

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**16. The Adoption Process for Gay Fathers:
Parenting Experiences and Recommendations for Adoption Professionals**

Matthews, J. D., & Cramer, E. P. (2006). Envisaging the adoption process to strengthen gay- and lesbian-headed families: Recommendations for adoption professionals. *Child Welfare Journal*, 85, 317-340.

Sixteen single-gay-adoptive-fathers shared their experiences of adoption and parenting in this qualitative study. Three phases (preparatory, placement, and post-placement) of adoption were discussed.

During the preparatory phase, a home study is conducted by an agency worker. This experience for lesbian and gay potential parents may depend on the willingness of the adoption agency to place children with them. Many participants mentioned that their social worker operated with an informal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy towards them. The authors recommend that adoption agencies avoid secrecy when working with lesbian and gay people, offer in-service sensitivity and diversity training, and evaluate their policies within the context of state and federal policies.

Regarding the placement phase, some participants noted that social workers seemed to only want to place older children with multiple disabilities with them. This unspoken ranking commonly occurs within the adoption network—White, married, middle-upper class couples are favored to adopt healthy children. The authors suggest that adoption professionals refer to the Child Welfare League of America’s *Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services* (2000). Sexual orientation, among other characteristics, should not be used to assess potential adoptive parents.

During the post-placement phase, participants mentioned that becoming a parent led to less frequent participation in LGBTQ community events. They also felt a reluctance to get involved with post-adoption support groups due to feelings of exclusion and alienation. Thus, adoption professionals should collaborate with LGBTQ organizations and strive to provide safe outlets for lesbian and gay adoptive parents to share their unique experiences.