice.

Sexual prejudice among helping professionals and students has been evaluated in several studies. Berkman and Zinberg (1997) studied the extent of heterosexism among a cohort of social work professionals. They randomly selected 376 respondents, stratified by gender and achieved a response rate of 54%. Men were not found to be significantly more heterosexist than women, and there was no significant difference between younger and older workers' attitudes toward gays and lesbians. They did, however, find that overall attitudes toward gay men were more negative than those toward lesbians. Berkman and Zinbert (1997) also found that positive relationships with gay and lesbian peers and superiors were correlated with low levels of heterosexism. The correlation between high religiosity and heterosexism was also significant. However, no relationship was observed between education on sexual diversity and heterosexist attitudes.

Newman, Dannensfelser, and Benishek (2002) surveyed beginning level graduate students in counseling and social work to compare their acceptance of gay men and lesbians. Using a national list of accredited programs in each discipline, they requested that surveys be given at orientation or on the first day of classes. A response rate of 41.7% of the social work programs and 23.3% of the counseling programs was obtained, yielding a total of 2,552 entering social work students and 862 counseling students. The average age of the respondents was 30.23 and the majority of the respondents were white (79.0%).

Newman and colleagues (2002) found that 24% of the variance in student attitudes towards gay men and lesbians was accounted for by degree sought, gender, race, sexual orientation, and religious identity. The largest effect sizes, while still moderate, were for sexual orientation and religious identity, with gay- and lesbian-identified students holding the most positive attitudes toward other gays and lesbians and with religiously conservative students

holding the most negative attitudes toward gay and lesbians. Graduate social work students were only slightly more accepting of sexual diversity than were graduate counseling students. Interaction effects were explored, but no significant interaction effects were found.

Brownlee, Sprakes, Saini, O'Hare, Kortess-Miller and Graham (2005) surveyed undergraduate social work majors at a Canadian university. Questionnaires were distributed to students in required classes at the first, second, third, and fourth year levels. All responses were anonymous. In addition to attitudes about gay men and lesbians, students were queried about their perceptions of the amount of sexual diversity content they believed had been covered in their social work courses. They were also asked about previous contact with gay men and lesbians. Of the 180 students enrolled, 157 completed the survey instrument. After incomplete questionnaires were removed, 137 surveys remained for analysis. 55 were completed by first-year students, 46 by second-year students, 20 by third year students, and 16 by seniors.

Brownlee and colleagues (2005) found that third- and fourth-year students held significantly more positive attitudes than first-year students. In addition, males were significantly more homophobic than female students. No significant relationship was found for age or the size of the student's home community, categorized as rural or urban. As had been found in previous studies, there was a strong positive correlation between previous contact with attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and attitudes.

The vast majority of the respondents in this study reported that they had no (31.1%) or little (49.6%) coverage of gay and lesbian issues in their classes. Whereas Berkman and Zinberg (1997) found no correlation between content on sexual diversity and heterosexist attitudes, Brownlee and colleagues (2005) found that students who reported receiving moderate or high

amounts of content on gay and lesbian issues held more negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians than did those who reported no or low content.

Green (2005) included Herek's (1994) Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gays (ATLG) scale as part of a larger survey that assessed professional competencies and attitudes of NASW members in his home state compared to members nationally. He used five equivalent subscales from Herek's (1994) ATG and ATL scales that focused on cognitive rather than affective attitudes. Questionnaires were mailed to 300 randomly selected NASW members from Green's home state and 300 randomly selected members from the rest of the country. The response rate was 55.8% and did not differ between the state and national samples. To avoid the potential for bias from over-sampling in one state, Green compared the responses from the national (n=153) and state (n=164) samples on age, race, gender, years of professional experience, professional function, and professional setting. The samples did not significantly differ; therefore, they were merged into one data set.

The majority of respondents identified as white (84.2%) and heterosexual (90.9%). Responses from those who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were not included in the data analysis reducing the sample size by 10%. Green (2005) compared male and female social workers attitudes toward gay men and lesbians and found no statistically significant gender differences. Also, respondents' attitudes towards gay men did not statistically differ from their attitudes toward lesbians.

Studies that have explored sexual prejudice in human services were primarily conducted on samples of undergraduate students enrolled in courses including psychology, social work, and nursing (Brownlee, Sprakes, Saini, O'Hare, Kortess-Miller, & Graham, 2005; Ewing, Stukas, & Sheehan, 2003; Horvath & Ryan, 2003; Negy & Eisenman, 2005; Smoot, 19991; Parrot,

Zeichner, & Hoover, 2006). However, very little of this small body of research was performed on actual practitioners (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Rondahl, Innala, & Carlsson, 2004; Ryan, 2000). Further, a review of the literature uncovered no studies specifically linking sexual prejudice with worker behavior.

3.2.2 Religious Fundamentalism

The relationship between religious fundamentalism and prejudice has been extensively studied. This research consistently found a positive correlation between fundamentalist beliefs and prejudice. A positive association between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice has also been found. Herek (1986b) contends that religious conservatism actually predicts prejudice. The expression of enmity towards gay men and lesbians among religiously conservative individuals, for example, enhance relationships with esteemed individuals in their reference group, thus serving a value expressive function. The expression of hostility may serve a value expressive function as well; religiously conservative individuals confirm their identity by voicing intolerant attitudes towards gay men and lesbians (Herek, 1986b).

Religious fundamentalism has been defined as “the certainty that one’s religious beliefs are correct, and that the belief one has access to absolute truth” (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005, p.809). Over the past few decades, research has linked religious fundamentalism and prejudice (Allport & Ross, 1967; Altmeyer, 2003, Altmeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Coward, 1986; Hunsberger, 1996). While early studies connect religious fundamentalism to racial and ethnic targets of prejudice, more recent studies have found women, Communists, and gay men and lesbians to be targets of prejudice as well (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). In a review of studies

published from 1990 through 2003, Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) found that religious fundamentalism was consistently related to prejudice against gay men and lesbians.

The literature offers two explanations for the high correlation between religious fundamentalism and negative attitudes towards sexual diversity. Batson and Burris (1994) and Herek (1987b) have suggested that while certain religions explicitly rebuke prejudice against various racial and ethnic groups, they may condone or actively encourage prejudice against gay and lesbians, teaching that same sex relationships are immoral. A study by Duck and Hunsberger (1999) found that respondents reported that racial prejudice was proscribed by their religious teachings, but that sexual prejudice was not.

Other research suggests that the high correlation between right wing authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism explains the link between fundamentalism and sexual prejudice. Right wing authoritarianism has been conceptualized as a personality attribute rather than a political attitude. Specifically, right wing authoritarianism is believed to be comprised of authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. This cluster of attitudes appears to also partially explain the link between religious fundamentalist ideologies and prejudice (Hunsberger, 1995; Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Wylie & Forest, 1992).

Several recent studies link religious fundamentalism with sexual prejudice. Altmeyer (2003) surveyed 371 white students enrolled in an introductory psychology class. Several weeks later, 441 parents of these students were queried. Responses from students and parents were anonymous. Altmeyer (2003) found that the correlation between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice, using Herek's Attitudes towards Homosexuality (ATH) scale, was .61. Laythe, Finkel, and Kirkpatrick (2001) also found that sexual prejudice was highly correlated with religious fundamentalism.

Few empirical studies have specifically explored religious fundamentalist beliefs in the context of social work practice. Dinerman (2003), in a recent editorial, considered whether a social worker's fundamentalist beliefs would negatively impact her/his ability to promote a client's right to self determination. She wondered if a fundamentalist social worker could "maintain the professional discipline to help the client reach the client's own decisions...especially if the client's decisions, goals and values differ from the fundamentalist social worker's beliefs" (p. 251).

Studies of sexual prejudice have found that sexual prejudice and adherence to fundamentalist religious doctrine are very highly correlated (see, for example, Altemeyer, 2003; Herek, 2000; Herek & Glunt, 1993). Studies of social workers have found similar results. Berkman and Zinbert (1997) found a strong, positive correlation between religiosity and heterosexism. Newman and colleagues (2002) also found religiously conservative students held the most negative attitudes toward gay and lesbians.

3.2.3 Personal and Professional Contact

Allport (1954) posited the contact hypothesis, which, simply stated, means that increased contact with members of a particular group will decrease prejudice against that minority group. The effect of contact on attitudes is dependent on the type of contact that occurs. Casual contact, for example, has the effect of increasing prejudice, while true acquaintance lessens prejudice. Contact with individuals of equal or greater occupational status tends to decrease prejudice against the group of which the individual is a part.

The contact hypothesis has been generally supported by the empirical literature. Although early studies focused primarily on racial attitudes, other studies have expanded target

groups to include various ethnic groups (Callaghan, Shan, Yu, Ching, & Kwan, 1997; Hamburger & Hewstone, 1997, Pettigrew, 1998), the elderly (Schwartz & Simmons, 2001; Soliz & Harwood, 2003), people with disabilities (Green, 2003), and sexually diverse populations (Herek & Glunt, 2003).

Prior personal contact with gay men and lesbians is believed to influence sexual prejudice (Herek, 1988; Herek & Capitanio, 1996). Herek and Glunt (1993) hypothesized that contact correlated with positive attitudes toward gays. They also hypothesized that the main effect of contact would be consistent across demographic subgroups; therefore, they did not anticipate an interaction effect between contact and subgroups, based on gender, level of education, religiosity, or political affiliation. They also anticipated that contact would predict sexual prejudice, even after controlling for the effects of demographic and background characteristics. Finally, they explored whether being from a particular social subgroup increased the likelihood of contact with gay men.

Using random digit dialing to generate a sample, Herek and Glunt (1993) completed 936 surveys, achieving a response rate of 47%. Sexual prejudice was measured using a 5-item subscale of the Attitude toward Gay Men (ATG) scale. As anticipated, they found that contact with gay men significantly and positively correlated with attitude. Only political ideology significantly interacted with personal contact, with those identifying as politically conservative having less contact than those identifying as politically liberal. Finally, they found that highly educated, politically liberal, young women were the most likely to have contact with gay men.

Building on Herek and Glunt's (1993) earlier work, Herek and Capitanio (1996) examined whether contact with two or more gay or lesbian individuals would be associated with more affirming attitudes than contact with just one person. They used random digital dialing to

sample household members nationwide; interviews were conducted in two waves. During Wave 1, a three item shortened form of the Attitudes toward Gay Men (ATG) scale measured sexual prejudice. Personal contact was measured through a series of questions, including the number of acquaintances, friends, or relatives who identified as gay and how they learned of these individuals' sexual orientation. During Wave 2, Herek and Capitanio (1996) added items about attitudes toward lesbians to the ATG.

Herek and Capitanio (1996) found that personal contact was strongly associated with an affirming attitude toward gay men and lesbians. Further, the more gay men and lesbian women the respondent knew, the more positive the attitude. Also, as predicted, those who were told directly by a gay man or lesbian about her/his sexual orientation, held significantly more favorable attitudes toward gays.

3.3 SUMMARY

Katz's functional theory of attitudes provides a comprehensive framework for the linkages among religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents, and intent to place children in gay- and lesbian-headed households. Those who believe that "homosexuality is a sin" bond with those in their reference group, thus serving a social expressive function. This expression may also serve a value expressive function by confirming identity by voicing intolerant attitudes towards gay men and lesbians (Herek, 1986b). Personal contact has also been found to be strongly associated with attitudes toward gay men and lesbians (Herek & Capitanio, 1996). The association among religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice has been also been found in studies of social work students and professionals.

Studies of social workers have also endorsed a strong positive correlation between previous contact with gay men and lesbians and attitudes.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical perspectives and literature reviewed in previous chapters provide the conceptual framework for the proposed study. This chapter begins with the study's hypotheses and then presents the sampling, data collection, and analysis plan employed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the protections of human subject offered.

4.1 STUDY HYPOTHESES

The first set of hypotheses I investigated is based on the model shown in Figure 1. Research has established a connection between religious fundamentalism and a variety of attitudes, especially attitudes towards members of minority groups (Allport & Ross, 1967; Barnes, 1997; Batson, 1971; Danso, Hunsberger, & Pratt, 1997, McFarland, 1989; Rowatt, Frankiln, & Cotton, 2005; Sheldon & Parent, 2002; Strickler & Danigelis, 2002). McFarland (1989), extending the earlier works of Allport and Ross (1967) and Batson (1971), found that fundamentalism correlated positively with discriminatory attitudes toward blacks, gays, women, and communists. More recently, Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) found that religious fundamentalism was consistently related to negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Thus, I hypothesized:

H₁: The stronger the religious fundamentalism, the more negative the attitudes towards gay and lesbian adoption.

H₂: The stronger the religious fundamentalism, the higher is sexual prejudice.

Religious fundamentalism has also been linked to prejudice in general (Allport & Ross, 1967; Altmeyer, 2003; Altmeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Coward, 1986; Hunsberger, 1996) and sexual prejudice in particular (Batson & Burris, 1994; Herek, 1987). Newman and colleagues (2002) found that religious fundamentalism significantly correlated with sexual prejudice among a sample of social work students. Similarly, Berkman and Zinberg (1997) found a statistically significant correlation between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice among social work professionals. Ryan (2000) found that child welfare workers, who identified as Christian, were significantly more prejudiced toward gay men and lesbians than those who were otherwise identified.

Sexual prejudice among human service professionals is also believed to influence attitudes about gay and lesbian adoption. Allport (1954) defined prejudice as having two components: a negative attitude toward a minority group and overly generalized beliefs about that group. Sexual prejudice refers to the negative attitudes and overly generalized beliefs about sexually diverse populations. Hartman and Laird (1998) proposed that consideration of lesbian and gay men as adoptive parents exposes sexual prejudice in even the most open-minded social workers. Therefore, I hypothesized:

H₃: The greater the sexual prejudice, the more negative the attitude towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents.

Consistent with Allport's contact hypothesis, personal and professional contact is believed to influence attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Herek and Glunt (1993) and Herek and Capitanio (1996) found that personal contact with those identifying as gay or lesbian predicted

decreased sexual prejudice. Studies of social work students (Brownlee, et al., 2005) and social work professional (Berkman & Zinbert, 1997) have supported Herek and Glunt's and Herek and Capitanio's findings. Thus, I predict that:

H₄: Previous personal contact with gay men or lesbians lessens sexual prejudice.

H₅: Previous professional contact with gay men or lesbians lessens sexual prejudice.

H₆: Previous personal contact with gay men or lesbians moderates the relationship between religious fundamentalism and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents.

Based on the links suggested by the reviewed literature, I also predict that:

H₇: Having higher religious fundamentalism scores is associated with a lower likelihood of intent to play children in gay- and lesbian-headed households.

H₈: More sexual prejudice is associated with a lower likelihood of intent to play children in gay- and lesbian-headed households.

H₉: Negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents are associated with a lower likelihood of intent to play children in gay- and lesbian-headed households.

Previous studies have also found that sexual orientation, age, race, and gender are related to sexual prejudice and attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents. Thus, these variables were considered in the analysis.

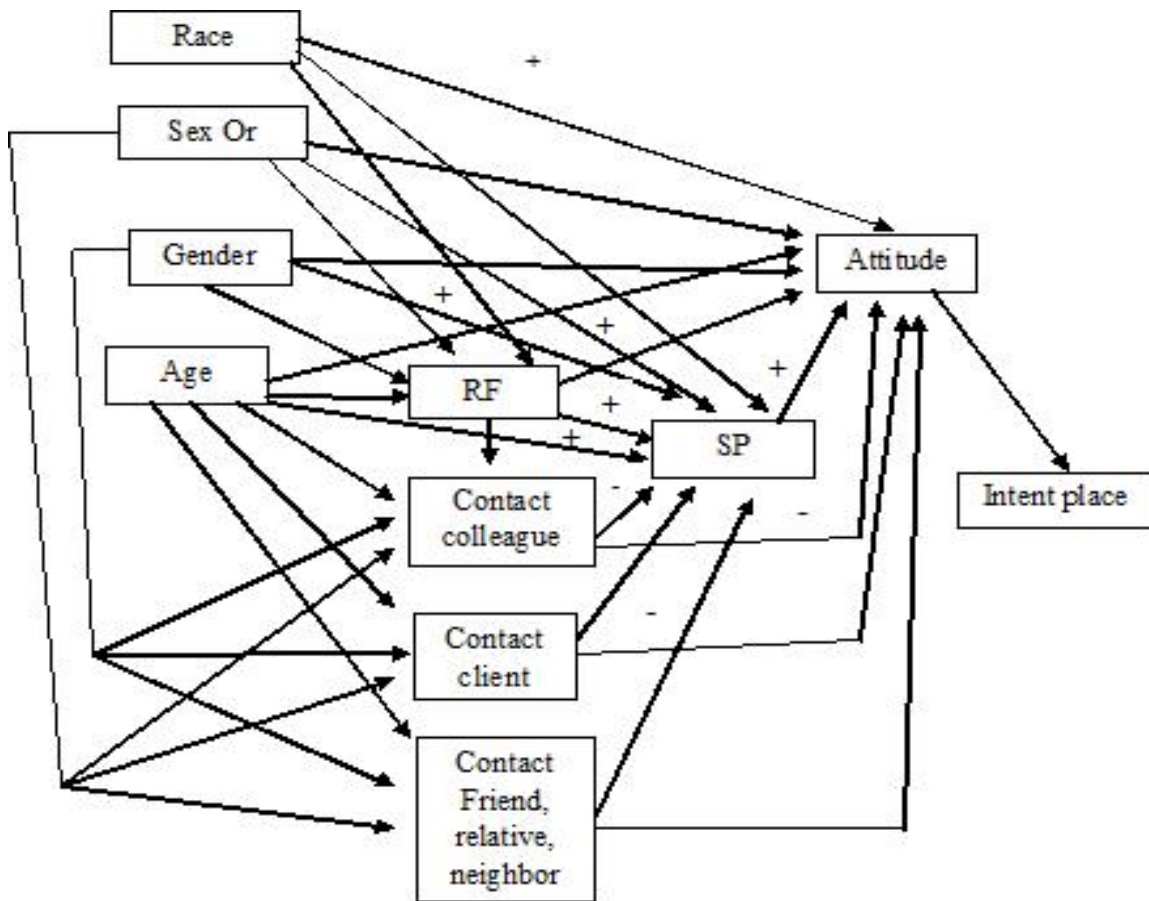


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

4.2 METHODS

4.2.1 Design

This is a cross-sectional study about various influences on professional decision-making with regard to placing children with gay and lesbian adoptive families. Potential participants were sent a letter and survey requesting their participation. Four weeks following the initial mailing, potential participants were sent follow-up postcards. Data collection began in March and was completed by the end of April.

4.2.2 Sample

This study targeted professional social workers with interest and presumably experience in working with children, youth, and families. The sample was selected from the national membership mailing list of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). A random sample of 1,000 workers who are listed as NASW members with the qualifying designation of Child and Family Welfare (N=17,010) was selected by InFocus Marketing. NASW contracts with InFocus Marketing to select samples of members for approved research projects.

Of the 1,000 surveys sent, 303 (30.3%) usable questionnaires were returned by sample participants. In addition, 18 questionnaires (1.8%) were returned marked undeliverable by the

postal service. Twenty surveys (2%) were not usable (fourteen sampled participants refused to answer; four stated they felt unable to answer; and two were deceased).

4.2.3 Constructs and Instrumentation

The mailed questionnaires included questions about demographics and professional training. The survey included Herek's (1994) sexual prejudice measure (SP), Altemeyer and Huntsberger's (2004) measure of religious fundamentalism (RF) and Ryan's (2000) Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents scale (ATT). To measure adoption intention, the survey asked respondents to rank-order various family types in response to ten scenarios; these responses were used to assess attitudes toward heterosexual, gay, and lesbian couples of different racial compositions as prospective adoptive parents.

In addition to the instruments described above, the Affective Attitudes about Race (ARAS) of the Quick Discrimination Index (Ponterotto et al. 1995) and Attitudes toward Transracial Adoption (ATA) developed by Fenster (2001) were also included. The survey instrument contained sensitive questions regarding sexual orientation. The purpose of including the scenarios and scales assessing racial attitudes was to avoid asking questions that solely related to sexual orientation. The full questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

4.2.4 Religious Fundamentalism:

Religious fundamentalism (RF) is characterized by a sense of possessing absolute truth, a unique relationship with God, and a dogmatic belief system. It has been found to predict various forms of prejudice (Altemeyer & Huntsberger, 1992; Barnes, 1997; Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick,

2001). Altemeyer and Huntsberger's (2004) recently revised twelve-item scale (Appendix A, Section 6) has high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .91) and has shown excellent construct validity as it correlates with right wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, as well as dogmatism and zealotry, and religious ethnocentrism. In the current study, the alpha coefficient was .91. The twelve items are scored using a nine-point scale, ranging from +4 for very strongly agree to -4 for very strongly disagree. In my study, the scale was scored from 1 to 9, with higher scores indicating greater religious fundamentalist beliefs. Returned questionnaires missing 4 or more items were not included in the analysis.

An overall RF score was created by summing scores on individual items and dividing by the total number of items with valid responses. The summed score was not normally distributed (skew=1.12); further, the mode was at the lowest value, rendering standard transformation ineffective. Thus, the original RF measure was re-scored by counting the occurrences of the responses 3 to 8 (CTRF) across the 12 items (see, for example, Koeske, Kirk, Koeske, Rauktis, 1994; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Koeske & Krowinski, 2004).

4.2.5 Sexual Prejudice

Sexual prejudice is defined as a negative attitude toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender individuals based on their sexual orientation (Herek, 2000). Herek's (1994) Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG), a 20 item scale, served as the measure of sexual prejudice (Appendix A, Section 4). The construct validity of the ATLG has been substantiated by its significant correlations with other measures including religiosity, lack of contact with sexually diverse individuals, and promotion of traditional sex-role attitudes, belief dogmatism (Herek, 1987a, 1988, 1994; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Herek & Capitano, 1996). More negative attitudes

toward gay men (high ATG scores) are positively associated with AIDS-related stigma (Herek, 1995; Herek & Glunt, 1991). The ATLG is considered reliable; alpha coefficients range from .80 to .94 for the full scale version (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Green, 2005; Herek, 1994). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was .90. In addition, Herek (1994) reports a .90 test-retest reliability correlation.

I used the original nine-point Likert scale designed by Herek (1994), where 1 indicated very strong disagreement and 9 indicated very strong agreement with items endorsing sexual prejudice. This scale partially controls for bias by negatively wording 5 of the 20 items. Thus, those items were reverse-scored. Returned questionnaires missing 6 or more items were not included in data analysis.

An overall ATLG score was created by summing scores on individual items, and dividing the sum by the total number of items completed. Lower scores indicated less sexual prejudice. Due to high skewness (2.08), the original variable was re-scored by counting the occurrences of 3-9 responses across the 20 items. This strategy has been used in other research (see, for example, Koeske, Kirk, Koeske, Rauktis, 1994; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Koeske & Krowinski, 2004). This score was then log transformed to achieve a roughly normally distributed measure (skew =.34).

4.2.6 Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents

Ryan (2000) developed an instrument to assess social workers' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents. The Attitude Toward Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents Scale (APS) used a five point Likert scale, ranging from 1 or strongly agree to 5 or strongly disagree. Six items were reverse scored. In Ryan's (200) study, Cronbach's alpha for the

fourteen item scale was .95. Unfortunately, there was no evidence of reliability or validity. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was .79.

For uniformity throughout the survey, I opted to reverse Ryan's coding strategy. Thus, higher scores on the scale indicated more negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents. An overall APS score was created by summing scores on individual items, and dividing the sum by the total number of items completed. The original score was log transformed to achieve a normally distributed score (skew=.62). Surveys missing two or more items on the APS were not included in the analysis.

4.2.7 Intent to Place Scenarios

A new instrument was developed for this study. Participants were presented with ten scenarios of children in need of placement. They were asked to rank order their first two placement choices by placing the number 1 (one) next to their first choice and a number 2 (two) next to their second choice. Participants could choose among heterosexual, gay male, and lesbian couples that varied by race (African American or Caucasian), for a total of six possible choices. Eight of the scenarios were of "hard to place children", including a child with chronic medical needs, a child with severe emotional and behavioral issues, a child who had experienced multiple placements, a child who had experienced sexual abuse, older children (varied by age and gender) and a sibling group. The children who were considered "easy to place" were healthy infants, one of whom was Caucasian and the other African American.

Of the 303 completed surveys used for analysis in this study, 135 participants did not respond to the scenarios querying about "hard to place" children and 85 did not respond to the "easy to place" scenarios. I decided to include these respondents as an analytic category, so

three level category variables were defined from the original score measures. The respondents who opted out of this questionnaire (missing values) were scored as “1”. Those respondents who selected only heterosexual alternatives for placement were scored as “3”. The remaining respondents, who would have selected at least one gay/lesbian couple alternative, were scored as “2”. Questions 1 through 6 and questions 9 and 10 were scenarios of “hard to place” children and questions 7 and 8 were of “easy to place” children.

The following table exclusively includes instruments used in data analysis.

Table 1. Concepts and Instruments

Concept	Instrument	Mean	SD	Cronbach’s alpha previous studies	Cronbach’s alpha dissertation study
Sexual Prejudice	Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians (Herek, 1994)	2.02	1.16	.80 to .94	.90
Religious Fundamentalism	Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Huntsberger, 2004)	2.68	1.37	.91	.91
Attitudes toward Gay men and Lesbians as Adoptive Couples	Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians as Adoptive Parents scale Ryan (2000)	1.66	.05	.95	.79

4.2.8 Demographics

Participants were asked to report on their gender, age, race, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and educational level. Respondents were also queried about the highest degree(s) obtained, and the year of graduation. They were also asked if they were exposed to specific content on gay and lesbian issues, race, and other diversity content during their educations. Participants were also asked about length and type of professional employment. Given that previous contact with lesbians and gays is considered to affect sexual prejudice (Herek, 2002), participants were queried as well about personal and professional experiences with gays and lesbians. (Appendix A, Section 7). According to Allport's contact hypothesis (1954), horizontal relationships are believed to decrease prejudice, while vertical contact is believed to be less impactful. Thus, I asked participants to state the number of friends, relatives, and neighbors whom identified as gay or lesbian and separately asked about the number of colleagues whom identified as gay or lesbian. Both of these relationships are considered to be horizontal. I also queried about the number of clients whom identified as gay or lesbian. The contact variables had non-transformable distributions with the mode at the lowest value. Therefore, I recoded them in this way: 0=0; 1-3=1; 4-9=2; 10-19=3; 20-29=4; 30 >=5. These recoded constant values were roughly normally distributed, with the skewness statistic ranging from .28 to .69.

Table 2. Variables and Hypothesized Relationships

Variable	Type	Hypothesized
Age	Continuous	Independent/Control
GLBT status	Dichotomous	Independent/Control
Gender	Dichotomous	Independent/Control
Race		Independent/Control
Religious Fundamentalism	Continuous	Independent
Sexual Prejudice	Continuous	Intervening
Attitude toward GL adoption	Continuous	Intervening
Horizontal personal contact	Continuous	Moderating/Independent
Horizontal work contact	Continuous	Moderating/Independent
Vertical Contact (clients)	Continuous	Moderating/Independent
Intent to Place Easy	Continuous	Dependent
Intent to Place Hard	Continuous	Dependent

4.3 PROCEDURES

4.3.1 Pretest

Prior to mailing the surveys to the 1,000 potential respondents, the proposed survey instrument was pre-tested on a small group of graduate-level social workers. As suggested by Dillman (2000), following the survey, workers were interviewed to determine ease of navigation, interest level, and any difficulties they experienced when completing the instrument. Participation in the pilot study was fully voluntary and respondents could have discontinued their participation at

any time. Based on feedback, two typographical errors were corrected, as was one grammatical error.

4.3.2 Data Collection

A complete packet containing the questionnaire (Appendix A) and cover letter (Appendix C) were mailed to the potential 1,000 respondents. Each potential participant received a questionnaire with each of the instruments discussed below. Each survey was mailed with a cover letter detailing the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality protections.

Follow-up postcards were mailed to all of the respondents four weeks after the initial mailing. Early returns were examined for completeness and other potential problems (Dillman, 2000).

4.3.3 Data Management

Prior to entering data into the SPSS 15.0 program, each survey was checked for completeness. After the data was entered, every fifth survey was reviewed to determine whether the entered data agreed with the responses in the original questionnaire.

4.3.4 Data Analysis Plan

Descriptive statistics including frequencies and means were used to describe respondent characteristics and the constructs used in the study. The distribution of the scale variables was

evaluated to assess issues of normality (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002). Variables were transformed as appropriate to meet this assumption.

Bivariate analyses were performed to assess the expected correlations between the main study variables of religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, and attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive parents. In addition, bivariate analyses were performed to examine the relationship between the demographic variables and the main study variables.

The relationships among the main study variables, religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, contact, and attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents were evaluated through a series of multiple regressions. Gender, race, age, and sexual orientation were also included in these analyses as control variables. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses about intent to place. Finally, moderated regression analysis was used to determine if contact moderated the relationship between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice.

4.4 HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTIONS

This study's sample consisted of adults capable of giving informed, voluntary consent for participating in research studies. No names or other identifying information was obtained. Therefore, those who choose to respond to the questionnaire did so with complete anonymity and I was unable to link an individual to a particular questionnaire.

All potential respondents received an introductory letter that described the nature and purpose of the study and their rights as prospective research subjects (Appendix C). Potential harm to participants is considered minimal. Potential respondents were informed that their

participation was strictly voluntary, and that they had a right to refuse to answer any question they wished.

Potential respondents were also told that all data obtained in this study will be presented in aggregate form only. They were told that the findings of this study may be published. However, they were assured that neither I, nor anyone reading the findings, will be able to discern whether a particular individual responded to this survey, or, if responding, what her/his answers were.

The research methods and human subject safeguards of this study have been reviewed by the University of Pittsburgh's IRB, which has granted exempt status to this protocol (Appendix E).

5.0 RESULTS

The purpose of the analysis is to investigate various influences on decision-making with regard to placing children in need of permanent homes with gay and lesbian adoptive couples. The potential linkages among religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, personal contact, attitudes toward gay and lesbian couples as adoptive parents, and intention to place children with gay and lesbian adoptive parents were examined. This chapter begins with a description of the sample. Next, bivariate relationships between predictor and criterion variables, including control variables, are presented. The findings from the path analysis used to test the hypothesized models are reported. The path model was tested without the intent variable due to the issues with measurement that were reported in the previous chapter. The link between attitude towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents and intent, as well as other main study variables, were assessed with ANOVA analysis, and these results are discussed in the end of this chapter.

5.1 DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 3. The respondents were overwhelmingly female (79.6%) and Caucasian (87.6%). Respondents were also queried about their religious affiliation (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Other). Almost one-third of the respondents chose "Other". With regard to sexual orientation, slightly over 10% of the

respondents identified as non-heterosexual, which is consistent with the percentage of non-heterosexually identified people in the general population of the United States (Smith & Gates, 2010). The mean age of the participants was 57.6, with over 80% of participants reporting that they were over fifty years. The age of the respondents in this sample was significantly older than current NASW members, which averages 48 years.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender (n=299)			
	Male	61	20.40%
	Female	238	79.60%
Race/Ethnicity (n=299)			
	White/Caucasian	262	87.6%
	African American	15	5%
	Latino/Hispanic	9	3%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	6	2%
	Native American/Hawaiian	2	.7%
	Multi-racial	3	1%
	Other	2	.7%
Religion (n=297)			
	Catholic	61	20.5%
	Protestant	93	31.3%
	Jewish	47	15.8%
	Other	96	32.3%
Sexual Orientation (n=298)			
	Heterosexual	266	89.3%
	Gay male	9	3%
	Lesbian	14	4.7%
	Bisexual	8	2.7%
	Other	1	.3%
Age (n=298)			
	18-34	10	3.4%
	35-49	48	16.1%
	50-64	175	58.7%
	65+	65	21.8%
Easy to place(n=297)			
	Missing all responses	85	28.6%
	At least one GL response	174	58.6%
	All Heterosexual responses	38	12.8%
Hard to place(n=295)			
	Missing all responses	135	45.8%
	At least one GL response	99	33.6%
	All Heterosexual responses	61	20.7%

Participants were also asked about their professional training and experience. An overwhelming percentage (88.6%) of respondents reported the MSW as the highest degree received. Most participants were veteran practitioners, with over 70% reporting twenty or more years of post-graduate experience. Almost half of the participants (43.5%) currently work practice in an agency setting, with 15.3% working in public agencies and 24.8% in private, non-profit agencies. Nearly one-third (33%) reported that they were in private practice. The majority of respondents (56.9%) stated that they were employed at the same site for over ten years. Approximately one out of ten (9.5%) of the respondents stated that they were retired. Another 3.7% reported that they were employed in a university setting.

Respondents also were asked about preparation to work with sexually diverse clients. Only about one-third of the respondents stated that they were prepared by their graduate program to work with gay and lesbian clients (37.0%). However, more than two-thirds of the respondents stated that received subsequent training with respect to working with gay and lesbian clients (68.2%).

The frequencies for the two dependent variables, easy to place and hard to place, are shown in the Table 3. For the easy to place scenarios, 85 (28.6%) did not respond, 174 (58.6%) noted at least one gay and lesbian response, and the remainder, 38 (12.8%), chose only heterosexual couples. For the hard to place scenarios, 135 (45.8%) did not respond, 99 (33.6%) noted at least one gay and lesbian response, and the remainder, 61 (20.7%), chose only heterosexual couples.

Table 4 provides summary statistics for the scales used in the analysis as well as summary statistics after the scales were transformed. The transformed variable statistics for the

scales are: (1) the mean for sexual prejudice is .54 (s.d. = .38) and skewness is .34; (2) the mean for attitudes toward gay and lesbian adoption is .20 (s.d. = .11) and skewness is .63; and (3) the mean for religious fundamentalism is 5.11 (s.d. = 3.89) and skewness is .29. As can be seen in the table, after the transformations, scale skewness is no longer problematic.

Table 4. Scale Descriptives

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness
Sexual Prejudice	2.02	1.16	1.00	8.25	2.087
Log Sexual Prejudice	.54	.38	0	1.30	.34
Attitudes toward Gay/Lesbian Adoption	1.66	.48	1.00	3.67	1.24
Log Attitudes toward Gay/Lesbian Adoption	.20	.11	0	.56	.624
Religious Fundamentalism	2.68	1.37	1	8	1.13
Log of Religious Fundamentalism	5.11	3.89	0	12	.292

5.1.1 Demographics and the Willingness to Respond to the Intent to Place Variables

As noted in the previous section, a sizable minority of respondents refused to answer the intent to place variables. Overall, there were 84 respondents (28.7%) who refused to answer either the easy to place children or difficult to place children scenarios and 52 respondents (17.7%) who refused to respond to one of the two dependent variables, though not both variables. In this

section, I examine the willingness to respond to these variables by gender, sexual orientation, race, and age.

Table 5 summarizes the findings of a comparison of those not willing to respond to any of the 10 scenarios, persons willing to respond to either the easy to place or hard to place scenarios but not both, and persons willing to respond to all of the questions. The only statistically significant differences were found for gender and age. Females (48.7%) were much less likely to respond to both sets of questions than males (71.2%); the major difference appears to be in the opted out of only one variable as only 3.4% of males refused to answer one of the variables while 21.7% of the females refused to answer one of the variables. The global test of age differences suggested that there was a statistically significant difference ($F = 6.19$) and therefore the means for each category were not equal. A post-hoc analysis found that the average age of respondents who refused to answer any scenarios (mean = 54.75) was statistically significantly different from respondents (mean = 59.55) who provided answers. There were no age differences for those who only opted out of one of the two response categories (mean = 56.10).

The next two tables (Table 6 and Table 7) separately report willingness to respond to the easy to place children and hard to place children variables. The only statistically significant difference for the easy to place variable was on age. Respondents refusing to respond to the easy to place children variable were younger on average (mean = 54.76) than respondents providing responses (mean = 58.76). Both gender and age differed for respondents on the hard to place variable. Females (49.2%) were less likely to respond than males (27.9%) and younger respondents (mean = 55.26) were less likely to respond than older respondents (mean = 59.57%).

Table 5. Demographic Characteristics and Willingness to Respond at All

Response Pattern for the Two Variables Combined							
Characteristic	Opted out of both variables		Opted out of only one		Responded to both variables		Chi-square
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Gender							
Female	68	29.6	50	21.7	112	48.7	13.52*
Male	15	25.4	2	3.4	42	71.2	
Sexual Orientation							
Heterosexual	70	26.8	46	17.6	145	55.6	5.21
GLBT	12	44.4	6	22.2	9	33.3	
Race							
Caucasian	77	30.4	46	18.2	130	51.4	3.89
People of Color	7	17.5	6	15.0	27	67.5	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F-test
Age	54.75	10.07	56.10	9.53	59.55	11.08	6.189**

* p < .01

** p < .05

Table 6. Demographic Characteristics and Willingness to Respond to the Easy to Place Children

Variable

Response Pattern for the Easy to Place Variable					
Characteristic	Opted Out		Responded		Chi-square
	N	%	N	%	
Gender					
Female	69	29.0	169	71.0	.47
Male	15	24.6	46	75.4	
Sexual Orientation					
Heterosexual	70	26.3	196	73.7	2.91
GLBT	13	40.6	19	59.4	
Race					
Caucasian	78	29.8	184	70.2	2.83
People of Color	7	17.1	34	82.9	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T-test
Age	54.76	10.01	58.76	10.75	2.95*

* p < .01

Table 7. Demographic Characteristics and Willingness to Respond to the Hard to Place Children

Variable

Response Pattern for the Hard to Place Variable					
Characteristic	Opted Out		Responded		Chi-square
	N	%	N	%	
Gender					
Female	117	49.2	121	50.8	8.90*
Male	17	27.9	44	72.1	
Sexual Orientation					
Heterosexual	116	43.6	150	56.4	1.05
GLBT	17	53.1	15	46.9	
Race					
Caucasian	122	46.6	140	53.4	3.17
People of Color	13	31.7	28	68.3	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T-test
Age	55.26	9.89	59.57	10.93	3.53*

* p < .01

** p < .05

5.1.2 Responses to the Scenarios

Table 8 summarizes the easy to place responses. As discussed earlier, respondents were able to rank their first two placement choices. Race seems to be a defining characteristic for these two scenarios. Of the 218 participants who chose to respond with regard to the healthy African American infant, most (96.3%) opted to place the child with a heterosexual African American couple as their first choice or second choice. African American lesbian couples were chosen as a first or second option by 117 respondents (53.7%) and African American gay males were chosen by 58 respondents (26.6%). Caucasian heterosexual couples were the fourth ranked group (43; 19.1%).

A similar pattern emerged for the white healthy infant scenario. Of the 219 participants who chose to respond with regard to the healthy Caucasian infant, most (96.3%) opted to place the child with a heterosexual Caucasian couple. Caucasian lesbian couples were chosen as a first or second option by 136 respondents (62.1%). While Caucasian gay males were chosen by 31 respondents (15.1%), a larger percentage (22.8%) preferred African American heterosexual couples.

Table 9 summarizes the hard to place responses. More participants opted out of ranking placement for hard to place children. The number of respondents who opted out ranged from 142 to 149.

Heterosexual couples, regardless of race were consistently the first or second most common responses with whom children might be placed among respondents who did not opt out of the question. The percentage of Caucasian heterosexual couples as the first or second choice ranged from 65.6% to 82.5% while for African American heterosexual couples, the choices ranged from 61.1% to 80.5%. In none of the scenarios, did any of the gay or lesbian couples receive a combined first and second ranking by more than 25%.

Table 8. Easy to Place Children Scenario Responses

Scenario:	1 st Choice (with a response)		2 nd Choice (with a response)		Either Choice (with a response)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy African-American Infant:	218		213		218	
Caucasian gay couple	1	.5	0	0	1	.46
Caucasian lesbian couple	0	0	2	.9	2	.92
African American heterosexual couple	205	94.0	5	2.3	210	96.3
African American gay couple	3	1.4	55	25.8	58	26.6
African American lesbian couple	7	3.2	110	51.6	117	53.7
Caucasian heterosexual couple	2	.9	41	19.2	43	19.1
No choice	85	28.1				
Healthy Caucasian Infant:	219		212		219	
Caucasian gay couple	5	2.3	28	13.2	33	15.1
Caucasian lesbian couple	5	2.3	131	61.8	136	62.1
African American heterosexual couple	2	.9	48	22.6	50	22.8
African American gay couple	0	0	0	0	0	0
African American lesbian couple	0	0	1	.5	1	.45
Caucasian heterosexual couple	207	94.5	4	1.9	211	96.3
No choice	84	27.7				

Table 9. Hard to Place Children Scenario Responses [Note: No choice calculated out of total responses, n = 303]

Scenario:	1st Choice (with a response)		2nd Choice (with a response)		Either Choice (with a response)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child who has chronic medical needs:	160		160		160	
Caucasian gay couple	12	7.5	8	5.0	20	12.5
Caucasian lesbian couple	13	8.1	26	16.3	39	24.4
African American heterosexual couple	23	14.4	84	52.5	107	66.9
African American gay couple	3	1.9	6	3.8	9	5.6
African American lesbian couple	3	1.9	10	6.3	19	11.9
Caucasian heterosexual couple	106	66.3	26	16.3	132	82.5
No choice	143	47.2				
Child who has emotional and behavior problems:						
Caucasian gay couple	9	5.6	10	6.3	19	11.9
Caucasian lesbian couple	16	10.0	18	11.3	34	21.3
African American heterosexual couple	37	23.1	78	48.8	115	71.9
African American gay couple	2	1.3	4	2.5	6	3.8
African American lesbian couple	6	3.8	14	8.8	20	12.5
Caucasian heterosexual couple	90	53.3	36	22.5	126	78.8
No choice	143	47.2				
Child who has history of sexual abuse and sexually acting out:						
Caucasian gay couple	12	7.5	6	3.8	18	11.3
Caucasian lesbian couple	14	8.8	18	11.3	32	20.0
African American heterosexual couple	32	20.0	82	51.3	114	71.3
African American gay couple	5	3.1	6	3.8	11	6.9
African American lesbian couple	9	5.6	17	10.6	26	16.3
Caucasian heterosexual couple	88	55.0	31	19.4	119	74.7
No choice	143					

Table 9. Hard to Place Children Scenario Responses continued

Scenario:	1st Choice (with a response)		2nd Choice (with a response)		Either Choice (with a response)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child with a history of multiple placements:	157		156		157	
Caucasian gay couple	18	11.5	13	8.3	31	19.7
Caucasian lesbian couple	17	10.8	21	13.5	38	24.2
African American heterosexual couple	28	17.8	68	43.6	96	61.1
African American gay couple	7	4.5	17	10.9	24	15.3
African American lesbian couple	9	5.7	12	7.7	21	13.4
Caucasian heterosexual couple	78	49.7	25	16.0	103	65.6
No choice	146	48.2				
Child with his/her sibling group:	159		159		159	
Caucasian gay couple	8	5.0	5	3.1	13	8.2
Caucasian lesbian couple	5	3.1	17	10.7	22	13.8
African American heterosexual couple	35	22.0	93	58.5	128	80.5
African American gay couple	4	2.5	4	2.5	8	5.0
African American lesbian couple	8	5.0	8	5.0	16	10.1
Caucasian heterosexual couple	99	62.3	32	20.1	131	82.4
No choice	144	47.5				
Child who is 13 years old:	154		154		154	
Caucasian gay couple	10	6.5	9	5.8	19	12.3
Caucasian lesbian couple	8	5.2	15	9.7	23	14.9
African American heterosexual couple	30	19.5	92	59.7	122	79.2
African American gay couple	4	2.6	4	2.6	8	5.2
African American lesbian couple	7	4.5	8	5.2	15	9.7
Caucasian heterosexual couple	95	61.7	26	16.9	121	78.6
No choice	149	49.2				

Table 9. Hard to Place Children Scenario Responses continued

Scenario:	1st Choice (with a response)		2nd Choice (with a response)		Either Choice (with a response)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy 8 year old girl:	158		158		158	
Caucasian gay couple	5	3.2	6	3.8	11	7.0
Caucasian lesbian couple	16	10.1	28	17.7	44	27.8
African American heterosexual couple	27	17.1	80	50.6	107	67.7
African American gay couple	2	1.3	5	3.2	7	4.4
African American lesbian couple	6	3.8	14	8.9	20	12.2
Caucasian heterosexual couple	102	64.6	25	15.8	127	80.4
No choice	145	47.9				
Healthy 8 year old boy:	157		156		157	
Caucasian gay couple	18	11.5	19	12.2	37	23.6
Caucasian lesbian couple	0	0	11	7.1	11	7.0
African American heterosexual couple	38	24.2	76	48.7	114	72.6
African American gay couple	5	3.2	17	10.9	22	14.0
African American lesbian couple	2	1.3	0	0	2	1.3
Caucasian heterosexual couple	94	59.9	33	21.2	127	80.9
No choice	146	48.2				

5.1.3 Relationships between Control Variables and Main Study Variables

Bivariate analysis was used to assess the potential relationship between conceptually relevant control variables and the study's main variables. The association of the demographic variables including gender, race, age and sexual orientation with religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, and attitudes toward gays and lesbians as adoptive parents were examined. These relationships are shown in Table 10.

In the present study, gender is not statistically significantly associated with religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, or attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents. In addition, gender was not statistically significantly related to client contact or personal contact. Females are more likely to have contact with sexually diverse colleagues than are their male counterparts (-.14). Race was statistically significantly associated with religious fundamentalism (-.17) and sexual prejudice (-.12), but was not related to attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents. Specifically, Caucasians were less likely to hold sexual prejudice and less likely to identify as fundamentalist than were African Americans. In addition, Caucasians were significantly more likely to have contact with sexually diverse individuals, personally and professionally.

The relationships of age with religious fundamentalism (-.17) and attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents (.12) were statistically significant, but the relationships to sexual prejudice and the contact measures were not statistically significant. Older individuals were less likely to express religious fundamentalist views than younger individuals. However, older adults were also more likely to report negative attitudes towards gay and lesbian adoptive parents. The relationship between age and contact was not statistically significant.

Heterosexuals were statistically significantly more likely to express sexual prejudice and negative attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive parents (-.21) and they were less likely to have personal contact with sexually diverse individuals (.26). There was no significant difference between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals with regard to professional contact.

Table 10. Correlation between Control and Main Variables

Variables	Sexual Prejudice	Religious Fundamentalism	Attitude	Horizontal Work Contact	Horizontal Personal Contact	Vertical Contact
Gender	-.11	.04	-.02	-.08	.10	-.14*
Race	-.12**	-.17**	-.09	.15*	.12*	.15*
Age	.05	-.17**	.12*	.04	.01	.07
Sexual Orientation	-.21**	-.11	-.16**	.04	.26**	.07

***p < .05**

****p < .01**

*****p < .001**

Associations among the main study variables were examined and are presented in Table 11. As the table indicates, there was a positive correlation between sexual prejudice and religious fundamentalism (.53); in other words, the stronger the belief in religious fundamentalism, the greater the sexual prejudice. Similarly, there was a positive correlation between sexual prejudice and negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents (.66), indicating that higher the sexual prejudice score, the more negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents. The relationship between religious fundamentalism and negative attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents (.51) was also positive. Thus, stronger beliefs in religious fundamentalism were associated with stronger negative beliefs about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents.

Contact with gays and lesbians was negatively associated with sexual prejudice, religious fundamentalism, and negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents, with horizontal personal contact being the strongest association. Specifically, there was a negative association between work contact and sexual prejudice (-.22), that is, the higher the number of

colleagues who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender the lower the sexual prejudice score. The negative relationship between religious prejudice and work contact was also weak (-.22), as was the relationship between work contact and negative attitudes towards gay and lesbians. The relationship between personal contact and sexual prejudice was also negative, but stronger (-.35), indicating that increased personal contact is related to decreased sexual prejudice. The relationship between personal contact and religious fundamentalism (-.23) and personal contact and negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents was also negatively correlated (-.24). The relationships among client contact and religious fundamentalism (-.20), sexual prejudice (-.15) and negative attitudes (-.13) were weak. All of the aforementioned correlations among the study's main variables were statistically significant.

Table 11. Correlation among Main Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sexual Prejudice	1.00					
Religious Fundamentalism	.53**	1.00				
Attitudes toward gay and lesbian adoption	.66**	.51**	1.00			
Horizontal work contact	-.22**	-.22**	-.19**	1.00		
Horizontal personal contact	-.35**	-.23**	-.24**	.31**	1.00	
Vertical contact (client)	-.15*	-.20**	-.13*	.27**	.31**	1.00

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

5.1.4 Multiple Regression Analyses

The next phase of analysis involved testing the hypothesized model. The results are described in Figure 2. Table 12 summarizes the effect of the various relationships and the disturbance in each path.

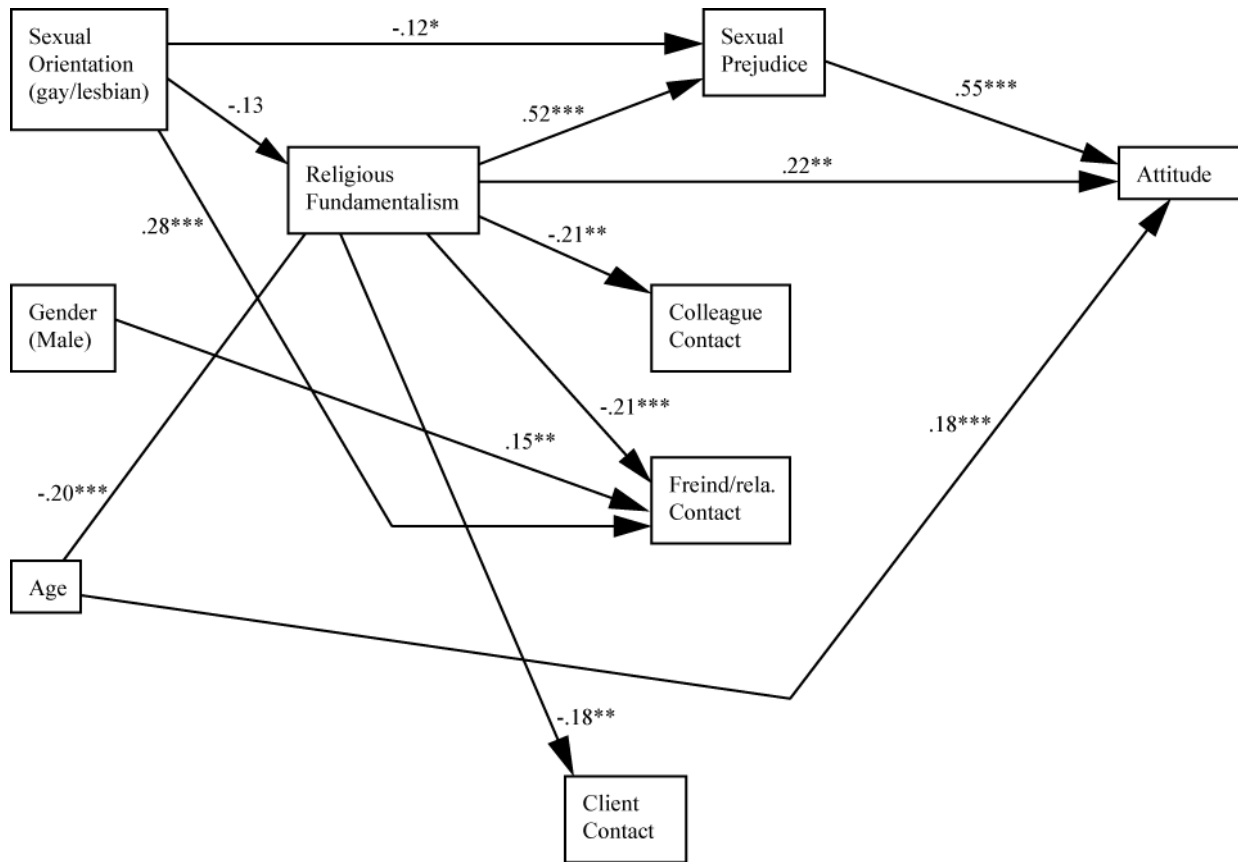


Figure 2. Model Test

A series of multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses 1 through 6. Figure 2 shows a revised path model designed to primarily test the direct and indirect effects of religious fundamentalism on attitudes opposing gay/lesbian adoption. The indirect effect is intended to operate through sexual prejudice. This model is based on the assumptions that religious fundamentalism was a prior construct to both sexual prejudice and contact with others. Further, social contact was considered a prior factor affecting amount of sexual prejudice. Sexual orientation, gender, and age were entered as correlated exogenous factors, and the three contact measures were intercorrelated. The analysis was done for the full-recursive model including the nine variables. Figure 2 omits correlations of exogenous variables and any effects not significant at the .05 alpha level.

The results show a strong indirect effect of religious fundamentalism on attitude towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents through sexual prejudice, with standardized betas (path coefficients) of .55 for religious fundamentalism influencing sexual prejudice and .55 for sexual prejudice to attitude. The direct effect, religious fundamentalism to attitude was also significant, but much smaller in size (.22), suggestive of *partial* mediation. Thus, as predicted in my first hypothesis, religious fundamentalism is related to greater opposition to gay/lesbian adoption; it turns out that there is a direct relationship and its relationship with greater sexual prejudice. As hypothesized, sexual prejudice, impacts on attitude towards gay and lesbian adoption. I also hypothesized that previous personal contact with gay men or lesbians lessens sexual prejudice and that previous professional contact with gay men or lesbians lessens sexual prejudice. The data supported the hypothesized influence of past contact with gays and lesbians on sexual prejudice (-.19), but not the hypothesized influence of professional contact, either with clients or colleagues.

In addition, (1) older workers had more negative attitudes about gay/lesbian adoption but lower scores on fundamentalism, (2) female workers had lower sexual prejudice scores and more contact with gay or lesbian friends and relatives, (3) those with less contact with gay or lesbian colleagues and with gay/lesbian friends and relatives had significantly higher scores on sexual prejudice, and (4) workers who identified as gay or lesbian were lower in fundamentalism and sexual prejudice, and had greater contact with gay or lesbian friends and relatives. None of the social contact measures were related to attitudes opposing adoption by gay and lesbian couples.

Table 12. Model Statistic for Endogenous Variables used in Model Test

Variable	F for Equation	R-squared	Error Term
Attitude	28.79**	0.50	0.83
Sexual Prejudice	24.11**	0.42	0.29
Colleague Contact	3.67*	0.05	1.09
Friend/Relative Contact	11.16**	0.14	1.20
Client Contact	4.19*	0.06	1.37

*p< .01

**p< .001

5.1.5 Differences among Those Who Refuse to Respond, Choose at Least One

Gay/Lesbian Response, and Only Choose Heterosexual Responses using One Way Analysis of Variance

ANOVA procedures were used to determine differences among the main study variables and intent to place (Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8). One-way ANOVAs indicated significant differences among all groups. The first ANOVA tested the differences among the main variables and intent to place healthy infants (easy to place). The results are in Table 13. The second ANOVA examined the differences among the main variables and intent to place hard to place children; the results are in Table 14. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores among all groups were significantly different.

With respect to the easy to place children variable, the results regarding religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, and attitudes to gay/lesbian adoption are consistent. In each case, the attained F-test suggests that overall the means across groups are not equal. The only contact variable for which the hypothesis of equal means may be rejected is contact with friends and relatives.

In the case of religious fundamentalism, the Tukey post-hoc comparisons show that the mean for each of the groups is statistically significantly different from that of the other groups. The group of respondents who refused to answer the two easy to place scenarios have lower scores on religious fundamentalism (and therefore, ascribe to less religious fundamentalism) than either the other two groups and those respondents with a response indicating at least one gay/lesbian couple had a lower average score than respondents reporting just heterosexual couples.

Similar findings were observed for sexual prejudice. The Tukey post-hoc comparisons show that the mean for each of the groups is statistically significantly different from that of the other groups. The group of respondents who refused to answer the two easy to place scenarios have lower scores on sexual prejudice (and therefore, are less prejudiced) than either the other two groups and those respondents with a response indicating at least one gay/lesbian couple had a lower average score than respondents reporting just heterosexual couples.

Finally, the outcomes for negative attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive couples are like that of the other two variables. The Tukey post-hoc comparisons show that the mean for each of the groups is statistically significantly different from that of the other groups. The group of respondents who refused to answer the two easy to place scenarios have lower scores on negative attitudes (and therefore, more positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents) than either the other two groups and those respondents with a response indicating at least one gay/lesbian couple had a lower average score than respondents reporting just heterosexual couples.

With respect to the hard to place children variable, the results regarding religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, and attitudes to gay/lesbian adoption are consistent. In each case, the attained F-test suggests that overall the means across groups are not equal. The only

contact variable for which the hypothesis of equal means may be rejected is contact with friends and relatives.

The Tukey post-hoc comparisons for religious fundamentalism show that the mean for each of the groups is statistically significantly different from that the other groups. The group of respondents who refused to answer the eight hard to place scenarios have lower scores on religious fundamentalism (and therefore, ascribe to less religious fundamentalism) than either the other two groups and those respondents with a response indicating at least one gay/lesbian couple had a lower average score than respondents reporting just heterosexual couples.

In the case of sexual prejudice, the Tukey post-hoc comparisons show that the mean for each of the groups is statistically significantly different from that the other groups. The group of respondents who refused to answer the eight hard to place scenarios have lower scores on sexual prejudice (and therefore, are less prejudiced) than either the other two groups and those respondents with a response indicating at least one gay/lesbian couple had a lower average score than respondents reporting just heterosexual couples.

In the case of negative attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive couples, the Tukey post-hoc comparisons show that the mean for each of the groups is statistically significantly different from that the other groups. The group of respondents who refused to answer the eight hard to place scenarios have lower scores on negative attitudes (and therefore, more positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians as adoptive parents) than either the other two groups and those respondents with a response indicating at least one gay/lesbian couple had a lower average score than respondents reporting just heterosexual couples.

Table 13. One Way ANOVA and Post Hoc Evaluation for Easy to Place Children Variable

	Response Pattern			Anova Overall F-test	Tukey Post-Hoc Comparison		
	Opt Out (1)	Some G/L (2)	Hetero. Only (3)		1 vs 2 Mean diff.	1 vs 3 Mean diff.	2 vs 3 Mean diff.
	Mean	Mean	Mean				
Religious Fundamentalism	4.00	5.35	7.11	9.24*	-1.35**	-3.11*	-1.75**
Sexual Prejudice (log)	.43	.55	.38	9.46*	-.12**	-.05*	-.19**
Attitudes to Gay/Lesbian Adoption (log)	.16	.21	.31	23.09*	-.05*	-.15*	-.10*
Contact: Colleague	1.55	1.33	1.26	.67	.18	.29	.17
Contact: Friend	2.11	1.66	1.46	3.61**	.45**	.65	.20
Contact: Client	2.11	2.26	1.86	.58	-.15	-.25	.40

**p < .05

* p < .01

Table 14. One Way ANOVA and Post Hoc Evaluation for Hard to Place Children Variable

	Response Pattern			Anova Overall F-test	Tukey Post-Hoc Comparison		
	Opt Out (1)	Some G/L (2)	Hetero. Only (3)		1 vs 2 Mean diff.	1 vs 3 Mean diff.	2 vs 3 Mean diff.
	Mean	Mean	Mean				
Religious Fundamentalism	3.90	5.79	7.08	17.77*	-1.89*	-3.19*	-1.30
Sexual Prejudice (log)	.40	.61	.76	24.41*	-.21*	-.36*	-.15**
Attitudes to Gay/Lesbian Adoption (log)	.17	.22	.27	21.30*	-.05*	-.11*	-.06*
Contact: Colleague	1.51	1.29	1.21	1.78	.22	.30	.08
Contact: Friend	2.02	1.61	1.40	5.84*	.41**	.63*	.22
Contact: Client	2.20	2.20	1.93	.84	0	.27	.27

**p < .05

* p < .01

5.1.6 Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis

I had originally predicted that contact with gays and lesbians would moderate the relationship between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Moderated multiple regression analysis tested the possible buffering effect on the relationship between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice by contact. None of the three types of contact examined were found to significantly moderate this relationship. The attained betas and significance levels were: (1) colleague contact, $b=.008$, $p=.933$; (2) personal contact, $b=-1.09$, $p=.274$; and (3) client contact, $b=.243$, $p=.808$.

6.0 DISCUSSION

This dissertation study examined the influences of religious fundamentalism, sexual prejudice, contact with sexually diverse individuals, and attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents on intent to place children in need with gay and lesbian couples. This chapter begins with a review of the findings. Next, the design limitations are addressed in depth and suggestions for future research are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for social work education and practice.

6.1 KEY FINDINGS

The aim of the current study was to examine the antecedents of social work professionals' attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents. Specifically, I was interested in learning if religious fundamentalism and contact with sexually diverse populations influenced workers' willingness to place children in need with gay- and lesbian-headed households. I was also interested in learning if religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice predicted attitudes about gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents. Finally, I wanted to know if attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents predicted intent to place children in gay and lesbian homes. I was interested to know if certain demographic characteristics, including gender, race,

age, and sexual orientation, was related to the main study variables, as the literature had suggested.

A key finding in this study was that there was a sizable minority of respondents who refused to answer the questions related to intent to place. Twenty seven percent refused to respond to the scenarios characterizing easy to place children and 44.3% refused to respond to the hard to place children scenarios. In addition, a sizable minority did not intend to place either easy to place children (12.9%) or hard to place children (22.1%) with gay and lesbian couples at all.

Perhaps the most surprising finding was, contrary to my expectations derived from a critical review of the literature, a higher percentage of respondents preferred to place easy to place children with gays and lesbian couples than hard to place children. For example, Hicks and McDermott (1999) found that lesbians and gay males believed that they were unfairly treated by the child welfare system, as they were only offered the most difficult to place children. Kenyon (2003) found that children placed with gay and lesbian couples are more likely to have disabling conditions than children placed with heterosexual couples. However, this may well have been confounded by identification of the race of the child and adoptive couple. Most first choice responses placed healthy infants with same race couples, and predominantly chose gay or lesbian same race couples as a second choice for easy to place children.

The second key finding is related to the intent to place variables. Based on the one-way ANOVA analysis, mean scores for sexual prejudice, religious fundamentalism, and attitude towards gay and lesbian adoption differ for the three groups. Sexual prejudice, religious fundamentalism and attitude towards gay and lesbian adoption scores were the lowest for those respondents who refused to answer the questions, next for the including one gay or lesbian

couple response, and highest for those respondents who chose only heterosexual couples. This pattern was similar for both dependent variables.

The third key finding deals with age. Contrary to expectation, age and religious fundamentalism were negatively associated. The research which links age and fundamentalism and prejudice is equivocal. Herek and Glunt (1993) found that age and sexual prejudice were positively correlated. Berkman and Zinberg (1997) surveyed social work professionals and found that age was not significantly associated with sexual prejudice. However, Rehner, Ishee, Salloum, and Velasquez (1997) studied social workers' attitudes toward poverty and found that age and years of experience was correlated with older social workers holding more positive attitudes towards impoverished individuals. Rosenwald (2006) also found, among a sample of licensed social workers, older workers held more liberal political attitudes than did their younger counterparts.

The final set of findings deals with the outcomes of the multiple regression analyses to assess the impact of the various measures on attitudes towards gay and lesbian adoption as well as the effect of contact on sexual prejudice.

As predicted, religious fundamentalism predicted sexual prejudice (H_2). Other studies have shown that, across various denominations, religious fundamentalism is consistently correlated with prejudice (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; McFarland 1989). Fundamentalists, by definition, are literal followers of their religious doctrine. Therefore, it is not surprising that they hold prejudicial views toward gay men and lesbians, as homosexuality is considered sinful in the Old and New Testaments (Eliason & Hughes, 2004). Similarly, other studies have found that social work students and practitioners are more likely to report sexual prejudice when

identified as religious fundamentalist and/or religiously conservative (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Snively et al., 2004, Krieglstein, 2003; Newman et al., 2002) .

Very few studies to date have examined the relationship between sexual prejudice and attitudes about sexually diverse adoptive couples. In the present study, as predicted, sexual prejudice predicted negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents (H₂). Ryan and Courtney (2004) found that lesbian adoptive parents were satisfied overall with their adoption experience, although all perceived worker bias throughout the process. Rye and Meaney (2010) found that undergraduate psychology students were likely to hold negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents.

Contact was found to partially mediate the relationship between religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice. Numerous studies have found a relationship between personal contact and decreased sexual prejudice (Crawford, et al., 1999; Eliason & Hughes, 2004; O'Hare et al., 1996; Snively, et al., 2004). Smith, Axelton, and Saucier (2009) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationship between sexual prejudice and contact. The review of 41 articles showed a significant negative relationship between these two variables.

Various types of contact have been found to correlate with diminished prejudice. For example, in their study of social work professionals, Berkman and Zinberg (1997) found that contact with gay or lesbian peers, not bosses or clients, was associated with decreased sexual prejudice. Consistent with the literature, I found that only horizontal personal contact with lesbians (friends, neighbors, and relatives) was significantly predicted attitudes towards gay and lesbian adoption (H₄); neither horizontal work contact nor vertical contact (i.e. client contact) was significantly related (H₅, H₆).

In this study, attitudes towards gay men and lesbians as adoptive parents significantly influenced workers' intention to place "easy to place" children and "hard to place" children. This is somewhat surprising and is inconsistent with the literature describing experiences of gay men and lesbians adopting children in need. Hicks and McDermott (1999) found that lesbians and gay males believed that they were unfairly treated by the child welfare system, as they were only offered the most difficult to place children. Kenyon (2003) found that children placed with gay and lesbian couples are more likely to have disabling conditions than children placed with heterosexual couples.

6.1.1 Understanding These Findings

As previously mentioned, 84 respondents refused to answer any of the intent to place scenarios. I developed an instrument specifically for this study to measure worker intent to place children in need with heterosexual or non-heterosexual parents. Several respondents explained their reasoning in writing on the survey instrument. These respondents stated that there was not sufficient information to determine the best placement. For example, one respondent wrote, "I cannot answer these questions because this is too simplistic. It would depend on which couple/family was appropriate, i.e. open to dealing with a child with medical needs and, through evaluation, competent to do so." Another wrote, "I would not make a placement decision based on race or sexual orientation alone. The personal qualities of the family are more important. As the findings indicate, those who were most likely to opt out of ranking placement intent on the provided scenarios were more tolerant. This also suggests that these respondents were truly professional in their approach; they required more data before making a placement decision. An alternative explanation is that workers were giving socially desirable responses.

I was surprised to find that there were social workers in practice who did not intend to place children in need with gay and lesbian couples at all. This finding suggests that, although social work professionals are bound by the Code of Ethics to honor diversity and to place personal values in abeyance when those values conflict with professional values, not all do so. It suggests that respondents are making professional decisions based on their personal values yet it is a professional imperative that personal and professional beliefs be distinct. Given that the literature is quite clear that outcomes for children of gay and lesbian parents are quite similar to children raised in heterosexual homes there is no professional justification for not considering gay and lesbian couples as adoptive parents.

Social workers opted to place easy to place children with gays and lesbians more frequently than hard to place children and this finding was especially counter intuitive. I believe that this may stem from a problem with the scenario instrument developed for this study. Participants were asked to rank their first two choices regarding placement. For the two easy to place children, participants often ranked the same race as child heterosexual parents as “1” and the same race lesbian couple as “2”. This suggests that for these respondents placing children with same race families was more compelling than placing with same sex couples.

Age was also negatively associated with religious fundamentalism. I suspect that this might suggest a cohort effect, that is, these older social workers came out of an era in which there was an emphasis on social justice; this finding is consistent with findings from other studies. For example, Marwell, Aiken, and DeMareth (1985) studied 1960’s civil rights activists, nearly twenty years later. They found that as the activists aged, they “remained liberal, attitudinally committed to the rights of minorities and other disadvantaged groups.” (p.374). It is possible that the social workers in this study ascribed to the values of their generational cohort

(1960's) and that, like the former activists studied by Marwell and colleagues, held onto their more tolerant attitudes towards diverse and disadvantaged populations.

The relationship of the personal friend and relative contact variable is as expected. An alternative to this model is that contact precedes prejudice. Alreshoud and Koeske (1997) found that attitude influenced contact, but contact did not improve attitudes. Binder, Brown, Zagefka, Funke, Kessler, Mummendey, Maquil, Demoulin, & Leyens (2009) found that contact reduced prejudice, but prejudice also reduced contact. This also proved to be the case in the current study. Respondents who scored higher on the sexual prejudice measure had significantly less contact with gay or lesbian colleagues and with gay/lesbian friends and relatives.

6.1.2 Implications for Social Work

Over the past decade, the number of children in need of adoptive homes has hovered around one half million (AFCASRS, 2009; Pecora, et al., 2000). Gay men and lesbians are an under-utilized resource for these children in need of permanence. Institutionalized heterosexism has been observed in adoption policies throughout the United States (Brodzinsky, et al., 2003). In addition, individual worker bias may well affect decisions regarding the placement of children with gay and lesbian adoptive parents (Brooks & Goldberg, 2001; Ryan, 2000). However, the literature suggests that this bias is unwarranted.

Research has consistently shown that gay men and lesbians are good parents. Children raised by gay or lesbian parents are similar to children raised by heterosexual parents in social and emotional development, cognitive functioning, and school functioning (see, for example, Gartrell & Bos, 2010). Increasingly, difficult to place children are adopted by gay men and

lesbians. However, the literature indicates that healthy infants are primarily placed with heterosexual couples. Farr, Foreson, and Patterson (2010) studied children adopted in infancy by gay and lesbian couples and by heterosexual couples. They found that children reared in lesbian- and gay-headed household fared equally well on measures of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Similarly, they noted no difference in parenting behaviors and couple satisfaction.

Although the research indicates that children raised in sexually diverse families are strikingly similar to their counterparts raised in heterosexual households, social workers still are reluctant to place children in need, especially healthy infants, with gay and lesbian families. Adoption recruitment that is affirming to sexually diverse families is in the best interest of children and the agencies providing placements (Downs & James, 2006). However, it appears that discomfort with sexually diverse clients negatively impacts the services provided (Swank & Raiz, 2007).

Social work is a value-based profession (Clark, 2006; CSWE, 2008; DuBois & Miley, 2010; Mallon, 1998). As such, social workers are obligated to understand and be sensitive to the challenges gay men and lesbians experience. In order to effectively empathize, social workers must have an understanding of their own attitudes toward sexual diversity. Further, social work professionals are duty-bound to examine their own covert as well as overt biases, as prejudice can potentially affect the quality of services delivered (Logie, Bridge, & Bridge, 2007).

The profession of social work has historically been dedicated to the promotion of social justice and respect for diversity (NASW, 2008). The Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2008) mandate that accredited social work programs teach students to competently "engage in diversity and difference in practice" and "advance human rights and social and economic justice" (EPAS Compliance Standards, p.4). In

addition, the learning environment of schools of social work, as defined by CSWE (2008), must reflect diversity, including sexual orientation, in their program leadership, research initiatives, and demographic make-up. The EPAS (2008) also dictates that graduates of accredited social work programs identify as professional social workers and conduct themselves in accordance with the ethical principles of the profession. The recognition and management of personal values to allow professional values to guide practice are among the behaviors supporting competent practice as delineated in the 2008 EPAS.

Although social workers are trained to be culturally sensitive and respect human diversity, like others reared in American culture, social work professionals often have conscious or unconscious biases against gay fathers and lesbian mothers and their children (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997; Van Voorhis & Wagner, 2002). Perhaps as reflective of this bias is the paucity of literature about lesbians and gays. Van Voorhis and Wagner (2002) conducted an analysis of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender content in four key social work journals over a nine year period. They reported that the few articles found in the social work literature concentrated primarily on AIDS. Most focused on individual interventions and only four examined macro-system approaches; all of these dealt with the AIDS crisis. The dearth of research on these families has had a negative impact on social work's ability to provide appropriate service and influence policy-makers.

As a profession, social work promotes an understanding of diversity. The training of students to separate their personal from professional values when these values are not in concert anchors social work education. From the early days of the Charity Organization and Society movement, workers have been struggling with the separation of personal feelings from professional behavior (Engel, 2010). Charles Levy (1976) wrote about the potential for disparity

between social work professional values and the social worker's personal values and the importance of reconciling this gap in professional practice.

However, drawing from the results in this dissertation study, actual practice decisions may yet be influenced by personal values, including religious fundamentalism and sexual prejudice. Indeed, Kreisher (2002) and the Evan B. Donaldson Institute (2003) found although federal, state, and agency policies govern adoption, practices vary region by region and by worker. The Donaldson Institute further reported that nearly 40% of the agencies nationally are unwilling to place children with gay and lesbian families, and more than 60% have never actually placed a child in gay- or lesbian-headed households.

The potential difficulty in separating the professional from the personal, when values differ, may explain the wide disparity in response to several variables. This may be especially true for the large number of missing responses to the scenario questions. Many respondents commented that there was not enough information from which to decide, and added that they would not, in practice, make a decision based on race or sexual orientation of the adoptive family alone. However, a sizeable percentage of these same respondents felt as if they were able to make that decision for (easy to place) healthy infants. This disparity may suggest that workers may believe that it is all right for "imperfect" (hard to place) children to be placed in "imperfect (gay and lesbian) homes. However, perfectly healthy infants (easy to place) children deserve to be placed in "perfect" (heterosexual) homes.

The significant relationships found in this study have implications for social work education and practice. Recently, utilization of evidence-based knowledge has been promoted in social work practice. However, the literature indicates that practice decisions are often based on the worker's own experiences; scientific knowledge is not consistently applied to service

provision (Maynard, 2010). This gap is widest when one's personal and professional values are not in concert (Spano & Koenig, 2007). Schools of social work and those providing continuing education can help social workers and students confront their personal belief systems that interfere with their professional practice decisions. Educators can focus on developing pedagogy that encourages professional ethical decision-making when personal and professional values are in conflict.

Educators should develop and utilize anti-oppressive pedagogical approaches. Also, it is critical that educators be mindful of the delicate balance between providing educational equality for students with fundamentalist beliefs. Social work professionals and students alike should be given the opportunity to discuss and work through these conflicts, thus reducing bias in practice situations, including placing children with gay and lesbian families.

Social work educators and practitioners can benefit from attending and providing specific training about sexual diversity to increase students' comfort and competence in work with people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. In addition, the efficacy of these trainings should be rigorously evaluated. Positive attitude change has been found following exposure gay and lesbian content in human sexuality courses (Cerny & Polyson, 1984) and lectures by out lesbians and gay men (Lance, 1987). The Council for Social Work Education and the Baccalaureate Program Directors' web sites provide links for content that can easily be placed into existing courses. Continuing education programs should also have this content available for participants.

These results also suggest that educators, their students, and practitioners may benefit from increased contact with diverse populations, specifically those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and other (LGBTQQIO). Of the three types

of contact tested, personal contact was the most potently associated with decreased sexual prejudice. This has implications for schools of social work and social service agencies. Schools should increase emphasis on hiring sexually diverse faculty and recruiting diverse students. In addition, schools of social work should sponsor and/or participate in campus Rainbow Alliance groups, the mission of which is to sponsor educational and social activities affirming the dignity of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning students and their allies. Similarly, social service agencies should recruit and employ people who identify as LGBTQQIO.

6.1.3 Study Limitations

This dissertation study has several noteworthy limitations discussed in this section. First, issues with the sample, including size, number of missing responses, and age are discussed. A critical evaluation of the survey instrument follows.

The first difficulty encountered was deciding on a population of respondents for whom this study is most applicable. Various alternatives were investigated. First, the use of child welfare workers throughout the state was explored; however, several major issues precluded sampling these workers in this state. The sample would have been limited to workers in this state with its particular laws and policies and would also be limited to public workers, thus reducing the ability to generalize the results. The decision to randomly sample provided national representation. However, not all social workers are NASW members, and not all members who designate their practice area as working with children and families have worked or currently work in adoption.

Surveys were sent to randomly selected members of NASW with the qualifying designation of Child and Family Welfare. According to deSilva (2006), of the estimated 850,000

social workers in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), only 150,903 are members of the NASW. The membership in 2010 has dropped to 132,126 (NASW, 2010). The differences among those who choose to belong to NASW and those who do not vary. Ritter (2008) found that social workers' membership in NASW was a strong predictor of political activity. Conversely, those whose political ideology is not in concert with the organization's stance on particular issues would likely be less inclined to hold membership.

Of the 1,000 mailed surveys, only 303 (30.3%) usable questionnaires were returned. Conceivably, respondents and non-respondents may be quite different. As with any voluntary survey, those who are more interested in the topic, whether for or against, would be more likely to respond. In addition, the questionnaire was lengthy and may have contributed to the low response rate. The age of the respondents in this study was older than the mean of age of NASW members. These limitations must be carefully considered when assessing the study's generalizability.

Although considerable care have been taken to ensure that the intent to place concept is a valid measure, the developed instrument had not been used in other studies, thus, the scenario instrument developed specifically for this study does not have established validity or reliability. The large number of missing responses and the comments from respondents indicated difficulty with this instrument. In an effort to reduce social desirability, participants were queried about racial attitudes and about transracial adoption. Anonymity was also ensured. However, social conformity may still well have been an issue; self ratings on prejudice and negative are most likely deflated. Thus, the reader should be aware of this when critically interpreting results.

Although the variables chosen for the model have been supported by previous research, it is not possible to account for other variables that may affect the relationship between religious

fundamentalism and sexual prejudice or between sexual prejudice and attitudes towards gay and lesbians as adoptive parents. Future research should examine other variables that may factor into worker decision-making. In addition, future work should focus on the development of an instrument that would better assess intent to place. Some recent studies have used vignettes in an attempt to reduce social bias. The development of vignettes would address the issues raised by some participants in this study (i.e. not enough information). In addition, the design of a measure to test implicit attitudes about gay men and lesbians as parents may better assist researchers in obtaining sensitive information from sophisticated professionals.

There are difficulties inherent in any cross sectional study and this study is no exception. Cross sectional design is appealing due to its low cost and brevity when compared to longitudinal design. However, by definition, a cross sectional study is merely a snapshot of a particular point in time. Although this design does not allow the researcher to address developmental issues (Gollob & Reichardt, 1987), given the broader constructs leading to more specific concepts, time order still is arguable. On the other hand, the order of the variables presented here makes conceptual sense. A world view, religious fundamentalism would influence a narrow construct, in this case sexual prejudice. Further, sexual prejudice is a broader construct than the very specific case of attitudes about gay and lesbian adoption.

6.1.4 Future Directions for Research

As stated previously, sexual prejudice is understudied in the population generally and among helping professionals specifically. The more we look at antecedents and consequences of sexual prejudice, the greater the likelihood that we can develop appropriate strategies for amelioration. This study suggested that religious fundamentalism impacts social work practice decisions.

Schneider (2004) found that religious beliefs lead to prejudice against gays and lesbians due to the view that gay and lesbians were “immoral”. Lehavot and Lambert (2007) also found that immorality ratings are significantly aligned with sexual prejudice. Further research is needed to examine the precursors of sexual prejudice. Additional research is also particularly needed on the influence of prejudice on social workers’ practice decisions.

Further research is also needed on the ability of social work programs to provide effective avenues to explore conscious and unconscious biases about at risk populations, including those identifying as non-heterosexual. Future research should focus on the comparison of the effectiveness of different educational programs designed to challenge prejudicial attitudes. Longitudinal studies of the effectiveness of the educational programs should be implemented to determine the efficacy of training over time, and the impact of the training on actual practice decisions.

APPENDIX A

This questionnaire asks about your willingness to place children in need in differently- headed homes. For each of the following, please RANK YOUR TOP TWO CHOICES for placing children in the following ways by placing the number 1 (one) next to your first choice and a number 2 (two) next to your second choice.

1. Child who has chronic medical needs

- _____ Caucasian gay couple
- _____ Caucasian lesbian couple
- _____ African-American heterosexual couple
- _____ African-American gay couple
- _____ African-American lesbian couple
- _____ Caucasian heterosexual couple

2. Child with emotional and behavioral problems

- _____ Caucasian gay couple
- _____ Caucasian lesbian couple
- _____ African-American heterosexual couple
- _____ African-American gay couple
- _____ African-American lesbian couple
- _____ Caucasian heterosexual couple

3. Child with a history of sexual abuse and sexually acting out

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

4. Child with a history of multiple placements

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

5. Child with her/his sibling group

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

Please place the number 1 (one) next to your first choice and a number 2 (two) next to your second choice for placing children in the following ways.

6. An thirteen year old child

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

7. A healthy African-American infant

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

8. A healthy Caucasian infant

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

9. A healthy 8 year old girl

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

10. A healthy 8 year old boy

- Caucasian gay couple
- Caucasian lesbian couple
- African-American heterosexual couple
- African-American gay couple
- African-American lesbian couple
- Caucasian heterosexual couple

The following questions concern your practice decision-making. Please read each question carefully and indicate, by circling the correct number, which best reflects your experience, where 1=very strong disagreement and 8= very strong agreement.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1. I make practice decisions autonomously. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 N/A
2. I feel that my practice decisions are supported. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 N/A

This questionnaire asks about your attitudes about lesbians and gay men. Please read each question carefully and indicate, by circling the correct number, which best reflects your attitude, where 1=very strong disagreement and 9= very strong agreement.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Do not Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

1. Lesbians just can't fit into our society 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. A woman's homosexuality should *not* be the cause for job discrimination in any situation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. Female homosexuality is detrimental to society because it breaks down the distinction between sexes. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. State laws regulating private, consenting lesbian behavior should be loosened. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. Female homosexuality is a sin. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. The growing number of lesbians indicates a decline in American morals. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
7. Female homosexuality in and of itself is no problem, but what society makes of it can be a problem. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8. Female homosexuality is a threat to many of our basic social institutions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Do not Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

9. Female homosexuality is an inferior form of sexuality. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10. Lesbians are sick. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11. Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
12. I think male homosexuals are disgusting. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
13. Male homosexuals should *not* be allowed to teach in schools. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14. Male homosexuality is a perversion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
15. Just as other species, male homosexuality is a natural expression of human men. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
16. If a man has homosexual feelings, he should do everything he can to overcome them. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
17. I would *not* be too upset if I learned that my son was gay. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. Homosexual behavior between two men is just plain wrong. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. The idea of homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. Male homosexuality is merely a different type of lifestyle that should not be condemned. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

This questionnaire asks about your attitudes about racial differences. Please read each question carefully and indicate, by circling the correct number, which best reflects your attitude, where 1=very strong disagreement and 9= very strong agreement.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Do not Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

1. I feel I could develop an intimate relationship with someone of a different race. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. My friendship network is racially mixed. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. I would feel okay about my son or daughter dating someone from another racial group. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. Most of my close friends are from my own racial group. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. I think it is (or would be) important for my children to attend schools that are racially mixed. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. If I were to adopt a child, I would be happy to adopt a child of any race. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
7. I think it is better if people marry within their own race. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The next set of questions asks about your religious beliefs. Please read each question carefully and indicate, by circling the correct number, which best reflects your attitude, where 1=very strong disagreement and 8= very strong agreement.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1. God has given humanity a complete, unfailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
2. No single book of religious teachings contains all the intrinsic, fundamental truths of life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
3. The basic cause of evil in this world is Satan, who is still constantly and ferociously fighting God. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

4. It is more important to be a good person than to believe in God and the right religion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

5. There is a particular set of religious teachings in the world that are so true, you can't go any 'deeper' because they are basic, bedrock messages that God has given humanity. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
6. When you get right down to it, there are basically two different kinds of people in the world: the righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
7. Scriptures may contain general truths, but they should *not* be considered completely, literally true from beginning to end. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
8. To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to one, fundamentally true religion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9. "Satan" is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There is really *no such thing* as a diabolical "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
10. Whenever science and sacred scripture conflict, *science* is probably right. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
11. The fundamentals of God's religion should never be tampered with or compromised with other beliefs. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
12. *All* the right religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings. There is *no* true, right religion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

The following questions ask about your religious beliefs. Please read each question carefully and indicate, by circling the correct number, which best reflects your attitude, where 1= strong disagreement and 5= strong agreement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. Children raised by homosexual parents are more likely to be subjected to ridicule. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Gay and lesbians should be required to undergo psychotherapy. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to adopt children. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Homosexuality is detrimental to society because it breaks down family values. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Gay men and lesbians make suitable parents. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Homosexuality is a mental illness. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Children who grow up in homosexual homes have no significant developmental differences than children who grow up in heterosexual homes. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Homosexuals are more likely to sexually abuse their children than heterosexuals 1 2 3 4 5
9. Homosexual relationships are as stable as heterosexual ones. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Homosexuals demonstrate sexual acts in front of their children. 1 2 3 4 5
11. A child raised by homosexual parents will not be denied spiritual growth. 1 2 3 4 5
12. If allowed, a gay or lesbian parent should only be allowed to adopt hard to place children. 1 2 3 4 5
13. A child raised by gay and lesbian parents will most likely become homosexual 1 2 3 4 5
14. Homosexuals are more likely to have short term relationships. 1 2 3 4 5

Below are statements about transracial adoption. For the purpose of this study, transracial adoption refers to the adoption of Black children by White families. By circling the number closest to your own feeling, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements, , where 1= strong disagreement and 5= strong agreement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. White families cannot prepare Black children to live in our racially divided society. 1 2 3 4 5
2. A child, both of whose parents are Black, should not be adoptively placed with a White family. 1 2 3 4 5
3. White families who adopt Black children are more interested in advancing the cause of integration than in fulfilling the need to parent a child 1 2 3 4 5
4. When Black children are in need of homes, White applicants should be encouraged to adopt a Black child. 1 2 3 4 5
5. White families who adopt Black children should be commended rather than criticized by Blacks. 1 2 3 4 5
6. It is very important for a Black child to develop pride in her/his Black heritage. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Black children adopted by White families should be helped to acquire a feeling of identity within the Black community. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Whites do not understand Blacks enough to raise a Black child. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I dislike the idea of Blacks being raised by Whites. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Black children raised in institutions would be no worse off than those raised by White families. 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. Black children lose their sense of identity when they are raised in White homes. 1 2 3 4 5
12. The possible identity confusion of a Black child raised in a White home is strongly outweighed by the value of having a family. 1 2 3 4 5
13. Fewer problems arise from transracial adoptions than from foster homes and institutions. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I feel positively about White families adopting Black children. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Racism in our society is too entrenched for transracial adoption to work. 1 2 3 4 5
16. A Black child adopted by a White family will feel “different” than her/his White siblings. 1 2 3 4 5
17. A child in need should be adoptively placed without any racial or ethnic consideration coming into the picture. 1 2 3 4 5
18. Transracial adoption will lead to racial identity, psychological, and /or psychosocial problems in the child later in life. 1 2 3 4 5
19. Transracial adoption is a good way to start breaking down the barriers of prejudice, racial discrimination, and stereotyping. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Whites cannot understand the problems Blacks face in society. 1 2 3 4 5
21. White parents are not prepared to teach Black children to cope with racism. 1 2 3 4 5
22. Black children adopted by White families are competent to adapt in Black communities. 1 2 3 4 5

Please respond to the following questions.

1. What is your present age? _____ years
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. African American
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Caucasian/Euro-American
 - d. Latino(a)/Hispanic American
 - e. Native American
 - f. Bi-racial/Multi-racial
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
4. What is your religious affiliation?

- a. Catholic
 - b. Protestant
 - c. Jewish
 - d. Other (please specify) _____
5. What is your highest professional degree?
- a. BSW
 - b. MSW
 - c. MA/MS in Psychology
 - d. PhD/DSW in Social Work
 - e. PhD in Psychology/PsyD
 - f. Other (Please specify) _____
6. When was your highest degree awarded? _____(year)
7. Which of the following best describes your identified sexual orientation?
- a. Heterosexual
 - b. Gay male
 - c. Lesbian
 - d. Bisexual
 - e. Transgender
 - f. Other
8. Did the classes offered by the program from which you received your highest degree prepare you to work with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender populations?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
9. Did the practicum/internship prepare you to practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender populations?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

- c. NA (no practicum/internship)
10. Did the classes offered by the program from which you received your highest degree prepare you to work with racial/ethnic minority populations?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Did the practicum/internship prepare you to practice with racial/ethnic minority populations?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. NA (no practicum/internship)
12. Are you currently working for an agency?
- a. Yes, public
 - b. Yes, private, non-profit
 - c. Yes, private, for profit
 - d. No, private practice or member of group practice
 - e. Other (please specify)_____
13. In total, how many years have you been professionally employed? _____ (if less than one, please enter 0).
14. How many years have you been employed in your present position? _____ (if less than one, please enter 0).
15. Since receiving your degree, have you had training in working with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
16. Since receiving your degree, have you had training in working with racial/ethnic minority populations?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
17. How many of your colleagues identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender? _____
18. How many of your colleagues identify as people of color? _____

19. How many of your relatives, friends, and neighbors identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?

20. How many of your relatives, friends, and neighbors identify as people of color? _____

21. How many clients have identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender? _____

22. How many clients have identified as people of color? _____

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!!!

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

You have been randomly chosen to participate in a nationwide survey of social workers and psychologists. The purpose of this study is to determine whether professional training is related to attitudes about adoption. For that reason, I am asking you to complete the enclosed questionnaire, which should only take 15-20 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate, the questionnaire will ask you about your background (age, race, education) as well as your ideas regarding a number of issues that may influence adoption decision-making. There are no foreseeable risks from your participation in this project, nor are there any direct benefits. However, I hope the information gleaned from this study will be helpful in training future social workers and psychologists.

If you decide to participate, I ask that you *do not* put your name or any other identifiable information on the questionnaire. Your response, therefore, will be anonymous; no one will ever be able to link your responses to you. Also, your participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to answer a particular question or even withdraw at any time. All completed questionnaires will be kept in a locked file cabinet for five years, after which they will be destroyed. The results of this study may be published, and all data will be presented in aggregate form only.

I am conducting this study as partial fulfillment of my doctoral requirements in the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. I can be reached by phone at 724 816 2800 or via email at gmm6@pitt.edu if you

have any questions. You can also contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Rafael Engel, at 412 624 6315 or via email at rengel@pitt.edu.

Your input is greatly desired and will help me to better understand professional practitioners' attitudes about adoption decision-making. Once completed, please mail the questionnaire back to me in the self-addressed, stamped, return envelope that has been enclosed for your convenience. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gayle Mallinger

University of Pittsburgh

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

POSTCARD REMINDER

Several weeks ago, I sent you a questionnaire looking adoption decision-making. If you have already completed the questionnaire, please accept my thanks. If you have not yet completed the questionnaire, I hope you do so shortly.

If you did not receive a questionnaire, please call me at 724 816 2800 or email me at gmm6@pitt.edu and I will send you one today.

Many thanks,

Gayle Mallinger

University of Pittsburgh

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Pittsburgh

Institutional Review Board

3500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 383-1480
(412) 383-1508 (fax)
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

Memorandum

To: GAYLE MALLINGER
From: SUE BEERS PHD, Vice Chair
Date: 7/16/2008
IRB#: PRO08040070
Subject: Placing Children in Need with Gay and Lesbian Couples: Influences on Placement Decisions

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "**Study Completed**" report from the project workspace.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

Expiration Date:12/31/2500

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