Adoption, Foster Care and Concurrent Planning:
A Study of Awareness, Attitudes, Motivations, Barriers and Implications for Communication

A project of The Community Task Force on Homes for Children

Community Task Force
on Homes for Children

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Community Task Force on Homes for Children (CTF), consisting of the five counties of the San Francisco Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara), conducted a multiphase research project. This project was designed to strengthen communication strategies directed at recruiting and retaining potential foster and adoptive families. The primary goal of this project is to increase the number of foster and adoptive families in the San Francisco Bay Area by creating more effective communications and media campaigns for targeted audiences. The study addressed the following issues: awareness and attitudes of specific target groups toward foster care, adoption and "concurrent planning" (also known as "permanency planning" or "fost/adopt"); motivations and willingness, as well as barriers, to becoming a foster or adoptive parent; and effective communication messages and channels for reaching target groups.

Quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods were used. A statewide random telephone survey of 1,011 California households conducted by Field Research Institute gathered quantitative data. Qualitative methods included 10 focus groups and 43 individual interviews with the general public as well as with current and former foster and adoptive parents in seven counties—Alameda, Contra Costa, Monterey, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz.

KEY FINDINGS

Awareness

Focus group and interview participants showed a lack of awareness of the extent to which foster homes are needed. They stated that most of their information regarding foster care issues was acquired through negative media attention.

In addition, participants were unable to distinguish between the role of public and private agencies, especially when it came to adoption. Participants associated adoption with private agencies and were unaware of the role of public agencies in caring for foster children.

Attitudes

The survey showed that 91 percent of those surveyed have a favorable attitude toward adoption while only 59 percent have a positive attitude toward foster care. These results were consistent with focus group findings in which participants expressed more positive attitudes toward adoption than toward foster care.

In addition, U.S.-born respondents were more likely to have a favorable view of adoption and foster care. Survey respondents born outside the U.S. were less likely to be positive about adoption and more likely to have no formed opinion regarding foster care. Furthermore, the survey showed that as an individual's education level increases, attitudes toward adoption become more positive as compared to lesser-educated respondents who tended to express a more favorable view of foster care.

Motivations

The ability to make a positive difference in a child's life was a powerful motivation for those considering becoming either a foster or adoptive parent. The survey showed that 93 percent of those who would consider providing a home for a child were motivated by the idea that they could make a difference in a child's life. Focus groups and interviews illustrated that this child-based motivation was particularly strong for foster parents. Adoptive parents' motivations were based more on fulfilling personal needs, such as having a child of one's own to nurture.

Willingness

Almost half of survey respondents would consider the possibility of providing either a temporary or permanent home to a child at some point in their lives. Respondents 50 and over were the most likely to consider foster parenting. Focus group respondents said they would be more likely to consider adoption if they could not have biological children, were financially secure or could stay at home with a child.

Barriers

Focus group participants expressed a fear of "contaminating" the existing family unit by introducing a foster child and his or her "problems" into the home. However, contrary to fears expressed in the focus groups, the actual experiences of current foster parents interviewed showed that having a foster child in the home has a positive impact on the family. Focus group participants also feared the potential emotional implications of bonding with the child and then having the child removed from the home. However, survey respondents most often mentioned practical barriers, such as age, having enough children, career limitations and limited financial resources.

Perception of fost/adopt

Overall, focus group respondents perceived fost/adopt (permanency planning) as a positive program for foster children. They were able to recognize the benefits of this process in which the child is either reunited with the biological parents or moves on to a caring adoptive family. Although focus group participants were concerned about attaching to and then possibly losing the child, they were able to weigh this emotional risk with the best interests of the child.

Information Sources

Both focus groups and survey respondents felt that word of mouth or personal communication with others who had prior experience fostering or adopting children were the most trusted sources of information on foster care and adoption. Family and friends were also cited as primary sources of information. However, current adoptive and foster parents had often used the Yellow Pages as their first information tool. Survey participants reported a willingness to turn to public and private agencies for information on foster care and adoption.

TARGET AUDIENCES' SPECIFIC FINDINGS

African-Americans

African-Americans expressed positive opinions about adoption but had an overall poor impression of the foster care system. This group expressed the pervasive belief that children in the foster care system have emotional, chemical, physical or genetic handicaps. Infants were perceived to be more desirable and less "damaged" than older children.

Latinos

Family values in the Latino culture served as a motivator as well as a barrier for pursuing foster care and adoption. The cultural love of children served as a strong motivator, while resistance came from the idea of introducing a child into the family who was not "one of their own."

Gays and Lesbians

Gays and lesbians perceived enormous barriers to providing a home for a child, including the belief that even if they could legally adopt or foster a child, they would face tremendous discrimination because of their sexual orientation. Some of their specific motivations to adopt or foster included the desire to create a sense of family and to foster a gay teen because they could identify with the youth's perceived feelings of pain, anger and confusion.

Helping Professionals

Out of the four target groups, helping professions expressed the most interest in foster care and had a greater sense of optimism about their ability to positively impact a foster child.

COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the negative perceptions associated with the foster care system and children in need of foster homes, counties and public agencies need to communicate more proactively and conduct education campaigns on foster care and adoption issues.

To counter the invisible or negative images in the media, public agencies need to visibly position themselves and delineate the differences between public and private adoption agencies. A key concept to communicate is that while private and public agencies place the same pool of children, public agencies are less expensive and offer support services for children with special needs. Making a positive difference in a child's life was a powerful motivator for prospective parents. This finding suggests media campaigns emphasizing "the best interest of the child" should be developed.

Counties must plan and implement targeted communications campaigns. The study identified specific target groups that each require tailored communication strategies. For example, for the Latino community, adoption and foster care issues could be positioned through community spokespeople, and Spanish language media campaigns could be created. For the African-American community, media messages that emphasize the need for adoptive and foster homes could be created.

INTRODUCTION

As we enter the new millennium, the need for families and homes for foster and adoptive children in California is compelling. California leads the country in its foster care caseload, with estimates of

children in care ranging from 107,000 to 120,000. With 20 percent of the nation's caseload, one out of five American children in need of foster care lives in California.

A national study about foster care (Greenberg Quinlan Research, June 1998) showed that most Americans recognize the serious need for foster care, and hold a positive attitude toward the foster care system in general. Yet few respondents would consider becoming foster parents themselves. In addition, the Benchmark Adoption Survey (Princeton Survey Research Association, 1997) showed that most Americans have a favorable opinion of adoption and believe that adoption serves a useful purpose in society, although half of respondents believe that adoption is not as good as having one's own child.

Reasons for Research

The goal of this study is to increase the number of foster and adoptive parents in the Bay Area by creating more effective media and communications campaigns for targeted audiences. No similar studies exist for the state of California. Additionally, no study has investigated both foster care and adoption in the same survey, so comparisons between these, within the same set of respondents, has not been possible. The Community Task Force on Homes for Children (CTF) recognized this information vacuum and the need for more research on public awareness and attitudes, as well as motivations and barriers, to adoption and foster care. CTF also recognized the need to identify new target audiences, new communication strategies and key messages for media campaigns directed at effectively recruiting more foster and adoptive parents to meet the needs of the Bay Area's children in need of homes.

These needs were further enhanced by two recent developments, one in communications and the other in state legislation. First, dramatic increases in the types of communications capacities and new technologies available, such as the Internet, present agencies with both challenges and opportunities. In the new communications landscape, it is important to find a better-defined niche for foster care and adoption and to proactively use new technologies to recruit families. Second, recent state legislation mandates "concurrent planning" (also known as "permanency planning" or "fost/adopt") for children in need of homes. This presents unique program issues in encouraging prospective families to work with the agency "in the best interest of the child." The new law asks prospective families to pursue dual purposes. It requires that fost/adopt families help a child reunite with his or her biological parents if possible, and at the same time, be ready to adopt if reunification efforts fail. Fost/adopt is a complex concept to communicate to prospective parents at an interpersonal level, and challenging to communicate in media recruitment campaigns.

An Update on Concurrent Planning

According to Judge Leonard Edwards, concurrent planning is similar to, but much more sophisticated than, the older fost/adopt concept of the 1990s. Since the inception of fost/adopt, there has been controversy from the birth parents' attorneys regarding the role of the fost/adopt parent. The concern is that the fost/adopt program does not give the biological parent a fair chance to reunite with the child because the fost/adopt parent's ultimate goal is to adopt the child.

The newer concurrent planning refers to an entire process of recruiting foster parents, training those parents in the "rules" of concurrent planning and then instituting the plan. Concurrent planning is based on child development principles, including the belief that it is best to reduce the number of times a child has to be moved. In the ideal scenario, the child is removed from a parent, placed with a

concurrent planning family and either returns home or is adopted by the concurrent planning family. As part of the contract that they sign, the concurrent planning family is trained and expected to assist the birth parents in the reunification process.

The premise of concurrent planning is to address the fundamental tensions around providing for the rights and the best interests of a child. It is also designed to balance the rights of the biological parents with the emotional needs and the rights of the prospective adoptive parents. Concurrent planning attempts to manage expectations through training, education and contractual agreement. Yet in essence, the conflicting message to the public is, "take a child into your home and heart; but first, please help us reunify the child with the birth parents. At the same time, please be ready to adopt if that option is not viable."

Because the concurrent planning family must wear the hats of both a foster parent and an adoptive parent, we need a better understanding of how people view foster care and adoption. It is only by understanding the attitudes of specific target groups within the general public, as well as current foster and adoptive parents, that service agencies can develop media campaigns and program services that more effectively recruit and retain adoptive and foster parents.

I. METHODOLOGY

In 1998, the Packard Foundation gave CTF a grant to conduct an exploratory needs assessment on foster care and adoption recruitment in Bay Area public agencies. This initial assessment helped CTF identify gaps in information and specific research needs in foster care and adoption in communications, recruitment and retention and served as a backdrop for more in-depth research on the subject. Between September 1999 and December 2000, CTF conducted research on attitudes toward foster care and adoption in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to gather data for this current study. Through a statewide survey, 1,011 California residents, representing all the state's counties, were polled on their attitudes toward foster care and adoption. In addition, 10 focus groups with respondents in different target groups and 43 individual interviews were conducted. Participants were drawn from seven counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Monterey, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz. The table below shows the number of participants by target group and data gathering technique.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY TARGET GROUP
AND DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUE

Target Group	Survey	Number of Focus Groups	Total Number of Focus Group Participants	Interviews
General Public				
Helping Professionals		2	13	
Gays and Lesbians		2	15	
African-Americans		1	8	
Other General Public	1,011	2	24	
Foster/Adoptive Parents				
Latino		1	9	
African-American		1	6	
Private Agency		1	7	
Current Agency Foster and Adoptive Parents				34
Former Agency Parents				9
TOTAL	**1,011**	**10**	**82**	**43**

Survey

In Fall 2000, the Field Research Institute conducted a statewide, random-digit dialing telephone survey

of 1,011 California households. The survey examined respondents' awareness, attitudes, motivations, willingness and perceived barriers to becoming adoptive and/or foster parents. Questions were asked on behalf of CTF and were conducted in English or Spanish. The questions regarding attitudes, motivations and willingness were embedded in one of Field's regularly scheduled syndicated surveys, which included a number of demographic and attitudinal variables.

Focus Groups

Of the 10 focus groups, 7 were drawn from the general public and 3 from current foster and/or adoptive parents. All participants were drawn from the seven counties shown in the table below. Of the seven general public focus groups, two were conducted with those members of the public who identified themselves as gay or lesbian, two with those who were employed in a helping profession (healthcare professionals, educators/childcare workers, therapists and probation officers) and one with individuals who identified as African-American. The other two general public groups were mixed in terms of age, ethnicity, profession and gender. The number of participants by county in each target population is shown in the table below.

GENERAL PUBLIC FOCUS GROUPS:
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTY

	Helping Profes-sionals	Gay/ Lesbian	African-American	Mixed*	Latino	Private	Totals
Alameda	1	1	5	4	0	0	11
Contra Costa	1	0	3	4	0	0	8
Monterey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
San Francisco	4	9	6	4	0	3	26
San Mateo	3	1	0	2	3	0	9
Santa Clara	4	3	0	7	6	4	24
Santa Cruz	0	1	0	3	0	0	4

These groups were made up of members of the general public and were mixed in terms of age, ethnicity, profession and gender.

The recruitment specifications for all general public groups were as follows:

- A mix of men and women.
- All had at least some college education.
- All were currently employed.
- All were to be open to the possibility of adoption or foster care.

Of the three current foster and/or adoptive parents groups, one was conducted with members who identified as Latino, one with those who identified as African-American and one with those who

work with private agencies.

Interviews

Between April and June 2000, 43 individual interviews were conducted with current and former foster and adoptive parents in the San Francisco Bay Area. Social services agency staff or local Foster Parent Association contacts identified potential participants. Actual respondents' identities were kept confidential to facilitate a candid discussion.

Thirty-five interviews were conducted at the respondents' home, and the remaining eight were done by telephone. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half. A county breakdown of interviews is shown in the table below.

INTERVIEWS BY COUNTY

Alameda	6
San Francisco	7
Contra Costa	7
San Mateo	7
Monterey	5
Santa Clara	7
Santa Cruz	4

II. SURVEY FINDINGS

The following section presents findings from a statewide, random-digit dialing telephone survey of 1,011 California households that took place in Fall 2000, conducted by the Field Research Institute on behalf of CTF. The goal of the survey was to study factors influencing awareness and attitudes toward adoption and foster care, motivations to adopt or foster, willingness to adopt or foster and barriers influencing the process. The findings are summarized below, while more detailed tables reflecting the survey data appear in the Appendix.

Sample Characteristics

The survey sample is divided almost equally between men and women, with around 40 percent of the respondents between ages 30 and 49. Around 30 percent are college graduates or have completed postgraduate studies, with the rest of the sample at a high school or less education level, or having some college or trade school. Around 80 percent of respondents are either white or Latino (56.9% white;

11

24.8% Latino), although African-Americans, Asian-Pacific Islanders and Native Americans are represented in single-digit percentages.

Over 40 percent of respondents report an annual household income of $15,000-50,000, with around 11 percent under $15,000 and 11 percent above $100,000. Approximately three-quarters of the sample are either employed or retired (58% employed; 16.4% retired). Around half the sample are married, and most (61.4%) are not presently parents or guardians. Almost 90 percent have American citizenship, and almost 80 percent were born in the United States.

In terms of political ideology, just over 30 percent describe themselves as conservative, and just over 40 percent as "middle of the road," with around 22 percent identifying as liberal. Over 30 percent identify "a lot" or "some" with the gay and lesbian community.

The vast majority (92.8%) say that they are "extremely concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about children, yet almost 80 percent say they are not very familiar with foster care or adoption issues. Approximately two-thirds have personal experience with foster care or adoption (either direct experience or through someone they know).

The full profile of the California sample interviewed by the Field Research Institute is presented in Table 1 in the Appendix.

Awareness

Awareness of issues relating to finding temporary or permanent homes for children who can no longer live with their biological parents was measured by the question, "How familiar are you with matters relating to foster care and adoption?" Fifty-nine percent of the survey sample said that they were either "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with these issues, while 50 percent said they were "not too familiar" or "not at all familiar." Only 1 percent had no opinion.

Attitudes

Attitudes toward adoption and foster care were measured by the question, "Is your impression of adoption or foster care generally positive or negative?" A positive attitude toward adoption was reported by 91 percent of the respondents, while a positive attitude toward foster care was expressed by only 59 percent. Several variables impacted respondents' attitudes toward foster care and adoption, as summarized below and detailed in Tables 2 and 3 in the Appendix.

Variables impacting attitudes toward adoption

- **Ethnicity**
  Whites were significantly more positive toward adoption, and African-Americans and Latinos significantly less positive, than the sample as a whole.

- **Education**
  Attitudes toward adoption became more positive as the respondents' level of education increased.

- **Employment Status**
  Employed respondents were significantly more positive about the idea of adoption than the sample as a whole. Unemployed respondents were significantly less positive.

- **Home Ownership**
  Home owners were more positive about adoption than renters.

- **Marital Status**
  Although respondents were overwhelmingly positive about adoption regardless of marital status, unmarried/cohabiting respondents were more likely than other categories to report negative attitudes about adoption.

- **Household Size**
  Respondents in larger households (5-12 people) were significantly less positive about adoption than those in smaller households or who live alone.

- **Language of Interview**
  Respondents in English-conducted interviews were more positive about adoption than respondents in Spanish-conducted interviews.

- **Citizenship**
  American citizens were more positive toward adoption than those without U.S. citizenship.

- **Place of Birth**
  U.S.-born respondents were more positive toward adoption than those born outside the United States.

- **Voter Registration**
  Respondents who were registered to vote were more positive toward adoption than those who were not.

- **Political Ideology**
  Conservatives were more likely to report being positive toward adoption and less likely to have no opinion. The politically ambivalent ("don't know") category were significantly less positive and more negative toward adoption.

- **Personal Experience**
  People who have been adoptive or foster parents themselves or knew someone who had were more positive toward adoption than those who lacked experience.

Variables impacting attitudes toward foster care

- **Age**
  Respondents aged 18-24 tended to be especially positive in their attitude about foster care. The 30-39 age group tended to be more negative or to have no opinion.

- **Education**
  The least educated group had a more favorable attitude toward foster care and the most educated group had a less favorable attitude. In general, higher education was associated with a lower probability of reporting a positive attitude toward foster care.

- **Language of Interview**
  Respondents for whom the interview was conducted in Spanish were less likely to be positive about foster care and more likely to have no opinion toward it than respondents

involved in interviews conducted in English.

- **Citizenship**
  Respondents who are not U.S. citizens were less likely to be positive about foster care and more likely to have no opinion toward it.

- **Place of Birth**
  Twice as many respondents born outside of the United States indicated that they had no opinion about foster care (leading to lower percentages of "positive" and "negative" attitudes on the subject). The same can be said about those who are not registered to vote (many of whom are not U.S. citizens).

- **Religion**
  Those in the "not religious/no preference" group were less positive about foster care than those with religious identifications.

- **Concern About Children**
  People rating themselves as "extremely concerned" about children were more negative about foster care than those who indicated that they were less concerned about children.

- **Familiarity with Foster Care and Adoption Issue**
  Familiarity with foster care and adoption is associated with more "positive" responses and fewer "no opinion" responses regarding attitudes about foster care.

- **Personal Experience**
  Respondents who have been adoptive or foster parents or knew someone who had were more positive about foster care and less likely to have no opinion about foster care.

Motivations

The subset of respondents who said that they were very or somewhat likely to adopt or foster were asked the reasons behind their choice. Several statements were read to them and respondents were asked whether the reason given in each statement applied in their case. The results are summarized below and reported in detail in Table 4 in the Appendix.

The main reasons behind respondents' willingness to adopt or foster are all focused on the child—to make a difference in a child's life, to provide a child with a positive family experience or to address the problem of so many children in need. The second most common set of motivations focused on how adoption or fostering would impact the adult—adding meaning to life, fulfilling religious or spiritual beliefs about providing for children or becoming (or continuing to be) a parent. The least common motivations were environmental factors—having adequate financial resources or the inability to bear children.

Willingness

To determine the survey respondents' preference for fostering versus adopting, their willingness to provide either a permanent or foster home was first evaluated. This was measured by the question, "How likely is it that you yourself would seriously consider providing either a temporary home to a child as a foster parent or a permanent home to a child as adoptive parent at some point in your life?" The distribution of responses across the sample was:

Very likely	15%
Somewhat likely	32%
Not too likely	23%
Not at all likely	29%
No opinion	1%

The 47 percent of respondents who indicated that they were either "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to provide a home were then asked whether they would be more likely to adopt or foster. Fifty-five percent indicated a preference for permanent adoption, 36 percent for providing a temporary foster home and the remaining 9 percent were unsure. The research objective was to identify the differences in the characteristics of those who were likely to prefer adopting over fostering. A summary comparison of these preferences across various demographic and ideological characteristics appears below and is detailed in Table 5 in the Appendix.

Variables impacting preferences for foster care vs. adoption

- **Age**
  Younger respondents (under 40) were more likely to prefer adoption; older ones (50 and over) to prefer providing a foster home. Those in their 40s were about equally disposed toward adoption and fostering. (Note however, that, in absolute terms, all age groups—with the exception of the 50–59 group—preferred adoption to fostering.)

- **Education, Household Income, Employment Status, Marital Status**
  Religious Identification
  The preference for adoption dominates in all subcategories of these demographic variables, with the exception of widowed persons, who would prefer to foster rather than adopt.

- **Concern About Children**
  A high level of concern about children is associated with a preference for adoption, whereas a moderate level of concern is associated with a preference for fostering. When children's issues are less salient in a respondent's mind, there is very strong preference for adoption over fostering.

```
Barriers
```

The main reasons for not becoming adoptive or foster care parents seem to be related to the respondent's life situation. Examples include already having a large enough family, being the wrong age, time constraints due to work and inadequate financial resources. Overall, barriers were less strongly based on the child's characteristics, circumstances or on the agencies' regulatory process.

Table 6 in the Appendix reflects the barriers to adopting or fostering expressed by the survey sample.

III. FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The following section presents the focus group and interview findings on foster care and adoption obtained in CTF's research. To plan and implement communications campaigns relevant to potential target audiences, it was necessary to have participants discuss the research issues in their own words and from their own life experiences. The objective of this aspect of the research was to obtain information on the level of awareness concerning adoption and foster care issues; attitudes toward adoption, foster care and fost/adopt; motivations and willingness to adopt or become a foster care or fost/adopt parent; and barriers to becoming a foster or adoptive parent. When applicable, focus group and interview findings are compared with survey results.

AWARENESS

… of need

Most focus group and interview participants were unaware of the extent to which there is a need for foster and adoptive homes, especially in California. Focus groups and interviews also illuminated the "invisibility" of foster care and adoption in the media. Participants indicated that there is not enough media attention given to these issues, and that current media focus is overwhelmingly negative. African-American participants who had seen the television program "Brian's Kids" on KPIX TV's "Evening Magazine" said that this exposure raised their awareness and sensitivity to adoption and foster care.

This is similar to the results from survey respondents, 59 percent of whom had said they were familiar or somewhat familiar with matters relating to foster care and adoption. Additionally, 92 percent of survey respondents stated that they were extremely or somewhat concerned with problems facing children in California today but lacked specific information and understanding.

> "There is not a lot of public information. Foster care and adoption seems hidden
> to me."

> "I never connected to the larger sense of how many kids are out there. I didn't understand how bad circumstances can be."

… of public agencies

Most general public focus group participants were unaware of the role of public agencies in caring for foster children, and most associated adoption with private adoption agencies. Although most of the participants in the general public focus groups were unfamiliar with the term "fost/adopt," the large majority could describe the concept quite accurately.

> "I wasn't even aware of the option to adopt through a public agency. I thought adoptions were only through private agencies and foster care was a public agency."

... through personal experience

For current parents in the focus groups and interviews, their awareness of either adoption or foster care issues came mostly through personal experience. They either had friends or family members who had been involved with foster care or adoption, or they became exposed to the needs of foster children through their work or connection to a religious or spiritual community.

ATTITUDES

... toward adoption

Most of the focus group and interview participants expressed positive overall attitudes toward adoption and foster care, regardless of their prior experience with either. Nevertheless, these positive attitudes were significantly stronger toward adoption than toward foster care. This mirrors survey findings—91 percent of survey respondents had a positive attitude toward adoption, compared to only 60 percent who felt positively toward foster care. Furthermore, the survey showed that respondents' education related to attitudes toward adoption and foster care in different ways. In the case of adoption, the survey showed that as an individual's education level increases, attitudes toward adoption become more positive as compared to lesser-educated respondents who tended to express a more favorable view of foster care. The survey also revealed that nonwhite ethnic populations and immigrants are less likely to have a favorable view about adoption. The more educated segment of this population had a more favorable view of adoption.

... toward foster care

There seemed to be a consensus in the focus groups and interviews that foster care should be only a temporary solution. Some of the drawbacks mentioned about foster care included: the impermanence of the arrangement; foster parents lacking accountability; interference with the biological family; and fears about the role of the biological parents.

> "I think of foster care as not permanent, and I think a child needs a permanent environment and constant nurturing."

One can infer from the participants' responses an underlying belief that giving a child only a temporary home is not in the best interest of the child. On the other hand, participants recognized that foster care can provide children with a positive family experience.

Participants also expressed negative impressions of children in the foster care system. Foster care children were often perceived as compromised by emotional, chemical, physical or even genetic handicaps. Participants noted the fact that there are older children in the foster care system, perceiving that older children are more difficult to influence positively. Even infants in the foster care system were thought to pose a substantial risk due to possible exposure to drugs or other forms of prenatal stress. In addition, some participants expressed the belief that a foster child may cause problems for the biological children of the foster family.

... toward agency processes

Focus group and interview participants' attitudes toward the foster care or adoption process were often

dependent upon their own personal experiences or the experiences of those close to them. If the participant had been or knew someone who was an adoptive or foster parent, this increased the participant's favorable attitude. One reason for a less than favorable attitude toward foster care was based on negative impressions of the foster care system and processes. One of the objections to foster care was the belief that staying in the system too long was not beneficial to children. African-American foster parents expressed more overall negative experiences with the agency process than other parents. There was a perception that there are different and higher standards for minority foster parents. In addition, African-Americans felt that they received more difficult children, that they were perceived as more resistant to agency policies related to disciplining children and that they were viewed as opposed to providing information on birth parents.

Though focus group and interview data reflected primarily positive attitudes toward the adoption process, participants expressed certain reservations. One reason for this was a general lack of information about the public adoption process as an available choice. Adoption was mostly associated with private agencies. The primary concerns participants expressed about the adoption process were actually issues associated with private adoption, including birth parents regaining the child after adoption was finalized, financial barriers and the excessive bureaucracy associated with overseas adoptions. An additional concern was the fear of not having the full medical and emotional history of the child revealed to the adopting parents.

... toward fost/adopt

Both the focus groups and interviews specifically addressed the issue of concurrent planning (fost/adopt). Both general public focus groups and the foster care and adoptive parent focus groups evaluated the concept, weighing the risks of emotional attachment against the benefits of helping a child reunite with the biological family. These groups generally recognized the value of having a trial period with the child. One of the main concerns expressed about being a fost/adopt parent was becoming emotionally attached and then having to return the child to the birth parents. Participants expressed concerns that biological parents may perceive the fost/adopt process as too threatening and may sabotage it.

On the other hand, participants identified that a positive reason to consider fost/adopt was the perceived opportunity to "try it" [parenting] once their own biological children were raised or if they were not able to have their own children. Overall, participants generally expressed less intense feelings toward fost/adopt than toward foster care. In part this may be due to the newness of the concurrent planning measure.

> "There is a positive side for the fost/adopt family. They can see if the child's personality fits into their family, especially if they already have children."

Current fost/adopt parents voiced serious concerns about the way the child welfare system handles the process of returning children to their birth parents or terminating parental rights. Among the complaints were that the system favors birth parents over what is best for the child; the timing and logistics of returning a child to the birth parents; and miscommunication or misrepresentation by the agency of the legal status of the child's case.

... toward adoptive parents

Many focus group and interview participants expressed the opinion that people become adoptive parents only when they cannot have children of their own. Some examples of this situation include women past childbearing age, same-sex couples, people with fertility problems and individuals with poor medical histories. Participants listed the following desirable characteristics for adoptive parents: financial security, ability to stick with something, love of children and the desire to have an infant or young child.

Participants listed the following challenges faced by adoptive parents: having children become resentful of adoptive parents for not being their own birth parent, having less selection with the age of the child than foster care parents, being "stuck" with a child with severe problems and having an incomplete medical history of the child. Rewards for adoptive parents included having the opportunity to be a parent, helping a child already born get a permanent home, having more time to impact a child's life, the rewards of parenting while not contributing to overpopulation of the planet and the fulfillment associated with an altruistic act.

... toward foster care parents

Two contrasting opinions of foster parents emerged from the general public focus groups. On the positive side, foster parents were viewed as energetic heroes with big hearts and a selfless love for children. However, negative stereotypes of foster parents included the view that foster parents are low-income individuals motivated only by financial gain, or worse, that they are abusive parents.

Characteristics that participants listed as desirable for foster parents included patience, commitment, responsibility, ability to be flexible, strong parenting skills, financial stability, religious beliefs and love of children. Challenges mentioned for foster parents included invasion of one's privacy, lack of time to care for the special needs of children, inability to relocate, gaining the trust of older children and the impact of the child's background and problems on the rest of the family. Rewards for foster parents included the pride and accomplishment of turning a child's life around, the ability to offer hope to a child, witnessing a child's growth, the challenge of working with a child and the opportunity to fill a void in one's life. Participants expressed appreciation for foster parents and the belief that there is a need in society for people to take this role.

> " I am very appreciative of people who are foster parents. We need more people in society to fill this role."

... toward fost/adopt parents

Participants characterized fost/adopt parents as people who in many cases have already had children and who need to be able to determine whether they and their existing family can handle the challenges of a special needs child. Characteristics seen as desirable for fost/adopt parents included courage and an ability to see what is best for the child and the biological parents, as well as a high tolerance for frustration. General public participants agreed that the best fost/adopt parents are those who approach the situation with the attitude that the biological parents are ideal candidates for the child.

Rewards for fost/adopt parents included the opportunity to assist in supporting the biological parent, the ability to reunite a family and the possibility of having a child permanently in the home.

Participants believed that there were rewards whether the child stayed in the placement home or was reunited with the biological family.

```
MOTIVATIONS

     …general motivations
```

Participants described two distinct types of motivations for why someone might become an adoptive, foster or fost/adopt parent: to meet a personal need, or because of an altruistic motivation. Generally, meeting personal needs was viewed as the more significant motivation for adoptive parents, while altruism was more likely associated with foster parents. A love for children was viewed as a fundamental motivation for anyone considering providing a home for a child. Current parents were also motivated by spiritual values.

> "I wanted to make a contribution to someone else's life. I came from a very child-oriented family and have always wanted to have a child."

Similarly, survey results found that making a difference in a child's life was the most powerful motivation for those seriously considering becoming foster or adoptive parents. Other critical motivations were also child-focused rather than focused on personal needs, including the desire to provide a child with a positive experience and the understanding that there are so many children in need of homes.

```
     ...motivations to adopt
```

While adoption was generally seen as motivated more by self-interest than altruism, a distinction was made by general public focus group participants according to the age of the child. The perceived motivations associated with adopting an infant were different from those associated with adopting an older child. The motivation to adopt an infant was felt to come from a fundamental human desire to have a child of one's own to nurture, love and shape. In contrast, the motivation to adopt an older child was believed to be driven more by the desire to give a child a "second chance" and to make a lasting difference in the child's life. Among the most commonly mentioned personal motivations for adopting were to have a family, to experience parenting and to provide siblings for children.

> "The motivation to adopt an infant comes from a fundamental human desire to have a child of one's own to nurture, love and shape."

Infertility issues were the most commonly mentioned motivation for current adoptive parents. Many adoptive parents said that they had a sense of destiny about the child, that he or she was "meant to be their child."

```
     ...motivations to foster
```

General public focus group participants expressed their belief that people who became foster care parents generally fit into one of four categories: those who already had experience raising children and

had an "empty nest," individuals who could not have children, couples who wanted to have a better experience than they had with their own children and those with previous fostering experience.

General public focus group participants expressed the belief that people become motivated to be foster parents in order to make a lasting difference in a child's life. Some also mentioned the ability to positively influence the birth parents. On the negative side, some participants felt that foster parents were motivated to take on this role to create or add to their income.

Motivations for current foster parent participants included the desire to help a child in need, the desire to help a specific child, wanting to continue parenting and a belief that fostering would provide meaning in their own life. Current foster parents had experienced a variety of events that precipitated action. For example, they met a specific child, had children leave for college, retired or were moved by a media presentation on the issue.

Those identified as targeted audiences were more likely to emphasize a motivation to foster based on a sense of responsibility to their group. For example, African-American participants mentioned the need to take care of African-American children; Latino participants spoke of the need for Spanish-speaking homes. Gays and lesbians were motivated by the desire to provide a loving home for gay and lesbian youth. In addition, gay and lesbian participants believed fostering would be more open to them than adoption.

...motivations for fost/adopt

The perceived motivations participants expressed for becoming fost/adopt parents were similar to adoptive parent motivations, with two exceptions. One was the belief that parents may be motivated to take on this role because it would allow them to "try out" a child before deciding to adopt him or her. Participants expressed concern that potential parents may see it as a kind of "lease to buy" and that this mind-set could impact the child. Another perceived motivation was the ability to positively impact both the child and the child's parents.

WILLINGNESS

…general willingness

In terms of willingness to consider providing a home for a child, current parents said the distinction between those willing to be a foster parent versus those willing to be an adoptive parent blurs after entering the system. As current parents connected with an individual child or saw more closely the plight of children in the system, they entertained the possibility of taking on another role with these children. Some foster parents became adoptive parents and some fost/adopt parents saw the benefits of providing a temporary home for a child.

These results are consistent with those of survey respondents, almost half of whom indicated that they were either very likely or somewhat likely to seriously consider providing either a temporary home to a child as a foster parent or a permanent home to a child as an adoptive parent at some point in their lives. When children's issues were less central in the mind of the respondent, there was a very strong preference for adoption over fostering.

```
                ...willingness to adopt
```

Focus groups and interviews showed that general public participants would most likely consider adopting if they could not have children, or if they had the financial resources or the ability to stay at home with the child. The emotional appeal of adoption was greatest for committed gay couples. Motivations for this group included developing a generational sense of family, having an easier time working within the system if they adopted "less desirable" children and wanting to help a gay teen. In examining survey respondents' willingness to adopt, of the 47 percent either very likely or somewhat likely to consider becoming a foster or adoptive parent, 55 percent indicated a preference for adoption. In addition, while all age groups preferred adoption to fostering, those under age 40 were more likely to prefer adoption than other age groups.

```
                ...willingness to foster
```

Most participants in the general public focus groups indicated that they would not consider becoming a foster parent, though some said they might consider foster care after raising their own children. Similarly, among those in the survey who were either very likely or somewhat likely to consider fostering or adoption, only 36 percent indicated a preference for becoming a foster parent. Respondents 50 and over were more likely to prefer providing a foster home.

The most attractive thing about fostering, particularly for older general public focus group participants, was the lack of a long-term commitment. A high level of concern about children was also associated with a preference for fostering. The participants who expressed the most interest in fostering were helping professionals who were attracted to the idea of making a difference in a child's life. They had a greater sense of optimism in the possibility that one good intervention from a caring adult might be the catalyst that would turn a child's life around. African-American participants were more likely to consider fostering a younger child than an older child, believing that older children were less tractable.

```
               ...willingness to fost/adopt
```

Most participants in the general public focus groups indicated that they would not consider becoming fost/adopt parents. The following section describes possible reasons for this preference, as well as barriers to more traditional forms of foster care and adoption.

```
BARRIERS
```

```
                ...adoption barriers
```

Focus group and interview participants emphasized emotional barriers to bringing foster or adopted children into their homes. While adoption held the greatest appeal for most participants, there were practical barriers as well that prevented many from seriously considering providing a permanent home for a child. Emotional barriers included having to let go of the child, the impact on the current family, not having a partner or not having a supportive partner. Participants were more resistant to the idea of adopting an older child, assuming it would be more challenging because the child would have had a more negative history. Practical barriers included feeling that the time was not right, believing that they were too old to adopt, not having enough space, a partner not being open to the idea and not having enough income. Some general public focus group participants expressed fears about biological parents fighting to take the child back after adoption and felt this was a barrier to adopting. This perception, which is often a result of negative media coverage, indicates a lack of understanding in the general

public about the differences between private and public adoption.

In terms of specific target groups, gays and lesbians perceived enormous barriers to adopting a child. Most assumed that they couldn't adopt and, if they could, that they would face overwhelming discrimination or obstacles because of their sexual orientation. For current Latino parents, cultural ideas about family were the primary barrier. Specifically, family members resisted the idea of bringing in a child who was not "one of their own" [family] and viewed adopted children as having many problems. Latino parents were also concerned about the impact of public negative attitudes on the child, particularly if part of an interracial family. Lack of information about the process for adopting was the biggest barrier mentioned among the African-American participants.

...foster care barriers

All of the same practical and emotional barriers that surround adoption also apply to foster care. In addition, anxiety about the child potentially suffering from emotional trauma was greater concerning foster care than adoption. Some of the barriers mentioned included the impact it would have on other family members, the lack of time to care for the child, the fear of becoming attached to the child, the financial inability to care for the child, the resistance they would experience from their partner and the special needs or problems of the child.

Participants were, in general, extremely reluctant to bring a foster child's "problems" into their home. The most frequently stated reason by current parents for not becoming a foster parent was the concern that their own children would be exposed and possibly "contaminated" by the troubled background of the foster child. "Contamination" themes mentioned by current parents included fears that their own children would pick up negative behaviors, that their family could be accused of abuse or that the birth parents would jeopardize the safety of their family. In addition to "contamination" concerns, attachment issues were another major barrier to becoming a foster parent. Participants worried about the potential loss of the child in their life for both themselves and their own children.

While focus groups and interview participants emphasized emotional barriers, survey respondents stressed more practical barriers. The major barriers mentioned that prevent survey respondents from becoming foster or adoptive parents were age concerns such as being too early or too late in life to provide a home (59%); having children of their own or feeling like their family is already big enough (57%); a job or career limiting the amount of time available for raising children (52%); and not having adequate financial resources to provide for a child (50%).

...fost/adopt barriers

In addition to the practical and emotional barriers mentioned for adoption and foster care, participants were reluctant to consider fost/adopt because of concerns about attaching to and loving a child and then not being able to adopt him/her, and potential conflict with biological parents.

IV. COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

Information Sources

Survey, focus group and interview data all indicate that family, friends and other personal sources were the primary, most trusted source for people looking to obtain information on issues relating to foster care and adoption. And 75 percent of survey respondents would be likely or somewhat likely to rely on information about foster care and adoption obtained from family and friends through word of mouth.

Survey results also show the most frequently mentioned sources for information on foster care and adoption were public (82%) and private (85%) agencies. Most current parents began to seek out information on an agency through the phone book. These parents had heard from family or friends that their community had children who needed homes, but were often not sure where to call. The Internet was the second most frequently mentioned tool for accessing information on agencies.

Communication Strategies

Participants emphasized the need for media campaigns to present positive and personal portrayals of foster care and adoption in order to overcome the many negative stereotypes that exist about foster children, foster parents and the child welfare system. Current parents frequently suggested portraying foster children as "normal" and "easy to love," showing success stories and using foster parents in media campaigns. These parents felt that real-life presentations of foster and adoptive families would offer encouragement to prospective foster and adoptive parents and enable them to identify with the families enough to see it as a possibility for themselves.

Some respondents were uncomfortable with the approach of featuring specific children in need of homes, as exemplified by the television program and campaign "Brian's Kids." It was sometimes perceived as comparable to "selling" a child, or adopting a "pet of the week."

Current parents most frequently mentioned churches as effective places to recruit homes for children. Gay and lesbian parents suggested using resources in their community, particularly those organizations that are sensitive to gay and lesbian issues.

Communication Messages

Suggested communication messages from study participants illustrate the need for human interest stories and other positive images of foster care and adoption. Although the following themes and messages are designed for media campaigns, they should also be used by agencies in their website materials and community outreach efforts. Consistency, coordination and reinforcement of themes and messages are the cornerstone of effective communications campaigns for foster and adoptive parent recruitment. Consistent and targeted key messages should tie together the full range of communications, ranging from the broadest unit (the mass media) to the next largest (Web marketing) to the more localized (community outreach, orientations and interpersonal, one-on-one social interactions). Consistent messaging in mass media, website strategies and community outreach (including special engagements, brochures and fliers) should be reflected in all agency communications—from answering

phones to orientation trainings and interactions with social workers.

Key themes:
- Bay Area children need homes.
- Fostering and/or adopting make a positive difference in a child's life.
- Providing a home for a child is a rewarding and fulfilling experience.
- Fost/adopt programs focus on the best interest of the child.

Communication messages for the general public:
- Foster and adoptive children are not contaminated and are not "damaged goods."
- Foster and adoptive children change positively due to being in a loving home.
- You don't need to be white, married and rich to foster or adopt.
- Having foster and adoptive children in the home can benefit the biological children.

```
Communication messages for key target audiences:


African-Americans
```
- Social service agencies work with families, not against them.
- African-American children have the most need for foster and adoptive homes.
- "Support the Culture" by providing foster and adoptive homes.
- A generation is being lost.

Keep in mind:
- Foster care and adoption awareness and education is gained through family, friends and churches/community networks.
- Sensitivity toward African-American cultural and family values and norms.
- The scope of need of African-American children in the system.
- The negative stereotypes held by many African-Americans of foster and adoptive children, parents and agencies, especially for foster care.

```
Latinos
```
- Bay Area Latino children need Spanish-speaking homes.
- Providing a home for a child is affordable.
- Latino children need homes and love.
- "Sangre" (blood) is important, as is creating family" (for those who can't conceive).

Keep in mind:

- The Latino community needs Spanish language messages.
- Use of Latino spokespeople to provide testimonials.
- The sensitivity to bi-racial placement/ethnicity.
- Latinos experiencing infertility are a key target group.

Gays and Lesbians

- Sexual orientation is not a barrier to adopting or fostering.
- Gay teens need love, understanding and support.
- There are many legal benefits of public adoption.

Keep in mind:

- Sensitivity to revealing too much personal detail.
- Fear of others finding out about their adoption.
- The gay and lesbian community networks.

Helping Professionals

- Bay Area kids need homes.
- Make a difference in a child's life.

Keep in mind:

- The altruistic nature of helping professionals.
- Examples of other helping professionals providing homes.
- The joy of seeing a child develop, rise to challenges and grow to his/her potential.
- Often when there are not enough foster homes in one county, the children are placed in another county displacing them from schools, friends and community.

Importance of Communications

This study has provided a wealth of communications research that can be effectively used in developing and implementing communications campaigns directed at recruiting foster and adoptive parents. Specifically, the study has identified key target audiences and their attitudes, as well as motivations and barriers, toward foster care and adoption. The study also identified key themes and messages for select target audiences. The challenge going forward will be to systematically and consistently use these themes and messages through the full range of available communications channels and strategies.

It is important to understand that communications must be viewed along a continuum. Key messages must be communicated from the broadest units of communication, such as the mass media and the Internet, to the more localized, such as community outreach conducted by public agencies through speaking engagements at churches and community groups. Public agencies need to maintain consistency in message as communications continue through orientations, home study and phone inquiries from prospective foster and adoptive parents. This consistency also must be maintained in interpersonal contact between prospective parents and social workers as they work together to place the child in the family home.

Consistency of tone through interpersonal connection is as important as consistency of message in the mass media. A great deal of communication literature supports the theory that the media can inform, educate and predispose viewers about a concept and a program, such as finding homes for foster and adoptive children in the Bay Area. Ultimately, however, the interpersonal interaction between prospective parents agencies becomes the key determinant in placing the child with the right family.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

In conclusion, several findings from this research suggest ways that public agencies can enhance existing communications strategies for more effective recruitment and retention of potential foster and adoptive families. Findings regarding public awareness showed that 59 percent of respondents were

either very or somewhat familiar with matters relating to foster care and adoption. Findings regarding the public's views about adoption, foster care and fost/adopt showed that attitudes toward adoption are extremely positive (91% of survey respondents). Foster care is also generally viewed positively (59% of survey respondents).

Fost/adopt is viewed neutrally—perhaps because it is a new concept and therefore currently lacks negative and positive attitudes that develop over time. The relatively less charged emotional aspect of fost/adopt may be beneficial for designing new communications campaigns. Campaigns should consider positioning fost/adopt closer to adoption because adoption is viewed more positively by the general public. For example, the communication message "in the best interest of the child" is effective in that it frames fost/adopt in a positive and compelling manner.

The survey showed that non-white ethnic populations and immigrants are less likely to have a favorable view of adoption. Therefore, media campaigns about adoption targeted to these audiences should address existing negative attitudes. The immigrant population, on the other hand, had a less formed opinion about foster care as reflected in the rate of "no opinion" responses. Thus, media campaigns about foster care targeting immigrant populations can be directed toward attitude formation rather than attitude change.

The findings also showed several variables impacting respondents' views on adoption and foster care. However, once a person was predisposed to bringing a child home, whether or not he or she would do so through an adoption or foster care arrangement seemed unrelated to demographics. Respondents over age 50 were an exception to this finding. This population has a better chance to be successfully recruited through media as foster care parents than any other age group. But even the over-50 age group preferred adoption over fostering.

Findings also showed the respondent's education impacted attitudes toward both adoption and foster care. The more educated segment of the sample population had a favorable view of adoption and the less-educated segment had a more positive attitude toward foster care. Therefore, media campaigns can be developed with this in mind.

In addition, people who expressed the most concern about problems facing children also had the most negative view of foster care. This might be related to a belief that giving a child only a temporary home is not in the child's best interests. On the other hand, a powerful determinant of positive attitudes toward both adoption and foster care was participants' own experience. If a participant knew someone who was an adoptive or foster parent, this increased his or her favorable attitude. Therefore, finding ways to connect people with more foster and adoptive parents in their communities might help change attitudes.

While general public focus group participants focused on "contamination" issues and reflected concerns about their children and families being adversely impacted by foster children, foster parents attested to the positive impact of foster children on other children in the family, including their own children. This result suggests significant opportunities for the use of adoptive and foster parents in media campaigns and in peer communication.

To counter the public agency's invisible or negative images in the media, public agencies need to proactively position themselves and delineate the differences between public and private adoption agencies. A key concept that should be communicated is that while private and public agencies place the same pool of kids, public agencies are less costly and also offer support services for special-needs

kids, such as counseling.

In addition to public agencies, counties must plan and implement targeted communications campaigns. The study clearly delineated new targets by age, education and ethnic background, each target group holding a unique set of characteristics, attitudes, motivations and perceived barriers. African-Americans, Latinos, gays and lesbians and helping professionals in particular would benefit from carefully targeted campaigns.

Finally, the results of the study raise concerns about attracting adoptive parents who are willing to go through a period of fostering. Perception of fostering is less positive than that of adoption. The characteristics of those willing to adopt are different from those willing to foster. Concurrent planning policy will need to be supported by an aggressive media campaign that bridges these groups and allays concerns about foster care. In designing effective media campaigns, the different demographics and the lifestyle variables of the target populations need to be taken into consideration. The study suggests that the most powerful message in such a campaign would be to focus on the benefits such a policy would have for the child. This motivation is strongly shared by both those interested in fostering and those interested in adopting children in need.

The current study provided communications research as a foundation for planning, developing and implementing communications and media campaigns. One of the next steps of this project should consider dissemination of research findings to interested parties, including child and family welfare directors at social service agencies, juvenile judges and the larger foster care and adoption network of agencies. Research findings should ideally be disseminated to county public agencies through workshops, presentations and trainings. Articles should be made available for publication through appropriate social service and scholarly journals. A Bay Area media campaign would ideally focus on the highlights of the study. "Bay Area Homes for Kids," a new program that succeeds "Brian's Kids" on KPIX TV's "Evening Magazine," is already using the research data in targeting new audiences with new messages.

Another next step should focus on developing and implementing the ideas from these findings into effective communications campaigns. Communications theories, such as stages of change and hierarchy of effects, can guide decisions regarding how to move audiences to awareness, motivation and action. Social marketing, media advocacy, the ecological model and diffusion of innovations can assist in planning, developing, testing and evaluating campaigns that not only address individual change but environmental change as well. Social learning and attribution theories can be particularly useful for designing appropriate messages. In sum, theory- based communications campaigns, using these research findings, could result in creating greater awareness about the Bay Area's children in need and motivate key target audiences toward action.

P R O F E S S I O N A L   C O N S U L T A N T S   U S E D   F O R   S T U D Y

California Poll conducted by the Field Research Institute

General Public Focus Group conducted by the Qualitative Research Centre, Inc.

African-American Focus Group conducted by King, Brown & Partners, Inc.

Latino Focus Group conducted by Rina Alcalay, Ph.D

Statistical analysis of survey data prepared by Robert Bell, Ph.D

Research assistant for report and interviews conducted by Laura O'Loughlin

R E S E A R C H   I N S T R U M E N T S   A N D   R E P O R T S

Survey
- Survey Questions
- Survey Results
- Data Analyses by Robert Bell, Ph.D.

Focus Groups
- Discussion Guide

Interviews
- Interview Questions

Specific reports on focus groups are available by request and are listed on our website, www.bakids.org. Reports include:

• Helping Professionals, Gays and Lesbians by the Qualitative Research Centre, Inc.

• African-Americans by King, Brown & Partners, Inc.

• Latinos

A P P E N D I X

List of Tables:

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

	%
Gender of Respondent	
Female	50.7
Male	49.3
Age	
18-24 years	12.2
25-29	9.7
30-39	19.7
40-49	20.8
50-59	14.9
60-64	6.5
65 and older	16.2
Education	
High School or Less	36.5
Some College/Trade School	32.1
College Graduate	15.9
Post-Graduate Studies	15.4
Ethnicity of Respondent	
Non-Hispanic White	56.9
Hispanic	24.8
African-American	6.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.6
Native American/American Indian	2.4
Multiple Ethnic Identifications	2.3
Declined to Answer	1.7
Annual Household Income	
Under $15,000	11.2

	%
$15,000 – $30,000	20.2
$30,000 – $50,000	22.1
$50,000 – $75,000	15.1
$75,000 – $100,000	10.1
>$100,000	11.3
Declined to Answer	10.1
Employment Status	
Employed	58.0
Unemployed	3.5
Homemaker	10.0
Retired	16.4
Disabled	4.5
Student	7.7
Home Ownership	
Rent	41.5
Own	58.5
Member of Household in a Labor Union	
No	83.2
Yes	16.8
Marital Status	
Married	52.8
Not Married/Cohabiting	6.9
Separated or Divorced	12.3
Widowed	7.8
Never Married	20.2
Presently a Parent/Guardian	
Yes	38.6
No	61.4
Size of Household	
Respondent Lives Alone	16.7
2 people	29.0
3-4 people	36.7
5-12 people	17.5

Language of Interview	
English	88.3
Spanish	11.7
American Citizenship	
Yes	87.1
No	12.9
Born in the United States	
Yes	78.2
No	21.8
Has at Least One Foreign-Born Parent	
Yes	21.7
No	78.3
Registered to Vote	
Yes	73.7
No/Noncitizen	26.3
Political Ideology	
Conservative	30.4
Middle-of-the-Road	40.7
Liberal	22.2
Don't Know	6.8
Religious Identification	
Not Religious/No Preference	13.3
Christian	61.6
Christian/Identifies with Religious Right	8.0
Non-Christian (Including Jewish)	15.7
Declined to Answer	1.4
Definitely Thinks of Self as "Environmentalist"	
"Definitely Yes"	31.6
All Other Responses	68.4
Identification with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender Community	
Identifies a Lot	8.7
Identifies Some	24.8
Does Not Identify	60.2
No Opinion	6.2

Concern About Children	
Extremely Concerned	66.7
Somewhat Concerned	26.1
Not Too/Not at All Concerned	7.2
Familiarity with Foster Care/Adoption Issue	
Very Familiar	21.9
Somewhat Familiar	39.0
Not Too Familiar/Not at All Familiar	39.1
Personal Experience with Foster Care/Adoption (You or Someone You Know)	
No	39.3
Yes	60.7

Table 2: Attitudes Toward Adoption

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
Gender of Respondent					
Female	511	91.4	4.9	3.7	
Male	500	91.2	4.0	4.8	.563
Age					
18-24 years	127	88.2	8.7	3.1	
25-29	106	90.6	5.7	3.8	
30-39	242	93.4	2.9	3.7	
40-49	207	93.2	3.9	2.9	
50-59	119	89.9	5.9	4.2	
60-64	54	90.7	3.7	5.6	
65 and older	152	90.1	2.6	7.2	.304
Education					
High School or Less	363	87.9	6.9	5.2	
Some College/ Trade School	326	91.7	3.7	4.6	
College Graduate	163	95.1	1.8	3.1	
Post-Graduate Studies	152	94.1	3.3	2.6	**n.s.**
Ethnicity of Respondent					
Non-Hispanic White	558	93.9	2.5	3.6	
Hispanic	263	87.5	8.4	4.2	
African-American	65	83.1	12.3	4.6	
Asian/Pacific Islander	57	91.2	3.5	5.3	
Native American/ American Indian	26	96.2	0.0	3.8	
Multiple Ethnic Identifications	26	96.2	0.0	3.8	**n.s.**
Annual Household Income					
Under $15,000	117	87.2	8.5	4.3	.189

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
$15,000 – $30,000	206	89.8	6.8	3.4	
$30,000 – $50,000	223	95.1	2.7	2.2	
$50,000 – $75,000	149	89.9	4.7	5.4	
$75,000 – $100,000	101	91.1	5.0	4.0	
>$100,000	120	95.8	1.7	2.5	

Employment Status					
Employed	594	92.8	3.7	3.5	
Unemployed	38	78.9	10.5	10.5	
Homemaker	106	88.7	8.5	2.8	
Retired	146	93.2	2.1	4.8	
Disabled	41	85.4	4.9	9.8	
Student	81	88.9	8.6	2.5	**n.s.**
Home Ownership					
Rent	428	87.1	6.8	6.1	
Own	554	94.4	2.9	2.7	**n.s.**
Member of Household in a Labor Union					
Yes	165	92.7	4.2	3.0	
No	829	90.8	4.7	4.5	.675
Marital Status					
Married	530	92.5	3.8	3.8	
Not Married/Cohabiting	77	86.7	11.7	2.6	
Separated or Divorced	113	92.9	2.7	4.4	
Widowed	72	87.5	2.8	9.7	
Never Married	214	90.7	5.1	4.2	**n.s.**
Presently a Parent/Guardian					
Yes	416	91.1	5.0	3.8	
No	591	91.5	4.1	4.4	.699
Size of Household					
Respondent Lives Alone	163	94.5	1.2	4.3	
2 people	280	90.0	4.3	5.7	
3-4 people	377	93.1	4.0	2.9	
5-12 people	185	87.0	9.2	3.8	**n.s.**
Language of Interview					
English	882	92.5	3.6	3.9	
Spanish	129	82.9	10.9	6.2	**n.s.**
American Citizenship					
Yes	862	92.5	3.5	4.1	
No	148	84.5	10.8	4.7	**n.s.**
Born in the United States					
Yes	773	92.5	3.5	4.0	**n.s.**

No	238	87.0	8.0	5.0	
Has at Least One Foreign-Born Parent					
Yes	167	92.8	2.4	4.8	
No	599	92.7	3.5	3.8	.675
Registered to Vote					
Yes	718	92.5	3.2	4.3	
No or Noncitizen	291	88.3	7.6	4.1	**n.s.**
Political Ideology					
Conservative	318	94.0	3.5	2.5	
Middle-of-the-Road	405	90.6	4.7	4.7	
Liberal	216	91.2	3.2	5.6	
Don't Know	72	83.3	11.1	5.6	**n.s.**
Religious Preference					
Not Religious/No Preference	127	91.3	3.1	5.5	.115
Christian	616	90.7	5.8	3.4	
Christian/Identifies with Religious Right	88	89.8	5.7	4.5	
Non-Christian (Including Jewish)	165	95.2	0.6	4.2	
Definitely Thinks of Self as "Environmentalist"					
Yes	313	93.9	2.9	3.2	
No	698	90.1	5.3	4.6	.126
Identification with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender Community					
Identifies a Lot	93	92.5	3.2	4.3	.588
Identifies Some	249	94.0	4.0	2.0	
Does Not Identify	605	91.2	5.1	3.6	

Concern About Children					
Extremely Concerned	671	92.7	4.2	3.1	.118
Somewhat Concerned	258	88.8	5.8	5.4	
Not Very/Not at All Concerned	72	87.5	4.2	8.3	
Familiarity with Foster Care/Adoption Issue					
Very Familiar	218	92.7	4.6	2.8	**n.s.**
Somewhat Familiar	383	94.0	3.4	2.6	
Not Too Familiar/Not at All Familiar	402	88.3	5.2	6.5	
Personal Experience with Foster Care/Adoption (You or Someone You Know)					
Yes	598	94.6	3.0	2.3	**n.s.**
No	401	87.3	6.5	6.2	

Table 3: Attitudes Toward Foster Care

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
Gender of Respondent					
Female	511	57.9	28.6	13.5	
Male	501	61.3	24.4	14.4	.314
Age					
18-24 years	126	80.2	15.1	4.8	
25-29	106	64.2	25.5	10.4	
30-39	243	50.2	30.5	19.3	
40-49	207	59.9	28.5	11.6	
50-59	118	57.6	28.8	13.6	
60-64	54	53.7	27.8	18.5	
65 and older	152	58.6	25.7	15.8	**n.s.**
Education					
High School or Less	362	64.9	20.7	14.4	
Some College/ Trade School	326	58.0	30.1	12.0	
College Graduate	163	58.9	26.4	14.7	
Post-Graduate Studies	154	51.3	33.1	15.6	**n.s.**
Ethnicity of Respondent					
Non-Hispanic White	557	61.4	26.6	12.0	
Hispanic	264	55.7	26.9	17.4	
African-American	65	72.3	21.5	6.2	
Asian/Pacific Islander	58	56.9	24.1	19.0	
Native American/ American Indian	26	46.2	26.9	26.9	
Multiple Ethnic Identifications	26	57.7	34.6	7.7	.083
Annual Household Income					
Under $15,000	117	64.1	19.7	16.2	.086

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
$15,000 – $30,000	207	57.0	25.1	17.9	
$30,000 – $50,000	223	61.9	29.1	9.0	
$50,000 – $75,000	148	58.8	25.0	16.2	
$75,000 – $100,000	100	61.0	28.0	11.0	
>$100,000	121	57.0	33.9	9.1	
Employment Status					
Employed	593	58.3	27.5	14.2	
Unemployed	37	59.5	24.3	16.2	
Homemaker	106	63.2	26.4	10.4	
Retired	146	58.9	26.0	15.1	
Disabled	41	53.7	31.7	14.6	
Student	81	70.4	18.5	11.1	.762
Home Ownership					
Rent	427	58.8	25.1	16.2	
Own	554	60.5	27.6	11.9	.144
Member of Household in a Labor Union					
No	828	60.3	25.8	13.9	
Yes	166	56.6	30.1	13.3	.522
Marital Status					
Married	530	57.7	29.1	13.2	
Not Married/Cohabiting	76	61.8	27.6	10.5	
Separated or Divorced	113	54.9	27.4	17.7	
Widowed	73	57.5	24.7	17.8	
Never Married	214	66.4	19.6	14.0	.229
Presently a Parent/Guardian					
No	591	59.7	26.1	14.2	.934

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
Yes	416	59.9	26.7	13.5	
Size of Household					
Respondent Lives Alone	163	62.0	20.2	17.8	
2 people	279	58.8	28.7	12.5	
3-4 people	377	63.4	24.7	11.9	
5-12 people	185	53.0	30.8	16.2	.087
Language of Interview					
English	881	61.1	26.7	12.3	
Spanish	129	50.4	24.8	24.8	**n.s.**
American Citizenship					
No	148	50.0	24.3	25.7	
Yes	862	61.1	26.9	11.9	**n.s.**
Born in the United States					
No	238	53.4	23.9	22.7	
Yes	772	61.5	27.3	11.1	**n.s.**
Has at Least One Foreign-Born Parent					
No	599	61.3	27.0	11.7	
Yes	166	63.9	27.7	8.4	.493
Registered to Vote					
Yes	719	60.5	27.5	12.0	
No/Noncitizen	291	57.4	23.7	18.9	**n.s.**
Political Ideology					
Conservative	317	62.8	27.4	9.8	
Middle-of-the-Road	406	60.1	25.6	14.3	
Liberal	216	55.1	28.2	16.7	
Don't Know	71	57.7	21.1	21.1	.110
Religious Identification					
Not Religious/No Preference	127	49.6	29.9	20.5	**n.s.**
Christian	616	61.0	26.3	12.7	

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
Christian/Identifies with Religious Right	88	61.4	31.8	6.8	
Non-Christian (Including Jewish)	165	62.4	21.8	15.8	
Definitely Thinks of Self as "Environmentalist"					
Yes	313	55.9	27.8	16.3	
No	698	61.3	25.8	12.9	.204
Identification with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender Community					
Identifies a Lot	92	54.3	32.6	13.0	
Identifies Some	248	64.1	26.2	9.7	
Does Not Identify	605	60.2	26.6	13.2	.390
Concern About Children					
Extremely Concerned	670	59.0	29.1	11.9	
Somewhat Concerned	257	62.3	22.2	15.6	
Not Very/Not At All Concerned	73	58.9	20.5	20.5	**n.s.**
Familiarity with Foster Care/Adoption Issue					
Very Familiar	217	64.5	28.1	7.4	
Somewhat Familiar	383	61.6	26.6	11.7	
Not Too Familiar/ Not at All Familiar	402	55.7	25.1	19.2	**n.s.**

	*number of respondents				†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	% Positive	% Negative	% No Opinion	P-Value†
Personal Experience with Foster Care/Adoption (You or Someone You Know)					
No	402	53.2	29.6	17.2	
Yes	598	64.2	24.7	11.0	n.s.

Table 4: Motivations for Providing Foster Care or Adoption (for those respondents likely to consider)

	Definitely Applies	Applies Somewhat	Does Not Apply
Make a difference in a child's life	77.9%	16.0%	6.1%
Would like to provide a child with a positive family experience	75.5	16.3	8.2
There are so many children in need	73.9	18.2	7.9
Add meaning to your life	57.2	29.0	13.7
Religious/spiritual beliefs about providing for children	57.1	25.3	17.5
Would like to become a parent or to continue parenting	53.1	26.3	20.5
Have the financial resources to adequately care for a child	37.6	31.8	30.6
Are unable to have children of your own	17.3	7.6	75.1

Table 5: Preferences for Foster Care vs. Adoption

	*number of respondents	% Preferring			†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	Temporary Foster Care	Permanent Adoption	Unsure	P-Value†
Gender of Respondent					
Female	254	33.6	56.8	9.5	
Male	220	39.0	52.8	8.3	.474
Age					
18-24 years	86	37.2	57.0	5.8	
25-29	59	33.9	61.0	5.1	
30-39	151	28.5	62.9	8.6	
40-49	105	43.8	44.8	11.4	
50-59	41	53.7	39.0	7.3	
60-64	11	36.4	54.5	9.1	
65 and older	15	33.3	40.0	26.7	**n.s.**
Education					
High School or Less	184	39.7	53.8	6.5	
Some College/Trade School	158	32.3	53.2	14.6	
College Graduate	60	40.0	51.7	8.3	
Post-Graduate Studies	66	36.4	60.6	3.0	**n.s.**
Ethnicity of Respondent					
Non-Hispanic White	197	35.5	53.8	10.7	
Hispanic	164	39.0	53.7	7.3	
African-American	39	38.5	53.8	7.7	
Asian/Pacific Islander	27	29.6	66.7	3.7	
Native American/American Indian	15	40.0	46.7	13.3	
Multiple Ethnic Identifications	22	40.9	50.0	9.1	.936

Annual Household Income					
Under $15,000	63	42.9	44.4	12.7	
$15,000 – $30,000	105	46.7	46.7	6.7	
$30,000 – $50,000	111	31.5	56.8	11.7	
$50,000 – $75,000	65	40.0	55.4	4.6	
$75,000 – $100,000	41	31.7	65.9	2.4	
>$100,000	56	25.0	66.1	8.9	**n.s.**
Employment Status					
Employed	305	33.1	58.0	8.9	
Unemployed	21	47.6	42.9	9.5	
Homemaker	55	41.8	50.9	7.3	
Retired	20	40.0	40.0	20.0	
Disabled	14	71.4	14.3	14.3	
Student	52	36.5	57.7	5.8	**n.s.**
Home Ownership					
Rent	243	39.1	53.9	7.0	
Own	212	34.4	54.7	10.8	.274
Member of Household in a Labor Union					
No	385	37.1	54.5	8.3	
Yes	80	36.3	52.5	11.3	.700
Marital Status					
Married	237	38.0	54.0	8.0	
Not Married/Cohabiting	47	40.4	51.1	8.5	
Separated or Divorced	55	40.0	47.3	12.7	
Widowed	11	54.5	18.2	27.3	
Never Married	122	28.7	63.9	7.4	**n.s.**
Presently a Parent/Guardian					
No	225	34.7	56.4	8.9	
Yes	246	38.2	52.8	8.9	.710
Size of Household					
Respondent Lives Alone	49	38.8	51.0	10.2	.993

2 people	103	35.9	55.3	8.7	
3-4 people	214	35.0	56.1	8.9	
5-12 people	104	38.5	53.8	7.7	
Language of Interview					
English	388	35.1	55.4	9.5	
Spanish	84	44.0	51.2	4.8	.168
American Citizenship					
No	88	42.0	54.5	3.4	
Yes	383	35.5	54.3	10.2	.105
Born in the United States					
No	141	34.8	58.9	6.4	
Yes	330	37.6	54.6	8.7	.342
Has at Least One Foreign-Born Parent					
No	254	35.8	52.4	11.8	
Yes	75	44.0	53.3	2.7	
Registered to Vote					
Yes	304	33.9	56.3	9.9	
No/Noncitizen	168	41.7	51.2	7.1	.202
Political Ideology					
Conservative	137	38.0	54.7	7.3	
Middle-of-the-Road	184	37.5	53.8	8.7	
Liberal	115	37.4	52.2	10.4	
Don't Know	37	24.3	64.9	10.8	.761

	*number of respondents	% Preferring			†statistical significance (n.s.=not significant)
	N*	Temporary Foster Care	Permanent Adoption	Unsure	P-Value†
Religious Identification					
Not Religious/No Preference	45	33.3	46.7	20.0	
Christian	289	34.6	56.4	9.0	
Christian/Identifies with Religious Right	51	47.1	51.0	2.0	
Non-Christian (Including Jewish)	82	41.5	52.4	6.1	**n.s.**
Definitely Thinks of Self as "Environmentalist"					
Yes	320	40.1	50.0	9.9	
No	152	35.0	56.9	8.1	.369
Identification with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender Community					
Identifies a Lot	54	24.1	66.7	9.3	
Identifies Some	134	37.3	54.5	8.2	
Does Not Identify	260	37.7	53.5	8.8	.419
Concern About Children					
Extremely Concerned	348	33.6	56.6	9.8	
Somewhat Concerned	107	50.5	44.9	4.7	
Not Very/Not At All Concerned	16	18.8	75.0	6.3	**n.s.**
Familiarity with Foster Care/Adoption Issue					
Very Familiar	129	34.1	55.8	10.1	
Somewhat Familiar	186	38.2	53.8	8.1	
Not Too Familiar/Not at All Familiar	155	36.8	54.8	8.4	.940
Personal Experience with Foster Care/Adoption (You or Someone You Know)					
No	191	36.6	54.5	8.9	
Yes	278	35.6	55.4	9.0	.974

Table 6: Perceived Barriers to Foster Care/Adoption

	Definitely Applies	Does Not Apply
Already have children/family is big enough	41.5%	42.2%
Too young or too old	39.5	40.6
Job or career limitations on amount of time you have available	28.9	46.1
Inadequate financial resources	28.2	49.3
Inadequate room in the home	27.9	55.2
Possibility of having to return child to biological parents	27.0	49.8
Public agency hassle factor	18.6	51.3
Impact the child might have on family members	17.9	56.2
Uncertainties about child's temperament, health or disposition	17.0	49.7