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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

HETEROSEXUALS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GAY FATHERS  
AND THEIR CHILDREN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY

ANDREW MCLEOD

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY, 1996

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis committee, Isiaah Crawford, PhD, and Jeanne Zechmeister, PhD, for the guidance and support they have provided in designing and conducting this study. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Mark Schneider and Julie Frazier for their constructive comments and to Erin Smith for her assistance in the data collection and management of the study. Finally, I thank my partner in life, Leif Tellmann, to whom I am indebted for his constant support throughout the production of this study as well as my career.

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	iii
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Negative Attitudes toward Gay Parenting in Custody Cases	
Empirical Research on Gay Parents and their Children	
Heterosexual Attitudes toward Gay Men that may Contribute to Anti-gay Parenting Sentiment	
Function of Negative Attitudes toward Gay Parents	
Rationale	
Hypotheses	
2. METHOD . . . . .	16
Participants	
Materials	
Measures	
Procedure	
3. RESULTS . . . . .	21
4. DISCUSSION. . . . .	26
Appendix	
A. VIGNETTE . . . . .	38
B. QUESTIONNAIRE . . . . .	41
C. GENERAL BELIEFS AND DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRES . .	44

D. CONSENT FORM . . . . .	52
E. DEBRIEFING STATEMENT . . . . .	54
REFERENCE LIST . . . . .	55
VITA . . . . .	60

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic Information . . . . .	34
2. Summary of Forward Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Ratings of the Benefit of Custody Reassignment . . . . .	36
3. Summary of Forward Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Ratings of Child's Sexual Orientation Confusion . . . . .	37

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"Family rights forever, gay rights never" was the slogan flaunted on pickets and chanted with high spirits at the 1992 National Republican Convention. An exploitative commitment to family values has made gays and lesbians the scapegoats for the decay of the traditional nuclear family. Despite the persistent political rhetoric surrounding the issue of family values, gays and lesbians are receiving favorable recognition, and tolerance is emerging. However, as gay politics begin to merge with the mainstream, controversy erupts over the prospect of gay and lesbian couples attempting to implement their civil rights to become biological, foster and adoptive parents. While the conviction that homosexuality conflicts with family values can be evidenced in political discourse as well as court decisions concerning child custody, there has been no assessment of what specific negative assumptions are made in regard to parental homosexuality. The purpose of this research project is to take a closer look at heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay fathers and their children.

Despite the controversy over gay parenting, gays and lesbians have always been raising children; except now as openly gay parents (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). The number



of gay parents is difficult to estimate because many of them are forced to conceal their orientation due to fear of discrimination. Nevertheless, it has been estimated that there are 1 to 5 million lesbian mothers and 1 to 3 million gay fathers in the United States (Gottman, 1990). Gays also have increasing options to become parents. While many gay men and women have children as the result of previous heterosexual unions, others are now pursuing such options as foster care, adoption, surrogacy and donor sperm insemination.

#### Negative Attitudes toward Gay Parenting in Custody Cases

Gays and lesbians entering parenthood face obstacles imposed by a society that marginalizes those they do not understand or know. Heterosexism is the institutionalization of the negative and prejudicial attitudes towards gays and lesbians (Neisen, 1990), and nowhere does it show itself more forcefully than in the issue of gay families.

The general assumption that gays are unsuitable parents who will have a detrimental effect on the social and psychological development of their children has been a major source of injustice underlying judicial decision-making in custody litigation (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). Since most officials involved in the decision-making process concerning custody know as little about homosexuality as the general public, they are clearly influenced by the cultural stigma attached to homosexuality and often deny gay parents the right to be parents (Patterson, 1992; Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990).

Rationales frequently made by courts to disqualify gays and lesbians as fit parents include concerns regarding the harassment that the child is expected to face in his peer relationships and the assumed influence that gay parents will have on their child's sexual and gender identity development (Cohn, 1995). The latter concern, in which the gay parent is assumed to essentially make his/her child gay, has been referred to as the "recruitment rationale" (Cohn, 1995). As a result of these heterosexist assumptions made in judicial decisions concerning child custody, gay and lesbian parents who have children from previous marriages are often denied custody and/or visitation with their biological children (Patterson, 1992).

Pejorative attitudes toward gay and lesbian parents also eclipses the child's best interests in public policies governing foster care and adoption (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). New Hampshire and Florida are states which have enacted legislation that prohibits gays and lesbians from qualifying as foster or adoptive parents (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). In other states, foster care and adoption agencies have instituted regulations that make it extremely difficult for gays and lesbians to become parents through their services (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). Even laws criminalizing sodomy are used to disqualify gays as potential foster or adoptive parents (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). Clearly, violations of sodomy statutes are not equally applied

to heterosexuals in determining one's fitness to be a parent (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990); rather, sodomy laws amount to nothing more than a desperate attempt to justify and legalize prejudices against gay parenting. Overall, there are fewer options for social service agencies to effectively and compassionately address the difficult task of finding homes for the many unwanted and abused children in the United States. Negative assumptions that the judiciary holds toward homosexual parental rights clearly have severe repercussions on America's children.

#### Empirical Research on Gay Parents and their Children

Recently, researchers who have examined populations of gay parents and their children have found that there is no credibility to the negative assumption concerning their parenting abilities (Bigner & Bozett, 1990; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Gottman, 1990; Harris & Turner, 1986; Patterson, 1992; Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). Studies consistently demonstrate that the parenting abilities and child-rearing practices of gay and lesbian parents are very similar to heterosexual parents (Cramer, 1986; Patterson, 1992). For instance, recent research comparing lesbian mothers who have conceived through artificial insemination to married heterosexual parents support the finding that lesbian mothers are as knowledgeable of effective parenting skills as their heterosexual counterparts and can identify the critical issues in child-care situations and formulate appropriate solutions

to the problems they encounter (Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995). Research specifically focused on gay fathers found their parenting styles and attitudes toward fathering to be more similar than different compared to non-gay fathers (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992). Additionally, both gay and non-gay fathers also report relatively few serious problems and overall positive relationships with their children (Harris & Turner, 1986). Other research on gay fathers indicates that there are no differences between homosexual and heterosexual parents with regard to degree of involvement with children's activities, degree of intimacy with children, problem solving, provision of recreation for children, encouragement of their autonomy, and the manner in which problems of child-rearing are handled (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1992; Harris & Turner, 1986; Miller, 1979).

Continuing attempts to unearth reasons for believing that children of gay men and women are likely to experience adjustment difficulties have also been unsuccessful (Patterson, 1992). Overall, the literature suggests that the social and psychological adjustment of children raised by gay and lesbian parents does not differ from children raised by heterosexual parents (Bigner & Bozett, 1990; Cramer, 1986; Gottman, 1990; Kirkpatrick, Smith & Roy, 1981; Miller, 1979; Patterson, 1992). Clearly, research discredits not only the notion that parental homosexuality is likely to have adverse effects on the development of their children, but also that

gays are not capable parents. However, despite the existence of research dispelling the myth that gays are unfit to be parents, heterosexist attitudes seem to prevail.

#### Heterosexuals' Attitudes toward Gay Men that May Contribute to Anti-gay Parenting Sentiment

The opponents of gay parenting most likely rely on stereotypical beliefs regarding homosexuality to justify their positions. While other variables such as religiosity and political conservatism have been found to be consistently and significantly correlated with negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Herek, 1984; Seltzer, 1992), rationales used to deny custody to gay and lesbian parents tend to be based upon assumptions regarding the unsuitable character of gays and lesbians as either emotionally unstable, cross-gendered, or promiscuous (Patterson, 1992). One would, therefore, reason that the negative assumptions concerning the parenting ability of gay fathers and the detrimental effects they have on their children are more likely to be predicted by stereotypical beliefs concerning gay men than political conservatism or religiosity.

Because evidence suggests that a more clearly defined stereotype exists for gay men than for lesbians (Kite & Deaux, 1987), most people may have more adamant feelings about gay fathers than lesbian mothers. In fact, Kite and Deaux (1987) found that people tend to "see a greater divergence between homosexual and heterosexual males than they do between

homosexual and heterosexual females" (p. 92). The results of a study conducted by Page and Yee (1985) also indicate that homosexual males are judged more harshly, possibly because their deviation from "appropriate" sex roles is more visible. The present study is, therefore, aimed at examining heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay fathers and their children.

The fact that heterosexuals perceive gay men to be more effeminate than heterosexual males (Page & Yee, 1985) may lead to the assumption that gay fathers do not make suitable role models for their children. For instance, Nungesser (1980) followed Bandura's social learning theory in applying the notion of cross-sex behavior in gays to the personal and social development of their children, and suggested that gay parents may not model sex-appropriate behavior for their children. As previously mentioned, even legal perspectives championed by the courts contend that children raised by homosexual parents will be at a psychological disadvantage and suffer more adjustment and identity difficulties than children raised by heterosexual parents (Patterson, 1992). Presumed cross-gender behavior in gay men may, therefore, result in the conclusion that a child raised by gay men will experience confusion regarding gender-related and/or sexual identity issues. Empirical evidence, however, not only refutes the expression of effeminacy in gay men (Stokes, Kilmann & Wanlass, 1983) but also suggests that children of gay and

lesbian parents do not differ from children of heterosexual parents on the basis of sexual orientation (Bigner & Bozett, 1990; Cramer, 1986; Gottman, 1990; Patterson, 1992), gender identity and gender role behavior (Gottman, 1990; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Miller, 1979; Patterson, 1992).

Negative attitudes toward gay parents are also believed to be directed at the children of gay parents. However, the concern that children raised by gay parents will also suffer from stigmatization and taunting by their peers has not been substantiated (Cramer, 1990; Patterson, 1992). Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, and Smith (1986) found that there were no differences in the way homosexual and heterosexual mothers rated the social skills and popularity of their children among their peers. Additionally, self-reports of popularity with peers by these children did not differ. While self-reports of this nature may be influenced by a bias to describe oneself in a positive light, there is no evidence to corroborate the assumption that the child will necessarily face stigmatization and that this stigmatization will necessarily result in irreparable emotional injury. In fact, research has demonstrated that children of gays do not differ from children of heterosexuals in psychological or social adjustment (Gottman, 1990; Kirkpatrick, et al. 1981; Miller, 1979; Patterson, 1992); thus, prohibiting gays from obtaining or maintaining custody of their own or adopted children because their family may face stigmatization is a clear case of

blaming-the-victim ideology; whereby gay parents and their children are indicted for society's heterosexism.

Misconceptions surrounding the mental health of gays may also influence attitudes toward gay relationships and the ability of gays to create a healthy environment for children. It has been more than two decades since homosexuality was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual as a psychological disorder (DeCrescenzo, 1984), but the stigma of emotional instability still shows its lingering impact on negative attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexual relationships (DeCrescenzo, 1984). In a study conducted on undergraduates' attitudes toward gay parenting, it was found that a gay male couple was viewed as being less emotionally stable, having poor parenting potential, and creating a more dangerous home when compared to a heterosexual couple (Crawford & Solliday, in press). Homosexual couples were also perceived to be less in love and less satisfied with their relationships than were heterosexual couples presented with identical information (Testa, Kinder, & Ironson, 1987). Moreover, evaluations of gays by heterosexual participants have also demonstrated that gay men are stereotyped as becoming more emotional and excitable in a crisis situation as well as being less decisive and logical than their heterosexual counterparts (Page & Yee, 1985). The fact that gay couples are perceived to be emotionally unstable, non-loving, and incompetent in a crisis may contribute to a



perception of gays as unable to meet the needs of a child.

Other preconceived notions regarding gays and their relationships are likely to impact one's perspective of the parenting ability of gays. A review of the literature concerning attitudes toward gays by DeCrescenzo (1984) uncovered some commonly held beliefs that gays are not only psychologically maladjusted but exhibit an impulsive, self-indulgence characterized by promiscuity and drug use. These assumptions can also be found in the legal system of the United States. According to the editors of the Harvard Law Review, gay men are considered to be too busy in their promiscuous pursuits to meet a child's needs (Patterson, 1992).

Clearly, there are stereotypical beliefs concerning homosexuality that are used to justify court decisions that prohibit gays from being parents. However, there has been no empirical assessment of the general population's attitudes toward gay parenting; nor have the stereotypical beliefs that underlie the assumption that gays are unfit to be parents been explicated.

#### The Function of Negative Attitudes toward Gay Parenting

Applying a functional approach to attitudes toward homosexuality, Herek (1986) contends that anti-gay attitudes serve the purpose of affirming certain values that are relevant to one's self-concept, thereby allowing individuals to establish their identity. In this way, negative attitudes

toward homosexuality can be symbolic, "expressing abstract ideological concepts that are closely linked to one's own notion of self and to one's social networks and reference groups" (Herek, 1986, p. 8). In a Western society founded on the principle of a nuclear family that requires a heterosexual couple and specific male and female parental roles, maintaining the perspective that gays are unfit to be parents symbolically expresses a feeling that exalted values are being violated and that the demand to change the status quo is illegitimate (Herek, 1986). Thus, espousing and publicly endorsing anti-gay values may be, in essence, expressing one's commitment to socially acceptable family values and, as a result, possibly reinforcing one's identification as a respectable parent, a decent Christian, even one who lives up to his/her prescribed gender role and sexuality. Given the considerable benefits of supporting one's sense of self as what one perceives him/herself to be, the symbolic attitude of anti-gay parenting would understandably solicit strong support.

Similarly, these attitudes can also serve a defensive function, especially for males who strive to conform to the stringent and often unrealistic definition of masculinity embraced in Western culture. Investigations repeatedly point to the institution of gender roles as the root of heterosexism and/or homophobia (Herek, 1984, 1986; Stark, 1991). In particular, Herek (1986) makes a clear link between homophobia

and male gender roles by explicating the social construction of heterosexual masculinity. In trying to conform to certain behavioral patterns and societal standards of masculinity, males can experience anxiety that they might fail to measure up to prescribed male roles (Herek, 1986). Because gay men are frequently perceived as exhibiting effeminate behavior (Herek, 1984), expressing homophobic attitudes enhances and reaffirms heterosexual males' masculine identity by emphasizing what they are not (Herek, 1986). The rewards that follow include social support from peers and reduced anxiety over meeting the standards of masculinity. It is, therefore, not surprising that heterosexual men more than women exhibit negative and hostile attitudes toward homosexuality in general and toward gay men in particular (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Kurdek, 1988).

The general attacks on the parenting abilities of gay men and women may be fueled by stereotypical beliefs that pervade the general public's perspective of homosexuality. The overall perception of a difference between gay and heterosexual individuals and relationships most likely results in the general assumption that gays are not fit to be parents. In particular, because gay men are perceived to be self-indulgent, effeminate, emotionally unstable and excitable, they are likely to be viewed as lacking certain traits and skills that are necessary for good parenting such as responsibility, "lovingness," competence, and the ability to

spend quality time with a child; however, evidence points to the fact that gay men may indeed have equal if not better parental abilities as their heterosexual counterparts (Bigner & Bozett, 1990).

### Rationale

In order to develop a broader understanding of the diverse array of modern families evolving in the 1990s, the negative assumptions underlying new family structures must be evaluated. Alternative families are becoming a more integral part of the social structure, forcing people to confront the possibility that the traditional nuclear family may not be the only environment that fosters the healthy psychological development of a child. To many, this change is threatening. Alternative families have been characterized by right wing groups as causing a "break down" of the traditional family and leading to the widespread problems facing America today. This sentiment, however, is partly induced by the perpetuation of inaccurate beliefs concerning the differences between traditional and alternative families. In particular, maintaining a belief that gay parents are different from heterosexual parents may serve the purpose of separating the "stigmatized them" from the "normal us." A belief of this sort is behind the critical decisions concerning custody, foster and adoption cases, and ultimately denies gays and lesbians the basic civil right to parenthood. In order to stop the perpetuation of the belief that gays are less fit to

be parents than heterosexuals, the attitudes toward gay parenting must be more fully understood and the specific stereotypical beliefs that underlie these attitudes must be explicated. To further explore these attitudes, the following hypotheses were examined:

### Hypotheses

Hypothesis I. Heterosexual individuals would perceive heterosexual parents more favorably than gay parents in terms of their ability to demonstrate good parenting traits and skills. In particular, the dimensions of good parenting used for the purposes of this study include responsibility, "lovingness," sensitivity to a child's needs, nurturance, competence in a crisis, emotional stability in the individual parents and their relationship, as well as the ability to provide appropriate male role models and to spend quality time with their child.

Hypothesis II. Heterosexual individuals would be more likely to attribute difficulties experienced by a child to the parental relationship of a gay couple as opposed to a heterosexual couple.

Hypothesis III. Heterosexual individuals would perceive children raised by gay parents as experiencing higher levels of overall distress, distress related to strained relationships with peers, gender identity, sex role behavior, and sexual orientation confusion than children raised by heterosexual parents.

Hypothesis IV. Heterosexual individuals would be more likely to believe that custody reassignment is appropriate for a child of gay parents than a child of heterosexual parents.

Hypothesis V. Stereotypical beliefs depicting gays as either effeminate, impulsive, promiscuous, emotionally unstable, or sexually abusive would be significantly predictive of the negative attitudes toward gay parents and their children. It was also hypothesized that stereotypes of gay men would be better predictors of negative attitudes toward gay parents and their children than political conservatism and religious attendance.

Hypothesis VI. Heterosexual males would evidence more negative attitudes toward gay parenting than heterosexual females on all of the above mentioned dimensions.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 151 self-reported heterosexual, volunteer undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at Loyola University Chicago. Data from homosexual and/or bisexual participants were not included in the analyses (N = 3, 2%).

#### Materials

Two vignettes depicting a family unit consisting of two parents and their adopted child were used. The vignettes described a family scenario that depicted mild, typical but ambiguous discord. Each scenario was identical with the exception of the sexual orientation of the parents. In the experimental vignette, the parents were presented as two gay men whose relationship was bound by a "union ceremony." The control vignette, described a heterosexual couple united by traditional marriage. In both scenarios, the child was described as making an adjustment to a new junior high school in the context of mild family discord. Copies of the vignettes are presented in Appendix A.

## Measures

Each vignette was followed by a 23-item Likert-type scale questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire prompted respondents to assess the parents and their child along the following dimensions: parenting ability; overall distress of the child; gender-related and sexual identity distress of the child; attribution of child's distress to parental relationship; and custody reassignment. Perceptions of parental abilities were measured by assessing levels of perceived emotional stability of the individual parents and their relationship, responsibility, competence, ability to be loving, sensitivity to the child's needs, nurturing ability, quality time spent with the child, and the suitability of male role models. These parental traits and skills were rated for their clarity, ratability as well as their overall relevance to the construct of parenting ability by a group of five developmental psychologists in order to create a valid measure of the construct. The reliability for the measure of parenting ability was calculated for each parental role in order to assess inter-item reliability. The reliability for Kris (the parent in the mother's role) was .83, and the reliability for Bill (the parent in the father's role) was .78. Ratings of the parenting ability of the individual parents as well as the parents as a couple were used to distinguish perceptions of homosexual and heterosexual parents.



The perceptions of the psychological adjustment of a child reared by gay as compared to heterosexual parents was measured by rating the child's degree of overall distress, identity distress related to confusion regarding gender role/identity or sexual orientation, and quality of peer relationships. The degree to which the child's problems were attributed to the parental relationship and the degree to which participants rated custody reassignment as beneficial were also assessed in the questionnaire. All measures in the aforementioned areas were scored by the single rating of the respective item. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix B.

Participants completed a General Beliefs 50-item Likert-type scale questionnaire designed specifically for this study. This questionnaire prompted participants to rate their degree of agreement (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree) with statements describing heterosexual and gay men as either effeminate, involved with multiple sexual partners, emotionally stable, impulsive, or inclined toward sexually abusing a child. These ten statements (5 items pertaining to gay men and 5 items pertaining to heterosexual men) were randomly presented with 40 other irrelevant, political items to control for the demand characteristics of the scale. Many of the irrelevant items were taken from The Authoritarian Personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Participants'

adherence to stereotypes were measured by comparing ratings of items concerning gay men to the respective items concerning heterosexual men.

A 17-item Demographics questionnaire accompanied the General Beliefs questionnaire. Political conservatism was measured by ratings on a four-point scale of political ideology with the categories of very liberal, liberal, conservative, and very conservative. The degree of religious attendance in the past year was measured along a five-point scale with the categories of frequently, at least weekly, once or a few times each month, once or a few times, or never attended. A copy of both the General Beliefs and Demographics questionnaires is presented in Appendix C.

#### Procedure

The undergraduate student volunteers were told that this study was designed to investigate perceptions of childhood problems, parental capabilities, and the degree to which childhood problems may be attributed to the parental relationship. They voluntarily signed up for this study and were administered the questionnaires in groups ranging from 4 to 11 students in a classroom designated for research activity. After reading a description of the study and signing a consent form indicating one's willingness to participate, each student was randomly assigned to either the control or experimental condition and administered the corresponding vignette. A copy of the consent form is

presented in Appendix D. The experimental group was assigned the vignette and its corresponding questionnaire pertaining to the gay parents and their child, whereas the control group was assigned the vignette and questionnaire pertaining to the heterosexual parents and their child. Respondents were provided a debriefing statement at the conclusion of their participation and questions regarding the study were addressed at that time. A copy of the debriefing statement is presented in Appendix E.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive information about the participants in this study. The total sample consisted of 151 college students, including 106 (70%) females and 45 (30%) males. The majority were first-year undergraduates (69.8%), who were Caucasian (63.2%) and Catholic (57.9%). There was an even distribution of those who identify themselves as Democrats (27.8%), Republicans (23.3%), Independents (27.8%) and Other (21.1%), and 59.4% of the participants were more likely to consider themselves as liberal in their political affiliation. None of the participants reported being married or having children.

Weighted means were used to balance for the discrepancy in sample sizes between male and female participants. The weight factor of .4245 was applied to the sample of 106 females, balancing the N of males and females at 45. An alpha level of .01 was used for all statistical tests in order to correct for the number of statistical analyses.

Hypothesis I stated that participants would perceive heterosexual parents more favorably than gay parents. To evaluate this hypothesis, a Multiple Analysis of Variance

(MANOVA) was conducted with a between-subjects factor consisting of parental sexual orientation in the vignette. Items concerning parental responsibility, ability to be loving and nurturing, competent in a crisis, emotional stability of the individual parents and their relationship, sensitivity to the child's needs as well as role model potential and quality time spent with the child were utilized as the dependent variables for the parenting ability construct. No significant differences in overall parenting ability were found. Two additional MANOVAs with a between-subject factor of parental sexual orientation assessed the differences in the individual parents along the same dependent variables related to parenting ability. Again, no significant differences were found.

Hypothesis II stated that heterosexual individuals would be more likely to attribute difficulties experienced by a child to the parental relationship of the gay couple as opposed to the heterosexual couple. To evaluate this hypothesis, a one way ANOVA was conducted with a between-subjects factor of parental sexual orientation, utilizing the score from the relevant item as the dependent variable. No significant differences were found.

Hypothesis III predicted that heterosexual individuals would perceive children raised by gay parents as experiencing higher levels of overall distress as well as identity distress related to gender, sex role behavior, sexual orientation and

strained peer relationships compared to children raised by heterosexual parents. This hypothesis was evaluated using a MANOVA with a between-subjects factor of parental sexual orientation and the aforementioned dependent variables related to identity distress. The results indicate a significantly higher rating of childhood distress in the gay parents condition,  $F(5,84) = 3.67, p < .01$ . In order to uncover what aspect of this distress is responsible for the difference found, follow-up univariate analyses were conducted. Results indicate that participants rated the child's confusion regarding his sexual orientation as significantly higher when his parents were gay ( $M = 2.99, SD = 0.89$ ) as opposed to heterosexual ( $M = 2.35, SD = 0.88$ ),  $F(1,88) = 9.13, p < .001$ . No significant differences were found in the other ratings pertaining to the child's relationship with his peers, confusion regarding his appropriate gender role behavior, or his gender identity as male.

Hypothesis IV stated that heterosexual individuals would be more likely to believe that custody reassignment was appropriate for a child raised by gay parents than a child raised by heterosexual parents. A one-way ANOVA was conducted with a between-subjects factor of parental sexual orientation and the score from the relevant item as the dependent variables. The result supports the hypothesis that custody reassignment would be perceived as significantly more beneficial for the child raised by gay parents ( $M = 2.53, SD$

= 1.02) as compared to the child raised by heterosexual parents ( $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ),  $F(1,88) = 6.98$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Hypothesis V stated that stereotypical beliefs depicting gays as either effeminate, involved in multiple sexual partners, impulsive, emotionally unstable or inclined toward sexually abusing children may be predictors of the negative assumptions made regarding gay parents and their children. First, dependent t-tests comparing ratings of gay men to heterosexual men were conducted along the aforementioned stereotypes to determine which stereotypes participants held. Results indicate participants agreed significantly more with the statement that gay men are effeminate ( $M = 2.10$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) than to the statement that heterosexual men are effeminate ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ),  $t(89) = 8.15$ ,  $p < .001$ . The other stereotypes of impulsivity, multiple sexual partners, likelihood to sexually abuse a child, and emotional instability were not significantly different for homosexual and heterosexual men.

Within the experimental condition, a Forward Multiple Regression Analyses (MRA) was used to assess and compare the degree to which the participants' self-reported political conservatism, religious attendance and stereotypical beliefs of effeminacy in gay men account for the variance in the dependent variables of the significant findings. Results indicate that the effeminate gay male stereotype was not only found to be a significant predictor, but also the best

predictor of ratings pertaining to beneficial custody reassignment ( $F$  change (1,44) = 9.761,  $p < .01$ ), and the child's sexual orientation confusion,  $F$  change (1,44) = 12.195,  $p < .01$  (see Tables 2 and 3, respectively); thus, the more one adheres to the stereotype of gay men as effeminate, the more one is likely to believe that custody reassignment would be beneficial for a child raised by gay fathers and the more likely that child would be perceived as experiencing confusion regarding his sexual orientation. Moreover, after partialling out the effect of political conservatism and religious attendance in a hierarchical-simultaneous hybrid MRA, the effeminacy stereotype accounted for variance in the dependent variables of the child's sexual orientation confusion and beneficial custody reassignment significantly above and beyond the other predictors,  $F$  change (3,42) = 9.710,  $p < .01$ , and  $F$  change (3,42) = 8.545,  $p < .01$ , respectively.

Hypothesis VI stated that males would be more likely to exhibit more negative attitudes toward gay parenting than females. In order to evaluate this hypothesis, a 2 (males vs. females) X 2 (gay parents vs. heterosexual parents) ANOVA was conducted using the dependent variables of ratings concerning the child's sexual orientation confusion and beneficial custody reassignment. No significant interactions or main effects of gender were found.



CHAPTER 4  
DISCUSSION

This study was designed to assess heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay fathers and their children. The data indicate that heterosexuals were more likely to view a male child reared by gay male parents as suffering from confusion regarding his sexual orientation than a child reared by heterosexual parents. Custody reassignment was also considered more beneficial when the parents of a child consisted of a gay male couple as opposed to a heterosexual couple. These findings are consistent with the custody decisions advanced by courts that contend a homosexual relationship in the home will have an adverse effect on the psycho-sexual development of children, thereby increasing the "undesirable" likelihood that they will be gay (Cohn, 1995).

Without empirical evidence or justification, courts advocating a "per se" approach to custody have lent credibility to the notion that gay parents might influence and confuse their children's sexual orientation. Having been commonly cited, this argument has been termed the "recruitment rationale" and has been used to ban gays from the right to

parenthood (Cohn, 1995). Not only is the "recruitment rationale" motivated by the prejudice that homosexuality is undesirable, but the notion itself has been empirically proven to be false. Research consistently indicates that children of gay parents are no more likely to be gay than children of heterosexual parents (Bigner & Bozett, 1990; Cramer, 1986; Gottman, 1990; Patterson, 1992). A recently published longitudinal study by Golombok and Tasker (1996) (cited in Olson, 1996) found that while children raised by a lesbian mother might be more likely to sexually experiment with people of the same gender, they were not more likely to mature and identify themselves as gay or lesbian. In another study of adult sons of gay fathers, it was found that more than 90% of the sons were heterosexual (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe & Mikach, 1995). The gay and heterosexual sons of this population also did not differ in the length of time they lived with their fathers. The empirical findings of these recent studies have confirmed the findings of previous research and have consistently dismantled the presumption that homosexuality can be "environmentally transmitted" from homosexual parents to their children.

The present study was also designed to evaluate the degree to which stereotypes of gay men impact upon the attitudes heterosexual individuals hold toward gay fathers. The results indicate that the stereotype of gay men as effeminate was found to be a significant predictor of the

perceived distress related to the child's sexual identity confusion and the presumed benefit of custody reassignment. The more participants agreed to the stereotype of effeminacy, the higher they rated the child's sexual orientation confusion and the benefit of custody reassignment. When compared to the participants' political conservatism (rated on a continuum of very conservative to very liberal), as well as the degree of religious attendance (measured by frequency of attendance to places of worship), the stereotype of gay men as effeminate accounted for greater variance in the dependent variables. Moreover, when variance accounted for by religious attendance and political conservatism were partialled out, stereotypes of effeminate gay men significantly predicted heterosexual's negative attitudes toward gay fathers and their children. Perceptions of gay men as effeminate seem to be significantly associated with the maintenance of heterosexist attitudes toward a gay family unit.

Herek's (1984) functional approach to attitudes toward homosexuality can be applied to the findings of this study. According to this approach, heterosexist attitudes are viewed as a symbolic expression of a violation of an exalted value system. The results of this study demonstrate that perceived effeminacy in gay men is related to the expression of negative attitudes toward gay fathers and their children. The presumed cross-gendered behavior in gay men may, therefore, be perceived as a violation of a heterosexist value system that

extols traditional gender roles. Herek's (1986) review of previous research pertaining to anti-gay attitudes supports this hypothesis as it demonstrates that "negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians are consistently correlated with traditional views of gender and family roles" (p. 565). The fact that there were no differences in the ratings of gay fathers and their children based on gender also supports Kerns and Fine's (1994) finding that "attitudes toward gay men are more strongly related to gender role attitudes than to gender" (p. 297).

According to Herek's (1984) theory, expressing negative attitudes toward gay fathers and their children would function as a means of reaffirming one's identity as an individual who hold traditional gender role attitudes. Condemning those who are perceived to violate the value system of traditional gender roles can help establish one's identity as traditionally masculine or feminine as well as one's commitment to the notion that men should act like traditional men and women should act like traditional women. This condemnation supports and maintains one's identity and self-esteem through the social acceptance and support that it conjures from a society that also embraces traditional gender roles (Herek, 1984). Furthermore, gay men who are perceived to be less masculine are also likely to be perceived to violate the traditional nuclear family structure which is constructed around Western notions of traditional gender

roles. Hostility toward gay men and gay fathers may, therefore, not only reinforce one's identification with prescribed gender roles, but also affirm one's identification with the structure of the nuclear family. Because gay fathers are perceived as being effeminate and challenging the gender-based structure of the nuclear family, they may be scapegoated as the cause of the disintegration of the nuclear family. The belief that gay fathers are more likely to cause their children to be confused about their own sexual orientation can further reinforce the heterosexist paradigm of the traditional nuclear family by extending the perceived threat of homosexuality to the family structure of future generations.

Results of the present study did not support the hypothesis that heterosexuals would perceive differences between gay and heterosexual parenting abilities. Heterosexuals were also not more likely to attribute a child's problems to the parental relationship of gay couple over a heterosexual couple. These findings, combined with the supported hypotheses of this study, may be explained by the perceived effeminacy of gay men. Perhaps this stereotype of gay fathers impacts attitudes toward gay parenting in two conflicting directions. On the one hand, effeminacy may be associated with maternal parenting qualities associated with good parenting skills. On the other hand, the perceived negative impact of effeminacy is that a male child raised by gay fathers is presumed to suffer confusion regarding his own

sexual orientation. In fact, because participants did not differentially attribute the child's problems to the relationship between the gay fathers, the child's problems may be attributed to the perceived effeminacy more than the sexual orientation of the gay fathers. Kite and Deaux (1987) have found that people do tend to subscribe to an implicit inversion theory of homosexuality which contends that identification with an opposite-sex parent may lead to adopting cross-gender behavior, including sexual attraction to the same-sex. Perhaps identification with an effeminate father is perceived to be the link to the child's confusion regarding his sexuality. In order to determine whether it is the perceived cross-gender behavior or the sexual orientation of the gay fathers that is presumed to be related to the sexual orientation confusion of the child, further studies could examine reactions to vignettes depicting a boy raised by gay fathers, heterosexual parents exhibiting cross-gender behavior and heterosexual parents exhibiting traditional gender roles. Finally, similar studies could examine possible differences in attitudes toward the adoption of a girl in these scenarios as well as include a vignette depicting lesbian mothers.

Several limitations of this study stem from the difficulty of pursuing research in an area that has been neglected in the literature. Despite the fact that there is an accumulating mass of research pertaining to gay parents and

their children that dispels many of the myths surrounding this issue (see Patterson, 1992 for review), there is currently no research addressing the heterosexist attitudes that continue to make it difficult for gays to gain or maintain custody of their own or adoptive children. As a result, the constructs in this study were broad in an attempt to capture predominant themes in negative attitudes toward gay parenting. Strong demand characteristics may also have elicited "politically correct" responding, resulting in a lack of differences in parenting abilities between gay and heterosexual parents. Gender differences may have also been clouded due to the transformation of weighted means applied to the data in order to correct for the discrepancy in sample sizes of males and females.

The design of the present study was also limited by its inability to apply mediational analysis presented by Baron and Kenny (1986). Future studies should measure anti-gay sentiment and its relationship to anti-gay parenting with the objective of examining possible mediational effects of variables such as stereotypes, adherence to traditional gender and family roles, religiosity (Herek, 1986), political ideology, authoritarianism (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993) and the choice vs. nature belief in the origin of homosexuality (Herek, 1995).

Finally, future research should not only focus on the pejorative attitudes toward gay and lesbian parents and the

potential mediating variables that may generate them, but should also expand upon the possible strengths of gay and lesbian parents that are eclipsed by these heterosexist attitudes. In Bigner and Bozett's (1990) review of the literature on gay fathers, such individuals were found to be more sensitive and responsive to the perceived needs of children than heterosexual fathers. They also suggest that gay fathers "go to extra lengths to act as a resource for activities with their children" (Bigner & Bozett, 1990, p. 164). Several gays have also reported that their sexual orientation has been a strengthening experience for their children. For instance, gay parents have reported that the honesty and openness surrounding sexuality allows for greater intimacy between gay parents and their children (Bigner and Bozett, 1990). Moreover, the children of gay and lesbian parents may be able to approach their own sexuality with greater acceptance as well as develop greater empathy for others and tolerance for alternative viewpoints (Patterson, 1992). Overall, deciphering the misconceptions as well as the positive aspects of alternative families will help broaden our limited conception of a healthy family environment.



Table 1

Demographic Information with Adjusted Means (N = 90)

Variable	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	45	50.0%
Female	45	50.0%
Race		
Caucasian	57	63.3%
Asian-American	20	22.2%
African-American	4	4.4%
Latino/a-American	4	4.4%
Other	5	5.7%
Religion		
Catholic	52	57.8%
Protestant	5	5.6%
Jewish	3	3.3%
None	11	12.2%
Other	19	21.1%
Political Affiliation		
Republican	21	23.3%
Democrat	25	27.8%
Independent	25	27.8%
Other	19	21.1%

Table 1 (cont)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Year in School		
First	63	70.0%
Second	18	20.0%
Third	8	8.9%
Forth	1	1.1%

Table 2

Summary of Forward Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Ratings of the Benefit of Custody Reassignment for the Child (N=45)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>Beta</u>
Step 1			
Effeminate Gay Male Stereotype	-0.45	0.15	-.41**
Step 2			
Religious Attendance	-0.10	0.12	-.11
Step 3			
Political Conservatism	-0.02	0.21	-.02

Note.  $R^2 = .18$  for Step 1;  $R^2$  Change = .01 for Step 2;  $R^2$  Change = .00 for Step 3. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . Effeminate Gay Male Stereotype (1 Strongly agree to 4 Strongly disagree), Political Conservatism (1 Very conservative to 4 Very liberal), Religious Attendance (1 Frequent attendance to religious services to 5 never attended religious services), Custody Reassignment (1 not at all beneficial to 4 very much beneficial).

Table 3

Summary of Forward Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Ratings of Child's Sexual Orientation Confusion Child (N=45)

Variable	B	SE B	Beta
Step 1	.		
Effeminate Gay Male Stereotype	-0.40	0.13	-.42**
Step 2			
Political Conservatism	-0.21	0.17	-.17
Step 3			
Religious Attendance	-0.11	0.10	-.14

Note.  $R^2 = .22$  for Step 1;  $R^2$  Change = .03 for Step 2;  $R^2$  Change = .02 for Step 3. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . Effeminate Gay Male Stereotype (1 Strongly agree to 4 Strongly disagree), Political Conservatism (1 Very conservative to 4 Very liberal), Religious Attendance (1 Frequent attendance to religious services to 5 never attended religious services), Child's Sexual Orientation Confusion (1 not at all to 4 very much).

## APPENDIX A

### VIGNETTE

Chris/Kris and Bill are a gay/(left blank) couple who, after living together for 7 years, celebrated their union/marriage in 1980. Having been successful in their careers and happy in their relationship, they decided that they could provide a secure home in which to raise a child. In 1983 they decided to adopt a baby boy. After years of paper work and waiting, they were excited to find out that their dream had become a reality, and they welcomed an infant named Jeffrey into their home.

Chris and Bill spent the next several years balancing the duties of parenthood with their careers and personal time. Chris is a bank teller who was able to work part-time in order to be home when Jeffrey returned from school. Bill, on the other hand, worked longer hours to maintain a decent standard of living for the family. His dedication at work was recognized with regular promotions that carried him up the corporate ladder. Tackling the increase in responsibilities that came with this recognition, Bill was under a great deal of stress and had less time to spend with Chris and Jeffrey. Chris's tolerance of Bill's new found priorities began to decline, and their relationship became strained at times with periodic quarrels.

Many years had passed and Chris and Bill managed to find some balance in their schedules and responsibilities. By now,

Jeffrey was approaching 11 years of age and was faced with making a transition from his old elementary school to a larger, new junior high school. Although he was always a quiet child, Jeffrey became a little more timid in junior high. He did not like baseball and did not join the Farm League baseball team with all the other boys in his class. As a result, Jeffrey was occasionally mocked by the other boys and felt less comfortable participating in sports during recess. He began to spend more of his recess time with his female friends, playing in the school playground.

At times, however, Jeffrey would become sad and wouldn't talk about his day at school. His teachers expressed their concerns to Chris during Parent's Night at school. They acknowledged the difficulty of making a transition to a new school and noted Jeffrey's lack of participation in class and decreasing involvement with the other boys during recess. Chris talked with Bill about Jeffrey's situation and asked Bill to talk to Jeffrey. Bill agreed and raised the issues with Jeffrey. However, Jeffrey became embarrassed and did not want to talk about it. Bill hugged Jeffrey and did not continue to inquire about the matter.

During a school break, Jeffrey visited his grandparents from Chris's side of the family. They lived in a neighboring town, but Jeffrey did not see them very often. However, during some time alone with his grandfather, Jeffrey started to talk about the problems he was experiencing at school.

Although Jeffrey tended to be comfortable talking about his problems with his grandfather, things did not change very much when he returned to school.

At home, Bill and Chris reminded Jeffrey that what was most important was to be himself. Jeffrey continued to be moody during his first month of junior high, but became less so with time.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

Please read the following passage and respond to questions 1-23 on the following two pages. Read each question carefully and circle the number of the response that best represents how you feel. Please answer all of the questions. If you have difficulty answering a particular question, choose the response which is closest to your feelings on that item. Feel free to refer back to the passage if necessary.

Once you have finished this, please continue to the next set of questions.

1. To what extent would you attribute Jeffrey's problems to Chris/Kris and Bill's relationship?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

2. To what degree do you believe Jeffrey is exposed to suitable male role models?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

3. To what degree would you rate the quality of time Chris/Kris spends with Jeffrey?

1-Very poor    2-Poor    3-Good    4-Very Good

4. To what degree would you rate the quality of time Bill spends with Jeffrey?

1-Very poor    2-Poor    3-Good    4-Very Good



5. How emotionally stable would you rate Chris/Kris and Bill's relationship?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

6. How emotionally stable would you rate Chris/Kris?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

7. How emotionally stable would you rate Bill?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

8. To what extent do you feel Jeffrey is confused about the behavior that is appropriate to his gender role?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

9. How responsible do you think Chris/Kris is as a parent?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

10. How responsible do think Bill is as a parent?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

11. How would you rate Jeffrey's relationships with his peers?

1-Very poor    2-Poor    3-Good    4-Very Good

12. To what extent is Jeffrey likely to be experiencing confusion regarding his identity as male?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

13. How beneficial would it be to Jeffrey's well-being to be placed in the custody of his grandparents?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

14. To what degree might Jeffrey be (or will be) experiencing confusion concerning his sexual orientation?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

15. To what extent do you believe Jeffrey is experiencing distress?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

16. How loving would you rate Chris/Kris to be toward Jeffrey?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

17. How loving would you rate Bill to be toward Jeffrey?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

18. How sensitive is Chris/Kris to Jeffrey's needs?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

19. How sensitive is Bill to Jeffrey's needs?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

20. How competent would you rate Chris/Kris in dealing with a crisis?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

21. How competent would you rate Bill in dealing with a crisis?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

22. How nurturing would you rate Chris/Kris?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

23. How nurturing would you rate Bill?

1-Not at all    2-Somewhat    3-Pretty much    4-Very much

APPENDIX C

The following is a list of statements. Please write down the number indicating to what degree you agree or disagree with each of these statements. Read each statement carefully and select the response that best represents your **general beliefs**. Please answer all of the questions. If you have difficulty responding to a particular statement, choose the response which is closest to your feelings on that item.

1 - **Strongly Agree**

2 - **Somewhat Agree**

3 - **Somewhat Disagree**

4 - **Strongly Disagree**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. People can be divided into two distinct classes, the weak and the strong.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. The business man and the manufacturer are much more important to society than the artist and the professor.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. In general, heterosexual men generally tend to be effeminate (feminine).

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Every person should have completed faith in some supernatural power whose decisions he/she obeys without question.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. In general, it is best to discipline a child with physical force.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Black children should only be adopted by black families.

\_\_\_\_\_7. Some people are born with a certain degree of obedience that makes them get along with their parents better.

\_\_\_\_\_8. Poor people have better coping strategies than wealthy people.

\_\_\_\_\_9. People can be divided into two distinct groups, happy and sad.

\_\_\_\_\_10. Generally, gay men tend to be involved with multiple sexual partners.

\_\_\_\_\_11. No normal person could ever think of hurting a close friend or relative.

\_\_\_\_\_12. In general, one should never discipline a child with physical force.

\_\_\_\_\_13. No weakness or difficulty can hold us back if we have enough will power.

\_\_\_\_\_14. Nobody ever learned anything really important except through suffering.

\_\_\_\_\_15. In general, heterosexual men are emotionally stable.

\_\_\_\_\_16. Single women, in general, have a greater tendency to worry than married women.

\_\_\_\_\_17. There will always be war and conflict because it is human nature.

\_\_\_\_\_18. No normal person could believe that obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.

\_\_\_\_\_19. Religious faith promotes individual success in

all facets of life.

\_\_\_\_\_20. When a person has a problem or worry it is best for him/her not to think about it, but to keep busy with more cheerful things.

\_\_\_\_\_21. It should be made public when an ex-convict with a history of rape moves into a particular district.

\_\_\_\_\_22. Gay men are generally impulsive.

\_\_\_\_\_23. Single men, in general, have a greater tendency to worry than married men.

\_\_\_\_\_24. Heterosexual men are, in general, not likely to sexually abuse a child.

\_\_\_\_\_25. What a young person needs is rugged determination and the will to work and fight for family and country.

\_\_\_\_\_26. Generally, heterosexual men tend to be involved with multiple sexual partners.

\_\_\_\_\_27. In general, people's past and future can be determined from their astrological charts with some accuracy.

\_\_\_\_\_28. People who yell at others often come from families in which there is a history of depression.

\_\_\_\_\_29. In general, gay men generally tend to be effeminate (feminine).

\_\_\_\_\_30. Today, teachers do not understand the complex problems of adolescence.

\_\_\_\_\_31. No weakness or difficulty can hold us back if we have enough physical health and strength.

\_\_\_\_\_32. Some people are born with a certain degree of irritability that makes them confrontational with their parents.

\_\_\_\_\_33. People who marry in the 90's are more likely to be happily married than people who married in the 50's.

\_\_\_\_\_34. In general, women experience less distress now than ever before.

\_\_\_\_\_35. In general, gay men are emotionally stable.

\_\_\_\_\_36. Teenagers should hold a job while in college to strengthen their character.

\_\_\_\_\_37. People generally drink alcohol too much and too often.

\_\_\_\_\_38. Heterosexual men are generally impulsive.

\_\_\_\_\_39. Mid-life crisis is characterized by depression and a history of trying to please others.

\_\_\_\_\_40. When a person has a problem or worry it is best for him/her not to hold back from expressing their emotions.

\_\_\_\_\_41. An insult to our honor should always be punished.

\_\_\_\_\_42. In general, men experience less distress now than ever before.

\_\_\_\_\_43. Gay men are, in general, not likely to sexually abuse a child.

\_\_\_\_\_44. Bisexuality does not truly exist.

\_\_\_\_\_45. Rebellious teenagers are more often than not have physically abusive parents.

\_\_\_\_\_46. Most of our social problems would be solved by raising taxes and investing money into social programs focusing on education.

\_\_\_\_\_47. People generally do not have strong enough social support systems.

\_\_\_\_\_48. The media does not focus on positive role models.

\_\_\_\_\_49. College students today work harder than they ever had to before.

\_\_\_\_\_50. Wars and social troubles may someday be ended by a natural disaster that will destroy human life on earth.

Please answer the following questions pertaining to your background.

1. How old were you on your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you male \_\_\_\_\_ or female \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your current relationship status  
single \_\_\_\_\_ married \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have any children? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How would you describe your parents' occupation/s?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Executive or professional  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Manager or owner of large business  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Manager or owner of small business  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Clerical  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Semi-skilled laborer  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Unskilled laborer  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Unemployed for at least one year
6. How would you describe your parents' highest level of education achieved?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate or professional degree  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Four year college degree  
 \_\_\_\_\_ One year or more of college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ High school diploma  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Grade school diploma
7. How would you describe the region in which you spent most of your life? \_\_\_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Urban



8. How racially integrated or ethnically diverse would you describe this home town? \_\_\_\_\_ Very \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ A little \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

9. What year are you in your college education?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1st \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd \_\_\_\_\_ 4th  
 \_\_\_\_\_ more than 4th

10. What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you taken a Human Sexuality course in college?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

12. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ African-American

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian-American

\_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino(a)

\_\_\_\_\_ Native-American Indian

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

13. How would you describe your religious affiliation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Catholic \_\_\_\_\_ Jewish \_\_\_\_\_ Protestant

\_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

14. How often in the past year have you attended religious services? \_\_\_\_\_ Frequently \_\_\_\_\_ Attended at least weekly

\_\_\_\_\_ Attended once or a few times each month

\_\_\_\_\_ Attended once or a few times

\_\_\_\_\_ Never attended in past year

15. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Homosexual \_\_\_\_\_ Bisexual \_\_\_\_\_ Heterosexual

16. How would you describe your political affiliation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Democrat    \_\_\_\_\_ Republican    \_\_\_\_\_ Independent  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

17. How would you describe your political belief system?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very Liberal    \_\_\_\_\_ Liberal  
\_\_\_\_\_ Conservative    \_\_\_\_\_ Very Conservative

APPENDIX D  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
RESEARCH PROJECT # 26

(CONFIDENTIAL)

Principal Researcher: Andrew McLeod,  
Clinical Psychology Graduate Student  
Supervisor: Isiaah Crawford, Ph.D.  
Director of Clinical Psychology

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, state that I am over 18 years of age and that I voluntarily agree to participate in a research project conducted by Andrew McLeod, Principal Researcher, Experiment # \_\_\_\_\_, Loyola University of Chicago.

The research is being conducted in order to determine attitudes toward the abilities of different parents and the psychological well-being of their children. The specific task I will perform requires: Completing one survey and reading a short vignette that should take a total of a 1/2 hour.

I acknowledge that Andrew McLeod has explained fully the task to me; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice or penalty; has offered to answer any questions that I might have concerning the research procedure; has assured me that any information

that I give will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential as no names will appear on testing materials.

I also acknowledge that the benefits derived from, or rewards given for, my participation have been fully explained to me, as well as the alternatives, if available, for earning these rewards, and that upon my completion of the research task I have been promised a brief description of the role my specific performance plays in this project. I understand that I will receive one extra credit point for each hour I participate in this study.

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Signature of Participant

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Signature of Researcher

## APPENDIX E

### DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Title: Attitudes toward Gay Fathers and their Children

Principal Investigator: Andrew McLeod

This project was designed to examine present-day attitudes toward gay male couples, their parenting ability, and the psychological well-being of their children. One of the specific variables that was examined included perceptions of the psychological adjustment of a child raised by gay fathers as opposed to heterosexual couples. This variable included measures of the extent of overall distress experienced by the child, the distress that is stereotypically associated with children raised by gay parents, and the degree to which custody reassignment was perceived to be beneficial. The other variables measured included attitudes toward gay fathers, their parental abilities, and the extent to which distress associated with their children is attributed to their relationship. The General Beliefs questionnaire was used to measure the extent to which stereotypical beliefs concerning gay men are responsible for attitudes toward gay parenting.

If you have any further questions, please contact Andrew McLeod at (312) 508-3001. If you would like more information about this area of research, the reference listed below would be a good place to start. Thank you for your participation. Patterson, C. J. (1992). Children of lesbian and gay parents. Child Development, 63, 1025-1042.

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## VITA

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis committee and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

April 2, 1996

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