Youth Perspectives on Being Adopted from Foster Care by Lesbian and Gay Parents: Implications for Families and Adoption Professionals

Patricia A. Cody, Rachel H. Farr, Ruth G. McRoy, Susan J. Ayers-Lopez & Kathleen J. Ledesma

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Youth Perspectives on Being Adopted from Foster Care by Lesbian and Gay Parents: Implications for Families and Adoption Professionals

Patricia A. Cody[a], Rachel H. Farr[b], Ruth G. McRoy[a], Susan J. Ayers-Lopez[a], and Kathleen J. Ledesma[c]

[a]The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA; [b]University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, USA; [c]AdoptUSKids, Linthicum, Maryland, USA

ABSTRACT

This article presents findings from a qualitative study on the perspectives of youth who were adopted from the United States foster care system by lesbian and gay parents and includes focus group data from adopted persons and survey data from adoptive parents. This study fills a unique gap in the literature by hearing directly from the youth through focus groups. Findings indicated that children use a variety of strategies for sharing or not sharing that their parents are gay or lesbian and that many experience bullying and teasing that may be different than experienced by other children. The children adopted by lesbian and gay parents often perceive themselves as being more accepting of others, having more understanding of people, and being more compassionate toward people than those not raised by lesbian or gay parents. Suggestions are provided for training of adoption professionals and prospective families about the challenges and benefits for youth adopted by lesbian and gay parents.

The adoption of children by lesbian and gay adults is a controversial issue in the United States and in many countries around the world (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Patterson, 2009; Rye & Meaney, 2010). However, many lesbian and gay adults have become parents through foster care and adoption in the United States, and many more have expressed a desire to do so (Gates, 2011). Indeed, in the United States, and in many places around the world, there is increasing visibility of lesbian and gay parents, particularly adoptive parents (Pertman & Howard, 2011). Little research is available about the experiences of children adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents, yet this research is critical in order to provide more knowledge to both child welfare professionals and to lesbian and gay adoptive families.

Overview of youth in foster care and needing adoption

In 2014, it was estimated that there were over 400,000 children in the U.S. child welfare system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). The mean age of the 415,000 children in foster care was 8.7 years old, with an average length of stay in the system of 20.8 months. The mean age of the more than 100,000 children in foster care who were specifically awaiting adoption was 7.7 years. In 2014, there were over 22,000 children who emancipated, or "aged out," of the foster care system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). As such, the ages and developmental needs of children in care vary widely, and there are many older children and adolescents (27% of children waiting for adoption are 11 years or older) in care needing permanency (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

Obstacles for lesbian and gay adoptive parents

While every prospective adoptive parent must pass through a number of steps in order to adopt, including an application process, a home study, workshops, and trainings (Brodzinsky & Pinderhughes, 2002), lesbian and gay parents often face additional challenges. Until recently, with the June 2015 Supreme Court decision regarding marriage equality (*Obergefell v. Hodges*; e.g., American Psychological Association, 2015), same-sex couples and single lesbian and gay adults could not legally adopt children in all jurisdictions in the United States; even so, legal ambiguities remain in some states regarding the rights of unmarried same-sex couples to adopt and about second-parent adoptions by lesbian and gay partners (Appell, 2011). Historically, some adoption agencies and adoption professionals would not work with openly lesbian and gay prospective parents (Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri, 2002). As lesbian and gay adults go through the process of fostering or adopting children, experiences of discrimination by child welfare agencies are not uncommon (Downs & James, 2006; Goldberg, Moyer, Kinkler, & Richardson, 2012; Kinkler & Goldberg, 2011; Mallon, 2007; Matthews & Cramer, 2006; Patrick & Palladino, 2009; Ryan & Whitlock, 2007). More recently, Goldberg, Kinkler, Moyer, and Weber (2014) found in their study that same-sex couples ($n = 30$) who had adopted a child from foster care encountered numerous barriers and stressors related to their sexual minority status, including legal challenges (i.e., not being able to jointly adopt their child as a couple). It is not known at this time how and when the marriage equality decision will impact improvement in the process and success rate of lesbian and gay parents who want to adopt from the child welfare system.

Despite obstacles, same-sex couples are four times more likely than other-sex couples to adopt children, according to 2010 Census data (Gates, 2013). Gates (2015) estimates that between 2 million and 3.7 million children younger than 18 in the United States have at least one sexual minority parent. Of those being raised by same-sex couples, approximately 12% are adopted children—a figure that likely

underestimates the total number of adoptees with lesbian and gay parents in the United States. Many adoptive lesbian and gay parent families also appear to have contact with children's birth families (e.g., Farr & Goldberg, 2015; Brodzinsky & Goldberg, in press), yet no published study to date has examined experiences of birth family contact from the perspectives of children adopted by lesbian and gay parents.

Outcomes for children raised by lesbian and gay parents

In debates about the adoption of children by lesbian and gay parents, children's development and outcomes often have been the focus. However, a large body of research (e.g., Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013; Patterson, 2009) addressing these issues indicates that, on average, children raised by (i.e., predominantly children born to) lesbian and gay parents appear to develop in ways that are very similar to children with heterosexual parents and also that lesbian and gay adults are as capable in their parenting roles as heterosexual parents. Unfortunately, however, little of this research has focused specifically on children and parents in foster and adoptive families, and much less research has focused on children and parents in gay father–headed families as compared to lesbian mother–headed families (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Goldberg, 2010; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013).

Parental influence on the sexual orientation of their children has been examined, particularly among lesbian mothers and their children. Golombok and Badger (2010) found that virtually all adult children ($M_{age} = 19$ years) of lesbian mothers, single heterosexual mothers, and two-parent heterosexual couples identified as heterosexual, with no significant differences by family type. In another study of lesbian mothers and their 78 adolescent children ($M_{age} = 17$ years), Gartrell, Bos, and Goldberg (2011) found that teenage daughters of lesbian mothers ($n = 39$) were more likely to have reported engaging in same-sex behavior and identify as bisexual as compared with samples of same-age peers from nationally representative data from the National Survey of Family Growth.

The extent to which children of lesbian and gay parents experience teasing, bullying, and other forms of victimization has also been of particular interest. Using a nationally representative sample of adolescents in the United States with female same-sex parents ($n = 44$) and a demographically matched sample of adolescents with heterosexual parents ($n = 44$), Wainright and Patterson (2006, 2008) found no significant group differences in peer relationships or reports of victimization. In contrast, Bos and Gartrell (2010) reported that 41% of a sample of 17-year-old children (39 girls, 39 boys) of lesbian mothers in the United States had encountered homophobic stigmatization. Adolescents' problem behaviors were associated with such stigmatization but high family compatibility (or perceptions of close, positive parent–child relationships) moderated this effect. A recent study of adopted school-aged children with lesbian and gay parents ($n = 49$) revealed that

a majority reported experiences of microaggressions (i.e., subtle insults, which may be unintentional, that serve to devalue individuals from marginalized groups) from their peers on the basis of having same-sex parents (Farr, Crain, Oakley, Cashen, & Garber, 2016). In contrast, many children in these families reported positive feelings about having same-sex parents (Farr et al., 2016). Thus, it appears from the limited existing research that children with lesbian parents sometimes encounter antigay prejudice and may be teased, but there are not reliable differences which distinguish children of lesbian and heterosexual parents in their adjustment (Patterson & Riskind, 2011).

Lesbian- and gay-parent adoptive families

Research examining child development and parenting specifically in adoptive families with lesbian and gay parents has emerged recently. Mallon (2014) identified three primary concerns that are raised by those opposing adoption by lesbian and gay adults: fears that the child will be bullied because of having lesbian or gay parents, sexual orientation outcome of the child, and the possible negative impact on the child's moral well-being. As a whole, findings from this growing body of literature are consistent with broader research about lesbian- and gay-parent families indicating that children adopted by sexual minority parents are generally thriving and parental sexual orientation is not strongly associated with adopted children's outcomes, even when controlling for pre-adoptive circumstances and age of placement (e.g., Averett, Nalavany, & Ryan, 2009; Erich, Leung, & Kindle, 2005; Farr et al., 2010; Lavner, Waterman, & Peplau, 2012; Ryan, 2007; Tan & Baggerly, 2009). Factors such as processes happening within the family (e.g., quality of family relationships and parenting) and environmental characteristics (e.g., laws and policies affecting families) appear more important than family structure to children's adjustment across developmental stages and overall family functioning (e.g., Erich, Kanenburg, Case, Allen, & Bogdanos, 2009; Goldberg & Smith, 2011; Patterson, 2009). For instance, Leung, Erich, and Kanenberg (2005) compared family functioning among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parent families and found no significant differences as a function of parental sexual orientation. Results showed higher family functioning among lesbian- and gay-parent families that had adopted older children. Children in foster care waiting for permanency tend to be older and often exhibit emotional and behavioral challenges, suggesting that this population of prospective lesbian and gay parents may represent a resource particularly suited for children awaiting adoption (Mallon, 2014).

Gianino, Goldberg, and Lewis (2009) specifically examined the experiences of adolescents adopted by lesbian and gay parents. By interviewing 14 adopted youth, ranging in age from 13 to 20 years old, Gianino et al. (2009) investigated how adolescents disclose their parents' sexual orientation, as well as their adoptive status, within friend groups and at school. Results showed that adolescents engage in a variety of strategies in revealing whether they have lesbian or gay parents, ranging

from not disclosing at all to sharing with others openly. Several of the adopted adolescents indicated that they had felt "forced" to tell others as a result of being part of a visibly transracial adoptive family with same-sex parents. Many noted some anxiety surrounding "coming out" about their families. In contrast, adopted adolescents reported that they had received positive reactions and responses from others about their adoptive status. Indeed, several studies have indicated that lesbian and gay parents appear more likely to adopt transracially, particularly White lesbian and gay parents adopting children of color, as compared with heterosexual parents (Farr & Patterson, 2009; Goldberg & Smith, 2009). Gianino et al. (2009) recommended that better parental preparation could help children as they navigate issues surrounding their adoption, racism, heterosexism, and homophobia with peers and in social environments.

In summary, existing research indicates that, on average, children born to and adopted by lesbian and gay parents appear to develop in ways that are very similar to children with heterosexual parents and also that lesbian and gay adults are similarly as capable in their parenting roles as heterosexual parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010). Relatively little of this research, however, focuses specifically on children in foster care or children who have been adopted from the child welfare system. This study seeks to begin filling this significant gap in the research by hearing directly from youth who were adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents. By learning about the experiences of children and youth as they are prepared to be adopted by lesbian or gay parents, are told about and come to understand their adoptive parents' sexual orientation, and experience the benefits and challenges of being raised by lesbian or gay adoptive parents, prospective adoptive families and agency adoption staff can be provided important information.

Methodology

In 2011, after receiving approval from The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, the authors began recruiting participants through public and private child welfare agencies, parent support groups, adoption advocacy groups, and professional contacts across the United States in an effort to secure a sample who met the following criteria: adopted person at least 13 years old, adopted from the U.S. foster care system by lesbian or gay parents, and remained in an intact adoption. Contacts were made in California, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, DC; some contacts sent the recruitment flier out to their client list or Listserv. Family recruitment was very difficult for this study; many families who wished to participate in the study had children who were too young, some agencies' institutional review board would not allow research involving children, and others reported not having any children adopted by lesbian or gay parents.

Adopted youth participated in this project as members of focus groups and were given $50 gift cards to Wal-Mart for participation. Adopted persons must have been adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s) from foster care and their adoption must have remained intact at the time of study participation. Seven focus groups were conducted by agency and research team staff with 24 participants (range = 2–5 per group). Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed, and qualitative data were double coded with the use of HyperRESEARCH qualitative software. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify, examine, and record themes that were present across the data. Coders included a senior research staff person with extensive qualitative coding experience and a senior staff person with experience in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and who had conducted similar research with this population. The project manager and principal investigator were involved in developing the codebook, reviewing coding, and discussion of consensus among coders.

Additionally, the adoptive parents of youth[1] participants completed demographic questionnaires (mailed paper surveys) which were entered into SPSS and frequencies were analyzed. Findings are provided below on the following: family demographics, adopted person's history, birth family contact, transracial adoption status, and the focus group data on experiences of youth adopted by lesbian and gay families. De-identified direct quotes from the participants are included.

Demographic characteristics

Adoptive parents: Demographic characteristics

A total of 13 families from three states (CA, MN, and IA) participated in the project. Table 1 provides data on the relationship status of the adoptive parent participants. There were 25 parents represented from the 13 families who participated in this project, including 16 lesbian parents (8 couples) and 9 gay parents (4 couples, 1 single). The mean age of the lesbian parents (47.69 years) was slightly younger than the mean age of the gay parents (50.12 years). One parent did not provide information about age. The majority, 13 (81.3%) lesbian parents and 7 (77.8%) gay

Table 1. Current relationship status.

Status	N	%	Length of time, if applicable
Married*	6	46.2	Mean: 2.4 years Range: less than 1 year–2.5 years
Living with partner	4	30.8	Mean: 14.0 years Range: 5–20 years; *missing: 1*
Legal partnership	2	15.4	14 years; 23 years
Single	1	7.7	N/A
Total	13	—	—

Note. *Of the six families that reported being married, three also reported living with their partner for 20 or more years, and one reported having a legal partnership for 18 years.

parents, were White. Two (12.5%) lesbian parents were Hispanic. Two (22.2%) gay parents were Asian/Pacific Islander, and one (6.3%) lesbian parent was Arabic.

In the adoptive parent questionnaire, parents were asked about their experiences with adoption and foster care. One lesbian adoptive parent had also been adopted, and nine parents (69.2%) reported that they had served as foster parents and had fostered between 1 and 22 children (mean = 6.44 children). The majority (*n* = 8, 88.9%) of the nine parents who had previously fostered reported to have adopted children whom they had fostered. Four (30.8%) families reported that they had not been foster parents.

Several of the participating families were also parenting other children who did not participate in this study. In total, the families were parenting 44 children of whom 41 were adopted, 2 were biological, and 1 was a foster child. The number of adopted children in each family ranged from 1 to 7 children (mean = 3.4). Twenty-four (58.5%) of the adopted children in these families met the criteria for this research project and chose to participate. Twenty-one (87.5%) of these children were adopted by both of their parents at the same time, and two (8.3%) were adopted by one parent and then later adopted by their other parent through a second-parent adoption.[2]

Adopted persons: Demographic characteristics

A total of 24 youth participated in the study. The majority were female (*n* = 14, 58.3%); 10 (41.7%) were male. At the time of their participation, youth ranged from 13 to 28 years (mean = 16.13). Data on age at time of participation, placement, and legalization are found in Table 2. Twelve of the adopted youth were reported to be Hispanic (50%), five (20.8%) were White, three were Asian/Pacific Islander (12.5%), two were Black/African American (8.3%), and two were biracial or multiracial (8.3%).

One (3.8%) child in this sample was biologically related to the adoptive parent (kinship placement) and twenty-three (95.8%) were not biologically related. Seven of the children had some other kind of preexisting relationship with the adoptive parent(s) prior to adoption (teacher, therapist, etc.). Adoptive parents reported that 14 (58.3%) of their participating adopted children had some type of

Table 2. Age of adopted persons.

Age at time of focus group	*N* = 24
Mean age	16.13 years old
Range	13–28 years old
Age at placement in adoptive home	*N* = 21 *(Missing for 3 children)*
Mean age	6.88 years old
Range	2–18 years old
Age at adoption finalization/legalization	*N* = 24
Mean age	7.70 years old
Range	3–23 years old

disability or challenge and 10 (41.7%) did not. The most frequently reported categories were educational needs or learning disabilities ($n = 7$, 29.1%) and attention deficit disorder or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder ($n = 5$, 20.8%).

Adoptive parent perspectives

Adoptive parent perspectives: Birth family awareness and perceptions about adoption by LGBT parents

The majority of the families ($n = 15$, 62.5%) reported that their children had some contact with members of their birth family. Nine families ($n = 9$, 37.5%) reported that there was no birth family contact. Six (40.0%) of the youth in contact with some of their birth family members had a mostly positive relationship with them, despite the adoptive parents reporting some concerns about the birth family members' behavior or consistency with contact.

Adoptive parents were asked whether their children's birth families knew that the children were being adopted by LGBT parents. Eighteen (75.0%) families reported that their adopted children's birth families knew, while six families (25.0%) reported that the birth families did not know. Of the 18 (75.0%) families that reported that members of their adopted children's birth families knew that they were being adopted by LGBT parents, 9 (50%) indicated that the biological families were supportive. Three of the children's birth families contained some members who were supportive and some who were not.

Adoptive parent perspectives: Transracially adopted children

Transracial adoption status was determined by comparing the ethnicity and race provided by the parents for themselves and for their children. The majority of children ($n = 18$; 75%) were part of a transracial adoption, and six (25%) were part of a same-race adoption. Only five parents in transracial adoptions reported challenges due to the nature of the adoption. Two reported that their children were asked a lot of questions about not looking like their parents, about their hair or physical appearance, or questions such as, "why are they Black, if you are White?" Two reported that their children had difficulties understanding their racial identity or being accepted by their community. One parent reported that their child was harassed about being a different race from her parents: "We have had some people ask personal questions … just because we have different races in our family. One of my daughters was racially harassed [when she was younger]." Parents were further asked what things they did to help address any challenges that their children have faced. Parents most frequently said that they put a high priority on honest discussion with their children and valuing diversity in all aspects of their lives. Many of the parents also reported that they attend cultural events in their communities and foster diversity in their relationships and their children's relationships. The following two quotes are examples of what the parents reported: "One of my

daughters initially wanted to be White (her birth mother looks White). She now embraces her ethnicity. We went to cultural activities and stayed in touch with their African American foster family" and "We just always made it an open topic of discussion and encouraged our son to learn and explore all of who he is. We have friends of different ethnicities and family members who are biracial, so he always felt like he fit in with his adoptive family."

Perspectives of adopted youth

How youth were told about parents being lesbian or gay

Youth participants were asked how they were told about their adoptive parents' sexual orientation. Many of the youth reported that their adoptive parents had shared their sexual orientation with them. Others reported that their adoptive parents never explained that they were lesbian or gay, but that they "just knew." A few youth said that they did not remember or were too young to know at the age of adoption. Additionally, a few youth reported that they were not told before being placed in their parents' home, and they found out at the time of adoption. A few others reported that their understanding of the meaning of lesbian or gay grew over time; that the youth thought their parents told them, but do not remember; or that they were told, but did not understand the meaning.

Examples:

My parents talked to me about it, but no one else ever talked to me about having two dads. They've talked to me about it and said that just because I have two dads doesn't mean that I should feel weird or different.

I don't remember them telling me because I was old, but I think I just knew. I don't know, if they told me, I don't remember, I just think that I knew.

Adoption workers' feelings about lesbian/gay parents: Youth perspectives

Youth participants were asked whether their adoption workers had feelings or attitudes about their parents being lesbian or gay. A few youth reported that their worker was supportive of the placement, and others reported that they did not remember or that their worker was "okay" with the placement. Other youth reported that their foster parents had negative feelings about the placement because their adoptive parents were lesbian or gay, that the youth's worker did not know that the adoptive parent was gay (this was in the case of a kinship placement), and that the youth's worker was lesbian or gay.

Examples:

I told my worker I was scared. She said that I am going to have good parents and was supportive of my two-mom family.

I don't think they cared, because they didn't talk about it or anything.

> My foster mom had feelings about a two-dad family. She didn't really show it, but the tone of her voice sounded like she did. She was a little bit disgusted that it would be two dads.

Youth input about placement with lesbian/gay parents

Youth were asked whether they were consulted regarding their feelings/opinions about being placed with lesbian/gay parents. Most reported that they were not asked their opinion, while some reported not remembering or not knowing; only a few reported that they were asked their opinion about the placement.

Examples of youth responses:

> I don't think she ever asked me how I felt. There was no discussion.

> My social worker that I had before … I don't remember talking to them about it.

> We talked about how I would have two moms and what it felt like for me and if I understood it at all. I said that I don't feel bad, upset, or different about it.

Did adoptive parents talk with youth about his/her feelings?

Youth respondents were asked whether their adoptive parents talked with them regarding their feelings about being placed with a lesbian/gay parent(s). A few of the youth indicated that their parents did not talk with them about their feelings, and a few reported that their parents or social worker/therapists talked to them about their feelings.

Examples:

> I talked to her about how other friends had a mom and a dad and how when I was little I was afraid that people would judge me for it. We talked about my feelings and how to cope with it and everything. They helped me understand what it was like and helped me understand what I was feeling so I could be more comfortable with the situation.

> They [parents] talked to me about having two dads, and how I shouldn't feel weird or different because we're still the same type of family system. They said they both care for me and love me and I shouldn't feel out of place for having two dads because we are a normal family.

Best things about having lesbian/gay parents

Most youth participants reported that the best thing about having lesbian/gay parents is that they are more open-minded, accepting, and understanding. Many also mentioned positive aspects about being adopted but that were not specific to having lesbian or gay parents. Some reported that they enjoyed having a unique

family that bends gender roles, and some reported feeling closer to their parents than they would feel to heterosexual parents.

Some youth reported that they enjoyed more of the positive gender qualities that go with each gender (e.g., females are nurturing) and thought it was better to have two same-gendered parents rather than a mom and dad. A few also reported that they were able to advocate about lesbian/gay issues and were stronger after learning how to deal with teasing.

Examples:

It makes you a lot more tolerant and accepting. At my school I have the reputation of being the mediator of everything. I'm always trying to find the middle of something to see both sides.

Being raised in a lesbian family I have gotten a lot more understanding for other people. More understanding of people's values, who they are, or what they are, and I don't judge people about that.

I think I get more of the motherly feel with both parents. Not like having a strict dad. I get more of a mother nurturing type thing, which is a great feeling. It is a warm fuzzy feeling to have two moms for both parents.

I think it has made me a stronger person overall because I understand how people who are actually gay in high school feel. I stick up for them. It has made me a person that has helped those kids. I'm the kind of person that backs them up when somebody is making fun of them in class.

Hard things about having a lesbian/gay parent(s)

The most frequently reported theme regarding difficulties was that the youth participants were teased by peers and made fun of at school. Others said that life is not any harder because they have lesbian/gay parents and that teasing by peers was worse when they were younger. Some participants reported the following: being adopted and being adopted by gay parents makes them feel different; hard not to have same-gender role model/hard to talk to parents about gender-specific concerns; being teased about being adopted (not related to their parents' sexuality); getting asked personal questions about their past; lesbian moms want to have long conversations about feelings; and parents are more strict than heterosexual parents.

Examples:

At first I didn't think it was bad, but then when I was being teased at school, I thought it kind of sucked.

I got really mad, because people would make fun of me, and ask where my mom was, and that I probably missed her. Then they'd say that their mom is at home and takes care of them.

The only thing is that girl stuff is hard because there is nobody to talk to. But, if I ever have something I need to talk to them about, I could talk to them. But, it is just not as easy as having a mom would be.

How youth manage difficult issues regarding having a lesbian/gay parent(s)

Youth participants were asked how they managed the issues that were difficult about having a lesbian/gay parent(s). The most frequently reported theme when needing to handle issues was that youth ignored or tuned out those who were critical, followed by the youth confronting or talking to peers making negative comments about lesbians/gays. Some participants reported that they did not tell their parents about challenges, and others reported that they had received support from parents, while others found supportive friends and school environment.

Examples:

I stand up to bullies. I also stand up for others that are being bullied, because, you know, not everyone has a voice, but the people who have voices should use them, not just for themselves, but for others.

I just have to deal with the pain myself. Because I don't like people judging me for who I am.

They don't know what we've been through. We can take it, but at a certain point, it is just too much, and you want to be left alone. If they don't, I'm just saying "I'm going to slap the s— out of you!"

They don't know how hard it is. They say you're going to have to go through that stuff and take the good with the bad. But, at the same time, the good is really good, but the bad can be totally opposite. I feel like you might have all the things you want in life, but getting judged by people is so hard. Sometimes they don't get that being judged is harder. It doesn't make it easier having the things you want, and they don't understand that.

Deciding whether to tell others about lesbian/gay parents

Youth participants were asked about how they decide whether to tell others that their parents are lesbian or gay. The most frequently reported themes were that the youth has to trust the other person before telling them; youth just tells others because it is a part of who they are and they are proud of their family; and youth does not want to explain their situation to others, which restricts having friends over.

Examples:

I tell the people I have a bond with. Because I have trust problems with certain people and it is hard for me to tell people without feeling judged unless I have a bond with them.

I haven't told anybody. Just the kids in my neighborhood know. Those are the people that I hang out with. My friends from school never come over, because I don't want them to

know, because I feel like they won't be my friends anymore if I tell them and they think I'm different.

My sister tells me to not tell anyone at all. I have a class with some of her friends in it, and she'll ask if they know. If I'm talking about my family of course they're going to know. She'll ask why I told them. But they're my friends too. Then she'll tell me not to tell anyone.

Negative experiences due to having lesbian/gay parents

Youth participants were asked to discuss any negative experiences that they have had related to the fact that they were adopted by lesbian or gay parents. The most frequently reported theme was being teased and bullied by peers at school. Some stated that it is hard to watch gay peers being bullied, and others reported extra levels of scrutiny on their family with people's reaction during the voting period for Proposition 8. Additionally, a few participants reported each of the following: teachers not standing up against teasing; youth got in a fight with a peer about teasing related to parents' sexuality; youth experienced negative incidents that were adoption-related, not related to parents being lesbian/gay; others make comments about gay parents sexually abusing their children; youth goes to a church that is not supportive of their family; neighbors are not supportive of their family; and parents intervening in situations in unsuccessful and embarrassing ways.

Examples:

I had a bully when I was at my first school. I found out he was a bully to everyone. He was just bullying me because I have lesbian parents, apparently.

In fifth grade, I told this girl that I had two moms, and she didn't want to hang out with me anymore.

They see our family and always say, "What happens in the family? What started this? What happened, if you don't mind me asking you questions?" And sometimes I don't know the person, and I just say "Oh yeah, I mind." That is my personal business.

We had a discussion in my English class. We spent a period talking about gay and lesbians. Some people were religious, and they were just like "The Bible says …" We came up with a million reasons why we should be tolerant of them. And they were just like "Uh, well, the Bible says so." They didn't really understand.

Talking to parents about negative experiences

Youth participants were asked to share whether they talked about difficult experiences that they faced with their adoptive parents. Youth reported that some talk to their parents about negative experiences and others are protective of their parents so they do not talk with them. Youth in one focus group each reported the

following: youth talks to parent in joint therapy and youth does not talk to their parents about negative experiences.

Examples:

> I'm afraid my parents are afraid that they're causing me trouble because they're lesbians and stuff. It isn't about me.

> I said something to them, and they know about me being teased. I'm glad that I did, because I don't want them to think that I don't like them. I don't want them to think that I have a problem with them being the way that they are, so I try to tell them that kind of stuff all the time and let them know that it bugs me.

> I kind of have always talked to my parents, because they don't act all weird or anything, so I feel like I can ask them and talk to them.

> Lately we've been having mom and daughter therapy, and it is weird because we fight so much more over the smallest things.

Advice for youth being adopted by lesbian or gay parents

A few youth participants did not know what advice they would give to children who were going to be adopted by lesbian or gay parents. Those who did have advice provided a wide range of things they would recommend, including the following responses:

> Stay strong and not to care about what other people think, because it's not their life, it's not like they're living your life for you.

> Don't let it show when people bug you. If you let them bug you and you show they're annoying you, they just do it more.

> I would tell them it's just like a normal family. They'll love you and care for you, and don't care about what people think, because it's not their life.

> Surround yourself with the people that are supporting and that don't bring you down.

> I'd tell them to be open towards the whole subject. And, don't be afraid, or assume just because they're gay, like if a boy gets adopted by a gay guy, don't assume that they're going to hit on you and stuff like that.

What adoption workers should know

Several youth participants suggested that workers prepare and educate the child before being placed with a gay or lesbian parent. They also recommended that workers not let their own feelings get in the way and that they ask the child whether they are okay with being placed with lesbian or gay parents. They further

suggested focusing on the positive rather than negative aspects about the placement and being supportive and understanding about the child's concerns.

Examples:

It's an important thing to bring up before the adoption. Yeah, by the way, you're going to have two dads, you know.

If social workers don't like it, I'm not sure if they check that through. Like, when you're a social worker, if you're against it, like not to let your thoughts about that kids shouldn't be adopted into that kind of family—not to let that get in the way.

Be more understanding about kids' feelings. And even though the kid might think that they don't care that their parents are lesbians or gay, it can still affect them from what other people are saying.

They should tell the kids if they're about to move into a house like that, and then make sure the kids are okay with it. I didn't care, but I didn't get told or anything. I would have liked to know in advance, so I didn't have to ask them.

You should have other kids to talk with each other … and see how they feel and share your feelings with them, not just like other people that don't know what you're going through.

Summary and discussion

The sample size in this study is very small and great caution must be taken when considering the findings. In addition, there were siblings from the same families in this sample who may have more similar experiences than children from different families. While there were commonalities in the participants' experiences, they also expressed a wide range of differences and varied feelings about being raised by gay and/or lesbian parents. It is important to keep in mind the uniqueness of each child's experience.

Despite the study limitations, the findings suggest that children do use a variety of strategies for sharing or not sharing that their parents are lesbian or gay. It also demonstrates that children adopted by lesbian or gay parents may experience bullying and teasing that is distinct from other children's experiences. The findings also indicate that children adopted by lesbian or gay parents can feel that they are more accepting of others, have more understanding of people, and are more compassionate toward people.

Implications for policy, practice, and research

Existing legal ambiguities regarding the adoption of children by lesbian and gay adults likely reduce the number of potential available families for children waiting to be adopted. Kaye and Kuvalanka (2006) compared placement rates of children from foster care in states with laws that prohibit adoptions by openly lesbian and

gay adults with placement rates in states that permit such adoptions. They found that, in states where adoption laws prohibited or restricted adoptions by openly lesbian and gay adults (i.e., in 2006, Florida, Missouri, Mississippi, Nebraska, and Utah), more children remained in foster care. In contrast, states that permitted lesbian and gay adults to adopt children had proportionately fewer children in foster care waiting for adoption (Kaye & Kuvalanka, 2006). Anti-gay legislation also appears to negatively impact adoption by lesbian and gay parents. Goldberg and Smith (2011) reported that lesbian ($n = 52$) and gay couples ($n = 38$) who had recently adopted a child and lived in states with anti-gay legislation were more likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety than were those who lived in states with more "gay-friendly" legislation.

To advocate for lesbian and gay adults hoping to adopt children, a number of organizations have implemented adoption initiatives. For example, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)[3] launched the All Children – All Families program in 2007 (HRC, 2009) with the goal of guiding child welfare agencies and professionals in their efforts to recruit prospective adoptive parents from lesbian and gay communities, develop successful working relationships with them, and by doing so, place more children with permanent adoptive families. This initiative is also an educational resource for lesbian and gay adults who may be considering adoption as a way to form their families. Other organizations, such as the Donaldson Adoption Institute (e.g., see Brodzinsky, 2008; Brodzinsky & Pertman, 2011), AdoptUS-Kids (e.g., see AdoptUSKids, 2010), the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (www.nrcdr.org), and the North American Council on Adoptable Children (e.g., see North American Council on Adoptable Children, 2011) are also engaged in a number of initiatives dedicated to the needs of children awaiting adoption and best practices with lesbian and gay parents.

Implications and recommendations

The findings of this study support existing research that children with lesbian and gay parents describe positive life experiences and are not unduly disadvantaged as a result of having sexual minority parents (e.g., Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013; Patterson, 2009) and contribute to the growing body of knowledge about adoptive families headed by sexual minority parents (e.g., Erich et al., 2005; Farr & Patterson, 2013). Consistent with these findings, other studies of older children with LGBT parents (Goldberg, 2007b), as well as younger adopted children with same-sex parents (e.g., Farr et al., 2016) have revealed positive feelings about having sexual minority parents, despite challenges with teasing or bullying. Moreover, young adults with LGBT parents ($n = 46$) have been found to report feeling more open-minded and tolerant of others as a result of having sexual minority parents (Goldberg, 2007b), just as did the youth in the current study. When placing a child with lesbian or gay parents, social workers must have the skills and knowledge to discuss this with the child. Many of the adopted youth in this study reported not

knowing that they were going to be placed with lesbian or gay parents or not initially understanding the meaning of such a placement. Similar findings have been found among young adults with LGBT parents ($n = 42$): Some reported being told in childhood, but others reported never having an explicit discussion about their "nontraditional" family status (Goldberg, 2007a). Although most of the children reported loving their parents and figuring it out over time, proper preparation may have helped them to be more comfortable talking to their adoptive parents about the challenges they were experiencing related to their parents' sexual orientation and to handle the bullying and teasing that they experienced.

Indeed, some youth did report experiencing teasing or bullying as a result of having lesbian or gay parents, consistent with findings from other samples of adolescents with lesbian parents (e.g., Bos & Gartrell, 2010). The possibility of isolation and coping alone would be a tremendous burden for children to manage. Parents should participate in pre- and post-adoption training that gives them the tools needed to approach their children about these issues and proactively determine whether their children are struggling with issues around their parents' sexual orientation. Parents should be informed that this is likely to occur so that they are prepared to bring this up with their children in a safe and effective way. Youth also may need support in deciding how and when to tell others about their family structure. As in other research with similar samples of children or adults with sexual minority parents, including those who were transracially adopted (Farr et al., 2016; Gershon, Tschann, & Jemerin, 1999; Gianino et al., 2009; Goldberg, 2007a), these youth described a variety of strategies for disclosure to others about their family structure.

Thus, support groups for youth adopted by lesbian or gay parents and youth who are being prepared for placement with lesbian or gay parents should be available. Traditionally, support groups are only facilitated for children who have been adopted. Participants in this study suggested that they would like to be a support for children being prepared for placement with lesbian or gay parents.

It is recommended that technical assistance, research findings, and other literature on parenting in lesbian and gay families be made available to educate adoption professionals about how to train and support prospective gay and lesbian adoptive parents to understand that their adoptive children may experience teasing, and possibly bullying, for having lesbian and gay parents. Many youth in this project reported that they were not likely to share their experiences of being bullied with their adoptive parents, in order to protect them. This is similar to findings among other samples of adoptees, demonstrating fears of "rocking the boat" with their adoptive families when thinking about issues such as contact with birth family (Farr, Grant-Marsney, Musante, Grotevant, & Wrobel, 2014). Particularly as lesbian and gay parents appear more likely than heterosexual parents to adopt children, and specifically children of color (Farr et al., 2010; Gates, 2013; Goldberg & Smith, 2009), professionals need to have skills and knowledge to train and support parents in proactively addressing a variety of issues with their adopted children, including those possible experiences of racism, adoption stigma, and heterosexism (Gianino et al., 2009). In addition, youths' perspectives highlight the need

for professionals to have better training in how to talk with children about families headed by lesbian and gay parents.

Further research directly assessing the experiences of children adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents is greatly needed. To date, very little research has been conducted with youth adopted by lesbian and gay parents, despite growing numbers of adoptive families with sexual minority parents. According to 2010 Census data, same-sex couples are four times more likely than other-sex couples to adopt children (Gates, 2013). From data representing couples and single parents (2000 Census, National Survey of Family Growth), it appears that more than 4% of all adopted children in the United States have sexual minority parents (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007). The 2015 Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage has the potential to increase the number of adoptions by lesbians and gays in states in which adoption had not been allowed between unmarried couples.

It is unknown whether the findings from this study are representative of all children adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents due to the small sample size and limited body of literature available to make comparisons. Additional research should be conducted to more thoroughly understand the complex concepts discussed by the adopted persons in this study. Longitudinal research, in particular, is needed to assess the experiences of youth who are adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents at different developmental stages of their lives. Perspectives change as youth mature, and this aspect of their experience should be explored to better understand the implications for children and families over time.

Notes

1. The term *youth* is used throughout this manuscript to refer to the focus group participants. Two of the participants were older than 18 at the time of participation, but their participation was about their experiences as youth so the term is used for readability.
2. A second-parent adoption is a legal process that allows a same-sex parent to adopt his or her partner's biological or adopted child without terminating the legal rights of the first parent. This definition was provided by The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force available via The Child Information Gateway at http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adoptive/second_parent.cfm.
3. The Human Rights Campaign website (www.hrc.org) on February 18, 2016, said the following about the organization: "As the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual[,] and transgender civil rights organization, HRC envisions a world where LGBT people are ensured of their basic equal rights and can be open, honest[,] and safe at home, at work[,] and in the community".

References

AdoptUSKids. (2010). Resources for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) foster and adoptive families. Retrieved from http://www.adoptuskids.org

American Psychological Association. (2015). *Amicus brief in Obergefell v. Hodges*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/about/offices/ogc/amicus/obergefell-supreme-court.pdf

Appell, A. (2011). Legal issues in lesbian and gay adoption. In D. Brodzinsky & A. Pertman (Eds.), *Adoption by lesbians and gay men: A new dimension in family diversity* (pp. 36–61). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Averett, P., Nalavany, B., & Ryan, S. (2009). An evaluation of gay/lesbian and heterosexual adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 12(3), 129–151. doi:10.1080/10926750903313278

Biblarz, T. J., & Stacey, J. (2010). How does the gender of parents matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(1), 3–22. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00678.x

Bos, H., & Gartrell, N. (2010). Adolescents of the USA National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study: Can family characteristics counteract the negative effects of stigmatization? *Family Process*, 49(4), 559–572. doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01340.x

Brodzinsky, D. (2008). *Adoptive Parent Preparation Project. Phase I: Meeting the mental health and developmental needs of adopted children*. Final policy and practice report. New York, NY: Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. Retrieved from http://www.adoptioninstitute.org

Brodzinsky, D. M., & Goldberg, A. (in press). Contact with birth family in adoptive families headed by lesbian, gay male, and heterosexual parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*.

Brodzinsky, D. M., Patterson, C. J., & Vaziri, M. (2002). Adoption agency perspectives on lesbian and gay prospective parents: A national study. *Adoption Quarterly*, 1, 43–60. doi:10.1300/J145v05n03_02

Brodzinsky, D. M., & Pinderhughes, E. (2002). Parenting and child development in adoptive families. In M. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 279–312). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Brodzinksy, D. M., & Pertman, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Adoption by lesbians and gay men: A new dimension in family diversity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Downs, A. C., & James, S. E. (2006). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual foster parents: Strengths and challenges for the child welfare system. *Child Welfare*, 85, 281–298.

Erich, S., Kanenberg, H., Case, K., Allen, T., & Bogdanos, T. (2009). An empirical analysis of factors affecting adolescent attachment in adoptive families with homosexual and straight parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(3), 398–404. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.09.004

Erich, S., Leung, P., & Kindle, P. (2005). A comparative analysis of adoptive family functioning with gay, lesbian, and heterosexual parents and their children. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 1(4), 43–60. doi:10.1300/J461v01n04_03

Farr, R. H., Crain, E. E., Oakley, M. K., Cashen, K. K., & Garber, K. J. (2016). Microaggressions, feelings of difference, and resilience among adopted children with sexual minority parents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45, 85–104. doi:10.1007/s10964-015-0353-6

Farr, R. H., Forssell, S. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2010). Parenting and child development in adoptive families: Does parental sexual orientation matter? *Applied Developmental Science*, 14, 164–178. doi:10.1080/10888691.2010.500958

Farr, R. H., & Goldberg, A. E. (2015). Contact between birth and adoptive families during the first year post-placement: Perspectives of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents. *Adoption Quarterly*, 18, 1–24. doi:10.1080/10926755.2014.895466

Farr, R. H., Grant-Marsney, H. A., Musante, D. S., Grotevant, H. D., & Wrobel, G. M. (2014). Adoptees' contact with birth relatives in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 29, 45–66. doi:10.1177/0743558413487588

Farr, R. H., & Patterson, C. J. (2009). Transracial adoption by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents: Who completes transracial adoptions and with what results? *Adoption Quarterly*, 12, 187–204. doi:10.1080/10926750903313328

Farr, R. H., & Patterson, C. J. (2013). Coparenting among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples: Associations with adopted children's outcomes. *Child Development*, 84, 1226–1240. doi:10.1111/cdev.12046

Gartrell, N. K., Bos, H. M. W., & Goldberg, N. G. (2011). Adolescents of the U.S. National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study: Sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and sexual risk exposure. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. doi:10.1007/s10508-010-9692-210.1007/s

Gates, G. J. (2011). Family formation and same-sex couples raising children. *National Council of Family Relations: Family Focus on LGBT Families Newsletter, FF51*, 1–4.

Gates, G. J. (2013). LGBT parenting in the United States. *The Williams Institute*. Retrieved from http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Parenting.pdf

Gates, G. J. (2015). Marriage and family: LGBT individuals and same-sex couples. *Future of Children*, *25*, 67–87.

Gates, G. J., Badgett, M. V. L., Macomber, J. E., & Chambers, K. (2007). *Adoption and foster care by gay and lesbian parents in the United States*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA School of Law Williams Institute.

Gershon, T. D., Tschann, J. M., & Jemerin, J. M. (1999). Stigmatization, self-esteem, and coping among the adolescent children of lesbian mothers. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *24*(6), 437–445. doi:10.1016/S1054-139X(98)00154-2

Gianino, M., Goldberg, A., & Lewis, T. (2009). Family outings: Disclosure practices among adopted youth with gay and lesbian parents. *Adoption Quarterly*, *12*(3), 205–228. doi:10.1080/10926750903313344

Goldberg, A. E. (2007a). Talking about family: Disclosure practices of adults raised by lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents. *Journal of Family Issues*, *28*, 100–131. doi:10.1177/0192513X06293606

Goldberg, A. E. (2007b). (How) does it make a difference? Perspectives of adults with lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *77*, 550–562. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.77.4.550

Goldberg, A. E. (2010). *Lesbian and gay parents and their children: Research on the family life cycle*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Goldberg, A. E., Kinkler, L. A., Moyer, A. M., & Weber, E. R. (2014). Intimate relationship challenges in early parenthood among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples adopting via the child welfare system. *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, *45*, 221–230. doi:10.1037/a0037443

Goldberg, A. E., Moyer, A. M., & Kinkler, L. A., & Richardson, H. B. (2012). "When you're sitting on the fence, hope's the hardest part": Experiences and challenges of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples adopting through the child welfare system. *Adoption Quarterly*, *15*, 1–28. doi:10.1080/10926755.2012.731032

Goldberg, A. E., & Smith, J. Z. (2009). Predicting non-African American lesbian and heterosexual preadoptive couples' openness to adopting an African American child. *Family Relations*, *58*, 346–360. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2009.00557.x

Goldberg, A. E., & Smith, J. Z. (2011). Stigma, social context, and mental health: Lesbian and gay couples across the transition to adoptive parenthood. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *58*, 139–150. doi:10.1037/a0021684

Golombok, S., & Badger, S. (2010). Children raised in mother-headed families from infancy: A follow-up of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers, at early adulthood. *Human Reproduction*, *25*(1), 150–157. doi:10.1093/humrep/dep345

Human Rights Campaign. (2009). *Promising practices in adoption and foster care*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

Kaye, S., & Kuvalanka, K. (2006). State gay adoption laws and permanency for foster youth. *Maryland Family Policy Impact Seminar*. Retrieved from http://www.hhp.umd.edu/FMST/_docsContribute/GayadoptionbriefFINAL0806.pdf

Kinkler, L. A., & Goldberg, A. E. (2011). Working with what we've got: Perceptions of barriers and supports among small-metropolitan-area same-sex adopting couples. *Family Relations*, *60*, 387–403. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00654.x

Lavner, J. A., Waterman, J., & Peplau, L. A. (2012). Can gay and lesbian parents promote healthy development in high-risk children adopted from foster care? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *82*(4), 465–472. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01176.x

Leung, P., Erich, S., & Kanenberg, H. (2005). A comparison of family functioning in gay/lesbian, heterosexual and special needs adoptions. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *27*(9), 1031–1044. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2004.12.030

Mallon, G. P. (2007). Assessing lesbian and gay foster and adoptive prospective families: A focus on the home study process. *Child Welfare*, *86*, 67–87.

Mallon, G. P. (2014). *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Foster & Adoptive Parents*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

Matthews, J. D., & Cramer, E. P. (2006). Envisaging the adoption process to strengthen gay- and lesbian-headed families: Recommendations for adoption professionals. *Child Welfare*, *85*(2), 317–341.

Moore, R. M., & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, M. (2013). LGBT sexuality and families at the start of the twenty-first century. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *39*, 491–507. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145643

North American Council on Adoptable Children. (2011). *LGBTQ Issues*. Retrieved from http://www.nacac.org/policy/lgbtq.html

Patrick, D., & Palladino, J. (2009). The community interactions of gay and lesbian foster parents. In T. J. Socha & G. Stamp (Eds.), *Parents and children communicating with society: Managing relationships outside of home* (pp. 323–342). New York, NY: Routledge.

Patterson, C. J. (2009). Children of lesbian and gay parents: Psychology, law, and policy. *American Psychologist*, *64*(8), 727–736. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.64.8.727

Patterson, C. J., & Riskind, R. G. (2011). Adolescents with lesbian or gay parents. In M. Fisher, R. Kreipe, & W. Rosenfeld (Eds.), *Textbook of Adolescent Healthcare* (pp. 331–334). Chicago, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.

Pertman, A., & Howard, J. (2011). Emerging diversity in adoptive family life: Adoption by gay and lesbian parents. In D. Brodzinsky & A. Pertman (Eds.), *Adoption by lesbians and gay men: A new dimension in family diversity* (pp. 20–35). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ryan, S. (2007). Parent-child interaction styles between gay and lesbian parents and their adopted children. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *3*(2/3), 105–132. doi:10.1300/J461v03n02

Ryan, S. D., & Whitlock, C. (2007). Becoming parents: Lesbian mothers' adoption experience. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, *19*, 1–33. doi:10.1080/10538720802131642

Rye, B. J., & Meaney, G. J. (2010). Self-defense, sexism, and etiological beliefs: Predictors of attitudes toward gay and lesbian adoption. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *6*, 1–24. doi:10.1080/15504280903472485

Tan, T. X., & Baggerly, J. (2009). Behavioral adjustment of adopted Chinese girls in single-mother, lesbian-couple, and heterosexual-couple households. *Adoption Quarterly*, *12*, 171–186. doi:10.1080/10926750903313336

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). *Adoption and foster care analysis and reporting system (AFCARS) reports: AFCARS Report #22 (Preliminary Estimates for FY 2014)*. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport22.pdf

Wainright, J. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2006). Delinquency, victimization, and substance use among adolescents with female same-sex parents. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *20*(3), 526–530. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.20.3.526

Wainright, J. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2008). Peer relations among adolescents with female same-sex parents. *Developmental Psychology*, *44*, 117–126. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.44.1.117