



Perspectives of Youth Adopted from Foster Care by Lesbian and Gay Parents

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BACKGROUND OF PROJECT

In 2002-2007, AdoptUSKids conducted a longitudinal study assessing actual and potential barriers to the adoption of children from foster care and success factors in families who had adopted from foster care (Children's Bureau, 2008). To assess barriers, a nationwide, purposive sample of 300 families from public and private agencies who were seeking to adopt children with special needs from the public child welfare system were followed from initial inquiry through finalization, their decision to discontinue to process, or the end point of the study. Periodically, families were interviewed by telephone or surveyed to assess their status in the process. To assess success factors, 161 families who had adopted a child from foster care were interviewed and then surveyed twice over the following two years.

In 2009, the AdoptUSKids research and evaluation team at the University of Texas at Austin was asked to re-contact and interview participants from the original Barriers and Success factors studies who had self-identified as lesbian or gay to explore their experiences of adopting from foster care. Sixteen families (fourteen couples and two singles) self-identified as lesbian or gay in the original studies. Ten of these families were successfully re-contacted and subsequently consented to participate in the follow-up project. In the case of eight families, the same person was interviewed for

the follow-up as was interviewed in the original study. In the ninth family, the partner of the original participant was interviewed and in the tenth family, both partners participated in the interview. Similar to the structure of the original study, questions pertaining to each step of the process were asked of the participants; however, the interview questions and coding methods for this study focused specifically on experiences related to being a lesbian or gay prospective adopter.

In addition, six focus groups (with 43 participants-25 females, 18 males) were conducted to further understand the barriers lesbian and gay families face when adopting from foster care. Participants were from Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, DC.

The findings from that project were presented to the AdoptUSKids partners in 2010. AdoptUSKids then developed a temporary, time-limited advisory group of experts in the area of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) adoptions that met via conference call three times in July and August. Among the many suggestions and recommendations that were shared during these conference calls was to conduct a study of youth adopted by lesbian and gay parent families so that they have the opportunity to share their experiences in their own words.

In 2010, AdoptUSKids proposed and received approval by the Children's Bureau to conduct the project discussed in this report. The project, "Perspectives of Youth Adopted from Foster Care by Lesbian and gay Parent(s)" was approved and funded by the Children's Bureau for the purpose of using the findings to shape the services that AdoptUSKids provides, either directly to LGBT families, or through a complex and multi-faceted set of technical assistance to States, Tribes, and Territories. This project received approval from The University of Texas at Austin, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

METHODOLOGY

During the summer of 2011, the AdoptUSKids evaluation team began working with agencies, support groups, and professional contacts across the United States in an effort to secure a sample of youth who had been adopted from the U.S. foster care system by lesbian or gay parents. Kinship Center in California and North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) in Minnesota provided the greatest assistance with participant recruitment and data collection.

Inclusion criteria for this study included the following:

- Youth had to be at least thirteen years old at the time of enrollment in the project (two of the youth participants were young adults at the time of their focus group)
- Youth were adopted from the U.S. foster care system
- Youth were adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s)
- Youth's adoption needed to be intact at the time of participation

Staff from Kinship Center reviewed their current and past case loads and contacted all families who met the inclusion criteria for this project. The response from families in California was overwhelmingly positive, but many families were unable to participate due to family commitments. All California families were recruited through Kinship Center.

Mary McGowan, a NACAC staff member, contacted LGBT-oriented groups and organizations in Minnesota. In addition, she made contact with her professional colleagues who worked in this field. A recruitment flier was sent out to the NACAC listserv of families with information to contact the AdoptUSKids evaluation team. All Minnesota families were recruited through NACAC. In addition, the family from Iowa with two youth in the project was recruited through the NACAC listserv.

Agencies, support groups, and professional colleagues were contacted in Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, DC. Some contacts were able to send out the recruitment flier to their client list or listserv. Some families responded but all had children who were too young to participate in this project. Other contacts were unable or unwilling to assist with recruitment or data collection for a variety of reasons including unwilling supervisors or administrators and lack of permission through their internal agency Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Frequently, the evaluation team received feedback that lesbian and gay parents currently have young children who would not meet the inclusion criteria for the project. In the two active support groups for LGBT adoptive parents in Austin, Texas all of the children were young. Professional contacts in Washington, DC either no longer were involved in adoption or knew only of families with young children.

Adopted youth participated in this project either as members of a focus group or in individual interviews. Interviews were conducted when there were not enough youth to form a focus group or conflicting family schedules interfered with the ability to conduct a group. Focus groups and interviews were conducted by Kinship Center staff, Mary McGowan with NACAC, and the AdoptUSKids evaluation team staff. Focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed for the purposes of data coding and analysis. Qualitative data were coded with the use of the HyperResearch qualitative software. Data were coded and checked by senior research and evaluation team staff.

Additionally, adoptive parents were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and data were entered into SPSS and analyzed. This report includes findings on the following topics: demographics, adopted person’s history, birth family contact, transracial adoption status, and the focus group or interview data. There was a great deal of variability among the opinions expressed by the youth participating in this project. For this reason, many direct quotes from the youth are included in the report.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of thirteen families participated in the project. The families were from California (n=9, 69.2%), Minnesota (n=3, 23.1%), and Iowa (n=1, 7.7%). See Table 1.

Table 1. State of Residence

State	N	%
California	9	69.2
Minnesota	3	23.1
Iowa	1	7.7
Total	13	100.0

Parent and Family Demographic Data

Table 2 provides data on the relationship status of the adoptive parent participants. Six (46.2%) of the couples were married, four couples (30.8%) reported living with their partner in a committed relationship, two (15.4%) couples were in a legal partnership, and one participant (7.7%) was a single parent. See Table 2.

Table 2. Current Relationship Status

Status	N (%)	Length of Time, If Applicable
Married*	6 (46.2%)	Mean: 2.4 years; Range: less than one year – 2.5 years
Living with Partner	4 (30.8%)	Mean: 14.0 years; Range: 5 – 20 years; <i>Missing: 1</i>
Legal Partnership	2 (15.4%)	14 years; 23 years
Single	1 (7.7%)	N/A
Total	13 (100.0%)	--

* 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.

Gender of Adoptive Parents

There were twenty-five parents in the thirteen families who participated in this project. There were 16 lesbian parents (eight couples) and nine gay parents (four couples, one single). See Table 3.

Table 3. Gender

Gender	N (%)
Female	16 (64.0%)
Male	9 (36.0%)
Total	25 (100.0%)

Age of Adoptive Parents

The mean age of the lesbian parents in this sample (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. See Table 4 for ranges.

Table 4: Age

Age	Lesbian Parents N=15*	Gay Parents N=9
Mean Age	47.69 years old	50.12 years old
Age Range	42 – 55 years old	42 – 63 years old

* Data are missing for one lesbian parent.

Ethnicity and Race

Two (12.5%) lesbian parents were Hispanic. The majority, thirteen (81.3%) lesbian parents and seven (77.8%) gay parents, were Caucasian. Two (22.2%) gay parents were Asian or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and one (6.3%) lesbian parent was Arabic. See Table 5.

Table 5. Ethnicity and Race of Adoptive Parents

Ethnicity and Race	Lesbian Parents	Gay Parents
African American	--	--
American Indian or Alaska Native	--	--
Asian or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	--	2 (22.2%)
Caucasian*	14 (87.5%)	7 (77.8%)
Hispanic	2 (12.5%)	--
Two or more races (multiple races indicated)	--	--
Total	16 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)

*One of the lesbian parents who reported to be Caucasian specified that she was Arabic.

Education

The majority of the lesbian parents in the project reported graduate school (n=9, 56.3%) as their highest level of education. This was followed by college graduate (n=3, 18.8%), associate's degree (n=2, 12.5%) and some college (n=1, 6.3%). The gay parents reported the following highest levels of education; college graduate (n=4, 44.4%), some college (n=3, 33.3%), high school diploma / GED (n=1, 11.1%) and graduate school (n=1, 11.1%). See Table 6.

Table 6. Education Level of Adoptive Parents

Education Level	Lesbian Parents	Gay Parents
High school diploma or GED	--	1 (11.1%)
Technical, vocational, or trade school	1 (6.3%)	--
Some college (includes junior or community college)	1 (6.3%)	3 (33.3%)
Associates degree	2 (12.5%)	--
College graduate (Bachelor's degree)	3 (18.8%)	4 (44.4%)
Graduate school (Master's, JD, MD, or PhD)	9 (56.3%)	1 (11.1%)
Total	16 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducted a survey of adoptive parents in 2007. They found that 70% of adoptive parents who had adopted a child from foster care had education levels beyond high school. They did not measure levels of higher education making it difficult to determine whether or not this sample is more highly educated than the general population of parents who have adopted children from foster care. In addition, it is unclear what percentage of the sample for the Health and Human services survey is made up of lesbian or gay parents.

Occupation of Adoptive Parents

The two most frequently reported occupational categories for the parents in this project were business ownership / management / retail (n=1, 4% of lesbian parents and n=4, 16% of gay parents) and social services / social work / mental health (n=4, 16% of lesbian parents and n=1, 4% of gay parents). Those were followed by education / academia, support staff, IT, medical, homemaker, gardener and speaker/consultant. See Table 7.

Table 7. Occupation

Occupational Category	Lesbian Parents	Gay Parents
Business ownership / Management / Retail	1 (4.0%)	4 (16.0%)
Social Services / Social Work / Mental Health	4 (16.0%)	1 (4.0%)
Education / Academia	3 (12.0%)	1 (4.0%)
Support Staff	2 (8.0%)	1 (4.0%)
IT	--	2 (8.0%)
Medical	2 (8.0%)	--
Homemaker	2 (8.0%)	--
Gardener	1 (4.0%)	--
Speaker / Consultant	1 (4.0%)	--
Total	16 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)

Family Income

Adoptive families reported a mean income of approximately \$170,462 with a range of \$63,000 - \$400,000. See Table 8.

Table 8. Yearly Gross Family Income

	Total Families (N=13)	Lesbian Parent Families (N=8)	Gay Parent Families (N=5*)
Mean Income	\$170,461.54	\$125,625.00	\$242,200.00
Income Range	\$63,000 - \$400,000	\$65,000 - \$200,000	\$63,000 - \$400,000

* One of the gay parents is a single parent.

Number of Moves

The families had moved between zero and three times in the past five years (mean = .42 moves). The gay parent families, on average, had moved slightly more often than the lesbian parent families. See Table 9.

Table 9. Number of Moves in Past 5 Years

	Total Families (N=12*)	Lesbian Parent Families (N=7*)	Gay Parent Families (N=5)
Mean number of moves	.42 moves	.29 moves	.60 moves
Range of number of moves	0 - 3 moves	0 - 1 moves	0 - 3 moves

* Data are missing for one lesbian parent family.

Adoption and Fostering Experiences of Parents

Only one lesbian adoptive parent in this project was also adopted. See Table 10.

Table 10. Adoption Status of Parents

Adopted?	Lesbian Parents	Gay Parents
Yes	1 (6.3%)	--
No	15 (93.8%)	9 (100.0%)
Total	16 (100.0%)	9 (100.0%)

Foster Parent Status

Adoptive parents were asked “Have you / your partner ever been a foster parent?” Nine (69.2%) families reported being foster parents and having parented between one and twenty-two children (mean = 6.44 children). The majority (n=8, 88.9%) of the families reported to have adopted children whom they had fostered. Four (30.8%) families reported that they had not been foster parents. See Table 11.

Table 11. Experience as Foster Parents

Have you / your partner ever been a foster parent?	N	If yes, how many children?	If yes, have you adopted any of them?
Yes	9 (69.2%)	Mean = 6.44 children Range = 1 child to 22 children	Yes = 8 (88.9%) No= 1 (11.1%)
No	4 (30.8%)	N/A	N/A
Total	13 (100.0%)	--	--

Number of Children in the Families

Many of the participating families were parenting other children who did not participate in this study. In total, the families were parenting 44 children of which 41 were adopted, two biological, and one fostered. The number of adopted children in each family ranged from one child to seven children. See Table 12.

Table 12. Number of Children

Type of Child	Number of Children	Range per Family
Adopted	41 children	1 child – 7 children
Biological	2 children	0 children – 2 children
Foster	1 child	0 children – 1 child
Total	44 children	--

Adoption and Custody

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 second parent through a second parent adoption.¹ See Table 13.

Table 13. Custody

Adoption or Custody Arrangement	N
Both parents adopted child together	21 (87.5%)
Both parents now have legal custody of child after a second parent adoption	2 (8.3%)
N/A, I am single	1 (4.2%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Adopted Youth: Demographic Characteristics

To increase the readability of this report, the term “youth” will be used in this section to refer to the total sample of 22 adopted youth and 2 adopted young adults who participated in the focus groups and interviews in this study.

Gender

A total of 24 youth participated in the study. The majority were female (n=14, 58.3%). Ten (41.7%) were male, and the parents did not report any youth being transgender. See Table 14.

The youth and their adoptive parents were not asked about the sexual orientation of the youth as part of this project, as the focus was on the perspectives of the foster youth’s experiences of being parented by lesbian or gay adoptive parents.

Table 14. Gender

Gender	N
Female	14 (58.3%)
Male	10 (41.7%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

¹ 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 is provided by The National Lesbian and gay Task Force available via The Child Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adoptive/second_parent.cfm.

Age of Participating Youth

At the time of their participation in the focus group or interview, the youth ranged from 13-28 years (average 16.13 years old). They were an average of 6.88 years old at the time of adoptive placement (range from 2 – 18 years) and 7.7 years old at the time their adoption was finalized (ranged from 3 – 23 years old). The 18-year-old youth moved in with his adoptive family at age 18; this adoption was finalized when the youth was 23 years old. See Table 15.

Table 15. Age of Youth

Age at Time of Focus Group or Interview	N=24
Mean Age	16.13 years old
Range	13 years old – 28 years old
Age at Placement in Adoptive Home	N=21 <i>(Missing information for 3 youth)</i>
Mean Age	6.88 years old
Range	2 years old – 18 years old
Age at Adoption Finalization or Legalization	N=24
Mean Age	7.70 years old
Range	3 years old – 23 years old

Ethnicity and Race

Twelve of the youth in this project were reported to be Hispanic (n=12, 50.0%). The racial background of other youth was as follows: Caucasian (n=4, 16.7%), Asian (n=3, 12.5%), African American (n=2, 8.3%) and bi-racial or multi-racial (n=3, 12.5%). See Table 16.

Table 16. AFCARS Categorization of Youth Ethnicity and Race

Ethnicity or Race	N
African American	2 (8.3%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	--
Asian	3 (12.5%)
Caucasian	4 (16.7%)
Hispanic (of any race) or Latino ethnicity	12 (50.0%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	--
Two or more races (multiple races indicated)*	3 (12.5%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

*These three youth were American Indian or Alaska Native and Caucasian, and Asian and Caucasian.

The adoptive parents who reported that their children were Hispanic also reported other races with which their children identified. In the AFCARS reporting system, youth who are mixed race with Hispanic are reported only as Hispanic. In this report, however, it is important to know how the youth and their adoptive parents identified their race and ethnicity in order to understand some of the qualitative comments reported later in the findings. There were seven Hispanic youth who also identified as belonging to another race. Those racial combinations were as follows: Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Caucasian (n=2); Hispanic and African American (n=2); and Hispanic and Caucasian (n=3).

Table 17 shows the age at placement, age at the time of adoption finalization, and age at the time of participation in the project by the ethnic and racial make-up of each child as reported by their adoptive parents. The mean age at placement for the Caucasian youth (n=4) was 11.3 years. The Asian youth (n=3) were, on average, 8.7 years at placement. Hispanic and Caucasian youth (n=3) were placed, on average, at 7.7 years. This was followed by Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Caucasian youth (n=2) placed, on average, at 6.0 years, and African American (n=2) and Hispanic (n=5) youth all placed, on average, at 5.5 years. The Hispanic and African American youth (n=2) and the Asian and Caucasian youth were placed, on average at less than four years and the American Indian or Alaska Native and Caucasian youth was placed at two years old. See Table 17 for mean ages at finalization and at time of focus group or interview.

Table 17. Ethnicity and Race: Age at Placement, Finalization and Participation

Ethnicity and Race of Child*	Mean Age at Placement in Adoptive Home	Mean Age at Adoption Finalization or Legalization	Mean Age at Time of Focus Group or Interview
African American (n=2)	5.5 years	6.0 years	14.0 years
Asian (n=3)	8.7 years	10.7 years	14.8 years
Caucasian (n=4)	11.3 years	13.8 years	18.3 years
Hispanic (n=5)	5.5 years (3 missing)	6.8 years	15.6 years
Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Caucasian (n=2)	6.0 years	7.0 years	13.7 years
Hispanic and African American (n=2)	3.8 years	4.5 years	15.8 years
Hispanic and Caucasian (n=3)	7.7 years	9.7 years	19.6 years
American Indian or Alaska Native and Caucasian (n=1)	2.0 years	3.0 years	14.1 years
Asian and Caucasian (n=2)	3.5 years	4.5 years	15.8 years

*The data reported in this table are not in the AFCARS format to allow for the specific combinations of bi-racial and multi-racial children to be seen. The multi-racial categories are not seen in the AFCARS format and may be important for looking at placement and finalization ages.

Youth's Relationship to Adoptive Parent Prior to Placement

One (4.2%) youth in this sample was biologically related to the adoptive parent. This youth was in the foster care system and later placed for adoption with a relative. Twenty three (95.8%) were not biologically related. Including the youth biologically related to the adoptive parent, seven of the youth had some kind of pre-existing relationship (such as a teacher, therapist, etc.) with the adoptive parent(s) prior to adoption. See Table 18.

Table 18a. Biological Relationship to Adoptive Parent

Biological Relation	N (%)
No biological relationship	23 (95.8%)
Biological relationship	1 (4.2%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Table 18b. Relationship Prior to Adoption

Prior Relationship	N (%)
Yes	7 (29.2%)
No	17 (70.8%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Adopted Youth’s Living Arrangements

Twenty-two (91.7%) of the participating adopted youth were living in the adoptive home at the time of the focus group or interview. Two (8.3%) of the adopted youth were young adults at the time of the interview and had moved out to live on their own. See Table 19.

Table 19. Adopted Youth’s Living Arrangements

Living with Adoptive Family?	N (%)
Yes	22 (91.7%)
No	2 (8.3%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Special Needs of Adopted Youth

Adoptive parents reported that 14 (58.3%) of their participating adopted children had special needs and that 10 (41.7%) did not. See Table 20. Table 20a reports the special needs of the twenty-four participating adopted children, as reported by their adoptive parents.

Table 20. Special Needs of Adopted Youth

Special Needs?	N (%)
Yes	14 (58.3%)
No	10 (41.7%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Table 20a. Special Needs of Participating Adopted Youth by Type

Special Needs	N (%)
N/A, No special needs	10 (41.7%)
Education / Learning Disability / Language Delayed	7 (29.1%)
ADD / ADHD	5 (20.8%)
PTSD	2 (8.3%)
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	2 (8.3%)
ODD	2 (8.3%)
Bipolar Disorder	2 (8.3%)
Reactive Attachment Disorder	2 (8.3%)
Anxiety	1 (4.2%)
Brain Injury	1 (4.2%)
Asperger's Disorder	1 (4.2%)
Hearing Impaired	1 (4.2%)
Behavioral Needs	1 (4.2%)
Asthma	1 (4.2%)

*Participants could report multiple responses.

Adopted Youth's Birth Siblings

Adoptive parents reported that 18 of their participating adopted children had birth siblings that the family adopted as well. These families adopted between one and seven siblings (mean = 2.67). One child (4.2%) did not have any birth siblings. See Table 21.

Table 21. Adopted Youth's Birth Siblings

	N	Explanations
Adopted the youth's birth siblings	18 (75.0%)	Mean: 2.67 siblings Range: 1 sibling – 7 siblings
Did not adopt the youth's birth siblings	4 (16.7%)	Sibling(s) adopted by another family Sibling(s) with relatives Explanations for two of the youth were missing
Youth did not have any birth siblings	1 (4.2%)	--
<i>Missing</i>	<i>1 (4.2%)</i>	--
Total	24 (100.0%)	--

Goal of Initial Placement with Adoptive Family

Seventeen children (70.8%) were initially placed with their adoptive parents for the purpose of adoption, while seven (29.2%) were initially placed for foster care and later adopted after the child's permanency goal was changed to adoption. See Table 22.

Table 22. Goal of Initial Placement with Adoptive Family

Goal of Initial Placement	N (%)
Adoption	17 (70.8%)
Foster Care	7 (29.2%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

For children who were placed initially with the adoptive family for adoption, they were in the home for, on average, 1.54 years before their adoption was finalized. The range of time from placement to finalization was less than a year to three and a half years. See Table 23. For children who were placed initially in foster care with the adoptive family, they were in the home for, on average, 1.21 years before their permanency goal was changed to adoption (ranged from 1 – 1.5 years). These children were in the adoptive home, on average, 3.45 years from the time their permanency goal was changed to adoption to the time when their adoptions were finalized. See Table 23a.

Table 23. Adoptive Placements: Length of Time to Finalization

Length of time from placement to adoption finalization	N=16 <i>(Missing information for 1 child)</i>
Mean Length of Time	1.54 years
Range	Less than 1 year – 3.5 years

Table 23a. Foster Care Placements: Time Frames during Placement

Length of time from placement to permanency goal change to adoption	N=7
Mean Length of Time	1.21 years
Range	1 year – 1.5 years
Length of time from adoption permanency goal to adoption finalization	N=7
Mean Length of Time	3.45 years
Range	Less than 1 year – 9 years

Circumstances that resulted in the Youth’s Removal from their Birth Families

Adoptive parents were asked about the reasons for removal from the birth family for each of their participating adopted children. All (n=24, 100.0%) of the youth were reported to have experienced physical neglect. This was followed by physical abuse (n=16, 66.7%), emotional abuse (n=15, 62.5%), prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol (n=14, 58.3%), parental incarceration (n=11, 45.8%), medical neglect (n=10, 41.7%), sexual abuse (n=7, 29.2%), and domestic violence (n=2, 8.3%). See Table 24.

Table 24. Circumstances Resulting in Child Removal

Removal Reasons	N (%)*
Physical neglect / Abandonment	24 (100%)
Physical abuse	16 (66.7%)
Emotional abuse	15 (62.5%)
Prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol	14 (58.3%)
Parental incarceration	11 (45.8%)
Medical neglect	10 (41.7%)
Sexual abuse	7 (29.2%)
Domestic violence	2 (8.3%)

*Participants could report multiple responses.

Youth’s History in Foster Care

On average, the participating adopted youth had 3.83 foster care placements (range: 1 - 11 placements) prior to being placed in their adoptive home. Their average length of time in foster care was 3.23 years with a range of less than 1 year – 14 years. See Table 25.

Table 25. Youth’s Foster Care History

Foster Care Placements	N=24
Mean Number of Placements	3.83 placements
Range	1 placement – 11 placements
Length of Time in Foster Care Prior to Placement	N=24
Mean Length of Time	3.23 years
Range	Less than 1 year – 14 years

What was each youth’s most recent placement type prior to being placed in your home?

The majority of youth (n=18, 75.0%) had been placed in a foster home immediately prior to their adoptive placement. Four youth (16.7%) were placed in a group home, and three youth (12.5%) were placed in a relative or kinship placement. See Table 26 for more details about their placement prior to the adoptive placement. The average length of time in the most immediate placement was 1.27 years with a range of less than one year to nine years.

Table 26. Most Recent Placement Type

Placement Type	N (%)*
Foster home	18 (75.0%)
Group home	4 (16.7%)
Relative or kinship home	3 (12.5%)
Adoptive home	1 (4.2%)
Emergency shelter	1 (4.2%)
Other: Foster to adopt placement for sibling pair that disrupted	2 (8.3%)
Length of Time in Last Placement	N=23 <i>(Missing information for 1 youth)</i>
Mean Length of Time	1.27 years
Range	Less than 1 year – 9 years

* Although parents were asked to indicate only one placement type, one family provided multiple responses for their children.

Is there anything that you have learned about your children or your children’s background that you feel would have been or could have been helpful to know at the time of placement?

Ten parents (41.6%) reported that they felt very well informed about their adopted child(ren)’s background. Issues that would have been helpful to know more about include the following: severity of abuse / neglect (n=3, 12.5%); relationship with birthparents (n=3, 12.5%); prenatal drug exposure (n=2, 8.3%); specific events (n=2, 8.3%); more pictures if available (n=2, 8.3%); and ADHD and Asthma (n=2, 8.3%). For additional information see Table 27.

Table 27. Additional Child Information

Additional Information	N (%)*
No, we were well informed	10 (41.6%)
Severity of abuse / neglect	3 (12.5%)
Relationship with birthparents	3 (12.5%)
Prenatal drug exposure	2 (8.3%)
Specific events	2 (8.3%)
More pictures if they were available	2 (8.3%)
ADHD and Asthma	2 (8.3%)
Mental illness	1 (4.1%)
Information about previous foster placements	1 (4.1%)
History of (family) mental illness / substance abuse	1 (4.1%)
<i>Missing</i>	3 (12.5%)

*Participants could report multiple responses.

Did the birth families of your children know that they were being adopted by an LGBT parent(s)? If yes, were they supportive?

Eighteen (75.0%) families reported that their adopted children’s birth families knew that they were being adopted by LGBT parents. Six families (25.0%) reported that the birth families did not know. See Table 28.

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, nine (50%) indicated that the birth families were supportive. Three (16.7%) of the children’s birth families contained some members who were supportive and some who were not. Two (11.1%) children each had family who were not supportive at first, but felt more positively over time and two (11.1%) each had families who were not supportive. See Table 28a.

Table 28. Birth family’s Knowledge of Adoptive Family Being LGBT

	N (%)
Yes	18 (75.0%)
No	6 (25.0%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Table 28a. Birth family members in support of LGBT adoption

Support	N (%)
Yes, supportive / Didn’t have a problem	9 (50.0%)
Some family members supportive, some not supportive	3 (16.7%)
Not supportive at first, but felt more positively over time	2 (11.1%)
No, not supportive	2 (11.1%)
Don’t know	1 (5.6%)
<i>Missing</i>	1 (5.6%)

Birth Family Contact

The majority of the families (n=15, 62.5%) reported that their children had some contact with members of their birth family. Nine families (37.5%) reported that there was no birth family contact. See Table 29.

Table 29. Birth Family Contact

	N (%)
Yes	15 (62.5%)
No	9 (37.5%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

Quality of Contact with Birth Family Members

Of the 15 (62.55%) youth who had some contact with their birth family members, seven (46.7%) had contact with one or more birth aunts. Five (33.3%) had contact with a birth grandmother and five (33.3%) with birth siblings. Four youth (26.6%) had contact with their birth mother and four (26.6%) with their birth grandfather. Two youth (13.3%) had contact with their birth father and two (13.3%) had contact with birth cousins. See Table 30.

Six (40.0%) of the youth in contact with some birth family members had a mostly positive relationship with their birth family members, despite the adoptive parents reporting some concerns about the birth family member behavior or consistency with contact. Five of the youth (33.3%) had a positive relationship with no concerns expressed by their adoptive parents. There was missing data about the quality of contact for two of the youth (13.3%). See Table 30a.

Table 30. Birth Family Members in Contact

Birth family	N (%)*
Birth Aunt	7 (46.7%)
Birth Grandmother	5 (33.3%)
Birth Siblings	5 (33.3%)
Birth Mother	4 (26.6%)
Birth Grandfather	4 (26.7%)
Birth Father	2 (13.3%)
Birth Cousins	2 (13.3%)

*Participants could report multiple responses.

Table 30a. Quality of Birth Family Contact

Quality	N (%)
Mostly positive or neutral but with some challenges and concerns	6 (40.0%)
Positive	5 (33.3%)
Missing	2 (13.3%)

What was your primary reason for adopting this child?

Adoptive parents reported reasons for adopting each of their children who participated in this project. Parents sometimes reported multiple reasons so the numbers add up to more than the twenty-four participating children. The most frequently reported reason for adopting was “Fell in love / good match” (n=12, 50.0%), followed by “Wanted to have a family / be parents” (n=8, 33.3%), and “Wanted to adopt / give a child a home” (n=5, 20.0%). See Table 31 for additional reasons.

Table 31. Reasons for Adopting Participating Children

Reason	N (%)*
Fell in love / Good match	12 (50.0%)
Wanted to have a family / Be parents	8 (33.3%)
Wanted to adopt / Give a child a home	5 (20.0%)
Biological sibling of another adopted child	3 (12.5%)
Previous relationship (teacher, case worker, etc.)	2 (8.3%)
Similar abuse history as adoptive parent	2 (8.3%)
Felt we could handle child's needs	2 (8.3%)
Met children during failed pre-adoption placement and decided to see if they fit	2 (8.3%)
Wanted a sibling set	2 (8.3%)
Child attached to family during foster placement	1 (4.2%)
Biological relationship	1 (4.2%)

*Participants could report multiple responses.

How did you find out about the children you adopted?

Half (n=12, 50%) of the parents reported that their agency worker told them about their child. Four (16.7%) each reported they found their children at an adoption party / picnic / festival and that they were the child's foster parent. Two (8.3%) parents reported they found their child through a waiting child advertisement or child specific recruitment tool, and two (8.3%) found their child on a photolisting site. See Table 32 for other ways in which parents found their children.

Table 32. How Adoptive Parents Found their Children

How Found	N (%)*
Agency worker told me about the child	12 (50.0%)
Adoption party/picnic/festival	4 (16.7%)
I/We was child's foster parent	4 (16.7%)
Waiting child advertisement or child specific recruitment (i.e., Wednesday's Child, etc.)	2 (8.3%)
I/We saw this child on a photolisting website	2 (8.3%)
Child profile book	1 (4.2%)
I/We (or my partner) worked with this child in a professional capacity (i.e., teacher, therapist, etc.)	1 (4.2%)
I am/my partner is related to the child	1 (4.2%)
This child is a sibling to a child I/We previously adopted	1 (4.2%)
She was a sibling to a child I/We were fostering	1 (4.2%)

*Participants could report multiple responses.

FINDINGS

Transracial Adoptions

Transracial adoption status was determined by comparing the ethnicity and race provided by the parents for themselves and their children. The majority, 18 (75.0%), of the youth were in a transracial adoption, and 5 (25.0%) were in a same race adoption. See Table 33.

Table 33. Transracial Adoption

	N (%)
Transracial adoption	18 (75.0%)
Same race adoption	6 (25.0%)
Total	24 (100.0%)

What challenges have you had as a transracial adoptive parent?

The adoptive parents were asked to identify any challenges they have had being transracial adoptive parents. The following are the direct quotes from the six parents who identified challenges:

- “Few, if any, challenges -- hair. A few questions about ‘why are they Black, if you are White?’ from students of mine or other children who don't know us well.”
- “None. People have sometimes said the children look like me.”
- “We have not really had challenges, other than strangers looking at us or people who try to figure it out, but it has never been difficult.”
- “She doesn't look Native American so she is not accepted as well in that community.”
- “Some minor identity issues when he was younger, not really knowing his own ethnic / racial identity, not feeling a connection to his birthfather who was Latino.”
- “We have had some people ask personal questions; just because we have different races. One of my daughters was racially harassed [when she was younger].”

What have you done to facilitate your child(ren)'s adjustment to being transracially adopted?

- “Embrace her culture; i.e., pow-wows, foods, art, books, looking up her heritage.”
- “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.”

- “We raised them to believe they are wonderful and to value difference and diversity and to know we are all different and diverse. To this end, we have cultivated relationships with people who are supportive of us and our children.”
- “Therapy, honesty, sports- keep them active; friends that are same race, activities they partake in (like soccer).”
- “We have tried to embrace the children's ethnic background and expose them to various cultures, holidays, and food.”
- “We have tried to foster knowledge of their American Indian heritage, but opportunities are somewhat limited.”
- “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 bi-racial, so he always felt like he fit in with his adoptive family.”
- “Be honest and open all the time.”

What have you done to support yourself in your role as a transracial adoptive parent (support groups, etc.)?

- “Extensive connections within the African American community who are available as resources for my children, as well as resources and support for me and my partner.”
- “Got educated in the culture.”
- “Nothing really -- just have a diverse group of friends and family. Stay informed.”
- “Support groups; know people from the community who support her and me.”
- “Therapy, sports, great family, [name of agency], group therapy, art groups.”
- “We have tried to foster knowledge of their American Indian heritage, but opportunities are somewhat limited.”

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us about your family?

This question provided parents an open-ended opportunity to share anything about their family. The following comments were given by parents:

- “Great kids. Lots of love, joy, & challenges. We wouldn't change a thing!”
- “[My partner] comes from a large family. I come from a small one. Both of our families have been very supportive of who we are and embrace our sons as full members of the family.”

- “Our kids have high energy, some learning disabilities, and some behavioral issues, but overall we have a great time together and we (partner and I) work very hard to make sure we give individual attention. Honestly, we don't see ourselves as different.”
- “She gets teased most for her special needs.”
- “We are struggling with [daughter's] teen years. [My partner] is hesitant to give her freedoms and [daughter] has recently contacted her bio dad against our wishes.”
- “We have experienced no real issue with being two men adopting children. It has been a positive experience for both us and the children.”

Youth Findings from Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups and interviews with youth were conducted by Kinship Center staff, Mary McGowan with NACAC and AdoptUSKids evaluation team staff. Focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed for the purposes of data coding and analysis. Qualitative data were coded with the use of HyperResearch qualitative software. Data were single coded and checked by a senior evaluation team coder.

To increase the readability of this report, the term “youth” will be used in this section to refer to the total sample of 22 adopted youth and two adopted young adults who participated in the focus groups and interviews in this study. Focus group and interview participants are not identified in the transcripts, and therefore, themes and concepts are coded if they were discussed in a focus group or interview. Indication that a theme or concept was discussed in a focus group does not indicate the number of participants in the focus group who mentioned this theme, nor does it mean that all focus group members reported the theme, but rather, that at least one focus group participant reported the theme.

Family Membership

Youth were asked who they considered to be part of their family. Youth in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and youth in three (50%) of the interviews reported having siblings. These youth did not specify whether or not their siblings were biological, foster, or adoptive. Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7) of the interviews included animals and pets as part of their family. Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups reported extended adoptive family to be part of their family. A few youth reported that the following are part of their family: adopted siblings living in and out of the adoptive home, step-siblings, foster siblings, and friends. Generally, the youth did not specifically report that their adoptive parents were part of their family because they understood the question to mean family members beyond themselves and their adoptive parents. See Table 34.

Table 34. Family Membership

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Includes siblings, not otherwise identified	4 (57.1%)	3 (50%)
Includes animals or pets	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Includes extended adoptive family	3 (42.9%)	--
Includes adopted siblings living in adoptive home	2 (28.6%)	--
Includes birth siblings not living in adoptive home	2 (28.6%)	--
Includes birth siblings living in adoptive home	2 (28.6%)	--
Includes step-siblings	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Includes foster siblings	--	1 (16.7%)
Includes friends or friends' families	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Name for Birth and Adoptive Parents

Youth were asked what they call their adoptive parents. Youth in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups, and youth in two (33.3%) of the interviews reported that they call their adoptive parents by different versions of mother or father (i.e., Mom and Mommy). Youth in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups and three (50.0%) of interviews reported that they call their adoptive parents by their first names. Youth in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups indicated that they call their parents by different versions of mother or father with their parents' first names or initials attached (i.e., Mommy Jane and Mommy Mary). Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups call their adoptive parents by the same version of mother or father (i.e., both mothers called "Mommy"). Others reported that they call their birth parents and adoptive parents by different versions of mother or father, that they use the term "real parent" to refer to their birth parents, that they call their biological father a sperm donor, and that they call their adoptive father by Uncle [NAME]. See Table 35.

Table 35. Name for Birth and Adoptive Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth calls adoptive parents by different versions of mother or father	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth calls adoptive parents by their first names, without mother or father variation	1 (14.3%)	3 (50%)
Youth uses version of mother or father with parents' names or initials	4 (57.1%)	--
Youth calls each adoptive parent by the same variation of mother or father (e.g., calls both 'Mom')	3 (42.9%)	--

Table 35 continued. Name for Birth and Adoptive Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth calls birth parents and adoptive parents by different versions of mother or father (e.g., calls one parent 'Mom' and the other 'Mama')	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth uses the term "real parent" to refer to their birth parent	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth calls biological father a sperm donor	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth calls adoptive parent 'Uncle [name]'	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Age at Time of Adoption

Youth were asked how old they were when they were adopted. Youth in all of the focus groups (100.0%) and in four (66.7%) of the interviews reported their age at the time of their adoption. Youth in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) of the interviews were not sure how old they were when they were adopted, but they guessed within a year or two. Youth in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups reported that they were unsure of their age at the time of the adoption, but stated that they were really young. See Table 36.

Table 36. Age at Adoption

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth reported age at adoption	7 (100.0%)	4 (66.7%)
Youth wasn't exactly sure of adoption age, but guessed within a year or two	4 (57.1%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth was unsure of adoption age, but knew they were really young	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

How Youth Was Told about Parents Being Lesbian or Gay

Youth were asked how they were told about their adoptive parents being lesbian or gay. Youth in four (57.1%) of the focus groups and three (50.0%) interviews reported that their adoptive parents had shared their sexual orientation with them. Youth in four (57.1%) of the focus groups reported that their adoptive parents never explained to the youth that they were lesbian or gay, but that they just knew. Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview said that they do not remember or were too young to know at the age of adoption. Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups and two (33.3%) interviews reported that they were not told before being placed in their parents' home and they found out at the time of adoption. Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups each reported that their

understanding of the meaning of lesbian or gay grew over time; that the youth thought their parents told them, but did not remember; and that the youth was told that they would have two fathers, but did not understand that they were gay.

Other youth reported the following: that their foster parents had told them that their adoptive parents were lesbian or gay, that the youth previously knew their parent was lesbian or gay because the parent was part of the extended family, and that their parents never discussed their sexuality with them. See Table 37.

Table 37. How Youth Were Told about Their Parents’ Sexual Orientation

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Adoptive parents did tell youth they were lesbian or gay	4 (57.1%)	3 (50.0%)
Adoptive parents never explained that they were gay, youth just knew	4 (57.1%)	--
Youth does not remember or was too young to know at age of adoption	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth was not told before being placed in parents’ home or found out when met parents	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth’s understanding of the meaning of lesbian or gay grew over time	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth thinks their parents told them, but does not remember	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth was told about having two fathers, but did not understand that they were gay	2 (28.6%)	--
Foster parents told youth that their adoptive parents were lesbian or gay	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth previously knew because adoptive parent is extended family	--	1 (16.7%)
Parents never discussed this with youth	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.²

Adoptive parents did tell youth that they were lesbian or gay:

- “My parents told me that they were lesbians and together. I don’t remember what age I was; I remember that they’ve talked to me several times about that.”
- “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.”
- “For me, [parent 1 name] met me and she didn’t tell me for a while. Then she brought [parent 2 name] over to [my group home] for Halloween, and that is when I found out. [Parent 1 name] told me that she has a partner, and that she didn’t know what that meant for me, but that she was married to her. I didn’t really think anything of it.”

Adoptive parents never explained that they were lesbian or gay, youth just knew:

- “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.”
- “I think I kind of figured it out because there were two dads. No one ever told me.”
- “I wasn’t told. I don’t think it was a big deal or anything. It was just something that was always there.”

Adoption Workers’ Feelings about Lesbian and Gay Parents

Youth were asked if they thought that their adoption workers had feelings or attitudes about their parents being lesbian or gay. Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that their worker was supportive of the placement. Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they do not remember. Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups indicated that their worker was “okay” with the placement. Youth in one (14.3%) of the focus groups, and one (16.7%) of the interviews were not asked this question. 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 a kinship placement), and that the youth’s worker was lesbian or gay. See Table 38.

² Qualitative codes presented in tables, as well as codes and quotes presented in text, are listed in order of frequency. This order is maintained in all subsequent sections of the report.

Table 38. Workers Feelings about Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth's worker was supportive of placement	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth does not remember	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's worker was "okay" with placement	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth's foster parents had negative feelings about placement because parents were lesbian or gay	2 (28.6%)	--
Worker did not express any opinions about this	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth felt worker was negative about placement because parents were lesbian or gay	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth thinks worker did not know adoptive parent was gay because parent was single	--	1 (16.7%)
Youth's worker was lesbian or gay	1 (14.3%)	--
Not asked nor discussed	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth's worker was supportive of placement:

- "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."
- "Everyone felt good about the placement."
- "My worker seemed like she was going to cry when she told me I was going to be adopted, because she was really happy for me."

Youth's worker was "okay" with placement:

- "I don't think my worker had any feelings about me being placed with two moms. I think they were okay with it."

Worker did not express any opinions about this:

- "I don't think they cared, because they didn't talk about it or anything."
- "They never talked to me about it."

Youth’s foster parents had negative feelings about placement because parents were lesbian or gay:

- “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.”
- “They thought it was bad, evil, disgusting and all of that. They wanted nothing to do with it, and they wanted me to be no part of it.”

Was Youth Asked Feelings about Placement with Lesbian or Gay Parents?

Youth were asked if they were asked their feelings or opinions about being placed with lesbian or gay parents. Youth in three (42.9%) of the seven focus groups and three (50.0%) interviews reported that they were not asked their opinion. Youth in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups reported not remembering or knowing. Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they were asked their opinion about the placement. Some youth were not asked this question in their focus group or interview, while others reported that they were too young to be asked their opinions or feelings, and that the youth had mixed feelings about being adopted (not related to their parents being lesbian or gay). See Table 39.

Table 39. Youth Asked Feelings about Placement with Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth was not asked their opinion	3 (42.9%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth doesn’t remember or know	5 (71.4%)	--
Youth was asked their opinion about placement	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Not asked nor discussed	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
This was discussed or youth had mixed feelings about adoption (not related to parents’ sexual orientation)	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth was too young to talk about this	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth was not asked their opinion:

- “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.”
- “I don’t think they knew my uncle was gay, so we never had that conversation.”

Youth was asked their opinion about placement:

- “They just asked if it was okay with me, and I said ‘yeah’.”
- “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.”

Youth’s Feelings and Attitudes about Moving in with a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

Youth were asked about their feelings and attitudes about moving in with a lesbian or gay parent(s). Youth in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they did not understand what it meant to have gay parents. Youth in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups reported that they were excited about their new family, liked their parents, or were grateful for the adoption. Youth in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview stated that they were grateful to be out of their foster home and in a better placement. Youth in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups and two (33.3%) interviews reported that they thought their parents had a different type of relationship. Youth in three (50.0%) interviews reported that they did not have strong feelings about it either way.

Responses from youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups were categorized into the following themes: Youth thought that it would be a normal family like any other family or youth did not have any preconceived notions; youth was sad or nervous to leave friends and school; youth had concerns not related to lesbian or gay parents; and youth had reservations at first, but then became comfortable as they got to know their parents. Youth in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups each reported the following themes: Youth was glad to have two dads because they had never had a dad before; youth does not remember; other aspects of the family were more important than their parents’ sexuality; youth was embarrassed and hid it from others; youth did not have any negative feelings before they started getting made fun of at school; and that the youth thought that their family would be very “manly,” since he would have two dads. See Table 40.

Table 40. Youth’s Feelings and Attitudes about Moving in with a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth was excited about the family, liked their parents, or were grateful for the adoption	5 (71.4%)	--
Youth did not understand what it meant to have lesbian or gay parents	4 (57.1%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth was glad to be out of their foster home and in a better placement	4 (57.1%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth thought their parents had a different type of relationship	1 (14.3%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth did not have any strong feelings about it either way	--	3 (50.0%)
Youth thought it would be a normal family like any family or youth didn’t have preconceived notions	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth was sad or nervous to leave friends and school; had concerns not related to lesbian or gay parents	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth had reservations at first, but then became comfortable as they got to know their parents	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth was glad to have two dads because they had never had a dad before	1 (14.3%)	--
Other aspects of the family were more important to the youth than their parents’ sexuality	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth was embarrassed and hid it from others	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth did not have any negative feelings before starting school, but then was teased	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth thought that the family would be very “manly,” since he would have two dads	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth does not remember	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth was excited about the family, liked their parents or were grateful for the adoption:

- “They were awesome parents, and I liked them a lot. Actually, I loved them.”
- “They showed us pictures of them and their house, and I was like, ‘Oh my god.’ It was so nice and I was so excited.”
- “It was really exciting because when I used to visit them [it] seemed like they loved me, and I loved them too.”
- “I was excited to have a family because that is something I had never known before. It took four years before I even had someone who actually cared for me, so I was really happy when I moved in.”
- “I was happy to have someone there to support me and love me. I was happy and excited to move in with them.”

Youth did not understand what it meant to have gay parents or to be in a gay family:

- “I didn’t really know about gay people, I was just kind of like “okay.”
- “When you’re a kid I don’t think that you think: ‘oh, I’m moving into a gay or lesbian home,’ because you don’t know what that means.”
- “When I was little, I didn’t even know they existed.”
- “I didn’t even know about gay and lesbian families. I thought they were make believe and not real because they were two dads.”
- “I didn’t even know the word gay or what that meant.”

Youth was glad to be out of their foster home and in a better placement:

- “I really loved moving out of my foster home, because my dad and mom didn’t treat me fairly. I was excited to get out of their house. It was like a dream.”
- “When I first moved into their home I was glad to be out of the foster home, because it was boring there.”
- “After meeting them I realized it was a better placement than where I was.”

Youth thought their parents had a different type of relationship:

- “I didn’t know they were gay. I thought they were two co-workers living together.”
- “At first I thought they were sisters.”

- “I didn’t get told they were gay. I didn’t know they were together as a couple.”
- “I didn’t understand that they were a couple. I always wondered ‘what is [name of parent] always doing here?’”

Youth thought it would be a normal family like any other family. Youth did not have any preconceived notions:

- “I didn’t feel uncomfortable or weird. I felt like it was a normal family.”
- “I thought that just because I had two dads didn’t mean that it was any different of a kind of family. They both love me and care for me.”
- “There were no expectations or anything. I just thought it would be normal.”
- “I just thought they would be parents. I didn’t think there was any real difference between a mom and a dad or two moms or two dads. It is still just a family living together and working and raising each other.”

Youth was sad or nervous to leave friends and school; had concerns not related to lesbian or gay parents:

- “I was kind of sad to leave behind some friends.”
- “We were nervous because we didn’t really understand what was going on.”
- “It took me a few months to get used to the new place. If I’m in a new place, I don’t get attached to it very easily. It takes me a while to get used to people and a new home.

Youth had reservations at first, but then became comfortable as they got to know their parents:

- “It took me a while to get used to my parents being gay, because I didn’t fully understand it. I understood some of it, but not all of it, so it took me a while to get used to it.”
- “At first I was scared about it, but then after meeting [them] I realized that they were just regular people.”
- “They forced me to go meet them, and I was nervous. The second time I met them it was a better relationship, and then even better the third time, and so on.”

Did the Adoptive Parents Talk with Youth about His or Her Feelings?

Youth were asked if their adoptive parents talked with them about their feelings about moving in with a lesbian or gay parent(s). Youth in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview indicated that their parents did not talk with them about their feelings. Youth in one (14.3%) of the seven focus groups reported that their social worker or therapist did, and that their parents talked to them about their feelings. See Table 41.

Table 41. Did Adoptive Parents Talk with Youth about His or Her Feelings?

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
No, adoptive parents did not discuss youth’s feelings	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth’s social worker or therapist did	1 (14.3%)	--
Yes, adoptive parents did discuss youth’s feelings	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth’s social worker or therapist did discuss youth’s feelings:

- “My therapist talked to me about some of the differences I might be feeling and how to deal with them, especially if someone came up to me or made fun of me for having two parents. We talked about not being ashamed about it, and that I have two parents who are loving and here for me. She said to not put myself down or feel bad about having a different kind of family. I told them a lot about how I was afraid to tell people because I felt like they would run away or feel like I was disgusting or something like that. Kids judge in a way.”
- “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.”

Yes, adoptive parents did discuss youth’s feelings:

- “When they would visit they would talk to me and my sister about how we felt moving in and stuff.”
- “They 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.”

Youth’s Worries and Concerns about Having Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked if they had any worries or concerns about having lesbian or gay parents. Youth in three (42.9%) of the focus groups reported that they were unaware of social prejudice and youth in three (42.9%) focus groups expressed that they were worried that they would be made fun of, judged, or not accepted. Youth in two (33.3%) interviews reported that they did not have any concerns or worries. Youth in one (14.3%) of the focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they were nervous about the move or adoption, but not about having lesbian or gay parents. Fewer youth reported that they did not have concerns and were happy to have a family; that they did not remember; or that they were nervous because their parents were lesbian or gay and a different race. See Table 42.

Table 42. Youth’s Worries and Concerns about Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth was unaware of social prejudice	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth was worried they would be made fun of, judged, or not accepted	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth was nervous about move or adoption, not related to lesbian or gay parents	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth did not have any worries or concerns about lesbian or gay parents	--	2 (33.3%)
Youth did not have concerns and was happy to have a family	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth does not remember	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth was nervous because parents were lesbian or gay and a different race	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth was unaware of social prejudice:

- “I don’t think I understood any of the social things about it, so it didn’t make any difference to me.”
- “When I first moved in, I didn’t really have any worries. But when I got to fifth grade, people were calling other people faggots and stuff.”
- “It wasn’t anything different to me, it was just two people who adopted a kid. As a five year old, you haven’t seen a lot of stuff in life, and you’re open to new things and don’t know what things mean.”

Youth was worried they would be made fun of, judged, or not accepted:

- “I was worried I would be made fun of because I didn’t have a mom.”
- “My friends had a mom and a dad, and when I was little I was afraid that people would judge me for it.”
- “I thought that the kids in the neighborhood wouldn’t like me because they would judge me by who my parents were. So when I moved into the neighborhood, I didn’t talk to anyone.”
- “The only concern that I had was, just that maybe other people wouldn’t accept me because I had a gay family.”
- “Mostly I was worried I would be made fun of.”

Youth was nervous about the move or adoption, not related to lesbian or gay parents:

- “I was just scared moving into a family overall because of all of the moving I had done. It wasn’t so much about them being gay or lesbian; it was just concerns about moving.”

Best Things about Having Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked what the best things are about having lesbian or gay parents. Youth in five (71.4%) of the seven focus groups reported that lesbian and gay parents are more open-minded, accepting, and understanding. Youth in four focus groups (57.1%) mentioned positive aspects about being adopted, not specific to having lesbian or gay parents. Youth in two (28.6%) of the focus groups and two (33.3%) interviews reported that they enjoy having a unique family that bends the gender roles. Youth in three (42.9%) of the focus groups reported that they feel closer to their parents than they would feel to heterosexual parents.

Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they enjoy more positive gender qualities that go with each gender (e.g., females are nurturing), and youth in one focus group (14.3%) and two interviews (33.3%) think it is better to have two same-gendered parents rather than a mother and father. Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups each reported that they are able to educate people and advocate regarding lesbian and gay issues, they are stronger after learning to deal with teasing, and that their parents taught them to love people for who they are, and not to care about differences.

Other youth reported the following themes: Adoptive parents agree more because they are the same gender, so family does more fun things; parents are more accepting of who the youth is or wants to be; lesbian and gay parents live more adventurous lives and take youth to more places; it is easier for youth to talk to opposite gendered peers because they learn from their parents; and youth feels that they get double the attention. One youth reported not knowing. See Table 43.

Table 43. Best Things about Having Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Teaches youth to be more open-minded, accepting, and understanding	5 (71.4%)	--
Youth mentions positive aspects about being adopted, not specific to having lesbian or gay parents	4 (57.1%)	--
Youth enjoys having a family that is unique, that bends the gender roles	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth feels closer to their parents than they would heterosexual parents	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth enjoys more positive gender qualities that go with each gender (e.g., females are nurturing)	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth thinks it is better to have two same-gendered parents rather than a mother and father	1 (14.3%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth is able to educate people and advocate regarding lesbian and gay issues, and is stronger after learning to deal with teasing	2 (28.6%)	--
Parents taught youth to love people for who they are, and not to care about differences	2 (28.6%)	--
Adoptive parents agree more because they are the same gender, so family does more fun things	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Parents are more accepting of who the youth is or wants to be	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Lesbian and gay parents live more adventurous lives and take youth to more places	1 (14.3%)	--
It is easier for youth to talk to opposite gendered peers because they learn from their parents	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth feels that they get double the attention	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth reported not knowing	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group is coded if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Teaches youth to be more open-minded, accepting, and understanding:

- “I don’t know what the best thing is, but I am glad I am not the type of person who thinks that gays are from a different world. I am glad that I accept the fact that I have gay dads. I am glad that I’m more accepting of different types of families.”
- “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 in a lesbian or gay family makes you more open and accepting. It makes you open your eyes and show you how to love other people for who they are.”
- “It has helped me embrace the ‘weird’ people.”
- “Having gay and lesbian parents has increased my understanding and patience for other people.”
- “The one thing I have gotten is the idea of tolerance for others. Even if you feel like you know their ideas...I’ve learned to sit and have patience for everything.”
- “It is easier to accept other people’s opinions and ideas.”
- “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.”

Youth enjoys having a unique family:

- “The best thing is being different...we’re normal, but just in a special way.”
- “I like being unique and different.”
- “Having lesbian parents is different, and that’s a good thing.”

Youth enjoys more positive gender qualities that go with each gender (e.g., females are nurturing):

- “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.”
- “Since they are mothers, they’re particularly more caring than fathers, so I get more mothering.”

- “Moms are more understanding. If you’re mad at one mom, but still want to talk to a mom, you still have another one available. They try to understand most of the time.”
- “You get a more gentle and thoughtful perspective on things, rather than the dad’s view of “this is how things always have been and this is what I have learned.”

Youth thinks it is better to have two same-gendered parents rather than a mother and father:

- “I think it is better to live in a lesbian family because I don’t really want another father.”
- “I think being in a gay family is better than being in a straight family, because I have been in both.”
- “I would say that gay parents are nicer than straight parents.”
- “In my opinion it is better to live with two moms or two dads”

Youth feels closer to their parents than they would heterosexual parents:

- “We’re closer. If you get an F in English or something, all my family members come together. My family does this family member thing. You all sit on the couch and talk about your things that are going on, and that is cool.”
- “My parents are open with stuff that other parents might be like ‘oh, not until the teenage years’ or something.”

Youth is able to educate people and advocate regarding lesbian and gay issues:

- “I think the best thing right now is that you get to educate people about it.”
- “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.”

Parents taught youth to love people for who they are, and not to care about differences:

- “It makes you open your eyes and show how you should love other people for who they are.”
- “I get where people are coming from and what they’re feeling. I understand that it is OK who they are. I tend to stand up for people whatever their orientation, race, or whatever is.”

Adoptive parents agree more because they are the same gender, so family does more fun things:

- “I get to do more fun stuff than if I had a mom and a dad because they usually agree on the same things since they’re both girls. There would be more arguments if I had a mom and a dad.”
- “My parents bond better and don’t fight as much or yell at each other as much as my other parents, so we do more.”

Parents are more accepting of who the youth is or wants to be:

- “A lot of families don’t think about the fact that their kid might be bi, lesbian, or transgendered, or you never know. It would be harder for those kids to tell their families that they were gay. But gay parents are accepting of who their kid is.”

Things That Only Lesbian or Gay Families Can Offer

Youth were asked if they thought there were things that only lesbian or gay parents could offer. Youth in four (57.1%) of the seven focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they did not see lesbian or gay families as different from heterosexual families. Youth in three (42.9%) of the focus groups and one (16.7%) interview reported that they receive more same-gender guidance from parents. Youth in two (28.6%) of the seven focus groups reported that they do not know or don’t have anything to compare their family to. Fewer youth reported the following themes: that lesbian and gay families teach youth tolerance or not to judge others; that the youth feels that every family is different and that the differences are not related to the sexuality of the parents; that the youth is able to go to PRIDE festivals; and that the youth feels that things are different because of their adoptions, not because of their parents’ sexuality. See Table 44.

Table 44. Things Only Lesbian or Gay Families Can Offer

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth does not see LGBT-headed families as different from heterosexual families	4 (57.1%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth receives more same-gender guidance from parents	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth does not know or does not have anything to compare it to	2 (28.6%)	--
Lesbian and gay families teach youth tolerance or not to judge others	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth feels that every family is different, but that differences are not related to sexuality of parents	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth is able to go to PRIDE festivals	--	1 (16.7%)
Youth feels that things are different because of their adoptions, not because of their parents' sexuality	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group is coded if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth does not see gay families as different from heterosexual families:

- “I don’t really think there is a difference between a mom and a dad family and a two mom family. It is just two parents.”
- “I don’t really compare it to having a mom and a dad. It is just a family. It is a happy, loving thing. A family is just what you call something that you need and love. I don’t really compare it to who is the mom and dad. It just is what it is.”
- “I don’t really know what people think that gay or lesbian people would do that is different than normal straight people.”
- “I don’t think there is anything to offer because every family is almost the same as any other family.”
- “I don’t see how being in a straight family, or with straight parents, would be any different or better.

Youth receives more same-gender guidance from parents:

- “For us, it is easier to talk about girl stuff, like periods.”
- “Since I am with girls, it is easier to talk to both of them about my stuff.”
- “It is easier to talk to them about stuff since we’re all girls.”

Youth does not know or does not have anything to compare it to:

- “I wouldn’t know the difference! I’ve only experienced the one family.”

Hard Things about Having a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

Youth were asked what things are hard about having a lesbian or gay parent(s). The most frequently reported theme was that the youth were teased by peers and made fun of at school (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 3 interviews, 50.0%). Others said that life is not any harder because the youth has lesbian or gay parents (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 3 interviews, 50.0%); teasing by peers was worse when youth was younger, and reduced as youth aged (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%); other people assume youth is gay because adoptive parents are gay (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%); peers saying ‘That’s so gay’ and making lesbian or gay jokes (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%) and others express homophobia or judgment of the family (n=3 focus groups, 42.9%).

Youth in two of the focus groups (28.6%) each reported the following: being adopted and being adopted by gay parents makes youth feel different; hard not to have same-gender role model or hard to talk to parents about gender-specific concerns; youth is teased about being adopted (not related to their parents’ sexuality); having gay parents results in others asking youth personal questions about their past; lesbian moms want to have long conversations about feelings and parents are more strict than heterosexual parents. Youth in one focus group (14.3%) and one interview (16.7%) reported that it was hard to repeatedly explain about their family to others.

Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported the following: fear for my parents’ safety or my safety; hard to not be with or know birth parents; parents are embarrassing (not lesbian or gay specific); hard to have others feel sorry for you when they hear your life story; and peer was beat up at school for being gay. See Table 45.

Table 45. Hard Things about Having a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth is teased by peers and made fun of at school	5 (71.4%)	3 (50.0%)
Life is not any harder because youth has lesbian or gay parents	4 (57.1%)	3 (50.0%)
Teasing by peers was worse when youth was younger, and reduced as youth aged	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Other people assume youth is gay because adoptive parents are gay	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Peers saying 'That's so gay' and making lesbian or gay jokes	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Others express homophobia or judgment of the family	3 (42.9%)	--
Being adopted, and being adopted by gay parents, makes youth feel different	2 (28.6%)	--
Hard not to have same-gender role model or hard to talk to parents about gender-specific concerns	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth is teased about being adopted (not related to their parents' sexuality)	2 (28.6%)	--
Having gay parents results in others asking youth personal questions about their past	2 (28.6%)	--
Lesbian moms want to have long conversations about feelings	2 (28.6%)	--
Parents are more strict than heterosexual parents	2 (28.6%)	--
Hard to repeatedly explain about their family to others	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Fear for my parents' safety or my safety	1 (14.3%)	--
Hard to not be with or know birth parents	1 (14.3%)	--
Parents are embarrassing (not lesbian or gay specific)	1 (14.3%)	--
Hard to have others feel sorry for you when they hear your life story	1 (14.3%)	--
Peer was beat up at school for being gay	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth is teased by peers and made fun of at school:

- “At first I didn’t think it was bad, but then when I was being teased at school, I thought it kind of sucked.”
- “With all of the teasing at school...I kind of felt less than everyone.
- “At first, kids made fun of me because I didn’t have a mom.”
- “If you’re adopted in a gay or lesbian family, then it is awkward to explain that you have two dads or moms. There are some people who will take that and destroy your life.”
- “It was hard. People started talking. The first two years of middle school were kind of like crap...”
- “People at school would call me faggot boy and gay ass.”
- “I was dribbling the ball, and another kid pushed me. I pushed him back, and he ran into me and said ‘Oh, at least I don’t have two gay dads.’”
- “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.”
- “It is hard to be teased about having lesbian parents.”

Life is not any harder because youth has lesbian or gay parents:

- “It doesn’t make life any harder on you. You don’t feel like your life is really difficult because you have gay parents. In some situations you might feel like you don’t want to tell them you have gay parents, because maybe they won’t accept me. But, in general, it is not hard to be a kid. It is still the same. It is the same family and set-up and everything. Your friends don’t treat you any differently. Once they get to know you, and know you’re a good person, just because you have a gay family doesn’t mean that all of a sudden you’re a different person. I don’t think it is any harder on me just because I have a gay family.”
- “I think I would just be a kid anywhere I go. I don’t feel left out or different from anybody.”
- “I didn’t really have any challenges, except my learning disabilities, which my parents helped me overcome. I didn’t have any issues about the lesbian and gay thing.”

Teasing by peers was worse when youth was younger, and reduced as youth aged:

- “At first, kids made fun of me because I didn’t have a mom. After a while they stopped, because it didn’t really bother me. Now one of the kids who was really mean is my best friend. I asked him what happened. He said he was young and stupid.”
- “When we were little, it was a big deal because people would ask you about everything...in sixth grade, I think that is when it changed, because everybody just didn’t care anymore.”
- “It was hard in elementary school, but then in middle school people were more accepting.”
- “Elementary was the hardest. In high school they understand more.”

Peers saying ‘That’s so gay’ and making lesbian or gay jokes:

- “My friend [friend’s name] is not accepting, and it pisses me off, because she’s like, ‘Oh, that’s so gay’, and it pisses me off ...what is that supposed to mean? What do you think gay means? And it’s just that they don’t understand.”
- “I get offended by words like gay and lesbo when they say it in a derogatory manner.”
- “I’ve talked to my friends’ parents and they always use the term, ‘that’s so gay’, and I always say do you know what that means?”
- “When I hear people saying, ‘Oh, that’s so gay’ and stuff, I immediately am like, ‘Why do you have to bring gay into it?’ Why don’t you just say ‘That is so ‘dumb’ or ‘stupid?’”

Others express homophobia or judgment of the family:

- “There is a teacher who speaks freely about how he doesn’t think that they should have gay parents, and they shouldn’t adopt. I respect his opinion because he is a good teacher. You can’t really judge someone for their opinion after you’ve been through a whole life of being judged and not liking it. So I respect his opinion and am not mad at him. But, there are always two sides to people.”
- “As of now, it’s not about me. I am worried for my parents, about people making fun when that whole Prop 8 thing was going on. So many judgmental people just came out and were so rude. I remember that my mom and I were driving home, and there was a guy standing on the side of the road with a YES on Prop 8 thing...that guy yelled at her and was like ‘oh, you faggot.’ I was so pissed off, I wanted to choke someone. I just feel like people are so rude to judge people. Who are they to do that? I don’t even see that it is a big deal. When people say things at school about gay or lesbian people, it isn’t me I’m thinking about, it’s my parents.”

- “In some cases, it is harder for my parents. They are trying to take care of me and do the best that they can, but at the same time, the best that they can still includes people judging them, even if they’re doing their best and are good parents. It isn’t that they can change who they are. And people still judge them, and that irritates me. I don’t really care if someone calls me a fag, because I can brush it off. But once they bring other people into it like family members that are actually gay, it’s just like –it’s really irritating to see that kind of stuff.”
- “When you have gay or lesbian parents, people are always going to judge you and put you down. I guess that is just the way that it is.”
- “For kids with gay families, they’re always going to be judged with the world’s point of view differently than kids with a straight family. But, everything changes. I don’t know how many years it will take, but people will just start caring less. At the same time, kids are not telling people as much that they have gay parents, and it will take a little bit longer for that process to happen because kids are still closed.”
- “For me it is just hard that there is still a lot of hatred and prejudice.”

Being adopted, and being adopted by gay parents, makes youth feel different:

- “Just being different and having to explain things to everyone.”
- “I was being teased a lot, not just for having gay parents, but for being adopted and stuff. I felt less than everyone. When my mom tried to get someone to talk to the whole school about what adoption is like to try to help them understand, the school rejected it.”

Hard not to have same-gender role model or hard to talk to parents about gender-specific concerns:

- “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.”
- “Sometimes it is just hard when you have two dads and are a girl. We go shopping, and they just don’t understand me.”
- “The only thing that might be different is having toughness. I know like being a male sometimes there is not that leader and you just have to find your own way.”

Youth is teased about being adopted (not related to their parents’ sexuality):

- “I get teased for the adoption, and what I have been through. And the pressure that you feel to tell everyone your life story, because if you tell part of it, then they don’t understand it.”

Having gay parents results in others asking youth personal questions about their past:

- “I don’t tell my friends about my family because I remember when I told my friend, and she was like, ‘Oh my gosh! Really? I never knew that!’ I’m like ‘It’s not a big deal.’ But she kept asking all of these questions like ‘have you ever met your mom?’ I started to cry, and said ‘no,’ and she said ‘oh, that really sucks.’ And I’m like ‘I think I kind of know that.’”
- “People ask all of these questions, like, ‘Oh, why do you have two dads? Why did your mom not want you?’ And it’s like, well, that’s not really how it goes.”
- “People tend to expect answers from you, like you’re obligated to give them an answer and an explanation.”

Lesbian moms want to have long conversations about feelings:

- “Sometimes they like to have heart-to-hearts. And I dread them. It’s like, [Youth’s name], can you come in here? Then I’m just thinking ‘Oh, my gosh! Again? This is the second time in two days.’ They’re comfortable to talk to, I just don’t like to show my feelings that much.”
- “Well, that’s the thing. With two parents that are lesbians, they like to have long talks about one subject.”
- “Whenever I got in a fight, we had a huge discussion about it that lasted two days.”

How Youth Manages Hard Issues Regarding Having a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

Youth were asked how they managed the issues that were hard about having a lesbian or gay parent(s). The most frequently reported theme was that the youth ignores others or tunes them out (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); youth confronts, talks with, or manages peers making negative comments about lesbians or gays (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 3 interviews, 50.0%); youth does not tell their parents about challenges or emotions (n=4 focus groups, 57.1%); youth gets support from parents or talks to parents (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); youth has supportive friends and school environment or chooses supportive peers, many of whom are gay and understand (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); and youth doesn’t tell their parents because their parents make it worse by trying to intervene (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).

Youth in three focus groups (42.9%) each reported youth manages issues themselves, and youth has other adults that they talk to (i.e., adult friend, therapist, neighbor, etc.). See Table 46 for additional ways in which youth reported managing difficult issues.

Table 46. How Youth Manage Hard Experiences

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth ignores others or tunes them out	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth confronts, talks with or manages peers making negative comments about lesbians or gays	4 (57.1%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth does not tell their parents about challenges or emotions	4 (57.1%)	--
Youth gets support from parents or talks to parents	3 (42.9%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth has supportive friends and school environment or chooses supportive peers, many of whom are gay and understand	3 (42.9%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth manages issues themselves	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth has other adults that they talk to (i.e., adult friend, therapist, neighbor, etc.)	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth doesn't tell their parents because they make it worse by trying to intervene	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth gets really angry at peers about these issues	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth uses positive coping skills	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth's parents don't understand them or their life	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth tells parents broad information about what happened, without details	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's parents advocated at school to reduce teasing	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth ignores others or tunes them out:

- “I just don't pay attention to what people have to say. I just let it go over my head, like whatever. People have their opinions and that is that.”
- “I just say ‘whatever.’ I don't want to do what they do, you know? I just ignore them.”

- “I just ignored them....I just didn’t react, I didn’t pay attention.”
- “I remember working one day, and I am very proud of my family. That is how I was raised. And I hear all of these negative things about being a lesbian couple, about how they are morally wrong. There are a lot of religious people like that that I have run into over the years. ... Most of the time I just kind of tuned it out.”

Youth gets support from parents or talks to parents:

- “I would come home and tell my parents – well, in fifth grade, I told this girl that I had two moms, and she didn’t want to hang out with me anymore. So I told my parents about it, and they talked to me about how sometimes things like this are going to happen, and how to deal with it. They said I can come and talk to them.”
- “Right now, I feel like my parents come to me a lot when they see that I have a problem or something like that. I feel like we can just talk to each other more about things...it made me ready for what people had to say about the differences.”
- “I talk to them about what is hard about being part of a gay family. They’ll understand. They won’t be like, ‘Oh, I totally need to change because she is freaking out.’ We tell each other how we feel, and we meet each other half way, and we’ll try to work on it just as any other family with a difficult situation.”
- “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 feel like I owe it to my parents to come talk to them, because I know they worry about me and about how I feel. I don’t have a problem talking to them.”

Youth confronts peers making negative comments about lesbians or gays:

- “I don’t let them know that my parents are gay, but I stick up for what is right, as in if someone is saying stuff in general about being gay, I’ll be like, ‘Okay, who are you to judge?’.”
- “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 tell bullies that they’re wrong and that they shouldn’t be talking like that, because it is alright being gay.”

Youth has supportive friends or chooses supportive peers:

- “I talk to my friend. She might not understand what I’m going through, and she doesn’t understand my life, but she is always there for me.”
- “At school and with friends I have surrounded myself with a comfort zone. I have so many gay friends, so they are kind of understanding and accepting.”
- “The way I manage it is to stay away from those people and stay near people who really don’t care if you have gay or straight parents. When you become really good friends with them they’ll stick up for you, and they know to defend you from the other people that pick on you just because you have gay or lesbian parents. That is how I manage my fear – I stay away from them and more towards the positive people.”

Youth doesn’t tell their parents because their parents would make it worse if they tried to intervene:

- “I don’t tell my parents because they would go into the office and talk to the principal. The kids would end up knowing, and they’d be like, ‘Well, you’re just weird. You don’t belong to any of us. You don’t belong to friends, or you can’t be a friend.’”
- “The one time I told my dad I had a problem in school, he walked into the school and told the principal, and it just became a big mess. I don’t like involvement with parents, and I don’t like involvement with adults in my problems period because they go and make everything a big deal.”
- “They exaggerate it or make a big deal out of it than it really is. I told my dad that this kid tripped me, and he was like, ‘Let me go and talk to that kid to make it all straight.’ And I was like ‘no dad, stop!’ It was very embarrassing.”

Youth manages issues themselves:

- “I just have to deal with the pain myself. Because I don’t like people judging me for who I am.”
- “I just try to keep it to myself... I make sense inside my head.”
- “I don’t like talking to people...when my mom tried to talk to me about stuff like this, I’m like ‘Okay, I’m not having this conversation,’ and I walk away and go into my room.”

Youth has other adults that they talk to:

- “I talk to my social worker about how I felt about being made fun of.”
- “It depends on what day it is, but if I’m on the ice rink, my coach will notice that I am quiet, and he’ll ask ‘why are you so quiet?’ and will tell me to focus on what I am doing right now and forget the other stuff. It helps.”

- “I don’t talk to my moms as much about this stuff, but one of my gay friends’ moms is really cool and bubbly and fun...she has been there for me. She knows everything.”
- “There is always one teacher that you could tell them anything.”
- “I talked to the principal. He liked my parents and was a safe person to talk to.”

Youth gets really angry at peers about these issues:

- “I would say F-off. I’m telling the truth. I will say F-off, it is none of your business”
- “I do get mad, and sometimes I cuss at them”
- “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!’”
- “In junior high someone got me so mad because they kept calling me, and I just went after them. I got so mad. After a while, you get mad and you just have to do something about it.”
- “In the third grade I gave someone a bloody nose and got suspended because they were making fun of me.”

Youth uses positive coping skills:

- “I read, and sometimes I swim.”
- “I like to write, and I like to write music. I like to write songs, and most of my songs are about my feelings and what it is like to have two moms. With music the good thing is that you don’t have to tell someone exactly what you are feeling, it just comes with the lyrics.”
- “The way I deal with some of my feelings is that I run. I go running for miles to just get it all away.”

Youth’s parents don’t understand them or their life:

- “My dads are goody-goodies, and I’m not one. I get in trouble and he takes it so far and just doesn’t understand what I’m going through. He doesn’t understand my life period. I don’t think he does at all.”
- “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.”

Youth talks with a therapist:

- “I talk to [my] therapist. I liked talking about it, because it cleared everything and I didn’t have to build inside of the wall what people would say about me and stuff.”
- “My therapist helps a lot, because now I tell her that I build a lot inside. I have a lot of stress and when I tell my mom, she just doesn’t understand and she makes a big deal. But, when I tell my therapist, it stays in her room.”

What Does It Mean to be Lesbian or Gay?

Youth were asked what it means to them to be lesbian or gay. The most frequently reported understanding was that it meant being born with or having an attraction to same sex persons (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%) and youth doesn’t know what lesbian or gay means (n=1 focus group, 14.3% and 1 interview, 16.7%).

Youth in two focus groups (28.3%) reported that gay means two dads and lesbian means two moms. Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported that gay means happy and gay is just a way that someone is and it is normal too; and that youth’s moms call themselves gay and not lesbian. One interviewee (16.7%) views sexuality as a continuum. See Table 47.

Table 47. What It Means to be Lesbian or Gay?

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Born with or having an attraction to same sex persons	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth doesn’t know what lesbian or gay means	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Gay means two dads, lesbian means two moms	2 (28.6%)	--
Gay means happy	1 (14.3%)	--
Gay is just a way that someone is, and it is normal too	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth’s moms call themselves gay, not lesbian	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth views sexuality as a continuum	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Born with or having an attraction to same sex person:

- “Gay and lesbian means you’re attracted to the same sex.”
- “It is just that you’re born liking the opposite sex. I don’t see that it is different. It is just fine, like it’s normal. You just like someone else that is the same sex as you.”
- “It means two people from the same sex are either intimate, or love each other, or share a relationship.”

Youth doesn’t know what lesbian or gay means:

- “I don’t know what lesbian means though. The thing is my parents are lesbians, but they call everyone gay. Like they’re lesbian with each other, but they’re gay.”
- “I don’t know if I understand what it means to be lesbian or gay.”

Gay means two dads, lesbian means two moms:

- “The first thing that will pop up is two dads, and then the other definition is happy. But, most of the time, they’re talking about gay dads.”

Who Explained What Lesbian or Gay Means?

Youth were asked who explained to them what being lesbian or gay meant. They reported the following: youth ‘just knew’ what being lesbian or gay meant (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); youth’s parents have talked with youth about what being lesbian or gay means (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%); youth’s parents do not talk with them about what being lesbian or gay means (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); other people do not understand what being gay or having a gay parent means (n=1 focus group, 14.3%); and youth’s understanding of what it means to be gay grew over time with input from others (n=1 focus group, 14.3%). See Table 48.

Table 48. Who Explained What Lesbian or Gay Means?

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth ‘just knew’ what being lesbian or gay meant	4 (57.1%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth’s parents have talked with youth about what being lesbian or gay means	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth’s parents do not talk with them about what being lesbian or gay means	2 (28.6%)	--
Other people do not understand what being gay or having a gay parent means	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth’s understanding of what it means to be gay grew over time with input from others	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth ‘just knew’ what being lesbian or gay meant:

- “I’m not sure who told me. I just kind of knew.”
- “I don’t really know who told me. I think I just knew in a way.”
- “I can’t remember how I learned about it. I have just always known; that’s life.”

Youth’s parents have talked with youth about what being lesbian or gay means:

- “I knew what bisexual and gay was from my parents. When they were explaining to me about themselves, they kinda went into the differences of two men together and a man liking a woman.”
- “I’m pretty sure my parents explained it to me... I can vaguely remember them talking to me about what it means to be gay and lesbian.”
- “Once at school they were talking about transsexuals, and I didn’t know what that meant. I just went to my parents, and they explained it to me, like they explained about what bisexual and gay and stuff means.”

Youth’s parents do not talk with them about what being lesbian or gay means:

- “I don’t recall them explaining it to me. And I really wasn’t curious about it, so it didn’t really come up.”
- “No, we haven’t talked about what it means.”

Talking about Family

Youth were asked how they talk about their family if they are questioned by others. The most frequently reported ways of talking about their family were the following: youth doesn't go into detail or casually tells others they have gay parents, without concern (n=6 focus groups, 85.7% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); and youth avoids talking about it or doesn't talk about it unless they have to (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%).

These were followed by less frequently discussed themes: youth denies having gay parents when people they do not know or trust ask them questions (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); youth sometimes invites peers over to let them see without telling them first (n=1 focus group, 14.3%); youth tells others that their parents are regular parents and just happen to be two men or women (n=1 interview, 16.7%); and youth tells others that their parents are in a relationship and that they should ask them about it, not the youth (n=1 interview, 16.7%). See Table 49.

Table 49. Talking about Family

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth doesn't go into detail or casually tells others they have gay parents, without concern	6 (85.7%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth avoids talking about it or doesn't talk about it unless they have to	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth says "dad" instead of "dads" to avoid questions	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth denies having gay parents when people they do not know or trust ask them about it	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth sometimes invites peers over to let them see without telling them first	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth tells others that their parents are regular parents and just happen to be two men or women	--	1 (16.7%)
Youth tells others that their parents are in a relationship and that they should ask them about it, not the youth	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth doesn't go into detail or casually tells others they have gay parents, without concern:

- "I usually just say it casually, like just naturally. At my school I've gotten in such a habit of saying it."

- “I just say I have two moms. I’m not going to give them my life story. I just say, ‘Yeah, I have two moms; that’s how it is.’”

Youth avoids talking about it or doesn’t talk about it unless they have to:

- “I don’t tell everyone about it. I’m not ashamed about it, but I don’t want it to leak out so that people would come ask me if I have a gay mom. I don’t want them to start the whole negative process over again, because I’ve gotten over it and I’ve forgotten it, and I don’t want to remember it again. There is a part of me that is still protective about it.”
- “I don’t like talking about it, so I really don’t say anything. I don’t really have that many conversations about them.”
- “I don’t really talk about my family a whole lot because I don’t like kids making fun of me, and that is usually what happens when I talk about it.”
- “When they both came together, I would just hurry up and try to get in the car, or hide in the restrooms.”

Youth says “dad” instead of “dads” to avoid questions:

- “I never say ‘my dads’, I always just say ‘my dad’ to avoid questions. It isn’t hard, it is just easier to say dad because then people won’t be like, ‘Your dads?’ And then you have to go into a long explanation.”

Youth denies having gay parents if people they do not know or trust ask them about it:

- “If they find out on their own and then ask me, I’m like ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about.’”
- “I had one person come up to me in school the other week. They said that they heard I had gay parents. I asked them who they heard that from. They said ‘somebody.’ I didn’t want to tell them, so I just denied it. There is an appropriate time to ask, like not inside of a crowd of people.”

Deciding Whether to Tell Others about Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked about how they decide whether or not 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 (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 1 interview, 16.7%); youth just tells others or it is a part of who they are and they are proud of their family (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); youth does not want to explain their situation to others, which restricts having friends over (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); and siblings’ difference in openness about parents’ sexuality creates tension (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported the following: youth asks friends and siblings to not tell others that their parents are gay; youth does not know how they make their decision; youth uses this to find out who their real friends are; and easier for youth to tell others that don't go to school with them. See Table 50.

Table 50. Deciding Whether to Tell Others about Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth has to trust the other person before telling them	5 (71.4%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth just tells others or it is a part of who they are and they are proud of their family	3 (42.9%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth does not want to explain their situation to others, which restricts having friends over	2 (28.6%)	--
Siblings' differences in openness about parents' sexuality creates tension	2 (28.6%)	--
Asks friends and siblings to not tell others that their parents are gay	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth does not know how they make their decision	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth uses this to find out who their real friends are	1 (14.3%)	--
Easier for youth to tell others that don't go to school with them	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth has to trust the other person before telling them:

- “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.”
- “For me, I don't tell everyone.... I have really bad trust issues with people, so I don't tell everyone. But the people I feel comfortable with – I'll tell them about my moms.”
- “I have to really know them...I have to trust them, or they're gay or bi themselves or friends with them so I know they're accepting of it.”

- “I feel like if they know me enough, and I know them enough to trust them with something like my parents being lesbians, then I’d go ahead and tell them.”
- “I only tell people that I trust to the fullest extent...if I feel comfortable that they’re not going to blab to other people about it, then yeah.”

Youth just tells others or it is a part of who they are and they are proud of their family:

- “I just come straight out. Most people hide who they really are from strangers. They meet new kids, and then once they get to know the person they take the mask off. But, I think that is a waste of time. I just show myself as who I am, and I don’t wear the mask. I flat out tell people that I am bi and live with a gay uncle, and that I am not bi because I live with a gay uncle. If you don’t like me, then that is your loss.”
- “I just tell them when something comes up. Like if they asked what my mom and dad’s names are, and I’ll say that I have two moms. I just say it. I don’t really have to decide. I guess if they wanted to be my friend and they have a big problem with it, then they wouldn’t, and then they wouldn’t be my friend anyway.”
- “There is no protectiveness if anyone wants to know. I’m proud of the fact that I have two moms....even if they were trying to use it against me, to me that is pointless...I’m proud of it. They’re good people. They’re truly good people. There is nothing anyone can say. There is no pain or fear or anything like that.”

Youth finds out if the other person is accepting, accepts gay peers or is gay or bi-sexual:

- “I’ll tell them if I know that they’re okay with that kind of stuff. Like when my friend told me she is bi, I told her about my dads.”
- “If they’re accepting of other gays...or if they’re friends with them. So then I know they’re accepting of it.”
- “You know through their personality, mostly. They have to be someone who is understanding and not judgmental to anybody about race or how they look... They don’t tease people. They don’t judge people or make rude remarks.”

Youth does not want to explain their situation to others, which restricts having friends over:

- “I don’t really like to talk about it that much with my friends. Only my close friends come over and stuff, and only a couple of them really know. Sometimes I just don’t have people come over because I don’t want to explain everything to them.”

- “It is hard to have people over, because I don’t want to explain the whole story to 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.”

Siblings’ differences in openness about parents’ sexuality creates tension:

- “I think my English teacher has known because my older brother is more open about it. He’ll just tell his friends. He doesn’t care. And I kind of would be like, ‘could you please not say stuff’, because, everyone knows he is my brother, so they’re going to know about me too.”
- “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.”
- “My brother read an essay to the class about his two dads and how he got adopted and stuff. I found out afterwards, and I was just like ‘Oh my gosh, what if people know?’”

How Others Respond to Finding Out Youth has Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked to discuss how people respond when they find out that they have lesbian or gay parents. The most frequent themes were: others are accepting, comfortable with it, or okay with it (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); people tell others and that gets back to youth (n=5 focus groups, 71.4%); people ask questions about lesbian and gay stereotypes or make lesbian or gay stereotypes (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); others express subtle judgment or non-acceptance (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 1 interview, 16.7%); people want to know more about the family (n=3 focus groups, 42.9%); and three focus (42.9%) groups reported that others get confused and think youth has one parent and one stepparent. See Table 51 for other ways in which youth reported about how others respond when they find out the youth have lesbian or gay parents.

Table 51. How Others Respond to Finding Out Youth has Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Others are accepting, comfortable with it, or okay with it (neighbors, friends, teachers, etc.)	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
People ask questions about lesbian and gay stereotypes or make lesbian or gay stereotypes	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Others express subtle judgment or non-acceptance	5 (71.4%)	1 (16.7%)
People tell others and that gets back to youth	5 (71.4%)	--
Others ask insensitive questions or questions about parents' physical relationship	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
Others don't say much about it or ask questions	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
People want to know more about the family	3 (42.9%)	--
Others get confused and think youth has one parent and one stepparent	3 (42.9%)	--
Friends' parents are the problem and peers are influenced by their parents' negative thoughts	2 (28.6%)	--
Friends are not sure how they feel about my parents, but then they meet them and like them	1 (14.3%)	--
Others say they don't know any gay people	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Others are accepting, comfortable with it or okay with it:

- “The people we’ve told are really receptive to it and understanding and stuff.”
- “I even have some friends that think it is super cool.”
- “Sometimes they say it is cool, or they don’t really say anything about it. They say oh okay, and don’t act like they have a problem with it.”
- “My closest friend has known I’ve had lesbian parents since we met in high school. He thinks it is awesome. A lot of my other friends think it is awesome too. I haven’t gotten a single negative comment.”

- “Sometimes I get curiosity, but 95% of the people just say it is cool, and it is accepted.”
- “Throughout the years some people are like ‘Oh, that is so cool to have two moms. I wish I had two moms.’”
- “They’re like ‘Oh, that is awesome.’ One said ‘I wish I had that.’ She was talking about how her dad wasn’t very nice to her or her mom, and she kind of wished she had another mom.”
- “In my old school, our viola teacher was lesbian as well, and she thought it was cool.”
- “My teachers, they don’t see anything different or wrong with having gay or lesbian parents. It is not a big deal with them at all. It doesn’t affect them at all.”
- “Mostly my friends are supportive. The guy I went to prom with knew, and he would always come over.”
- “I go to a performing arts school, and there a million, bajilion gays. Everybody is awesome and supportive.”

People ask questions about lesbian and gay stereotypes or make lesbian or gay stereotypes:

- “When people find out that I have gay parents, they think I am gay too. They think that if you have gay parents it moves on to you and you turn out gay. And then the whole family is gay because you have gay dads. That is not how this works.”
- “People ask if they’re really into fashion and stuff for gay dads, or for moms they ask if they’re really tomboy-ish and have short hair and wear weird shoes – those sandals or something.”
- “They think they’re always into shopping and fashion, that they know every shoe designer. It’s like, that’s not how all gays are.”
- “People ask, ‘Oh, can your mom point out another gay person since she is gay?’”

Others express subtle judgment or non-acceptance:

- “I felt like my PE teacher treated me differently. He was just kind of rude.”
- “I told some people, and they were like ‘Oh, really? Okay.’ I thought it was kind of weird, because I felt judgment and they kind of withdrew.”
- “If teachers do care, they don’t show it. Obviously they wouldn’t want to make a kid feel bad about that kind of stuff.”
- “All the friends I hang out with know that I have lesbian parents, and don’t really care. If they were to use it against me, that would be way out of line, and I would never trust them again.”

People tell others and that gets back to youth:

- “I told one of my friends...and apparently it got leaked out. There is one kid I went to school with and we hated each other. He was kind of a bully, and he would always say ‘you’re gay.’ That was hard for me.”
- “I told this one guy that I had two dads. In another class he told everyone in his class that I have two dads. Then all these people came up to me and asked about having two dads. It was embarrassing.”
- “People are cool when they find out, then they tell other people, and then other people are like ‘hey, don’t you have two moms?’”

People want to know more about the family:

- “Once I tell them about my two dads, they want to meet them.”
- “I have a lesbian friend now who was really interested in meeting my parents. She was really excited, but she is not officially out. She was really into the idea and was excited to see them and meet them.”

Others get confused and think youth has one dad and one stepdad:

- “Sometimes they ask if those are my moms, and I’m like ‘yeah.’ Then they ask if one is my stepmom. I say ‘No, they’re both my moms.’”
- “Parents think that [name of Dad 2] is my stepdad. ‘Oh, so you’re living with two dads, right? So [name of Dad 1] is your dad and [name of Dad 2] is your stepdad, right?’”
- “They think that [name of Mom 1] is my mom and that we live with my stepmom, because they don’t really see her.”

Others ask insensitive questions or questions about parents’ physical relationship:

- “At that point they ask all these questions about how it feels, and about whether or not I have caught them kissing and all this other stuff. I’m just like, ‘Oh, I don’t want to answer you.’ They’re going to keep asking, but then I just walk away.”
- “They ask me if they sleep in the same bed and stuff. I’m like – well, do normal couples sleep in the same bed? I mean, obviously. Especially when people come over and they’re going to sleep at my house, my mom usually talks to the parents to make sure they’re okay with it, because they don’t want them sleeping over and not knowing.”
- “Kids at school would ask me stuff about what they do, and I-- they like kiss or something. It is weird to talk about, because they don’t really need to know.”

Friends' parents are the problem and peers are influenced by their parents' negative thoughts:

- “It kind of sucks though, because I have one friend that is really religious, but he’s friends with a lot of gay people. He says ‘Oh, I don’t like that, it is gross.’ But if it weren’t for his parents telling him all this religious stuff, like how would he really feel? It is what you’re being told, or is that what you really believe? Some people are so encouraged by their parents in what they do that they think they need to follow the same rules.”
- “My friends’ parents aren’t supportive of gay families, and then that rubs off on my friends.”
- “It is just the parents of the kids that don’t like gays or think they should adopt. So it rubs off on the kids.”

Youths’ Feelings about How Others Respond When They Learn that They Have Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked to share how these experiences were for them. Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) reported that they think others are curious and want to learn. Youth in one of the focus groups (14.3%) reported that these experiences are annoying. See Table 52.

Table 52. How These Experiences Are for Youth

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth thinks others are curious and want to learn	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth thinks these experiences are annoying	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth thinks others are curious and want to learn:

- “Since they don’t know anything about it, I think they just kind of want to learn about it. They’re just curious.”
- “I haven’t gotten a bad response. I think curiosity is probably the worst response I’ve gotten – that’s it. They just want to know how it works, or what it means. But I’ve never had any bad reactions or experiences.”

Youth thinks these experiences are annoying:

- “It is kind of annoying when people ask questions.”
- “I get annoyed sometimes, especially when I’m in a bad mood.”

Negative Experiences Due to Having Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked to discuss any negative experiences that they have had related to the fact that they were adopted by lesbian or gay parents. Some youth who had not experienced very much negativity also shared things that were positive related to their parents being lesbian or gay. The most frequently reported theme was being teased or bullied by peers at school (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 2 interviews, 33.3%);

Youth also stated that it is hard to watch gay peers being bullied (n=1 focus group, 14.3% and 1 interview, 16.7%). Youth in two of the focus groups (28.6%) each reported the following: scrutiny of family in public or people's reaction during Proposition 8; youth has lost friends due to having lesbian or gay parents; visibility of adoptive or gay family in the community or people make assumptions and stare; and youth frustrated with non-accepting religious peers or churches.

Youth in one of the focus groups (14.3%) each reported the following: teachers not standing up against teasing; youth got in a fight with a peer about teasing relating to parents' sexuality; youth experiences negative incidents that are adoption-related, not related to parents being lesbian or gay; others make comments about gay parents sexually abusing their children; youth goes to church that is not supportive of their family; youth wants to go to church, parents do not; neighbors are not supportive of their family; and parents unsuccessfully intervening in situations in an embarrassing way. See Table 53.

During this discussion, some of the youth chose to respond by sharing positive or neutral experiences. Youth in three (42.9%) of the focus groups reported never experiencing anything negative related to their parents' sexuality. Other youth reported attending an LGBT-friendly church; never having been teased; and never having been given a hard time by teachers. Youth in one focus group reported that their neighbors were supportive of the family. See Table 53a.

Table 53. Negative Experiences Due to Having Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Teased or bullied by peers at school	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth states that it is hard to watch gay peers being bullied	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Scrutiny of family in public or people's reaction during Proposition 8	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth has lost friends due to having lesbian or gay parents	2 (28.6%)	--
Visibility of adoptive or gay family in the community or people make assumptions and stare	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth frustrated with non-accepting religious peers or churches	2 (28.6%)	--
Teachers not standing up against teasing	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth got in a fight with a peer about teasing relating to parents' sexuality	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth experiences negative incidents that are adoption related, not related to parents being lesbian or gay	1 (14.3%)	--
Others make comments about gay parents sexually abusing their children	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth wants to go to church, parents do not	1 (14.3%)	--
Neighbors are not supportive of the family	1 (14.3%)	--
Parents unsuccessfully intervening in situations in an embarrassing way	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Teased or bullied by peers at school:

- “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.”
- “And then another kid found out about my parents somehow. And he told me that everybody in the school thinks they're going to hell since they're gay and because I go to a Catholic school.”

Youth states that it is hard to watch gay peers being bullied:

- “The kid that had gotten picked on like every day. He ended up moving like a week after that because of everybody picking on him. It was just a sad thing for me that nobody stood up for him. I feel like I should have. I felt like I should have done it sooner, and he would have stayed.”
- “It is hard that people mock kids because they’re gay. Some people will also bully you, beat you, and make you do their homework.”

Scrutiny of family in public or people’s reaction during Proposition 8:

- “When the Prop 8 thing was going on, some of our neighbors were YES on Prop 8.”
- “When Prop 8 was going on, there was a group of guys walking around with a Yes on 8 sign. They were so obnoxious. You don’t have to be gay if you don’t want to. You don’t have to go around –it’s their own life. You should let them do what they want, you know. There are kids at school that are gay and are going to feel bad too.”

Youth has lost friends due to having lesbian or gay parents:

- “In fifth grade, I told this girl that I had two moms, and she didn’t want to hang out with me anymore.”
- “I’ve lost friends over it. When [name of friend] asked me why I tell people, it is because I want to see who my true friends are.”

Visibility of adoptive or gay family in the community or people make assumptions and stare:

- “We went to this grocery store, and then we went to this Korea-Mexican place right in the city. We walked in and started to sit down. Then these two couples came by and just stared at us. And the woman just glared at us and my moms got mad, like ‘why are you staring at us?’ They didn’t like my parents because it is two moms. Two lesbians.”
- “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.”

Youth frustrated with non-accepting religious peers or churches:

- “One of my friends, she is religious, so she is against it. My friend, the Christian one is friends with my other friend who is bi. So, she’s not the kind that won’t associate with you for it, but she is also against it. I know she won’t stop being my friend for it, but it is hard to have people over.”
- “It is hard, because so many churches aren’t as accepting.”
- “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.”

Table 53a. Positive and Neutral Experiences Reported in Response to Negative Experiences Question

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth has never experienced anything negative relating to parents’ sexuality	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth goes to a LGBT-friendly church	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth has never been teased	2 (28.6%)	--
Teachers never gave youth a hard time	2 (28.6%)	--
Neighbors are supportive of the family	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes

Youth has never experienced anything negative relating to parents’ sexuality:

- “I haven’t had any negative experiences because of having gay or lesbian parents.”
- “No, I haven’t experienced any problems.”

Youth has never been teased:

- “I never really got teased about being adopted or being with two parents. I’ve never been teased.”

Youth goes to LGBT-friendly church:

- “I go to an GLBT church, and it is come as you are. Everyone is either gay, bi, straight, lesbian, or transgender, so they’re very accepting.”
- “We go to an Episcopalian church, and it has a lot of gay couples. That is where we knew a few of the gay families we know, but we don’t really keep in contact with them anymore.”

Talking to Parents about Negative Experiences

Youth were asked to share whether or not they talked about difficult experiences that they faced with their adoptive parents. Not all youth were asked this question or chose to answer it. Youth in one focus group (14.3%) and one interview (16.7%) reported each of the following: youth talks to parents about negative experiences; and youth is protective of parents. 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. See Table 54.

A few of the youth in one focus group each reported the following about how their parents responded to them: parents were supportive or easy to talk to, and parents told youth to ignore others. See Table 54a.

Table 54. Talking to Parents about Negative Experiences

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth talks to parents about negative experiences	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth is protective of parents	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth does not talk to parents about negative experiences	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth talks to parent in joint therapy	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth is protective of parents:

- “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.”

Youth talks to parents about negative experiences:

- “We have had discussions. I mean, not because we were confused, but we just kind of talk about how the Bible sometimes seems like it is hypocritical. Because it says it isn’t right to be gay, but you can also do stuff that you weren’t allowed to do in the Bible before, so why choose this one thing?”
- “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.”

Youth talks to parent in joint therapy:

- “Lately we’ve been having mom and daughter therapy, and it is weird because we fight so much more over the smallest things.”

Table 54a. How Parents Respond

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Parents were supportive or easy to talk to	1 (14.3%)	--
Parents told youth to ignore others	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Parents were supportive or easy to talk to:

- “Oh yeah! We’d talk about it if I had negative experiences.”

Parents told youth to ignore others:

- “My dad was just like ‘Oh, you know, we’re not going to worry about what other people think.’”

Frequency of Negative Experiences

Youth were asked to discuss how frequently they faced negative experiences related to being adopted by lesbian or gay parents. Some of the youth reiterated that they had not had negative experiences (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 3 interviews, 50.0%). Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported the following: negative things just happen sometimes; and the older the youth has gotten, the less he or she cares about what others think, which has made things easier. A youth in one interview (16.7%) reported that negative things happen frequently. See Table 55.

Table 55. Frequency of Negative Experiences

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Negative things do not happen very often	3 (42.9%)	3 (50.0%)
Negative things just happen sometimes	1 (14.3%)	--
The older the youth has gotten, the less they care about what others think, which has made things easier	1 (14.3%)	--
Negative things happen frequently	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported code.

Negative things do not happen very often:

- “Negative things don’t happen a lot. People don’t really say a lot of things.”
- “I haven’t had too many negative experiences, which is pretty good.”
- “I haven’t really had any negative experiences with having gay parents.”

Ease of Talking to Parents over Time

Youth shared the ease or difficulty they have in talking with their parents about the challenges that they have faced related to being adopted by lesbian or gay parents. The most frequently reported themes were youth’s ability to talk to their parents has not changed (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 1 interview, 16.7%); it has gotten easier over time for youth to talk to their parents (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%); and harder for youth to talk to parents or it is normal for youth to talk less to parents as they age (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%). One interviewee (16.7%) reported that the ability to talk to his or her parents has fluctuated over time, and youth in one focus group (14.3%) reported that it is now harder for youth to talk to their parents, because teasing is more frequent now that they are older. See Table 56.

Table 56. Ease of Talking to Parents over Time

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youths' ability to talk to their parents has not changed	4 (57.1%)	1 (16.7%)
It has gotten easier over time for youth to talk to their parents	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Harder for youth to talk to parents or it is normal for youth to talk less to parents as they age	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth does not talk to parents or youth feels misunderstood by everyone	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's ability to talk to parents has fluctuated over time	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youths' ability to talk to their parents has not changed:

- "It is easy for me. I've always liked to talk to them. It is the same."

It has gotten easier over time for youth to talk to their parents:

- "I've been a lot more comfortable there. Like I could talk to them, but like I could only talk for a certain time, and then I was done."
- "It has gotten easier over time, because the older kids in our family understand it more than the little kids."

Harder for youth to talk to parents or it is normal for youth to talk less to parents as they age:

- "I think it has gotten harder, because now that I'm a teenager I get somewhat annoyed over my parents so much. It is normal though, even with straight parents. It is just, I'm at this point of kind of separating away from them, and so I don't think I ever really even like to talk to them. I talk to them about certain things, but certain things I like to keep to myself about."

Changes in Feelings about Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth shared whether or not their feelings about being adopted by lesbian or gay parents had changed over time. The most frequently reported themes were youth's feelings have not changed over time (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 3 interviews, 50.0%); youth has become indifferent or youth is used to being teased or embarrassed (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%); and youth's feelings have grown more positive over time (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%). Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported the following: youth's feelings vary based on how others treat them; youth is now less open about their family due to experiencing teasing; youth does not have issues with their parents being lesbian or gay, they just do not tell others; and youth's positivity has decreased, feels that they would be understood if they had a dad. See Table 57.

Table 57. Changes in Feelings about Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth's feelings have not changed over time	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth has become indifferent or youth is used to being teased or embarrassed	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's feelings have grown more positive over time	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth's feelings vary based on how others treat them	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth is now less open about their family due to experiencing teasing	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth does not have issues with their parents being lesbian or gay, they just do not tell others	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's positivity has decreased, feels that they would be understood if they had a dad	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth's feelings have not changed over time:

- “No. I have always loved them. As long as I have a mother, since I’m a girl, I guess I’ll be fine. Having two dads would be the worst, when they wouldn’t know how to take care of me very well. All these girl things they wouldn’t know what to do with.”
- “Yeah, I have always been happy about what I have.”
- “They haven’t really changed because I was never sad. I was never sad about having either. I was always happy to have a family that loved me, so it has always been the same.”

Youth's feelings have grown more positive over time:

- “I think it has gotten better. For me personally, it has been so hectic lately at my house that it has been a bunch of things. I think it has gotten a lot better, like its more positive.”
- “I’d say more positive, because when I was little I didn’t really understand what being gay or being a lesbian was. But now that I have been told and have my own perspective on what I think about it, I’d say I am much more comfortable with it and can cope with people’s rude comments towards it, or good comments towards it.”

Youth's feelings vary based on how others treat them:

- “It has a lot to do with other people. When you’re little and you’re with them by yourself, you’re at your home and you think it is normal. But then, so many people can be cruel and mean about it, and then you think it is bad or wrong. It has to do with the way that other people treat you. If everyone is accepting around your neighborhood, it feels great. But when people around you are negative, it makes you feel like you must be a bad person to be adopted into this type of family and stuff.”

Youth has become indifferent or youth is used to being teased or embarrassed:

- “I am starting to be like ‘okay, this is my family, you know. They love me, so I shouldn’t be ashamed of them. So when we go out places, I’ll just not care what other people think.’ It is more at school because then you have to deal with it every day.”

Participation in Adoption-related Groups and Events

Youth most frequently reported that they participate in events through their adoption agency (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); go to PRIDE events, gay parties, or Rainbow Families (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 4 interviews, 66.7%); family celebrates adoption day, day youth met parents, or has an adoption party (n=3 focus groups, 42.9%); youth does not participate in any adoption related events or groups (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%); youth participates in gay-straight alliance at school or there is a gay-straight alliance at school (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%); and youth attends camps (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

Youth in one focus group (14.3%) reported that the youth has gone to an adoption conference or adoption panels and one interviewee reported that the youth participates in a teen youth group, not adoption or lesbian and gay specific. See Table 58.

As shown in Table 58a, many of the youth reported enjoying the events that they attended, and some had no opinion. Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported feeling overwhelmed at lesbian and gay events and that anti-gay people would show up to make fun of attendees.

Table 58. Participation in Adoption-related Groups and Events

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth goes to PRIDE events, gay parties, or Rainbow Families	3 (42.9%)	4 (66.7%)
Youth participates in events through their adoption agency	4 (57.1%)	2 (33.3%)
Family celebrates adoption day, youth met parents, or has an adoption party	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth does not participate in any adoption related events or groups	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth participates in gay-straight alliance at school or there is a gay-straight alliance at school	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth attends camps	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth has gone to an adoption conference or adoption panels	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth participates in teen youth group, not adoption or lesbian and gay specific	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth goes to PRIDE events, gay parties, or Rainbow Families:

- “We used to go to Rainbow Families every year.”
- “We always do the Rainbow Families, so we have probably all been right beside each other. If we look at old pictures, we were all probably all next to each other.”
- “We go to gay PRIDE festivals, and it is kind of fun going there. They’re Pride is the respect for the gay people. Sometimes they have parades and they also have candy.”

Youth participates in events through their adoption agency:

- “We go to the kinship celebration. We basically help out with the people who host it. Last year, I took pictures when families would come in.”
- “Every year there is a kinship thing where we get together and there are crafts and painting stuff.”
- “My parents go to meetings and trainings and stuff like that. We go too. They have this thing called *Elevate* for foster kids or that are adopted now. The parents have a meeting somewhere too and they talk about stuff. We just hang out with other foster kids and stuff and get to know them and what they’ve been through. If we want, we can share stories about what happened to us, and stuff like that.”

Family celebrates adoption day, day youth met parents, or has an adoption party:

- “In October, it is kind of our family anniversary of when we first met....we kind of celebrate like that. We’ll go out to eat. We always go out to eat, but it is like we’re special.”
- “We celebrate every day we were adopted each year.”
- “We have our own celebration each year for our adoption day.”

Youth does not participate in any adoption-related events or groups:

- “No, we don’t really participate in adoption celebrations.”

Youth participates in gay-straight alliance at school or there is a gay-straight alliance at school:

- “At my school there was a gay-straight alliance thing that was being formed.”
- “I also have a gay-straight alliance at my school. Us teens decided to make one there, because I think every school should have one.”

Table 58a. Youth’s Feelings about Events

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth enjoys events or is positive about events	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth is indifferent about events	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth is overwhelmed at gay events because everyone knows them	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth reported that anti-gay people sometimes attend events to make fun of the attendees	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth enjoys events or is positive about events:

- “I like going to them [peer support groups at adoption agency]. I like meeting new people, and sometimes we have parties and stuff.”
- “We go to a bunch of Pride festivals, and it is fun going there.”

Youth is indifferent about events:

- “I don’t know if I like them. Sometimes they’re a little boring.”
- “Basically it’s like whatever, because it is just another year of being with my family. I guess I can be happy about it, but I am happy every single day because I’m just a person who cares, you know?”

Knowing Other Youth Adopted by Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth shared whether or not they know other youth adopted by lesbian or gay parents. The most frequently reported responses were youth knows other youth adopted by heterosexual parents (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 1 interview, 16.7%); youth knows others adopted by lesbian or gay parents (n=6 focus groups, 85.7%); youth has lesbian, gay, or bisexual friends (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 2 interviews, 33.3%); youth does not know other youth adopted by lesbian or gay parents (n=1 focus group, 14.3% and 3 interviews, 50.0%); and parents have lesbian or gay friends who have adopted children (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%).

Youth in one focus group (14.3%) each reported the following: youth’s birth sibling was adopted by a different lesbian or gay couple; youth has met youth adopted by lesbian or gay parents in the course of daily living; youth knows peers who have lesbian or gay parents, but were not adopted; and youth met other peers adopted by lesbian or gay parents through their agency. See Table 59.

Table 59. Knowing Other Youth Adopted by Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth knows other youth adopted by heterosexual parents	5 (71.4%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth knows others adopted by lesbian or gay parents	6 (85.7%)	--
Youth has lesbian, gay, or bisexual friends	3 (42.9%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth does not know other youth adopted by lesbian or gay parents	1 (14.3%)	3 (50.0%)
Parents have lesbian or gay friends who have adopted children	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's birth sibling was adopted by a different lesbian or gay couple	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth has met others adopted by lesbian or gay parents in the course of daily living	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth knows peers who have lesbian or gay parents, but were not adopted	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth knows other youth adopted by heterosexual parents:

- “I know kids who are adopted, but they aren’t in a gay or lesbian family, just a normal dad family.”
- “I know a friend who was adopted at birth, and she was actually adopted into a straight family, but they didn’t have kids of their own.”

Youth knows others adopted by lesbian or gay parents:

- “I know a girl that was adopted by two gay dudes. It is really sad because they just got separated.”
- “My one friend and my other friend were adopted by two dads.”

Youth has lesbian, gay, or bisexual friends:

- “I have a bunch of gay friends and lesbians and bisexuals.”
- “I have lots of gay friends. Because I don’t judge them they tend to come up to me in tons, you know?”

Parents have lesbian or gay friends who have adopted children:

- “Some of my moms’ friends have kids that they adopted, and they are gay.”
- “In high school we had some family friends, [friend’s name] and [friend’s name], and they were both gay. They had two boys that I just loved hanging around with.”

Importance of Having Friends who Have Lesbian or Gay Parents

There was disagreement about whether or not it was important to have friends with lesbian or gay parents. Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) and 2 interviews (33.3%) reported that it was not important, and youth in three focus groups (42.9%) reported that it was important. Other youth reported that it isn’t needed but it is nice, and others reported that the importance of it depends on a lot of factors. See Table 60.

Table 60. Importance of Having Friends who Have Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
It is not important for youth to have friends who have lesbian or gay parents	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
It is important for youth to have friends who have lesbian or gay parents	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth feels it is not important to have friends who have lesbian or gay parents, but it is nice	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
It is sometimes important to youth	3 (42.9%)	--
Being adopted by lesbian or gay parents does not guarantee support and all youth experience it differently	1 (14.3%)	--
It is important for youth’s parents to be friends with other lesbian or gay people	1 (14.3%)	--
It is important to have lesbian and gay friends, supportive friends, or less judgmental friends	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

It is not important for youth to have friends who have lesbian or gay parents:

- “No, I don’t think it is important. It doesn’t really matter to me.”
- “I honestly don’t judge. I really don’t care if they have gay parents or not. If we get along, we get along. I don’t look exactly for people with gay parents. I don’t look for people that are like me in that way. I just look at their personality. And if they have gay parents, OK, cool, you know. We can relate on that level, but I don’t really look for it.”

It is important for youth to have friends who have lesbian or gay parents:

- “Yeah, it is helpful to know that they sort of live similar lives.”
- “Yeah, just to see like what their perspectives are on it, and see how comfortable they are, what they feel.”

Youth feels it is not important to have friends who have lesbian or gay parents, but it is nice:

- “I feel like it is not important, really, but enjoyable.”
- “I don’t think it is important, but it would be nice to. I do think it is important for my parents to hang out with gay people like them if they choose to.”

It is sometimes important to youth:

- “Sometimes it is important to have some friends who have gay and lesbian parents, but not all the time.”
- “I don’t know if it is important, but I think it is nice that they interact with each other and stuff, and that families get to know each other who have adopted with other people. I guess it is kind of important in a way.”

Family Socializing with Other Lesbian or Gay Families

In general, the youth did not report that their families socialized with other lesbian or gay families. Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) and three interviews (50.0%) reported that they had previously been around other lesbian or gay families, but had no close relationships. Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) each reported the following: youth’s parents have lesbian or gay friends, but youth does not hang out with them or their families; youth’s family does not socialize with other lesbian or gay families; youth has other family members who are lesbian or gay parents; and youth’s parents have both LGBT and heterosexual friends. See Table 61.

Table 61. Family Socializes with Other Lesbian or Gay Families?

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth has been around other lesbian or gay families, but no close relationships	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth's parents have lesbian or gay friends, but youth does not hang out with them or their families	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth's family does not socialize with other lesbian or gay families	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth has other family members who are lesbian or gay parents	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth's parents have both LGBT and heterosexual friends	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth's family socializes with heterosexual families who have children	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's family hangs out with other lesbian or gay families, does not specify closeness	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth has been around other lesbian or gay families, but no close relationships:

- “We used to hang out with another family that was adopted through a different agency, but we don’t really hang out with them anymore.”
- “Some of my moms’ friends have kids that they adopted and are gay. We don’t see them very much. Only when we go to the PRIDE festivals, or if they have parties here.”

Youth’s parents have lesbian or gay friends, but youth does not hang out with them or their families:

- “My dads hang out with other gay and lesbians, but we don’t hang around with them.”
- “My parents hang out with their friends, and we stay home and watch TV or do homework. I don’t think we’re involved with their friends as much.”
- “Our neighborhood is full of tons of gay couples – but not kids.”

Youth has family members who are lesbian or gay parents:

- “Actually, my aunt got a divorce, and she is adopting my baby brother. And they’re lesbians. And we hang out with them a lot, too”

Transracial Adoption

Eighteen (75.0%) of the youth in this sample were in transracial adoptions. Youth in most focus groups (n=4, 57.1%) and one interviewee (16.7%) reported not having any problems with being transracially adopted. Youth in three focus groups (42.9%) reported that others get confused about how parents are connected to them because of the difference in skin color. Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) and one interview (16.7%) reported that others question their origins, which leads to the topic of adoption. Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) each reported the following: others assume youth has Black parents or are surprised when they find out youth has White parents; the way others react when they find out; and others have said: ‘that can’t be your mom or dad’. Youth in one focus group (14.3%) and one interview (16.7%) each reported the following: others state that youth acts White and youth is judged by others for not being Black and Mexican enough; people stare at youth or youth’s family in public; others say that youth looks like their parents; youth not knowing as much about their own race, race issues, hair care, skin care, etc.; others compare youth’s skin tone to their parents and try to figure out where the youth came from; youth wonders what others think, but they are never questioned; and youth sometimes thinks about his or her heritage but mostly just ignores it because youth looks White. See Table 62.

Table 62. Transracial Adoption Issues

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth has not experienced any transracial adoption issues	4 (57.1%)	1 (16.7%)
Others are confused about how parents are connected to youth because of the difference in skin color	3 (42.9%)	--
Others question youth’s origins, which leads to the topic of adoption	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Others assume youth has Black parents or are surprised when they find out youth has White parents	2 (28.6%)	--
The way others react when they find out	2 (28.6%)	--
Others have said: ‘that can’t be your mom or dad’	2 (28.6%)	--
Others state that youth acts White and youth is judged by others for not being Black and Mexican enough	1 (14.3%)	--
People stare at youth or youth’s family in public	1 (14.3%)	--

Table 62 continued. Transracial Adoption Issues

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Others say that youth looks like their parents	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth not knowing as much about their own race, race issues, hair care, skin care, etc.	1 (14.3%)	--
Others compare youth's skin tone to their parents and try to figure out where the youth came from	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth wonders what others think, but they are never questioned	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth sometimes thinks about heritage but mostly just ignores it because he or she looks White	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth has not experienced any transracial adoption issues:

- “My friends think my race is awesome. But they never say anything about my dads. I haven’t experienced any type of racism.”
- “I haven’t had any issues because of being transracially adopted.”
- “I don’t get any comments because of being a different race than my parents.”

Others are confused about how parents are connected to youth because of difference in skin color and others question youth’s origins, which leads to the topic of adoption:

- “They just, they ask us like, ‘What does your dad look like? Is he -----?’ That is all I remember.”
- “Not issues...but when we are with one of our moms, when we’re out – a lot of people ask, ‘what does your dad look like? Is he Asian?’”
- “When they see my parents, they ask if it is my real mom, and I say ‘yea, but I’m just darker’. And they ask if I have a Mexican dad, and I just say ‘yeah’. They’re all like looking at my brother and sister, and they’re like ‘wow’.”

- “That is kind of the first question. Like, ‘oh, who is that White guy that picks you up from school?’ Some kid asked me just the other day. She’s like, ‘was that your dad?’ And I was like ‘yeah’. She said, ‘So you’re half White?’ And I’m like ‘um, no’.”
- “People assume you have Black parents just because you’re Black. And when they find out you don’t, they’ll be all like what happened and stuff, and where are your birth parents and stuff.”
- “My biological dad is Mexican, and my mom is the rest of the stuff. And when they see my dad, they’re like ‘I thought you said your dad was Mexican?’ I’m like, ‘Oh, that’s my real dad’. Then they’re like, ‘Oh, so were your parents married? And then got divorced and now you’re with him?’ I’m just like ‘no.’ I don’t tell them I’m adopted. It’s just not easy to say it. That little question opens up into bigger things.”
- “Sometimes they’re just like ‘oh, is that your aunt or something?’ ‘No, that’s my moms. Those are my moms. And sometimes they’ll ask what my actual birth family is. Then they’ll start asking all these questions. I don’t even want to talk about it. I get tired of it.”

Others assume youth has Black parents or are surprised when they find out youth has White parents:

- “When I’m in sports, they assume I’m from that tough Black family.”
- “When they come to my house we have some of the best chicken; they think that because we’re African American that it comes from an African American mom.”
- “People assume I have Black parents and are always really surprised when they find out my parents are White.”

The way others react when they find out:

- “People are like, ‘Oh, your parents are White and you’re not?’ Obviously, you can tell I am adopted. But it was hard for me when I was little because I didn’t get why people cared about that.”
- “Just the reaction from people is hard sometimes.”

Others have said: ‘that can’t be your mom or dad’:

- “People just say ‘well that can’t be your dad, he is White.’”
- “I get that all time. Like, you’re Black and your moms are White. How does that work? I’m like, I’m adopted. That is all I’ll say. It is because I’m adopted.”

Handling Transracial Adoption Challenges

Youth in one focus group (14.3%) and one interview (16.7%) reported that they handle transracial challenges by stating that they are adopted without offering additional information. Youth in one focus group each reported that they do not explain their family to strangers, and state ‘I don’t know you’; youth’s family uses humor; and youth gets support from their parents. See Table 63.

Table 63. Handling Transracial Adoption Challenges

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth states that they are adopted, but does not provide additional information	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth does not explain family to strangers, and states ‘I don’t know you’	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth’s family uses humor	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth gets support from their parents	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth states that they are adopted, but does not provide additional information:

- “I just tell them we’re different like it is no big deal. I don’t really care, but they care. I don’t care what they say.”
- “Obviously they know you’re adopted, so you just move on past it.”

Youth does not explain their family to strangers, and states ‘I don’t know you’:

- “I’ll just be like ‘whatever.’ I don’t want to explain it to you.”
- “We’ll be in the grocery store and every now and then somebody will mention it, and we’ll be like: ‘We don’t know you’.”

Youth’s family uses humor:

- My mom laughed one time because my sister is a little darker than me, and my mom is really white. Someone told her ‘oh yeah, you guys really look alike.’ My mom was like ‘You’re kidding, right?’ We don’t look anything alike. Ever since then that has been a joke... ‘Oh yeah, we totally look alike’.”

Youth gets support from their parents:

- “I would cry when I was little, or I would cry because I didn’t really know what to do. I mean, there was nothing I could do about it. And it was their opinion and how they felt and reacted to it. I was definitely hurt. My parents helped me get past that because they would understand also how people felt about it. They would also tell me to be strong and to ignore what other people thought because that isn’t what defines me. I mean, it is what I think and how I feel that defines who I am.”

Questions about Transracial Adoption or Having Lesbian or Gay Parents

Youth were asked if they were asked more questions about being adopted transracially or being adopted by lesbian or gay parents. The majority of youth in the study reported that they were either not asked about either issue or they were asked more about having a lesbian or gay parent(s). See Table 64.

Table 64. More Questions about Parents’ Sexuality or Transracial Family?

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth is asked more about gay parents	6 (85.7%)	--
Youth is not questioned about either thing	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth is asked more about transracial family	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth sees them as different topics or separate issues, and cannot compare them	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth is questioned the same amount about both	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth is questioned more about having gay or lesbian parents:

- “More questions about lesbian parents than race. When they hear ‘lesbians’ they’re more interested about that than ethnicity. They figure that if they’re lesbians and you’re adopted, they don’t really think one of them is your real mom. They just think about the fact that you were adopted into a whole different, new family.”
- “There aren’t very many about either, but more about being in a lesbian family.”
- “I don’t really get comments at all, but when I do it would mostly be about having gay or lesbian parents.”

Youth is not questioned about either their parents being lesbian or gay or about transracial adoption:

- “I don’t really get questions about either thing.”
- “I don’t really get questioned about race or adoption because I don’t really tell.”

Youth is asked more about transracial family:

- “I get more questions about being in a transracial family. They’re all trying to figure it out.”

Feelings about Transracial Adoption

The majority of youth felt positive (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 1 interview, 16.7%) or neutral (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%) about being in a transracial adoption. Youth who shared negative feelings reported that it requires difficult explanations and it is hard to deal with the stereotypes and judgment. See Table 65.

Table 65. Feelings about Transracial Adoption

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth likes the diversity in their home, feels positive, or thinks it is cool	5 (71.4%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth is neutral about being transracially adopted, or feels there is nothing good or bad about it	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Others are invasive by asking questions in public, family’s visibility can be difficult	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth thinks their parents buy them more things because they are White	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth feels that movie stars have made transracial adoption cool	1 (14.3%)	--
Simple situations lead to difficult explanations	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth finds it hard to deal with stereotypes and judgment	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth likes the diversity in their home:

- “The whole culture is really fun. I like to have multi-cultures in the home.”
- “My dad that is half Mexican, he makes good Mexican food. My Caucasian dad makes some really good mashed potatoes. It is all about the food.”
- “The best part is my grandma, she is Asian. She is a caterer, and she makes food for twelve people when she comes down, even though there are four of us.”

Youth is neutral about being transracially adopted or feels there is nothing good or bad about it:

- “There is nothing bad, but there is nothing good either.”
- “There are no negatives, but there aren’t any plusses to it.”

Youth feels positive or thinks it is cool:

- “The people we used to be friends with, their kids were darker, and one mom was Caucasian with red hair, and the other was Caucasian with curly brown hair. All the different ethnicities and looks, it was kind of really cool. I always tell my friends I want to have two of my own and then two adopted. I want to have Asian babies. I know that is really weird, but I think different ethnicities are really cool.”
- “I don’t know; it is just cool.”
- “I think I took all the negativity into humor, which is kind of the way I deal with it. People will ask me, and I don’t know. It is kind of cool. That is the way I see it.”

Others are invasive by asking questions in public, family’s visibility can be difficult:

- “Some people will question you, asking ‘are those your parents?’ They came up to me and asked if they were my parents, and I said ‘yeah’. Because they were White and I am Black skinned.”
- “People ask ‘are those your parents?’ They would ask about the Asian one, and I would say ‘yeah’. And then when they hear your White dad is your dad, they would go back to being mixed up. And they’d go back and start to question you even more. It was annoying.”

Knowing Other Youth in Transracial Families

Some youth in all of the focus groups (100.0%) reported that they knew others who were adopted transracially. A few youth in one focus group (14.3%) and one interview (16.7%) reported not knowing anyone adopted transracially. See Table 66.

Table 66. Knowing Other Youth in Transracial Families

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth knows others who have been transracially adopted	7 (100%)	--
Youth does not know any transracially adopted youth	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth’s birth sibling was adopted transracially by a different family	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth knows youth who were adopted non-transracially	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported code.

Youth knows others who have been transracially adopted:

- “I have an Asian friend who is adopted by two Black people. People always ask him why his dads are Black.”
- “I know someone. She is African American and she has White fathers.”
- “I have a friend and he is Mexican but was adopted by White people.”

Direct quotes from youth about handling challenges with transracial adoption, listed in order of frequency as in the above table:

Youth has talked with their parents about handling these situations:

- “We talked to our moms about how to handle this stuff. Like what to say to be comfortable so we don’t have to say anything we’re not comfortable revealing, or just so that we’re happy with what is going on. I’m not sure if anything caused the conversation, or if they just brought it up by themselves.”

Peers ask youth questions about their ethnicity:

- “Sometimes people will ask about what we are, ethnically. They’ll be like ‘Oh, what is your mom and your dad?’ And we’ll be like ‘Um, we’re adopted, so our parents are actually not the same race as us.’”

Birth Family Contact

Many youth reported having regular contact with their birth family (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 2 interviews, 33.3%) or sporadic contact with their birth family (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%). Youth in two focus groups (28.6%) and three interviews (50.0%) reported having no contact with their birth family. See Table 67.

The majority of those reporting contact indicated that contact was with birth siblings, birth parents and extended birth family members. See Table 67a.

Table 67. Contact with Birth Family?

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth has regular contact with their birth family	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth does not have contact with their birth family	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth used to be in contact with their birth family, but does not have contact anymore	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth has sporadic or occasional contact	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth is trying to find their birth family	--	1 (16.7%)
Youth only has contact with birth siblings in the same adoptive home	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth has regular contact with their birth family:

- “My mom’s mom, that’s my grandma. I see her every other weekend. And then I see my aunts or uncles on my birth mom’s sides if I go to my grandma’s. Or like my birthday or my brother’s birthday they come over here and stuff like that.”
- “I have contact with my dad, because now he got out of jail and he is living in Mexico. And usually I go down there to see him.”
- “I’m in contact with my birth family, but not my birth mom. I can be in contact with her, but I choose not to be.”

Youth does not have contact with their birth family:

- “No. I am still kind of untrusting. My whole life I don’t care about my father. My mom had a baby and she was taking care of the baby, and he ran south, and never came back to take care of the baby. That baby is me, but I don’t care because he left me and my mom.”
- “I can’t, because we don’t know where they are.”

Youth used to be in contact with their birth family, but does not have contact anymore:

- “When we were little we used to go to these places, and on the way back there were these really crappy apartments. And we’d stop by every time and say hi and stuff. We used to see our brother and sister and our mother. But then one day they weren’t there, so now we don’t have any contact.”
- “I’ve met one of them once. I’ve met my dad about three times. After he went to jail I had no contact with him. I don’t know if he is still alive anymore.”
- “I used to, but not anymore. The last time I was twelve... and my mom and them were doing drugs in their apartment. So my mom and cousin said you’re not going to visit them anymore if you want to do drugs. And my real mom was high, so she said “whatever.” So I stopped visiting them because of the drugs and stuff.”

Youth has sporadic or occasional contact:

- “I think it was a year ago. I used to visit my mom when I was little, then we stopped. And then about a year ago I went over to my mom’s house to celebrate one of my brother’s birthdays, like the brothers I don’t live with. I have two brothers that I don’t live with.”

Table 67a. Birth Family Member Contact

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Birth siblings	6 (85.7%)	--
Birth mother or father	6 (85.7%)	--
Birth aunt, uncle, or cousins	3 (42.9%)	2 (33.3%)
Birth grandmother or grandfather	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Birth family, not otherwise specified	1 (14.3%)	--
Family of origin stepparent	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Type of Birth Family Contact

The type of contact that youth had with various members of their birth family varied widely. It included being adopted with birth siblings, having regular face-to-face visits, and sporadic telephone contact. See Table 68.

Table 68. Type of Birth Family Contact

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Face-to- face contact with siblings	3 (42.9%)	--
Face-to-face contact with aunts or uncles	1 (14.3%)	2 (33.3%)
Face-to- face contact with grandparents	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth is placed with one or more birth siblings	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Face-to-face contact with birth parents	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth writes to birth mother or father	1 (14.3%)	--
Face-to-face contact with cousins	--	1 (16.7%)
Birth mother lives at youth's house	1 (14.3%)	--
Telephone contact with birth father	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Adoptive Parent Contact with Adopted Youth's Birth Family

Youth in five focus groups (71.4%) and two interviews (33.3%) reported that their adoptive parents have contact with their birth parents. Some youth in two of the focus groups (28.6%) reported that their adoptive parents used to have contact with their birth parents but no longer do. See Table 69.

Table 69. Parents' Contact with Birth Family

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Parents have contact with youth's birth family	5 (71.4%)	2 (33.3%)
Parents previously had contact with youth's birth family, but do not now	2 (28.6%)	--
Parents do not have contact with youth's birth family	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Relationship between Adoptive Parents and Birth Family

Youth were asked about the relationship between their adoptive parents and the birth family members with whom they are in contact. The most frequently reported response was that contact is positive with birth grandparents, aunts, uncles, or parents (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 2 interviews, 33.3%). See Table 70.

The youth also reported mostly positive feelings about their adoptive parents' relationships with birth family members (n=4 focus groups, 57.1% and 2 interviews, 33.3%). See table 70a.

Table 70. Relationship between Adoptive Parents and Birth Family

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Contact is positive with birth grandparents, aunts, uncles, or parents	4 (57.1%)	2 (33.3%)
Relationship is neutral	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth reports jealousy between adoptive parents and birth parents or that birth parents didn't want child to be adopted	2 (28.6%)	--
Adoptive parent cut off contact with youth's birth family members	1 (14.3%)	--
Contact is difficult with adoptive parents of youth's birth siblings, because they are not accepting of gay families	1 (14.3%)	--
Contact with youth's birth sibling is difficult	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's birth family did not want youth to be adopted	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Table 70a. Youth’s Feelings about Birth Family Contact

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth likes contact with birth family	4 (57.1%)	2 (33.3%)
Contact is difficult or complicated	1 (14.3%)	--
Adoptive parents helped find birth parents	1 (14.3%)	--
It is hard for youth when birth family members say negative things about youth’s birth mother	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth likes contact with birth family:

- “In foster care I was always in contact with birth family. And when we got adopted, we would visit them a lot. I got really lucky because some adopted parents cut off all relationships with parents.”
- “I have a good relationship with them. I like to see them once in a while.”

Contact is difficult or complicated:

- “I recently met one of my older sisters and it has been kind of hard. The relationship started out great, and then it got kind of rocky, and now I am deciding whether or not I want to keep contact with her. It has been really hard on the whole family. She got pregnant at an early age, and she has been homeless. Now she is pregnant again after putting her kid through all of that...and at a point she was doing drugs when we knew her. She doesn’t really have a good relationship with my mom. She is always asking [NAME] for stuff she really doesn’t need...It has been hard on all of us, she isn’t getting any better, and it is always negative stuff from her. Having a lot of stress like this going on in the house, I wonder if this is the best relationship to have right now.”
- “I find contact complicated, because our whole family is spread out all in different areas. I’ve never even met my older brother and one of my older sisters. I think there are so many loops of lies and not knowing who got adopted by whom, and it is just so complicated. My older brother, he is in his twenties ---I don’t even know if he knows about us because my mom put in a form saying we wanted to meet him and the parents rejected it. Now since he is of age, I’m not sure if he even knows we exist. I’ve always wanted to know an older brother, that’s always what I’ve wanted. So, I don’t know, it is complicated.”

Birth Family Feelings about Youth Being Adopted by a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

Youth were asked about how their birth family felt about them being adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s). The most frequently reported responses were: youth’s birth family is happy that they have a good family or doesn’t care that youth’s adoptive parents are gay (n=5 focus groups, 71.4% and 3 interviews, 50.0%); youth doesn’t think their birth parents know that they have a lesbian or gay parent, but they are happy youth is in a safe home (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); and youth’s birth family has not said anything negative (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%).

Youth in one focus group (14.3%) reported that the birth sibling’s adoptive parents have a problem with the youth’s parents, so they have less contact than youth would prefer; one interviewee (16.7%) reported that it is hard for the youth’s family that youth has a lesbian or gay parent. See Table 71.

Table 71. Birth Family’s Feelings about Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth’s birth family is happy that they have a good family or doesn’t care that youth’s adoptive parents are gay	5 (71.4%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth doesn’t think their birth parents know that they have a lesbian or gay parent(s), but they are happy youth is in a safe home	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth’s birth family has not said anything negative	2 (28.6%)	--
Birth sibling’s adoptive parents have a problem with youth’s parents, so they have less contact than youth would prefer	1 (14.3%)	--
It is hard for the birth family that youth has a lesbian or gay parent(s)	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth’s birth family is happy that they have a good family or doesn’t care that youth’s adoptive parents are gay:

- “They are very happy because my mom was a drug addict, and she is very happy because she knows my parents are going to keep us safe and out of trouble.”
- “My mom doesn’t care. She doesn’t care about that. She just cares that they adopted us. That we’re safe and we’re getting food and we have clothing, you know?”

- “They’re totally cool with it. They don’t really care. As long as we were adopted into a good family that cared for us.”
- “I don’t think she thinks bad about it. She loves them now because she knows how good our life is now and how we’re happy. She is just really thankful, I think, that they’re giving us all that they are, you know?”
- “She (bio mom) warmed up almost immediately. She was very grateful that I was adopted by such great people. She was happy the way we both turned out, you know, because of them.”

Youth doesn’t think their birth parents know that they are in a lesbian or gay family, but they are happy youth is in a safe home:

- “I don’t [know if] my mom knows, but I think she feels that I am in a safe place now, and that I am not in a place where I can get hurt again. When I was first getting my parental rights to be terminated, she appealed. So that lasted for about three months. But then when my older brother was doing the same thing as me, she didn’t appeal. So I think she is happy that we have a home. And I think my dad, stepdad, was angry because he got caught.”

Youth’s birth family has not said anything negative:

- “Nothing has been said about me having two moms.”
- “Our parents met with our birth father to give him pictures and stuff. I don’t know exactly what happened there, but they didn’t say that there was any big deal about it.”

What Youth Would Change about Their Families

Youth offered a wide range of things that they would change about their family. Most of the themes surrounded common teenage wishes about their families. Youth in one focus group (14.3%) reported that they wished their family would be less visible or a little more ‘normal’. The youth did not specify if they felt the visibility was due specifically to being adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s) or adoption in general. See Table 72.

Table 72. What Youth Would Change about Their Families

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth wishes parents were less strict, nicer, less protective, or easier going	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth would not change anything	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's family would have more money or be famous	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth would have more contact with birth family or a better relationship	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth would have fewer siblings	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's family would be less stressed out	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's parents would know them better, better understand them, be there more, or listen better	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth's family would be less visible or a little more 'normal'	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth would change who their birth father is	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's birth mother would not have met youth's stepparent	--	1 (16.7%)
Youth would have been adopted with birth siblings	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's parents would always agree	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth wishes parents were less strict, nicer, less protective, or easier going:

- “I wish they were more easygoing.”
- “I wish my dad would be nicer, and just stop talking and listen.”
- “I can’t even walk two blocks. I’m not allowed to walk to the park alone. I can’t walk to Dairy Queen on my own. She doesn’t want me to go anywhere. She is what I call overprotective.”
- “My dads, they might not seem protective, but they’re like they are. And I think it is unfair because they would let my brother out all the time. If I would walk somewhere alone, they’re like [name], where have you been? Do you know what time it is?”

Youth's family would have more money or be famous:

- "I would change that I'm not already rich and famous."
- "We're in a very well off family, but you know, more money would never hurt!"
- "I love my family. I love the people in it. I love everything about it. There is nothing I would change, except maybe more money."

Youth would have more contact with birth family or a better relationship:

- "I would want to have more of a relationship with my mom and brothers and grandma. Like, see them more."
- "I kind of wish I'd get to see my brothers more often."

Youth would have fewer siblings:

- "Um, maybe having five kids is maybe too much."
- "I'd have not as many siblings."

Youth's family would be less stressed out:

- "Recently our parents bought an investment property. They were really busy with that for a while, so it was all stress and trying to get things done. So I guess less stress."

What Youth Would Change about School

In contrast to the question about what the youth would change about their family, things that the youth would change about their schools were overwhelmingly related to acceptance and tolerance about lesbian and gay issues, as well as adoption issues. These issues include that the youth's school would be more accepting of gays and lesbians or would have more awareness of gays and lesbians (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%); increase overall acceptance or reduce gossip and judgment (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); youth would create a foster-adoption club (n=1 focus group, 14.3%); peers would not bully others when they don't understand them – they would ask questions (n=1 interview, 16.7%); youth's peers would not stereotype gay peers and expect them to be a certain way (n=1 focus group, 14.3%); youth's school would have more adoption acceptance and awareness (n=1 focus group, 14.3%); and youth would increase peers' awareness and acceptance of different races. See Table 73.

Table 73. What Youth would Change about their School

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth would not change anything	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
Miscellaneous teenage wishes: (Everyone would be nicer, school would be harder, school would be an art school)	4 (57.1%)	--
Youth's school would be more accepting of gays and lesbians or would have more awareness of gays and lesbians	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Increase overall acceptance or reduce gossip and judgment	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth would create a foster-adoption club	1 (14.3%)	--
Peers would not bully others when they don't understand them – they would ask questions	--	1 (16.7%)
Youth's peers would not stereotype gay peers and expect them to be a certain way	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth's school would have more adoption acceptance and awareness	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth would increase peers' awareness and acceptance of different races	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth would not change anything:

- “I wouldn't change it. I mean, I really feel like I'm in a good neighborhood and a good school.”
- “Nothing. We've gone to great schools so far, and we're really lucky.”

Miscellaneous teenage wishes (Everyone would be nicer, school would be harder, school would be an art school):

- “Mine would be that the girls would sit there and be nicer at lunch.”
- “I just wish it was an art school.”
- “It would be more challenging. It can be very tedious.”
- “Nicer kids.”
- “That the lunch prices went down. It costs six bucks for every lunch.”

Youth’s school would be more accepting of gays and lesbians or would have more awareness of gays and lesbians:

- “Maybe just make more awareness for not even just gay and lesbian, but for adopted children too. ...Yeah, more acceptance for adoption and for gay and lesbian.”
- “I’d say that more people were accepting towards LGBT people, or understanding.”

Increase overall acceptance or reduce gossip and judgment:

- “I have one thing I would change about my school. I think the one thing is the gossip. Just the gossip, period. I hate it.”
- “For people not to judge you.”
- “I would change that everybody could accept people for what they do and who they are. Everybody makes mistakes in life sometimes, so not to just put that on people for their whole life.”

What Youth Would Change about Neighborhood

Many youth reported that there was nothing in their neighborhood that they would change. See Table 74.

Table 74. What Youth would Change about their Neighborhood

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth would not change anything	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Youth’s neighborhood would have more young or active people	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth’s neighborhood would be more open or accepting	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth and adoptive mother would take Prop 8 signs down and tear them up during protests	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth’s neighbors would be less stuck up	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth's neighborhood would have more young or active people:

- “I think I would hope to have more people in my age group. There are all these little kids, so it kind of sucks not knowing hardly anyone in the neighborhood.”
- “Yeah, a little more people my age.”
- “People need to be out more. There need to be kids actually in the neighborhood.”

Youth's neighborhood would be more open or accepting:

- “When the whole Prop 8 thing was going on across the street, my older brother climbed their fence, got the signs, tore them up, and threw them in the trash. They said Yes on Proposition 8, so they didn't like it...I tore up a bunch of signs. My mom and them would do it too sometimes. Like she drove on the side of the road – ‘Hey, go get those signs and bring them here.’ Really, just to be more accepting. There are a lot of them that are kind of snotty like the ones who did the Proposition 8 thing...I guess they think they're so good and stuff.”
- “That people were more open. Like back then, when there were racists, and if it was like one White person on a block with all these Black people, or the other way around ---and they would all stare at that person, like ‘What are you doing here?’ That is basically how it is.”

Other Changes Youth Would Like

Youth reported a variety of other areas in which they would make changes if they could. These ideas included wishing things with their birth family was different, having different siblings, having both a Mom and Dad, and that other youth would be better educated about lesbian and gay issues. See Table 75.

Table 75. Other Changes Youth Would Like

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth would not change anything else	2 (28.6%)	2 (33.3%)
Youth wishes things were different with their birth family	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Other teenage dreams	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth would not change anything because they have learned from their mistakes	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth would have a sibling or a different sibling	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth would have both a Mom and a Dad	1 (14.3%)	--
Other youth would be educated about lesbian and gay issues so that they better understand	--	1 (16.7%)

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth wishes things were different with their birth family:

- “I just wish that my birth parents were not drinking and stuff anymore, and I could see them every once in a while. But I can’t because they’re not better yet.”
- “Yeah, I’d change me not knowing my dad. I don’t know him.”
- “Yeah, me not knowing my mom.”

Youth would not change anything because they have learned from their mistakes:

- “I wouldn’t change anything in my life. I think you learn from all your mistakes. And everything that happens, you learn from your experiences. You grow from it, so if you were to change something, you would never learn anything from them, so I wouldn’t change anything.”

Advice for a Friend Being Adopted by a Lesbian or gay Parent(s)

Some youth didn't know what advice they would give to a friend who was going to be adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s). Those who did have advice provided a wide range of things they would recommend, including the following: youth would tell their friend to stay strong or prepare for bullying and teasing (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%); youth would tell them that it will be a normal family (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%); youth would tell their friend what to say to others that talk to them about it (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); youth would stay in touch and support them (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); youth would advise the youth to surround themselves with people that support them and choose trustworthy friends (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%); and youth would tell them it will be cool or fun (n=2 focus groups, 28.6%). See Table 76.

Table 76. Advice for a Friend Being Adopted by a Lesbian or Gay Parent(s)

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Youth would tell friend to stay strong or prepare for bullying and teasing	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth does not know what they would advise	3 (42.9%)	--
Youth would tell them that it will be a normal family	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth would tell their friend what to say to others that talk to them about it	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth would stay in touch and support them	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth would advise friend to surround themselves with people that support them and choose trustworthy friends	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth would tell them it will be cool or fun	2 (28.6%)	--
Youth would dispel stereotypes and encourage them to stay open	--	2 (33.3%)
Youth would explain what it has been like	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth would tell friend to talk to their parents and get support	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Youth would tell them not to get their moms or dads angry	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth would tell their friend to see it as normal and don't make a big deal out of it or don't let it interfere with their life	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Youth would tell friend to stay strong or prepare for bullying and teasing:

- “I’d say be strong.”
- “Just take it and prepare for all those haters.”
- “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.”

Youth would tell them that it will be a normal family:

- “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.”
- “I’d tell them they’re the same. They’re your parents. And that a lot of parents are gay and that there is no difference, practically. Don’t hate their parents because they’re gay or lesbian.”
- “I’d tell them it will be the most loving thing that you can ever imagine. It is going to not be a lot different than a straight family, but there will be a definite difference in the caring part. If its two moms, you’ll just get mom love all over the place. And if you get two dads, you just get dad love all over the place. I would just say to go with it. You know, it’s nothing different than a straight family, except that they’re lesbian or gay.”
- “There is really no difference in the family in like the family issues and way of life. It’s the same, except two dads or two moms.”

Youth would tell their friend what to say to others that talk to you about it:

- “I would tell them, you know, if people talk to you about it, like what they might want to say. Like how they feel about it or something.”

Youth would stay in touch and support them:

- “I would get their number and then when they need to talk about anything I would do it.”
- “I would get their number and hang out with them and if they needed anything, I’d be here for them.”

Surround yourself with people that support you or choose trustworthy friends:

- “Surround yourself with the people that are supporting and that don’t bring you down.”
- “Choose somebody trustworthy as a friend in school.”

Youth would dispel stereotypes and encourage them to stay open:

- “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.”

Youth would explain what it has been like:

- “I’d just say what it has been like....when they’re first moving in, I would tell them about having two moms or two dads. Like if they’re saying to watch out for them because they were all weird or something. Because they’re probably not weird if they’re foster parents, and they would adopt a kid.”
- “I would actually just kind of tell them what it would be like, and let them decide for themselves if it is the kind of thing they would want.”

Youth would tell friend to talk to their parents and get support:

- “You know, just because it is different than the normal thing, of course there are going to be questions. And, you know, like my brother said, at some point if you have a hard time with bullies, go talk to your parents. Tell them what questions you have. Tell them all of that. You know, use them as parents. Like they’re no different than any other parents, you know?”

What Adoption Workers Should Know

Youth suggested that workers prepare and educate a child before being placed with a lesbian or gay parent (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 3 interviews, 50.0%); don’t let worker’s own feelings get in the way or don’t discriminate based on parents being lesbian or gay (n=3 focus groups, 42.9% and 1 interview, 16.7%); ask youth if they are okay with it (2 interviews, 33.3%); see good things about the placement, not negatives (n=1 focus group, 14.3% and 1 interview, 16.7%); and be supportive and understanding about youth’s concerns because negativity affects youth even if they say it doesn’t (n=2 focus groups, 28.6% and 1 interview, 16.7%). See Table 77.

Table 77. What Adoption Workers Should Know about Helping Youth Adopted by Lesbian or Gay Parents

	Focus Groups* (N=7)	Interviews (N=6)
Prepare and educate children	2 (28.6%)	3 (50.0%)
Don't let worker's own feelings get in the way or don't discriminate based on parents being lesbian or gay	3 (42.9%)	1 (16.7%)
Be supportive and understanding about youth's concerns because negativity effects youth even if they say it doesn't	2 (28.6%)	1 (16.7%)
Ask youth if they are okay with it	--	2 (33.3%)
See good things about the placement, not negatives	1 (14.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Would be helpful for youth to join small groups with other youth who are in lesbian or gay families	2 (28.6%)	--
Encourage lesbian or gay parents to seek support	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth feels it would be helpful if social worker was gay or adopted	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth feels that social workers should have something in common with the youth so they can relate and connect	1 (14.3%)	--
Youth thinks that if a lesbian or gay person wants to adopt, they should do it	1 (14.3%)	--

*A theme is coded for a focus group if one or more participants in the focus group reported it.

Direct quotes from youth representing the most frequently reported codes.

Prepare and educate children:

- “Tell them they’re like other parents. Just tell the kids they’re like any other parents, it is just that they’re gay or lesbian.”
- “It’s an important thing to bring up before the adoption. Yeah, by the way, you’re going to have two dads, you know.”
- “Talk about it, and just be more focusing on the family piece. You know, these are going to be your parents, and this is going to be your family. You’ve got great people now, they’re great people, and here you go.”

- “Let them know how it’s going to be being adopted into a lesbian family, and talk more about it.”
- “Educate them a little. And be like: ‘Would you rather be adopted by a gay family or a straight family? Gay families are blah blah blah, straight families are blah blah blah.’”

Don’t let worker’s own feelings get in the way or don’t discriminate based on parents being lesbian or gay:

- “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.”
- “Give them the opportunity without bias instead of just assuming ‘Oh, they need a straight family, they need to do this.’”

Be supportive and understanding about youth’s concerns because negativity effects youth even if they say it doesn’t:

- “I’m very angry with social workers. I think we need better social workers, and a better foster care program. Because I can remember when I told my teacher what happened at my house when no one was there. And she called a social worker and they just left, so then I got in way more trouble because of that.”
- “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.”
- “I think they should just narrow down this tape and then just listen to it, and then they’ll be set for life!”

Ask youth if they are okay with it:

- “I think they should be more open, and just ask the kids ‘What are your opinions on gays?’ and stuff.”
- “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.”

See good things about placement, not negatives:

- “Some of them might feel bad for them, like, ‘Oh, they’re not going to have a mom and a dad.’ It’s not a bad thing; it just makes you more open to things in life. So not to project it being a bad thing.”

Would be helpful for youth to join small groups with other youth who are in lesbian or gay families:

- “I think a small group like this. I mean, eventually we all know the same thing or have the same thing. I’ve never been to any kind of thing like this. Hopefully somebody understands.”
- “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

- A large body of research addressing the debate about children being raised by lesbian or gay parents indicates that, on average, children raised by lesbian and gay parents (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 similarly as capable in their parenting roles as heterosexual parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010). 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 families as compared to lesbian mother families.
- There were thirteen families who participated in the project. There were sixteen lesbian parents (eight couples) and nine gay parents (four couples, one single).
- Many of the participating families had other children who did not participate in this project. In total, the families were parenting 44 children of which 41 were adopted, two biological, and one was a foster child.
- Twenty-four (58.5%) of the youth in these families met the criteria for this research and chose to participate. The majority of the participating youth in the study were female (n=14, 58.3%). Ten (41.7%) were male.
- At the time of their participation in the focus group or interview the youth were, on average, in their mid-teens and the majority of the youth were in transracial adoptions (75%).
- Youth were asked if their adoption workers had feelings or attitudes about their parents being lesbian or gay, and many reported that their workers were supportive. Most of the youth, however, reported that they were not asked or were too young to remember if they were asked about their feelings regarding being placed for adoption with a lesbian or gay parent(s).

- Many youth reported that having lesbian or gay parents has made them more open-minded, accepting, and understanding. Some of the youth reported that they appreciated having a unique family and they enjoyed having more of the positive gender qualities that are associated with each gender, such as having two nurturing mothers.
- Youth were asked if they thought there were things that only gay or lesbian parents could offer. Many of the youth reported that they did not see gay or lesbian families as different from heterosexual families, and some reported that they received more same-gender guidance from their parents.
- The majority of the youth reported that the hardest thing about being in a lesbian or gay family was that they were teased by peers and made fun of at school.
- When asked how they handle difficult situations regarding their being adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s), the majority reported ignoring others or tuning them out. Fewer reported that they got support from parents or talked with their parents. The majority reported that they had to trust the other person before telling them that their parent(s) are lesbian or gay.
- The majority of youth reported that they have been asked more questions about having lesbian or gay parents than about being in a transracial adoption.
- Some of the youth offered the following advice to workers: prepare and educate a child about what it means to be adopted by a lesbian or gay parent(s); and if workers feel negatively about the placement, they shouldn't let their personal feelings get in the way, nor discriminate based on parents being lesbian or gay.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Due to the small sample, additional research needs to be completed to more thoroughly understand the complex concepts discussed by the adopted persons in this project.
- Conduct ongoing longitudinal research to assess the long-term experiences of youth adopted from foster care by lesbian or gay parents and better understand the implications for children and families.
- Develop technical assistance and literature to educate States, Tribes, and Territories about how to train and support prospective lesbian and gay adoptive parents to deal with the fact that their adopted children will likely be teased, and possibly bullied, for having gay or lesbian parents. Many youth in this project reported that they were not likely to share this with their adoptive parents, in order to protect them. Parents need to know this is occurring and know how to bring this up with their children in a safe and effective way.
- The sample size in this project is very small and great caution must be taken when considering the findings. While there were commonalities in the youth's experiences, they also expressed a wide range of differences and varied feelings about being raised by gay or lesbian parents. It is important to keep in mind the uniqueness of each participant's experience.