LESGIAN FAMILY’S DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES AN EXTENSION OF
CARTER AND MCGOLDRICK’S MODEL

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Dedication

In Memory of Ruby Bruington
For your unconditional love and support
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INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in the number of families headed by lesbian and gay couples. An estimated 6 to 14 million children being raised by lesbian and gay parents (American Civil Liberties Union, 1999). The number of children and families can only be estimated at this time for a variety of reasons. The 2000 Census was the first one that allowed same-sex couples to be counted. Moreover, the social stigma that accompanies being lesbian or gay may have negatively affected people’s willingness to identify themselves as part of a same-sex couple and therefore might have affected the accuracy of these numbers. It is possible, then, that current data under-represent the actual number of homes with same-sex parents. However, in the same-sex unmarried households from the 2000 Census, 301,000 had same-sex male partners and 293,000 had same-sex female partners (Simmons & O’Connell, 2003). 96,000 of the female same-sex homes and 66,000 of the male same-sex homes contained children. In addition to these existing households, an estimated 49% of gay men who were not parents said they would like to have children (Franklin, 2003). The over 90 support groups for lesbian and gay parents listed on the Internet (Gay Parent Magazine, 2008 at http://www.gayparentmag.com/29181.html) further indicates the prevalence of lesbian and gay families in our society.
This data supports the need to articulate a family life cycle model relevant for lesbian and gay parents. Lesbian and gay couples with children clearly are becoming more visible in U.S. society (Franklin, 2003). Given this trend, it will be important to establish whether the family life cycle stages currently being used by counselors and therapists represent lesbian family’s experience. Further, as the existing models were developed with heterosexual couples in mind, it is not clear whether the developmental tasks proposed for these stages or models reflect those tasks relevant for lesbian families. To date there has been no research conducted which directly answers these questions nor has a new or modified theory been explicitly proposed to account for developmental differences for families headed by two women.

Johnson and Colucci (1999) have described developmental tasks for lesbian and gay families, which are grounded in the family life cycle model originally proposed by Carter and McGoldrick (1999). The original family life cycle model proposed by Carter and McGoldrick contains 6 family life cycle stages and was based on the experience of heterosexual couples. Those stages include (1) leaving home: single young adults; (2) the joining of families through marriage: the new couple; (3) families with young children; (4) families with adolescents; (5) launching children and moving on; and finally (6) families in later life.

Ecological influences are a complex set of interacting factors within the individual, family, experienced culture, community, and society at larger that influences the development of children, adolescents, adults, and families. Ecological influences are also experienced within the concept of time with the facts of a historical period and the changes in each of these ecological influences over time. The idea expressed by
ecological influences helps to limit the ideographic application of any theory to individual family’s or family from a specific subculture. Also, this heightens the need to update family developmental theories periodically because of the changes that time and historical events has on the family system. Carter and McGoldrick (1999) account for the ecological influences on a family through vertical and horizontal flow of stress in the different life cycles (Figure 1). These ecological influences can dramatically impact or alter the developmental path of individuals and families. Horizontal stressors are broken into three subgroups. The first includes developmental horizontal stressors such as life cycle transitions and migration. The second horizontal stressor subgroup consists of unpredictable events and includes untimely death, chronic illness, accident, and unemployment. The final horizontal stressor subgroup is historical events, which includes war, economic depression, political climate, and natural disasters. One historical example for same-sex families is the current shift in the socio-political climate that allows for some recognition and tolerance of same-sex families. This shift can be seen by some state laws changing to legally recognize same-sex families (i.e., domestic partner registrations, same-sex inclusion into existing marriage law).

Vertical stressors occur at each of the systems levels. The larger society, community, and extended family levels may provide the greatest vertical stressors for same-sex couples because of the inherent heterosexism within U.S. society (Patterson & Friel, 2000). Carter and McGoldrick (1999) even include homophobia in their list of vertical stressors. This term refers to fear related to ideas or people perceived as homosexual. The term heterosexism captures the broader idea of institutionalized prejudice against people who are not heterosexual. Heterosexism provides the
Figure 1: Carter and McGoldrick’s Flow of Stress Model

foundation for arguments against allowing same-sex couples to provide foster care, adopt, and marry. This term does not exclude homophobia as an influencing factor but heterosexism provides a more complete description of the societal, community, extended
family, immediate family, and individual stresses that are related to the sexual orientation of the individuals within the couple.

Johnson and Colucci’s (1999) adaptation of Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) theory for same-sex families argues that although this theory has several problems when applied to same-sex families, it should not be thrown out entirely. Instead Johnson and Colucci suggest the existing theory should be adjusted to better fit lesbian and gay families. Johnson and Colucci do not use the same names for the stages as Carter and McGoldrick. They also use different age groupings with their renamed developmental stages.

Other authors provide a counterpoint to Johnson and Colucci’s (1999) perspective that it is sufficient to adapt existing family life cycle models to reflect the experience of same-sex families. Specifically, existing family life cycle models are based on nongay experience and Judeo-Christian values that may adversely affect the validity of these models when applied to same-sex couples (Siegel & Lowe, 1994). For example, same-sex couples use broader criteria when defining their “families.” Close friends are considered part of the family. Same-sex couples tend to create families of “choice” in addition to or sometimes instead of biological families (Weston, 1991). Another difference is the lack of instruction or guidance from previous generations on how to survive and thrive as a lesbian or gay (Slater, 1995). Slater also talks about the lack of rituals endorsed by the society at large for the lesbian and gay family such as weddings or baby showers. Slater suggests that a new family life cycle model needs to be developed independent of pre-existing heterosexual models. Slater proposed this new model would be more reflective of same-sex families’ experience.
The purpose of the current study was to go directly to couples and have them describe their experience in terms of a life cycle perspective. Based on this data a life cycle model was developed. This model was used to determine if the existing models by Johnson and Colucci’s (1999) modification of Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) family life cycle model could be adapted or a new model needed to be created.

Statement of the Problem

The majority of the research that was done on lesbian and gay families in the 1980s and 1990s focused on the effect of parent sexual orientation on the developmental well being of the children (Franklin, 2003; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Stacey and Biblarz reviewed 21 studies on lesbian and gay families and found most of the researchers concluded there was no difference in the developmental well-being of children raised in lesbian or gay homes and those raised by nongay parents. It is important to note this research was partly in response to the difficulties lesbian and gay parents had experienced when trying to retain custody of children during a divorce. Lesbian and gay parents were not awarded custody of children by the courts in an attempt to “protect the children from the harm” that would occur from exposure to lesbian or gay parents. Now that the “harm” myth has been thoroughly refuted, the research most germane to lesbian and gay families will be helping these families understand the diversity of norms for lesbian and gay families as well as providing models for the lesbian and gay family life cycle and developmental tasks for each of the stages. This new line of research would be in contrast to studies reviewed by Stacey and Biblarz which looked at aspects of individual child development, not general family developmental processes.
In general, there has been little research done with lesbian and gay families. There have been two meta-analyses of the research on families with lesbian mothers (Allen & Burrell, 1996; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). These studies have looked at the effect of having lesbian mothers on the children, not at family processes. After a review of over 8,000 family research articles published since 1980 Allen & Demo (1995) reported lesbian and gay families have been “virtually ignored in family research” (p. 430). In particular there has been no research addressing family life cycles and the developmental tasks for lesbian and gay families within those cycles.

The process lesbian and gay families go through in deciding to become parents is clearly different from the traditional family in the U.S. (Franklin, 2003). The average nongay family is expected to add children to the family unit. In these families, the addition of children usually occurs without the need for extensive planning, legal concerns, or making decisions about the process used to add children. In contrast, Franklin (2003) reports that lesbian and gay parents are “self-selected” and this minority group within the lesbian and gay community spends a great deal of time thinking and planning for parenthood. Frequently this decision also requires great financial expense to utilize infertility technology or adoption. The adoption process frequently must be pursued twice for the same child in order to secure legal rights for both parents. The addition of children for the lesbian or gay family frequently requires the inclusion of a third party, such as legal counsel, adoption agency, surrogates, and/or social workers.

It is also likely heterosexism and homophobia adversely impact lesbian and gay families. These biases could be reduced if communities, counselors, and same-sex families better understood the effect heterosexism and homophobia have on same-sex
couples when adding children to their family unit. Related to the way that heterosexism and homophobia may influence lesbian and gay families, it is possible that the power structures within lesbian and gay families are influenced and biased by socialization of sex-role expectations (Franklin, 2003). An exploration of lesbian family relationships could present additional information that provides a unique intersection of gender and sex role expectations while exploring the power relations within the family.

Because there has been little research in the area of lesbian and gay families with young children, qualitative methods of research may be indicated (Morrow, 2007). Qualitative methods can help to establish themes that describe this process for this population and uncover what the family’s developmental tasks are as children are added to the family structure. The current research project sought to gather information that could provide a basis for developing a theory about the life stages and developmental tasks for families with lesbian parents.

Because there has been little research in the area of lesbian and gay families with young children, qualitative methods of research may be indicated (Morrow, 2007). Qualitative methods can help to establish themes that describe this process for this population and uncover what the family’s developmental tasks are as children are added to the family structure.

*Purpose of the Study*

The focus of the current investigation was couples in the third stage, or “families with young children” in terms of Carter and McGoldrick’s (1989) six stages of the family life cycle. This stage was selected as these couples were those who had most recently pursued the decision to add children to the family and therefore their recollection of the
issues and tasks that were part of this process would be more salient. As proposed by Carter and McGoldrick (1999) the key principle of the emotional process for the third stage is “accepting new members into the system.” In order for normal family development to proceed at this stage, three second-order changes are required within the family system. These changes include: (1) “adjusting marital system to make space for children,” (2) “joining in child rearing, financial and household tasks,” and (3) “realignment of relationships with extended family to include parenting and grand parenting roles” (p. 2).

The stage Johnson and Colucci call “Parenting” is the best match for Carter and McGoldrick’s “Families with Small Children.” Within this stage, the first difference for lesbian and gay couples is the decision of how to add children to the family. Most nongay couples do not need to make a decision about the method used when adding children. The lesbian and gay couple must choose from several methods and options when planning to add children to the home. Another difference is the family of origin’s response and integration of the new family and grandchildren into the extended family system. Most nongay families of origin are thrilled at the prospect of adding children. However, this excitement is not always the case for lesbian and gay families of origin. Even for those families of origin who accept the addition of children into a lesbian or gay couple’s family there are support and educational needs that typically do not exist with nongay couples.

Many of the options for adding children to the family will expose the lesbian and gay couple to heterosexism and/or homophobia. For example, many adoption agencies will not work with lesbian and gay couples and co-adoption is not available in every state
for couples who are not married (Martin, 1993). Another area of difference is the legal vulnerability lesbian and gay families encounter (Patterson & Friel, 2000). Even when lesbian and gay couples utilize all the legal processes which are available, such as power of attorney, living will, or joint adoption, the partner is likely to experience less legal protection when compared with their nongay counterparts. Because of these legal constraints lesbian and gay families are strongly encouraged to seek legal counsel when adding children, or shortly after adding children to their family unit (Johnson & Colucci, 1999). Johnson and Colucci also suggest lesbian and gay parents join community support groups specific to lesbian and gay parents to assist with the added stress, strain, and complexity experienced if adding children because of heterosexism and homophobia from the general culture.

Johnson and Colucci (1999) describe several general areas of difference for lesbian and gay families that cross all developmental stages. The first is the bicultural nature of same-sex families. These families function within the broader culture as well as within the lesbian and gay culture. These families must function within the larger nongay culture and encounter heterosexism and homophobia in this cultural context. Since most lesbians and gays were immersed in nongay families while growing up they may attempt to use some similar parenting and family organization strategies as nongay families. However, same-sex families simultaneously function within the lesbian and gay culture and typically must develop unique responses to family issues because of their same-sex status, which may be supported within this subcultural context. In this sense, same-sex parents may experience both internal and external “culture” clashes between these two cultural contexts.
Investigating the experience of these lesbian families provided an opportunity to remove potential gender bias from research into the roles and changes that take place when children are added to the family. Families with young children will be examined in the current study in an attempt to build a family developmental model for lesbian parents. The resulting theory is broader than one stage.

Based on the above literature, it is hypothesized there may be an identifiable pattern of family developmental tasks which are unique to families headed by lesbian couples. The following research questions were explored:

1. What are the life cycle stages encountered by lesbian couples?
2. What are the developmental tasks required for successful progress through these developmental stages?
3. What are the second order emotional processes required to support these developmental tasks?

Definition of Terms

1. **Heterosexism**: is a belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the only natural, normal, or moral mode of sexual behavior, and is also used to refer to the effects of that cultural ideology.
2. **Homophobia**: is prejudice against (fear or dislike of) homosexual people and homosexuality.
3. **Legal involvement**: can include anything from consultation with an attorney, to preparing wills, trusts, powers of attorney, co-parenting agreements, to obtaining an adoption or guardianship or child custody, support and visitation order.
4. **Culture:** is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another.

5. **Homosexuality:** is erotic activity with another of the same sex.

6. **Lesbian:** is of or relating to homosexuality between females.

7. **Family of choice:** may include biological relatives as well as nonbiological friends who are viewed and/or treated the same as a biological only family.

8. **Family life cycle:** is used to describe a sequence of life events from birth to death. This is a sequence of parenthood stages over the life course, from birth of the children through their departure from the home to their own childbearing and a continuation of the cycle in the next generation.

9. **Family developmental tasks:** are processes that are necessary in order for the family to move forward successfully to the next family life cycle.

10. **Second order emotional changes in family status:** are more specific developmental tasks that help in the process of preparing families and family members for success in the current stage and preparation to succeed in the next family life cycle stage.

11. **Unit of meaning:** is a paragraph, sentence, or portion of a sentence that contains a single idea or cohesive thought.

12. **Categories:** are larger or broader ideas that can be applied beyond the statement that generated the category.

13. **Themes:** are a grouping of categories into a larger idea or single categories that cannot be grouped with other categories because they are unique or already functioning at a broader conceptual level.
14. **Thick descriptions:** provide context to assist the reader in interpreting the presented data. Thick descriptions provide information related to the individual being described that may improve the reader’s understanding of the study’s results.

**Assumptions**

It was assumed in this study that the experts who reviewed the questions for the focus groups provided a professional response to the questions based on their past experience and the reported past experience was an accurate representation of their professional involvement with same-sex parents and families. It was also assumed the research participants were honest when reporting their memories and experiences from the past when responding to the researchers questions. Additional assumptions were made concerning the stated credentials of the fellow analyzers who participated in analyzing the transcripts from the individual interviews and focus group. It was also assumed the inherent bias of the analyzers would not significantly skew the results.
Literature Review

Lesbian & Gay Parents

The traditional nuclear family is no longer the dominant family in society (Ciano-Boyce & Shelly-Sireci, 2002). Divorce, death, adoption, and fertility options have created single parent and blended homes, which has created more diversity within families (Franklin, 2003). Lesbian and gay couples have historically had children from nongay relationships whom they have raised, as single parents, and within lesbian or gay relationships (Hartman, 1996).

Lesbian and gay couples who are choosing to have children within a lesbian or gay relationship are becoming more visible in the society of the United States (Franklin, 2003). It is estimated there are six to 14 million children being raised by lesbian and gay parents (American Civil Liberties Union, 1999). Of the same-sex unmarried households from the 2000 Census, 301,000 had male partners and 293,000 had female partners (Simmons & O’Connell, 2003). Closer examination of these homes reveals 96,000 of the female same-sex homes and 66,000 of the male same-sex homes contained children. The social stigma accompanying identification as lesbian or gay suggests these numbers are likely to be an underreporting of same-sex homes containing children. Patterson and Freil (2000) have made some estimates of the number of lesbian and gay families using the National Health and Social Life Survey (Laumann, 1995). These individuals suggest
the number of lesbian and gay parents with dependent children ranges on the low end of 1 to 9 million parents; this would represent between 1 to 12 percent of children under the age of 19 in the United States. Also, Patterson and Freil’s (2000) numbers are significantly higher than those reported in the 2000 census. Furthermore, of couples who did not currently have children, approximately half of those surveyed were interested in having children (Tuller, 1978).

There has been a steady increase in the number of gay and lesbian couples becoming parents. This phenomenon has been called a “gayby boom.” There are over 90 support groups for gay and lesbian parents listed on the Internet (Gay Parent Magazine, 2008 at http://www.gayparentmag.com/29181.html). An important difference between lesbian and gay families versus nongay families is the manner and expectations of becoming parents. As noted by Franklin (2003), nongay couples are expected to have children and frequently become parents in a haphazard manner. The lesbian and gay couple who is considering becoming parents, on the other hand, experiences this process as very intentional requiring an intensive time commitment, significant thought and planning, and frequently financially expensive.

In general, there has been little research done on lesbian and gay families. The 1990 decade in review for the Journal of Marriage and the Family found the term “homosexual couple” only used once during the 1980s decade (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). This was even less than had been summarized by Macklin (1980) when looking at the literature on same-sex intimate relationships from the 1970s. In 1993, Laird reviewed the literature on lesbian and gay families and commented that only a small number of studies had been done, which only began the process of providing a brief glimpse into the
everyday lives of this group of families. Laird (1993) expressed concern that the narrow definitions that were being used in family research dictated that some of the kinship and family situations that are seen in lesbian and gay families are excluded from research investigations. When researchers exclude this diversity from research on families, opportunities have been missed to expand or increase new theoretical understandings of families (Laird, 1993). In 1996, Allen and Burrell completed a meta-analysis of 18 studies which looked at same-sex and opposite-sex couples who had children. The meta-analysis examined parenting styles, emotional adjustment of children, and sexual orientation of children. The most recent attempt at a meta-analysis by Stacey and Biblarz (2001) only found 21 studies to include in the analysis on same-sex and opposite-sex families.

In the literature on same-sex families, ethnicity has been largely ignored (Demo & Allen, 1996). The lack of ethnic variety in studies of lesbian and gay families compounds the loss of the true diversity within this population. Gender, biological sex, sexual orientation, and ethnicity are not bimodal categories (Roughgarden, 2004). All of these identities occur across a continuum in which individuals find themselves with “more or less” instead of “having or not having.” The rich diversity that is created by this intersection of identities is lost through attempts to operationalize, define, limit confusion, and simplify communication. Ethnicity has also been impacted by the sample methods used for studies. The difficulty that researchers have experienced in finding participants has forced most of the studies of lesbian and gay couples to employ convenience sampling and “snowball” sampling (Demo & Allen, 1996; Franklin, 2003; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Tuller, 1978).
One cause of problems when conducting research with lesbian and gay couples has been labels. African American and Hispanic men may not adopt the label of “gay” because of the white political male identity that is attached to the term, the idea that “gay” men are effeminate, or because individuals in these two ethnic groups do not like to label themselves (ORCO Macro, 2005). It is not unusual for men who have sexual relations with other men to not label themselves as gay (Matteson, 1987). In addition, there is confusion on how to refer to lesbian and gay couples. Are they partners, girlfriends, boyfriends, cohabitating, domestic partners, roommates, or a couple? Studies on cohabitation have conceptualized cohabitation as a developmental stage in the progression to selection of a life long partner and eventually marriage (Allen and Demo, 1995). This heterosexist idea institutionally limits the developmental potential most same-sex relationships are thought to have through the lack of access to marriage for same-sex couples. Same-sex couples are currently only able to marry in Massachusetts and California. In addition, the federal government does not recognize same-sex marriages from these states.

The use of labels may impact recognition from employers and government agencies from local to national. Recognition, from an ecological perspective, will theoretically have some impact on the couple and family system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Labels can lend confusion and/or sample difficulties for studies in addition to hiding complexities that occur within lesbian and gay families. In an attempt to operationalize and avoid potentially confounding influences the true diversity that is the reality of human life is missed in many studies. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) argue that the labels lesbian and gay parent should not be used. Because these labels are based on
heterosexism and sexual orientation is not the most important factor in parenting. Parents who are lesbian and gay simply represent one of the ways in which parents and families are diverse.

There have been two attempts at a meta-analysis of the research on families with lesbian mothers and gay fathers (Allen & Burrell, 1996; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). In the review by Allen and Burrell (1996) the authors commented on lesbian and gay families being problematized or the approach to research was from the perspective that the lack of a problem needed to be proved before other types of research could be undertaken. This approach obscured the natural diversity that exists within these families. Allen and Burrell (1996) found eight articles during a 14 year time frame that looked at issues of family relations within lesbian or gay families (Bozett, 1980; Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993; Hare & Richards, 1993; Koepke et al., 1992; Renzetti, 1989; Robinson, Skeen, Hobson, & Herrman, 1982; Schrag, 1984; Wisensale & Heckart, 1993).

Allen and Burrell (1996) spoke to research problems that pervade the study of lesbian and gay families. The problems reported ranged from biased theoretical underpinnings, studies that use theories which are fraught with heterosexist terms, perspectives, norms, and ecological structures which caused the removal of families from research data because of the narrow terms used to define families and family members. Some researches believe that all of the information that has accumulated on lesbian and gay families to date has been tainted by heterosexism (Allen and Demo, 1995; Laird, 1993).

In Carter and McGoldrick’s (1989) second edition of *The Changing Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy* there are 5 pages devoted to lesbians; 2 of these pages include gay males. The discussion in these 5 pages is related to the incorporation
of lesbians and gay males into family systems, work settings, and society as children, workers, or a partner within a couple. None of the commentary is related to lesbians or gay men having children and independent family units. In their third edition Carter and McGoldrick (1999) revised this text changing the name to *The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives*. The most recent text has 62 pages devoted to lesbian and gay issues. Included in new pages is a brief literature review on lesbian and gay male concerns at different life stages in relation to the family of origin. This chapter also provides a brief account of potential difficulties same-sex families may encounter and includes some of the limited research on specific aspects of same-sex couples who have children (i.e. parenting styles, child development). The only visible inclusion of same-sex families into Carter and McGoldrick’s theory is the addition of homophobia as one of the “isms” that can act as a vertical stressor on families and family members.

In the research on gender, Kurdek (1989, 1991, & 1992) has challenged the gender difference model. This model has stated that men are more agentic and women more communal but in the work by Kurdek many similarities were found in the relating styles of lesbians and gay men. This similarity between studies of couples of lesbians and gay men with nongay couples suggests that gender may not be the root cause for differences that have been noted in research on families. The standard reasoning has been that lesbian relationships could not last because of the socialization of women that would cause a merger or increasing dependency between two women in an intimate relationship which would create a decrease in sexual interest and the eventual demise of the relationship. The problem with this line of reasoning, as Laird (1993) pointed out, is
its basis on male heterosexual norms. These male norms define a lack of differentiation as problematic. Peplau (1994) suggested that attachment and autonomy are two separate dimensions instead of extremes on a continuum. In Peplau’s research, lesbians who valued autonomy were no more likely than women who placed little emphasis on autonomy to have close and loving relationships with other women. According to Franklin (2003), previous research on lesbian and gay parents which has explored the traditional ideas of masculine and feminine gender roles has shown these concepts are more fluid within this community than in the dominant culture and not limited to the traditional models.

A study by Ciano-Boyce and Shelly-Sireci (2002) raises questions concerning the influence of gender in relation to the roles adopted when parenting. In this study the children of lesbian parents consistently chose one parent for nurturing activities and the other parent for rough and tumble play, reading, and watching television. The parents reported a division of roles that they did not always desire but still occurred in spite of overt attempts at egalitarian relationships between the partners in the relationship. These relationship changes were also in contrast to the prior relational structure that had existed for the couple before children had been added to the family. All of this suggests other factors may contribute to the definition, establishment, and contributing influences to role definition within families outside the paradigm of gender or biological sex.

One of the difficulties that may have plagued research with gay and lesbian couples and their families is that this group is typically thought of as individuals instead of members of a couple or the head of a family. Same-sex couples as well as same-sex families have only recently become visible to the general population and the grouping of
individuals into a self-declared unit of “couple” or “family” is still seen as the exception to lesbian and gay individuals. Thinking like this has been partly responsible for the obvious bias in research. Research has in large part excluded lesbian and gay individuals, but to an even greater extent excluded same-sex couples and families headed by same-sex couples or individuals. A review of the literature examining same-sex and opposite-sex couples reveals a number of similarities, some differences, results that look suspicious, and results that seem blatantly obvious.

The majority of the research conducted with lesbian and gay families in the 1980s and 1990s focused on the effect of parent sexual orientation on the developmental well being of the children (Franklin, 2003; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Allen & Burrell, 1996; Laird, 1993). This research was partly in response to the difficulty lesbian and gay parents have experienced when trying to retain custody of children during a divorce. Allen and Burrell (1996) performed a meta-analysis of studies on lesbian and gay led families to simplify the results of studies which sometimes had conflicting information. The meta-analysis compared data from three sources: parents, teachers, and children. Data from parents was compared on the quality of the parent/child interaction, parent’s rating of children, and the attitude of the parent on sex role issues. No significant difference was found on these items between homosexual and heterosexual parents. Also, no significant difference was found in data from teachers’ ratings of children from homosexual and heterosexual parents. The data from children compared sexual orientation, satisfaction with life, and moral and cognitive development. No significant differences were found between groups. The data from children also looked at sexual
orientation and satisfaction with lifestyle by gender. Again, no significant differences were found between groups.

Now that the “harm” myth has been thoroughly refuted, the research most germane to lesbian and gay families is helping the lesbian and gay family understand what diversity of norms exist for lesbian and gay families and provide models of the lesbian and gay family life cycle with the developmental tasks that occur in each of the stages. The potential diversity within the lesbian and gay family has likely been obscured by the homogenous sampling that has occurred in research studies (Allen & Demo, 1996).

Stacey and Biblarz (2001), when reviewing 21 studies on lesbian and gay families, found that most of the researchers purported there was no difference between the children raised by lesbian or gay parents and those raised by nongay parents. None of these studies looked at the developmental tasks of the families. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) reported that a complete meta-analysis of the literature on lesbian and gay parents was not possible when they reviewed the literature. As they stated, this is because too few studies have been conducted with the same general outcome to make a meta-analysis possible. They reviewed 21 studies that focused on lesbian parents and the children in their homes but found only 2 studies that looked at gay fathers. Stacey and Biblarz refute the claims, made in the studies they reviewed, that there are no differences of parenting or child outcomes between the children raised in lesbian and gay families versus those raised in nongay families. Furthermore, Stacey and Biblarz stated that researchers attempted to minimize the differences that were found in studies in a misguided attempt to demonstrate that lesbian and gay families are not different than nongay families and
therefore not inferior. In fairness to the research being reviewed in these studies, Stacey and Biblarz neglected to point out the difference in the social and political climate at the time of the studies and their own review.

Some differences that Stacey and Biblarz (2001) found in their review were fewer adherences to sex-typed norms or expectations for sex-typed norms for daughters and sons of lesbian mothers. This encompassed nontraditional gender occupations and more comfort in exploring a wider range of sexuality including number of sexual partners and partner gender. One of the important differences considering the stigma that accompanies same-sex families was the demonstration of these children is emotional and mental resilience. Another area of difference found was greater competence at parenting by the nonbiological mother when compared with nonbiological stepfathers. There was a greater degree of simpatico in parenting styles between lesbian couples than their nongay counterparts. Lesbian mothers were less interested in their children playing in a gender specific manner than the nongay mothers. In addition, children of lesbian parents reported feeling closer to the nonbiological parent, including discussions of the child’s sexual development, than the children in nongay homes with stepfathers. In addition, Stacey and Biblarz consistently found differences in parenting style between lesbian and nongay couples. Lesbian parents exhibited more egalitarian and compatible child-rearing styles than their nongay counterparts.

Comparative Studies of Lesbian, Gay and Heterosexual Couples and Parents

One of the difficulties in doing research around lesbian and gay couples is language. The term “partners” suggests a business arrangement. “Lovers” is a term that creates connotations of an illicit affair or at least a courtship that has not matured to
the final stage of a romantic relationship. “Cohabiting” carries a suggestion of some stability but doesn’t take into account same-sex couples who do not live together. Some recent terms that are developing greater legal substance are “civil union” and “domestic partner.” These terms do not associate with nomenclature for referring to the happily “unioned” couple or the recently “domesticated” couple. The language is diverse when members of the couple refer to the other member in the relationship. Lesbian and gay couples may refer to each other as partner, mate, life mate, lover, roommate, significant other, housemate, husband, wife, girlfriend, or boyfriend. Each of these terms have advantages as well as disadvantages.

The range of living circumstances that accompany same-sex couples is just as diverse as the labeling used when referring to the couple and the individual members in the relationship. Couples may cohabitate or maintain separate residences; they may have separate finances or joint finances; they may be monogamous or have a variety of open relationship arrangements; they may be open about their orientation and relationship, partly open, or not open at all; and they may or may not have children. The majority of same-sex couples are married, living together, and have or plan to have children. This is one difficulty that is encountered when researching same-sex couples. Each researcher can operationalize the “couple” differently.

Dailey (1979) studied three groups: homosexual couples, heterosexual couples, and non-married heterosexual couples. Dailey reported little difference between the three groups related to the success of relationships. This is the dominant theme, little difference, throughout the studies comparing these two groups of couples.
Fewer studies have been done on families with gay fathers, but gay fathers have been found to be more consistent in setting limits, more nurturing, and more emotionally expressive than their nongay counterparts (Bigner, 1996). It seems counterintuitive not to suspect a difference between lesbian and gay families and nongay families. It seems that although there is not an adverse impact of growing up in a lesbian or gay family, there are differences in parenting. Caution should be used when concluding there was a lack of negative impact. Since some conservative perspectives would argue increased sexual activity of daughters and the increased homoerotic exploration of sons from the families of lesbian and gay parents constituted a negative impact.

A study by Kurdek (1994a) which looked at more of the within couple issues reported that opposite-sex couples were more likely to argue about social issues than lesbian couples. Same-sex couples were more likely to argue about distrust issues than opposite-sex couples. Concerns about intimacy and power topped the list for all three types of couples.

Kurdek (1998) later looked at a combination of issues, some within couple and some between the couple and society. Overall the study showed little difference between couples. Same-sex and opposite-sex couples did not differ on constructive problem solving within the relationship. However, same-sex couples reported higher levels of intimacy and autonomy and fewer barriers to dissolution of their relationship than opposite-sex couples. In spite of these results, the relationship dissolution rate was very low for the same-sex couples in the study.

In addition to fewer barriers to dissolution, the process that lesbian and gay families go through in deciding to become parents is not similar to that of the traditional
family in this country (Franklin, 2003). The traditional family expects to add children through a private interaction between the two partners that will result in the addition of children at some point in the future. Children also may be added unintentionally with little or no planning concerning the addition of children. In contrast, Franklin (2003) reports that lesbian and gay parents are “self-selected” and that this minority group within the lesbian and gay community spends a great deal of time thinking and planning for parenthood and frequently face great financial expense, for example from using fertility technology or adoption. The adoption process may only allow one parent to adopt. In some states co-adoption or second parent adoption provides an opportunity for both parents to be seen as the legal parent of their child. Co-adoption also provides the parents and child more secure legal rights. These plans require the inclusion of a third party in the planning and implementation stages, usually a social worker and potentially a lawyer.

It is possible that heterosexism and homophobia play a role in the process of lesbian and gay families. Understanding the effect that heterosexism and homophobia has on the decision making process of couples or the experienced or anticipated heterosexism and homophobia would be instructive to communities, counselors, and other lesbian and gay families that are considering adding children to their family. For instance, learning that heterosexism and homophobia are not issues or are geographically specific (i.e., rural or urban) in lesbian and gay families would be equally instructive to the gay and lesbian community and society at large. To date, studies on lesbian and gay families have not addressed the impact that heterosexism and homophobia has on lesbian and gay families.
Another study by Kurdek (1994b) looked at internal issues for gay and nongay couples. Kurdek found little difference between couples in self-reported conflict resolution styles, either engaging in conflict and/or withdrawing. One difference was reported for husbands with children. The wives rated the husband as lower in positive problem solving. The other groups, same-sex couples, and opposite-sex couples without children reported positive problem solving. Same-sex and opposite-sex couples similarly reported more relationship satisfaction when positive problem solving was used and lower relationship satisfaction when conflict engagement or withdrawal was used. This suggests children create more potential for a change in relationship structure or relational patterns compared to those in place prior to adding children.

Another result reported from the research on lesbian couples is the more egalitarian structure that lesbian couples have when compared to their nongay counterparts. Rollins and Galligan (1978) theorized that all parents may avoid a decrease in the level of marital satisfaction if they share, delegate, integrate, and efficiently perform their roles; within the family, this sounds like a description of an egalitarian arrangement. Because lesbian and gay couples do not have gender role models to draw from, it would seem they may be more likely to experience couple satisfaction because of their need to negotiate roles and the sharing of duties within the family structure.

In addition, in the review of the 21 studies, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) consistently found differences in parenting style between lesbian and nongay couples, with lesbian parents exhibiting more egalitarian and compatible child-rearing styles. This difference may be more a result of the different pairings of gender (mixed-gender vs. same-gender) or a combination of gender and sexual orientation.
It may be at the point of adding children when the gender role uniqueness of same-sex couples becomes more apparent (Kurdek, 1994b). This researcher would suggest there is greater expectation placed on women in opposite sex relationships to fill a prescribed role as “mother” after children have been born. This is the point when same-sex couples would engage in a discussion or process of establishing role expectations for each member of the couple and provide the first opportunity to study how sex and gender identity impacts parenting without the confound of society’s gender expectations.

In addition, there may be sex traits that will influence the manifestation of gender roles within the couple. Lesbian couples are more likely to be monogamous than gay male couples (Laird, 1993). Laird suggests this may be a product of sex instead of orientation. Laird asserts men, in general, are less likely to be monogamous than women. This difference between the sexes suggests some difference may exist between lesbian couples, gay male couples, and opposite sex couples in the areas of rules, structure, and adjustments which may take place when adding children into the family unit.

It has been suggested that the societal challenges that are encountered by children in lesbian and gay families may play a role in creating greater psychological strength and social awareness in the children coming from these homes (Brill, 2001).

Other differences between lesbian and gay families versus nongay families have been noted in the literature. Kurdek (1988) and Crosbie-Burnett and Helmbrecht (1993) both stated that lesbian and gay couples are more likely to find social and emotional support from their partner and friends than family when compared with the general population. Lesbian and gay families are faced with institutionalized heterosexism on a
regular basis (Allen & Demo, 1996) through forms, public policy, questions concerning children and family, and legal restrictions or limitations.

Julien, Chartrand, and Begin (1999), reported the joint networks of the lesbian and gay couples were larger and included more friends than non-gay couples. All three groups had about the same number of family in their social networks. Some differences occurred in how much inclusion and who was included in the couple’s joint network when predicting the couple’s level of successful adjustment. A bivariate correlation suggested that when gay couples were less dependent on separate and shared friends they experienced higher conjugal adjustment. For lesbian couples, better adjustment was forecasted by having more friends in common and being less dependent on family. Heterosexual couples experienced better conjugal adjustment when an equal number of both partners’ families were included in their shared network.

Because lesbian and gay couples risk alienation from family if they disclose their orientation or their relationship, it would follow that these couples would rely more heavily on a network of friends. Blumstein and Schwartz (1993) and McWirter and Mattison (1984) reported that same-sex couples were more likely to disclose their orientation to friends than to family. Since same-sex couples choose friends and are born into families it would seem likely that the choice of friends would lead to more understanding of alternative orientations than family members. It is possible for the couple to maintain separate family ties but this may be likely to impede the success of the relationship by pulling couples in more than one direction during ritual family times like holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays.
In another study, which examined the structure of lesbian and gay social support networks, Dulin, et al. (1999) point to a fundamental difference between same-sex and opposite-sex social support networks. Lesbian and gay couples are more likely to rely on friends and include a larger number of friends in their social support networks than their nongay counterparts. It is likely this difference for same-sex couples is in response to the potential familial rejection, in addition to the similar gender roles that each person brings to the relationship and the resulting negotiating in which the couples engage to establish and maintain their relationships.

Julien et al. (1999) reported that same-sex couples had larger joint networks of friends with more overlap between each partner’s network than heterosexual couples. In addition, the number of family members included in the social support network was smaller for same-sex couples than for opposite-sex couples. One possibility is that gay couples who are less dependent for support outside the relationship are more likely to succeed. This suggests that the type of gay couple being studied is limited. The hostile social environment that gay couples experience may limit successful relationships to a particular type of relationship. If this is the case, then the comparative studies between gay, lesbian, and nongay couples may not be comparing the same thing or at the very least, are not comparing the same range of relationship structure across groups. Julien et al. (1999) found that lesbian couples maintain fewer separate friends, and that when they have a larger overlap between friends and family within their social support network they experience a higher level of conjugal adjustment.

The lesbian and gay family also has faced difficulties within the lesbian and gay community. The number of lesbian and gay families has provided the opportunity for a
subculture to establish itself and provide support to the members. Some changes in partner selection and termination of relationships are also beginning to occur because of the impact these decisions have on parenting (Wells, 2001).

The majority of evidence has found similarities between these three groups: lesbian, gay, and nongay (Julien, et al., 1999). This suggests that some existing theory for nongay couples may be useful in viewing lesbian and gay couples. After theories have been developed a comparison with nongay theory would be useful for both groups to challenge thinking, find gaps and overlap in existing theories.

It is likely that the boon of same-sex families that has been occurring for the past decade will alter the focus of some researchers and increase the knowledge about this new style of family. Part of the reason for this research is because of a book by Roughgarden (2004) where she reported greater success rates for the offspring from same-sex parings in the animal kingdom than for opposite-sex parings. She speaks extensively concerning different gender arrangements in the animal kingdom outside of the bimodal gender paradigm. In Roughgarden’s discussion of gender in the animal kingdom she suggests benefits of having more than one gender within a species. This suggests the potential for useful knowledge from studying families headed by same-sex couples.

It is important to note that all of the instruments used in these studies are suspect because the instruments were normed for opposite couples not same-sex couples. Because homosexual couples were unable to marry and the prospect of marriage was not even being discussed as a political or practical potential at the point in time when these studies occurred, assessments designed for married couples are potentially flawed.
Generational interactions have not been studied within lesbian and gay families (Bozett, 1987). This leaves questions of parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, and other extended family members’ relationships and interactions as an unknown zone of information (Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993) except through anecdotal evidence. This limits understanding how lesbian and gay families function, establish and define boundaries, and how the family achieves legitimacy. The connections to extended family may be altered because of the attraction that grandchildren and a more “normal” family appearance create for kin (Franklin, 2003). Allen and Demo (1993) argue the need for family-based research on lesbian and gay families because of the large number of questions in relation to these families that cannot be answered at this point in time.

Some weaknesses of the studies reviewed by Demo and Allen (1996) are the homogenous make up and the use of convenience samples to gain participants for studies have obscured the layers of diversity that are represented within the lesbian and gay community. It has been reported after a review of over 8,000 articles published from 1980 to 1990 that lesbian and gay families have been “virtually ignored in family research” (Allen & Demo, 1996) (p. 430). In particular, there has been no research addressing family life cycles and the developmental tasks within those cycles of lesbian and gay families.

Same-sex couples, because of biological restrictions, must be more decisional when adding children to the family unit than opposite-sex couples. Therefore comparative studies between these two groups, same-sex and opposite-sex couples, may be comparing non-normal sampling against a normal sampling from the two representative groups. If that is the case, then studies looking at similarities and
differences are likely to be limited in usefulness at this point. More productive studies would describe, identify the complexities, and develop theories based on this information. This would run counter to many attempts to adapt existing theory for nongay couples and families to the world of the same-sex couple and family.

In addition, studies that examine childless same-sex and opposite-sex couples may have a built-in confound. Are the opposite-sex couples not having children by choice, haven’t decided about children, or just not planning on children at this point but will in the future? The same-sex couples can only entertain the prospect of children through adoption, same-sex marriage and then divorce, or through fertility options. The same-sex couple’s decision to have or not have children is going to be impacted by societal acceptance of the relationship and societal and community acceptance of people with homosexual orientations. This experience is not encountered by the opposite-sex couple when deciding if they are going to have children. Adding children for same-sex couples is more labored and intentional than for the average opposite-sex couple.

Over the 5-year time period of the study by Kurdek (1998) over 80% of the same-sex couples stayed together. This could be an artifact of the study; perhaps successful same-sex couples were more likely to choose to participate in the study. This could also suggest that same-sex couples are not willing to self-label as a couple versus a label of dating until they have become successful within their relationship. This is difficult to speculate about since the courtship patterns for same-sex couples are arrived at through a different developmental pattern than opposite-sex couples and same-sex couples have more hurdles and fewer encouragers from society to be a couple. Same-sex couples do not have the same “biological time clock” pressing them to find a mate. It is possible that
same-sex couples remain together partly as a result of a higher degree of openness to new experiences (Kurdek, 1997). Same-sex couples may be less restricted in their thinking when solving relational problems since they are more open to new experiences. This may be one of the adaptive ways that same-sex couples cope with a non-supportive social environment. Another adaptive response to a hostile social environment may be the increased likelihood, when compared with nongay couples, that lesbian and gay couples will seek support from friends and family (Ulin & Milardo, 1992).

**Qualitative Research with Lesbian and Gay Couples**

Laird (1993) recommended that research concerning lesbian and gay families should be qualitative, ethnographic, and holistic. She further states that this research should look into the daily lives of lesbian and gay families. Kitzinger (1987 & 1989) suggested that comparative studies between lesbian and gay parenting and nongay parenting be dropped and replaced with studies that focus on lesbian and gay parents which would eliminate some of the tendency to fit lesbian and gay parents into the mold that already exists for nongay parents. Hicks (2005) argues for a move away from outcome-based research to “interpretivist methodologies” in order to capture the complexity of the lesbian and gay parenting experience.

Concerns have been raised that positivist approaches to research, which have been designed from a heterosexist perspective, may prevent groups who exist outside the heterosexist paradigm, from defining themselves in ways other than through pathologizing or stigmatizing (Gamson, 2003). Gamson (2003) believes that qualitative research methods that focus on the everyday lived experience fit especially well with subjected or minority groups of people. This type of research may assist these groups in
defining their lives through their own terms and lived experience instead of being included in existing theory as an afterthought. The typical type of research approach is usually interested in fitting lesbian and gay families into existing theory without exploring the lives of these families to see if the attempted match actually fits the families. Morrow (2007) speaks of qualitative methods being useful when building theory where theory does not already exist.

*Grounded Theory*

Grounded theory has been around since the 1960s (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Charmaz (2000) stated there are six strategies of grounded theory. First is the concurrent collection and analysis of data; second is a two-step coding processes looking for specific themes and broader hierarchical themes; third are comparative methods; fourth is memo writing with the intention of constructing theoretical ideas to be tested against the data; fifth is sampling which is used to clarify the emerging conceptual ideas; and finally the development of a theoretical model.

Glaser (1998) makes the assumption that data, through analysis and experience in the field, will volunteer the social process that underlies the data. This approach requires that research participants say what is important either through being asked the “right” questions or through the voluntary offering of information to the researcher. Charmaz (2000) refers to the richer data pool that can be explored when considering the respondents assumptions and unstated messages which may go beyond a respondent’s statements. This type of data may be gathered through field notes or from a collection of respondent statements that highlight a broader theme beyond the respondent’s transcribed text.
Grounded theory relies on narrative constructions or reconstructions of previous experiences (Maines, 1993). These constructions from the respondents are not the original data; these are the most current construction or reconstruction of the respondent’s remembered experience concerning the data being related. The researcher then deconstructs and reconstructs the data through analysis, generating one more degree of removal from the original experience.

Theory Development from Qualitative Research

Stacey and Biblarz (2001) levied a critique that researchers appear hesitant or perhaps timid to theorize in the area of lesbian and gay families. The implication appears to be that lesbian and gay research has a history of being defensive or attempting to show “normalcy” instead of running the risk of theorizing which may instill a backlash or subject an already attacked minority to further attacks.

The development of theory begins with the coding process (Charmaz, 2000). The coding process has several different levels of comparison that provide different views of the data which are instructive to the final themes (Morrow, 2007). The comparison process allows the researcher to better understand the context necessary for the participant’s meaning to exist. The final themes or broad categories are treated as concepts and can be used as the basis for the proposal of a theory from the data.

Arguing Against Modification of Nongay Theory for Same-sex Families

Slater (1995) proposed five problems with the existing theory. The first is the assumptions that nongay families are more likely to assume children are a part of the coupling where lesbian families do not assume children but these families tend to be intentional in the decision to add children. The second point is related to the definition of
family being defined by “blood and legal ties.” Same-sex families struggle to establish legal ties for their families and the “blood” concept may influence if or how extended families participate with same-sex families. Slater’s third point addresses the role intergenerational relationships play in sustaining “rituals, values, prescriptions, and folk wisdom from one generation to the next.” Here Slater identified the differences between same-sex and opposite-sex families would require same-sex families to create rituals, values, and the typically intergenerationally shared folk wisdom would be useless for this new type of family. The fourth point made is that there is a lack of recognized rituals within the extended family system for lesbian and gay couples. Same-sex couples rarely have marriages, commitment ceremonies, or domestic partnership rituals. In addition, for those same-sex couples where these types of rituals occur the extended family is often not included or the inclusion is limited. Slater’s final point is that there is a lack of language and norms for language in how to refer to the relationships within a same-sex pairing, such as partners or lovers, what is the adoptive mother called or the mothers-in-law?

**Family Theory**

Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) stages of the family life cycle consists of six stages. Table 1 shows these six stages, key principles in the emotional process of transition and second-order changes in family status required to proceed developmentally for each stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGE</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF TRANSITION: KEY PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>SECOND-ORDER CHANGES IN FAMILY STATUS REQUIRED TO PROCEED DEVELOPMENTALLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving home: single</td>
<td>Accepting emotional and financial responsibility for self</td>
<td>a. Differentiation of self in relation to family of origin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| young adults | b. Development of intimate peer relationships  
c. Establishment of self in respect to work and financial independence |
| The joining of families through marriage: the new couple | Commitment to new system  
a. Formation of marital system  
b. Realignment of relationships with extended families and friends to include spouse |
| Families with young children | Accepting new members into the system  
a. Adjusting marital system to make space for children  
b. Joining in child rearing, financial and household tasks  
c. Realignment of relationships with extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles |
| Families with adolescents | Increasing flexibility of family boundaries to permit children’s independence and grandparents’ frailties  
a. Shifting of parent/child relationships to permit adolescent to move into and out of system  
b. Refocus on midlife marital and career issues  
c. Beginning shift toward caring for older generation |
| Launching children and moving on |Accepting a multitude of exits from and entries into the family system  
a. Renegotiation of marital system as a dyad  
b. Development of adult-to-adult relationships between grown children and their parents  
c. Realignment of relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren  
d. Dealing with disabilities and death of parents (grandparents) |
| Families in later life | Accepting the shifting generational roles  
a. Maintaining own and/or couple functioning and interests in face of physiological decline: exploration of new familial and social role options  
b. Support for more central role of middle generation  
c. Making room in the system for the wisdom and experience of the elderly, supporting the older generation without overfunctioning for them  
d. Dealing with loss of spouse, siblings, and other peers and preparation for death |
Johnson and Colucci (1999) argued for keeping Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) existing theory with modifications. Their position was counter to other authors (e.g., Slater, 1995; Siegel & Lowe, 1994) who felt it would be better to start over with a purely new theory to avoid the potential heterosexist bias that exists in Carter and McGoldrick’s theory because it was originally developed with heterosexual couples. Starting fresh with theory development was proposed because some individuals consider lesbian and gay families “inventions.” If this type of family is an invention, then a new unbiased theory may be needed to describe it. Some of the rationale that Johnson and Colucci used for modification of the existing theory is that gays and lesbians are typically bicultural, having been raised in nongay homes as well as being lesbian or gay. Because of this bicultural status, Johnson and Colucci argued that several of the same aspects of family exist in both cultures. These areas, “that gays and lesbians are part of a complex multigenerational family system consisting of a family of origin, a multigenerational lesbian/gay community, and/or a family of choice that consists of friends, partners, and/or children” (pp. 346-347), are the basis of Johnson and Colucci’s argument. It would be unlikely that lesbians and gays would not use or modify the ideas of family they experienced while being raised and eliminating the idea of these families being a new invention instead of a variation of the existing family system.
Methods

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a family life cycle model for lesbian families in which the key developmental tasks and processes necessary for the life cycle stages, through families with young children, were articulated. Given the debate in the literature between whether or not modification of existing theory (Johnson & Colucci, 1999) or developing a unique theory (Slater, 1995) was most appropriate, the current investigation used a qualitative research design to avoid pre-existing bias in model development. Although the broad notion of developmental stages with key principles and second order changes was consistent with Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) original model of family life cycle, the specific stages and tasks were derived from the recalled experience of the participants in this study.

Participants

Experts

Experts were identified using purposive sampling (Bernard, 2002). The process of finding experts began with recommendations from families who had used the services provided by the experts. A leader at the Jesus Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in Indianapolis suggested a local attorney who had worked with numerous same-sex families concerning adoption and necessary legal paperwork. This same leader at the MCC was also a parent in a same-sex relationship with children who had not yet entered
formal schooling. Using the “snowball effect” (Kadushin, 1968; Bernard, 2002) a physician with fertility expertise was recommended by the legal expert. All of the experts used in reviewing the questions had worked with between 50-100 or more same-sex couples, as indicated by their self-report. The definition for assisting with the transition of adding children to the home was working with a same-sex couple either prior to, during, or after the addition of the child to the home. The review of the literature and input from experts resulted in one set of questions for the lesbian focus group members. Thick descriptions of the experts will be provided below in the description of the interview question development procedures.

Couples

A random sample of gay and lesbian couples would have been difficult to select because of the social stigma that surrounds these families. Therefore, purposive sampling (Bernard, 2002) was used to find focus group participants. Participants for the focus groups were recruited from a lesbian/gay parenting group located in Minneapolis, MN called Rainbow Families. Rainbow Families is one of the largest lesbian and gay parenting organizations in the nation. Recruitment from this group increased the likelihood of finding an adequate number of couples for the individual interviews and focus group. Research participants were solicited through the organization’s electronic list service, announcement in the organization newsletter, at the group meetings, and by word of mouth from members of the parenting group. Thick descriptions of the couples will follow in the Results section.

The lesbian couple participants utilized a variety of approaches to adding children to the family. One couple used international adoption, one used local adoption resources,
and five couples used fertility methods. Two of the couples using fertility methods had a known donor and the rest of these couples used a sperm bank. The children’s ages ranged from two to six years old.

Research Team

The research team consisted of the author and three psychology graduate students. The research team members were enrolled in the Counseling Psychology graduate program at Ball State University and all volunteered to participate on the research team.

Procedures

Interview Question Development

In the first stage of this study, the primary researcher generated questions from the literature on lesbian and gay families and the literature on same-sex couples, which were used in the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group. The questions were related to those processes encountered when establishing a couple, becoming a family, and the changes experienced when adding children to the family unit and derived from existing literature about this process. These questions were reviewed by one expert from each of the following areas: legal/adoption, fertility, and ministerial. The experts reviewed the list of questions to identify gaps, poor wording, or unnecessary questions. Their recommendations were used to make revisions and additions to the original list of questions. Additions were made to the questions using the advice of the experts and the primary researcher. Two of the experts stated the questions were adequate as written. The legal expert suggested the addition of a definition of “legal involvement” for question number four and the addition of the question about why no legal involvement if none had been used (appendix B).
Thick Descriptions of Expert Advisors

Recall that the experts were asked for their critique of the questions for the focus groups. The following thick descriptions of these expert advisors provide additional contextual data for the study related to both the experts themselves and their responses to the question set.

The minister worked at a local lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) church in the Indianapolis area. She was also a mother, with her partner, of two adopted children who had not entered formal schooling. The pastor shared she has worked with between 50 and 60 same-sex parents in her ministry. Her response to the proposed focus group questions was “They seem right on to me.”

The attorney was an expert in the areas of adoption and legal documents for same-sex couples from the Indianapolis area. She had worked with approximately 90 adoptions involving same-sex couples. In addition, she had handled legal issues related to children of same-sex parents for approximately another 100 couples. Her response to the proposed questions was “Since I am only looking at it from the legal perspective, my review is limited. I think I would add a question to item 4: If you did not seek legal assistance, why not? And perhaps you should further define "legal involvement" as you have on the other questions, i.e., Legal involvement can include anything from consultation with an attorney, to preparing wills, trusts, powers of attorney, co-parenting agreements, etc., to obtaining an adoption or guardianship or child custody, support and visitation order.”

The fertility specialist was also from the Indianapolis area. He reported working with hundreds of female couples. He said he felt the material was “right on” and that he
was surprised at how “accurate” things looked in the questions. He also expressed interest in learning what the results of the study produced.

**Focus Group and Individual Interviews**

The researcher offered three times for focus groups, which provided the couples with three different times to choose from. While the original intent was to conduct three focus groups using a semi-structured interview format, two of the sessions ended up being conducted with only one participant couple which limited the richness of the data from the semi-structured interview format. Only one lesbian couple signed up for the first focus group. The second focus group was scheduled with two participant couples but circumstance prevented one couple from participating which meant one lesbian couple participated in the second semi-structured interview. The final focus group had five lesbian participant couples. All three meetings used the questions generated from the literature and reviewed by the experts. Each of the single couple meetings and the focus group had the option of exploring additional topics generated during the meeting. This semi-structured format helped capture additional pertinent material such as the availability of local resources.

The individual interviews and focus group were conducted by the primary researcher in the Minneapolis metropolitan area in meeting rooms provided by the University of Minnesota and Dr. Simon Rosser. The individual interviews and focus group occurred over a three-day time period. A brief description of the focus for the discussion and a protocol for interacting within the group and meetings was provided at the beginning of each individual interview and focus group. The protocol consisted of a confidentiality statement, written consent form, and expectations for group member
participation and how to safely opt out of participating in the entire process or specific portions. The protocol also covered how the group members were expected to interact with one another during the focus group (i.e. one person speaking at a time, being respectful of others opinions when differences arose, etc.). After potential group members indicated that they understood the process, they were given an opportunity to gain further clarification of the focus group procedures as needed.

Daycare was arranged for children of the focus group participants. In addition, each couple received a $15 gift certificate to Amazon.com. Each couple who participated in the individual interviews and focus group also were provided with a synopsis of the results after the feedback session was conducted. The participant couples reviewed this synopsis and provided feedback to the primary researcher about the adequacy of the synopsis in terms of representing their experience. Each couple who participated in this review and feedback session was given an additional $15 gift certificate to Amazon.com. What resulted during and after the feedback session will be discussed later. Of the original seven couples during the data collection, all of the couples indicated a desire to participate in the feedback session. When the couples were approached to schedule the feedback session five stated an interest but only four couples stated they were available for the feedback session. One of these couples was unable to attend because of an unexpected scheduling problem related to work. This resulted in three couples participating in the feedback session.

Potential participants completed a demographics questionnaire, which was used to screen for viable participants. Inclusion criteria were couples where both parents were lesbian or bisexual and couples who had at least one child in the home who was still not
attending formal schooling, and couples who used adoption or some type of infertility method.

Research Team Recruitment and Training

The primary researcher met with the potential research team members concerning the research topic and methodology used in this study. The purpose of this meeting was to identify biases they held and their willingness to participate in the study. There were no extreme biases expressed by research team members that would jeopardize their ability to generate objective categories. Research team members then were required to practice encoding a transcript that was unrelated to the study, discuss the resulting themes, and practice this procedure again until each analyzer was comfortable they understood the process being used. In exchange for participation on the research team, members received acknowledgment for their participation in written documentation summarizing the research, thanks from the primary researcher, and a meal at a local restaurant as thanks for their assistance.

Research Design

Qualitative research methods were used in this study, specifically grounded theory (Bernard, 2002). Grounded theory has been used in previous research on gay and lesbian individuals (Beckstead & Morrow, 2004; Beehler, 2001; Cimo, 2003; Hogan, 2002; Jackson, 2000; Kivel, 2000; Lasser & Tharinger, 2003; Mccaw, 2001; Morrison, 2004; O’Shea, 2000; Oswald, 2002; Remafedi & Carol, 2005). Purposive or judgment sampling (Bernard, 2002) was used to select experts and research participants.

Grounded Theory was used for the data analysis. Grounded Theory (Bernard, 2002) involves the 1) production of transcripts of interviews, 2) identification of potential
themes, 3) pulling data from categories as they emerge together and comparing them, 4) thinking about how categories are linked together, 5) using the relations among categories to build theoretical models while constantly checking the models against the data (particularly against negative cases), and 6) presenting the results using examples or quotes from interviews that illuminate the theory.

The basis of grounded theory is to discover patterns of behavior or thought in a set of texts through developing themes and coding the text for the presence of these emerging themes. The research team examines the transcripts to identify units of meaning and assigns categories to each unit of meaning (Bernard, 2002). The research team had a discussion following the completion of this phase to compare results and discuss if the broader themes developed from the categories captured the ideas presented by the respondents. The research team reexamines the categories used for the statements to determine if the existing descriptions accurately represent the statements that were identified as belonging to this category. Grounded Theory is flexible and intended to be unique to the research project but grounded in a process.

The next step requires the primary researcher to examine the resulting categories and develop concepts or broad themes that are overarching to the individual categories. These broad themes are used as a basis for developing a new theoretical model. In the final step, the researcher compares the resulting broad themes with the theoretical models, in this case those proposed by Carter and McGoldrick (1999) with the modification by Johnson and Colucci (1999) for lesbian and gay families.
Data Analysis

The primary researcher used audio recordings of the individual interviews and focus group to transcribe the resulting dialogue from these groups. The transcription process utilized a voice recognition computer program called Dragon Speak to generate the first draft of the transcript. The initial transcription required the researcher to speak the text into a microphone while listening to participants dialogue. Because of background noise and limited quality of the earphones attached to the microphone used for dictation, later corrections used different headphones to improve the ability of the primary researcher to hear what the participants said in order to make the transcripts as accurate as possible. This second review of the transcripts did not utilize the voice recognition software. The resulting written format of each transcript was compared with the audio recording to verify the accuracy of the transcription.

The primary researcher provided training to the research team on the process used to categorize and analyze the data collected from the individual interviews and focus group as described above. Recall that the training was on a topically unrelated transcript in order to avoid prejudicing the raters regarding categories or themes. The unrelated mock transcript was used to instruct them about how to develop categories. Each research team member, as well as the primary researcher, independently analyzed every transcript. The first stage of the coding process was to create a generalized collection of categories resulting from the ideas identified by the analyzers. The primary researcher took the resulting categories and removed duplicate categories from each analyzer’s notes. The resulting categories from each analyzer were placed together, compared back to the transcript, and then broader themes were developed. In addition, categories from
each question for the individual interviews and focus group were compared with the categories from the other research participant meetings. These stages were used to help identify the themes within categories, investigate the links between categories, and relationships among categories to build a theoretical template of ideas for comparison to the theory suggested by Johnson and Colucci (1999) and to develop a theoretical model to compare with Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) theory.

The resulting categories and themes generated through this process, as well as any implications drawn by the primary researcher for lesbian families, were used to generate a summative narrative that was presented back to the research participants. The research participants commented on the accuracy of the summarization or report on errors which were apparent from the research participant’s perspective. This step functioned as a validity check to ensure the research team’s accuracy of summary and interpretation. The research participant’s responses were unanimously positive to the material presented to them. Participants were able to identify themselves and their experience in the summative material presented. During the feedback meeting, the participants frequently would divert to political or social discussions that were tangential to the material being presented. In this way, the summative material being presented to them appeared to function as a catalyst for discussion of social, political, and familial problems they had encountered. The longer discussions occurred around topics that had a negative effect on the individual participant or the community at large. The positive aspects of the materials did not result in lengthy tangential discussions but rather produced laughs, smiles, and nodding of heads with pleased expressions.
In addition to having the lesbian couple participants review the final categorization and coding of interview material, the research team members and the researcher met one more time after the categorization had been completed on all three transcripts. The purpose of this follow up meeting was to review accuracy among team members and to gain reactions, thoughts, and biases experienced by the research team members while conducting the encoding process. The research team members were provided a description of the couples who participated in the study and the feedback material that had been presented to the couple participants during the feedback session. Research team members responded to the questions listed in Appendix N. This procedure served as an internal validity check of the category generating process and was another chance to expose biases that may have influenced the encoding process.

The results and validity sections of the narrative were used to develop a model of lesbian family developmental tasks for the purpose of comparison to the original models proposed in the existing literature. The proposed unique experiences and circumstances that were suggested by Johnson and Colucci (1999) in their chapter on life cycle issues for lesbian and gay families were compared with the major themes and concepts generated in the model derived from the present study. Recall that Johnson and Colucci were modifying the major themes and concepts from Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) family life cycle model for nongay families. The final stage of the present investigation involved a comparison of Johnson and Colucci’s suggested changes to Carter and McGoldrick’s model with the model generated from the current study.

Finally, the primary researcher maintained a written narrative of the entire study. This narrative consisted of his thoughts and reflections during all phases of the study.
Some of these thoughts altered future portions of the study and some of those will be described further in the limitations portion of this paper. An example of a procedural change was dropping the review of semi-structured interview questions by “expert couples” after discovering the expert minister was also in a same-sex relationship with young children who had not entered school.
Results

Section I

The results in this chapter are based on the methods and analysis described in the previous chapter. The units of meaning, categories, and themes were generated from couple participants’ interviews during three semi-structured interviews, two with individual couples and one with a focus group including five couples. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will provide information about the results from analyzers, participants, and validity assessments. The second section contains categories and themes that were encoded using grounded theory (Bernard, 2002) from the transcripts of the research participants.

Qualitative research approaches rely on varying types of thick descriptions to provide context for the expert advisors, participants, data, researcher, analyzers, and results (Morrow, 2007). These thick descriptions allow the reader to interpret the material and have an opportunity to determine both the applicability of the material and how broadly the information can be applied (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Following are thick descriptions of the participants, analyzers, validity check with the participants, and validity check with the analyzers.

The Setting

The couples were recruited from the membership of Rainbow Families. Rainbow Families is a not-for-profit organization that provides support, training, and resources for
same-sex parents in the greater Minneapolis area. Most of the interviews occurred at the University of Minnesota. One interview happened at the home of the couple because of scheduling conflicts.

The Research Participants

Couple #1 - These Caucasian lesbian women were 51 and 43 years old. They had adopted two children from Guatemala. Initially they had tried infertility methods and adoption concurrently. They stopped pursuing fertility methods when the adoption started going through. When they wanted to add a second child to their family they again began with fertility methods but stopped when they found out sperm and eggs from other people would need to be used. They returned to Guatemala to adopt their second child. The mother who had attempted fertility methods was chosen to stay home with the children for two years. She had started back to work on a part-time basis at the time of the interview. The other mother worked full time and felt that she had most of the stereotypical male roles in the home that a nongay couple would have. The stay-at-home mom served as the primary disciplinarian. The two women reported both regretting and enjoying their roles in the family.

Couple #2 - These Caucasian women, one lesbian and the other bisexual, were 34 and 37 years old. They added one child to the family using artificial insemination with a known donor. The donor reportedly held a special place in the family and was referred to as the child’s “special uncle.” The donor’s family was also included as part of the child’s family system. The non-birthing mother struggled with feelings of fear initially when including the donor’s family in their child’s life. Her fear centered on the potential of this family taking more ownership of the child than she felt their relationship warranted.
This parent resolved her conflicts after realizing this involvement was what the couple had been seeking for their child, a wide, loving family system that would help in the rearing of this child and provide her with many people who loved and cared for her.

Couple #3 - These Caucasian lesbian women were 31 and 35 years old and used fertility methods for adding a child to their family. These women lived in a small town and viewed themselves as pioneers in the community and portrayed themselves as having strength and the ability to withstand social pressure. One of the women placed an ultimatum on her own mother by requiring her to be involved from the start with their child or not at all. Both women sounded pleased that the grandmother asked to be included from the start after taking a couple of hours to contemplate the new situation. Most of the parenting practices in the lesbian couple were modeled after the partner whose family of origin used talking to resolve conflicts versus the other partner’s family of origin that attempted to resolve situations with yelling.

Couple #4 - These Caucasian lesbian women were 38 and 34 years old. They explored fertility and adoption methods initially and added their child through adoption. They had initially not seen themselves as being able to add children because they didn’t feel they could afford the measures needed to add children. After learning they wanted to have children, the father of one of the women offered to pay for all of the expenses related to adding children. They stated he made this offer because he saw them as having the potential of being great parents. He was also eager to become a grandparent and thought a grandchild would add to the longevity of his wife.

Couple #5 - These Caucasian lesbian women chose not to complete the demographics sheet. The following information about them is summarized from what
they shared during the semi-structured interviews. Two lesbian women who had been previously been married to men and then divorced raised one of women in this pairing. Once coupled, these parents raised the children (including the participant in the current study) from these previous marriages together. The other woman was raised in the suburbs in a “traditional” home where she indicated “religion was not important”. She stressed this point because her father attempted to use religion as a justification for his concerns when the couple decided to add children to their family. Both of these women felt their coming out process was easy because of the support they had received from their individual families of origin. They had two children by artificial insemination with an unknown donor. They both expressed surprise that one grandfather expressed concern over them adding a child into their home. Little contact was maintained with this grandparent. The birth mother stayed at home with the children and she was viewed as the “center of the family.” She was the organizer and the one who made sure everything necessary happened. The other mother was the “breadwinner” for the family and deferred to her partner on most parenting issues. Insurance for the family had been an issue in the past because of job changes which resulted in the loss of domestic partner insurance benefits. Both partners spoke of the other parent’s role as crucial and much appreciated within the family system.

Couple #6 - These Caucasian lesbian women were 35 and 39 years old. These women used artificial insemination and decided which would be birth mother based on issues related to age and medication use. Specifically, one woman was getting close to the age where a pregnancy would begin to add risks for mother and child and the other
partner was taking medication which both women were afraid might impact a fetus negatively.

Coup#7 - These Caucasian lesbian women were 35 and 36 years old. These women used artificial insemination to become pregnant. One of them was a mental health professional and expressed distress that she spent much of her time helping people “fix the mistakes” from parenting. She expressed considerable concern that she and her partner’s children would have problems, too, because of their parenting practices. This couple had poor relationships with both of their families of origin. They had chosen an older lesbian couple as their child’s grandparents and a single, retired neighbor to serve as another important family member.

The Analyzers

Again, to provide an increased understanding of the context for the results of this investigation, a brief description of each analyzer follows. In addition, a narrative of the analyzers’ thoughts and reactions about coding the transcripts is provided in an attempt to yield additional information about the context for the final results.

Analyzer 1 was a 36-year-old, Caucasian, nongay, female, and mother of three. She received a Master’s degree in counseling from Ball State University. She is currently working as a counselor at a youth correctional facility in Muncie, Indiana.

Analyzer 2 was a 34-year-old, Caucasian, nongay, male, who was born and raised in Clinton, Iowa. He received a B.S. in psychology from Iowa State, and a Master’s degree in counseling from Truman State University. He had practicum experience at the International Student office, completed an internship at a mental health center, completed an internship at the University of Memphis Counseling Center, and trained as a
Counseling Psychologist at Ball State University where he has subsequently received a Ph.D. He is currently teaching at Ball State University in the School of Extended Education.

Analyzer 3 was a 27-year-old, Caucasian, gay male, who was born and raised in Dublin, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. He received his BA in psychology from Miami University, and his Master’s in counseling from Ball State University. He had practicum and internship experiences in various K-12 school settings, including a junior secondary school in Trinidad, West Indies. He expressed research interests in multicultural counseling and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) issues, focusing primarily on adolescents. He is currently working as a middle school counselor in Muncie, Indiana.

Analyzer 4 and the primary researcher was a 46-year-old, Caucasian, gay male, who was raised in Mandan, North Dakota. He received a B.S. in Music Education from the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND and a M.Ed. in counseling with an emphasis in school and community counseling from North Dakota State University in Fargo, ND. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Ball State University and working as a therapist in a residential treatment facility.

**Narrative of Analyzers Thought’s and Reactions**

When the analyzers reviewed the final analysis from the semi-structured interviews they were looking for similarities and differences in what they had found when initially coding the data. In addition, the analyzers talked about their individual experiences, thoughts, and concerns while coding the transcripts from the semi-structured
interviews. The following narrative is a synopsis of the results of that meeting with the analyzers.

While coding the transcripts, the analyzers were highly cognizant of the need to avoid bias, prejudice, and projecting their own assumptions onto the data. In addition, they expressed a concern, that while coding the units of meaning, the categories would represent the intended meaning of the research participants. This concern for finding the “right” meaning was tempered by a conscious attempt to remain objective and stay true to the intended message from the research participants.

The systemic societal bias toward same-sex couples became blatantly apparent to the analyzers while going through the coding process. There are government policies that add barriers and require additional effort for same-sex couples to bring children into their homes. It was also apparent that some of the same-sex couples viewed some rules (e.g. requiring counseling before proceeding with fertility procedures) as heterosexist and the resulting extra steps as something that nongay couples would not encounter. This belief was held by the participant couples in spite of the fact that some of these extra steps are also a part of the parenting process for nongay couples who use fertility methods for adding children to their families.

The analyzers found themselves learning about adoption, legal limitations and necessities for same-sex couples as well as the tremendous amount of preparation required by same-sex couples when adding children to their homes. In addition, the analyzers were able to identify with different aspects of the stories being told by these lesbian couples. Some identified with the desire to parent or the struggle to overcome
obstacles in pursuit of a goal. The experience of these couples transcended the
community of same-sex parents and was easily understood by the research team.

It was easy at times, during the analysis, for an analyzer to empathize with the
participants’ experience and see these stories from the participant’s perspective. These
couples found the need to “create” family, a process which the graduate students also
reported finding the need to do while away from family and undertaking the stressful
graduate educational process. The research team described this parallel process between
themselves and the research participants.

It was interesting to note the number of similarities between same-sex couples and
the experiences of the nongay analyzers even in the midst of stories that were
highlighting differences and difficulties not experienced by most nongay couples. These
couples appeared to hold little back about their experiences when describing them. The
voyeuristic aspect of coding was at times uncomfortable for the analyzers. However,
knowing that the couples had willingly shared this deeply personal information helped
ease this discomfort for the analyzers.

The analyzers found it gratifying to hear that the children in these families were
living in the homes of loving parents. The couple participants’ stories also highlighted
the advantages some have when they receive the support of loving and involved families.
For those analyzers who were gay there was also a sense of pride that these women
persisted through a difficult process to create thriving successful families who were
willing to self-advocate as needs arose. This ability to self-advocate was possible
because of the self-awareness, political knowledge, and ability to articulate ideas clearly
that these women possessed. These qualities evident in the couple participants led the
research team to question how representative of all same-sex couples the participants in this study were.

Some of the couples were difficult to “like” because they sounded like they were doing a large amount of complaining or negative talking. Some of this complaining or negativity appeared to be about challenges the couple participants described as heterosexist. But, to the research team, these were challenges that all couples who use fertility methods experience. These apparent non-heterosexist examples were rare but were expressed by some of the couple participants with an apparent hostility that made it difficult to not be negatively influenced by these couples.

Reading these stories also helped make apparent some of the advantages that have been taken for granted by those who do not have to struggle to add children to their family. There were also a surprisingly large number of resources available to these couples before, during, and after adding children to their homes. Another surprise to the analyzers was the “cliques” within the lesbian community between biological versus adoptive families. An additional surprise was the cost involved to create these families. The analyzers found it disappointing to see the extent of difficulties experienced with the extended families of these couples, but they also found it comforting to see there was variation in the extended families’ responses.

Section II

First and Second Analysis

The following tables (2, 3, & 4) present the data in a format suggested by Bernard (2002). Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 show the transcripts from the three interviews in the left column, presented in the temporal sequence in which the semi-structured
interviews occurred. (Sunday, Monday, then Tuesday). The middle column contains the initial conceptual categories identified by the analyzers for the unit of meaning in the left column. There is a blank line between the conceptual categories for that unit generated by each analyzer. The right column represents the results of the second level of analysis, which was conducted by the primary researcher. This column represents the core conceptual theme(s) of the category(ies) in the middle column.

After generating these core conceptual categories, a third analysis of the data was performed (Bernard, 2002). This analysis arranged the resulting conceptual categories by each semi-structured interview’s response to each question. The purpose of this analysis was to explore the possibility of variation in responses between semi-structured interviews. Recall that two of the meetings were conducted as semi-structured interviews with one couple present. The primary researcher wanted to insure there was no significant difference in the material generated from the two interviews with one couple and the interview with five couples. Therefore, comparative analyses of the core conceptual categories were made at this stage in the data analysis. No variation in the core conceptual categories was found in responses between semi-structured interviews. However, the resulting data from the semi-structured interview, which contained ten women instead of two women, was much richer in detail and response thickness to each question.
Table 2
Sunday Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT DIALOGUE (the names in the transcripts are pseudonyms)</th>
<th>CATEGORY (listed by analyzer 1st through 4th, a blank line between analyzers)</th>
<th>SECOND ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong> - T - Okay, would you describe the decision-making process leading up to adding kids into your home? How did you guys go about, what did you think about to make that decision, how did you go about deciding</td>
<td>1st Analyzer&lt;br&gt;- Desire for a family</td>
<td>Desire for children and a family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2nd Analyzer&lt;br&gt;- Lack of knowledge of decision-making process&lt;br&gt;- Desire for children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3rd Analyzer&lt;br&gt;- Desire for children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4th Analyzer&lt;br&gt;- Background: always agreed on having kids – mutual desire</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was just about how to make how to create the family that was the question.</td>
<td>• How to create&lt;br&gt;• Question of process to create a family&lt;br&gt;• Uncertainty about family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question 2** - T - Yeah, nice. Can you describe what you're extended families reactions were to you adding kids to your home?

I think in many ways their reaction about Samantha and I being together was, it was actually I think we've benefited, I think that having kids then all of a sudden made sense to them. And I remember my grandfather telling me that you know, he was very conservative and just didn’t say a lot about Samantha and I being together, but when I told them I was pregnant he told me that there was nobody on this earth that was more deserving of having children than yourself. And from that point on everything just really opened up because then we had something in common with the rest of our family. You know we had nieces and nephews and now they had cousins and now we were part of the family in ya know more of a puzzle piece that fit with everybody else.

T - So it changed some of the relationships within the family

I would say so.

T - Okay

T - Did you notice that there was more interaction than after you decided to add children

Much more interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Changes in family by adding kids</th>
<th>Changes in the family through increased acceptance by adding children, an increased sense of belonging in the family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Unsure how to create family</td>
<td>• Changes in family by adding kids</td>
<td>• Benefits from experience of reactions of extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating a family</td>
<td>• Family reaction to same-sex relationship</td>
<td>• Acceptance of relationship by family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Changes in family by adding kids</td>
<td>• Experiencing commonalities with family. Sense of being “part of the family,” belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes in family by adding kids</td>
<td>• Affirmation of relationship changes within family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Increased extended family involvement</td>
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Okay alright right

T - I'm going to define a term heterosexism so that we are talking about the same thing make sure we are both on the same page as the next question is about that. Heterosexism is a belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the only natural normal or moral mode of sexual behavior and is also used to refer to affects of that cultural ideology and homophobia comes from that piece where homophobia is a prejudice or a fear of anything that doesn't fit within that mold.

**Question 3** - Could you describe any experiences you had with heterosexism or homophobia in regard to the process of adding children to your family?

I guess there's only one negative thing that pops into my mind which was an encounter with a family that, you know was fine with Samantha and I, but once we had children had told us that it just went against their beliefs. And that they also they home schooled their children and they said that they home schooled their children to disengage them from families like ours was that that was period point-blank answer. They just didn't want their children exposed to people like us.

T - They were comfortable with

They were OK

T - Before that

We know that it wasn't they probably really weren't okay okay. But it was you know we were

---

| Negative response to becoming parents from friends |
| Previously okay with same-sex couple |
| Tolerance not acceptance |
| Accepted by others as lesbian couple |
| Others disapproval of children in same-sex couple |
| Double standard for heterosexual versus homosexual couples |
| Efforts to avoid diversity |
| Prejudice |
| Double standard for couples het. Vs. hom |
| Tolerance seems to stop with children |
| People wanting to shield their children |
| Children changed peoples perception of who they were |
| Negative feedback from couple due to kids |
| Change in perspective |

---

Adding children into a same-sex relationship exposed prejudice that had appeared to be tolerance or acceptance before the addition of children.
dealing with them on an adult to an adult level and I think once we had kids all of a sudden you know it just it wasn't okay they didn't want their kids exposed to the this

| T - It was almost the opposite of your family | • Familiar reactions different from friends 
• Affirmation of family’s acceptance of children 
• Own family more accepting 
• Experience of prejudice – feeling singled out or different |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right absolutely</td>
<td>Reactions to creation of a family varied across friends and family</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T - Wow any other experiences that you can think of?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm trying to think you wanted positive or negative correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T - Actually they would probably mostly be negative because we're looking at heterosexism and homophobia or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| You know there's a couple of things like when we went in and were trying to decide. A couple of clinics here in the metro area the OB/GYN group clinics. If we were going to do insemination in the clinical setting they wanted us to it was mandatory that we went to a session or two of counseling prior to them treating us or working with us. And I asked the one doctor right off the bat would you make a 16 year-old who was thinking of becoming pregnant or thinking that she was pregnant would you make her go through that same therapy session and they said “no.” So was specific to us | • Prejudice higher standard for parenting required 
• Seeking friendly allies 
• Bias within medical field toward lesbian couple 
• Decision to choose more accepting/less biased medical practitioner |
| | A bias within the medical community exists but equal treatment can also be found |
| • Mandatory counseling because of being lesbian 
• Sought non-heterosexist professional |
| • Refusing to be a victim 
• Advocates for self |
So we chose to go to seek other professional we were not going to go through any group that made that mandatory you know

T - Yeah you know exactly does the kind of stuff I was looking for

Okay

Well

T - Other things like that?

Yes actually I have another really good one you love this one excuse me

(paused to respond to grandmother’s request)

Well yeah I’m pretty sure it’s a homophobia thing know can be as specific or not but as far as you know rules laws and regulations. I had applied for a medical assistance during my first pregnancy with Jane because the income guidelines are extremely generous for single women, signal pregnant women and technically I was.

T - Yes

And the reason why I did it because Samantha was working at Ameriprise I had found an OB Dr. I really really loved and her company her department was sold out in between so we no longer were going to have the same insurance so the only way for me to stick with this doctor. And that was another thing

| Interaction with legal/government regulations | Inequality in medical benefits for same-sex couples required searching for additional resources |
| Insurance requirements/issues | |
| Same-sex pairing treated differently from opposite-sex pairing | |
| Extra steps required because same-sex pair | |
| Changes in life circumstances require unusual responses | |
| Access to company benefits | |
| Government resources | |
| Government regulations | |
| Unclear homophobia | |
| Process of applying for medical assistance | |
| Process of identifying OB and struggle to maintain relationship with OB | |
| View inequality of “spouse” treatment by company | |
| Struggles with the medical/insurance field | |
| Medical insurance | |
| Inequality of benefits for same-sex couples | |
| Communication/process with insurance company and employer | |
| Difficulty getting insurance Resourcefully found loopholes | |
| Difficulty maintaining | |
so when her Ameriprise sold out they offered the spouses of employees that were working there that were pregnant to stick with their doctor even though the insurance companies didn't match but that was not the same for Samantha and it so was not offered to us. So we just found loophole after loophole to go through and ended up applying for MA and got coverage and could stick with the OB that I wanted to be with. And had Jane. And then, where am I going with this with the coverage thing

T - I think you're headed towards the applying for the assistance

Yes, okay so I applied for assistance, okay so I applied for the assistance and got it. Had Jane went off the assistance and then Samantha got a job she got a job with another company. And when she first got the job they did not offer domestic partner benefits

T - Okay

After she started working there for about a year after she was there year they did offer. But in the meantime but so before they offered domestic partner benefits I applied once again for MA with my pregnancy with Eve. And they did grant me the MA however they found out down the road, she worked for this big company that they had offered domestic partner benefits there. So the Employment or Economic and Employment Council whatever she had sent me a letter saying “I want to know if your partner Samantha

<table>
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<tr>
<th>medical insurance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• No insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Company policy changed</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Difficulty getting insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognizes she’s not in a</td>
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<tr>
<td>legal marriage, she’s “single”</td>
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<tr>
<td>according to the state</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Background information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Persistence in the face of</td>
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<tr>
<td>heterosexist insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>coverage</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Background information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feeling singled out</td>
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</table>
Johnson," she found out going back to past paperwork, “if her company offers same-sex or domestic partner benefits.”

Well I ended up getting this attorney from Out Front to work with me because I didn't quite frankly think it was any of their business it was my choice if I wanted to be on MA or her insurance. It had nothing to do with what they, you know, were wanting to know because it’s one of those things where they can't have it both ways.

T - Right

They have to pick one or the other and I wasn't asking for coverage for the children because Samantha automatically covers them, it was for myself. And did I want to sit on MA for the rest of my days will gosh darn it I sure did, you know so so that's another situation so we ended up ya know I mean so they never came back with anything and

T - After they

Every six months they ask and I don't answer

T - Oh every six months they ask

In a review. They ask in a review of the ask they say are you eligible for other benefits in the review

T - Wow okay

And I think actually I do check I think the attorney said you can check yes you are eligible, do you get them, or are you getting them, no

• Accessing additional resources
• Ability to make choices
• Political stance
• Government regulations
• Additional resources
• Government response
• Different response to same-sex pairing
• Additional resources required
• Different response to same-sex pairing
• Desire for fairness and privacy
• Medical/insurance
• Self-coverage insurance
• Repeated hassle with coverage
• Continued questions regarding eligibility
• Process of MA
• Lack of privacy
• Noncompliance faced with pressure and force
• Discrimination
• Difficulty getting individual coverage
• Not wanting to be on MA permanently
• Continued insurance inquiry
• Attorney’s advice
• Threat of coverage termination
• Fought situation with attorney

Insurance coverage for domestic partner benefits not equal with nongay employees.

Need additional resources to fill gaps caused by inequality between nongay and partner benefit insurance.

Government regulations prevent equal treatment and attempt to limit access because of potential partner benefits.
|you’re not so they left alone                      | • Advocates for self after feelings of discrimination  
|                                               | • Defending self  
|                                               | • Feeling discriminated and intimidated  
|                                               |  
|T - They did                                   |  
|Yes                                            |  
|T - But they were still curious                |  
|They were still curious. And really threatening to close my case and everything in the beginning until I got that attorney to work with me. He sent some letters yeah they were going to close the case and say no you're not getting MA because you could be eligible for other benefits blah blah blah so |  
|                                               |  
|T – You’ve had several. Then I’m assuming you guys have to pay taxes on any of the domestic partner benefits that you get? | • Government regulations/company benefits  
|                                               | • Quantity of legal involvement  
|                                               | • Legal documentation to protect family unit and couple  
|That Samantha would know                       |  
|T – Okay, if you’re not, that would be another example of where heterosexism would step in because a straight couple who has benefits doesn’t have to pay taxes | • Employment tax responsibility  
|                                               | • Legal involvement (process) to add children  
|Right, and I know that was a big question when she now she's back with Ameriprise so now we’re all back under her benefits just very recently as of December for only about six months and I know that was a question with the tax stuff | • Insurance coverage resumed  
|                                               | • Same-sex couples are taxed  
|                                               | • Considerable legal paperwork  
|T - And if the federal government that makes you pay the taxes |  
|Right                                          | • Demonstrating knowledge and concern about benefits and taxes  
|T - Minnesota's pretty good in most of its laws for same-sex couples but | • Being prepared and organized with legal issues  
|                                               |  
|                                               | A large amount of legal work needed  

not all the states are. So I don't know about state taxes but federal

Okay

T – Okay, nice thank you any others?

That's all I can think of

**Question 4** - T - What if any legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family.

Oh lots of legal involvement. We had legal paperwork drawn up prior to conception, during conception, group work for being at the hospital during delivery, and then went through the adoption process after the kids were born.

T - The second parent adoption

T - And for awhile Minnesota was in California and Minnesota were the only two states offered that

I know we’re lucky that's for sure very lucky

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local laws impact the adoption</th>
<th>• Second parent adoption</th>
<th>• Local laws impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Adoption process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understanding state’s progress</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Able to adopt in the state in which they live</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Awareness of national struggle for equality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ability to make financial decisions</td>
<td>Legal documents needed to make financial and medical decisions for partner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ability to make medical decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Legal documents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Legal process for medical event (birth)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Considerable paperwork</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Paperwork for power of attorney granted to partner</td>
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T - So the paperwork that you guys have done up was in reference to

Durable medical for power of attorney

Also living will

Living will and there was some piece to that she gave to us that had to go in my medical file for Samantha to make decisions, not only me, but for the child if
something would've happened there was an additional
I don't know that it had an additional
There was something in there saying that it was my wish to have wanted you to make all the decisions if something happened to me during delivery that two-page piece of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 4a</th>
<th>T - So did you guys have an attorney?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>T - That attorney helped you with all of that stuff?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 4b</th>
<th>T - What motivated you guys to access legal resources?</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To access legal resources?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of knowledge, probably. Like why did we hire an attorney to do it all?</td>
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<tr>
<th>T - Why did you even involve legal at all, why would you even bother to pull legal in</th>
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<tr>
<td>Well because we didn’t have a known donor for one</td>
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<tr>
<td>No it was a responsible thing to do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yeah</td>
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<tr>
<td>T - Okay</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It was a responsible something to do</th>
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<tr>
<td>Because wanted to be equal parents and as we raise the kids it should be</td>
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<tr>
<th>Additional resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for expert knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affirmation of legal aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of legal knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Further legal preparedness regarding partner’s rights as parents</td>
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<tr>
<th>Legal involvement helps ensure being equal parents by society</th>
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<tr>
<td>Legal involvement helps ensure being equal parents by society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role within relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involved legal counsel so they would be equal parents</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lacked legal knowledge</td>
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<td>50-50</td>
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<tr>
<td>T - Okay and that was one of the ways to make sure that you could ensure that</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>T – Okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T - Alright here's another definition. Culture and want you to use this definition of culture when you're answering the next question. Culture is the system of shared believes values customs and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another. <strong>Question 5</strong> - Describe the cultural similarities and differences between your current family and the family that you came from. You go first</td>
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<td>T – Okay, so yours really almost a duplicate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well not really, in some ways yes, but in other ways, you know. My</td>
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parents got together and created a family and then they broke off and split and ended up with same-sex partners. So it's a little bit different in that way, it's just you know very much the same yes but I think just kind of doubled add to

Raised by a mom and dad

T - How about for you?

I grew up in a heterosexual family, obviously, my parents got divorced when I was 13. I didn't come from very like church or Christian background I mean my parents are both Christian obviously but they were not very heavy into religion.

So coming out for me was pretty easy because my parents weren't, I don't know, they were just really easy about it so I came out when I was really young probably about 20/21 and have been out ever sense and they've been great until.

My mom was lives down the street, so I was raised here in the suburbs which was. Not many people were gay I guess, ya know not many people were gay out here, but I didn't care in a kind of just live my life that like that ever since of them my dad was okay with it up until we had the girls and then he didn't think that we should have kids that was his take on it.

We've had five years of an estranged relationship and just recently started

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relating information</th>
<th>Family dynamics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Her family of origin was created differently than her current family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Her family of origin is different than current</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner family background – similar but different</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner family background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assumes everyone is Christian?</td>
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</table>

| Positive family of origin response |
| Personal growth process |
| Due to parents not being religious coming out was easy |
| Felt comfortable coming out |
| Felt support from parents |

| Inherited culture |
| Negative family of origin response |
| Later family of origin response |
| Negative family of origin response |
| Friend’s response |
| Negative family of origin response |
| Changes in relationship Recollection of |

| Coming out to family of origin was easy |
| Being lesbian was okay, being lesbian with children was not |
That was going back to one of Trent’s first questions. I totally forgot about that situation, it was weird I'd totally forgotten about the he's been out of the picture for so. He was asking what our experiences has been good and bad in the beginning. I told him of one of the family that was kind of the same way once we had kids the woman down the street that home school their kids and didn't want her children to be affiliated with families like ours I totally forgot about Harry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>disapproval (dad)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Being lesbian was okay, being lesbian with kids was not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strained relationship with father due to kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being lesbian okay, having children changes to not okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong – unphased by lack of gay culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having kids had negative effect on relationship with dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Father stopped supporting decisions/relationship</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

That has little impact compared to my dad

| Family versus friends response |
| Family’s response more valued than friend’s response |

T - So your mom still was involved

Yep, she's been great to through the whole thing. She was there through both girl’s births.

Her dad’s thing is a little bit different in that one of his first responses with us going about having kids. He made some comment about instead of having kids why wouldn’t you adopt. That was one of the pieces for him was, there a million kids out there that need better homes or need a home, why wouldn't you pursue that as opposed to having kids of your own

T - But he didn't adopt

No, I think it's because he's never been very child friendly his whole

| Positive family of origin response |
| Family of origin response not supportive |
| Negative family of origin response |
| Negative family of origin response because of relationship |
| Family of origin response not supportive |
| Hetero versus homo – same response |
| Attitude about children |
| Relationship with parent |
| Solid support system |
| Questioning of values |
| Information sharing |
| Selfishness perceived betrayal |

Positive and negative responses from family of origin

Some family responses are the same for opposite-sex and same-sex offspring’s families

Some responses are a result of the changes in relationship when the parent’s child becomes a parent
life. He’s never cared for kids much. So he doesn't see, like I think if he would've opted over life, he probably would never have had kids. So he thinks that I’m so much like him that this is not.

I think it’s, deep down, more about him than it is about like. Cause now he’ll start bringing in the Bible thing into the. And I’m like, dad you don't even go to church, so I don't care what you think about the bible. So it’s just weird, I don’t get it, but he’s getting over it slowly but surely.

And he doesn’t like babies. So as the kids were little I really think that was his way of not having to deal, with the whole baby thing.

He was like that with my sister's kids too.

T - Really okay so part of it may not have anything to do with the fact that this is a same-sex couple.

No

T – I heard you mention something that sounded like it might have been a factor in there. That he sees you as being a lot like him so in some ways this is almost like a betrayal. You went and had kids and you weren't supposed to.

Right, totally. For all I know he’s gay too. I mean seriously, my mom has said that several times. That could be the other missing link.

Questions 6 - T - How is your current parenting style and family organization similar to or different from family of origin?

- Different from family of origin
- Parenting style differences

Current parenting style different from
from the families that you guys came from?

Mine is very different

Different

T - Different for both of you

It’s really interesting. My parents were really loose, their old hippies, and they were just very loose and I'm very militant and rigid in my parenting. And Samantha's the opposite, her parents were probably very militant and rigid and Samantha's very loose and soft

T - Okay

I try, doesn't come naturally and then a little bit militant about some things

No, you're really not, you’re pushover

Yeah and for sure I am the pushover

T - How do you guys manage that then between the two of you?

It works

It does work, very well

Rarely do we ever get in fights about parenting which is nice

T - Okay

T – Nice

T - About how the family is organized, similarities or differences, between how you guys organize your family versus

from family of origin

- Parenting style
- Parenting satisfaction
- Shared parenting views

- Differences in experiences and choices
- Explanation of differences
- Role within relationship
- Balance and agreement

- Current parenting style different than family of origin
- Different parenting style
- Both partners parent opposite of what their parent did
- One partner is very loose
- They provide balance for each other

- Tries to parent the same way as partner
- Parenting styles compliment each other which helps to maintain general happiness

families of origin

Partners provide balance in parenting

- Parenting roles
- Unique qualities
- Parenting style differences
- Comparison of parenting

Critiquing of family of origin’s parenting
I think we’re the most organized family because of her.

We are, but we’re very different in how we’re organize.

Yeah

You know

I think we’re much more in tune with the girls and probably either of our parents were. Maybe your mom and dad were better than. My parents might parents were not very in tune with us as kids. For sure, not my dad, and my mom was so busy raising three girls, that you know. What can you do by yourself

It just work so much because I'm, what organizes of so well, is that Samantha goes out and she works and is able to provide for the family. It sounds like division, but I am home all the time, and I do everything in the home and girls are in a lot of activities and I can manage the household and do all the groceries and all that. And that's what makes us organized, it's just that dynamic

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>T - So I want to make sure I got this right. It sounded like you guys are saying that part of how you guys organize is around your kids but the homes you came from weren’t necessarily organized around the</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Family of origin organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus of family of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One partner’s family of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examined both families of origin and extracted the best qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compliments partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Common goals – achieved by different means – compliment each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative view of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents could have one better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justifying mom’s neglect no excuse for dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Tradition” – defines parenting roles 1) Breadwinner 2) Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sounds almost defensive; defending parenting roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very organized family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Differently organized than families of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They are more in tune with the children than their parents were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One partner is the “bread-winner” while the other is the home-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognition of positive strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Affirmation of positive strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acknowledgment of uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parental relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roles within relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elicited very specific changes in current parenting approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common parenting goals are achieved through different means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a clear recognition of the differing roles for each parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
children  
I think hers was  
Mine was, very much so  
My whole family is, all the focus is always the kids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>T - Okay all right. Let's see describe those whom you consider to be your extended family now</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That would be like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have, our extended family would be, our families, my mom and her partner, and Samantha's Mom for sure, and Samantha's sisters, and their kids, and my mom was one of nine kids and some of the younger siblings are closer in my age. They're not that far off. So my kids have, what technically are my first cousins, that of their age and know that are younger. I would definitely consider them. You know we definitely have a couple of same-sex couples that are very good friends. You know maybe a couple that don't have children and a couple that do have children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim and Jeremy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, well and Sue and Kim. Couples that don't have kids and couples do have kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T - When you guys think about the those people that are in that extended family that aren't biological, do you see them, or do you think your kids see them as aunts and uncles kind of thing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| origin was organized around the children |
| Biological family |
| Created family |
| New unique labeling of family |
| Created family |
| Personal definition of extended family |
| Labeling people or relationships |
| Attachment |
| Labeling of people or relationships |
| Their extended families include friends as well as biological relatives |
| They consider non-biological relations similarly to biological relations |
| Some family members avoid relational labels |
| Traditional extended family |
| Nontraditional extended family |
| Children nondiscriminatory on deciding who is family – very inclusive |
| Labeling not important to children – product of home environment or parenting? |

| Their extended family includes friends as well as biological relatives |
| Some labeling of “family” is new or unique when compared to traditional family labels |
I think so definitely, there's definitely an in depth

Jane’s funny though. Jane calls when her parents call, she doesn't say grandma’s on the phone, she says your moms on the phone. So Jane’s very different about labeling people so it’s interesting.

T - Okay

So I don't know, if we said Sue and Kim, I don’t know that Jane would ever call them aunt Sue and Kim.

She wouldn't, but I definitely think that she has a deeper attachment with certain people. There are definitely people that she's drawn to and has a different attachment to. But the labeling thing, yeah she's just not one to say “aunt this” or “uncle that”

Right

T – Okay

**Question 8** - T - Last question. Describe information or resources from previous generations, your parents or grandparents, that type of thing, if any that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents

You go ahead

I would say, for both of us, Samantha’s Mom and my mom kept the old, very typical early 70s baby book

T - Okay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent resources</th>
<th>Used notes from own childhood kept by parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of positive traits from previous generations</td>
<td>Critiqued previous generations for pluses and minuses in parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of previous generation errors</td>
<td>Search for resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent thinkers, unique responses based on family need, not opinion</td>
<td>Reject non-inclusive resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for resources</td>
<td>Use of appropriate resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique response to each child based on individual needs</td>
<td>Search for resources that use inclusive language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And just the writing in that and stuff, and we went back to look at both of those quite often through Jane's first year. Just reading the information that, you know, was relevant back at that time and kind of seeing where, I mean looking at the milestones the important things, like what Samantha was doing and what I was doing. But other than that I can't really think of anything else that would be.

I think your grandparents are good examples of, a strong, yeah know, role models for the girls too.

T - Did you guys look to those previous generations for parenting tips, how to discipline, how to manage anything

Not my side

I don't think so, I think we just did own thing

We’re definitely not people that like, when we have our issues we figure it out we don’t like. We have friends that tend to say so-and-so's just doing this I'm just going to do this, what you think? And its like their never really on track with the way we might handle it.

If anything, I would say we’re looking at the new stuff that's coming out. These new books, like I was telling Samantha, I've read since Jane was born probably ten books and very few of them really seem to be fitting toward our family. And one of the things that, you know,
that irritates me most about reading these books, their really into the heterosexual terminology. Well the father, I just can't even stomach getting beyond chapter 1 of a book like that. But there are some new ones that have come out that are very, they seem to be using more inclusive language. And there is one author in particular, and I can’t remember her name, but she’s got this great book out. And I’ve read it twice and I did have Samantha read it. Cause I just thought this is something that we could actually use

T - Okay and the types of stuff that would be in that book?

Well their really talking about parenting based on the type of child that you have. I mean what's your temperament, what's their temperament. Is this a kid who's sensor sensitive, is this a kid who has, I mean. You know really trying to figure out the root of who they are and then going off of that. And the one thing that I liked about it is, she's in the first half of the book, she's describing kids who are for, you know the example again are very sensory sensitive. And that has been Jane, that’s been with our oldest child. And they're saying in the United States people kind of frame these kids as being picky or fussy or fickle or whatever. But in Europe those kids are considered extremely bright and, you know just you know, the cream of the crop really. So, you know, really now you know you’ve got this type of child, what can you do to kind of help him or her manage their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>milestones. Used with own children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admire grandparents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to do own thing very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solve issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to do own thing very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to be educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is . . . difficult to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relate to materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heterosexist viewpoint –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unable to relate to material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration of parenting roles:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one researches parenting (homemaker) and shares information with breadwinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes child focused parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to different cultural views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fitness and activity participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>favoured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>another type of activity also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sensitivities either before they happen or during

Table 3  
_Monday Interview_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT DIALOGUE</th>
<th>CATEGORY (listed by analyzer 1° through 4°, a blank line between analyzers)</th>
<th>SECOND ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Question 1 - T** - Could you describe for me the decision-making process leading up to the addition of children to your home? | 1° Analyzer  
- Desire for children before relationship established  
- Overt decision  
- Rationale for decision  
- Defer to partner  
2° Analyzer  
- Awareness of deficits  
- Shared values  
- Roles within the relationship  
- Age and preferred experiences  
- Invitation to share “spotlight”  
3° Analyzer  
- Both wanted children prior to the relationship existing  
- They discussed having children as a couple  
4° Analyzer  
- Shared desire to have children  | A shared desire, rationale, decision, and planned roles related to having children |
| Well I don't know maybe you're the better one that should answer this because your memory is better than mine and. One thing we did know after we'd been together, well even before we got together, we knew we wanted children, before we even started living together. So that was something we both wanted, we had talked about. When it came to the time to have children the decision was made that Cindy would be the one to bear children or child. Because I never wanted to be pregnant, and I'm older, and she wanted the experience of having a child, being pregnant. So you can pip in anytime you want to. | 1° Analyzer  
- Access known resources  
- Community resources  
- Process to parenthood  
- Community resources  
- Process to parenthood  
- Steps stresses  
2° Analyzer  
- Sharing resources  
- Information sharing  
- Mutual goal  
- Discovery of relevant knowledge  
- Stress  | Seek knowledge and advice using various personal and community resources  
Stressful process |
people in various places. Lots of people just talking about should we have children, what does that mean to a relationship. It was really helpful 6 or 8 weeks of class.

Right, right.

I don't know and so we have sort of started the process. Which I'll have to say it was a very stressful process of trying to get pregnant. Just going through the whole, where are you going get the sperm, to when the days are that you have to do it, and if you're working trying to organize that so that you can just leave work and go do it, whatever at the doctor's office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process for artificial insemination</th>
<th>Establish first plan and backup plan for adding children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect of the artificial insemination process</td>
<td>Explore barriers and limitations to plans for adding children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought friend’s advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a decision making class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed issue with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed logistics of the process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends as resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational class as resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining info after decision was made to try and get pregnant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful, complex process rearranging life; daily routine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So we tried for, really hopeful from the beginning and then we all so kind of had the idea that we were going to have more than one child even from the beginning. Kind had the idea that we were going to try to get pregnant and if it didn't work we would adopt. We always sort of had that as an option. And probably after we were trying for six months we started to look into adoption. Already thinking that I was going to be trying to get pregnant and Linda was going to be the one who was going to be doing the adoption. And we decided from early on that it was going to be an international adoption. Went like three different agencies talked to them about what countries would fit with us. Came up with Guatemala fairly easily.

Early on one of the things is we wanted to do the adoption. And it would be and international adoption. Could I adopt as a single woman. And do we have to hide Cindy in the closet. I mean can we be open about it. And heck did we find out, how

<p>| Hopes and second plans (B) | |
| Plan “B” | |
| Options | |
| Exploring adoption options | |
| Adoption decisions | |
| Factors considered | |
| Defer to partner | |
| Positive thinking | |
| Options | |
| Decision is made | |
| Roles within the relationship | |
| Adoption specifications | |
| Gender limitations | |
| Questioning disclosures | |
| Confusion | |
| Effects of same-sex relationship | |
| Discussed having more than one baby | |
| Discussed alternatives | |
| Discussed logistics of adoption | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>did we find out?</th>
<th>Preparedness; adoption backup plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking for quick results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prejudice/Discrimination: Aware of possible barriers or obstacles as a “single” woman and as a gay woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That sort of lead us to which agency.</td>
<td>Establish comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were two different agencies that we thought we could the open with.</td>
<td>Decision criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The one agency really didn't have a process for Guatemala that we could be</td>
<td>Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open about cause they used another agency that did Guatemala that was sort of</td>
<td>Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a religious based agency so we could be open with the first agency but then</td>
<td>Decisions about choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we couldn't. So their only other option was China and at that time things</td>
<td>Adoption decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were changing and that wasn't a good option. And the other agency we could be</td>
<td>Challenges in values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very open about and Guatemala was the option there. And even though it was</td>
<td>Price of diversity and acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like the most expensive option that was the one that we came up with. So we</td>
<td>Resignation and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>started that process while we're still trying to get pregnant. As a matter of</td>
<td>Didn’t feel they could be openly gay with religious agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fact, into that process we were still trying to get pregnant.</td>
<td>Didn’t feel they could be open with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>China agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still thinking. Like well, if we end up with two babies that'll be all right.</td>
<td>Found an agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And then after a while into that process, probably after we knew about Stacy,</td>
<td>Kept options open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we maybe only tried one more month or something. Stopped that process and</td>
<td>Stopped pregnancy process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>went through the adoption process.</td>
<td>when they adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And then that's sort of led to Stacy. After we had Stacy we brought Stacy</td>
<td>Pride – choosing agencies to be open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with us to the doctor's office hoping that would help us get pregnant again.</td>
<td>Discrimination: Encountered difficulty with agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatever, you know, she's one years old we’re traipsing.</td>
<td>Cost not a deterrent – goal too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparedness – two plans in action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose agency on ability to be “open”</td>
<td>Moved forward on both plans for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved forward on both plans for adding children to the family</td>
<td>Fertility attempts and limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility attempts and limitations lead back to adoption</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
her to the sperm clinic to get the sperm. Cause that was our option. I was a stay-at-home mom with her. And so Linda would come with, you know. So the time I don't know how long we tried and then we went from that to the fertility clinic. Found out that, at that point in order for me to be able to have a child we would have to have an egg donor and a sperm donor. That even if we did all of these drugs it would most likely I couldn't use my eggs. So at that point we were kind of like, an egg donor and the sperm donor, what's the point let’s just go back to Guatemala.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And we liked the fact that the kids would have the cultural connection together. And so than we did the second adoption.</th>
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<th>True. And one of the things that also lead us to Guatemala is because I would be the one who would be doing the adoption. And we had this agency that we could be very open with. And my age was not a factor. The fact that I was a single woman was not a factor. And I personally have just always enjoyed Latin American, Central American, just that whole culture of the foods. I'm just kind of drawn to that. So it just seemed like for me it's like that just seems like great, great way to go</th>
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</table>
Guatemala. As Cindy said it was one of the most expensive. But you could bring your child home at an earlier age than in China. So that was another really a big draw for us.

Because in China the process can take a year, a year and a half. For Guatemala we could get, we could bring home a baby anywhere from like as early as five months of age, versus 1 1/2 year old who's been kept in an orphanage, in a crib, versus one child who could be in foster care and you could bring your baby home.

So that was actually a pretty big draw. Once we get a lot more reading about sort of connecting with the infant and that whole attachment piece the orphanage versus the foster care and Guatemala at the earlier age.

T - So all of these resources that you guys checked in on in the process, how did you find them, word-of-mouth, your Maybe Baby class?

The Maybe Baby class was through the Chrysalis Center which is a resource center for women.

T - I've heard of that.

Chrysalis Center very well-known in the Twin Cities. But you go ahead cause you did a lot of Internet and Rainbow Families.

Well when we first started we'd had friends who'd gotten pregnant by using the same doctors that we went to. So we used that connection for that. And then than we, your friends had adopted through that Crossroads agency which was a China connection earlier. So that's how we went to that agency. And then I don't remember how we got to IAS. Did we,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>from Guatemala or China</th>
<th>on the attachment of the child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Read about attachment process to make decision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Happy with success with agency – all possible barriers gone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Further benefits of using this agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparedness – reading and learning</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| • Local resources |
| • Resources |
| • Gaining resources |
| • Local resource |
| • Resources gathering information |
| • Local resources |
| • Gathering information |

| • Information sharing |
| • Networking and use of relationships as resources |

| • Learned about class through another agency |
| • Some information came from internet |
| • Some information came from friends |
| • Some information came from a conference attended |

| • One partner conducted most |

Networking and gathering resources from friends, LGBT community, agencies, and the internet before starting the adoption process.
Now I'm trying to remember, was there a rainbow families conference we went to.

We went to the resource area and we started picking out.

Yeah that's what we did and then you went to an adoption, you and somebody. Or somebody went to an adoption conference

It was Monica.

Yeah.

And you got all these different. So there was a conference that you went to about adoption got information on all these different agencies.

T - And Monica was a friend of yours.

So we sort of weeded through that. And IAS was a good fit for us. Because we could be very open. They had many other lesbians couples using that agency. Many others were using that agency and they knew exactly what they were doing. Which was basically being open with us and lying to the country. And basically that's what was happening

And we had a reference list from them, so we called people and said what was your experience like. I understand that you used this adoption agency. What was that like and that kind of thing. And we even, later on, became a reference so people could call us. And find out what it was like for you.
open about themselves
- Abusing the heterosexist system
- Preparedness: Researched agencies – interviewed people
- Volunteering; giving back; supporting the cause

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<th>Length of fertility method</th>
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<td>Impatience/doubt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The whole process took a little over a year</td>
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In retrospect the time frame for the adoption was relatively quick

The adoption process was an emotional time

There was a search and use of resources during the adoption process to help navigate bureaucracy and problems

T - So that whole process, start to finish, once you guys began, how long did that take before you actually got your first child? Including the fertility.

The fertility thing was probably nine or 10 months. I know we are doing the inseminations the first couple of months of the adoption thing. We did our paperwork pretty fast. Like we decided we're going to do this. I wasn't working full-time Linda was working so I would do all of this stuff and then I would say okay we have to go here where to go fingerprints that you do this we have to do that. I think we had our paperwork done in maybe two to three months. Then we found out about Patricia, or I mean Stacy, really as soon as our paperwork was done, within weeks we knew about her, she was 10 days old. And then she came home at seven months old.

T – So it took you guys in total around 13 to 15 months?

Well like from the time we started doing the insemination, yeah. To bring a child home

Yes

T - Wow that was still pretty fast

Yeah that was fairly fast. It would have been faster except there was this huge Guatemala thing going on to the time and we had to get Senator Dayton involved. We had to get the senator involved because
there was like this big thing that happened in Guatemala and the US Embassy was stopping all these adoptions, they weren't getting through and. So the agency's sort of steered us in some ways and one way was to get the senator involved who could then contact the Embassy and say what's happening with this Olson baby who is stuck up there. It was quite a stressful time.

Very stressful, very emotional. And also before that, don't you remember that you, we had an email. I don't want call it Guatemala adopt. But remember there was a listserv that people were going through Guatemalan adoption agencies. They could be living in Boston, they could be living in Los Angeles. Anywhere, and they are trying to do international adoptions in Guatemala. And they'd be on this listserv

So you'd hear what was happening

So you'd hear and people would say what I've heard is

Do this and then we'd be like, okay let's do this

T - So there was a lot of advice

So supposedly when you start, once you get a child in Guatemala it should take between four and six months to bring the child home. So it was seven months.

T - So it was pretty close

Now looking back it was pretty close but at the time, like we got through the really first part in Guatemala, and then it got stuck in this long part. Like I think if that hadn't all happened we would have been closer to 4 or 5 months. But it got stuck, we thought it was going to take forever.

- The whole process was fast
- The process could have been faster had it not been for international issues
- Stressful time due to uncertainty
- Advice from people on internet
- Adoption process is quick
- Got bogged down in international issues
- Background information
- Political support
- Resource
- Fearful it wouldn’t happen
- Group membership – support – advice
- Process rocky – frustrating
T - How did your experience with the senator go?

Well first, who did we go to first?

Norm Coleman

No it wasn't Norm Coleman. He wasn't senator than. Coleman, we would never go to Coleman's office. It was somebody else. Representative.

I don't know

Was it Norm’s.

I thought it was.

We went to two different places in 2001. Another interesting thing was September 11 happened.

T - How did that affect you guys?

Well fortunately, I don't think it affected us all except that the travel.

Except for the travel, than when we had to travel. That happened in September and then we in traveled in November so it was pretty shortly after. And security was pretty.

T - Over the top

Yeah

We were worried that it was going to affected it all.

T - I can see what you would be.

So there was someone we did try to connect with, tried to work through.

T - Were you able to be open with the

- Recovering memories
- Unforeseen influences
- Anticipated problems
- Additional challenges to adoption process
- Effects of the additional challenges to adoption process
- Worry
- Sought help from government
- Travel became a challenge after 9/11
- Unexpected event (9/11) causes concern

- Accessing resources
- Usefulness of resources
- Limited information
- Accessing resources
- Limited partner information
- Use of resources

Accessed resources for information, support, and ideas of how to facilitate the
senator?

Oh yeah, I never talked with Senator Dayton directly.

But you weren't open that it was you. You didn't say me and my partner.

Oh you mean open that way. No no.

You just said I'm Linda Olson.

Everything that was ever communicated, we even wrote and sent faxes to a contact at the consulate in Mexico. Who in Mexico City, we got the name through this listserv, of this person you could contact. Well, that he, his people were investigating what was happening in Guatemala City. And he was located in Mexico City.

But he's like the head of the Guatemala, the regional person or what ever.

T - OK

So I would like write up this letter and I'd say Linda's you need to sign this cause it's from you. This is what I found out. You need to sign this so we can send it from you.

And so I would fax this letter.

I forgot about that guy.

And remember I even talked to him on the phone.

And he was very nice. He's like I'm sending my people.

Right.

It was this big deal.

- Emotional response
- Felt hard but on reflection pretty easy
- Emotional response
- Limited partner information
- Advices from resources
- Emotional response
- Effectiveness and response of resources used
- Plans/hopes
- Decisions/hopes
- Resources advice
- Response from resources
- Response to information
- Support system
- Guarded identity
- Effect of same-sex couple and societal bias
- Communication for support
- Roles within relationship and adoption process
- Challenges of international adoption process
- Effects of adoption process
- Guarded identity
- Abuse of power
- Fear, paranoia, insecurity
- Resources within relationships
- Determination
- Determination and overcoming obstacles
- Challenges within international adoption process
- Did not inform government of sexuality
- Got a contact in Mexico
- Guy in Mexico was helpful
- The process they went through is common but not well known
- Emotional process

process

Fearful of discrimination because of LGBT status and avoided by being closeted in some situations

Used several resources to help guide and facilitate the process including US and foreign government offices

The process created high levels of emotions throughout and required determination
Which I think is pretty common with international adoptions to go through. Now that we've, now looking back. With our second adoption we got through really fast but our friends took really long and they started at the same time. So I think there are always these issues. But when you're in the midst of it, it's very unpleasant.

It's very unpleasant. But Senator Dayton's office, no I represented I'm a single woman, I'm adopting this child, I've been working like this, this is what's happening and supposedly the US Embassy is not cooperating, supposedly if you try to contact them, because I tried to contact the US Embassy in Guatemala, the rumor was according to the list serve, if you contact them they get so pissed off at you that they'll take your paper and put it on the very bottom. OK, so then we were afraid to do anything. You know, I mean you almost got paranoid are they tapping my phones, you know, this whole thing. You just are really freaked out about it. But I worked with a woman, who was in Dayton's office, and explained to her and she said we will follow up and we will follow up. And in fact I got a phone call from her telling me, the adoption had been approved everything was a go-ahead, before our adoption agency. I called the adoption agency and I said “I understand the pink slip” or whatever they call it, that says you can now travel because everything is final. So now it's safe for you to travel, meaning you're not going to get down there and say, oh I'm sorry it's going to be another six weeks. Senator Dayton's office knew that before our adoption agency.

And I got our adoption agency.

It was like Thanksgiving, well we had decided we were going anyway.
Oh that's true.

We decided we're going, we don't care if they have the pink slip we’re going to go down there to meet this baby and we’ll just stay there until the adoption is done. So we told the adoption agency and they were not very happy. And then we found that out from Senator Dayton's office and it was Thanksgiving weekend that the adoption agency called us Sunday night of Thanksgiving weekend. And said you can travel tomorrow. And we're like travel “tomorrow we’re working tomorrow we’re working tomorrow” what do you mean, you know. Than they were, so then we couldn’t leave for like two days or something, until we got ready.

Yeah we had to get our reservation and the hotel set up.

We were going to travel like that Thursdays so we just had to move everything ahead I think or something.

**Question 2 - T** – Could you describe how your extended families reactions, what they were to the addition of children to your home?

Maybe you go first. I have, my mother had already passed away before she even knew anything about the adoption. My dad, sorry I’m going to get emotional, was still alive and knew that Cindy wanted to get pregnant, that we were trying to get pregnant. And he was so right behind it. He thought it was really cool. So he unfortunately never got to meet our daughters.

And he passed away in July. So before, I mean, he didn't he didn't even know that we were adopting.
He didn’t even know we were adopting.

He just knew that we were trying to get pregnant.

He didn’t know we were adopting. But I know that if both of them were alive I can guarantee that they would be swallowing those children up.

Yeah

Yeah

They were very, very supportive of Cindy and our relationship. My dad said he never understood but he loved us and supported it. And I have an older sister who I do not keep in contact with. Surprisingly though, every Christmas she sends some of the best Christmas presents you can think of.

For the kids

For the kids. So that is, and I know if we were to contact her, and say we want to come out and visit, or we want you to meet the children, she would say “yes.” I know she would, I know she would say yes.

And the children know that there are these relatives from your side of the family that they don’t know.

Right

Cause they were talking about the other day, well we know from mommy's side of the family there are cousins we don't know.

That's right

So

T - So it sounds like your sister's relationship with you has been altered by

| • One partner’s mother had died prior to adoption |
| • Father supportive |
| • Father died |
| • Both parents supportive |
| • Father didn’t understand but supportive |
| • Older sister strained relationship but supportive |
| • Positive reaction/support from father (family) |
| • Support from family |
| • Parental support |
| • Children’s reactions to extended biological family |
| • Understanding of family dynamics |
| • The children knew that they are supported by someone they have not met |
| • Distance from relatives |
| • Negative sibling response to homosexuality before children |
| • Positive sibling response to homosexuality before children |

The children knew that they are supported by someone they have not met

Sister saw homosexuality as an illness but was supportive
having kids?

Well it’s, there’s a five-year difference, and over time, I mean, we just went really in different directions. My sister is very religious, born-again Christian. And I’m gay. And so, I have an illness. She's left me brochures at times about how they can cure my homosexuality. They can cure alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, homosexuality and you know.

T - Was this before the children?

Before the children. Way before the children. So I've had a couple of those brochures that were given to me.

But even before the children, she was supportive of a us when your father passed away and that happen before the kids.

Exactly. And then when our father died. And my sister lives in Utah. And my dad was living here in Minneapolis. We decided that his, he wanted to have his ashes scattered at sea where my mom's ashes were scattered off the coast of California off of San Diego. So my sister was here when he passed away. And went through the whole cremation thing and all that kind of stuff. And we were making arrangements to go to San Diego. And we were asking this gentleman, who was a friend of the family. He and his family have just been our second parents all our lives, second parents. We asked them if he would give the eulogy on the boat. And we know could we stay with them. Well, my sister and I could definitely stay with them. But Cindy could not stay in the house, stay under the same roof. First it was well we just don't have room. And then it was basically you can't stay under the same roof because we do not agree with

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<th>Sister supportive against homophobia</th>
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<td>Sister supportive</td>
<td>Negative experience with family</td>
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<td>Negative experience with family</td>
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<td>Nature of relationship with sister</td>
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<td>Negative perception of same-sex couples</td>
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<td>Resourceful relationship</td>
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<td>Unconditional love and support</td>
<td>Unconditional love and support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sister is older and religious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sister thought homosexuality was an illness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sister was supportive despite her “illness”</td>
<td>Wanted father cremated</td>
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<td>Could not stay with family friend because of “lifestyle” choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sister was angry/supportive</td>
<td>They made arrangements to stay elsewhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Made flower arrangements</td>
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<td>Sister surprised with her support</td>
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Support from sister came in spite of the sibling relationship not being maintained as a close relationship.
your lifestyle choice. Which I tried to tell him it's not a lifestyle choice, this is who I am blah blah blah blah blah. That made my sister so outraged, she refused to stay there. So the three of us decided, the hell with them, we’re going to not count on them for anything. They want to give the eulogy that's fine. But they were going to help me get flower arrangements and all this, so that we could throw flowers off the boat and do this and all this. You know there was a Days Inn down the street that they’d be happy to book a hotel room in for Cindy. So we decided, to hell with it, we booked a very nice hotel right on the riverfront there in San Diego. We rented a car, a convertible.

And we drove around.

I worked with a friend, a dear friend there and said “checkout where there are some good flowers this is what we're looking for.” And our friends came through and said this is where you can go, they'll have flowers. I called the boat captain made all the arrangements, didn't use them for anything.

And your sister, I mean, was very it was very shocking. Because

And very supportive

Yeah

So, I think I to be honest, I think my sister, I would be there at the drop of a hat for my sister and she would be there for me. I have not done my part to keep up contact with her. I mean she's reached out a few times, I don't follow up and then of course she doesn't reach out again. But, so that's my doing, that's my issue. But again I mean she would be there, if there was anything
for the kids anything that needed to be done. I would never doubt that she would be there.

T - So sounds like that change actually happened earlier.

Yeah I think it happened earlier.

T - And having the kids just confirmed or reaffirmed when the kids came along.

T - All right how about for your side?

Well, I had a very difficult coming out with my family too, very difficult. But it was pretty resolved before I even got together with Linda. I mean I think, I think children always make it easier. Who’s going to resist the kids, I mean I think that’s true, it definitely for us pushed some things that. My parents knew that I was a lesbian, well for a few years before the kids. And my sister knew. But my grandparents weren't allowed to know. And my mom reacted really poorly and it was kind of a long and ugly story

About your coming out, not about the children

It was just a horrible story. I had significant depression and was hospitalized and attempted suicide. It was a horrible time for me, horrible. But it was pretty resolved by the time of the kids. But I knew I wasn't really supposed to tell anybody else. I grew up in a very, very small town in Pennsylvania. So my parents knew, my sister knew, but my grandparents weren't supposed to know. And nobody else was really supposed to know. Because in my mom's words “they would never be able to accept that.” Well when we decided we were going to have children, my grandparents knew about Linda, just as

| Negative experience with family | “Coming out” was a negative experience with family of origin |
| Change caused by children | Most of the “coming out” problems with family of origin were resolved prior to adding children |
| Negative experience with family | The couple is more “out” now because of children |
| “Coming out” resolved before children | Children helped move the family forward in resolving issues around daughter being a lesbian |
| Negative family response to homosexuality | Children made being accepted easier |
| More “out” because of children | |
| Difficult coming out process | |
| Children serving to ‘bridge’ relationship gaps | |
| Obstacles as same-sex couples | |
| Negative effects of familial reactions on mental health | |
| Resolve | |
| Forced secret identity | |
| Honesty | |
| Denial | |
| Vulnerability | |
| Parental values | |
| Difficult coming out with family | |
| Coming out process resolved before current relationship | |
my friend I guess. But anyway, we decided we're going to have children, I was like “mom this is the time because I'm not going in front of my children going to deny that we're both their parents” and you know. So we went home to tell my grandparents and we had a picture of the Lena. So that really did push us to be open with them in a way that, you know, wouldn't necessarily have happened. To this day my mom is sort of still convinced that my grandparents just think that Linda and I are raising children together. I'm like, who would just think that, I don't get it. But, even my mom said “I don't really think they know you're in a relationship together.” They know, they do, they do. So I don't know, that denial is very interesting. So now everybody in the whole small town knows because every year we go home. In the summer, Linda and I and the two kids. So everybody in the extended family knows. And nobody has ever caused any trouble.

T - it sounds like things actually got better for you

It's much more open and it's much more. But it definitely forced the issue. Because you weren't going to lie in front of the kids, I mean, it was. One thing that really does push you to be open as a family because how can you be respectful to your children if you're not open with the people around you. So, I think it forces everybody to be go beyond where you are.
guys a definition for heterosexism and homophobia. Just to make sure that we're talking about the same thing cause the next question is about that. Heterosexism is the belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the only natural normal or moral mode of sexual behavior and is also used to refer to the effects of that cultural ideology. Homophobia is prejudice against, fear or dislike of homosexual people and homosexuality, okay. **Question 3** - Describe any experiences that you had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your family.

I'm trying to think, like the doctor's office, no. Well there's been some times when we fill out, like you fill something out for your kids and the questionnaire may say, mothers name, father's name. Well even now we're trying to get certificates of, what’s it called, citizenship. And the whole form is based on the mother and the father and then there's all these questions about marriages. Like the forms don't fit our family in so many ways. It's frustrating and then with those government forms, you don’t really, you know if it’s a stupid school form you just cross it out and you say mother. Parent one and parent two. You just change it but the government, you’re like, well we’re not married. And some of those legality things are kind of screwy. And then I tried to e-mail some legal people about how actually to fill it out and there doesn't seem to really be a clear answer. So there's some, actually some, this other list that we’re on about Guatemala adoptions, this Rainbow Guatemala or something, that other list thing we’re on, some of the people have just said they just crossed it out and they write parent or something.
Well I was trying to remember, because even there, what's your relationship, your single, married, separated, divorced.

And some places are now getting into it and saying married, committed partners, they'll add those classifications. Like some of the things that you fill out here, I work from the University of Minnesota, they’ve become better about that. Fortunately here in the state of Minnesota they recognize same-sex adoptions. So on the birth certificate its parent, parent.

T - For the state

So we have both of our names on the birth certificate

T - So it sounds like most of the heterosexist or homophobic components are at the federal level not at the state or employment level.

We live in a good state

And at least at the University of Minnesota, which has a domestic partnership. But if I went and applied for a job at Pillsbury, I don't know what they would have. I have a feeling they would probably have a domestic partnership. But they may talk about, you know when you of insurance forms or something, father, mother.

I mean the biggest thing was the whole Guatemala adoption. That whole, the fact that we had to lie through most of that.

Oh at the US Embassy I lied through my teeth.

They actually looked her in the face and said, “you’re a heterosexual.”

No, they never said are you a heterosexual woman. You are adopting as a single

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<td>Minnesota more accepting than US government</td>
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<td>She suspects a company like Pillsbury might be heterosexist</td>
<td>Societal environment improving – positive – accepting – not heterosexist</td>
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<td>Not concerned about employment benefits for partner</td>
<td>Some ways heterosexism impacted the family system: same-sex parents were unable to be completely “open” about their relationship during the adoption process. A legal</td>
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There are exceptions to heterosexist forms found in employment and state government
unmarried woman. “Yes I am.” And that was true.

T – It was

Course when we came here we were living here but then we have the ability to do a co-parent adoption which is all done through the courts. So we are recognized legally.

Even the fact that the adoption agencies, the social worker there did two different home studies. One was for the country that didn't mention me and one was for the state where I was a part of the home study so Guatemala didn't think I even existed, where the state actually heard about me.

T – That adoption agency is amazing.

They heard about her but it wasn't like they are in a relationship. This is another adult and what is the purpose of this adult, this person will help with child rearing and taking care of the child.

T – So you were a nanny.

I was, exactly right and kind still are.

No you're not.

I'm trying to think about any places we’ve gone where, I mean if anything. This isn't answering the question but some of the things have been very interesting when you're standing in line at the grocery store and their looking at the child, and they look at you, they look at the child, and they look at you, and they're trying to figure out what the relationship is. And they'll say something like, oh is this your grandchild. No it's my daughter. Oh. So they're looking at, here is an older person who doesn't look anything like this child and, so that's really

| Recognition of same-sex parents
| Adoption process
| Perceived role within relationship
| Had to lie to adopt due to heterosexism
| They are both parents by the court
| Adoption agency supported them through deception
| Forced closeted through process
| Working the system
| Equal rights as parents important: Moved to have ability to coparent adopt?
| Very accepting agency

process called coparent adoption is required to make both parents in the same-sex pairing equal parents. There was a need to find an adoption agency willing to do extra work, take extra steps, and keep some information hidden from the country the child was being adopted from

| Non-acquaintances reactions
| Cultural bias
| Perceived relationship
| People in checkout line try to determine their relationships
| Feeling outside of the norm: Noticeably different due to international adoption

People react and are curious concerning the unusual makeup of the family unit
T – That doesn’t sound like it would necessarily be heterosexism as much as some cultural bias.

That's right it doesn't really answer your question but it is kind of an interesting, just because of the cultural, a different.

**Question 4** - T – Yes, lots of people aren’t used to that intercultural adoption piece. OK, what, if any legal involvement if any did you guys engage in when adding children, or after adding children to your family.

Well the second parent adoption and then we created wills that very clearly specified what would happen to the children if.

T – Did you generate more than one type of will?

We have, well I have a power of attorney and, I don't know if you call them living wills, is that really the right thing. But Cindy has power of attorney over me in case I become

T – Incapacitated?

T – And the living will is usually in reference to being able to make health decisions in the hospital setting

So she has the ability to do that, make decisions on my behalf.

But we didn't even have any kind of will until the children, I mean we didn't have anything. And then we were like, well what if something happens to both of us and we felt really strongly about, well first we felt pretty strongly about having it very clear if something happened to one of us. So that, even though we couldn't imagine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for needing legal role</th>
<th>Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived need for legal change in need</td>
<td>Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs for legal</td>
<td>Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Legal resources | Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to stipulate who will care for their children in the
| Local resources | event of death. |
| Legal requirement for both to be parents | Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents. |
| Legal limitations and requirements | Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner. |
| Additional required steps | Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death. |
| Local resources legal steps | Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to stipulate who will care for their children in the
| Legal involvement | event of death. |
| Legal roles within relationship | Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents. |
| Change in priorities | Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner. |
| Parental responsibility | Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death. |
| Changes in future planning | Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to stipulate who will care for their children in the
| Legal resources | event of death. |
| Legal process | Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents. |
| Resources for advocacy | Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner. |
| Affirmation of resources of advocacy | Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death. |
| Commitment and support | Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to stipulate who will care for their children in the
| Technicality of international adoption process for same-sex couples | event of death. |
| Readoption process | Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents. |
| Convenience of timing | Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner. |
| Advocacy networking | Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death. |
| Future planning | Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to stipulate who will care for their children in the
| Created a will | event of death. |
| Created will after children | Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents. |
| Got attorney through friends | Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner. |
our extended family fighting for the kids, we knew that that's always a.

T – I wanna make sure that I'm understanding you have in the power of attorney for her, you have in the power of attorney for her, you both have a living will for the other person, and then the two of you have a will that says how you want your children handled if something was to happen to both of you.

Or either one of the us, like if something would happen to me, that Linda would be the parent. And we've also changed it. Like we originally we have certain people who would take care of the kids then after we had two kids and we spent more time with those people we changed it to. So we have an addendum.

Of who would raise the children if something, in case something would happened to both of us.

4a – T – What legal resources did you guys access?

How did we find out about the attorney?

Well the first attorney was from friends, we had her and then she made all these mistakes in the document. So than for the second, we used her for our first second parent adoption and that's when we did the wills. And then when we, we used a different attorney for Patricia's second parent adoption and that's when we changed our wills at the same time.

Right, so we got the documents released from our first attorney brought to us and then we brought it to our second attorney and then she kind of redid the whole, the whole thing.
But I'm sure it's like word-of-mouth within the community. I mean if you go to the Rainbow Families conference you know who the attorneys are that work with gay and lesbian population and they sort of specialize.

Yeah, that's how I, that's how I kind of remember it.

T – It sounds like the Rainbow group was a great resource for you guys for a lot of different stages of this.

Remember I told you about that Rainbow Families Conference. We usually go every year it’s a great place for the kids.

4b – T – What motivated you guys to access legal involvement?

Well we had to for the second parent adoption. Because, because the kids were just adopted by Linda. As soon as we could we had to do the second parent adoption. Plus you have to readopt the kids anyway from Guatemala, so it's a perfect time to do this second parent adoption at the same time as you do the readoption.

T – I didn't realize you had to do a readoption.

You wouldn't have to have done the readoption if you had visited the child before you went and got the child. So if you know about the child and you flew down there and visited for a week and then you came back and then you went and got the child. You come back on an IR3 visa, which means the adoption’s final. If you don't visit the child during that part and you just go down and get the child, which is like we did. Then you come back on an

- Felt very comfortable with social worker and rest of process as a result of her
IR4 visa. Then you have to do a readoption in your state. And so it’s a perfect time to do the second parent adoption at the same time because you have to do it.

And I think the readoption is usually done between nine months and a year because you have to have a second home study, a follow up home study.

That says the child's doing good.

And so we had the same social worker, who every lesbian couple in town uses if they go through, even if they go through, she also works a different adoption agencies. So she’s the go to

T – She is the go to

She is the one who does. Everyone is like, did you use Kathy Prow. Yes, we did, everybody uses Kathy Prow in town. So then she comes and does the second and that becomes part of your whole process of readopting. And as Cindy said that's when you might as well to the coparent adoption.

So then I think that's what, well I think that's when we'd decided to do the wills and everything at the same time because

If anything happens

You really wanted to be clear about.

T – OK. I'm going to give you guys another definition this one's for culture. Culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another. OK? **Question 5** - Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your, each of your families of origin.

- Defining culture
- Family role
- Culture changes from family of origin
- Similarities and differences between families
- Differences with current family
- Culture from family of origin

There are similarities and differences between current family and family of origin

Some aspects of current family’s
Can you read that definition

T – Shared beliefs, shared values, shared customs, shared behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and cope with others

First thing that pops to my head is customs like, beliefs and stuff that have to go around like our holidays you know, I kind of think of that. But then, couldn't it also be something that is just something that became kind of a ritual within your family that you wanted to have in your joint family?

T – Yup you guys have already shared one actually from your family. There was a custom, a ritual, of not sharing a secret in order to protect.

It is a big thing in my family

T – And so that would've been part of the culture in your family and it sounds like the culture within this family, is a little different, you've modified that particular cultural piece for yourself. So that would, it's a very broad thing as far as what we’re looking at it's not just. But you're right it's those rituals, those holidays, and those things are also part of that.

But it's even a more basic day-to-day type thing that

Well I think that part of the difference comes from, my family of origin was very similar in our skin color, who we were. And I think that our family is diverse in that way at least. And I think it makes us more open and aware kind of, of differences. Even just being aware of our children and encouraging them to be more

- Difference from family of origin
- Intentional about parts of culture
- Culture from family of origin accident or habit
- Intentional family creation
- Family of origin limited options
- Current family option
- Defining family customs and traditions
- Effects of diversity within family
- Impact of family values
- Constrained thinking
- Confusion
- Education of diversity in families
- Evolution of family values
- Intentionality
- Lack of intentionality
- Intentionality
- Affirmation for lack of intentionality
- Intentionality in creation of family
- Comparison with current family versus family of origin (intentional vs. habitual)
- Intentionality to meet specific needs
- Similar holiday customs
- Shared family secret
- Family had similar skin color
- Current family more diverse in skin color
- Growing up she assumed one model for family
- Current family intentionally discusses diversity of family

culture are very intentional

It appeared that some parts of family of origin culture were either accidents or habits

Diversity is an important aspect of current family’s culture
open in their thinking as far as different types of families. Growing up I assumed that everyone had a mom and dad and there were kids, and that was where I came from, that’s what I assumed. I remember I actually had to gay uncle and I thought that was the weirdest thing in the world. And I remember sitting at the kitchen table saying “that is the weirdest thing in the world.”

Well in our family, we purposely talk about what makes up a family how different families are very different. You know, it may be that there is a single mom raising children or maybe there’s grandparents raising children, maybe that there’s two dads, maybe there’s two moms, and those all make up a family. I think it’s sort of, it’s a much more open and accepting cultural of differences. Just because of some of our experiences, but sort of purposely.

T – You are pretty intentional

With a lot of our culture. I mean even the whole ritual about, I get the feeling that the rituals we create in our family are thought out. We talk about, this is important that we share this together. Where I think sometimes in my family it just kind of happened and became a habit. And I don’t know that there was a lot of intentionality, you know, in how we did Christmas. Church was at seven and so of course we just did this at this time and, you know, for us it’s been a little more, do we want to do it that way, is at the best way to do it.

T – So it felt to you that some of your family rituals were more of an accident? And yours

I hate to say that, more habitual

T – Built on what has happened before, instead of being thought about, and you

make-up
- Current rituals thought out in advance
- Past family rituals were habit
- Rituals thought out to give best to children
- Choosing a school was a well thought out process

- Defining culture
- International adoption forced a change in thinking
- Breaking stereotypes
- Internalized heterosexism
- Teaching children to appreciate differences between families
- Encouraging openness – wanting/creating a different family experience than she had growing up
- Creating new traditions – new family/different family means new traditions
- Excited about new possibilities for family
- Responsibility – raise the children as best as possible
guys have been, have thought through what this is going to mean or how it’s going to work.

And it comes back to some of what, even creating a family. Kind of what you said at the beginning which is that some families just happen. Well our family didn’t just happen. I think we feel pretty strongly about we created this family now what’s, you know, we have some responsibility to make it a good family. It didn’t just happen. We brought these children here, we really feel like, you know, they deserve everything we can figure out that’s best for them. I mean even just as far as choosing a school. In my family you went to the school that was in the town and part of that was because that was the school, you know. I don’t think my parents ever thought about any other options, that there were like a Catholic school down the road, that there was probably this other option. I don’t think it was, you just went to that school. Part of that is because we lived in the small town but here the whole school choice thing for us was a big huge deal. And I think partly because we felt this responsibility of finding the best fit for our family in the school and in the community of the school.

T – How about on your end of things?

Well I didn’t grow up in a small town. I mean we moved around quite a bit, my dad was in a business where he got transferred quite a bit. But when I look back on it, we always made sure we lived in the white suburb, okay. We lived in the white suburb and you went to the school. It was based on where you lived, based on the schools, probably not like church, but schools, shopping centers, homes, how nice is it, is it in an area that’s growing, it was all, kind of like, that upper-middle-class what you

| Family of origin made intentional choices, emphasized the larger cultural norms/expectations |
| Conscious differences from previous generations example |
| Previous generation has changed |
| Upper middle class values |
| Rigid cultural beliefs/judgments |
| Narrow definition of ‘family’ |
| Change in definition of family |

Changes in culture from family of origin have been made in the areas of diversity, more involvement with other cultural groups, and broadening the definition of family

Family of origin
look for when you move. And I always, you know, it was always, you know, a white man marries a white woman and your not, if you're black you marry another black and that's the way it is. And there are even comments made, about somebody, well he married a Japanese woman, you know well, that's because he was stationed over such and such a place or something you know. But it was always pointed out that she was, she is Japanese. And I can remember my parents, when I was in high school, and they were visiting some family friends, a daughter of some family friends. And the family had adopted. And I remember my mother saying “she's not their real child, she's adopted.”

T – So blood that was a very important issue.

I guess so, even if it wasn't recognized that it wasn't

T – It was like a second-class child

Yeah, which you know, years later as I’ve already said my parents would have just opened their arms to our daughters and would never have thought that they weren't our daughters.

T – So those cultural pieces in your family, how do those play out?

So, if I'm understanding your question, is I too have made a conscious effort, that you know, like through the smart moves routine, you know. Little black boys can hold hands with little white girls, you know, I have a dream type of thing. And to, yeah there’s differences and you recognize that there’s the difference. But

T – It sounds like you've made a conscious efforts

- Intentionality
- Personal growth
- Past family – education was important
- They always moved to racially segregated areas in the past
- Adopted children/parents were looked down upon
- She believes her parents would have accepted their daughters
- She made a conscious effort to live in more diverse areas
- Her parents have become more understanding
- Family very status oriented
- Family very conservative view on marriage – making it harder to have a same-sex partnership
- Biology important for family membership
- Children improve relationship with family
- Family values change
- Unsatisfied with own upbringing – will now do things differently and on own terms
- Parents changed as new family began – close with parents

parents made changes because of same-sex relationship of daughter
effort to do it different

Yeah we've made a conscious effort to do it different way. And my parents, particularly my dad, they very softened from being the almost John Birch society type, to really being way over for them. Becoming more understanding, not just tolerant, but understanding and things aren't so black and white.

T – OK

Can I just go back, I just had a thought about the heterosexism because it just reminds me of this kind of funny story about her daughter when she was two or three. And I feel like we've tried to create this open, all kinds of families, blah blah blah. And one day, and she was really little, cause we were going to early childhood education, cause I was devastated that day. She was looking at this tomato plant and she was like, this is a momma tomato and a daddy tomato and a baby tomato. And I said well Lanie what if there were two mommies. There is not two mommy tomatoes. There is a momma and a baby and a daddy. And I was just like, my child thinks it has to be this way. I went to this early childhood class that day and we’re having this parent talk. And I’m just like, even she thinks that’s the way it has to be. And here we think we’re trying to create this contention open family. And that's how, the kids see it on TV, they see it all around them, and even in this family where there were two moms. She was, kind of, three year old adamant that this is how it has to be. And I was just like, oh my god, what have I done. You know what I mean, it was just really an interesting phenomenon for me. Like I think there's probably much more, people aren't openly saying stuff to us but I'm sure there's much more subtle undertones because even the

| • Imposition of dominant culture iconographic images |
| • Early impact of heterosexism |
| • Effects of statements |
| • Early impact of heterosexism |
| • Despite their effort to create an open family the child learned about family structure outside the home |
| • Fearful societal influences will win over parenting influences (heterosexist society) |
| • Fearful societal influences will win over parenting influences (heterosexist society) |
| • Viewing relationship – heterosexual stereotypes – result of society or upbringing? |
kids are picking up on them.

T – OK, very good point

**Questions 6** - T – How was your current parenting style and family organization similar or different from that of your families of origin?

Sometimes Cindy says we’re more like heterosexual couples than heterosexual couples are.

T – What do you mean by that?

Well we have very sort of delineated roles in our house, you know, as far as. What I was kind of thinking was I’m much more like parenting styles of my parents than I would hope to be. In many ways I think I wanna do it so differently and in many ways I think you end up doing what you know, which is what happened when you were a child. So I started off trying to be really understanding and listening and not getting angry. The older the kids get the more I hear my mother’s little voice coming out of my mouth. It's really interesting even though when you intentionally try to do it differently. You do what you know, which is what your parents taught you.

T – Okay what did you mean that you guys are more heterosexual than the heterosexuals are?

Well laugh about that because, here we are two women in the household, and share the activity, you share in the chores, let's say you know. It's not like, the woman does the wash and the man does the lawn mowing, which is kind of like that stereotype heterosexual. Well, even though I try, Cindy does most of the laundry, does almost all the cooking, does the grocery

| Similarities to dominant culture |
| Parenting similar to family of origin |
| Similarities to the larger nongay culture |
| Circumstances dictate roles in family |
| Distinct differences in parental roles with the children. These are acknowledged by children and parents |

| Effects of family of origin |
| Roles within relationship |
| Falling into stereotypical partner roles |
| Parenting styles/roles |

She parents like her own parents did

They have divided household chores in a fashion similar to stereotypical heterosexual marriages

She was a stay at home mom for 2.5 years which helped create the roles

One has a more stereotypical father disciplinarian role

| Struggling to be different than parents were |
| Views self as product of upbringing |
| Internalized heterosexism? |
| Partner roles compared to gender roles |
| define own roles in heterosexual terms or |

Parenting style similar to family of origin

Roles in family similar to dominant culture’s stereotypical roles
shopping, takes the kids shopping to get clothes and stuff. I work outside the home, she also works outside the home, I work outside the home, you know 40 hour week, I cut the grass probably after she's told me “it's about time you cut the grass,” I do kind of the little fix-it stuff around the house. I don't really do a hell of a lot do I? Oh I put in the edging of the lawn, what else do I do, I'm the one that runs to the liquor store. It becomes a 54:42  
But I was a stay-at-home mom so initially, I was at home all the time.

How long was that, two and half years?

It was supposed to be just a year but, about two and half to three years. And we found ourselves doing it a lot. Even though you would think you might not do it the same.

But that’s how, it’s kind of how roles

But parenting is kind of like that too, I'm home, especially when I was home all the time, the kids knew they had to listen to me. When Linda came home she was the fun parent that they didn't get to see very much and even to this day they just adore her. And I'm the one that says now you need to go make your bed.

I can say it a hundred times and they won't listen to me. They hear it from Cindy and they go and make the bed. I don't know if that happens in heterosexual families, where you know, my parents didn’t do this, but wait till your father comes home. I mean we've heard that for I don't know. We don't do that kind of thing but it's just really interesting, I mean, even though I may have more of the traditional male role. I'm not like the disciplinarian and, I mean that comes from her.

<table>
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<th>stereotypes</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Kids listen to the parent who they have the most contact with</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Internalized heterosexual stereotypes/roles</td>
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T – You still have varied it some from that ideal that we hear about?

Well not that we really wanted to, like with the discipline stuff, just kind of morphed that way.

We’re trying to sort of change it a little bit. Because we find that it's very hard to, it's hard for one person to feel like they are always the one making the kids toe the line. And then it's really hard for her when they won't listen to her. So we’re trying to work on sort of making that work better. But I would say that our parenting styles in a lot of ways are similar. We have pretty similar feelings about what's OK and what's not OK. That we have fairly similar, fairly similar. My limits or maybe a little bit tighter than yours. So she may let them get away with a little bit more. But the big, the big serious things we’re pretty similar on.

Yeah, like bedtime.

And what's OK, what’s not okay.

This is the time and that’s when you go to bed. And that's how was in my family.

We’re pretty structured.

Pretty structured about that.

We have pretty clear rules.

Clear rules.

Around TV, around bedtime, around mealtime. And we're pretty similar in that not one of us is really laid back and one of us is.

T – Did you guys find that you arrived at the similarity just because it felt right or did you guys have a discussion about it

• Intentionality not always successful
• Similar approaches to parenting
• Parenting similar to family of origin
• Clear shared rules for the kids
• Evolution of parenting styles
• Consistency in parental values
• Structure within family
• The discipline roles just happened
• They are working to change their roles
• In general their rules are similar
• Conscious of how parenting styles have developed
• Conscious effort to be consistent with parenting styles
• Act like parrots

Parenting styles have evolved and continue to evolve

Rules are consistent between parents

Intentional planning around parenting

Outside resources helped

Intentional planning and mutual parenting
where you.

We discussed it.

Especially when the Lena was first with us, we had a lot of discussion about parenting I think. It brought us closer that first year she was home. Because we were trying to figure out, what are we going to do with this baby? And how are we can organize our lives and get all of those other things done that, you know.

But we also knew before, I mean. You were trying to get pregnant and the Maybe Baby class. I mean there were discussions about discipline and what's OK. And is it okay if your child writes all over the walls or, you know just, is spanking okay, timeouts, how will you do things, how do you want to parent together. So we had lots of discussion about that, and we were just right on, right on, the same wavelength on that.

Yeah

T – But you had some outside organized help in focusing your discussions about this whole parenting thing.

And in Minnesota they have this thing called early childhood and family education. Which is a wonderful thing. It's wonderful and it's for kids from birth till they go to school. And it's actually, you can go to classes were the kids are involved in one part and the parents are talking in another room or whatever. We do that with both kids. More with Lena. But with both kids and usually I would be the one to take them because I was at home. But then we did an evening class where we read about this power struggle book. So some of it was based on a book or whatever. But it facilitate the intentional approach to exploring parenting
• State resources accessed to help establish good parenting practices
• Mutual decision
• Mutual parenting values and goals
• Affirmation of mutual parenting values and goals
• Family resources
• Role within relationship
• Realization of exclusive resources
• Concern for funding
• They discussed rules
• Had a lot of discussion about parenting with first child
• The discussion brought them closer as a couple
• Had discussion prior to first child also
• Minnesota has education for parenting
• Children receive some education as well as parents
• Education for parenting
• State provides the resource
• Colorado does not have such classes
• Funding is being cut for program
• Funding was cut now restored
• Focused on early childhood
• Used lots of resources for parenting
• Planning – open discussion about how to parent
• Seeking help – community resource/class on parenting

values and goals

Used state, local, and family resources to help planning for parenting values and goals
was really a great resource we have in the Twin Cities that money gets put into. This state is pretty good here. Cause I called up my sister in Denver and said you should go to these ECFC classes. She said what is ECFC and then I realized it was just a thing that we had here.

It’s supported here by the public school system, of course being drastically cut now and it will all be gone because.

Well I heard it’s getting refunded now. It was really good when we started. Then it got really cut now it’s gotten more funding. It’s much more focused now putting in to preschool and early childhood.

So again, you’re right, we used lots of resources.

**Question 7 - T** – Would you guys describe those who you consider to be your extended family now?

Friends like Lori and Heather

Yeah, Lori and Heather

How about Henry?

And Henry he’s our neighbor. And then I would say it's more my parents, my grandparents, and my cousins

And your sister

And my sister.

And I pick these two friends. They also adopted two children from Guatemala. And I just feel like Lori and Heather, we could call them. They're part of the extended family. I mean I think there's other people you could say, oh yeah, cause you know we could do something with

- Seeking help – utilizing community resources for parenting and child development
- Very resourceful using many sources

- Extended family: friends, neighbors, and biological family members
- Extended family: other same-sex parents who have adopted, neighbor
- Part of rationale for including non-biological people in extended family is availability and geography
- Some extended family
- Individualized definition of “extended family”
- Recognition of importance of extended family and support
- Extended family includes friends and relatives
- They define family as anyone they can count on/call on in an emergency
- Extended family includes

Extended family includes friends, neighbors, and biological family members

Extended family defined as reliable people

Extended family includes friends, neighbors, and biological family members

Extended family defined as reliable people
them. But for me I’m kind of using part of the definition because I think I could call them at any moment and say “we need this” or “this is going on,” or “can you watch Lena right now because something’s happened we have any emergency, Cindy has to fly somewhere” or something. They would do that. And our neighbor, who lives across the alley from us, Henry, whose a single man, he’s now, he’s been divorced for years. He’s like sixty something. He would do anything for us. He would do anything for the girls. So I would really call him.

And they are really important to us because none of my family lives here.

In Pennsylvania

So we have no family.

T – Other than the family you've created.

Right

**Question 8 - T – All right last question.**
Describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you’ve found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents.

Say it

T – I'll say it a little different this time. You may have gone to your parents or your grandparents for parenting tips or for advice about something or that type of thing, where you went back and accessed that earlier generation as a resource for something. So, describe any information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you've found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents.

Well one thing, this might sound dumb but,
I went to my mom and she gave me my baby book. And it was actually helpful because it just said little things like what happened when I was two months old. That she had, you know, carefully written down.

T – Right.

And we certainly have called my mom and said “Lena is doing this, what the, and how would you deal with this” we've had a lot of bedtime issues from an early age. We've had many discussions with my mom about what to do about certain things and my sister actually but she's not really in another generation.

Your generation she's our

T – But does your sister have children that are older than yours

Well they’re nine and our kids are six and four. Yeah, she's very helpful in that, like it’s a phase, it’s a bad phase. But it will be over sometime.

Yeah, exactly. So she's been very

Very helpful

Supportive and none judgmental. I would say, even your mom, I don’t, there's not judgment like you’re doing this wrong, or you should do it this way. It's kind of like you know they see that, like if we’re visiting them and something isn't going right. Well, what do you think we should do? Well if taking her and putting her in the car and driving her around until she falls asleep, didn’t do it. Not like, “oh my gosh, I can’t believe they’re taking her around” no nothing like that and I don’t get that they’re saying it behind our backs.

| Access siblings with older children for advice |
| Parents from family of origin are supportive, not judgmental |
| Parents from family of origin are normalizing grandchildren’s behavior |
| Parents from family of origin are being careful about being involved as a means of being supportive |
| Parents from family of origin are being supportive, not judgmental and normalizing |
| Normalizing |
| Parents from family of origin supportive of same-sex relationship and normalizing grandchildren behavior |
| Parents from family of origin provide physical assistance with children. Parent’s of parents are sympathetic to the travails of parenthood |
| Parents from family of origin |

Accessed parents from family of origin and siblings for advice

Parents are either non-intrusive or nonjudgmental in their support
No, lots of times they’re like I think, “relax, it’s all fine. You know, like, it’s okay.”

T – So as you say that this is the picture that I had in my head. They’re like going that you’re taking this too seriously calm down a little, just go with the flow.

Sometimes I think that they’re just kids, kids cause trouble. I don’t think they’re saying that you’re overreacting necessarily but their saying it’s OK kids do this.

T – This is natural, this is normal.

Exactly or I think, we’ve had significant trouble. Significant trouble that my parents have observed. With us even fighting because we can’t get the kids to sleep or us then having a fight. My parents have observed it and always they’ve been sort of like. Either they sort of back away and just let it happen or they support us or.

Yeah in fact there’s been times. I just have a couple comments. One you summed it up very nicely, I mean of saying that they are not like criticizing us or saying you’re overreacting. No, not judgmental like that, but more “you know it’s just a phase. It will pass.”

And in the beginning we were like it’s just a phase. I was so sick of people saying it’s just a phase. And now I find myself say it’s just a phase.

It's just a phase, sure it’s going to be over soon

Your three-year-old is doing what? Oh yeah that’s a phase that’ll be over with don’t worry. Just to wait until they get to be six. Then the phase is different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>provide same support to siblings. Support dependant on need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Nonjudgmental support during the challenges of parenting</td>
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<td>• Stress and effects of parenting</td>
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<td>• Conflict resolution</td>
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<td>• Effect of vacation</td>
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<td>• Support by family</td>
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<td>• Bonding between grandfather and grandchild</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comparison in use of family as a resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Effect of the birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Closeness of family bond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comparisons within relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Called on sister for advice</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sister and mother provided support and were nonjudgmental regarding parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gave advice on “normal” child behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Parents are either non-intrusive or nonjudgmental in their support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents tried to be calming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At first she didn’t like their response</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Now she offers similar advice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Then the phase is different.

So that is really, is helpful. Then when there have been times where, if one of the children was really acting, child was really acting up, and so that Cindy and I and a snapping at each other then we’re kind of like embarrassed that we did that in front of her parents or what ever. Then when things calm down, a lot of times her mom would still be up. And than the three of us would sit and just like, oh I’m really sorry got angry and. It didn’t really help when you did this. Yeah, and then we kind of sit and talk about it and so that helps to talk about that. So it could be anything like. “Oh yes, I remember Cindy when you and Marcy would.

Right. We took a family vacation with my parents to Disney World. And stayed in this little cabin with my parents and two children and us. They got to see firsthand how it was. And at the time Patricia, who is now 4 ½, was 3½ or 3 was terrified of dressed up creatures. So here we were at Disney.

T – Oh my goodness

So it was a pretty horrendous vacation for her. So my dad was pretty much constantly on Patricia duty because there was Mickey Mouse walking by. And like she refused to go. It was Lena's fifth birthday and we were having it with Pooh characters. Patricia was not going to that birthday party, so my dad took her. My dad would take her and they would go off on the boat by themselves.

Whatever was going on there was

My dad as been just great. Patricia can

<table>
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<th>to others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now she sees that is was helpful to normalize</td>
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<tr>
<td>When they got frustrated with each other – one mother helped them sort it out afterward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They took a vacation with one set of parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father helped care (for) one child who was frightened</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sister utilized parental support more due to pregnancy complications and health issues of twins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normal for parents to help with grandchildren</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfortable going to family for help – family support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents help give them peace of mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Happy with parents involvement and relationship with the parents – comfortable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parrots!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both very close with mom – comfortable – helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive relationship: parents are very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family very close – mother close with other daughter as well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have tantrums and like screaming.

T – So a follow-up to this than. You have a sister, did she access your parents in the same way do you think?

More. My sister had twin girls. She had a very difficult pregnancy. She was, the kids were pre-mes. And she was significantly ill after they were born. My mother lived out there for a while in Denver. And my mother periodically would be out there for months at a time. My sister’s pretty good she’s better. My one niece has cerebral palsy and the other one doesn’t. Although, I mean she walks and everything but she definitely has, she’s had a couple of major surgeries. And my mom has a very close relationship with those girls and really, you know, helped raise the kids when my sister was very sick. And still just recently, you know, my nieces were at my mom’s house for like four weeks or something. So my mom has even a closer relationship with those grandchildren.

T – So it looks like that's a pretty normal cultural thing in your family.

Yeah

T – Any comments you guys have to finish things up?

I don't think so. Do you want to tell him. This is something that just popped into my head. Remember that time when you were, you had the Groovy dolls. I mean this has something to do with the, maybe not, maybe it’s more of a cultural thing. You were telling that story about, no there’s not a daddy tomato. Okay, but that one time when you had the Groovy girl and then you introduced the Groovy boy doll and he had different skin culture, I mean different skin color. Can you tell him that story? I don’t

- Culture and skin tone reminder
- Children are unique
- Larger cultural norms or iconographic messages that would occur because children are members of the human species
- Limits to larger culture’s message
- Parenting rules in the home
- Clarifying experience within culture
- Sibling comparisons

Frustrated and maybe confused – feels like they are failing to teach their daughter that differences are okay

Fearful of heterosexist media – limit TV exposure time
know how it fits into any of your questions.

Our older daughter Lena is very, what's the word, just really aware of everything that's going on around her. And is very sensitive to people and what's happening, she fairly quiet. I think you'd classify her as an introvert. But has an excellent memory, is, I mean when she was three could tell me “you're going the wrong way, this isn’t how we get to” what ever. Our other daughter doesn't pay a bit of attention to anything. That's not the building where such and such. That's not even near, that doesn't even look like that building. And Lena is very aware of all differences, in all things around her and what's going on. And she's the one who said the thing about mom and dad tomato. And one day, well I guess she had this groovy girl. It was a girl.

You know what a groovy girl doll is?

It's like this cloth doll

Kind of like a rag doll type thing

The doll must've been white or light fair skin, Caucasian looking but it was fair skin. And they had done something, so they were getting sort of this reward which was this new groovy kid. She was getting the new groovy boy and the other one must getting a groovy boy or whatever. So I left it on their place at the breakfast table thinking it was going to be this great, you know fun thing. Well she was like devastated like, and I was like, you know what is wrong. “He does not match my groovy girl his skin is darker.” And I was just like

We didn't even notice it.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sensitivity to diversity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult acceptance</td>
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<td>Awareness/sensitivity to diversity</td>
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<td>False sense of accomplishment</td>
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<td>Need to “match”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media impact on kids perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining family values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter noticed that her two dolls skin color did not match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is very aware of skin color differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents thought they were creating an accepting environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child prefers dark to light skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents limit TV watching to reduce impact of cultural norms on children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive reward system used at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern: Sudden awareness that children more aware of differences and don’t like them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated and maybe confused – feels like they are failing to teach their daughter that differences are okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful of heterosexist media – limit TV exposure time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I mean it was really. She's always been very aware. We have these very good friends Diana and Jonathan who have a boy, Forest, who's the same age as a Lena and a boy, Duncan, who's the same age as Patricia, I mean within months of each other. And Forest, they were both born in Guatemala also, Forest is much lighter skin. And from a very young age Patricia was like his skin is lighter than mine but he was born in Guatemala too you now, I don't understand. Why is his skin lighter? That whole, like, awareness of skin color and differences. She's very aware of it all. And you think your creating this environment of, “its okay if you have a different skin color.” Oh this boy and girl could not be together because they did not match. Their skin was a different color. I was just like “What?” She's always been very attracted to dark skinned boys, like on the TV. I mean if she's going to choose one of the boys that would be the one to choose. Even she would choose an African-American looking child over a Caucasian child just because.

T – OK.

It's just really interesting and. At what a young age those.

T – I think what you guys, that story really hits home as to how difficult it can be for gays and lesbians to come to terms with not fitting in. How easy it is for us to learn those cultural norms that the larger society is sending. And you guys have gone out of your way not to have those be a part of this.

Right.

And they're still there. Some of them anyway
I think that’s true. And our kids are really limited on the TV that they watch. Cause at first I was like “oh she's just seeing every TV show has a mom and dad and children and that why she thinks the tomato.” “It’s all about the TV.” Well now our kids are only allowed to watch TV on the weekends and their are only allowed to watch TV two hours a day on the weekends at max. Which has worked very well for us, the kids are much more creative, they interact much better together.

And that includes like DVD or something that’s not like. If you rent something from the library that includes part of your TV time.

At first it was huge, like, “I want to watch TV.” And now they don’t even ask. They know that's the rule. I just think it’s so much better. So I know it's not all coming from TV. Where’s it coming from?

T – Do you guys have any questions for me?

No I think it'll be interesting to hear about the bigger picture.

Yeah I’m fascinated in the follow up session or what ever that comes next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Tuesday Data Collection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT DIALOGUE</td>
<td>CATEGORY (listed by analyzer 1st through 4th, a blank line between analyzers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Question 1 - T - All right first question. I'd like you guys to describe the decision-making process that you went through leading up to the addition of children into your home. How did you go about deciding you're going to have them and that | 1st Analyzer  
• Limits and resources to getting pregnant  
• Future planning  
2nd Analyzer  
• Positive family support  
- financial support  
- emotional support |
piece? And whoever wants to start. I also want to encourage you guys if somebody else says something that is part of what fits for you please say it again okay? So I have an idea of how much it is across for all of you.

I guess I could start. I was sitting around at, with my father, everyone else went to church, we were going to refuse to go to church so we sat around a Christmas one time and he and we talked about the goals would like to have family someday but it was a real far away, I was just kind of saying that because wouldn't that be great someday we were in our late twenties but really didn’t have. If we had the money someday we might to do that, that kind of thing, and my father said “you’re never going to have enough money to have a child, it’s just not, you can’t plan for that, it’s never going to happen. I happened to be lucky enough to be an only child, where he said we will help you get pregnant. And your mother will live 20 years longer if she’s a grandmother. So suddenly, crash it became a reality that we could really do this. Because it was really, we weren't really going to do it, because we knew we didn't have enough money for one thing. And we certainly didn't have enough money for all the fertility things. We both work in nonprofit and it there just wasn’t enough money there. Going through the process I’m sure you’ll get to that at some point, that crash, oh my gosh we can do this. So we hurried up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd Analyzer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with father about goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought it would be great to have a family if had the money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father said he would help with money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father said a grandchild would help mother from family of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly money wasn’t an issue</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4th Analyzer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive family support – financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive family support – emotional support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And went to Europe

Went to Europe for two weeks to sow oats and then started to came back and have a family. We had to do that. Get rid of that just that couple thing. We needed to do that first we knew we wanted to go to Europe someday. We hurried up and did

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final act as a couple</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting need for “sowing oats” out of system before children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realization of how relationship dynamics will change with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing goals and preparation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that and then came back and we started trying to have a family.

T - Wow okay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can go. My partner and I had different perspectives on families. I really wanted one and she really didn't. And when we got married we kind of decided, well we'll just see what happens, you know we were both pretty open to either option. But within a few years we had a couple of different friends who were a bit older than us were struggling with fertility. Male-female couples. And having a lot of different kinds of issues. Basically related to being late, unable to get pregnant at least easily because of their age. And it kind of called into question for us we needed to decide. We started exploring the idea in general. We went through a little back-and-forth figuring out who. We decided to use a known donor. And so we had a little bit of process around that. But ultimately it was just seeing women like ourselves who wanted to have children and couldn't. And feeling like we don't want to be, not able to.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Decided to travel to Europe before having a family</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognizing that life will change drastically</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Differing views on starting a family</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Experiences of acquaintances influenced decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agreeing on parts/steps of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experiences of acquaintances influenced decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different perspectives on families</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding age constraints in conception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Realization of need to make a decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Process to determine donor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding age constraints in conception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partner didn’t want a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Were open after marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Because of friends they realized “clock was ticking”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Started discussing who could donate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Originally disagreed on having children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having children was not a priority early on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Felt pressure to make decision – age a concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial concerns impact method</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Financial limitations</td>
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</table>

For us money was an issue too and so we really needed it to be turkey baster friendly and that. And that is less and less possible post 35. So anyway

| Having a family became important after being together |
| Felt time constraints because of age |
| Finances important |
| T - Okay | Money was an issue for them also
| Financial needs limited options | Always knew method adoption
| “Just jumped in... after 15 years” | Planned on adoption but tried fertility and were unsure of making a family because of the length of time waiting.
| Last “couple” trip | Participated in one last act as a couple
| Length of process lead to questions | Influences of local resources
| Failed attempts | Decision to adopt
| Process of gathering information for adoption | Apprehension and doubt
| Impact of partner isolation | Faith
| Adoption was first choice | Extremely lengthy process caused doubt on having family
| Took a vacation and then started the process | Utilized community resources
| Weren’t sure until call came from adoption agency | Difficulties with language, labeling and grouping based on biology
| Went to a meeting on adopting older children | Labeling or grouping
| Went to baby adoption workshop | Couples decision for who would become pregnant
| Tried to get pregnant first | Was not comfortable with segregating the parents by labeling adoptive versus biological

We've been together for 15 years. And we knew kids would always be in the process somewhere along the line and adoption was always the first choice. So we just sort of jumped in to it. We did the thing where we went to Florida and Disney World and came back and started the whole process and just figure you know now we're parents and actually waited four years for Leslie. That was a little bit of a, we were almost on the edge of maybe we just shouldn't do this. Then all of a sudden we got the call. So it was, was obviously supposed to happen

I think initially we saw, I think we were at Pride, and we saw the

Children's Home Society

Children Home Society was at Pride and they had older children adoption. And so we had initially went to a meeting for that. And then we went to the MayBe Baby workshop

We did try the fertility thing

Actually we waited three years. We tried for 18 months with me it just didn't happen. It never felt like that's what we should be doing, it's not going to happen because I wasn't there. So then now we have Leslie

T - So let me ask you guys did MayBe Baby? You guys did a MayBe Baby. Anybody else? You two did the MayBe Baby. Because I've been hearing about that and I think that's a unique to this area

I bet it is
I had a hard time with MayBe Baby because they kept talking about the Bio mom. And before I adopt my daughter I'm just this person that's kind of around. So that was a really tough time for me during, that was really a struggle for me during MayBe Baby. I'm more involved than just what MayBe Baby was trying to say.

What's up with the groups? The Bio mom versus the non Bio mom. That part used to bug me about MayBe Baby. She and I would go home and talk about it because I didn't want to be mommy’s friend. I'm the mom too

Try being like in the group of four for adoption. You're way off in the corner like. It was primarily lesbians that were going straight to fertility. We were with the one gay couple in group that was considering adoption

It was pretty obvious, I think kids are awesome, I'm not going to do it. She has wanted her entire life to have a baby. So it was really easy for us to decide who was going to do it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal struggles</th>
<th>She had issue with the talk of a biological mother</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feelings of isolation and inequality</td>
<td>She said she wanted to be “mom” too</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal struggle</td>
<td>Mostly lesbian couples going for fertility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification as active partner</td>
<td>One couple considered adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustration with segregated view of moms</td>
<td>It was easy to decide who would carry the child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived inferiority of adoptive versus biological parents</td>
<td>Frustrated with organized group – felt not being the biological mom made her less important to the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roles within creation of a family</td>
<td>Felt ‘odd one out’ in group</td>
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<tr>
<td>She had issue with the talk of a biological mother</td>
<td>Mutual desire to have a family</td>
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<tr>
<td>She said she wanted to be “mom” too</td>
<td>Joint desire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly lesbian couples going for fertility</td>
<td>Monetary concerns</td>
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<td>One couple considered adoption</td>
<td>Options, plan A/B</td>
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<tr>
<td>It was easy to decide who would carry the child</td>
<td>Preparing for becoming parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustrated with organized group – felt not being the biological mom made her less important to the group</td>
<td>Mutual family goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felt ‘odd one out’ in group</td>
<td>Financial limitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual desire to have a family</td>
<td>Decision to have family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint desire</td>
<td>Solidifying relationship in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monetary concerns</td>
<td>Mutual desire for a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options, plan A/B</td>
<td>Monetary concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for becoming parents</td>
<td>Made a public commitment to each other before starting a family</td>
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</table>

T - OK, how about for you guys.

I think we both had always wanted kids. And I think it was the thing when are they going to fit into our lives. We were never going to have the money to do it. And I think we thought we would, one of us would give birth to a child. Adopt anyway, thought about adopting later. So we were pretty convinced I think that we

| Mutual desire for a family | Mutual desire for a family |
| Monetary concerns | Monetary concerns |
| Options, plan A/B | Made a public commitment to each other before starting a family |
| Preparing for becoming parents | Mutual family goal |
| Mutual family goal | Financial limitations |
| Financial limitations | Decision to have family |
| Decision to have family | Solidifying relationship in |
were going to have a child and then we hurried up and got married. Because we were like well if we are going to have a commitment ceremony we should probably do it before we have a child instead of wait until he's a teenager. We've been together seven years or something.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>preparation for family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both wanted kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>One would have child then adopt later</td>
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<tr>
<td>Got married before having a child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual desire to have children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional – commitment (marriage) before children</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>So we did the MayBe Baby class. We had already decided we were going to do it. We should probably go because they might have something important that we should think about, you know. But it wasn't really anything that we hadn't already thought about and they did separate us. Which we hadn't, we didn't know. So it was like you go to the Bio mom and I'll just go to the non-Bio mom and that's not how it turned out. But we had already decided that we were going to have a child. So than we finished that in October and started trying to get pregnant I think in February.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Accessing community resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Checking information accuracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Options left open for person to carry baby</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Eager to gain knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Negative experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Disappointment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Separation of groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Went to Maybe Baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Had already decided to have a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparedness – utilized community resource</td>
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<th>And that group finished in October and then outside of that one of the couples pulled us all together. So we all met, seven couples out of that met. And we continue now four years later to meet on a every other month basis. But so, we were the second couple to get pregnant because somebody got pregnant during MayBe Baby. But so that was ours. So I think I had a friend who said you're never going to feel like you who have enough money to have a child you just need to do it. Which I</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Creating community based resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Monetary concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Process more complicated because of same-sex pairing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Friendships gained</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Acceptance of financial challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Complication with same-sex couples</td>
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<tr>
<th>Created resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process more complicated because of same-sex pairing</td>
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think really hit home for me. The process of deciding to have kids wasn’t any different for us than if I had been with a man or something. It was just, I always took it for granted we were going to have kids. We never really had that discussion it was more about when and how.

It’s a big process

T - Okay

- They still meet with the couples
- Second couple to get pregnant
- You will never feel like you are going to have enough money
- Process more complicated than if she had been with a man
- Community resource led to creating own support group

I’ve always knew that I wanted to have kids. And so when I was sort of dating and screening people saying “OK I’m not looking to date very long.” I want to have a relationship, that was sort of one of my screening things, I want to have kids. If not I’m not going to pursue this. My partner and I knew pretty early on that was something we wanted to have. It was sort of when and how. So we work together five years before he was? Six years, seven years? Before he was born.

- Part of dating criteria
- Both had same desire
- Together several years before action taken
- Compatibility
- Partner compatibility criteria
- Mutual family goal
- Started into relationships knowing she wanted children
- They knew they wanted children
- Mutual desire to have children

We too, we went on a trip to Mexico and then came home and said all right let's go. We had our appointment with the doctor like a week after we got back.

- One last couple vacation
- Went on vacation first
- Recognized life will change after child – because more limited

And we knew that I was the one that would carry the first child because I was a couple years older and little further along in my career. She was just sort of getting

- Criteria for deciding who would carry the baby
- Medical concern and age contributed to decision of

Roles and factors in child-bearing/relationship
established so.

T - OK. How did you guys decide who was going to carry the child when you finally did decide?

I was taking antidepressants and I didn't want to mess with that, the risk of that is what it finally came down to. Did a ton of research. It was definitely going to be me for the longest time she had no interested. And then she's also older, so it started to seem like something that she might like to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2 - T - OK, nice. Okay. Second question. Describe your extended families reactions to the addition of children to your home.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You want to take that one first</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yeah. I had the old, “you had better not bring a child up in that relationship.” I got the “how dare you raise a child with two parents of the same-sex.” Which I responded to your children are being raised by a Catholic Republican, I'm not the problem. After I informed my mother who has never really been to supportive of the decision I told her there is not going to be a grandma come lately. This was the reality Minnesota does allow same-sex adoption, it's going to happen. And if you're not on board now you're not coming on later. And she and I were going to go to a Twins game that night. I freaked out, “I can’t go I’m just going to stay home.” My mom called back about three hours later and she ended up saying. You know what, I don't</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>who carried the pregnancy</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Roles within child-bearing/relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Determining factors for child-bearing partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Had doctor appointment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• She carried first child because she was older</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Didn’t want to get pregnant because of medication</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Older one got pregnant</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognizing how career will be effected by having a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thought about health risk in decision of who would carry the child</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family responded negatively to same-sex couple adding children</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daughter placed an ultimatum on mother and mother’s involvement with her grandchild</td>
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</table>

| Views, opinions, or attitudes toward same-sex couple positively changing after addition of child but still contains negative views |
understand it, and how's it happening and can I be a part of the name picking. OK. It was in a voice mail. So I was like all right you know she's at least on board so she wants to know how, because she doesn't understand “how can you get pregnant without a man.” She's 54 or something and for some reason she is a cavewoman so. But she's on board now and she loves our daughter as much as any other grandparent does. She just doesn’t, she just doesn't like it, but she's accepted it.

T - She doesn't like?

Us together, even though it's been eleven of years. It's about time you get used to it. She’s come a pretty long way. Course she does blame softball for our relationship. And this is probably one of the most unathletic people on the planet. So softballs not really what's really happening here.

T - Okay

I'm really trying not to talk over her. In the interest of science and research trying not talk over you. Great.

T - How about for your extended family?

Well my parents were obviously on board because they paid for all the insemination's. And there were many. My grandmother who's now 90, it was absolutely no big deal, she thought it was great. In fact she thought there would never be a child because I was a lesbian and if there is that's even better. They all love Doris. I'm glad my grandfather's not alive any more. It's

- Comfort relief
- Acceptance of child
- Resistance
- Acknowledgement of mother’s progress
- Placing blame

- Reaction – “you had better not bring a child up in ‘that’ relationship”
- How dare you
- Argument with mother which led to the mother accepting the idea of a child
- Mother doesn’t understand their relationship

- Family not supportive of same-sex relationship or as parents
- Strong; doesn’t need family support to live life
- Child brings positive change to relationship with mother
- Mixed messages: - mother still disapproves of same-sex relationship but deals with it to be in her grandchild’s life

- Grandparents and great grandparents accepting
- Not all family members equally accepting
- Even conservative family members at least okay on the surface

- Emotional and financial support
- Pleasant surprise and acceptance
- Relief
- No open show of disapproval

A variety of acceptance within family and no open disapproval
really terrible to say that. But he would not have accepted that. Her husband. But he. But she's just fine with it. She loves her daughter, aunts and uncles, just fine with it. I haven't had any problem. Even the more conservative ones, just seems to be. If they're talking about us bad it's behind our backs

- Her parents accepted the idea of children and showed support
- Grandmother thought it was great
- She doesn’t think her deceased grandfather would have accepted it
- No problems with extended family
- Positive family support – from beginning

T - Did that feel like there was a shift with your family, your extended family?

No they were always on board, pretty much.

T - All right.

My parents were, for the most part, okay. They were in the process of a pretty stinky divorce after 40 years of marriage. So they were sort of in their own stuff. And coping in their own, what I deem problematic ways. So my mom was pretty depressed and negative and made comments about, well you’re too old, and why are you doing this, your kids going to have Down's syndrome. And at that point I said I'm all done and goodbye. And so I didn't have contact with my mom from the time that I was about three months pregnant until our son was about two months old. I was like, I’m not going to deal with your insanity. I felt because of the divorce sort of helping her cope and trying to manage and do stuff and just thought “I can't do it I just, I'm not going to put myself through this while being pregnant.” And I didn't have any contact with her at all. And I was challenging because I wish I had a mom. And I’ve really never had a mom that could

- No change before and after children
- Grandparents okay but distracted
- Limited negative influence from grandmother (unrelated to same-sex pairing)
- Grandmother’s involvement is limited, poor relationship
- Problems related to relationship not same-sex pairing
- Grandpa super ally but not great relationship
- Continual support
- Familial support
- Negativity
- Effects of conflictual relationship
- Avoidance of stress
- Regret
- Effects of negativity and past conflicts
- Re-creation of relationship with mother
- False sense of support
- Strained relationships within family

Parents supportive of same-sex pairing but poor relationship with both parents unrelated to orientation. No change before or after adding children except mother’s involvement is limited and father became a “super ally”
be there in that way. So I was like sort of grieving what I never had. Now we see her maybe once a month. Every six weeks. You know it's very much focused around, I want to allowing you to have some contact with your grandson but we’re never going to have a stunning relationship. But she's very appropriate to me and my partner, respectful of our relationship, it's not about that. So usually meet, in the summertime we meet for more go out to eat and then go play in the park so. We can do that. And that's sort of the way we've managed it, for now. And my dad, my dad likes to be, he wants to do Rainbow Families, he wants to do Out Front, and he wants to do this stuff but it's more about him and not about having a relationship with us. So it's a little funky. We see him about a once a month, so it's not stunning relationships but more about sort of their drama and not about us being [a couple].

T - OK

My partner's family is pretty respectful, for the most part. Her 91 year-old grandmother just died. And just adored our son. her And we pushed her a lot, she was Missouri Senate Lutheran. We just really challenged her but she was always right there. Our commitment ceremony when all the other family drama was happening she said “well if you're going to have Oreos and Kool-Aid in the backyard I'll buy the Oreos.” And I’m like “rock on.” So it's all right.

T - OK, who's next?

- Family was always accepting
- Parents were okay with kids
- Mother was concerned about her age
- She cut ties with her mother throughout the pregnancy
- Mother is back in picture not a great relationship
- Mom is respectful of their relationship
- Dad is involved in gay activities but she believes it’s for him and not her
- Negative reaction from mother hindered their relationship
- Advocating for self hard: cutting mom out (plus her negativity) was extremely difficult emotionally
- Relationship with mother damaged resulting in limited contact
- Mother supportive of relationship
- Fairly positive relationship with father

- Multi generational acceptance
- Positive family responses, negative pieces typical to all families
- Negative family reactions
- Positive family responses
- Initial confusion and errors over protocol and response to gender based roles
- Positive family response
- Family of origin negative response to daughter being lesbian

Multi generational acceptance
Positive family reactions
Negative family reactions
Initial confusion and errors over protocol and response to
My, immediately family was totally fine, wouldn’t you say? My mom said some weird stuff when I was pregnant. Just typical weird mom stuff. Not about your relationship, not about being lesbian parents or anything. Just weird stuff that moms sometimes say that don’t make sense. And my siblings have been great, very important. Extended family has been fine. We just have uncles and aunts who are very good evangelical Christians and so don't really talk with us any more, to us, to me. Since he's been with us I think my family has been great. My mom has made really supportive comments “like he's like to have lucky to have two parents who love him so much.” Really supportive stuff, and he interacts with all of his cousins, and everything just feels normal.

The only weird story is with Char's mom is when. I guess it was the first Mother's Day. After he was born she came to visit, right? She was here, not for Mother's Day, she was just here visiting. She never once mentioned the fact that I was also having my first Mother's Day. Over and over again she said it. She wanted to get Char a Mother's Day present. Sent her a card and stuff but there was never any. So that was kind of weird but, I think she just didn't know what to do. And since then she hasn't done that again. And my family is just great. They, they were thrilled that we were having kids. For me I don't think anyone in my family. There was never any issue.

T - All right

My family, since I came out, my parents I've actually had less and less contact with them. My dad hasn't really spoken to me more than to maybe pick up the phone

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<th>Extended bio family accepting and supportive</th>
<th>Limited acceptance from bio siblings</th>
<th>Ultimatum to bio parents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited involvement and exposure to bio mom</td>
<td>Bio parents very supportive</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>Familial support</td>
<td>Familial support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family’s acceptance of child</td>
<td>Family’s acceptance of child</td>
<td>Family’s acceptance of child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion and lack of recognition</td>
<td>Rejection by family</td>
<td>Rejection by family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family’s acceptance of child</td>
<td>Ostracized from family</td>
<td>Ostracized from family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative family support</td>
<td>Some support</td>
<td>Alternative family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing rules within relationship</td>
<td>Importance of respect for choices</td>
<td>Importance of respect for choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of family support</td>
<td>Intentional avoidance</td>
<td>Intentional avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme level of support</td>
<td>Partner’s family – respectful</td>
<td>Partner’s family – respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom said weird things during pregnancy unrelated to lesbianism</td>
<td>Siblings important</td>
<td>Siblings important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family important</td>
<td>Family supportive</td>
<td>Family supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels normal</td>
<td>Some confusion on first</td>
<td>Some confusion on first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never an issue in my family</td>
<td>Mother’s Day</td>
<td>Never an issue in my family</td>
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Extended bio family accepting and supportive

Mixed reactions from siblings
when I call than just hands it off. And my mom it's really strained, my parents are religious and the family is very insular I guess. So when we first came out there was, we were kind of ostracized from my extended family also but that was only for maybe a year or something. Then my aunt and cousins call. I have invited, those kind of replaced my immediate family for us. I think, you know my aunt. Now that we have Leslie we'll go visit her every once in while and she says Leslie you call me Grandma. So that's nice, they've all been much more accepting than my family. I have four siblings. Two of them that are the closest to me, two brothers not either, one completely not supportive very, listens to Rush Limbaugh all day long. He wants to preach to me if he does talk to me and the other one is kind of, you know, sometimes he's says something a little supportive but most of the time he's not. And then my sister's are much younger and their supportive. So I think for us when we had decided to go into the adoption process part of what I needed to take care of is I called my mom and said “we're going to do this. And if you want to be involved all here's our rules. You have to respect, it's OK that up to this point you haven't respected us but we won't visit. We won't visit won't do, we won't feel obligated if you're not going to respect that we're a couple and having a child.” So we've seen her three times. Since Leslie’s 2 ½. And it's always been like we’re coming to Indiana and both of our families are there. So will see Sally's family whose very supportive. And who'll go have lunch with my mom for an hour. For a defined time at a restaurant where there’s other people around soon you can't have. So that's kind of where we are at.

T - Okay

- Since coming out less contact with family
- Strained relationship with parents
- After coming out ostracized from extended family at first
- Aunt and cousins replaced immediate family
- Two brothers unsupportive
- They set up rules for visits with family
- They visit one family and then the other briefly: - a public place
- Parents supportive
- Extended family supportive
- Positive family reaction and support
- Family supportive
- Religious barrier for some extended family
- Child feels comfortable with family
- Mother supportive but unsure on how (awkward)
- Strong family support
- Religious barrier
- Immediate reaction negative
- Support more important than biological connection
- Conservative views hinder relationship
- Lack support
- Positive support
- Advocating for self – include mother on our conditions
- Relationship still weak
- Family very positive and supportive
And my parents are very, ecstatic almost too happy for us. They're retired now so they come for like the whole summer. Their RV. So they're just here all the time and they're very, very excited and like my extended family is just like ecstatic. And we are actually in the process of adopting another child. So they're like just beside themselves with what to do. Leslie’s (23:19) African-American so that was a big thing. You got to deal with your stuff.

Sally’s family you know her parents are very supportive and very knowledgeable, you know about but when we go back to Indiana it's like. They're saying things about her hair or you know, whatever, and so part of what we do is we're trying to educate them about

T - Culture things

Yeah cultural things more so than, they could care less about us being lesbians. That's old news. The new news is that Leslie’s African-American and that's really exciting for the whole family.

So they're come and tell you things they’ve found out about African-Americans. Oh this is you know, or I read this book.

I mean they're just very supportive like

T - Bought you a bottle of Pink

Yeah, exactly they're so proud of themselves. You just have to give them kudos for, but they really try.

Wanna piggyback a little bit about families that are trying to be supportive but. I have one brother and he’s the Catholic Republican and that stinks but. He likes to think that he doesn't consider our child any less of a niece than and he does any other

- Ethnicity big news, lesbians old news
- Cultural awareness
- Support and mutual exchange of information
- Salience within diversity
- Effort to learn and educate for better support
- Child’s race was an issue
- Family supportive of cultural issues
- Family excited to learn about African Americans
- Supportive and curious about difference
- Very excited and supportive

- Bio family try to support but still treat differently than other children
- Small ways of not acknowledging or confirming same-sex pairing
- Family member are tolerant versus accepting of same-sex family
child. But yet it's problematic for him. So he's got many other nieces by his wife and her family because their Catholic and have millions of kids. But all I had to say is treat her like you do other kids but you don't because you don't respect how we had her and the relationship that we have and that's the problem. Or the fact that her daughter has a hyphenated name yet her mother will send us Mother's Day cards and my mother won't even acknowledge it. And she still writes the name wrong until I corrected her about the 18th time then she'll what little arrow in there, put Bruington at the end of it. Instead of having Jones Bruington. She'll put Jones. From my grandmother being 80 something. That's fine. Grandma doesn't even know. She doesn't care. But for my own mother to not acknowledge the fact that this child has a hyphenated last name and she is legally my child. That's a problem. So she thinks she is on board being accepting but all the subtleties I know that she's not.

T - OK

My partner's family their a little crazy. Jill and her sister are both adopted. And ended up kind alike not being at home during their teen years because the family so crazy. So their dad in particular saw her daughter as a chance to do it all again. Like a try over, like a do over. And actually said that. Starting at the baby shower it was freaking us both out. Actually this is a totally different person. And then it turns out our daughter looks a lot like Jill. And so that just compounded things and we still hear that sometimes. So they're generally really positive but rather strange. Jill’s sister is probably Amanda’s favorite person in the whole world and is a wonderful aunt to her. And she is also

| Generational allowances made for errors |
| Subtle disapproval or respect of relationship |
| Struggles with values |
| Lack of respect for relationship |
| Resistance to acknowledge parental role of each partner |
| False sense of acceptance |
| Brother treats child differently |
| One mother acknowledges Mother’s Day while other doesn’t |
| Mother writes child’s name wrong |
| Grandmother is accepting but mother is not |
| Frustrated that . . . religious and political beliefs barrier to full acceptance |
| Frustrated with mother’s support – feels superficial |
| Bio parents hoping for a second chance at parenting with grandchild |
| Supportive |
| Specific family members more supportive |
| Mostly positive and supportive |
| Chaotic family life |
| Attempt to make amends |
| Fear uncertainty of actions |
| Similarities between mother and daughter complicate motives of the family |
| Support |
| Strong “familiar” |

Family is mostly positive and supportive
lesbian. Her and her partner bring Amanda to their house all the time and watch her a lot and stuff like that. So they are really a big part of Amanda's life. Jill's extended family, my grandparents, aunts, and uncle's. In general they are pretty positive and especially on one side of the family. [Nobody's there to me] and says there are any great details of people sucking or being awesome. Even though they only live two hours away we don't see them very often. That's more about Jill's relationship with them than Amanda's. I'm sure there's lots of gossip. There's like a hundred cousins or something, so they can't stop themselves. My side of the family is much smaller. When we're together my entire familial and it's just 13 and hers is like 60 or something. They are Catholic we are atheists.

My folks had a hard time with it. In fact, they came to visit when Jill was about five months pregnant. Like we are Scandinavian and so one of things is when we are not comfortable about something we don't talk about it. If Jill would talk about her feet being swollen or some other side effects of pregnancy. And it would be like silence all of a sudden. The only other person in the room that's been pregnant is my mom and she is a nurse and all of a sudden there's nothing there. We never had a conversation while she's here but after
she left. Cause they live in Washington state. I talked to her about it and said that I was upset. She expressed a couple things. One that, this is very classic Scandinavian thing, people aren't going to know really what to think. It was hard for her to feel like she couldn’t brag about it. She couldn't explain it in her community to her friends. She has like one or two close friends that their very supportive of me or something. In general I don't have a sense of, if everybody knows or nobody knows. And I don't really what the deal is and I don't ask. Don't ask don't tell really works well in Scandinavian families. But basically she expressed that this was a big challenge for her is having how do I get excited about having a grandchild in my life, I don't feel like I can just be excited everywhere all the time. I told her “I don't really care about that she'd had to deal with it herself.” The baby came and there were no plans for them to come out anytime soon. Every family has their own ways and my family, like when I was born or my little brothers were born my grandmother was always there. She would come before the baby came and be there for the first couple weeks. Like there was no plan. I was like “what the hell.” My little brother lives in Australia and they were planning to go see them. And as I was like they're not having babies they don't even have girlfriends. There was a fight about that. My dad came out, my mom had to work. It took a while, I would say maybe the first holiday season after Amanda was born. She was about seven months old things kind of got sorted out. So that took a little while and for me that was really hard because I'm really close to my mom in general. But this hasn't been the easiest thing for her to accept from the beginning of Jill to the birth of Amanda has been a challenge for her. You know I would say

- Struggle with accepting relationship
- Effects of culture (lack of communication)
- Effects of disapproval
- Explanation of behavior
- Fear of judgment by others
- Limited support for family members
- Confusion
- Effects of culture on communication
- Fear of judgment by others
- No plans to involve family in birth of child
- Family traditions
- Loss of tradition
- Some family support
- Transition from resistance to acceptance
- Difficulty with strained relationship
- Understanding of challenges of others
- Nature of relationship with father

- Parents had a hard time with it
- Her family generally doesn’t talk about things
- Mother explained not talking as a trait
- Mother couldn’t talk about
- Mother has one or two friends who are supportive of her
- She doesn’t ask if people know about her or not
- Mother was concerned how to express her excitement
- Told mother to deal with it herself

Past traditions broken because of same-sex pairing

Bio parents difficulty in coping with same-sex pairing and resulting children
also for my dad but we don't have the same kind of relationship so we don't have to fight about it so much.

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<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No plans to see child</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the past parents helped with other births</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fought about parents not coming to see them and baby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dad came to visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visitation sorted out but it was hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge for mother to accept</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Father had trouble accepting at first</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with mother’s support – mother uncomfortable about pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trying to work on relationship with mom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother hiding behind cultural background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture adds to difficulty with acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huge demonstration of lack of acceptance – break in family tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confrontational – confrontation over sub par treatment – demonstrates strength</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Father demonstrates support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother slowly warmed up but her struggle put a strain on their relationship</td>
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</table>

For other extended family, my older brother is a born-again Christian. He prays for me and stuff and Amanda. We don't see each other much and that's fine. He didn't say anything. He nice to her when he sees her and sends her really gross girl toys at the holidays. Like this obnoxious daughter of Chucky baby that made the most disgusting sounds and motions, it just

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesbians need help from God</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Daughter accepted into family system</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>First grandchild is a big deal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aunts and uncles okay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive intentions but limited interaction</td>
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Being lesbian a problem but daughter accepted into family

Positive family support
really freaks me out. They're getting their
girl thing out on our daughter. Jill’s the
first daughter. My older brothers actually a
half brothers so this is like my mom's first
grandchild. She's the first girl for a lot of
people and my younger brothers are really
awesome with her. (30:59) My aunts and
uncles, I have a few of them, I think are
pretty positive.

| Positive support |
| Brothers are supportive |
| Aunts and uncles are positive |
| Religious barrier – lack of acceptance |
| Superficial (“surface”) acceptance |
| Some family shows good support |

I'm not out to my grandparents. I don't
know, maybe that's pretty unusual but.
They know Jill, they know we've been
roommates for 15 years or whatever and
we have a daughter together too. But how
they think that happened is a thing of a
Scandinavian mind trick that I can't even
explain. It’s challenging like my grandma
decided that Amanda was adopted from the
streets or something, that somebody didn't
want her. When Amanda was really new
my grandma talks a lot about how nobody
could want this wonderful child. It was
very hard and awful. Then she got a little
older. She forgot where Amanda came
from. My grandpa doesn't talk about
anything. I don't really know what he says.
He lives in a retirement community. Jill
and I have been to visited him a couple of
times. He’s never met Jill, where my
grandmother has. So I don't really know
what he thinks. I mean he’s not an idiot
but I don’t know, so we don’t talk about.
And that’s challenging and I don’t know
how that will be. It's largely been at my
parent’s wishes because in our family what
will happen is they will have to deal with it
if my grandparents are having a hard time
with it and I won’t. Because maybe they
won’t talk to me about it. And I do think it
would be hard for them so I’m not closed to
that. But I’ve drawn a line, I won’t lie to
them but we can omit all kinds of

| Not out to older generations. Daughter and partner are not overtly explained |
| Limit contact to people and information to older generations |
| Bio parents want same-sex information limited |
| Adjust personal desires to benefit bio parents |
| Limits to hiding same-sex relationship |
| Concerns for hiding in the future as daughter ages |
| Effects of culture |
| Rationalization within cultural context |
| Challenges and effects of denial |
| Familial manipulation |
| Setting limits |
| Values |
| Morales |
| Uncertainty about futures of grandparents |

| Not out to older generations |
| There are limits to how much hiding is done of same-sex relationship by the couple |
| Grandmother thought child |
information but I won't let them say things that invalidate Jill’s life so we'll just have to see how that goes. As Jill gets older, if they stick and they’re both 90 it might not be an issue in the long run but it might be, I don’t know.

I just wanted to add one more extended family. Our donor is family to Jill as well. We call him very special uncle, his wife very special aunt, his daughter very special cousin. And their parents and step parents are also in her life. There were a lot a challenges when we were starting a family. Sorting that out, our daughter is older than their daughter and there was a lot of like anxiety, especially for me as the nonbirth parent, about how. Like at one point before when we were pregnant but we hadn't told his family yet his mom said to me something about being about finally being a grandmother or something I was like “no you're not.” And we’ve kind of a chilled down a little on that that cause our intentions about having known donor in addition to having. You know there’s all kind of reasons. But one of them was for there to be more love in our daughters life not less. In general their siblings and their parents. And them their just really great like. Sort of like aunts, uncles, and cousins I mean that’s kind of their relationship.
They have a big part in sort of our description of our family and how our family works.

T - Okay. As different people were talking I saw heads nodding. So if you guys wanna take add to anything or say yes when so-and-so was saying that it was totally the way it was for me in or whatever, you get a shot at it.

T - OK. Anybody anything you want to add?

Something that came out while we were talking was, what was interesting for me was seeing my mom come out to a lot of people when I was pregnant and then since Elliot has been in our lives. That when I was pregnant, told her like, explained the whole insemination process to her. And she then in turn explained it to her brothers because they were like “well how does that really work.” And she was like yeah “I explained it to Ed today.” And we were like “oh great”. I think some of your family as well, much more comfortable if I think about the relationship and having a family but I think there was still. Like now their grandparents and there’s something to brag to people about or something. So my mom comes out all the time that she has a lesbian daughter and this grandson. That's been really, I think, helpful in our relationship in her acceptance of it is that she has taken that piece on. And I saw it with Marcy's parents as well.

Ya my mom started becoming an advocate, not I mean. It was a whole process with her, I mean, but by the time we got to where we were having a kid she was accepting of our relationship and loving of Char and all that. But she did, I think once Elliot was born she was at the point where she would be so excited if she would meet

| They have a big part in sort of our description of our family and how our family works. | Donor family involved and supportive |
| T - Okay. As different people were talking I saw heads nodding. So if you guys wanna take add to anything or say yes when so-and-so was saying that it was totally the way it was for me in or whatever, you get a shot at it. | Struggled with boundaries with donor family |
| T - OK. Anybody anything you want to add? | Looking for extra support – own family not good enough |
| Something that came out while we were talking was, what was interesting for me was seeing my mom come out to a lot of people when I was pregnant and then since Elliot has been in our lives. That when I was pregnant, told her like, explained the whole insemination process to her. And she then in turn explained it to her brothers because they were like “well how does that really work.” And she was like yeah “I explained it to Ed today.” And we were like “oh great”. I think some of your family as well, much more comfortable if I think about the relationship and having a family but I think there was still. Like now their grandparents and there’s something to brag to people about or something. So my mom comes out all the time that she has a lesbian daughter and this grandson. That's been really, I think, helpful in our relationship in her acceptance of it is that she has taken that piece on. And I saw it with Marcy's parents as well. | Bio parents come out as parents of a lesbian as a result of grandchild |
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| | Arrived at being an advocate to other parents |
| | Bio parents go through a process. Grandchild speed up the process |
| | Acceptance and open communication |
| | Sharing information |
| | Acceptance and pride |
| | Extended ownership of the relationship |
| | Process of family acceptance |
| | Seeking comfort in helping others |
| | Empathy |
| | Process of acceptance |
| | Impact of children on family |
| | Mom came out and explained the process to others |
| | Mother came out about having a lesbian daughter and grandchild |
| | Mother became an advocate when they decided to have | Bio parents “come out” as parents of a lesbian as a result of grandchild |
| | Mother/daughter relationship improved as a result of adding child |
| | Mother became an advocate when they decided to have children |
someone else who had a gay kid and was uncomfortable with that, cause here was her chance to turn them around. You know, I mean really she would find them everywhere. Parents of gay children you know. That was not where she started at all when I first came out so. I think there's something to, you can't deny a grandchild.

(36:34) I kind of have the exact opposite of that. My mother will admit that she is the grandmother to our daughter but they have no idea how she was created. She will not speak of me. But she has a lot of gay friends, she’s been to gay bars. She will never refer to me as her gay daughter she just kind of says “oh I have this granddaughter” or my daughter’s coming to visit, my daughter and her friend are coming to visit. As much as the woman tries to say she’s on board she just, her subtleties are just so loud. She does have a granddaughter, she has two of them. My brother has a daughter and we have a daughter. But it’s more I have four grandchildren. My brother has his three children and my daughter has a child. Doesn't really acknowledge the fact that we have a child. But when we're there it’s totally different.

But nobody else that doesn’t know is there.

Right, yeah. But I kinda of get to the point

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<th>children</th>
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<td>• Once second child came mother would advocate for gay people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pregnancy/child improved relationship with mother – found more acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hesitation in saying all are comfortable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pregnancy/child improved relationship with mother – found more acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mother’s support took time to develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mother became advocate for gay parenting – forged new identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Child improved relationship with mother</td>
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| Bio parent accepts grandchild but avoids dealing with same-sex relationship |
| Pushes same-sex into face of bio parents to pay them back |
| Acknowledges grandchild but avoids same-sex relationship to explain source of grandchild |
| Limited acceptance |
| Feelings of rejection |
| Situational acceptance |
| “Protected” identity |
| Affirmation of “protected” identity |
| Spite |
| Effects of spiteful behavior |
| Limited acceptance |
| Painful burden as result of limited acceptance |

| Bio parent accepts grandchild but avoids dealing with same-sex relationship |
| Child pushes same-sex relationship into face of bio parents to pay them back |
where I just start being as gay as possible and start talking about everyone who I think is hot, just to freak them out a little bit. Because why not, I mean they've put me through hell for 35 years, I might as well just take a little back. So I kind of get the look. I embarrass her a lot. But yeah its, my mother will acknowledge she has a granddaughter but doesn't really explain our situation to have a granddaughter. I consider that to be crap. But that's my cross to bear I guess.

| Mother admitted to be a grandmother but would not say how  |
| Mother has trouble acknowledging her gay daughter’s child  |
| She deliberately tries to embarrass her mother for revenge  |
| Mother doesn’t say where granddaughter came from  |
| Mom okay with gay but not her daughter to be gay  |
| Frustration mother is inconsistent – not as accepting as she wants  |
| Says one thing and does another  |
| Anger; resentment  |
| Punishing mother for lack of acceptance  |
| Upset mother not at level of acceptance she wants her to be at  |

Even Joyce's mom actually admitted, however it killed her to say, that we were actually good parents. I call it convenient Catholicism, when you can just pick out whatever you want to throw at someone. You know you don't really believe anything that's in there, you just sort of have your little bag of stuff to chuck out so you don't really have to form your own opinions but about that was a big day when she said that. We should have had a tape recorder.

I forgot to talk about, I have one sister who is fabulous. She adores our child she is wonderful to my partner and I and been on board from the very beginning. She lives in California and moved to DC so she's not here. But we probably see her at least a

| Acknowledgment of parenting skills  |
| Resentment toward Christianity  |
| Pleased to be seen as good parents  |
| Sibling acceptance and support  |
| Resistance to recognize strengths within same-sex couple  |
| Skepticism of religion  |
| Effort and progress toward acknowledgment of strengths  |
| Limited opportunities to hear praise of relationship  |
| Acceptance by some family  |

Pleased to be seen as good parents
Positive support from sister
couple of times a year. It’s fabulous and he adores her. And she wrote letters, wrote a letter of support for the second parent adoption. We have also created a really intentional nonbiological family. An older lesbian couple that are our closest friends who are his grandparents. And they're the ones that go to grandparents Day and they're the ones who see him every weekend and they're the ones that we call and go “oh my god biological grandma is dying we need to drop the kid on your doorstep in an hour.” So that he has, I mean he has four related grandmas with all the step parents. But these two women are his grandmas. And they're the ones that were there when he was born, with us in the hospital. They're the ones that we talked to about oh my God what are we doing. Or what have we done or what's going or how much should do we put in his therapy fund today. They're there, they are our family. I mean we have parents that we sort of deal with. They are our family. And so my sister and also my best friends who lives in Tucson but is his Guardian if something happens to us. None of our family is his guardian. That was a very deliberate choice on our part. It was not biological family to do that. So that's the other piece. It just feels really important.

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<th>Effects and examples of support</th>
<th>Non biological family are treated like actual bio family and relied on more extensively</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Joyce’s mom admitted they were good parents</td>
<td>• Intentionality</td>
<td>• Created an extended family of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anger toward Catholicism</td>
<td>• Unconditional support from nonbiological family</td>
<td>• Important to not have biological family be guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disbelief that she said they were good parents</td>
<td>• Redefining “family”</td>
<td>• Created own family with similar people – reliable – completely accepting</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sister has supported relationship and adoption from beginning</td>
<td>• Importance of nonbiological support</td>
<td>• Parents disappointing; only tie biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feel mother is insincere – not really accepting</td>
<td>• Positive support from sister</td>
<td>• Main goal is to surround</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child has strong bond to sister – evidence of support</td>
<td>• Non biological family are treated like actual bio family and relied on more extensively</td>
<td>Non biological family placed at higher level than biological</td>
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T - OK anybody else?

One more thing. I think that it was almost like, we didn't have a commitment ceremony, more than just between us and a couple of friends. And so both of our families never had a chance when they really . . and we needed kind of we made it because we moved away and made it easier for them to just kind of ignore or not talk about it. But I think when we had a kid it was some people, I would agree, they were, all of a sudden they became our, we gave them a chance to be our advocates and they were, you know. Talk, talking about it and about us and about you know, that we were adopting and telling all their friends and were excited. And then advocate part, also my sister who is younger. I'm able to just say to my parents and my brothers. If you guys aren’t going to be supportive than we are not going to be a part, but she's kind of straddling between. She’ll come and visit us and she's also you know, she's fourteen, one is 12 and one is 14 years younger than me, so they were still at home and so I think that she struggled. For a long time my parents just said she would have no contact when I first came out. But you know as she's gotten old enough to travel on her own and make her own decisions she's the one that's maintaining a relationship with me. And she'll talk about dad said this and I told him. . . She's the one that’s going back and aggressively defending us and defending you know. She'll go back and just, like last time she was at our house she went around made a little video of our house because my parents had never set foot. They’ve come to Minnesota and they won't come visit us. They’ll come visit family across the street but ignore our house. And so, she's very

<table>
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<th>child with accepting people – always</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Removed from family view so no work accepting same-sex relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Grandchild created opportunity for family to advocate for same-sex pairing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Some family advocate to other family members</td>
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<td>• Relocating to help parents with resistance to same-sex relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Change of opinion and attitude after birth of child</td>
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<td>• Negative effects of disapproval</td>
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<td>• Making own decisions</td>
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<td>• Assertiveness regarding thoughts and values</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maturity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Avoidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Efforts to unite family</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Never had a commitment ceremony with family</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No ceremony made it easier for family to ignore their relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Family was given a chance to be advocates when child came</td>
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<tr>
<td>• They told family to either support or piss off</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Parents initially said they would have no contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sister has aggressively advocated to their parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No confidence in family – never tested families acceptance</td>
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Because same-sex relationship was not in the family’s view it was easy to avoid. After adding children the same-sex relationship was more visible

There was a change of opinion and attitude after the birth of their child

Strong support from sister
aggressively like putting me in their face all the time you know, that they have a grandchild that's up here that they don't see. You know. It's a role that I just, but she's in the middle of us so she.

Child increased acceptance and level of family involvement/support
Strong – acceptance required of family membership
Strong support from sister – advocate

T - OK, anybody else? I’m going to give you guys a definition for heterosexism and homophobia. So that we’re all talking the same talk when we get to this next question. Heterosexism is a belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the only natural normal or moral mode of sexual behavior and is also used to refer to the effects of that cultural ideology. Homophobia is prejudice against, fear or dislike of homosexual people and homosexuality. Question 3 - I'd like for you guys to describe any experiences you have had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your family.

Well the whole thing is heterosexist and homophobic. I mean we have to go and buy sperm at $500 of vial. We have to pay for the process that straight people don't have to. We have to legally protect their families. I mean we spent a fortune in lawyer’s fees for drawing up agreements before our child was born. To make sure that if anything happened to me that my partner would be his Guardian before the adoption could be completed.

We had to get letters of support.
Letters of support to adopt
To let people know we were okay people.
That we’re acceptable to be parents. We had to go to court to prove that we’re

Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
- Purchase sperm
- Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
  - Establish legal protection non-gays don’t have to do
- Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
  - Get letters of support to become parents
- Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
  - Prove to court that we’re acceptable as parents
- Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
  - Expensive
- Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
  - Perform steps that are sometimes pointless which slows the process
parents and that we can do this.

Somebody had to approve that we were parents.

Somebody had to approve that we were fit to be parents. Now I am a therapist, a social worker. My specialty is child development. In my utopia, people would have to have a license to be a parent. In my reality in my perfect world that would be true. I spend my life cleaning up people's disastrous childhoods.

To piggyback on that, I work with people on welfare trying to help them find employment so they can support the children they've already, had in a way that they don’t have to pay for.

And then, but you want test me in being a parent but not everybody else that can go out and have random sex and have children. And the amount of money that we spent to have our families that you know, to go have the baby we have got to take all the papers with us. This is my partner, she gets to be here. She gets to make the medical decisions if something happens. She gets to do this. You have to do father search when you're going to adopt, with the second parent adoption, even if you used an unknown donors you have to do a father search that delays the process by 30 days. So that no man steps forward and says “that's my kid.”

You have to pay for a profile.

And you to pay for that. Right. I mean you have to pay for the profile from the website. You have to do . . . I mean it is all heterosexist and homophobic.

We have to explain how we got a baby.

Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
- Pay for a profile
- Health insurance for the family
- The whole process is a challenge
- Expensive – not same for non-gays
- Non-gays don’t have to prove they are fit
- The process is new for some agencies
- Some social workers are positive
- Sometimes non-gays are given preferential treatment
- Judgmental attitudes
- Attitude of “damaged children can have damaged parents”
- Deception needed to access the system
- Need to self-advocate
That's not fair.

Ya, you have to explain to uncle Ed.

Because clearly that’s . . . you know not how babies are made.

Insurance, health insurance. My partner just left her job that had partner benefits. So now, you know, she and the kid are covered, I'm SOL, I’m self employed I’m SOL. All right here we go again. The whole thing is a challenge, I mean every step. And we do it, I mean, one of my friends says “well it sucks that we have to but at least we can.” And I'm like at least we can. We have some methods to do it but you know, straight people don't have to spend $20,000. And the hassle to do this.

They don't have to prove that they, you know, that they could be, that they are parents. That they are good parents.

So on the adoption side. The other thing when we went in to the adoption program in 2000. I think we were pretty new at that point. Some of the social workers were just delighted that we were there and ya know. But then we also got, we got a call once and it was a birth mother looking at us and, it turned out really weird but. It came down to, what we think happened, and we kind a got some of this in phone conversations. Is that the social worker told that, the birth mother was having a boy, and she said well wouldn't it be better if

Aren’t you worried about the male role model.

And so then we were slotted. Then the social worker didn't schedule us until after she'd scheduled a heterosexual couple to

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<td>- Damaged children can have damaged parents</td>
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<td>- Deception needed to access the system</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Need to self-advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Everybody should have to go through a process to become a parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Non-gays (some) can’t afford the children they have</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Some non-gays become parents though random sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Thankful the opportunity exists</td>
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- Financial impact of heterosexism |
- Burden to prove competency |
- Systemic injustice |
- Heterosexism |
- Double standard for same-
meet with them. You know, and then later when we called and said what's going on. She said well they always pick the first couple that meets with them. It was just, you know, we'd had kind of similar with Leslie's birth mom we had a social worker that was just terrible. She wasn't just terrible, she was worse. She was, you know,

Just inappropriate.

Inappropriate about us being lesbians, she was also very bigoted toward the birth mom and just would say things that we, we started going to visit our birth mom on our own because we were like, we don't want her to reflect us and we don't want her turning this whole the wrong way. So we kind of had to pull through.

Cause her attitude was that because of the situation the birth mother was in. Pretty much was probably no one else, of a normal couple, would want is child. There's nothing wrong with Leslie, there was nothing wrong with the situation, it was just someone’s bad choices and you know but it’s okay you can take this kid, sort of attitude.

T - OK, garbage child

Here you’re cleaning up what no one else will take, so good for you. You won’t mess that one up.

And she, would I mean, she was just rude.

Well even initially going in a lot of people go in as one person so they can adopt from foreign adoptions and things like that. Well we came in as a couple and said “you need to do with us as a couple” whatever issues you have, you deal with that. And

sex versus opposite sex couples
- Financial impact of heterosexism
- Additional expectations from same-sex couples
- Lack of privacy
- Limited access to employee benefits
- Double standard between same-sex and opposite-sex couples
- Some acceptance from social workers
- Effects of biased system
- Bigotry
- Separating from negativity
- Same-sex couples viewed as ‘abnormal’
- Unworthiness
- Get what no one else wants
- Unworthiness
- Assertive communication

- They pay for sperm while straight people do not have to
- Had to legally create family
- Had to prove that they were capable parents
- Adoption process complex
- Have to explain to family members how baby came to be
- Insurance harder to get
- Straight people don’t have to prove they are good parents when adopting
- Some social workers delighted they were adopting
- Birth mother was worried that there would be no male role model
we were in their face from the very beginning.

- Mother met with heterosexual couple before them
- Social worker inappropriate toward lesbians
- Thought that social worker was bigoted toward birth mother
- They visited birth mother without social worker due to her attitude about the mother
- Social worker implied that no one else would take child
- Social worker rude
- They went in as a couple from the beginning

- Angry they have to pay for equality
- Feel insulted – have to prove they’re equal
- Feels she will be better than most parents out there
- Unfair – feels like 2nd class citizen
- Angry about the cost to be equal in heterosexist world
- Frustrated at hoops in process
- Angry about cost in process
- Unfair heterosexist system
- Heterosexism – angry doesn’t have equal rights
- Unsatisfied with just being able – wants it to be equal
- Feel they are viewed as sub par
- Felt some support at agency
- Felt the social worker was heterosexist
- Felt social worker was homophobic?
- Felt she was prejudiced and
We had this really great social worker. Who was very like “we say we’re diverse so let's act like we are.” And she would just, I mean, she would run up to stairs practically saying “this is what they said we need to change this” you know and we weren't really aggressive but we were just like this is who we are this is what it is, you deal with us you know. And just sort of gave them the avenue to do it. And some of them stepped up and did and some of them didn't. So you just sort of said “okay, well thank you we’ll go with this person then.”

And that was originally why we went adoption was because we wanted to be equal in the decisions, we wanted to have equal to adopt together as a single and neither of us felt a strong need to have the child.

And also, not that my family would have done that if either one of us have had the child but, Joyce's family, not that they're that accepting now but there would have been no way that they would have accepted a child that I had. You know or if Joyce had the child then it’s only hers. We just didn't want to deal with that of all. This way we’re both her moms, this is what it says, you know that's the way it is.

In the open adoption we wanted a connection to the birth family. For a family, we thought that was really important. We really liked the idea of children.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Just being a same-sex couple challenges the system</td>
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<tr>
<td>- A variety of responses from people in the system</td>
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<td>- Some of the</td>
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I just wanted to say, I'm uncomfortable with anything that suggests that because our families are planned and chosen they're necessarily better than the families that are unplanned or unchosen. I have in fact found that some of my best allies, in talking about my nontraditional family are single moms, where dad is not in the picture. That's my experience. I would just mention a couple of experiences. One was birth class. To take it back a little ways. There was all straight couples and then us and I was dad partner. Either I was not there or I was dad hyphen partner, I think how that would be worded. It drove me F'n crazy. I'm not dad partner, I'm just partner. Just like it was really hard for a lot of the instructors in a couple of different ones to like treat me as an equal. And to see me there. Like if they saw there then I was totally different and they had to like. That was challenging for some of them and really frustrating from me. Another one was kind of different. In the workplace, I had a lot of challenges with my employer. My immediate supervisor in terms of. . . Well my partner and I both work at the University and my boss knows we both work a block from each other or whatever. And any time our daughter was sick if I would call in or make a plan to go to a doctor's appointment with her, my supervisor would always asked “can't Jill do it.” I really think my supervisor saw Jill as the primary parent and me as something else. And that was really hard to accept. I think a lot, the only other example I would give, is just something you mentioned earlier. Whenever people, I still struggle with sort of the “coming out.” So we’re in the grocery story and someone says “Who's your daddy?” you know. I like, I struggle with don't know. And like I struggle with, she’ll just say “I don’t have one” and she’s three so that’s going to work for a while.

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But I struggle with because, aside from my grandparents, I’m not at all close. But I still get to make a choice every day about who do and who I don’t talk to about my private life. With my daughter it’s a new challenge. It’s like, it’s really hard to make like a socially conscious choice as well as like a individually protect the baby and me choice. There’s a lot of conflict I guess between what’s best for her in that moment and then sort of in her development and the world and her self identity. And I’ll say I’ve had way less negative experiences than I imagined having. Yet I still almost always, like in the last month, where somebody asked a question like that and I basically didn't tell the true and she's right there. And she said something different than I said, you know. And that’s just a real challenge. I don’t know, that may not caused by an individuals homophobia than society and that really shapes a lot of how we choose to interact with the world and a lot of those choices are really different when you have another person involved and, as I said, a person you are trying to teach to be proud of herself. To be proud of her family. With that said my baby sees two mommies everywhere. You do don’t you. We'll be at a restaurant and she’ll see a couple across the way. I’m just joking, but seriously like two people with Mullets and they’re actually not two women. And she’s like look there’s two mommies. So I love that she’s very proud of herself and us right now. But I want to do everything I can to protect her from negative experiences. And I don’t want her to shy away from that and also get to foster that feeling of awsomeness and pride. Something like that.

T - OK

I was thinking. She brought that up. We

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get, and it's not homophobia, I think it's heterosexism where we'll all be in Target or something or anywhere. And some stranger will ask which one of you is the mom. There's no way that you're both the moms. It's just not even and then we both say that we both are. And we get this contorted face weird like. Maybe the more liberal people will look like “I just put my foot in my mouth, why did I say that.” Just kind of thinking “that's weird.” Just forms for preschool that say father and mother. I just cross’em out and say parent one, parent two. We don't even do Mother, Mother because there's Father, Father.

Right

Parent number one and parent number two.

I tend to be a little more aggressive when it comes to people making generalizations about us. I was at the grocery store and there was a soccer team that was bagging the groceries and I was with my daughter and she was at home and the woman said “do you want take a sucker home for Dad” and I said “mom!” I'm yelling at this woman who was just trying to be polite. I didn't know she was calling me a boy or referring to, assuming that I have a husband at home. So I got kind of aggressive with her. And I'm like “oh thank you.” I'm walking around going “God I'm a jerk” and I was referring to myself but. I tend to view the, we're kind of the pioneers in Coon Rapids. Where even our daughter, her little preschool group. At the end of the holiday season they yelled out “Merry Christmas Mom and Dad.” And we sent an e-mail saying that's offensive because there's Grandmas and Aunts and Uncles. And they stopped saying that. It's been two years they haven't said that. We tend to be the

| Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic: |
| - Need for legal so reality matches emotional and structural family dynamics |
| - Legal steps required to protect family unit |

| Legal grey areas |
| Extra steps to protect family from particular people |
| Professional awareness increasing |
| Accessed local resources to find legal assistance |

Some advocates in the system

Employers want other parent to be the primary

Most responses are positive and some forms and language are inclusive

The uniqueness of the family is celebrated not hidden or ignored

| Legal steps to provide health care decisions |
| Need to create options |
| - Legal needs and associated expense |
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| - Create awareness, knowledge and comfort about family creation |

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| - Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic: |
aggressive pioneer types.

T - OK, anything else? How about for you two?

I remember birth class, they actually used partner. I was trying to think of all the prenatal stuff. Which was kind of.

We've been really lucky.

Sometimes you get a weird medical assistant. Showing you to the room and they were like “is that your sister.” Just weird stuff or “is that your daughter.”

Which we get all the time.

But for the most part everybody was really good and I think people at the birth class used the word birth partner as their set thing. They didn't burden us and it was at HCSC so I think they see a wide variety of families. But clearly not everybody got that we were a lesbian couple. I think it was more that she was my sister.

I think we randomly have questions. Like “who's the mom” and it's really annoying if it's not coming from a lesbian.

Everybody who was involved in getting me pregnant. That was all. Everybody got it. We never had anything.

Elliott goes to preschool and that's been fine. All the forms there say parent. Everything been fine actually. I don't know that we've had a lot of negative experiences.

T - Individually but systemic?

Systemic, yeah. I mean we had, we've found a doctor through Rainbow families

- Unnecessary steps in the process
  - Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
    - Need for second parent adoption
  - Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
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  - Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
    - Legal steps
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    - Professional awareness increasing
  - Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
    - Accessed local resources to find legal assistance
  - Willingness to grow and change
  - Options
  - Decision-making process for adoption
  - Struggle with parental recognition in same-sex couples
that did my, that helped us with my insemination. We had a lesbian midwife. Who was like a “rock on.” The midwife part was great. I ended up needing to have a C-section with a lesbian OB. My partner is now pregnant. We had to do a whole bunch of really intense fertility stuff. The doctor they referred us to is a lesbian. So we had a really good, in that sense, really good people who get it. Supportive of us. The hospital and birth process was good. His school is great about, you know, we get two Mother's Day cards. For Father’s Day they made him grandfather cards to give to his grandfather's. They do that stuff without us saying. The experiences is more of the societal stuff that I really struggle with.

T - All right so I'm going to let you guys know that we've got about less than 20 minutes left and I've got a few questions to go some of these will take less time. But maybe keep your answers shorter and tighter and then maybe we'll get done.

Question 4 - What if any legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family?

We just got, when we were starting to think about a family we had a health-care directive done and wills. And if there were ever to be children we would have custody of each other's children.

T - A health-care directive is similar to a living will.

Yes exactly. Apparently the default in Minnesota is save the baby, not save the mother, and we wanted that to be reversed. So that she would make that decision if I were incapacitated. And then after she was born we had it added, a Guardian added to

- Intentionality
- Clarification of perspective on family styles
- Allies
- Heterosexism
- Frustration
- Inequality
- Heterosexism and frustration
- Perceived inequality
- Emotional struggle
- Negative effects of heterosexism
- Struggle with disclosing sexual orientation
- Struggle to explain relationship
- Options about disclosure
- Protection of family
- Impact of same-sex parents on child’s family identity
- Appreciation
- Challenges of conditional honesty
- Challenges of instilling family pride
- Universalizing family structure
- Love and pride
- Parental desire to protect
- Fear of shame
- Loss of pride
- Effects of heterosexism
- Rebellion against forced identification
- Understanding of struggles of gay men (parents)
- Affirmation to rebellion against forced identification
- Aggressive communication
- Assumption of family style
- Confusion
- Frustration
the will. And then the second parent adoption was a couple thousand dollars, that kind of thing. Because it took so long, she was almost a year old before Doris was able to adopt her. And it kind of felt like a relief. Emotionally she was hers the whole time but it was just you know when we took this picture with the judge and we had that on our mantle, you know, and that's just the way it is. We celebrate that day, that adoption day, she gets an extra present and those kinds of things. She knows, she's five, she knows mommy adopted her mama had her. But legally we had to, it was a lot of that.

T - OK

That's what we did. We had the living wills, the health-care directive. We had the wills drawn up for guardianship so before she could be a guardian until the adoption, the second parent adoption went through. I think Karen was three months old and we were able to get it done pretty quickly. We also do adoption day. A special Gotcha Day. We’ve got a first day Gotcha Day. He just turned three so he's starting to understand that we’re talking about that. Talking to him about . . . We have a book that we read him about his family. The birth mother and the adoptive mother. And now that he knows he's going to be a big brother, talking about this baby is going to come from mama and then I'm going to adopt that baby. So he's sort of.

T - OK

We did the same. A living will, the will, all that go ahead and, several drafts based on exactly when it would happened. And we did it a couple months before the due date. We also have to do the father search, which is pretty funny, since we knew

- Anger
- Advocacy pioneers for diverse family types
- Example of heterosexism
- Advocacy pioneers for diverse family types
- Some courtesy
- Appreciation
- Confusion
- Show of respect for same-sex relationship
- Denial
- Lack of understanding
- Annoyance
- Positive preschool experience
- Examples of support throughout medical process from those who can relate
- Appreciation for support
- Support and actions that display acceptance
- Societal resistance
- Preparation for the future
- Values within relationship
- Relief after lengthy process
- Legal recognition of parents
- Joy
- Roles within family relationship
- Agreement with other same-sex couple
- Legal security for the future of the child
- Celebration of child and family
- Educating on the process and relationships
- Agreement with other same-sex couple
- Legal process
- Lack of legal experience with donor relationship
where the sperm had come from. But also our donor sent a letter of support. Our adoption went through about two months after the Lena was born. Which is pretty fast. There was just one little funny thing. The donor family was maybe coming to visit us around the time of the adoption. We told the lawyer the donor family was coming to the adoption hearing. And it just made the lawyer, she totally freaked out. In general there was known donor phobia with the legal process. Because it's untested territory so much more. But we didn't have any written agreement with the donor, like a donor agreement or anything like that in writing.

T - OK

We did everything. We did the final adoption together. Leslie was about four months old. And did all the assigning who would take care of her if something happened to us. We did go to the extra step and signed a paper that said basically right down someone's name that if this person ever tried to take her away or if something happens to either one of us that these people cannot have, “no right to say anything.” Just to protect you even further if something happens.

T - OK

We did all the same.

T - Okay, did any of you who give power of attorney?

Yes

Yes

Yes
| T - For in your case those two were the same document, power of attorney and medical? |
| It was sort of like package. The will, the power attorney, the healthcare directives were all that sort of. The lesbian package. |
| The lesbian special. |
| The attorneys in town have them all. |
| T - What legal resources did you guys access? |
| We went to a workshop at Rainbow Families. And the presenter thought sperm was dirty, so we didn't like her. She was giving us medical advice when we asked some questions. But the partner was just as smart as her so we went to her legal partner, who also presented at the Rainbow families conference. |
| T - OK |

- Birth class used partner
- Asked who was the mom
- Everyone involved in pregnancy “got it”
- School was fine
- Hospital very gay friendly
- School sent Mother’s Day cards and grandfather cards without them saying
- Legal forms involving custody
- Legal adoption process was lengthy
- Legal documents: living will, health care directive, and second parent adoption
- Adoption day celebrated
- They have a book to explain their family to their child
- Same legal forms as above
- Father search
- There was no donor agreement
- Did adoption and wills
- Forms to help protect family
- Gave power of attorney
- All the forms are in one package
- Went to a workshop for legal advice
- Presenter thought sperm was dirty
- Sought partner’s advice instead
- Advocating for selves; diversity – unwilling to lower standards
- Expected mixed reactions
- Equality as parents crucial in decision making
- Family stuck with heterosexist definition of parents – biological
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<th>Adoption still fits in hetero norm for family</th>
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<td>Nontraditional can be good too</td>
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<td>Frustrated with heterosexist class – heterosexist language</td>
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<td>Hetero class; unsure about homo couples – felt less important – felt less than equal</td>
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<td>Frustrated with heterosexist viewpoint – one primary caregiver, other primary provider</td>
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<td>Uncomfortable in social situations</td>
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<td>Views gay identity as private – not “out and proud”</td>
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<td>Struggle with being a feminist and changing the world and protecting her baby from possible negativity</td>
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<td>Fearful of societal reactions</td>
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<td>Struggling with own comfort level and wanting child to do better</td>
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<td>Heterosexist interaction in society</td>
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<td>Heterosexist forms, adapting and changing forms – advocating for change</td>
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<td>Unafraid to correct people – advocating for change</td>
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<td>Doesn’t live in extremely gay aware area – very hetero</td>
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<td>Positive experience due to neutral language</td>
<td>Felt people still viewed from heterosexist viewpoint</td>
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<td>Only lesbians can accurately ask that question?</td>
<td>Positive experience</td>
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<td>Homo friendly</td>
<td>All around amazingly accepting, positive experiences</td>
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<td>Responsible – legally protecting family/children</td>
<td>Adoption process costly</td>
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<td>Felt more secure having both parents legal guardians</td>
<td>Milestone – very significant day for them</td>
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<td>Open about everything with daughter</td>
<td>Responsible – legal protection – equal rights for both</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open about everything with child</td>
<td>Trying to avoid confusion in hetero world by teaching child about his family</td>
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<td>Established legal protection and equality</td>
<td>Used a known donor with positive support – to limit complications</td>
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<td>Legal protection very important</td>
<td>Legal protection</td>
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<td>Legal protection</td>
<td>Responsible – full legal coverage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible – full legal coverage</td>
<td>Smart – utilized community resources</td>
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<td>Did research finding right</td>
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We wanted to meet with an attorney about lesbian legal issues. And she knew nothing about adoption or any of that but was fascinated by the fact that we were going to having a child. She was proud of us for doing that but she wasn't able to answer questions. And she was a lesbian attorney. She was like wow, oh. So that was.

Char actually did a lot of our stuff for the adoption.

We found her just because she was the attorney that spoke at our MayBe Baby class. So we were like. We had friends that used her for their adoptions. We were like whatever. It's a pretty easy process for an attorney.

We picked ours out of Lavender Magazine. We saw an ad.

We did our adoption finalization with lawyers recommended Children's Health Care. Our will in all that was done at the same time.

We did call around and there's a couple lesbian women in town that sort of do the partner adoption deal. So, and my partner’s an attorney and she sort of asked around and looked at Lavender.

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<th>attorney</th>
<th>Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Failed attempts to access legal aid</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Used one legal resource to locate local legal resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Explored multiple local resources before choosing legal assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Lack of legal knowledge in adoption process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Pride</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Networking for supportive resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Went to an attorney</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Attorney was lesbian but didn’t know the issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Found attorney</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Attorney spoke at class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Friends had used attorney</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Picked attorney out of magazine</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lawyer through Children’s Health Care</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Call around for attorneys</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Asked around and looked at magazine</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Utilized community resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Utilized community resources and friends</td>
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</table>
T - OK. What motivated you guys to access legal resources?

Heterosexism.

Fear.

Find every way possible to bind yourselves together without having to bring a piece of paper.

Such a horrible time when you have to make sure all the bad things that can happen.

Yeah

How people can try to tear your family apart.

T - OK I’m going to give you guys another definition this one’s for culture. Culture is the system of shared beliefs values customs and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another. Should I whip through that one more time?

The family culture?

T - Cultures the system of shared believes values. This will make more sense after I’ve asked the question. Question 5 - Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your family of origin.

That's a dissertation in itself.

I think we’re more accepting. Not that my

| Community resource? | Heterosexism |
| One stop shop – comfortable with agency | Fear |
| Did own research | Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic: |
| | - Create legitimacy |
| | Motivation for seeking legal help |
| | Heterosexism motivated them to seek legal resources |
| | Fear motivated them |
| | A way of binding them together |
| | General sense of fear of heterosexism and homophobia negatively impacting their families |

| Intentionally less prejudice, more accepting | Feels creating a family has forced a higher level of acceptance as parents |
| More intentional through using resources and preparing for family | More intentional in all decisions than family of origin |
| To stretch beyond what was available in family of origin | |
| Open-mindedness | |
| Understanding of diversity | |
| Resourcefulness | |
| Intentional education on diversity | |
| Prioritizing child’s feelings | |
| Willingness to sacrifice comfort so child can know her culture | |
| Limited cultural growth | |
parents weren’t. It's a given. I have to accept whatever Leslie comes to do the table with. Because of what we've created. I don't have a right to be prejudice.

I think that we utilize a lot more resources. Like we go to parenting groups, Rainbow families, adoption group, and we purposely looked for an adoption group that wasn't just lesbians. We want Leslie to see all kinds of families and different race, mixed race families. We're consciously trying to make it easier for her first of all. She sees people like her around all the time. If we’re uncomfortable that's okay but she needs to be comfortable.

To go outside our comfort zone.

That's our priority for our family. My, the culture of my family, my younger brother is African-American because he was adopted. And we never saw any, we were in Indiana, completely different now, not accepting at all. The family was. No contribution going on. Religion was really important we went to Christian schools.

T - OK

| Chosen family and their role versus extended family and family of origin. I wouldn't say had zero role actually when I was growing up. In fact, I think a lot of things that we made big in our family, their words fits them. In our family of origin is like that. Like there were one or two aunts and uncles who were just sort of somebody's friend. Everybody in the family knows. We’ve done that a lot with our family. And Jill and I are both activists. In different areas. That's a big part of Jill's life. That was not any part of my life. So she's definitely being raised with a strong sense of justice and a strong sense of that she has a part in making something come | • They believe that their family is more accepting than family of origin
• More likely to use more resources
• Consciously expose daughter to different types of families
• Consciously go outside of their comfort zone
• Feels creating a family has forced a higher level of acceptance as parents
• Focused on needs of the child – making her as comfortable with differences as possible
• Needs of child greater than own
• Diversity important

| Chosen family and family of origin similar between generations
• Activism important now, not part of family of origin
• More activism in current family then family of origin
• Many areas are similar between current family and family of origin
• Childhood friends turned out to be gay
• Current family similar to family of origin
• Comfortable being “out”
• Being gay parents is not bad

| Chosen family and family of origin similar

More activism in current family then family of origin

Created family is the most important family

There are differences between current
I don't know a lot of difference except technological generational anyway. I tried to do a lot of community work with her. She's still pretty young but I talk to her about when I go down to the shelter and do some things there. Or if I'm doing some other community involvement. She's a little bit too young for a lot of the things that I do. She knows that I do that and she will ask. I was thinking, I was going to answer this, there's not really a whole a lot of difference. I grew up pretty liberal area. My parents were pretty liberal. I think I say no to the same things. I'm an only child, she's an only child. I think you probably have a lot more differences

Missouri Senate, yeah, small-town around 6000 people. Now that I'm no longer living in that town most of my friends are gay. It's just funny that we all came around at the same time like “you too, I knew it.” But yeah, I had my past life pretty much was so different than it is now. I'm not afraid, I really don't care what people think. So my daughter has two moms, OK, you know what, it's a reality. There's a lot of other things that I could be doing that are a lot worse. But there's a lot of other things are happening right now that are a lot worse. And the fact that she and I are raising a daughter, we are not that bad of people. We're doing nothing wrong. Our child is in a loving home. She has a very strong nonbiological family. We've been adopted pretty much by this family that lives up here. I'm from small-town Illinois, she's from Iowa. We don't know anybody up here but each other and our daughter and this family that's adopted us. Not adopt us but they've kind of taken us under their wing. I really don't care about things as much as I thought that I used to.
This is it, this is me, I'm me all the time. We try to be really open. We didn't talk about much in my family, you don't acknowledge it, you don't do it. I ended up a therapist. So we talk about feelings, we talk about what's going on, we talk about what's happening. And have that open relationship where you can talk about stuff, where you can come together. We think about what are our values, what do we want to teach, who do we want to be, and have him have that and have this chosen family.

| Currently family more open communication than family of origin | Desire outside input and observation to ensure good parenting |
| Close biological connection not important; close relationships make a family | Children have known resources that are easily accessible for their needs |
| Feminist philosophy – advocating for change | Family of origin similar to current family |
| Many similarities in family culture | Intentional changes from family of origin |
| Grew out of conservative background | More similarity to partner’s family of origin |
| advocating for self | Checks and balances support |
| unafraid to be open | They have outsiders who will check their parenting |
| feels the needs to justify it still | They are more accepting of outside help and advice |
| Nonbiological family – Close relationships = family | More similarity to partner’s family of origin |
| I’m here, I’m queer, get used to it | More openness |
| Didn’t like closed communication – opposite of family background | |
ass. To have that kind of thing where there are people watching, there are people giving us feedback. There are people, and he knows. He knows he has people he can go to. In the midst of my partner’s grandmother dying and we dumped him at their house. Came back and there’s a jar of peanut butter sitting on the steps by his backpack. We said, OK? We set down the dinner and he said “Grandma Mommies don't have any peanut butter for peanut butter toast for breakfast would you borrow me some.” Part of me is like “oh my god” he’s begging for peanut butter. And then on the other hand I’m going, he's barely 3 and he can say “we don't have this, I know these people that love me and care about me and I can ask them for what I need and they will help me.” And I think, well okay, that's what you have these neighbors is all about. And so, in part, my embarrassment and my pride at the same time. I’m like, okay this is what we want for our family. He can go and he can say this is real and know there are people that will assist to him and help him and be there. So now we joke about the eating breakfast food in our shelf.

T - How about for you guys?

I think there's a lot of similarity and my family. The way my culture was growing up.

And I think mine is just, we didn't talk about anything, there's no emotion, there's nothing. And I think having boy was really important for me too. It's work I've done in my life to be able express my own emotions and to recognize them. So for me, in particularly having a son, it's been very important for me to help him identify his emotions. I think that's important, we do that a lot. And like that never, to this

- Family façade
- Accountability
- Support system
- Establishing a support system
- Mixed emotions
- Recognition of support system
- Similarity with family of origin a new family
- Lack of communication
- Teaching identification and expression of emotions
- Values
- Lack of emotional expression
- Open communication
- They have outsiders who will check their parenting
- In family of origin outsiders perceived things were good when they may not have been
- They are more accepting of outside help and advice
- A lot of similarity between family of origin and current
- More openness in communication in current family than family of origin
- Concerned about failing as a parent – making mistakes like their families did – use trust worthy friends to help evaluate parenting
- Close relationships with nonbiological friends are important
- considered family
- Believes child has trust and love in his relationships – reaching goal for
day, doesn't happen in my family of origin. But yeah, I think we're quite similar to Marcy's.

There's a lot of sharing in my family. We share everything. I agree, we have more openness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>family/parenting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Consciously working against hetero gender stereotypes/socialization of boys</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase in openness</td>
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T - OK. I going to tell you guys what the last questions are. And I promised you eight so if you want to leave then you can but you know what the last questions are so you can make an informed decision about whether you're going to stay or not. **Questions 6** - The next one is how is your current parenting style and family organization similar to or different from that of your family of origin? Describe those whom you consider to be your extended family now. And the last one is describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents. Did you access older generations for their knowledge of anything in relation to parenting. OK, so with those three out there if you guys wanna go I understand cause I told you eight.

What was the first question again?

We have a baby sitter issue is this going to hurt your research

T - No

One of those questions sparked my interest. What was the first question?

**Questions 6** - T - How was your current parenting style and family of organization similar or different than that of your family of origin?

For me personally, my family was a bunch of yeller's, you know, you get mad you yell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences between family of origin and current family in spite of still participating with family of origin in perceived negative ways</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ineffective communication</td>
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<td>• Avoidance</td>
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<td>• Difference from family of origin</td>
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<td>• Healthy communication</td>
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<td>• Realization of parenting strengths</td>
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<td>• Acceptance of family behavior</td>
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<td>• Acquired parenting style</td>
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<td>• Difference in parenting own family and family of origin</td>
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<td>• Family of origin – yell – current family – discuss issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• She adapted to partner’s style of discussing things</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Family of origin = yelling. Current family = discuss issues</td>
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| Conscious change in current family from family of origin |
| Usage partner’s family of origin as a model for current family |
| Differences between family of origin and current family in spite of still participating with family of origin in perceived negative ways |
| Healthy communication |
| Realization of parenting strengths |
| Acceptance of family behavior |
| Acquired parenting style |
| Difference in parenting own family and family of origin |
| Family of origin – yell – current family – discuss issues |
| She adapted to partner’s style of discussing things |
| Family of origin = yelling. Current family = discuss issues |

| Change in family communication style |
| Learned new communication pattern from |

Family of origin = yelling. Current family = discuss issues
and pretty soon have ice cream and forget that it ever happened. And we’re not really like that, we’re more of a sit down discuss before we decide what’s going to happen.

Which is how I grew up.

Right, and so I kind of adapted my parenting to yours because it seemed to work a lot better than mine did. And still to this day, my mother and I will go head-to-head and then we just all have cake. Because that’s just what you do in my family. But with our daughter if something happens like the window gets busted, “OK, why don’t you go upstairs to your room for a little bit,” and we’ll talk. And then we decide together as a family unit what’s the consequence to this, what are we going to do, who’s going to tape the window shut because now it’s busted. So I think that, you know, my parenting style is a lot different from the one that I had when I was growing up. Because we were always yelling at each other. Everybody was a yellin’, and then you would just pretended that it didn’t happen.

T - OK. Is anybody else going to need to go? Cause then what I think I’m going to do is ask you two the other two questions real quick.

We’re sorry

**Question 7** - T - Describe those who you considered to be your extended family now.

Our babysitter.

T - So it could be your biological family and it might be additional people. Several people have already talked about other people that they have that they consider part of their family.
And it was part of that different.

**Question 7 - T - No, there is another question described those that you think are in your extended family now.**

Well, we have auntie. We have a great friend of ours who is just auntie. And her entire family has embraced us.

That's the family we talked about earlier that's taken us under their wing.

Yeah. They felt bad that first year that we didn't have anywhere to go on Easter. Which isn't really a big holiday for us. They felt bad so we had a brunch. Ever since then we've been kind of in her whole family.

Our friend, her names Karen. Karen's mom came to our house for Mother's Day. We had a cookout, she didn't really have any place to go either, so Karen brought her up to our house. This family's incredible, you know. We see a rodent out in our yard. We'll e-mail Uncle Jay and find out what is this thing in our yard. They kind of know us as the city dorks. They've taken us under their wing and because of our living situation, our friend Karen's niece, probably had an easier time coming out as a lesbian.

I think so.

Because the families like, even Karen's moms like “I know lots of lesbians.” Well she knew us and that was it. But when came Lena came out it was like, “hey Lena, what ever, you like it I love it.” I think the family kind of accepted their family because of us. And they are very important part of our family.
Along with our real extended family.

T - The biological one?

Yeah. Yes there really isn't anything better than a family reunion in the middle of Nebraska.

Yes, there really isn't, Red cloud Nebraska.

T - I've been there.

Have you

T - I have

I'm sorry

Were you studying Willa Cather

T - I went to new to school in Nebraska for awhile.

There's a Bruington Cemetery and she is the Bruington in the cemeteries.

**Question 8** - T - Okay the last one is described information or resources from previous generations if any that you guys found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents.

I think we look to your parents a lot.

I think we look to my parents a lot, yeah, definitely. To a fault maybe. Because I think that they were so great that everything they did was right.

I'm not dousing the fact that your mother thinks that everything that goes through Anna's life has to be the same as it was for yours. So even the first doll's name, was named, the same for her dolls that she had.
As far as a resource to learn things. The resource, they've helped us a lot. They've helped us just with, you know, we call them up and like, what do we do? We have to take this baby home now what do we do? And her dads like, “I know what you mean we had to take her home too.” The first couple of nights her mom stayed with us because we didn't. There's a baby in our house, what are we do? I'm 29 years old I don't know what to do. Her family is extremely important to us and they're extremely helpful.

But I don't do well listening to her mother.

Nobody really does. You know my mom's the yellor. She has two children, one is successful, I'm in social work. We're pretty much on the opposite ends of the spectrums with our families. I'm in a relationship with my biological family but it's just because they're my family. I really do think that things will change if my grandma passes. Because she's pretty much the only reason that I even communicate with people. And I don't think I need them, that's my thing. I'm perfectly okay with who I am. Her family has accepted me tremendously. I wouldn't change anything for the world.

We'll take all their advice for parenting.

Exactly because they kind of know more.

T - All right

So were sorry for leaving.

Thank you for letting us trump you.

We live across the street from the redneck that watches us. He'll call us your garage doors open you.

- Difficulties with one family of origin
- Conflicts with family of origin
- In relationship with family of origin because of blood only
- One family of origin member is the reason for maintaining contact
- Acceptance by partner’s family of origin. Respect partner’s family of origin’s parenting knowledge
- More communication and equality in tasks than family of origin
- More daycare than family of origin
- Differences
- Lots of similarities
- Difference between generations
- Similarities between generations
- Intentional parenting roles
- Relationship versus power is the big issue
- Parents have power but the couples relationship is not a power system

Difficulties with family of origin and maintain limited contact

Acceptance from partner’s family of origin

There are similarities and differences with families of origin, attempting to be intentional in choices of parenting skills used and avoided

Parents have power but the same-sex relationship is not a system based on power

Parenting roles are intentionally more equal with the family organized around
Thank you.

We'll see you in a few months

T - Yes, December, hopeful. OK, how it your current parenting style and family organization similar or different than that of your family of origin?

T - Are you guys needing to go too?

No

T - Okay, you guys feel the need to go please do. I don't wanna keep you here past when I told you that you needed to unless you're comfortable with that. OK

Okay

T - It's up to you

Okay. Mostly family organization probably a lot more communication, little more sharing of tasks, now the same, we've attempt a 50-50 split for parents who work. Although my parents worked opposite shifts when I was growing so there wasn't as much day care in our lives as there is in our daughters potentially. Organization and what?

T - Similarities and differences in parenting styles

We talk. I got put in the corner. We do timeouts on the steps but you know. I think we do borrow a lot from my parents and I think the main differences. I would describe them as family generational. We’re all about attachment Dr. Stevens and that crap. But not like that total exactly like what that all is. But just a lot more that integrated for a style and it wasn’t for my parents. But their basic approach to

| Differences between generations with work versus staying home |
| TV watching treated differently. More classes and activities. Try to include both parents in activities |
| Less TV, more play time and activities. Some work projects |
| Similarities to previous generation |
| Both parents equally involved versus dad not being around much |
| Not home with child like previous generation |
| Intentional change in expressing emotions from previous generation |
| Wanting more affection than experienced in previous generation |
| Similar to previous generation |
| Biological and friends and adoption groups |
| Those with different views for children to see |
| Biological but chosen family are closer and “really our family” |
| Biological |
| Conflict |
| Normalizing and explanation |
| Differences in relationships with family of origin |
| Familial obligation |
| Limited bond to family of origin |
| Self-acceptance |

the children and their needs

Conscious change in how emotions are expressed in current family from family of origin. Want to create a safe emotional environment

More communication happens between current parents than families of origin

Parenting more about a blend of styles; open to new ideas
parenting wasn't out-of-the-box.

T - OK

We try and do, my parents are pretty traditional my mom didn't work until I was out of high school and was the primary parent. My dad went to work and were pretty equitable. I work part time and so probably more of the primary because I'm at home a couple days a week. My partner works full-time. But that was more about a choice we made sort of for our family versus one of us being more primary than the other. We try to do more equitable and talking. Really evaluate the relationship versus the power. Although, I also believe in a benevolent dictatorship. So is the power of the parents but it's a very authoritative sort of process.

T - OK

I stayed home and both my parents worked.

And both my parents worked.

Yeah so that's totally different. We use timeouts we respect them.

T - OK

I think there's a lot more one-on-one connection. We don't, there's no TV, I mean we don't sit around the TV like my family and just watching. You know we don't do that, there's more music, there's more classes, and there's more involvement I guess with both of us doing things together, where my dad was home more than my mom, so we did more things with him. We went camping but there wasn't a lot of, the little things like music classes were done with one parent or the other, so we try to do it together.
T - OK

Yeah things are more family centered or child centered. It's about, you know, I plan my days off on tasks we need to do but we're going to the park, we're going to music class, we're going to play versus cleaning the garage. Some of that. But that we're really trying to focus on, this is child centered, we don't turn the TV on unless it's for watching Lion King for the 79th time. That kind of stuff

T - Okay, how about for you guys?

I think I'm, I see my mom when I parent. There are things that I do that she does. Those are mostly positive things I'm trying to adapt into my parenting. The positive ones about her. My dad wasn't around very much. Were both very active in Ellie's life. We used to do opposite schedules until just very recently so probably even split now. But very child centered. We don't spank, we use timeouts, just that is different.

T - OK

Yeah like the culture is pretty similar to the way I was brought up. Although my mom was home, stayed home she didn't work. But the fact that that's all I know is, and knowing that that's not going to be the case for Ellie. I don't worry about it but it's hard to imagine what that existence is going to be like.

T - OK

I just want to add one thing. We made a really conscious decision to like try to avoid anger. There was a lot of that in both of our houses growing up. So, and you know, trying to make me much more good parenting advice

- Family organization different
- More communication
- Tasks shared equally
- More daycare now
- We talk more as parents
- They do borrow a lot from parents
- They use techniques taken from a Dr. Stevens
- Parents very traditional while they try to be more equitable in terms of power
- Both parents worked
- Use timeouts/parents did not
- More one-on-one communication in current family
- Activities more centered around child
- Some things adopted from mother
- They don’t spank
- Culture similar to how I was raised
- More conscious about how feelings are expressed
- Not a lot of affection in family of origin
- Expose daughter to people with similar views
- Surround family with similar others
- Not close with family
- Lacked acceptance with family
- Much happier with this family
- More equality
- Agreed with parents on several ideas
- Parenting more about a
conscious than our parents were about how feelings are expressed to our child.

T - OK

We think that. Not a lot of affection in my family. And really, yeah her family.

T - OK.

My family was just like that. My mom does a lot of good things but mostly.

T - Okay, extended family, who do you consider to be your extended family?

My biological family and then we have a set of friends, adoption groups, and just people that we’re bringing in to support us that have similar views, or even different views that we want Leslie to experience that not everybody is the same as how they live their life. More so probably than my biological family.

T - Okay

T - How about for you?

Our biological families but we try to bring, people who are really, you know, this lesbian couple that are really our family. And my best friend is this girl that are part of our close support system. Checking every day about how’s the kid.

T – OK

I think for us is just biological.

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<tr>
<th>Question 8 - T - OK. The last question describe any information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while you were becoming parents.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chosen family members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological family maybe less involved because of distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not much sharing between generations</td>
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| Resources are limited by circumstances |
| Specific information is |
T - Oh, did you want it to the extended family?

Yeah just the donor family, our donor family, and our biological family, also we have a lot of aunties. No uncles which we're not against in theory. Except for special uncle. Resources? Potty training is one. But other than that it's been pretty lacking. I think it's partly geography and distance, partly family being where it is, it being hard to gather advice from some people in our family is. Just the physical way I think that our family, our parents, in particular, are present in our daughter’s life. I think that's maybe societal. Where people were away from their parents. So maybe it's just for gay people I don't know. Why would we do that, I don't know. Actually we haven't had a lot of like friends who were a little bit older or generational whose parents have been able to pass on those things.

T - OK, all right, thank you.

We really look to the his Grandma's. The one woman was married and had three biological children that are like our age and older I think, actually. So they, so we looked to them, and what they have learned. And also both my grandparents and my partner's grandparents were very integral and sort of protecting us in growing up and being really positive loving forces in our lives. And while they’re not. My grandparents weren’t alive while my son’s been alive and sort of that love and connection knowing how important that was and sort of trying to take that and pass that along. And I think also my partner's grandmother, the love that she has given. My partner, and us a couple, and then passed on to our son and trying to carry that on down.

| Repeating experienced positives from previous generation with children |
| Diverse extended family |
| Lack of family or generational resources |
| Barriers to family resources |
| Questioning societal norms |
| Normalizing lack of resources from family |
| Resources from extended family |
| Importance and value of extended families’ love and support |
| Received potty training |
| Most resources lacking due to geographical distance |
| Looked for advice from two grandmas |
| Lots of guidance from grandparents |
| Extended family both bio and nonbio |
| Distance from parents limits help |
| Sees parents (in general) unable to really help gay family with parenting |
| Connection with family important – relationships with own grandparents is viewed as a resource in sharing love |
OK, all right

T

Yeah my mom, I mean my mom. My mom and I had sort of had some issues but we when I became a parent was becoming a parent sort of closed the rift. We were talking on the phone all the time. And you know if I would have a, we were working out the schedule, I would just have a meltdown, I could always call her at work. I could call my mom and that kind of stuff. But people are just talking about relationships with, I lived far away from all my grandparents when I was a kid. And so we sort of missed out on having that. Elliott also lives far from his grandparents but I feel like there's been an effort on both of our parts. And the grandparents parts to be as much of a frequent part as can considering the distance. I saw my grandparents once a year or something.

T - OK, all right, how about you guys?

To a fault almost, we don't ever ask for help. So I think people just sort of sat back and waited to say anything, you know, they didn't just jumped in and say “okay you need to do this you need to do that.” I think they just sort of waited until, you know, I called them and said “oh my god I don't know what I'm doing what we do, we brought her home and holy cow.” So they sort of, when you open that door, sort of throw things out here and there. Nobody really, actually we've had people ask us parenting advice. I don't know why that is. I mean Leslie is just this great little kid. People say it's 50% personality 50% you. So at least we have half a chance. So I don't know if that's just her or because it's different we do things differently than our family did. And maybe they're like “oh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with parent of origin changed positively when became pregnant</th>
<th>Having a child improved relationship with mother and she is used as a resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent supportive through tough times</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased exposure to grandparents is a change from previous generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maturity and resolved conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support system as resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>Similarity with childhood extended family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support from my mom once I became a parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a child improved relationship with mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mom is resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family relationships important</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Didn’t ask for advice and it wasn’t offered until requested</td>
<td>Previous generation highlights good parenting when it is seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope that mistakes maybe overcome by the child</td>
<td>Grandfather adjusting his style to better match grandchild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some appreciation of different approaches as possibly being better</td>
<td>Two generations back become advocates for granddaughter’s family and great grandchild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous generation highlights good parenting when seen</td>
<td>Pride in family shared between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes being made as a grandparent to match or work with grandchild better</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two generations back become advocates for granddaughter’s family and great grandchild. Pride in family shared between</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
maybe that was a better way to do that than the way you we did that.

T - So you're getting asked by your family members.

Yeah or my mom makes comments like "you handled that really well or."

T - OK. Wow that is

Yeah and that's kind of a struggled too because her dad is a yeller. And Leslie, she, and we don't yell at home at all, you know, we talk. But she's, so she just kind of has a meltdown or stops completely and doesn't know what to.

“Are you okay, you okay?”

He's also hard of hearing so sometimes like he is not.

Is he's actually had to tone himself down a lot.

He's scary.

He scars her and realizes woe, maybe that's not. Scared us to. This is what happens. When you're a parent you don't see what you're saying or doing at the time. So then when you're not actually primary parent all the time. It's kind of a slap in the face. He is coming along fine with that.

But Sally's grandfather, he passed away this last year. Not that he gave us a lot of advice but he was very accepting and he was extremely excited to be Leslie's great-grandfather. He, Sally sent him pictures once a week and he'd show them to everyone in this little town. Everyone is saying "oh this is Leslie.” People on the street.
You’d be walking and someone would talk to me. How do you know me. Oh you’re Joe’s granddaughter I know all about you. Which was big for my grandpa to be almost like “I dare you to say anything” to some people. And a lot of people who actually talk to us and think it’s so great. They’ve gone way beyond their comfort zone, and would probably never have approached us if it hadn’t been for that.

He just made it clear that, you know, we were important to him, Leslie was important and we, when we came to town, we were staying with him, and we were going to see all his friends and we were going to his church with him and sitting by him and, you know. And so that, I think that, was really important to us.

T - Great, thank you guys very much. I appreciate you staying the extra 20 minutes. I will send you guys an e-mail for sure some time by late December or early January or something like that.

Table 5 uses the material from the right column of the preceding Tables 2, 3, and 4. Table 5 is organized by the questions that were presented to the research participants in the left column. The middle column contains the themes that were generated from the second analysis for each of the questions. And finally the right column contains the narrative description of the themes from the middle column. The narrative from the right column was used as the summary of the data that was presented back to the research participants in the feedback session.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>2ND ANALYSIS</th>
<th>NARRATIVE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the</td>
<td><em>Desire for children and a family</em></td>
<td>For some the decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>decision-making process leading up to the addition of children to your home?</td>
<td><strong>How to create the family</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A shared desire, rationale, decision, and planned roles related to having children</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seek knowledge and advice using various personal and community resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stressful process</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Establish first plan and backup plan for adding children</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Explore barriers and limitations to plans for adding children</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chose agency on ability to be “open”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moved forward on both plans for adding children to the family</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fertility attempts and limitations lead back to adoption</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conscious planning of family makeup</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Previous positive experience with an agency is a strong influence in returning to that agency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desire to use an adoption process that is the most beneficial for positive impacts on the attachment of the child</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Networking and gathering resources from friends, LGBT community, agencies, and the internet before starting the adoption process</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>process began with a desire for children and a family. For others having a family became important after being together as a couple. Age was also a consideration for some couples. They felt their biological clock was ticking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There were questions of how to create the family. There was also a final act as a couple for many couples. For most couples this was in the form of a vacation. Some couples made sure they had some type of documented commitment between themselves before starting to create their family.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There was a shared desire, rationale, decision, and planned roles related to having children between the same-sex partners. In addition couples made conscious choices about what the family makeup would be by the children being added, the different roles each would play in the family and how this change would affect their relationship.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When working with international adoptions some countries systems provided more consideration for the developmental needs of the child, which influenced the adopting couple’s decision of where to adopt.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time was spent seeking knowledge and advice using various personal and</td>
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</table>
Decision for adoption agency based on most lesbian friendly

Gave back to the system

In retrospect the time frame for the adoption was relatively quick

The adoption process was an emotional time

There was a search and use of resources during the adoption process to help navigate bureaucracy and problems

Unexpected event (9/11) causes concern

Accessed resources for information, support, and ideas of how to facilitate the process

Fearful of discrimination because of LGBT status and avoided by being closeted in some situations

Used several resources to help guide and facilitate the process including US and foreign government offices

The process created high levels of emotions throughout and required determination

Positive family support – financial support – emotional support

Engaged in a final act as a couple

Having a family became important after being together

Felt time constraints because of age

community resources including friends, the LGBT community, agencies, and the internet. Barriers and limitations to plans for adding children were explored. This search of resources for information, advice and help continued during the adoption process. Some resources and support systems were created by couples during the process of adding children. For those who adopted internationally the US government and foreign government offices were also accessed.

Some couples expressed concern at the need of some to label each partner and the inaccuracy of many of the labels that were used.

Because of fears there would be negative responses to the couple’s same-sex status there were times couples were intentionally closeted. Couples commented on the process of adding children as being more complicated because of the same-sex pairing.

Part of the process included finding out how “open” a couple could be in working with particular agencies, how lesbian friendly the agency was. A previous positive experience with an agency strongly influenced couples to return to that agency.

The process of adding children
<p>| Finances important | was stressful, emotional, and required determination. But in retrospect it was not as time consuming as it had felt while in the process. Unique situations increased some of the worries couples experienced. And for some couples the length of time the elapsed from starting the process before adding a child to their home made them question whether creating a family was going to happen for them. |
| Planned on adoption but tried fertility and were unsure of making a family because of the length of time waiting | Some couples experienced financial and emotional support from their families of origin. All couples expressed the importance of finances and monetary concerns. |
| Participated in one last act as a couple | Some couples establish a preferred plan for adding children and backup plan if the first plan fails. Some couples moved forward on both plans at the same time until one plan either produced results or the other become untenable. |
| Was not comfortable with segregating the parents by labeling adoptive versus biological | A majority of the couples felt a need or desire to give back either through providing some type of service or through being an advocate of some sort. |
| Mutual desire for a family | Describe your extended families’ reactions to the addition of |
| Monetary concerns | Changes in the family through increased acceptance by adding children, an increased sense of belonging in the family |
| Made a public commitment to each other before starting a family | Many couples expressed a change for the positive in relationships with families of origin. Some couples also felt that having children increased |
| Preparedness – utilized community resource | |
| Created resources | |
| Process more complicated because of same-sex pairing | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>people</th>
<th>Family of origin supportive even though they don’t understand the orientation issues</th>
<th>the sameness with other family members and allowed the same-sex couple to belong more in the extended family system. For some participants the acceptance and support extended through multiple generations. Some couples felt supported by the family system in spite of the family not understanding issues related to same-sex couples. Children helped move most family systems forward in resolving issues around a daughter being a lesbian.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The children knew that they are supported by someone they have not met</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sister saw homosexuality as an illness but was supportive of sister in the face of homophobia from family friends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support from sister came in spite of the sibling relationship not being maintained as a close relationship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Coming out” was a negative experience with family of origin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Most of the “coming out” problems with family of origin were resolved prior to adding children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The couple is more “out” now because of children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Children helped move the family forward in resolving issues around daughter being a lesbian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children made being accepted easier</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family responded negatively to same-sex couple adding children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter placed an ultimatum on mother and mother’s involvement with her grandchild</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Views, opinions, or attitudes toward same-sex couple positively changing after addition of child but still contains negative views</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|  |  | Some families responded negatively to a same-sex couple adding children to the family system. Some families who provided support still maintained negative views of same-sex couples. Another family’s response was dynamic and contained positive, negative, and varying degrees of each throughout the family system. Some of these variations were the difference between tolerance and acceptance. Some families appeared to attempt to ignore the pregnancy and addition of a child and refused to talk about their new grandchild. Family traditions were broken or altered in attempting to not deal with the new grandchild. The variations in extended family and same-sex couple’s responses to each other were unique to each couple. In some cases being a lesbian was a
| A variety of acceptance within family and no open disapproval | problem but the grandchild was still accepted. In other families the daughter was not “out” to the grandparents. Some same-sex couples limited the amount of “hiding” of their orientation they were willing to do in the family. In some families the parents from the family of origin “came out” as parents of a lesbian as a result of the new grandchild. This resulted in some family of origin parents becoming advocates and attempting to aid other parents of children with alternative orientations. |
| Parents supportive of same-sex pairing but poor relationship with both parents unrelated to orientation. No change before or after adding children except mother’s involvement is limited and father became a “super” ally | Some couples expressed some ownership in their family of origin’s response or lack of response to the same-sex couple because these relationships were not publicly declared through any type of ceremony or ritual. Adding children to the relationship made the relationship more public and provided the extended family more opportunity to acknowledge and response to the same-sex couple. |
| Multi generational acceptance | For same-sex parents to be seen as good parents by family and friends is an affirming experience. |
| Positive family reactions | Some members of same-sex couples expressed having poor relationships with their parents that were unrelated to issues of orientation. There were also some couples who did not see a change in relationship after |
| Negative family reactions | |
same-sex pairing

Bio parents difficulty in coping with same-sex pairing and resulting children

Being lesbian a problem but daughter accepted into family

Positive family support

Not out to older generations

There are limits to how much hiding is done of same-sex relationship by the couple

Donor included in family system in a place of honor

Having a known donor and including him in the family system is extra work and challenging

Bio parents “come out” as parents of a lesbian as a result of grandchild

Mother/daughter relationship improved as a result of adding child

Mother became an advocate when they decided to have children

Bio parent accepts grandchild but avoids dealing with same-sex relationship

Child pushes same-sex relationship into face of bio parents to pay them back

Pleased to be seen as good parents

Positive support from sister

adding children to their family.

In some family systems the different ethnicity of the child added to the family was where the family focused attention, orientation was “old news.”

Some same-sex couples placed boundaries on relationships and involvement from extended family members. These included ultimatums that would prohibit future involvement if there was not involvement from the beginning.

Errors or mishaps from extended family members around protocol were not uncommon, especially during the early stages of adding children. Many of these were related to Mother’s Day and recognition of equal parental status for each member of the same-sex couple.

The children of same-sex couples knew the extended family supported them even when the children had never met these family members.

Some extended family members saw homosexuality as an illness but were still supportive when the same-sex couple was faced with homophobia. Some of this support occurred even when the relationship between the family members had been minimally maintained.

For some participants the
Non biological family are treated like actual bio family and relied on more extensively

Non biological family placed at higher level than biological

Because same-sex relationship was not in the family’s view it was easy to avoid. After adding children the same-sex relationship was more visible

There was a change of opinion and attitude after the birth of their child

Strong support from sister

“coming out” process had been painful or complicated with their family of origin. Most “coming out” issues had been resolved with families before couples started the process of adding children. Some participants aggressively push the extended family to deal with and face issues around orientation.

Most couples experience being more “out” as a result of having children. Couples also found they had less control over how “out” and when they were “out” after adding children.

Some couples used known donors and include them as part of their extended family. Non-biological family frequently holds a place of greater importance for same-sex couples than biological extended family.

Describe any experiences you had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your family?

Adding children into a same-sex relationship exposed prejudice that had appeared to be tolerance or acceptance before the addition of children

Reactions to creation of a family varied across friends and family

A bias within the medical community exists but equal treatment can also be found

Inequality in medical benefits for same-sex couples required searching for additional resources

Insurance coverage for domestic

Some experienced prejudice in the medical field but others found through careful selection this could be avoided.

Adding children into a same-sex relationships exposed prejudice that had appeared to be tolerance or acceptance before the addition of children. Reactions varied across family and friends.

Insurance coverage for domestic partner benefits is not equal with those for nongay employees. These differences require seeking additional
| partner benefits not equal with nongay employees |
| Need additional resources to fill gaps caused by inequality between nongay and partner benefit insurance |
| Government regulations prevent equal treatment and attempt to limit access because of potential partner benefits |
| Government forms are heterosexist. Same-sex couple’s families do not match forms |
| Same-sex couples advocate for self by changing the forms to match their family |
| There are exceptions to heterosexist forms found in employment and state government |
| Some ways heterosexism impacted the family system: same-sex parents were unable to be completely “open” about their relationship during the adoption process. A legal process called coparent adoption is required to make both parents in the same-sex pairing equal parents. There was a need to find an adoption agency willing to do extra work, take extra steps, and keep some information hidden from the country the child was being adopted from |
| People react and are curious concerning the unusual makeup of the family unit |
| Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic: |
| - Purchase sperm |
| - Establish legal protection non-gays don’t have to do |
| - Get letters of support to |
system is heterosexist and homophobic:
- Purchase sperm
- Establish legal protection non-gays don’t have to do
- Get letters of support to become parents
- Prove to court that we’re acceptable as parents
- Expensive
- Bring documentation along to prove people have rights
- Perform steps that are sometimes pointless which slows the process down
- Pay for a profile
- Explain how you got a baby
- Health insurance for the family
- The whole process is a challenge
- Expensive – not same for non-gays
- Non-gays don’t have to prove they are fit
- The process is new for some agencies
- Some social workers are positive
- Sometimes non-gays are given preferential treatment
- Judgmental attitudes
- Attitude of “damaged children can have damaged parents”
- Deception needed to access the system
- Need to self-advocate
- Just being a same-sex couple challenges the system
- A variety of responses from people in the system
- Adoption creates more legal equality than birthing a child
- Adoption creates more equality with families of origin. No “blood” lines to confuse issues
- Traditional expectations and

become parents
- Prove to the court that they are acceptable as parents
- Expensive
- Bring documentation along to prove partner has rights
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- Adoption creates more equality with families of origin. No “blood” lines to confuse issues
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What, if any, legal involvement</th>
<th>A large amount of legal work needed</th>
<th>There was a large amount of legal work needed. Local laws impact adoptions, which</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local laws impact the adoption</td>
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Roles can make those who don’t match invisible or treated “differently” than the traditional
- Some of the choices around “coming out” are removed
- Don’t always disclose family structure. This sometimes conflicts with what the child says
- Want to instill pride which is sometimes in conflict with desire to be “out”
- Strangers assume one is mom “which one of you is the mom”
- Forms are heterosexist
- Advocating for knowledge of differences
- Pioneers must be more active
- People assume the status of the relationship as non-gay
- Non-gays held to a different standard
- Non-gays roles are assumed in same-sex relationships by outsiders
- Societal problems, not with individual experiences
- Legal steps to provide health care decisions
- Need to create options

Some advocates in the system

Employers want other parent to be the primary

Most responses are positive and some forms and language are inclusive

The uniqueness of the family is celebrated not hidden or ignored

Traditional expectations and roles can make those who don’t match invisible or treated “differently” than the traditional
- Some of the choices around “coming out” are removed
- Don’t always disclose family structure. This sometimes conflicts with what the child says
- Want to instill pride which is sometimes in conflict with desire to be “out”
- Strangers assume one is mom “which one of you is the mom”
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- Non-gays roles are assumed in same-sex relationships by outsiders
- Societal problems, not with individual experiences
- Legal steps to provide health care decisions
- Need to create options

Many couples have rituals or actions that celebrate the uniqueness of their family.
| did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family? | **Legal documents needed to make financial and medical decisions for partner**

Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents

Friends and community resources were important in finding legal assistance

The attorney needs additional expertise in working with same-sex couples specific needs

Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:

- Legal needs and associated expense
- Emotional realities are in place long before legal realities
- Need for legal so reality matches emotional and structural family dynamics
- Legal steps to protect family unit
- Create awareness, knowledge and comfort about family creation
- Legal steps required to protect family unit
- Unnecessary steps in the process
- Need for second parent adoption
- Legal grey areas
- Extra steps to protect family from particular people
- Professional awareness increasing

Accessed local resources to find legal assistance | requires legal knowledge.

Legal documents are needed to make financial and medical decisions for the same-sex partner. They are also needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents.

Friends and local community resources were important in finding legal assistance.

Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:

- Legal needs and associated expense
- Emotional realities are in place long before legal realities
- Need for legal so reality matches emotional and structural family dynamics
- Legal steps to protect family unit
- Create awareness, knowledge and comfort about family creation
- Legal steps required to protect family unit
- There are unnecessary steps in the process
- Need for second parent adoption
- There are legal grey areas
- Extra steps are needed to protect family from particular people
- Professional awareness is increasing

<p>| a. If so, what | Lacked legal knowledge | Utilized community resources |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Legal resources did you access?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Legal resources are needed to guarantee the right for one partner to protect and control the finances and health decisions of the other partner</strong></th>
<th>and friends to find a knowledgeable attorney</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utilized community resources and friends to find a knowledgeable attorney</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>b. What motivated you to access this(ese) legal resource(s)?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Legal involvement helps ensure being equal parents by society.</strong></td>
<td>Legal involvement helps ensure being equal parents by society. It is the responsible thing to do for the sake of your children to ensure they will be cared for if something unfortunate happens. There is also a fear that not taking these legal steps exposes a same-sex family to potential negative impacts from society or family that other families don’t need to worry about.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death</td>
<td>The process of adoption, readoption, and second parent adoption required the involvement of someone with an expertise in legal issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to stipulate who will care for their children in the event of the death of one or both parents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The process of adoption, readoption, and second parent adoption required the involvement of someone with an expertise in legal issues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General sense of fear of heterosexism and homophobia negatively impacting their families</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your family of origin?</strong></td>
<td>Grew up bi-cultural and sees LGBT culture as being predominantly hidden</td>
<td>Most couples talked about similarities and differences in each family of origin with their current family. Some participants grew up in same-sex homes where there would be more cultural similarities to the current home. Some see themselves as parenting almost exactly as they were parented. Others are not utilizing anything from their family of origin and either uses their partner’s family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family backgrounds similar but different</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coming out to family of origin was easy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Being lesbian was okay, being lesbian with children was not</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family’s response more valued than friend’s response</strong></td>
<td>as a model or accessing friends and resources to establish new ways of parenting from their parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive and negative responses from family of origin</strong></td>
<td>Some participants experienced difficulty “coming out” to family and others found this process easy. Some families of origin were comfortable with lesbian daughter but not with her having children. Some families responses were the same regardless of the orientation of their children, same-sex and opposite sex are treated the same. Some same-sex couples valued their family’s responses over those of friends. There were some changes in relationship noted but some of these were a result of a child becoming a parent and taking on this new role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some family responses are the same for opposite-sex and same-sex offspring’s families</strong></td>
<td>Many of the same-sex couples were consciously intentional about many of the decisions being made about their current family. Some saw their family of origin traditions and parenting were seen as more habitual, convenient, or the result of accidents instead of careful consideration.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Some responses are a result of the changes in relationship when the parent’s child becomes a parent</strong></td>
<td>Changes in culture from the family of origin have been made in the areas of diversity, more involvement with other cultural groups, and a broadening of the definition of family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many of the couples felt the created family was the most important family.

Some same-sex couples expressed frustration and fear that their attempts to raise children more comfortable with diversity are being undermined by a heterosexist society. Some other differences from families of origin are an increase in activism, more open communication within the family, comfort with people from outside the family looking at how well the family is functioning, and being more accepting of outside help and advice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is your current parenting style and family organization similar and/or different from that of your family of origin?</th>
<th>Current parenting style different from families of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners provide balance in parenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiquing of family of origin’s parenting elicited very specific changes in current parenting approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was a large variety in responses to this question. Some couples parenting style is different from their family of origin. Some couples parenting style is the same as their family of origin. Some couples critiqued their families of origin and made specific changes or kept specific qualities based on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common parenting goals are achieved through different means. There is a clear recognition of the differing roles for each parent. Examined both families of origin and extracted the best qualities. Parenting style similar to family of origin. Roles in family similar to dominant culture’s stereotypical roles. Parenting styles have evolved and continue to evolve. Rules are consistent between parents. Intentional planning and mutual parenting values and goals. Used state, local, and family resources to help planning for parenting values and goals. Differences between family of origin and current family in spite of still participating with family of origin in perceived negative ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe those whom you consider to be your extended “family” now?</th>
<th>Their extended family includes friends as well as biological relatives. Some labeling of “family” is new or unique when compared to traditional family labels. Extended family includes friends.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most couples expressed less need to follow traditional labeling of what a family is and included nonbiological members in their extended family along with biological members. For some couples the nonbiological family members were the more valued family.</td>
<td>the critique. Some couples use each other to provide balance in their parenting. Some couples talked about their parenting style having evolved and continuing to evolve. Some common themes were having clear roles that each parent has within the family unit. Having a common goal that both parents are striving toward with their parenting. Recognizing that most of the roles match stereotypical roles from the dominant culture. Most of the couples were very intentional and spent time accessing state, local, and family resources to help planning for parenting values and goals. One of the participants admitted she parents different from her family of origin but she still participates with her family of origin in the old patterns she grew up with and has not been able to implement these positive changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
neighbors, and biological family members

Extended family defined as reliable people

Extended family is nonbiological – close relationship = family

Still close with biological family

Describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents?

| Used notes from own childhood kept by parents |
| Critiqued previous generations for pluses and minuses in parenting |
| Search for resources that use inclusive language |
| Avoid “cookie cutter” approach to children |
| General information about normal baby development/behaviors |
| Advice seeking |
| Accessed parents from family of origin and siblings for advice |
| Parents are either non-intrusive or nonjudgmental in their support |
| Partner’s mother an important resource |
| Difficulties with family of origin and maintain limited contact |
| Acceptance from partner’s family of origin |
| There are similarities and differences with families of origin, attempting to be intentional in |

members. Having a close dependable relationship was a major factor in considering someone family.

Baby books were frequently accessed to help establish what was normal as well as parents and sibling’s insight, knowledge, and advice. Some parents maintained distance unless invited to participate and provided support that was nonjudgmental. Specific family members were sought for advice and information.

Previous generations were used as a guide for what to avoid and include in parenting. Books on parenting that used inclusive language were sought.

Some couples are making a concerted effort to raise each child based on that child’s needs, no “cookie cutter” parenting. Some previous generations highlight the positive parenting they see happening in the same-sex family.

Some couples maintain limited contact with their family of origin and do not access any family members for advice, knowledge, or assistance. Others felt circumstances limited access to resources.
choices of parenting skills used and avoided

Parents have power but the same-sex relationship is not a system based on power

Parenting roles are intentionally more equal with the family organized around the children and their needs

Conscious change in how emotions are expressed in current family from family of origin. Want to create a safe emotional environment

More communication happens between current parents than families of origin

Parenting more about a blend of styles; open to new ideas

Resources are limited by circumstances

Specific information is sought from specific family members

Having a child improved relationship with mother and she is used as a resource

Previous generation highlights good parenting when it is seen

Grandfather adjusting his style to better match grandchild

Two generations back become advocates for granddaughter’s family and great grandchild. Pride in family shared between generations

Some couples commented on previous generations adjusting the way the engaged children from what had been used during a previous generation.

Some same-sex couples stated their relationship is not based on power but the role of the parent has power. They see more communication happening in the same-sex relationship than was in their family of origin. Couples also expressed a desire to remain open to new ideas and attempting to blend styles of parenting.

One of the differences from families of origin was in how same-sex families organized themselves around their children and attempt to be intentionally equal in providing parenting. There was a consistent expression of wanting to create an emotionally safe environment for their children.

One couple expressed a pride in family, which was shared between generations. Two generations back had become advocates for the same-sex family and the resulting children.
Each participating couple in the research study was contacted and invited to participate in a feedback session at the same location where the original semi-structured interviews were held. Three couples participated in the feedback session. Five couples had initially indicated they would be attending but two couples were unable to attend that evening because of an illness and an unforeseen trip. Both of the couples who originally agreed to participate but were unable to attend sent messages stating their regret at missing this opportunity.

**Validity Check With Couple Participants**

At this feedback session a summary of the data was presented to the research participants. The text in the summary of the feedback session is the literal transcript of what was said to the research participants. The purpose of this meeting was to have those who provided the data originally review the resulting summary for accuracy. The following text is an overview of the summary presented to the research participants. The summary material was organized and presented following the original question. This format was used so the participants would have context for the material and an opportunity to identify any errors or misstatements in the summarized material.

**Summary of the Feedback Session**

*Question 1: Describe the decision-making process leading up to the addition of children to your home?* There was a range of processes for the decision making to add children. These ranged from looking at financial concerns, using adoption or artificial insemination, which parent would get pregnant or be the first to adopt, to age and health
concerns of each parent. The desire to have children was common to all couples. For some same-sex couples the decision making process began with a desire for children and family. For others having a family became important after being together as a couple. Some of the couples created a ritual final “act” as a childless couple before starting the process of adding children. Creating an “official” status for the relationship was also important for some of the couples. This “official” status was achieved through commitment ceremonies or domestic partnership rituals.

A common theme was planning and advice seeking. All of these couples spent several months seeking information, attending workshops and training groups, answering questions related to desired roles and expected roles in the future family system, and identifying the legal concerns and tools to address those concerns. The makeup of the family was a conscious intentional process for each couple including the method of adding children, if adopting who would be adopted and why, as well as the parenting duties of each member of the couple. These couples sought advice about adopting or fertility methods using various personal and community resources, which included friends, the LGBT community, agencies, and the Internet. Barriers and limitations to plans for adding children were also explored. This search of resources for information, advice and help concerning adoption, fertility options, or parenting continued after the process of adding children had been started. In addition, the couples created some resources and support systems during the process of adding children based on perceived needs by the couples.

There was a long list of expressed concerns. These ranged from concern over the need of some people and agencies to label each partner and the inaccuracy of many of the
labels that were used to fears there would be negative responses to the couple’s same-sex status. All of the couples commented on the process of adding a child as stressful, emotional, and requiring determination. All of the couples mentioned finances at some point in the discussion. The financial aspect was most often a roadblock to adding children. Some couples experienced financial as well as emotional support from their families of origin. All of the couples expressed the importance of finances and monetary concerns incurred through the process of adding children.

*Question 2: Describe your extended families’ reactions to the addition of children to your home?* Many couples expressed a positive change in relationships with families of origin. Some couples also felt that having children increased the “sameness” with other family of origin members and allowed the same-sex couple to belong more in the extended family system. This sense of belonging was not limited by generational boundaries. Some couples felt supported by the family system in spite of the family not understanding issues related to same-sex couples. Adding children helped move most family systems forward in resolving issues around a daughter being a lesbian. There were also families that responded negatively to a same-sex couple adding children to the family system. Some families who provided support still maintained negative views of same-sex couples. Other families’ responses were dynamic and contained varying degrees of positive, negative views. There were also families that attempted to ignore the pregnancy and refused to talk about their new grandchild. Within the negative reactions there were family traditions broken or altered as part of the attempts to not deal with the new grandchild from a same-sex pairing.
The variations in extended family and same-sex couple’s responses to each other were unique to each couple. In some cases being a lesbian was a problem but the grandchild was still accepted. In other families the daughter was not “out” to the grandparents. Some same-sex couples limited the amount of “hiding” of their orientation they were willing to do in the family. In some families the parents from the family of origin “came out” as parents of a lesbian as a result of the new grandchild. This resulted in some family of origin parents becoming advocates and attempting to aid other parents of children with alternative sexual orientations. Some couples expressed some ownership in their family of origin’s response or lack of response to the same-sex couple because the same-sex relationships had not been publicly declared through any type of ceremony or ritual that would have blatantly placed the relationship in the family’s view. Adding children to the relationship made the relationship more public and provided the extended family more opportunity to acknowledge and respond to the same-sex couple. Several same-sex parents expressed pleasure in being seen as good parents by family and friends. They saw this as an affirming experience. Some members of same-sex couples expressed having poor relationships with their parents that were unrelated to issues of orientation. There were also some couples that did not see a change in relationship after adding children to their family.

Errors or mishaps from extended family members around protocol were common, especially during the early stages of adding children. Many of these were related to Mother’s Day and recognition of equal parental status for each member of the same-sex couple, others involved correct usage of the child’s last name. The children of same-sex couples knew there was extended family support for them, even when the children had
never met these family members. Some extended family members saw homosexuality as an illness but were still supportive when the same-sex couple was faced with homophobia. Some of this support still occurred, even when the relationship between the family members had been minimally maintained. Non-biological family frequently held a place of greater importance for same-sex couples than biological extended family.

*Question 3: Describe any experiences you had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your family?* Every couple commented on the homophobia and heterosexism they experienced. Most of these comments were centered on legal and medical issues. Couples talked about the added expense of securing all the necessary legal work in order to protect the family. Couples also talked about having to prove themselves as fit to be a parent regardless of the approach used to add children. This last point was followed with comments about the ability of opposite-sex couples to become parents without the need to prove their parental worthiness, in some cases becoming a parent is an accident for opposite-sex couples versus the intentionality that same-sex couples must employ. The areas of greatest concern were medical, legal, insurance, and governmental policy. Several of the couples commented on the lack of negative response from the general population. Most couples appeared to have expected more harassment from the general population, which had not come to fruition.

*Question 4: What, if any, legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family? If so, what legal resources did you access? What motivated you to access this(ese) legal resource(s)?* All of the couples commented on the large amount of legal work needed to add children and protect the
family unit. There are legal needs when adopting and co-adopting or doing a second parent adoption. Legal documents are necessary to ensure the family wishes will be honored. Those documents include a will, a living will, and power of attorney. Because same-sex families are relatively new on the family scene those laws that do pertain to these families are also relatively untested and create some legal grey areas. Strong thorough legal work can help eliminate some of the grey. Couples expressed concern for ensuring certain biological family members did not have legal recourse to remove a child from either parent of the same-sex couple if one member were to die. There was also concern that the same-sex couple wanted to have a say in who would raise the child if both same-sex parents were to die. This question produced another large number of examples of heterosexism and homophobia. Most of these were created because same-sex couples cannot legally marry and the protections that normally come with marriage must be artificially created or approximated. The goal of most couples was to help ensure being equal parents by society as much as possible through legal documents. Another important theme was legal involvement is the responsible thing to do for the sake of your children to ensure they will be cared for if something unfortunate happens.

Question 5: Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your family of origin? Most couples talked about similarities and differences in each family of origin with their current family. Some see themselves as parenting almost exactly as they were parented. Others are not utilizing anything from their family of origin and either use their partner’s family as a model or accesses friends and other resources to establish new ways of parenting. Some other differences from families of origin are an increase in activism, more open communication within the family, comfort
with people from outside the family looking at how well the family is functioning, and
being more accepting of outside help and advice.

Some families of origin were comfortable with a lesbian daughter but not with her
having children. Some families responses were the same regardless of the orientation of
their children, same-sex and opposite sex were treated the same. Some same-sex couples
valued their family’s responses over those of friends. Many of the same-sex couples
were consciously intentional about many of the decisions being made about their current
family. Some saw their family of origin traditions and parenting styles as more habitual,
convenient, or the result of accidents instead of careful consideration.

Changes in culture from the family of origin have been made in the areas of
diversity, more involvement with other cultural groups, and a broadening of the definition
of family. This emphasis on diversity has required more acceptance and tolerance of all
people involved with the same-sex family. Many of the couples felt their created family
was the most important family. Some same-sex couples expressed frustration and fear
that their attempts to raise children who were more comfortable with diversity were being
undermined by a heterosexist society.

Question 6: How is your current parenting style and family organization similar
and/or different from that of your family of origin? There were a large variety of
responses to this question. Some couple’s parenting style is different from their family of
origin. Some couple’s parenting style is the same as their family of origin. Some couples
critiqued their families of origin and made specific changes or kept specific qualities
based on the critique. Some couples use each other to provide balance in their parenting.
Some couples talked about their parenting style having evolved and continuing to evolve.
Some common themes were having clear roles that each parent fulfilled within the family unit, having a common goal that both parents are striving toward with their parenting, and recognizing that most of the roles match stereotypical roles from the dominant opposite-sex culture. Most of the couples were very intentional and spent time accessing state, local, personal, and family resources to help plan for parenting goals and values.

Question 7: Describe those whom you consider to be your extended "family" now? Most couples expressed less need to follow traditional labeling of what a family is and included non-biological members in their extended family along with biological members. For some couples the non-biological family members were the more valued family members. Having a close dependable relationship was a major factor in considering someone family.

Question 8: Describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents? Baby books were frequently accessed to help establish what was “normal” as well as grandparents and sibling’s insight, knowledge, and advice. Specific family members were sought for advice and information. Previous generations were used as a guide for what to avoid and include in parenting. Books were sought on parenting that used inclusive language. Some couples were making a concerted effort to raise each child based on that particular child’s needs and no “cookie cutter” parenting. Some couples maintain limited contact with their family of origin and do not access any family members for advice, knowledge, or assistance. Some same-sex couples stated their relationship is not based on power but the role of the parent has power. The same-sex couples see more communication happening in the same-sex relationship than was in their families of origin. Couples also
expressed a desire to remain open to new ideas and attempting to blend styles of parenting. One of the differences from families of origin was in how same-sex families organized themselves around their children and attempted to be intentionally equal in parenting. There was a consistent expression of wanting to create an emotionally safe environment for their children.

At this point in the feedback session the primary researcher added the following conclusions. There were many similarities and differences between same-sex and opposite-sex families. There were many similarities and differences between the current family and the family of origin. These areas were specifically unique to each family. But all of the families spent time thinking about the traditions, values, and politics of raising children. These couples participated in conversations with each other and experts to help them sort out the important from the mundane and they continued having these conversations to ensure their family and the relationship of the couple remained healthy.

Same-sex families who were interviewed appeared to value preparing to become the best parents they could be before having children. This was a process of exploring the good and bad from their family of origin and the good and bad from their partner’s family of origin. Same-sex couples also reached out to friends, neighbors, government agencies, community resources, and family members for information, advice, and assistance to be better parents and to help guide in their development as parents.

These same families readily expressed fears as a parent, a lack of knowledge about parenting, and worries that their children might be inadvertently damaged while growing up in this family. That the parent’s best intentions might be thwarted or miss the mark and result be less than favorable results for the child was a concern.
There was also a broader community awareness and a knowledge that same-sex parents may be held to a higher standard so there may be a greater need to excel and succeed as parents to prove same-sex couples should be parents. This larger community awareness also extended to a large number of couples that advocate for groups in need or give back to organizations that had provided assistance to the couple.

A strong sense of expanding the language of family was expressed. This included increasing self-comfort with diversity as well as attempting to ensure the children they were raising would be comfortable and accepting of the differences encountered in others. All of the couples talked about non-biological members in their family who held significant importance in this expanded definition of family. It appeared the more geographically separated from the family of origin or the less comfortable the family of origin was with same-sex couples/parents the more important non-biological family members became.

The group of same-sex parents interviewed appeared to be an extremely self-reliant, resourceful, and determined group of women. If they were unable to arrive at a solution to a problem on their own they reached out to others who might be able to solve the problem or the couple researched resources that might be able to assist them. There was a strong sense of self-advocacy within the group along with a high sense of political acumen that helped guide them in the decisions they made as parents. It seems likely the struggle or evaluation that “coming out” required for each participant was instrumental in providing some type of framework for these individuals to evaluate and step outside the “stereotypical” family concept to reach solutions for their desire of a family that matched the uniqueness each of them presented.
Couples’ Response to the Feedback Session

The primary researcher started the feedback session by explaining to the couples present that this session was to determine the accuracy of the summarized material by comparing it with their lived experience. The group had the opportunity to voice any discrepancies, concerns, or misrepresentations that they noticed in the summary material. The researcher made a statement concerning the expectations and assured the research participants that pointing out discrepancies in the summary material was desired by the primary researcher. This statement reassured the group there would be no negative repercussions for pointing out discrepancies. Then each participant was provided with a copy of the summary feedback document before the material was presented. The group was given a few minutes to review the material. Then the research participants were encouraged to refer to the provided material as they listened to the primary researcher expound on the main ideas and concepts contained in the written material. The primary researcher then reviewed the summary feedback material with the group. The group then had an opportunity to comment or discuss the material after each major point in the summary was presented.

During the early portion of the feedback session, the group was initially quiet. They generated more responses and discussion as the feedback session progressed. There were no comments made by any participant which questioned the accuracy of the summary material.

However, there was considerable discussion during the feedback session. All of this discussion was related to the summary material and was generally an expansion or elaboration of a related topic or experience. The topics discussed were frequently
political. At the beginning of the feedback session, the researcher would pause and ask what the members thought about the summary material. As the session proceeded the members would wait for a pause and begin their discussions without prompting. In the later portion of the feedback session, the researcher would have to interrupt the political discussions in order to return to the summary material.

As stated above, there was nothing challenged, questioned, or corrected in the summary material. When the participants were asked if the summary represented their experience or perspective they all said “yes” and commented on the strangeness of hearing their earlier comments from the semi-structured interviews presented back to them. They expressed appreciation that their families experience was being considered in research and they hoped this research would be beneficial to other families in the future.

The dominant response from the members during the feedback session was a desire to elaborate further on the summary material being presented. The researcher interpreted this response as a strong nonverbal indication of agreement with the summary material. The second type of response was to launch into a related discussion with an accompanying attitude that the material just presented was obvious and needed no further elaboration. Often they would look at each other and smile or nod in agreement when the summary material was presented.

Validity Check With Research Team Analyzers

The research team analyzers were presented the same summary of the feedback that the couple research participants received in addition to the final analysis of the data before the model had been developed. The research team also had an opportunity to review the thick descriptions of the research participants at this stage in the process. The
research team critiqued the accuracy of the summary feedback items in comparison with their experience with the data. The research team reviewed the summary feedback in context with the thick descriptions of the couple participants. Each analyzer readily engaged in a discussion about the thick descriptions of the couples as well as the feedback material by questioning parts of the thick descriptions (i.e. “There was a bisexual?”) and by commenting about specific items in the feedback material (i.e. “I couldn’t believe how much work was involved to add children” or “I learned so much about adoption through this study”). All four analyzers expressed pleasure with the resulting feedback materials accuracy with their experience with the data and that the work they had done matched the other analyzers’ work. The analyzers also commented on the value of the thick descriptions of the participants in creating the context for reading the feedback materials by placing the analyzers back into the mind frame of the original transcriptions. And finally, the analyzers stated the resulting summary was accurate with the original stories and responses from the participants.

Summary

This chapter has provided thick descriptions of the participants and analyzers in the research team within the context of the data collections and analysis. This chapter has also summarized the categories resulting from the research participant discussions and themes derived from the units of meaning generated from transcripts of the research participant interviews. Two checks of validity were conducted and presented. One validity check was conducted with the couple participants and the other with the research team analyzers.
The data analysis revealed some universal experiences shared by these lesbian couples. Their experience seemed to reflect some differences in family life cycle stages when compared with the experience of opposite-sex couples. One of the differences described was the value placed on different roles in the family system. Specifically, these women appeared to value the role of the mother above that of the “breadwinner” and those women who provided the financial support to the family felt they were not doing as much for the family as the stay-at-home mother. In those couples with dual careers the workload was split as evenly as the women were able to manage. These lesbian women examined their individual strengths and weaknesses before adding children to decide who would be better suited for which roles. Some of these decisions were based on desire, earning potential, and aptitudes. These women demonstrated that money’s lack of power, the equality of domestic roles, and having a child-centered family were crucial components in the decision making process of structuring these homes.

*Family Life Cycle Model Building*

The final stage of data analysis involved developing a family life cycle model based on the experiences described by the lesbian couple participants. The model developed from this data used the existing over-arching structure from Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) model. That is, the developed model used the couple’s description of their experience to identify common stages, emotional processes, and second-order changes reflected in their statements. The data from this study suggested a theoretical model which would include the following stages: Dating with the intent of parenting, Becoming a Couple, Becoming Parents, and Families with Young Children. The couple participants also articulated emotional processes of transition and second-order changes
in family status required to proceed developmentally. Because of the limited age ranges of children present in the homes of couple participants in the present study only two stages from the original theory could be compared with the model generated in this investigation. There appeared to be two additional stages for these lesbian couples which were not reflected in Carter and McGoldrick’s original model. Carter and McGoldricks’ stage of Leaving Home comes before the stages referred to in Table 6. This study does not have data to compare with this earlier stage of Leaving Home and establishing themselves as young adults. Further, there was no data from this study to compare with the later stages of Carter and McGoldrick’s model (Leaving Home: Single Young Adults, Families with Adolescents, Launching Children and Moving On, and Families in Later Life) which chronologically come after the stages presented in Table 6 because the couple participants in the study have not yet reached these stages.

Table 6
Modifications to Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGE</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL PROCESS OF TRANSITION: KEY PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>SECOND-ORDER CHANGES IN FAMILY STATUS REQUIRED TO PROCEED DEVELOPMENTALLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dating with the intent of parenting | Searching for a partner with similar family desires/life views | a. Accept the idea of becoming a parent  
b. Come to terms with LGBT communities responses  
c. Come to terms with family of origin related to starting a family |
| Becoming a couple | Reprocessing coming out issues within the dynamics of a couple versus being single | a. Negotiating heterosexist dominant culture  
b. Establishing roles and norms for the couple  
c. Negotiating response to families of origin |
| Becoming parents | Reprocessing coming out issues within the dynamics of being same-sex parents with children | a. Establishing legal documents to protect family system  
b. Establishing roles within the family system |
c. Determine desired family make-up  
d. Identify resources  
e. Establish members of “extended family”  
f. Reinvent the “family system”  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families with young children</th>
<th>Accepting new members into the system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Revision of roles from couple to family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Joining in child rearing, financial and household tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Realignment of relationships with extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Reevaluate roles in the family for effectiveness of desired family goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The present investigation used qualitative research methods to develop a model of family life cycle developmental stages and associated emotional tasks based on lesbian couples' self-described life experience. Specifically, grounded theory methodology was utilized in order to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the life cycle stages encountered by lesbian couples?
2. What are the developmental tasks required for successful progress through these developmental stages?
3. What are the second order emotional processes required to support these developmental tasks?

Because of the limited age ranges of children present in the homes of study participants, only four stages were suggested from the data. Following is a brief description of the four stages developed from this study.

**Dating with the intent of parenting** presented as a unique stage from the data because of the need to seek a like-minded partner in relation to having a desire for a family. The desire for a family cannot be assumed for same-sex couples. This also appeared to be important as a stage because most of the couple participants had already established their individual lives as independent people before starting to date with the intention of finding a life mate interested in raising a family. During the dating stage couples must also navigate the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) communities' response to a same-sex
couple adding children to the home. A parallel process occurs with the families of origin for the same-sex couple. In both situations, the same-sex couples risk negative, neutral, and positive responses to the information of adding children by the LGBT community and the respective families of origin.

The next stage of Becoming a couple requires each individual to revisit coming out issues. The couple must now face the heterosexism related to the same-sex relationship which will become more visible. The couple must also establish how they will work as a couple. What are the roles each person will take within the relationship of the couple? In addition, the couple must negotiate the families of origin’s responses to the couple and how the couple will or will not be incorporated into this extended family system.

The next stage of Becoming parents requires the same-sex couple to reprocess coming out again because the presence of children forces the couple into more situations where the same-sex nature of the relationship is apparent to more people than previously experienced by the same-sex couple. The couple may experience less control in the decision to come out. The same-sex parents will also need to renegotiate roles from those established as a couple to those that will meet the couples needs within the extended “family system.” Same-sex parents will also need to take steps to protect the family. These steps will require legal assistance and documents to help ensure the parent’s desires for the family system and will be known and followed in the future (i.e. will and living wills). The same-sex couple will need to establish the “family” their children will know. This “family” may include friends and/or biological family. The same-sex couple will also make a decision at this stage of what will constitute this new family, how many
children and how the children will be added to the family system. The final second order change at this stage for the same-sex couple is to create their idea of a family system which will be based on the past experiences and knowledge of both partners.

The final stage in the proposed model from this study is *Families with Young Children*. The major task at this stage is accepting new members into the family system. Again the roles of family members will need to be revisited to make adjustments to meet the needs of the new modified family system. The same-sex couple will need to join in raising the children as well as accomplishing household tasks and meeting financial concerns. The addition of children to the same-sex relationship will also require a realignment of the relationships with extended family members. And finally, changes will need to happen at the multigenerational level as well as between individual members of the family system.

Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) model of the stages of the family life cycle contains six stages. Four of the stages in this model cannot be discussed based on the data from this study because of the limited ages of the children present in the homes of the study participants. Therefore, only two of Carter and McGoldrick’s stages will be reviewed.

Johnson and Colucci (1999) suggested several modifications to Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) family life cycle in an attempt to account for the unique family developmental issues likely encountered by lesbian and gay families. For the purpose of the current investigation, only two stages of the original family life cycle were explored and articulated. Of Carter and McGoldrick’s six family life stages, only the developmental tasks and emotional processes corresponding to their second and third
stages were explored in detail. Carter and McGoldrick labeled their second stage “joining of families through marriage: the new couple” and the third stage “families with young children.” The closest corresponding areas in Johnson and Colucci’s modification were the stages of coupling and parenting. The theoretical model resulting from the current study suggested some modifications to Carter and McGoldrick’s model in relation to the aforementioned two stages and an expansion of the model including two additional stages.

The present investigation suggested at least two stages should be added to Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) theory and significant modifications to the stage of “joining families through marriage” need to be made and a few additions to the stage of “families with young children.” The first new stage that needs to be added is “dating with the intent of parenting.” Dating for same-sex couples happens after the “coming out” process has started. This pushes dating into a different time frame and context than that experienced by nongay individuals. Couples spoke of the importance of dating in order to find another person interested in starting a family. The second added stage was “becoming parents.” Lesbian couples do not have a model to use when they decide to start a family. In addition, issues related to coming out are revisited because of the majority culture’s heterosexist influence on agencies, professionals, and legal systems. The decision to become parents is not a one or two step process for same-sex couples. They proceed through multiple steps that require intentional choices at numerous points. The third stage of “becoming a couple” was renamed because of the limited legal options for lesbian couples to become married. This legal limitation requires some additional changes in what the couple must manage during this stage. The final stage of “families
with young children” required a few additional second-order changes that are unique to lesbian couples.

Recall that Johnson and Colucci (1999) argued for keeping Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) existing theory with modifications. Their position was counter to other authors (e.g., Slater, 1995; Siegel & Lowe, 1994) who felt it would be better to start over with a purely new theory to avoid the potential bias that exists in Carter and McGoldrick’s theory which was originally developed with heterosexual couples. The current research project attempted to answer the question of whether modification of the original family life cycle theory was sufficient versus starting fresh and developing a unique model that would be more suited to gay and lesbian couples’ experience. In answering this question of whether to modify existing theory or start from scratch, several areas seemed relevant to explore in the structured interviews/focus group with lesbian couples. Specifically, the areas of gender roles, schedules, aptitudes, and how earning power impacts the family realignment were considered. The final area examined was the decision-making processes used by lesbian families when adding children to their family system.

This decision-making process seemed particularly relevant for lesbian couples given their unique need to plan and prepare for the addition of children. These couples appeared to spend considerable effort on the planning process in a way that provided a thoughtful comprehensive family structure capable of coping effectively with the rigors of family life. Further, the lesbian families were forced to review and assess finances early in the process to determine if they could afford an adoption, surrogacy, or infertility medical procedures. When adoption was used, the lesbian or gay family went through
home visits and questioning from adoption agencies that explored many important aspects of parenting not always considered when using traditional methods of adding children to the family. The process these women experienced could almost be viewed as a type of licensing to demonstrate readiness to become a parent. In addition, the absence of gender expectations seemed to provide more opportunity for a sharing of the responsibilities of raising a family. The lesbian parents did not have predetermined gender-based expectation of the roles that each of them would be taking within the family. These couples had to negotiate who would be taking on which roles and which roles would be shared. These types of decisions were expected to influence the relational quality of these couples. The experience of being a minority and related struggles that come with that status provided these parents with unique insight that these women hoped would be transmitted to their children and provide their children with a richer understanding of family and the world in which they live.

These differences aside, the data from the current study supported Johnson and Colucci’s (1999) argument that the existing theory could serve as a starting point for understanding the family life cycle process for lesbian and gay couples, recognizing some slight modifications of the theory might be required. Most of the spontaneous, open, responses provided by lesbian couples in this study align fairly well with the original theory, with only minor modifications. These women had no awareness of the existing theory or subsequent arguments in the literature about the applicability of the existing theoretical model. According to their self-described experiences, these same-sex couples had more similarities than differences when compared with nongay families at these life cycle stages. Therefore, it does not appear that an entirely new model of family life cycle
needs to be developed for lesbian couples. Some of these similarities and differences will be explored in the discussion below.

Showing some of the wide variance in experience between the participant couples, a small number of partners within the couples had limited involvement with their families of origin. If one partner had problems with their family of origin the other partner’s family of origin was still involved. For those families of origin who were less involved or not involved it was because there was a lack of acceptance related to homosexuality and related discomfort or negative belief systems surrounding homosexuality. Most couples in this study experienced a strengthening of family ties within their families of origin after the addition of children. They also described an improvement in their extended family's views of homosexuality and acceptance of their child’s (the new parent’s) status as a member of a minority group. One participant said “…when I told them I was pregnant he [father of the participant] told me that there was nobody on this earth that was more deserving of having children than yourself. And from that point on everything just really opened up because then we had something in common with the rest of our family.”

Slater (1995) proposed there were five problems with the existing theory. The first was the assumption that nongay families assume children are a part of the coupling. Johnson and Colucci (1999) argued that some nongay families do not have or intend to have children but the data from this study suggests that although parenting may not be the cornerstone of same-sex family life in general it is the cornerstone for a subset of lesbian couples who are adding children to their families. Some of these couples entered the world of dating with the specific requirement of finding a suitable partner with whom to
co-parent. Other couples decided to add children because they wanted to add children while it was still physiologically possible to become pregnant. Only a small number of the women in this study felt they had to be convinced by their partner to add children to the family unit. There may be a variation from the nongay population in the focus during dating of finding a partner also interested in parenting but the expectation of having children did not seem to vary from that of nongay couples.

The second problem with existing theory that Slater (1995) proposed was related to the definition of family being related to “blood and legal ties.” This concern was supported by the data from the current study. Most couples expressed less need to follow traditional labeling of what constitutes a family and included non-biological members in their extended family along with biological members. In addition, for some couples the non-biological family members were the more valued family members. Having a close dependable relationship was a major factor in considering someone family.

Slater’s (1995) third problem with existing theory was the role intergenerational relationships play in sustaining “rituals, values, prescriptions, and folk wisdom from one generation to the next” in the theories based on nongay families. However, the families from the present study demonstrated that new rituals, values, and wisdom were created within the current family but the rituals, values, and wisdom from previous generations were also culled for items that were pertinent to the current family system. This process included transforming some of these valuable items into a new version. The most common practice mentioned in the study was accessing baby books to see what the current parents were doing at the same chronological times. This information helped these new parents relax and get a better idea of “normal” baby activities. One couple
shared the following example of transforming a ritual. This family celebrated “Gotcha Day” which was similar to a second birthday for adopted children. The family celebrated the child’s birthday but a second, similar celebration happened on the day the child was adopted. Another example was when one of the families who added children with a known sperm donor referred to him as a “special uncle” and he was included in many of the family celebrations and activities as an honored member of the family. The extended family of this “special uncle” was also included in the life of this child. It appeared, then, that same-sex parents operated in many ways which were similar to nongay families, but may have felt more freedom to modify, embellish, or create new family rituals based on family need.

The fourth point made by Slater (1995) in her argument against using existing theory was that not only were rituals not passed down intergenerationally, there was a lack of recognized rituals for lesbian and gay couples. There were some examples of couples being excluded from typical family rituals because of the same-sex status of the relationship but all of the couples talked about rich inclusion of rituals within their current families. The couples that talked about a lack of rituals from the extended family were in the minority for this study. Some couples talked about family members making extra effort to create ritual or to ensure respectful inclusion of the couple in family rituals. One of the grandmothers who had never talked about the same-sex status of the granddaughter’s relationship was eager to attend and provide food items for a reception after a commitment ceremony was announced. Another partner’s sister who had provided bigoted materials in relationship to correcting a same-sex attraction was
adamant her sister and same-sex partner be treated as equals at their father’s funeral service.

There was considerable variety in the transmission of norms, rituals, and folk wisdom from previous generations in the population in this study. Couples talked about the ongoing education related to same-sex relationships, which their families of origin were doing, at different levels and in different areas. The bicultural nature of the families was expressed. Some of the families of origin were learning about the queer culture of their children’s families. Other families of origin appeared to expend considerable effort to avoid becoming aware of this new culture. All of the lesbian couples talked about examining their families of origin and accepting or rejecting specific aspects of the family of origin. Some couples relied heavily on information from their families of origin and others rejected everything from the family of origin. All of the couples talked about creating new rituals that honored and placed value on the uniqueness of their current family. These new rituals were different from their families of origin and all of the couples believed they had come from families where rituals were sometimes established out of convenience or thoughtless repetition of previous generations without thinking through the significance of the ritual. All of the couples expressed concern that the rituals in their current family were thought through carefully and matched their families’ needs and goals. These lesbian families emphasized the uniqueness of their children within the family system through rituals. This may be a difference from nongay families because of the intentional questioning of what was done by the previous generation.
Slater’s (1995) fifth and final concern related to the lack of language and norms for language in how to refer to the relationships within a same-sex pairing, such as “partners” or “lovers.” An example of language issues for lesbian couples was represented by what to call the non-birth, adoptive mother when fertility methods were used to conceive. There was not much discussion of this issue by the research participants when describing their families and families of origin. There was some discussion from research participants about extended family reluctance to use the hyphenation in their name. This family would only use the part of the child’s familial name which matched their family name, when sending correspondence. One area where study participants more consistently mentioned name and language problems was in dealing with birthing classes or agencies. Some couples expressed concern over the fact that some people within agencies tended to struggle with how to label each partner and the inaccuracy of many of the labels that were used.

Many of the concerns raised by Slater (1995) were either irrelevant or not of major concern to the participants in this study. This finding in conjunction with the theoretical model derived from the couple participant’s responses suggested Johnson and Colucci (1999) were correct in electing to modify existing theory instead of starting over. The next portion of the discussion will compare the findings from the current study with the modifications Johnson and Colucci (1999) made to Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) theory. Johnson and Colucci referred to Carter and Orfanidis (1976) who stated the family of origin is just as powerful an influence for lesbians and gay men as for nongay individuals. While the participants in the current investigation demonstrated a range of responses to the family of origin, all of them highlighted the importance of family of
origin. Some couples talked of either struggling to resolve the lack of family acceptance or enjoying the acceptance they experienced from their family of origin. Other couples rejected one of the partner’s families of origin as a model for their current family. A few couples examined the pluses and minuses from both families of origin in an attempt to determine which aspects of family functioning to use or discard. Then these couples would use the parts that appeared to best match their values or discard the parts that had no significance for the current family. All of the couples expressed some process of examination of their family of origin.

It seemed the skills they had already cultivated during the process of “coming out” served as the basis for examining and establishing themselves as parents in relation to their family of origin. This process was consistent with Cass’s (1979) model of lesbian and gay identity formation called Identity Comparison. During this stage of individual development lesbian and gay individuals must rewrite the heterosexual “blue print” for life. This process invites the individual to examine all aspects of the heterosexual world to identify which parts no longer apply and those parts that still match this new identity. During the process of “coming out” individuals must evaluate what family systems and individuals in that system who will be affirming or harmful to the individual who is “coming out.” In addition, the individual who is “coming out” must find internal and external resources to fill gaps and protect against social attacks, familial attacks, religious attacks, and attacks from their network of friends. These attacks may be intentional or accidental but still require a response from the individual.

This same process appeared to be utilized by couples in examining their families of origin, community, local agencies, medical personal, or resources during the family
life cycle stage of “becoming parents.” Couples would surround themselves with supportive people and systems to assist with creating a healthy family. This process was similar to the lesbian or gay male creating a supportive system during and after the “coming out” process. When a couple identified a potential deficit to their new family system they would take action to either eliminate the problem completely, minimize the impact of the problem, or to find a counterbalance to the problem which would help keep the family unit as healthy as possible. It is this process that frequently influenced and instructed the couple in the creation of their own unique family.

One of the couples stopped speaking with one of the mother’s from the family of origin during the pregnancy because she was negative and the couple felt she was harmful to the family unit. Other couples limited the time and location of contact with the parents from the family of origin because of the potential negative impact on the current family. Some same-sex couples created new sets of “grandparents” who took the major role of grandparents instead of the grandparents from the family of origin, as a means of providing a creative counterbalance to the negative impact of the blood tie grandparents.

Bowen (1978) systems theory maintains that the well being of partner relationships can be directly tied to the relationship with the family of origin. Laird (1993) and Green, Bettinger, and Zacks (1996) argued this symbiotic relationship does not hold true for lesbian couples. Even though most lesbians and gay men have important family of origin stories, the process of coming out forces lesbians and gay men to evaluate the role and importance of the family of origin in the individuals life. This process of evaluation would again be readily available when evaluating the importance or
value of the family of origin in a couples relationship or family unit. Most of the
participants in the current study shared a revisiting of coming out issues in varying
degrees as related to their family of origin. But the relationships with the families of
origin were not crucial to the success of the couples in this study. Again this matches the
and Green, Bettinger, and Zacks (1996) that the well being of partner relationships is not
tied to the relationship with the family of origin for lesbian couples.

There were couples in this study where there was definite importance applied to
the family of origin relationship. But there were also couples who had broken off contact
with their family of origin completely, temporarily, or significantly limited the contact
with the family of origin. This particular aspect of the couple’s relationship may not be
possible to evaluate with this single point data collection method and may require a
longitudinal study to evaluate the importance of family of origin to the long term well
being and satisfaction of the couple and family. It does not seem likely that the couple
who has parents who have not reconciled their negative response to the same-sex aspects
of their child’s relationship would base well being or satisfaction of the couple’s
relationship using this familial relationship.

Lesbian couples do not match the typical money equals power structure (Johnson
& Colucci, 1999) that is seen in most opposite sex relationships. The lesbian couples in
this study shared parenting as a combined parental unit. Some of the roles that each
partner took had been decided prior to adding children. Additional roles developed as
needed after the child had arrived. Partners would describe pluses and minuses to each of
the roles they had in the family system. The main goal expressed by all couples was the
health and well being of the family system for the benefit of their child. Decisions were made about roles and the importance of roles based on this goal for most couples as opposed to decisions based on maintenance of power relationships. Counter to traditional power structures, for some of the couples the primary caretaker appeared to have more power in the family system and the primary money earner expressed concerns of being on the sideline and not as necessary for the success of the family.

In this study, the area of selecting a method for bringing a child into a family, was consistent with Johnson and Colucci’s (1999) expectations. Each couple explored options that allowed them to make a decision about how to add children to their family. For some, finances were the biggest factor. Other couples considered age, health, or medications being taken by one of the parents in making their fertility decisions. Some women had no interest in getting pregnant which meant the other partner would get pregnant or adoption would be used. Some couples initiated two methods at the same time and would wait until one method proved effective. The last issue that was shared concerning the decision making process related to international adoptions. The country was chosen based, in part, on how the child would be cared for while waiting for adoption. Those children placed in foster care in a foreign country were more valued over those placed in an orphanage because of concerns over attachment issues. The length of the time the adoption process would take was also a factor in the decision of which country to use for an international adoption.

Johnson and Colucci (1999) described the difficulty lesbians may encounter with physicians, fertility specialists, or adoption agencies because of heterosexist attitudes and beliefs. Some couples in the current study changed the agency or individual they had
been working with because extra steps were expected of a lesbian couple that would not have been asked of a nongay couple. Some heterosexist attitudes were tolerated, provided the end result was adding a child to the family. The couple participants also did a great deal of networking during the process of adding children to the family. This networking occurred through attending educational conferences, seeking lesbian friendly agencies and individuals, and asking friends and acquaintances for advice about where to seek assistance. The couple participants also explored how friends or acquaintances had navigated the process of adding children. Some couples expected to challenge the system and push for change. Other couples evaluated different agencies until they found one with experience or comfort in working with a lesbian couple.

The family constellation for lesbian couples is viewed as a creation or invention (Slatter, 1995, Siegel & Lowe, 1994) because there are no role or relational prescriptions after which same-sex families are expected to model themselves. This idea implies these families may look noticeably different than opposite-sex families. Some couples in this study described themselves as more heterosexual in the organization of their family system than most opposite-sex families. Many of the couples saw themselves as traditional in their structure; one is the breadwinner and the other takes care of the children and the home. There were also couples where each partner worked and the children spent time in a daycare while the parents were at work. Each of these different systems had been discussed and decided on prior to the arrival of the children. This expected difference of the same-sex headed family being a creation or invention by Johnson and Colucci (1999) was not prominent within the participants of this study.
Another difference discussed by Johnson and Colucci (1999) related to which parent would be named by the courts as the adoptive parent. Because the state laws in Minnesota allow for co-parent adoption, all participants in this study had been named by the courts as the legal parent. The parents did go through a decision process concerning which parent would be the first to adopt. The second adoptive parent was required to wait an additional six months before the second adoption could move forward. Because of the unique circumstances in the geographic region where data was collected this expected difference of which parent would be the adoptive parent by Johnson and Colucci could not be assessed.

Some couples expressed concern related to the family of origin being more invested if a pregnancy had happened because of blood ties. This concern prompted some couples to choose adoption in order to keep both families of origin and each parent as “equal” in the eyes of the family and the law as possible.

Another difference from opposite-sex couples that Johnson and Colucci (1999) suggested was in the reaction from the family of origin to the news of a grandchild. This is typically a joyous event but Johnson and Colucci believed that would not be the case for all lesbian and gay families. Participants in the current study described a variety of responses from families of origin to the news that their daughter and her partner would be having a child. Some responded with statements of disbelief and outrage “you can’t bring a child into that kind of a family.” The other extreme were parents who were completely supportive and provided every possible support for the couple. One of the participants stated, “My grandmother, who's now 90, [said] it was absolutely no big deal, she thought it was great. In fact she thought there would never be a child because I was a
lesbian and if there is that's even better.” The variations in between these extremes took many forms. Some parents attempted to avoid talking about the addition of the grandchild. Some would only talk within the family about the grandchild but not with friends. Some parents and grandparents from the family of origin were excited and shared the news with friends and/or the entire community. One of the participants described her mother’s involvement with the grandchild like this “Now we see her maybe once a month. Every six weeks. You know it's very much focused around more allowing you to have some contact with your grandson but we’re never going to have a stunning relationship.” Another variation was the acceptance of the grandchild but no discussion of how the child had arrived in the family or subtle signs of discomfort like “But for my own mother to not acknowledge the fact that this child has a hyphenated last name and she is legally my child. That's a problem. So she thinks she is on board being accepting but all the subtleties say that she's not.” This study suggests Johnson and Colucci were accurate when stating there would be potential differences in how extended families would react to the news of a grandchild from a same-sex couple versus an opposite-sex couple.

Johnson and Colucci (1999) stated it is “very important” for same-sex couples with children to access legal counsel to help insure their family is protected under the law. The reason for this need is because same-sex families are not limited from having children under the law but these families are also not recognized under the law (Martin, 1993). Each couple in this study took extensive legal precautions to protect their family. Most of the following legal steps were taken because couples were not able to marry legally in Minnesota and realizing that the federal government does not recognize same-
sex marriages from Massachusetts or California, which does provide same-sex couples a legal marriage at the state level. Each couple used a lawyer to help them negotiate what was legal when considering local, state, and federal laws. In addition to adoptions and second parent adoptions, couples used lawyers to produce living wills, powers of attorney, and wills which explicitly detailed who would become their child’s parent if one or both partners were to die before the child reached the age of majority.

The last change to Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) theory suggested by Johnson and Colucci (1999) was the need for same-sex parents to join community support groups specifically for same-sex parents because of the stress and strain which same-sex parents experience related to heterosexism from the dominant culture and potentially from the LGBT subculture. All of the couples in the study were members of Rainbow Families, which is a support group for same-sex families. This organization provided social events for families to intermingle as well as educational and resource opportunities for same-sex families. Some members of the study had attended a class called Maybe Baby where two psychologists provided information about what decisions should be considered before adding a child, how adding a child to the family might alter the roles and makeup of the family, as well as potential avenues for adding children and the unique questions, problems, and advantages each of these methods entailed. The Minneapolis area has a local resource called the Lavender magazine where local professionals and businesses can advertise specifically to the LGBT community. This magazine can make it easier for couples to find LGBT friendly services. Some couples also accessed local early childhood education programs to provide additional support and information for parenting. Most of the couples in the study also created or joined small support groups of
other same-sex parents. The couples in this study appeared to feel a need for support that
matched the support Johnson and Colucci suggested for these couples.

The author believes the increased need to plan and prepare for children will
provide a thoughtful comprehensive family structure that is capable of coping effectively
with the rigors of family life. These beliefs are based on the lesbian families frequent
need for purposeful planning for inclusion of a child. The lesbian family is forced to
review and assess finances early in the process to determine if they can afford an
adoption, surrogacy, or infertility medical procedures. When adoption is used, the
lesbian or gay family goes through home visits and questioning from adoption agencies
that exposes and explores areas that parents should consider. This process could almost
be viewed as a type of licensing to demonstrate readiness to become a parent. In
addition, the removal of gender expectations may provide more opportunity for a sharing
of the responsibilities of raising a family. The lesbian parents do not have predetermined
gender-based expectation of the roles that each of them will be taking within the family.
These couples must negotiate who will be taking on which roles and which roles will be
shared. These types of decisions are expected to influence the relational quality of these
couples. It will be expected that the experience of being a minority and related struggles
that come with that status provides these parents with unique insight into life that will be
transmitted to their children and provide these children with a richer understanding of
family and the world in which they live.

Limitations

The present investigation did not use a random sample of lesbian couples. The
couples self-selected to participate following recruitment through a regional support
group. This selection bias may have generated threats to external validity and generalizability of the current findings. Specifically, this study’s participants may be a group of individuals that is assertive when seeking outside help and resources. If that is the case, these couples may have found more local services than the average same-sex parent. There may be other same-sex parents who were not as comfortable participating in research studies and sharing their family life cycle experience. This self-selection bias would skew the type of data obtained in the present study and therefore limit generalizability to all lesbian family systems. In addition, only three of the seven original couple participants attended the feedback session to confirm the validity of the initial data presented so it is unknown if the feedback materials represented those couple participants who did not attend the feedback session. This further limits the generalizability of the results of this study.

Further, the geographic region where the study took place seemed to contain an unusually large number of local and community resources for these women. The local LGBT community was proactive and highly visible in the region, a fact which may have altered reactions by the majority culture to these same-sex parents. Also, Minnesota has state legislation that provides for equal treatment of members of the LGBT community. This open environment may have encouraged professionals, agencies, and state programs to be more responsive to and proactive with same-sex parents. There were even state laws designed to support same-sex couples who added children into their homes, for example the second adoption law allowing both mothers to retain legal custody of a minor child. This community based openness extended to state forms and some local agencies that used inclusive language as well as services designed to help new parents
start their families by providing information to help the new family avoid common parenting mistakes. This apparent openness to sexual diversity likely resulted in the couple participants encountering more positive attitudes unique to this geographic region. These attitudes, which are not typical across the United States, may have provided these couples with more freedom to express their needs, seek needed help, and have confidence to pursue adding children to their family system.

Another limitation in this study was the restricted age range of the participants and the restriction to a subset of the family life stages. While this restricted range allowed for a detailed assessment of a portion of the family life cycle, further research will need to be conducted which assesses a broader age and life cycle range with lesbian families. Additionally, all of the couples included in this study were committed to the current relationship. No separated lesbian couples were included in this study. Again this limitation only allowed for articulation of an abbreviated family life cycle model with intact lesbian couples and families.

The final limitation in this study was the exclusive focus on same-sex female couples. Future research is needed to extend the current research to same-sex male couples, additional ages and life stages, and other geographic regions. It will be important to establish a broader family life cycle model which encompasses the full life cycle stages for same sex couples with both female and male same-sex parents.

Sociocultural Limitations

This study was linguistically limited to referring to the women in the study as either lesbian or bisexual. There are more inclusive nomenclatures, which would not limit women’s self-identification. Since orientation is more likely to occur on a
continuum instead of discrete labels it would have been more sensitive to not refer to women as lesbian or bisexual but to perhaps say households headed by two women.

**Implications**

Counselors and therapists should make sure local resources are available for this population to assist them with the decision-making process of whether to add children, what methods to use, what local organizations and professionals are supportive of same-sex parents, as well as accessing necessary legal services. Counselors and therapists should be aware of state laws in their region of practice that impact same-sex parents (i.e., Florida doesn’t allow lesbians or gay men to adopt, Michigan does not allow second-parent or co-parent adoption, North Dakota allows co-parent adoption on a case by case basis).

This population from the study (couple participants) is sensitive to performing well as a parent, in part to compensate for the societal message of same-sex couples not being valued or even acknowledged. Because of this sensitivity same-sex parents may need more access to parenting information, developmental norms for babies and children, and social support that allows them to question freely and hear the trials and tribulations other same-sex couples are experiencing. These mechanisms of support will help them better evaluate their preparedness and success as parents.

This study can help expand or more clearly define multicultural awareness within the counseling psychology profession in the area of families headed by two women. Idiographic information generalized to the nomothetic level concerning the specific population of families headed by two women can help the profession respond more appropriately to clients from this subculture as well as when training future counseling
psychologists in graduate programs. There is also an implication for the social justice and needed advocacy for this minority group. Some state and all federal laws ignore the existence of this minority group. The counseling psychology field should be advocates to improve this group of parents ability to parent and care for their families by being included in legal definitions and privileges of family systems recognized within the law.

Future research in this area should not ignore the potential identity issues that may be experienced by those children who were adopted or resulted from pregnancies with sperm from an unknown donor. All of the other four stages are likely to include new material or the need to modify existing ideas within the model by Carter and McGoldrick (1999).

Conclusions

Overall the changes by Johnson and Colucci (1999) suggested to Carter and McGoldrick’s (1999) family life cycle model, at least for the stages families with children who have not entered school, seemed fairly accurate. The results from the current study substantiated the proposed modifications to the model recommended by Johnson and Colucci in the following ways. The first was the similarity with Johnson and Colucci was the importance of the family of origin for lesbian couples as it is for nongay couples. There were couples who had little or no contact with their family of origin but this disengagement caused significant emotional distress to the family system. Most couples indicated they valued the family of origin even if their involvement with extended family was limited. Next Johnson and Colucci stated the relationship with the family of origin was not crucial to the success of the same-sex couple. The couple participants in this study described a lack of correspondence between the quality of the relationship with
their family of origin and their sense of the quality of their couple’s relationship which matched Johnson and Colucci’s suggestions. Although it is important to note that the quality of the couple relationship would more robustly be evaluated using longitudinal data instead of the snapshot data the current study represents. Johnson and Colucci proposed that the families of origin would have a variety of responses to the news of a grandchild. This modification was accurate when looking at the data from the present study. The responses from the families of origin varied from excitement to dismay.

Further, Johnson and Colucci (1999) proposed that lesbian couples would not use the “money equals power equation” in their relationships. This modification was supported by the current study. All couples expressed admiration and respect in their partner’s roles and contributions to the family. This equality occurred regardless of the financial impact each partner provided for the family. The next modification of Johnson and Colucci substantiated by the present investigation involved the process of selecting a method to add children. Each couple in this study went through a process of selecting their personal method for adding children in a similar manner as suggested by Johnson and Colucci.

Johnson and Colucci (1999) suggested same-sex couples may experience difficulties with professionals when adding children was not strongly supported by the current study. However, there were some examples of couples changing providers because of heterosexism or limiting the information provided for the same reason, but most couples expressed satisfaction with the professionals with whom they worked. Again it is important to note this finding might be unique to the couples in this study because the state where they lived had unusually broad legal protections for alternative
sexual orientations. Further, these couples lived in or near a proactive LGBT community that had numerous resources to help with the process of adding children. These unique aspects of these couples experience may have resulted in their encountering less heterosexism than couples in other communities and localities.

It is hard to evaluate the next point of needing legal counsel. All of the couples in this study felt accessing legal counsel was important and each of them took this step. This suggested a match to what was proposed by Johnson and Colucci (1999). The point that is difficult to assess is the importance of this step, and until more information is available for same-sex couples with children who have split, the importance of this step cannot be properly evaluated. The last point that matches what was proposed by Johnson and Colucci was in the area of community support groups. All of the couples in this study belonged to at least one community support group. Some couples were or had been involved with up to four different support groups. This was seen as so important by the couples in this study that some of the couples took the initiative to create support groups to fill perceived needs. A caution to the interpretation of the data for this point is the method of participant recruitment for the study. Participants were recruited from a large support group, which insured membership in at least one support group.

Areas where the data from this study did not match the ideas put forward by Johnson and Colucci (1999) were limited. The first was the uniqueness of the constellation of the family unit for lesbian couples. Most of the couples in this study either matched the traditional opposite-sex structure of breadwinner and homemaker or the more contemporary model of two parents working with children spending time in daycare. The only other difference, which may have been an artifact of where the
couples lived, was the decision of which parent the courts would name as the adoptive
parent. All of the couples in this study were parents either by adoption or through a
biological pregnancy. None of the couples were left without legal protection.

In conclusion, the existing research on lesbian families has been instructive for
theorizing how families headed by two women might be the same or different from the
existing theoretical model of the stages of family life cycle by Carter and McGoldrick
(1999). Johnson and Colucci (1999) have presented a thorough critique of Carter and
McGoldrick’s model of family developmental tasks with suggested changes based on
literature that largely matches what was found in this field study. The most important
difference between families headed by two women versus nongay couples appears to be
the amount of thought, planning, and research that occurs by participant couples prior to,
during, and after adding children into their homes. These women are prepared for
parenthood through membership in support groups, accumulation of parenting
information, creation of legal documentation for protection of the family and its
members, an evaluation of finances, an evaluation of the fitness of the family for
adoption, a creation of “family” that is available and supportive regardless of blood ties,
and by examining personal abilities and desires to arrive at the most effective
implementation of needed roles for each unique family system. Most of the participant
couples admitted feeling inadequate to the task of parenting. The participant couples
attempted to challenge themselves to seek out more information and assistance to help
alleviate this perceived inadequacy. These women shared, through thought and deed, that
they are not satisfied with having become parents. They are still looking to the future and
planning with their children at the center of these efforts. For most of the families of the participant couples, the organization structure of the family is based on children.
References


January 17, 2007

Dear Dr. X,

I am a doctoral candidate at Ball State University in counseling psychology. I am doing preparatory work for a study examining family developmental tasks of same-sex parents with preschool children. I am looking for an expert in fertility who has worked with same-sex couples who have used fertility methods to add children to their home. Barbara Baird suggested your name as an expert in the area of fertility with same-sex couples.

The research study will be investigating if the proposed theoretical framework for family developmental tasks for same-sex couples matches the findings from a field study. Before beginning the field study I have a list of eight questions gathered from the literature on same-sex parents. I am only looking for a review of these 8 questions from the perspective of your area of fertility work with same-sex parents. Any suggestions you might have that would improve these questions would be appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to look over these questions. If you have suggestions for changes please contact me using the information at the bottom of this page.

I have one question concerning your experience. Please let me know an approximate number of same-sex couples you have worked with over the years.

I have included the list of questions with this fax.

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any questions about the study or the results of the study, please let me know and I will do my best to answer them for you.

1605 N. Walnut St.
Muncie, IN 47303
tbarstad@comcast.net
tabarstad@bsu.edu
Phone: 765-748-5859
Fax: 765-285-2067

Sincerely,

Trent Barstad, M.Ed., LMHC
Doctoral Candidate
Ball State University  
January 17, 2007  

Dear Pastor X,  

I am a doctoral candidate at Ball State University in counseling psychology. I am doing preparatory work for a study examining family developmental tasks of same-sex parents with preschool children. I am looking for an expert in the area of pastoral care who has worked with same-sex couples who have add children to their home. I have attended church at Jesus MCC infrequently since moving to Indiana and was hoping your parenthood had increased the chances of you working with couples in this area.  

The research study will be investigating if the proposed theoretical framework for family developmental tasks for same-sex couples matches the findings from a field study. Before beginning the field study I have a list of eight questions gathered from the literature on same-sex parents. I am only looking for a review of these 8 questions from the perspective of your area of pastoral work with same-sex parents. Any suggestions you might have that would improve these questions would be appreciated.  

Thank you for taking the time to look over these questions. If you have suggestions for changes please contact me using the information at the bottom of this page or reply to this email  

I have one question concerning your experience. Please let me know an approximate number of same-sex parents you have worked with over the years.  

I have included the list of questions with this email.  

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any questions about the study or the results of the study, please let me know and I will do my best to answer them for you.  

1605 N. Walnut St.  
Muncie, IN 47303  
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Fax: 765-285-2067  

Sincerely,  

Trent Barstad, M.Ed., LMHC  
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix B

Questions for semi-structured interviews:

1. Describe the decision-making process leading up to the addition of children to your home?

2. Describe your extended families’ reactions to the addition of children to your home?

Here are the definitions of heterosexism and homophobia I would like you to use when answering the next question: Heterosexism is a belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the only natural, normal, or moral mode of sexual behavior, and is also used to refer to the effects of that cultural ideology. Homophobia is prejudice against (fear or dislike of) homosexual people and homosexuality.

3. Describe any experiences you had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your family?

Here is the definition of legal involvement I would like you to use when answering the next question: Legal involvement can include anything from consultation with an attorney, to preparing wills, trusts, powers of attorney, co-parenting agreements, etc., to obtaining an adoption or guardianship or child custody, support and visitation order.

4. What, if any, legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family?
   a. If so, what legal resources did you access?
   b. What motivated you to access this(ese) legal resource(s)?
   c. If you did not seek legal assistance, why not?

Here is the definition of culture I would like you to use when answering the next question: Culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another.

5. Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your family of origin?

6. How is your current parenting style and family organization similar and/or different from that of your family of origin?

7. Describe those whom you consider to be your extended "family" now?

8. Describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents?
Appendix C

(following is the information that will be given potential participants through email and newsletters,)

My name is Trent Barstad. I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology doctoral program at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I am looking for parents of Gay or Lesbian families who have preschoolers and are willing to be involved in a research project to study the developmental stages that are experienced by Gay and Lesbian families.

The parents would be involved in two different stages of the research. The first stage would involve participating in a 60 to 90 minute focus group. The second stage would be a feedback session, approximately 45 minutes, during which the results from the focus group will be presented back to the group members. The group members will be invited to comment on the material presented during the feedback session. The feedback session would occur approximately 4 months after the focus group meeting.

Daycare services will be provided on site for participants' children. Each couple will be given one $15 gift certificate to Amazon.com for participating in each of the two stages of the study.

If you are interested in participating or have questions, my cell number is 765-748-5859, email addresses are tbarstad@comcast.net or tabarstad@bsu.edu.

Thanks,

Trent Barstad, MEd
Appendix D

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

Hello, my name is Trent Barstad. I am a licensed counselor in the state of Indiana and am currently a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology Department at Ball State University. This will be the first scientific research study looking at the family processes of same-sex parents with preschool children. I am looking for individuals to participate in this study who are same-sex parents with preschool children. The research will involve focus groups and feedback sessions lasting between 1 – 1½ hours each. Babysitting services will be provided for both meetings. I am looking for female and male parents who have used either adoption or infertility methods. There will be a modest compensation for your time. If you are interested please send an email to tbarstad@comcast.net and tell me your name and that you are interested in the research study in your message. I will send you a preliminary list of questions to ensure you are a good match for the criteria needed in this study.

Thanks,

Trent Barstad, M. Ed., LMHC
Ball State University
Appendix E

Dear (INSERT NAME),

Thank you for responding to the invitation to participate in this research study. I am attaching a Demographics Sheet that is in a Microsoft Word formatted document. Please open the document and respond to the 8 questions. Save this as a new document and attach in an email to tbarstad@comcast.net.

If you do not have Microsoft Word I have included the 8 questions below in the email. I apologize in advance for any strangeness that may be present in the formatting, email can do strange things to formatting. Click reply and respond to the questions before sending the email back.

After I have received and reviewed all of the potential participant’s Demographics Sheets I will be in contact with you again. I will contact you within 4 weeks time regardless of the state of responses to let you know where things stand.

Sincerely,

Trent Barstad, M.Ed., LMHC
Doctoral Candidate
Ball State University

DEMOGRAPHICS SHEET

Check the one that applies to each question.

1) Sex:
   Female _________
   Male ___________

2) Age (partner A): ______
   Age (partner B): ______

3) Ethnicity:
   African-American/Black (nonhispanic) ______
   Hispanic ______
   Native American/American Indian ______
   Asian or Pacific Islander ______
   Caucasian ______
   Mixed (specify) _________________________
   Other (specify ) _________________________
4) Orientation:
   Lesbian _____
   Gay male _____
   Bisexual female _____
   Bisexual male _____

5) How many children do you have in each of the following groups (please put in parenthesis the number of children living primarily in another home for the first 4 categories, if any):
   0-5 years? _________
   6-12 years? _________
   13-18 years? _________
   19 years or older? _________
   Living in your home? _________
   Living away from your home? _________

6) Do you have children from a previous relationship? _________
   If yes, how many? _________

7) Please indicate the method(s) used for adding children to your family:
   Adoption _________
   Surrogacy _________
   Fertility methods _________
   Other _________
   (Specify: ____________________________)

8) How long have you been with your current partner? _________

9) How many children do you have with your current partner? _________
Appendix F

Letters of location

Dear X,

I’m writing to let you know of the date, time, and location for the second meeting in which you agreed to participate. This meeting will be a chance for you to hear a summary of the information that was provided in the focus groups from this summer. You will also have an opportunity to clarify or contradict any of the information you are hearing. The meeting will take place at the following address:

University of Minnesota
Division of Epidemiology and Community Health
1300 South 2nd Street
Minneapolis, MN  55454
The name of the building is: West Bank Office Building.

At the end of this email is a link to a map of the address at Mapquest.com

We will be meeting on Wednesday, January 2 in rooms 305 and 310. There will be signs when you enter the building directing you to the third floor and the room. Please arrive by 6:20p. We will be done no later than 7:30p.

If for some reason you are unable to attend on Wednesday, please let me know.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to seeing you again.

Sincerely,

Trent Barstad, M.Ed., LMHC
Doctoral Candidate
Counseling Psychology
Ball State University

Following is a link to the map of the address at Mapquest.com:
http://www.mapquest.com/maps/map.adp?email=1&mapdata=%252bkZmeilh6N%252bo5vPH81OBDPvybo1U7zZufz2CdUWNxEKxDCrF%252bh%252fxRH29pumqAR49a1%252bU8WPBQEaKcq16sphPCIDMiWutALYR88Yev3shci8nXaxsM9tv0AKckEAC4cf2wdInjYFlqRboUC64C1SFTWWBNf8nf31crz57ihHb45i%252b0Fno
Appendix G

Establishing Meeting Time

Hello X,

This is Trent Barstad again, it has been about 2 months since I last communicated with you. We communicated earlier in the year about participating in a research study of same-sex parents with preschool children. At that time I indicated the first meeting would most likely happen in the month of June. I am still planning on the first meeting occurring in June. Please let me know if there are any days in the month of June that will not work for you. Also, please indicate times of day that are most convenient in you and your partner’s schedule.

Thanks,

Trent Barstad, M.Ed., LMHC
Doctoral Candidate
Ball State University
Appendix H
INSTRUCTIONS
For Focus Groups

The overall purpose of the study is to explore family life of lesbian and gay parents with preschool children. The packet that you have just received contains a demographics sheet. Please take a few moments to fill in the information requested on the demographics sheet.

I have a few questions that I will be asking you to respond to during the focus group. Before we begin with the questions let’s introduce ourselves and please share an unusual hobby, activity, or experience about yourself with the group if you are comfortable.

Does anyone have an objection to me starting the recorder now?

Now I would like to establish some guidelines for the group while responding to the questions I will be asking. I would like to suggest a couple of guidelines first and then I would be interested in any additional guidelines any of you would be interested in having in place before we begin.

First I want you to know that I will not be sharing any information you provide today in any format that will be connected with your name or any identifiable information. Second I do not expect every person here to respond to every question today. If there is a question that feels too personal or which you don’t have any experience with, I don’t want you to feel pressure to respond. The next guideline is to respect the opinions of others in the group and that their experience may be different than yours. If your experience is different I am interested in how your experience differs. The last guideline I would suggest is waiting until there is an opening in the conversation before sharing your comments. I will not move on to another question until everyone has had an opportunity to respond who has comments. In addition, if only one person is talking at a time it will make transcribing our conversation easier.

Does anyone have additional guidelines for the group?

Let’s begin with our first question.
Appendix I

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Family Developmental Tasks in Homes with Same-sex Parents

The overall purpose of the study is to examine family life among lesbian and gay parents who have preschool children. For this study, you will be asked to participate in one focus group and one feedback session. The focus group is expected to take approximately 90 minutes. The feedback session is expected to last approximately 45 minutes. During the focus group you will be asked to talk about the process and experience of adding and having children in your home. The feedback session will be intended to share the information gathered from the focus group meetings back to you the participant. The participants in the feedback session will be asked to comment on the accuracy of the summarized information from the perspective of the participant.

The focus group and feedback sessions will be audio recorded for the purpose of making a transcription of the session for analysis purposes. Your name will not be attached to any of the information gathered and will remain confidential. Transcripts and audio recordings will be maintained in password protected electronic files for an indefinite period of time.

One benefit you may gain from your participation in this study may be a better understanding of the range of experiences that other parents who are lesbian or gay have experienced. You will also receive a $30 gift certificate from Amazon.com, and a copy of the feedback material for your personal use. A $15 dollar gift certificate will be given after participation in the focus group and another $15 gift certificate will be given after participation in the feedback session.

Any foreseeable risks or ill effects from participating in this study may be a result of answering some of the questions in the focus group that revisit difficult memories of your experiences of adding and having children that may have been unpleasant for you. Should you experience any feelings of anxiety or discomfort you may contact Family and Children’s Service at 612-728-2061, Family Service of St. Paul at 651-222-0311, or The Men’s Center at 612-822-5892.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator(s) before participating in this study.

Ball State University is sponsoring and responsible for this research. For one’s rights as a research subject, the following may be contacted: Coordinator of Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or irb@bsu.edu.

Principal Investigator:  
Faculty Supervisor:
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Counseling Psychology
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (765)285-8040
Email: tabarstad@bsu.edu

Theresa Kruczek, PhD
Counseling Psychology
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (765) 285-8040
Email: tkruczek@bsu.edu
Appendix J

Confidentiality statement:
I want to begin by briefly explaining the purpose of this study. I’m doing research on family developmental tasks of same-sex parents with preschool children. I will be conducting three focus groups with same-sex parents of preschool children. I will transcribe the focus group discussions and write a report about the findings from analyzing the data. Your name will never be used in any connection with the study. I won’t be telling anyone who I interviewed and your name won’t appear in the written report. I would also like to tape record our interview so that I don’t lose any of it but please feel free to turn the machine off at any time if you don’t feel comfortable. Do you have any questions?
Appendix K

Thank You Message

I really enjoyed meeting you and your partner and spending some time getting to know some of your life story. I wanted to thank you for attending the focus group Monday night. Your responses to the questions are going to be helpful. I look forward to seeing you again at the feedback session.

If, now that you’ve had more time to digest what we did, you have any questions about the study, what happened during the meeting, or anything else, please let me know and I will do my best to find an answer for you.

I will email you again in October with an update of where things are at for the feedback session at that time.

Thanks Again!

Trent
Appendix L

Transcripts

Sunday data

Researcher - Okay, would you describe the decision-making process leading up to adding kids into your home? How did you guys go about, what did you think about to make that decision, how did you go about deciding

I don't ever know that there was really a decision process, we just knew that we wanted kids and how to go about having that, making that happen, was the decision but not about having kids.

Researcher - So when you guys got together you both already knew that you wanted kids

Yes, absolutely

Researcher - That was a very early on

Yeah

Researcher – Okay

And I think I don't know if it's because we’re both women or what but I knew that I wanted kids from the time I knew it was quite young and Samantha felt the same way to, she knew that she wanted to have a family and have children. It was just about how to make how to create the family that was the question.

Researcher - Yeah, nice. Can you describe what you're extended families reactions were to you adding kids to your home?

I think in many ways their reaction about Samantha and I being together was, it was actually I think we’ve benefited, I think that having kids then all of a sudden made sense to them. And I remember my grandfather telling me that you know, he was very conservative and just didn’t say a lot about Samantha and I being together, but when I told them I was pregnant he told me that there was nobody on this earth that was more deserving of having children than yourself. And from that point on everything just really opened up because then we had something in common with the rest of our family. You know we had nieces and nephews and now they had cousins and now we were part of the family in ya know more of a puzzle piece that fit with everybody else.

Researcher - So it changed some of the relationships within the family

I would say so.
Researcher - Okay

Researcher - Did you notice that there was more interaction than after you decided to add children

Much more interaction.

Researcher - Okay alright right

Researcher - I'm going to define a term heterosexism so that we are talking about the same thing make sure we are both on the same page as the next question is about that. Heterosexism is a belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the only natural normal or moral mode of sexual behavior and is also used to refer to affects of that cultural ideology and homophobia comes from that piece where homophobia is a prejudice or a fear of anything that doesn't fit within that mold. Could you describe any experiences you had with heterosexism or homophobia in regard to the process of adding children to your family?

I guess there's only one negative thing that pops into my mind which was an encounter with a family that, you know was fine with Samantha and I, but once we had children had told us that it just went against their beliefs. And that they also they home schooled their children and they said that they home schooled their children to disengage them from families like ours was that that was period point-blank answer. They just didn't want their children exposed to people like us.

Researcher - They were comfortable with

They were OK

Researcher - Before that

We know that it wasn't they probably really weren't okay okay. But it was you know we were dealing with them on an adult to an adult level and I think once we had kids all of a sudden you know it just it wasn't okay they didn't want their kids exposed to the this

Researcher - It was almost the opposite of your family

Right absolutely

Researcher - Wow any other experiences that you can think of?

I'm trying to think you wanted positive or negative correct
Researcher - Actually they would probably mostly be negative because we're looking at heterosexism and homophobia or

You know there's a couple of things like when we went in and were trying to decide. A couple of clinics here in the metro area the OB/GYN group clinics. If we were going to do insemination in the clinical setting they wanted us to it was mandatory that we went to a session or two of counseling prior to them treating us or working with us. And I asked the one doctor right off the bat would you make a 16 year-old who was thinking of becoming pregnant or thinking that she was pregnant would you make her go through that same therapy session and they said “no.” So was specific to us

Researcher - Yes

So we chose to go to seek other professional we were not going to go through any group that made that mandatory you know

Researcher - Yeah you know exactly does the kind of stuff I was looking for

Okay

Well

Researcher - Other things like that?

Yes actually I have another really good one you love this one excuse me

(paused to respond to grandmother’s request)

Well yeah I’m pretty sure it’s a homophobia thing know can be as specific or not but as far as you know rules laws and regulations. I had applied for a medical assistance during my first pregnancy with Jane because the income guidelines are extremely generous for single women, signal pregnant women and technically I was.

Researcher - Yes

And the reason why I did it because Samantha was working at Ameriprise I had found an OB Dr. I really really loved and her company her department was sold out in between so we no longer were going to have the same insurance so the only way for me to stick with this doctor. And that was another thing so when her Ameriprise sold out they offered the spouses of employees that were working there that were pregnant to stick with their doctor even though the insurance companies didn't match but that was that not the same for Samantha and it so was not offered to us. So we just found loophole after loophole to go through and ended up applying for MA and got coverage and could stick with the OB that I wanted to be with. And had Jane. And then, where am I going with this with the a coverage thing
Researcher - I think you're headed towards the applying for the assistance

Yes, okay so I applied for assistance, okay so I applied for the assistance and got it. Had Jane went off the assistance and then Samantha got a job she got a job with another company. And when she first got the job they did not offer domestic partner benefits

Researcher - Okay

After she started working there for about a year after she was there year they did offer. But in the meantime but so before they offered domestic partner benefits I applied once again for MA with my pregnancy with Eve. And they did grant me the MA however they found out down the road, she worked for this big company that they had offered domestic partner benefits there. So the Employment or Economic and Employment Council whatever she had sent me a letter saying “I want to know if your partner Samantha Johnson,” she found out going back to past paperwork, “if her company offers same-sex or domestic partner benefits.”

Well I ended up getting this attorney from Out Front to work with me because I didn't quite frankly think it was any of their business it was my choice if I wanted to be on MA or her insurance. It had nothing to do with what they, you know, were wanting to know because it’s one of those things where they can't have it both ways.

Researcher - Right

They have to pick one or the other and I wasn't asking for coverage for the children because Samantha automatically covers them, it was for myself. And did I want to sit on MA for the rest of my days will gosh darn it I sure did, you know so so that's another situation so we ended up ya know I mean so they never came back with anything and

Researcher - After they

Every six months they ask and I don't answer

Researcher - Oh every six months they ask

In a review. They ask in a review of the ask they say are you eligible for other benefits in the review

Researcher - Wow okay

And I think actually I do check I think the attorney said you can check yes you are eligible, do you get them, or are you getting them, no you’re not so they left alone

Researcher - They did
Yes

Researcher - But they were still curious

They were still curious. And really threatening to close my case and everything in the beginning until I got that attorney to work with me. He sent some letters yeah they were going to close the case and say no you're not getting MA because you could be eligible for other benefits blah blah blah so

Researcher – You’ve had several. Then I'm assuming you guys have to pay taxes on any of the domestic partner benefits that you get?

That Samantha would know

Researcher – Okay, if you're not, that would be another example of where heterosexism would step in because a straight couple who has benefits doesn't have to pay taxes

Right, and I know that was a big question when she now she's back with Ameriprise so now we’re all back under her benefits just very recently as of December for only about six months and I know that was a question with the tax stuff

Researcher - And if the federal government that makes you pay the taxes

Right

Researcher - Minnesota's pretty good in most of its laws for same-sex couples but not all the states are. So I don't know about state taxes but federal

Okay

Researcher – Okay, nice thank you any others?

That's all I can think of

Researcher - What if any legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family.

Oh lots of legal involvement. We had legal paperwork drawn up prior to conception, during conception, group work for being at the hospital during delivery, and then went through the adoption process after the kids were born.

Researcher - The second parent adoption
Researcher - And for awhile Minnesota was in California and Minnesota were the only two states offered that

I know we’re lucky that's for sure very lucky

Researcher - So the paperwork that you guys have done up was in reference to

Durable medical for power of attorney

Also living will

Living will and there was some piece to that she gave to us that had to go in my medical file for Samantha to make decisions, not only me, but for the child if something would've happened there was an additional

I don't know that it had an additional

There was something in there saying that it was my wish to have wanted you to make all the decisions if something happened to me during delivery that two-page piece of

Researcher - So did you guys have an attorney?

Yes

Researcher - That attorney helped you with all of that stuff?

Yes

Researcher - What motivated you guys to access legal resources?

To access legal resources?

Lack of knowledge, probably. Like why did we hire an attorney to do it all?

Researcher - Why did you even involve legal at all, why would you even bother to pull legal in

Well because we didn’t have a known donor for one

No it was a responsible thing to do

Yeah

Researcher - Okay
It was a responsible something to do

Because wanted to be equal parents and as we raise the kids it should be 50-50

Researcher - Okay and that was one of the ways to make sure that you could ensure that

Yes

Researcher - Okay

Researcher - Alright here's another definition. Culture and want you to use this definition of culture when you're answering the next question. Culture is the system of shared believes values customs and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another. Describe the cultural similarities and differences between your current family and the family that you came from.

You go first

For me it's similar in many ways, both my parents were gay, lesbians, and I do think there's a lot of culture with the GLBResearcher community.

And unfortunately you don't see it a whole lot. I mean you see a you see it most I would probably say at pride about once a year. But there's definitely other times throughout the year that you see it but you know there are a lot of things for me that are the same raising kids as a family with Samantha that were similar for me and my childhood

Researcher – Okay, so yours really almost a duplicate

Well not really, in some ways yes, but in other ways, you know. My parents got together and created a family and then they broke off and split and ended up with same-sex partners. So it's a little bit different in that way, it's just you know very much the same yes but I think just kind of doubled add to

Raised by a mom and dad

Researcher - How about for you?

I grew up in a heterosexual family, obviously, my parents got divorced when I was 13. I didn't come from very like church or Christian background I mean my parents are both Christian obviously but they were not very heavy into religion. So coming out for me was pretty easy because my parents weren't, I don't know, they were just really easy about it so I came out when I was really young probably about 20/21 and have been out ever sense and they've been great until.
My mom was lives down the street, so I was raised here in the suburbs which was. Not many people were gay I guess, ya know not many people were gay out here, but I didn't care in a kind of just live my life that like that ever since of them my dad was okay with it up until we had the girls and then he didn't think that we should have kids that was his take on it.

We've had five years of an estranged relationship and just recently started (15:19)

That was going back to one of Trent’s first questions. I totally forgot about that situation, it was weird I'd totally forgotten about the he's been out of the picture for so. He was asking what our experiences has been good and bad in the beginning. I told him of one of the family that was kind of the same way once we had kids the woman down the street that home school their kids and didn't want her children to be affiliated with families like ours I totally forgot about Harry

That has little impact compared to my dad

Researcher - So your mom still was involved

Yep, she's been great to through the whole thing. She was there through both girl’s births.

Her dad’s thing is a little bit different in that one of his first responses with us going about having kids. He made some comment about instead of having kids why wouldn’t you adopt. That was one of the pieces for him was, there a million kids out there that need better homes or need a home, why wouldn't you pursue that as opposed to having kids of your own

Researcher - But he didn't adopt

No, I think it's because he's never been very child friendly his whole life. He’s never cared for kids much. So he doesn't see, like I think if he would've opted over life, he probably would never have had kids. So he thinks that I’m so much like him that this is not.

I think it’s, deep down, more about him than it is about like. Cause now he'll start bringing in the Bible thing into the. And I’m like, dad you don't even go to church, so I don't care what you think about the bible. So it’s just weird, I don’t get it, but he’s getting over it slowly but surely.

And he doesn’t like babies. So as the kids were little I really think that was his way of not having to deal, with the whole baby thing.

He was like that with my sister's kids too
Researcher - Really okay so part of it may not have anything to do with the fact that this is a same-sex couple.

No

Researcher – I heard you mention something that sounded like it might have been a factor in there. That he sees you as being a lot like him so in some ways this is almost like a betrayal. You went and had kids and you weren't supposed to.

Right, totally. For all I know he's gay too. I mean seriously, my mom has said that several times. That could be the other missing link.

Researcher - How is your current parenting style and family organization similar to or different from the families that you guys came from?

Mine is very different

Different

Researcher - Different for both of you

It’s really interesting. My parents were really loose, their old hippies, and they were just very loose and I'm very militant and rigid in my parenting. And Samantha's the opposite, her parents were probably very militant and rigid and Samantha's very loose and soft

Researcher - Okay

I try, doesn't come naturally and then a little bit militant about some things

No, you're really not, you’re pushover

Yeah and for sure I am the pushover

Researcher - How do you guys manage that then between the two of you?

It works

It does work, very well

Rarely do we ever get in fights about parenting which is nice

Researcher - Okay

Researcher – Nice
Researcher - About how the family is organized, similarities or differences, between how you guys organize your family versus

I think we’re the most organized family because of her

We are, but we’re very different in how we’re organize

Yeah

You know

I think we’re much more in tune with the girls and probably either of our parents were. Maybe your mom and dad were better than. My parents might parents were not very in tune with us as kids. For sure, not my dad, and my mom was so busy raising three girls, that you know. What can you do by yourself

It just work so much because I'm, what organizes of so well, is that Samantha goes out and she works and is able to provide for the family. It sounds like division, but I am home all the time, and I do everything in the home and girls are in a lot of activities and I can manage the household and do all the groceries and all that. And that's what makes us organized, it's just that dynamic

Researcher - So I want to make sure I got this right. It sounded like you guys are saying that part of how you guys organize is around your kids but the homes you came from weren't necessarily organized around the children

I think hers was

Mine was, very much so

My whole family is, all the focus is always the kids

Researcher - Okay all right. Let's see describe those whom you consider to be your extended family now

That would be like

We have, our extended family would be, our families, my mom and her partner, and Samantha's Mom for sure, and Samantha's sisters, and their kids, and my mom was one of nine kids and some of the younger siblings are closer in my age. They're not that far off. So my kids have, what technically are my first cousins, that of their age and know that are younger. I would definitely consider them. You know we definitely have a
couple of same-sex couples that are very good friends. You know maybe a couple that don't have children and a couple that do have children.

Tim and Jeremy

Yeah, well and Sue and Kim. Couples that don't have kids and couples do have kids

Researcher - When you guys think about the those people that are in that extended family that aren't biological, do you see them, or do you think your kids see them as aunts and uncles kind of thing?

I think so definitely, there's definitely an in depth

Jane’s funny though. Jane calls when her parents call, she doesn't say grandma’s on the phone, she says your moms on the phone. So Jane’s very different about labeling people so it’s interesting.

Researcher - Okay

So I don't know, if we said Sue and Kim, I don’t know that Jane would ever call them aunt Sue and Kim.

She wouldn't, but I definitely think that she has a deeper attachment with certain people. There are definitely people that she's drawn to and has a different attachment to. But the labeling thing, yeah she's just not one to say “aunt this” or “uncle that”

Right

Researcher - Okay

Researcher - Last question. Describe information or resources from previous generations, your parents or grandparents, that type of thing, if any that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents

You go ahead

I would say, for both of us, Samantha's Mom and my mom kept the old, very typical early 70s baby book

Researcher - Okay

And just the writing in that and stuff, and we went back to look at both of those quite often through Jane's first year. Just reading the information that, you know, was relevant back at that time and kind of seeing where, I mean looking at the milestones the
important things, like what Samantha was doing and what I was doing. But other than that I can't really think of anything else that would be

I think your grandparents are good examples of, a strong, yeah know, role models for the girls too

Researcher - Did you guys look to those previous generations for parenting tips, how to discipline, how to manage anything

Not my side

I don't think so, I think we just did own thing

We’re definitely not people that like, when we have our issues we figure it out we don't like. We have friends that tend to say so-and-so's just doing this I'm just going to do this, what you think? And its like their never really on track with the way we might handle it.

If anything, I would say we’re looking at the new stuff that's coming out. These new books, like I was telling Samantha, I've read since Jane was born probably ten books and very few of them really seem to be fitting toward our family. And one of the things that, you know, that irritates me most about reading these books, their really into the heterosexual terminology. Well the father, I just can't even stomach getting beyond chapter 1 of a book like that. But there are some new ones that have come out that are very, they seem to be using more inclusive language. And there is one author in particular, and I can’t remember her name, but she's got this great book out. And I’ve read it twice and I did have Samantha read it. Cause I just thought this is something that we could actually use

Researcher - Okay and the types of stuff that would be in that book?

Well their really talking about parenting based on the type of child that you have. I mean what's your temperament, what's their temperament. Is this a kid who's sensor sensitive, is this a kid who has, I mean. You know really trying to figure out the root of who they are and then going off of that. And the one thing that I liked about it is, she's in the first half of the book, she's describing kids who are for, you know the example again are very sensory sensitive. And that has been Jane, that’s been with our oldest child. And they're saying in the United States people kind of frame these kids as being picky or fussy or fickle or whatever. But in Europe those kids are considered extremely bright and, you know just you know, the cream of the crop really. So, you know, really now you know you’ve got this type of child, what can you do to kind of help him or her manage their sensitivities either before they happen or during
Monday data collection

Researcher - Could you describe for me the decision-making process leading up to the addition of children to your home?

Go ahead

Well I don't know maybe you're the better one that should answer this because your memory is better than mine and. One thing we did know after we'd been together, well even before we got together, we knew we wanted children, before we even started living together. So that was something we both wanted, we had talked about. When it came to the time to have children the decision was made that Cindy would be the one to bear children or child. Because I never wanted to be pregnant, and I'm older, and she wanted the experience of having a child, being pregnant. So you can pip in anytime you want to.

Well so we, I guess we had information from friends about doctors to go to.

Maybe Baby

And we went to class called Maybe Baby which was really, really helpful. It was a fairly large class run by a couple of psychologists and it’s for gay, lesbian, transgendered, whoever is thinking about having a child. We had actually started to try to get pregnant before we went to the Maybe Baby class. There were lots of people in various places. Lots of people just talking about should we have children, what does that mean to a relationship. It was really helpful 6 or 8 weeks of class.

Right, right.

I don't know and so we have sort of started the process. Which I'll have to say it was a very stressful process of trying to get pregnant. Just going through the whole, where are you going get the sperm, to when the days are that you have to do it, and if you're working trying to organize that so that you can just leave work and go do it, whatever at the doctor's office. So we tried for, really hopeful from the beginning and then we all so kind of had the idea that we were going to have more than one child even from the beginning. Kind had the idea that we were going to try to get pregnant and if it didn't work we would adopt. We always sort of had that as an option. And probably after we were trying for six months we started to look into adoption. Already thinking that I was going to be trying to get pregnant and Linda was going to be the one who was going to be doing the adoption. And we decided from early on that it was going to be an international adoption. Went like three different agencies talked to them about what countries would fit with us. Came up with Guatemala fairly easily.

Early on one of the things is we wanted to do the adoption. And it would be and international adoption. Could I adopt as a single woman. And do we have to hide Cindy
in the closet. I mean can we be open about it. And heck did we find out, how did we find out?

That sort of lead us to which agency. There were two different agencies that we thought we could the open with. The one agency really didn't have a process for Guatemala that we could be open about cause they used another agency that did Guatemala that was sort of a religious based agency so we could be open with the first agency but then we couldn't. So their only other option was China and at that time things were changing and that wasn't a good option. And the other agency we could be very open about and Guatemala was the option there. And even though it was like the most expensive option that was the one that we came up with. So we started that process while we're still trying to get pregnant. As a matter of fact, into that process we were still trying to get pregnant. Yes

Still thinking. Like well, if we end up with two babies that'll be all right. And then after a while into that process, probably after we knew about Stacy, we maybe only tried one more month or something. Stopped that process and went through the adoption process. And then that's sort of led to Stacy. After we had Stacy we brought Stacy with us to the doctor's office hoping that would help us get pregnant again. Whatever, you know, she's one years old we're traipsing her to the sperm clinic to get the sperm. Cause that was our option. I was a stay-at-home mom with her. And so Linda would come with, you know. So the time I don't know how long we tried and then we went from that to the fertility clinic. Found out that, at that point in order for me to be able to have a child we would have to have an egg donor and a sperm donor. That even if we did all of these drugs it would most likely I couldn't use my eggs. So at that point we were kind of like, an egg donor and the sperm donor, what's the point let's just go back to Guatemala. And we liked the fact that the kids would have the cultural connection together. And so than we did the second adoption.

True. And one of the things that also lead us to Guatemala is because I would be the one who would be doing the adoption. And we had this agency that we could be very open with. And my age was not a factor. The fact that I was a single woman was not a factor. And I personally have just always enjoyed Latin American, Central American, just that whole culture of the foods, I'm just kind of drawn to that. So it just seemed like for me it's like that just seems like great, great way to go Guatemala. As Cindy said it was one of the most expensive. But you could bring your child home at an earlier age than in China.

So that was another really a big draw for us

Because in China the process can take a year, a year and a half. For Guatemala we could get, we could bring home a baby anywhere from like as early as five months of age, versus 1 1/2 year old who's been kept in an orphanage, in a crib, versus one child who could be in foster care and you could bring your baby home.
So that was actually a pretty big draw. Once we get a lot more reading about sort of connecting with the infant and that whole attachment piece the orphanage versus the foster care and Guatemala at the earlier age.

Researcher - So all of these resources that you guys checked in on in the process, how did you find them, word-of-mouth, your Maybe Baby class?

The Maybe Baby class was through the Chrysalis Center which is a resource center for women.

Researcher - I've heard of that.

Chrysalis Center very well-known in the Twin Cities. But you go ahead cause you did a lot of Internet and Rainbow Families.

(8:22)

Well when we first started we'd had friends who'd gotten pregnant by using the same doctors that we went to. So we used that connection for that. And then than we, your friends had adopted through that Crossroads agency which was a China connection earlier. So that's how we went to that agency. And then I don't remember how we got to IAS. Did we,

Now I'm trying to remember, was there a rainbow families conference we went to.

We went to the resource area and we started picking out.

Yeah that's what we did and then you went to an adoption, you and somebody. Or somebody went to an adoption conference

It was Monica.

Yeah.

And you got all these different. So there was a conference that you went to about adoption got information on all these different agencies.

Researcher - And Monica was a friend of yours.

So we sort of weeded through that. And IAS was a good fit for us. Because we could be very open. They had many other lesbians couples using that agency. Many others were using that agency and they knew exactly what they were doing. Which was basically being open with us and lying to the country. And basically that's what was happening

And we had a reference list from them, so we called people and said what was your experience like. I understand that you used this adoption agency. What was that like and
that kind of thing. And we even, later on, became a reference so people could call us. And find out what it was like for you.

Researcher - So that whole process, start to finish, once you guys began, how long did that take before you actually got your first child? Including the fertility.

The fertility thing was probably nine or 10 months. I know we are doing the inseminations the first couple of months of the adoption thing. We did our paperwork pretty fast. Like we decided we're going to do this. I wasn't working full-time Linda was working so I would do all of this stuff and then I would say okay we have to go here where to go fingerprints that you do this we have to do that. I think we had our paperwork done in maybe two to three months. Then we found out about Patricia, or I mean Elanna, really as soon as our paperwork was done, within weeks we knew about her, she was 10 days old. And then she came home at seven months old.

Researcher – So it took you guys in total around 13 to 15 months?

Well like from the time we started doing the insemination, yeah. To bring a child home

Yes

Researcher - Wow that was still pretty fast

Yeah that was fairly fast. It would have been faster except there was this huge Guatemala thing going on to the time and we had to get Senator Dayton involved. We had to get the senator involved because there was like this big thing that happened in Guatemala and the US Embassy was stopping all these adoptions, they weren't getting through and. So the agency's sort of steered us in some ways and one way was to get the senator involved who could then contact the Embassy and say what's happening with this Olson baby who is stuck up there. It was quite a stressful time.

Very stressful, very emotional. And also before that, don’t you remember that you, we had an email. I don't want call it Guatemala adopt. But remember there was a listserv that people were going through Guatemalan adoption agencies. They could be living in Boston, they could be living in Los Angeles. Anywhere, and they are trying to do international adoptions in Guatemala. And they'd be on this listserv

So you'd hear what was happening

So you'd hear and people would say what I've heard is

Do this and then we'd be like, okay let's do this

Researcher - So there was a lot of advice
So supposedly when you start, once you get a child in Guatemala it should take between four and six months to bring the child home. So it was seven months.

Researcher - So it was pretty close

Now looking back it was pretty close but at the time, like we got through the really first part in Guatemala, and then it got stuck in this long part. Like I think if that hadn't all happened we would have been closer to 4 or 5 months. But it got stuck, we thought it was going to take forever.

Researcher - How did your experience with the senator go?

Well first, who did we go to first?

Norm Coleman

No it wasn't Norm Coleman. He wasn't senator than. Coleman, we would never go to Coleman's office. It was somebody else. Representative.

I don't know

Was it Norm’s.

I thought it was.

We went to two different places in 2001. Another interesting thing was September 11 happened.

Researcher - How did that affect you guys?

Well fortunately, I don't think it affected us all except that the travel.

Except for the travel, than when we had to travel. That happened in September and then we in traveled in November so it was pretty shortly after. And security was pretty.

Researcher - Over the top

Yeah

We were worried that it was going to affected it all.

Researcher - I can see what you would be.

So there was someone we did try to connect with, tried to work through.
Researcher - Were you able to be open with the senator?

Oh yeah, I never talked with Senator Dayton directly.

But you weren't open that it was you. You didn't say me and my partner.

Oh you mean open that way. No no.

You just said I'm Linda Olson.

Everything that was ever communicated, we even wrote and sent faxes to a contact at the consulate in Mexico. Who in Mexico City, we got the name through this listserv, of this person you could contact. Well, that he, his people were investigating what was happening in Guatemala City. And he was located in Mexico City.

But he's like the head of the Guatemala, the regional person or what ever.

Researcher - OK

So I would like write up this letter and I'd say Linda's you need to sign this cause it's from you. This is what I found out. You need to sign this so we can send it from you.

And so I would fax this letter.

I forgot about that guy.

And remember I even talked to him on the phone

And he was very nice. He's like I'm sending my people.

Right.

It was this big deal.

Which I think is pretty common with international adoptions to go through. Now that we've, now looking back. With our second adoption we got through really fast but our friends took really long and they started at the same time. So I think there are always these issues. But when you're in the midst of it, it's very unpleasant.

It's very unpleasant. But Senator Dayton's office, no I represented I'm a single woman, I'm adopting this child, I've been working like this, this is what's happening and supposedly the US Embassy is not cooperating, supposedly if you try to contact them, because I tried to contact the US Embassy in Guatemala, the rumor was according to the list serve, if you contact them they get so pissed off at you that they'll take your paper and put it on the very bottom. OK, so then we were afraid to do anything. You know, I mean
you almost got paranoid are they tapping my phones, you know, this whole thing. You just are really freaked out about it. But I worked with a woman, who was in Dayton's office, and explained to her and she said we will follow up and we will follow up. And in fact I got a phone call from her telling me, the adoption had been approved everything was a go-ahead, before our adoption agency. I called the adoption agency and I said “I understand the pink slip” or whatever they call it, that says you can now travel because everything is final. So now it's safe for you to travel, meaning you're not going to get down there and say, oh I'm sorry it's going to be another six weeks. Senator Dayton's office knew that before our adoption agency. And I got our adoption agency.

It was like Thanksgiving, well we had decided we were going anyway.

Oh that's true.

We decided we're going, we don't care if they have the pink slip we’re going to go down there to meet this baby and we’ll just stay there until the adoption is done. So we told the adoption agency and they were not very happy. And then we found that out from Senator Dayton's office and it was Thanksgiving weekend that the adoption agency called us Sunday night of Thanksgiving weekend. And said you can travel tomorrow. And we’re like travel “tomorrow we’re working tomorrow we’re working tomorrow” what do you mean, you know. Than they were, so then we couldn’t leave for like two days or something, until we got ready.

Yeah we had to get our reservation and the hotel set up.

We were going to travel like that Thursdays so we just had to move everything ahead I think or something.

Researcher – Could you describe how your extended families reactions, what they were to the addition of children to your home?

Maybe you go first. I have, my mother had already passed away before she even knew anything about the adoption. My dad, sorry I’m going to get emotional, was still alive and knew that Cindy wanted to get pregnant, that we were trying to get pregnant. And he was so right behind it. He thought it was really cool. So he unfortunately never got to meet our daughters.

And he passed away in July. So before, I mean, he didn't he didn't even know that we were adopting.

He didn’t even know we were adopting.

He just knew that we were trying to get pregnant.
He didn’t know we were adopting. But I know that if both of them were alive I can guarantee that they would be swallowing those children up.

Yeah

Yeah

They were very, very supportive of Cindy and our relationship. My dad said he never understood but he loved us and supported it. And I have an older sister who I do not keep in contact with. Surprisingly though, every Christmas she sends some of the best Christmas presents you can think of.

For the kids

For the kids. So that is, and I know if we were to contact her, and say we want to come out and visit, or we want you to meet the children, she would say “yes.” I know she would, I know she would say yes.

And the children know that there are these relatives from your side of the family that they don’t know.

Right

Cause they were talking about the other day, well we know from mommy's side of the family there are cousins we don't know.

That's right

So

Researcher - So it sounds like your sister's relationship with you has been altered by having kids?

Well it's, there’s a five-year difference, and over time, I mean, we just went really in different directions. My sister is very religious, born-again Christian. And I'm gay. And so, I have an illness. She's left me brochures at times about how they can cure my homosexuality. They can cure alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, homosexuality and you know.

Researcher - Was this before the children?

Before the children. Way before the children. So I've had a couple of those brochures that were given to me.
But even before the children, she was supportive of us when your father passed away and that happened before the kids.

Exactly. And then when our father died. And my sister lives in Utah. And my dad was living here in Minneapolis. We decided that his, he wanted to have his ashes scattered at sea where my mom's ashes were scattered off the coast of California off of San Diego. So my sister was here when he passed away. And went through the whole cremation thing and all that kind of stuff. And we were making arrangements to go to San Diego. And we were asking this gentleman, who was a friend of the family. He and his family have just been our second parents all our lives, second parents. We asked them if he would give the eulogy on the boat. And you know could we stay with them. Well, my sister and I could definitely stay with them. But Cindy could not stay in the house, stay under the same roof. First it was well we just don't have room. And then it was basically you can't stay under the same roof because we do not agree with your lifestyle choice. Which I tried to tell him it's not a lifestyle choice, this is who I am blah blah blah blah blah. That made my sister so outraged, she refused to stay there. So the three of us decided, the hell with them, we're going to not count on them for anything. They want to give the eulogy that's fine. But they were going help me get flower arrangements and all this, so that we could throw flowers off the boat and do this and all this. You know there was a Days Inn down the street that they'd be happy to book a hotel room in for Cindy. So we decided, to hell with it, we booked a very nice hotel right on the riverfront there in San Diego. We rented a car, a convertible.

And we drove around.

I worked with a friend, a dear friend there and said “check out where there are some good flowers this is what we're looking for.” And our friends came through and said this is where you can go, they'll have flowers. I called the boat captain made all the arrangements, didn't use them for anything.

And your sister, I mean, was very it was very shocking. Because

And very supportive

Yeah

So, I think I to be honest, I think my sister, I would be there at the drop of a hat for my sister and she would be there for me. I have not done my part to keep up contact with her. I mean she's reached out a few times, I don't follow up and then of course she doesn't reach out again. But, so that's my doing, that's my issue. But again I mean she would be there, if there was anything for the kids anything that needed to be done. I would never doubt that she would be there.

Researcher - So sounds like that change actually happened earlier.
Yeah I think it happened earlier.

Researcher - And having the kids just confirmed or reaffirmed when the kids came along.

Researcher - All right how about for your side?

Well, I had a very difficult coming out with my family too, very difficult. But it was pretty resolved before I even got together with Linda. I mean I think, I think children always make it easier. Who’s going to resist the kids, I mean I think that's true, it definitely for us pushed some things that. My parents knew that I was a lesbian, well for a few years before the kids. And my sister knew. But my grandparents weren't allowed to know. And my mom reacted really poorly and it was kind of a long and ugly story

About your coming out, not about the children

It was just a horrible story. I had significant depression and was hospitalized and attempted suicide. It was a horrible time for me, horrible. But it was pretty resolved by the time of the kids. But I knew I wasn't really supposed to tell anybody else. I grew up in a very, very small town in Pennsylvania. So my parents knew, my sister knew, but my grandparents weren't supposed to know. And nobody else was really supposed to know. Because in my mom's words “they would never be able to accept that.” Well when we decided we were going to have children, my grandparents knew about Linda, just as my friend I guess. But anyway, we decided we're going to have children, I was like “mom this is the time because I'm not going in front of my children going to deny that we’re both their parents” and you know. So we went home to tell my grandparents and we had a picture of the Lena. So that really did push us to be open with them in a way that, you know, wouldn't necessarily have happened. To this day my mom is sort of still convinced that my grandparents just think that Linda and I are raising children together. I’m like, who would just think that, I don't get it. But, even my mom said “I don't really think they know you're in a relationship together.” They know, they do, they do. So I don't know, that denial is very interesting. So now everybody in the whole small town knows because every year we go home. In the summer, Linda and I and the two kids. So everybody in the extended family knows. And nobody has ever caused any trouble.

Researcher - it sounds like things actually got better for you

It's much more open and it's much more. But it definitely forced the issue. Because you weren't going to lie in front of the kids, I mean, it was. One thing that really does push you to be open as a family because how can you be respectful to your children if you're not open with the people around you. So, I think it forces everybody to be go beyond where you are.

Researcher - OK, all right I’m going to give you guys a definition for heterosexism and homophobia. Just to make sure that we're talking about the same thing cause the next question is about that. Heterosexism is the belief or argument that male-female sexuality
is the only natural normal or moral mode of sexual behavior and is also used to refer to
the effects of that cultural ideology. Homophobia is prejudice against, fear or dislike of
homosexual people and homosexuality, okay. Describe any experiences that you had
with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your
family.

I'm trying to think, like the doctor's office, no. Well there's been some times when we fill
out, like you fill something out for your kids and the questionnaire may say, mothers
name, father's name.

Well even now we’re trying to get certificates of, what’s it called, citizenship.
And the whole form is based on the mother and the father and then there's all these
questions about marriages. Like the forms don't fit our family in so many ways. It's
frustrating and then with those government forms, you don’t really, you know if it’s a
stupid school form you just cross it out and you say mother. Parent one and parent two.
You just change it but the government, you’re like, well we’re not married. And some of
those legality things are kind of screwy. And then I tried to e-mail some legal people
about how actually to fill it out and there doesn't seem to really be a clear answer. So
there's some, actually some, this other list that we’re on about Guatemala adoptions, this
Rainbow Guatemala or something, that other list thing we’re on, some of the people have
just said they just crossed it out and they write parent or something.

Well I was trying to remember, because even there, what's your relationship, your single,
mixed, married, separated, divorced. And some places are now getting into it and saying
married, committed partners, they'll add those classifications. Like some of the things
that you fill out here, I work from the University of Minnesota, they’ve become better
about that. Fortunately here in the state of Minnesota they recognize same-sex
adoptions. So on the birth certificate its parent, parent.

Researcher - For the state

So we have both of our names on the birth certificate

Researcher - So it sounds like most of the heterosexist or homophobic components are at
the federal level not at the state or employment level.

We live in a good state

And at least at the University of Minnesota, which has a domestic partnership. But if I
went and applied for a job at Pillsbury, I don't know what they would have. I have a
feeling they would probably have a domestic partnership. But they may talk about, you
know when you of insurance forms or something, father, mother.

I mean the biggest thing was the whole Guatemala adoption. That whole, the fact that we
had to lie through most of that.
Oh at the US Embassy I lied through my teeth.

They actually looked her in the face and said, “you’re a heterosexual.”

No, they never said are you a heterosexual woman. You are adopting as a single unmarried woman. “Yes I am.” And that was true.

Researcher – It was

Course when we came here we were living here but then we have the ability to do a coparent adoption which is all done through the courts. So we are recognized legally.

Even the fact that the adoption agencies, the social worker there did two different home studies. One was for the country that didn't mention me and one was for the state where I was a part of the home study so Guatemala didn't think I even existed, where the state actually heard about me.

Researcher – That adoption agency is amazing.

They heard about her but it wasn't like they are in a relationship. This is another adult and what is the purpose of this adult, this person will help with child rearing and taking care of the child.

Researcher – So you were a nanny.

I was, exactly right and kind still are.

No you're not.

I'm trying to think about any places we’ve gone where, I mean if anything. This isn't answering the question but some of the things have been very interesting when you're standing in line at the grocery store and their looking at the child, and they look at you, they look at the child, and they look at you, and they're trying to figure out what the relationship is. And they’ll say something like, oh is this your grandchild. No it's my daughter. Oh. So they're looking at, here is an older person who doesn't look anything like this child and, so that's really

Researcher – That doesn’t sound like it would necessarily be heterosexism as much as some cultural bias.

That's right it doesn't really answer your question but it is kind of an interesting, just because of the cultural, a different.
Researcher – Yes, lots of people aren't used to that intercultural adoption piece. OK, what, if any legal involvement if any did you guys engage in when adding children, or after adding children to your family.

Well the second parent adoption and then we created wills that very clearly specified what would happen to the children if.

Researcher – Did you generate more than one type of will?

We have, well I have a power of attorney and, I don't know if you call them living wills, is that really the right thing. But Cindy has power of attorney over me in case I become

Researcher – Incapacitated?

Researcher – And the living will is usually in reference to being able to make health decisions in the hospital setting

So she has the ability to do that, make decisions on my behalf.

But we didn't even have any kind of will until the children, I mean we didn't have anything. And then we were like, well what if something happens to both of us and we felt really strongly about, well first we felt pretty strongly about having it very clear if something happened to one of us. So that, even though we couldn't imagine our extended family fighting for the kids, we knew that that's always a.

Researcher – I wanna make sure that I'm understanding you have in the power of attorney for her, you have in the power of attorney for her, you both have a living will for the other person, and then the two of you have a will that says how you want your children handled if something was to happen to both of you

Or either one of the us, like if something would happen to me, that Linda would be the parent. And we've also changed it. Like we originally we have certain people who would take care of the kids then after we had two kids and we spent more time with those people we changed it to. So we have an addendum

Of who would raise the children if something, in case something would happened to both of us

Researcher – What legal resources did you guys access?

How did we find out about the attorney?

Well the first attorney was from friends, we had her and then she made all these mistakes in the document. So than for the second, we used her for our first second parent adoption
and that's when we did the wills. And then when we, we used a different attorney for Patricia’s second parent adoption and that's when we changed our wills at the same time.

Right, so we got the documents released from our first attorney brought to us and then we brought it to our second attorney and then she kind of redid the whole, the whole thing

But I'm sure it's like word-of-mouth within the community. I mean if you go to the Rainbow Families conference you know who the attorneys are that work with gay and lesbian population and they sort of specialize

Yeah, that's how I, that's how I kind of remember it.

Researcher – It sounds like the Rainbow group was a great resource for you guys for a lot of different stages of this.

Remember I told you about that Rainbow Families Conference. We usually go every year it’s a great place for the kids.

Researcher – What motivated you guys to access legal involvement?

Well we had to for the second parent adoption. Because, because the kids were just adopted by Linda. As soon as we could we had to do the second parent adoption. Plus you have to readopt the kids anyway from Guatemala, so it's a perfect time to do this second parent adoption at the same time as you do the readoption.

Researcher – I didn't realize you had to do a readoption.

You wouldn't have to have done the readoption if you had visited the child before you went and got the child. So if you know about the child and you flew down there and visited for a week and then you came back and then you went and got the child. You come back on an IR3 visa, which means the adoption’s final. If you don't visit the child during that part and you just go down and get the child, which is like we did. Then you come back on an IR4 visa. Then you have to do a readoption in your state. And so it’s a perfect time to do the second parent adoption at the same time because you have to do it.

And I think the readoption is usually done between nine months and a year because you have to have a second home study, a follow up home study.

That says the child's doing good.

And so we had the same social worker, who every lesbian couple in town uses if they go through, even if they go through, she also works a different adoption agencies. So she’s the go to

Researcher – She is the go to
She is the one who does. Everyone is like, did you use Kathy Prow. Yes, we did, everybody uses Kathy Prow in town. So then she comes and does the second and that becomes part of your whole process of readopting. And as Cindy said that's when you might as well to the coparent adoption.

So then I think that's what, well I think that's when we'd decided to do the wills and everything at the same time because

If anything happens

You really wanted to be clear about.

Researcher – OK. I’m going to give you guys another definition this one's for culture. Culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another. OK? Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your, each of your families of origin.

Can you read that definition

Researcher – Shared beliefs, shared values, shared customs, shared behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and cope with others

First thing that pops to my head is customs like, beliefs and stuff that have to go around like our holidays you know, I kind of think of that. But then, couldn't it also be something that is just something that became kind of a ritual within your family that you wanted to have in your joint family?

Researcher – Yup you guys have already shared one actually from your family. There was a custom, a ritual, of not sharing a secret in order to protect.

It is a big thing in my family

Researcher – And so that would've been part of the culture in your family and it sounds like the culture within this family, is a little different, you've modified that particular cultural piece for yourself. So that would, it's a very broad thing as far as what we're looking at it's not just. But you're right it's those rituals, those holidays, and those things are also part of that.

But it's even a more basic day-to-day type thing that

Well I think that part of the difference comes from, my family of origin was very similar in our skin color, who we were. And I think that our family is diverse in that way at least. And I think it makes us more open and aware kind of, of differences. Even just
being aware of our children and encouraging them to be more open in their thinking as far as different types of families. Growing up I assumed that everyone had a mom and dad and there were kids, and that was where I came from, that's what I assumed. I remember I actually had to gay uncle and I thought that was the weirdest thing in the world. And I remember sitting at the kitchen table saying “that is the weirdest thing in the world.” Well in our family, we purposely talk about what makes up a family how different families are very different. You know, it may be that there is a single mom raising children or maybe there’s grandparents raising children, maybe that there's two dads, maybe there's two moms, and those all make up a family. I think it's sort of, it's a much more open and accepting cultural of differences. Just because of some of our experiences, but sort of purposely.

Researcher – You are pretty intentional

With a lot of our culture. I mean even the whole ritual about, I get the feeling that the rituals we create in our family are thought out. We talk about, this is important that we share this together. Where I think sometimes in my family it just kind of happened and became a habit. And I don't know that there was a lot of intentionality, you know, in how we did Christmas. Church was at seven and so of course we just did this at this time and, you know, for us it’s been a little more, do we want to do it that way, is at the best way to do it.

Researcher – So it felt to you that some of your family rituals were more of an accident? And yours

I hate to say that, more habitual

Researcher – Built on what has happened before, instead of being thought about, and you guys have been, have thought through what this is going to mean or how it’s going to work.

And it comes back to some of what, even creating a family. Kind of what you said at the beginning which is that some families just happen. Well our family didn't just happen. I think we feel pretty strongly about we created this family now what's, you know, we have some responsibility to make it a good family. It didn’t just happen. We brought these children here, we really feel like, you know, they deserve everything we can figure out that's best for them. I mean even just as far as choosing a school. In my family you went to the school that was in the town and part of that was because that was the school, you know. I don't think my parents ever thought about any other options, that there were like a Catholic school down the road, that there was probably this other option. I don't think it was, you just went to that school. Part of that is because we lived in the small town but here the whole school choice thing for us was a big huge deal. And I think partly because we felt this responsibility of finding the best fit for our family in the school and in the community of the school.
Researcher – How about on your end of things?

Well I didn't grow up in a small town. I mean we moved around quite a bit, my dad was in a business where he got transferred quite a bit. But when I look back on it, we always made sure we lived in the white suburb, okay. We lived in the white suburb and you went to the school. It was based on where you lived, based on the schools, probably not like church, but schools, shopping centers, homes, how nice is it, is it in an area that's growing, it was all, kind of like, that upper-middle-class what you look for when you move. And I always, you know, it was always, you know, a white man marries a white woman and your not, if you're black you marry another black and that's the way it is. And there are even comments made, about somebody, well he married a Japanese woman, you know well, that's because he was stationed over such and such a place or something you know. But it was always pointed out that she was, she is Japanese. And I can remember my parents, when I was in high school, and they were visiting some family friends, a daughter of some family friends. And the family had adopted. And I remember my mother saying “she's not their real child, she's adopted.”

Researcher – So blood that was a very important issue.

I guess so, even if it wasn't recognized that it wasn't

Researcher – It was like a second-class child

Yeah, which you know, years later as I’ve already said my parents would have just opened their arms to our daughters and would never have thought that they weren't our daughters.

Researcher – So those cultural pieces in your family, how do those play out?

So, if I'm understanding your question, is I too have made a conscious effort, that you know, like through the smart moves routine, you know. Little black boys can hold hands with little white girls, you know, I have a dream type of thing. And to, yeah there’s differences and you recognize that there’s the difference. But

Researcher – It sounds like you've made a conscious effort to do it different

Yeah we've made a conscious effort to do it different way. And my parents, particularly my dad, they very softened from being the almost John Birch society type, to really being way over for them. Becoming more understanding, not just tolerant, but understanding and things aren't so black and white.

Researcher – OK

Can I just go back, I just had a thought about the heterosexism because it just reminds me of this kind of funny story about her daughter when she was two or three. And I feel like
we’ve tried to create this open, all kinds of families, blah blah blah. And one day, and she was really little, cause we were going to early childhood education, cause I was devastated that day. She was looking at this tomato plant and she was like, this is a momma tomato and a daddy tomato and a baby tomato. And I said well Lanie what if there were two mommies. There is not two mommy tomatoes. There is a momma and a baby and a daddy. And I was just like, my child thinks it has to be this way. I went to this early childhood class that day and we’re having this parent talk. And I’m just like, even she thinks that’s the way it has to be. And here we think we’re trying to create this contention open family. And that’s how, the kids see it on TV, they see it all around them, and even in this family where there were two moms. She was, kind of, three year old adamant that this is how it has to be. And I was just like, oh my god, what have I done. You know what I mean, it was just really an interesting phenomenon for me. Like I think there's probably much more, people aren't openly saying stuff to us but I'm sure there's much more subtle undertones because even the kids are picking up on them.

Researcher – OK, very good point

Researcher – How was your current parenting style and family organization similar or different from that of your families of origin?

Sometimes Cindy says we’re more like heterosexual couples than heterosexual couples are.

Researcher – What do you mean by that?

Well we have very sort of delineated roles in our house, you know, as far as. What I was kind of thinking was I’m much more like parenting styles of my parents than I would hope to be. In many ways I think I wanna do it so differently and in many ways I think you end up doing what you know, which is what happened when you were a child. So I started off trying to be really understanding and listening and not getting angry. The older the kids get the more I hear my mother’s little voice coming out of my mouth. It's really interesting even though when you intentionally try to do it differently. You do what you know, which is what your parents taught you.

Researcher – Okay what did you mean that you guys are more heterosexual than the heterosexuals are?

Well laugh about that because, here we are two women in the household, and share the activity, you share in the chores, let's say you know. It's not like, the woman does the wash and the man does the lawn mowing, which is kind of like that stereotype heterosexual. Well, even though I try, Cindy does most of the laundry, does almost all the cooking, does the grocery shopping, takes the kids shopping to get clothes and stuff. I work outside the home, she also works outside the home, I work outside the home, you know 40 hour week, I cut the grass probably after she's told me “it's about time you cut the grass,” I do kind of the little fix-it stuff around the house. I don't really do a hell of a
lot do I? Oh I put in the edging of the lawn, what else do I do, I'm the one that runs to the liquor store. It becomes a

But I was a stay-at-home mom so initially, I was at home all the time.

How long was that, two and half years?

It was supposed to be just a year but, about two and half to three years. And we found ourselves doing it a lot. Even though you would think you might not do it the same.

But that’s how, it’s kind of how roles

But parenting is kind of like that too, I'm home, especially when I was home all the time, the kids knew they had to listen to me. When Linda came home she was the fun parent that they didn't get to see very much and even to this day they just adore her. And I'm the one that says now you need to go make your bed.

I can say it a hundred times and they won't listen to me. They hear it from Cindy and they go and make the bed. I don't know if that happens in heterosexual families, where you know, my parents didn’t do this, but wait till your father comes home. I mean we've heard that for I don't know. We don't do that kind of thing but it's just really interesting, I mean, even though I may have more of the traditional male role. I'm not like the disciplinarian and, I mean that comes from her.

Researcher – You still have varied it some from that ideal that we hear about?

Well not that we really wanted to, like with the discipline stuff, just kind of morphed that way.

We’re trying to sort of change it a little bit. Because we find that it's very hard to, it's hard for one person to feel like they are always the one making the kids toe the line. And then it's really hard for her when they won't listen to her. So we’re trying to work on sort of making that work better. But I would say that our parenting styles in a lot of ways are similar. We have pretty similar feelings about what's OK and what's not OK. That we have fairly similar, fairly similar. My limits or maybe a little bit tighter than yours. So she may let them get away with a little bit more. But the big, the big serious things we’re pretty similar on.

Yeah, like bedtime.

And what's OK, what’s not okay.

This is the time and that’s when you go to bed. And that's how was in my family.

We’re pretty structured.
Pretty structured about that.

We have pretty clear rules.

Clear rules.

Around TV, around bedtime, around mealtime. And we're pretty similar in that not one of us is really laid back and one of us is.

Researcher – Did you guys find that you arrived at the similarity just because it felt right or did you guys have a discussion about it where you.

We discussed it.

Especially when the Lena was first with us, we had a lot of discussion about parenting I think. It brought us closer that first year she was home. Because we were trying to figure out, what are we going to do with this baby? And how are we can organize our lives and get all of those other things done that, you know.

But we also knew before, I mean. You were trying to get pregnant and the Maybe Baby class. I mean there were discussions about discipline and what's OK. And is it okay if your child writes all over the walls or, you know just, is spanking okay, timeouts, how will you do things, how do you want to parent together. So we had lots of discussion about that, and we were just right on, right on, the same wavelength on that.

Yeah

Researcher – But you had some outside organized help in focusing your discussions about this whole parenting thing.

And in Minnesota they have this thing called early childhood and family education. Which is a wonderful thing. It's wonderful and it's for kids from birth till they go to school. And it's actually, you can go to classes where the kids are involved in one part and the parents are talking in another room or whatever. We do that with both kids. More with Lena. But with both kids and usually I would be the one to take them because I was at home. But then we did an evening class where we read about this power struggle book. So some of it was based on a book or whatever. But it was really a great resource we have in the Twin Cities that money gets put into. This state is pretty good here. Cause I called up my sister in Denver and said you should go to these ECFC classes. She said what is ECFC and then I realized it was just a thing that we had here.

It’s supported here by the public school system, of course being drastically cut now and it will all be gone because.
Well I heard it's getting refunded now. It was really good when we started. Then it got really cut now it's gotten more funding. It's much more focused now putting in to preschool and early childhood.

So again, you're right, we used lots of resources.

Researcher – Would you guys describe those who you consider to be your extended family now?

Friends like Lori and Heather

Yeah, Lori and Heather

How about Henry?

And Henry he’s our neighbor. And then I would say it's more my parents, my grandparents, and my cousins

And your sister

And my sister.

And I pick these two friends. They also adopted two children from Guatemala. And I just feel like Lori and Heather, we could call them. They're part of the extended family. I mean I think there's other people you could say, oh yeah, cause you know we could do something with them. But for me I’m kind of using part of the definition because I think I could call them at any moment and say “we need this” or “this is going on,” or “can you watch Lena right now because something’s happened we have any emergency, Cindy has to fly somewhere” or something. They would do that. And our neighbor, who lives across the alley from us, Henry, whose a single man, he’s now, he's been divorced for years. He’s like sixty something. He would do anything for us. He would do anything for the girls. So I would really call him.

And they are really important to us because none of my family lives here.

In Pennsylvania

So we have no family.

Researcher – Other than the family you've created.

Right

Researcher – All right last question. Describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you've found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents.
Say it

Researcher – I'll say it a little different this time. You may have gone to your parents or your grandparents for parenting tips or for advice about something or that type of thing, where you went back and accessed that earlier generation as a resource for something. So, describe any information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you've found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents.

Well one thing, this might sound dumb but, I went to my mom and she gave me my baby book. And it was actually helpful because it just said little things like what happened when I was two months old. That she had, you know, carefully written down.

Researcher – Right.

And we certainly have called my mom and said “Lena is doing this, what the, and how would you deal with this” we've had a lot of bedtime issues from an early age. We've had many discussions with my mom about what to do about certain things and my sister actually but she's not really in another generation.

Your generation she's our

Researcher – But does your sister have children that are older than yours

Well they’re nine and our kids are six and four. Yeah, she's very helpful in that, like it’s a phase, it’s a bad phase. But it will be over sometime.

Yeah, exactly. So she's been very

Very helpful

Supportive and none judgmental. I would say, even your mom, I don’t, there's not judgment like you're doing this wrong, or you should do it this way. It's kind of like you know they see that, like if we're visiting them and something isn’t going right. Well, what do you think we should do? Well if taking her and putting her in the car and driving her around until she falls asleep, didn’t do it. Not like, “oh my gosh, I can’t believe they’re taking her around” no nothing like that and I don’t get that they’re saying it behind our backs.

No, lots of times they’re like I think, “relax, it’s all fine. You know, like, it’s okay.”

Researcher – So as you say that this is the picture that I had in my head. They're like going that you're taking this too seriously calm down a little, just go with the flow.
Sometimes I think that they're just kids, kids cause trouble. I don't think they're saying that you're overreacting necessarily but their saying it's OK kids do this.

Researcher – This is natural, this is normal.

Exactly or I think, we've had significant trouble. Significant trouble that my parents have observed. With us even fighting because we can't get the kids to sleep or us then having a fight. My parents have observed it and always they've been sort of like. Either they sort of back away and just let it happen or they support us or.

Yeah in fact there's been times. I just have a couple comments. One you summed it up very nicely, I mean of saying that they are not like criticizing us or saying you're overreacting. No, not judgmental like that, but more “you know it's just a phase. It will pass.”

And in the beginning we were like it's just a phase. I was so sick of people saying it's just a phase. And now I find myself say it's just a phase.

It's just a phase, sure it’s going to be over soon

Your three-year-old is doing what? Oh yeah that’s a phase that’ll be over with don’t worry. Just to wait until they get to be six. Then the phase is different.

Then the phase is different.

So that is really, is helpful. Then when there have been times where, if one of the children was really acting, child was really acting up, and so that Cindy and I and a snapping at each other then we’re kind of like embarrassed that we did that in front of her parents or what ever. Then when things calm down, a lot of times her mom would still be up. And than the three of us would sit and just like, oh I'm really sorry got angry and. It didn’t really help when you did this. Yeah, and then we kind of sit and talk about it and so that helps to talk about that. So it could be anything like. “Oh yes, I remember Cindy when you and Marcy would.

Right. We took a family vacation with my parents to Disney World. And stayed in this little cabin with my parents and two children and us. They got to see firsthand how it was. And at the time Patricia, who is now 4 ½, was 3½ or 3 was terrified of dressed up creatures. So here we were at Disney.

Researcher – Oh my goodness

So it was a pretty horrendous vacation for her. So my dad was pretty much constantly on Patricia duty because there was Mickey Mouse walking by. And like she refused to go. It was Lena's fifth birthday and we were having it with Pooh characters. Patricia was not
going to that birthday party, so my dad took her. My dad would take her and they would go off on the boat by themselves.

Whatever was going on there was

My dad as been just great. Patricia can have tantrums and like screaming.

Researcher – So a follow-up to this than. You have a sister, did she access your parents in the same way do you think?

More. My sister had twin girls. She had a very difficult pregnancy. She was, the kids were pre-mes. And she was significantly ill after they were born. My mother lived out there for a while in Denver. And my mother periodically would be out there for months at a time. My sister’s pretty good she's better. My one niece has cerebral palsy and the other one doesn't. Although, I mean she walks and everything but she definitely has, she’s had a couple of major surgeries. And my mom has a very close relationship with those girls and really, you know, helped raise the kids when my sister was very sick. And still just recently, you know, my nieces were at my mom's house for like four weeks or something. So my mom has even a closer relationship with those grandchildren.

Researcher – So it looks like that's a pretty normal cultural thing in your family.

Yeah

Researcher – Any comments you guys have to finish things up?

I don't think so. Do you want to tell him. This is something that just popped into my head. Remember that time when you were, you had the Groovy dolls. I mean this has something to do with the, maybe not, maybe it's more of a cultural thing. You were telling that story about, no there's not a daddy tomato. Okay, but that one time when you had the Groovy girl and then you introduced the Groovy boy doll and he had different skin culture, I mean different skin color. Can you tell him that story? I don't know how it fits into any of your questions.

Our older daughter Lena is very, what's the word, just really aware of everything that's going on around her. And is very sensitive to people and what's happening, she fairly quiet. I think you'd classify her as an introvert. But has an excellent memory, is, I mean when she was three could tell me “you're going the wrong way, this isn’t how we get to” what ever. Our other daughter doesn't pay a bit of attention to anything. That's not the building where such and such. That's not even near, that doesn't even look like that building. And Lena is very aware of all differences, in all things around her and what's going on. And she's the one who said the thing about mom and dad tomato. And one day, well I guess she had this groovy girl. It was a girl.

You know what a groovy girl doll is?
It's like this cloth doll

Kind of like a rag doll type thing

The doll must've been white or light fair skin, Caucasian looking but it was fair skin. And they had done something, so they were getting sort of this reward which was this new groovy kid. She was getting the new groovy boy and the other one must getting a groovy boy or whatever. So I left it on their place at the breakfast table thinking it was going to be this great, you know fun thing. Well she was like devastated like, and I was like, you know what is wrong. “He does not match my groovy girl his skin is darker.” And I was just like

We didn't even notice it.

I mean it was really. She's always been very aware. We have these very good friends Diana and Jonathan who have a boy, Forest, who's the same age as a Lena and a boy, Duncan, who's the same age as Patricia, I mean within months of each other. And Forest, they were both born in Guatemala also, Forest is much lighter skin. And from a very young age Patricia was like his skin is lighter than mine but he was born in Guatemala too you now, I don't understand. Why is his skin lighter? That whole, like, awareness of skin color and differences. She's very aware of it all. And you think your creating this environment of, “its okay if you have a different skin color.” Oh this boy and girl could not be together because they did not match. Their skin was a different color. I was just like “What?” She's always been very attracted to dark skinned boys, like on the TV. I mean if she's going to choose one of the boys that would be the one to choose. Even she would choose an African-American looking child over a Caucasian child just because.

Researcher – OK.

It's just really interesting and. At what a young age those.

Researcher – I think what you guys, that story really hits home as to how difficult it can be for gays and lesbians to come to terms with not fitting in. How easy it is for us to learn those cultural norms that the larger society is sending. And you guys have gone out of your way not to have those be a part of this.

Right.

And they're still there. Some of them anyway

I think that's true. And our kids are really limited on the TV that they watch. Cause at first I was like “oh she's just seeing every TV show has a mom and dad and children and that why she thinks the tomato.” “It’s all about the TV.” Well now our kids are only
allowed to watch TV on the weekends and their are only allowed to watch TV two hours a day on the weekends at max. Which has worked very well for us, the kids are much more creative, they interact much better together.

And that includes like DVD or something that’s not like. If you rent something from the library that includes part of your TV time.

At first it was huge, like, “I want to watch TV.” And now they don’t even ask. They know that's the rule. I just think it’s so much better. So I know it's not all coming from TV. Where’s it coming from?

Researcher – Do you guys have any questions for me?

No I think it'll be interesting to hear about the bigger picture.

Yeah I'm fascinated in the follow up session or what ever that comes next.
Researcher - All right first question. I'd like you guys to describe the decision-making process that you went through leading up to the addition of children into your home. How did you go about deciding you're going to have them and that piece? And whoever wants to start. I also want to encourage you guys if somebody else says something that is part of what fits for you please say it again okay? So I have an idea of how much it is across for all of you.

I guess I could start. I was sitting around at, with my father, everyone else went to church, we were going to refuse to go to church so we sat around a Christmas one time and he and we talked about the goals would like to have family someday but it was a real far away, I was just kind of saying that because, wouldn't that be great someday we were in our late twenties but really didn’t have. If we had the money someday we might to do that, that kind of thing, and my father said “you're never going to have enough money to have a child, its just not, you can’t plan for that, its never going to happen. I happened to be lucky enough to be an only child, where he said we will help you get pregnant. And your mother will live 20 years longer if she's a grandmother. So suddenly, crash it became a reality that we could really do this. Because it was really, we weren't really going to do it, because we knew we didn't have enough money for one thing. And we certainly didn't have enough money for all the fertility things. We both work in nonprofit and it there just wasn’t enough money there. Going through the process I’m sure you’ll get to that at some point, that crash, oh my gosh we can do this. So we hurried up

And went to Europe

Went to Europe for two weeks to sow oats and then started to came back and have a family. We had to do that. Get rid of that just that couple thing. We needed to do that first we knew we wanted to go to Europe someday. We hurried up and did that and then came back and we started trying to have a family.

Researcher - Wow okay.

I can go. My partner and I had different perspectives on families. I really wanted one and she really didn't. And when we got married we kind of decided, well we'll just see what happens, you know we were both pretty open to either option. But within a few years we had a couple different friends who were a bit older than us were struggling with fertility. Male-female couples. And having a lot of different kinds of issues. Basically related to being late, unable to get pregnant at least easily because of their age. And it kind of called into question for us we needed to decide. We started exploring the idea in general. We went through a little back-and-forth figuring out who. We decided to use a known donor. And so we had a little bit of process around that. But ultimately it was just seeing women like ourselves who wanted to have children and couldn't. And feeling like we don't want to be, not able to. For us money was an issue too and so we really
needed it to be turkey baster friendly and that. And that is less and less possible post 35.
So anyway

Researcher - Okay

We've been together for 15 years. And we knew kids would always be in the process
somewhere along the line and adoption was always the first choice. So we just sort of
jumped in to it. We did the thing where we went to Florida and Disney World and came
back and started the whole process and just figure you know now we're parents and
actually waited four years for Leslie. That was a little bit of a, we were almost on the
edge of maybe we just shouldn't do this. Then all of a sudden we got the call. So it was,
was obviously supposed to happen

I think initially we saw, I think we were at Pride, and we saw the

Children's Home Society

Children Home Society was at Pride and they had older children adoption. And so we
had initially went to a meeting for that. And then we went to the MayBe Baby workshop

We did try the fertility thing.

Actually we waited three years. We tried for 18 months with me it just didn't happen. It
never felt like that's what we should be doing, it's not going to happen because I wasn't
there. So then now we have Leslie.

Researcher - So let me ask you guys did MayBe Baby? You guys did a MayBe Baby.
Anybody else? You two did the MayBe Baby. Because I've been hearing about that and
I think that's a unique to this area

I bet it is.

I had a hard time with MayBe Baby because they kept talking about the Bio mom. And
before I adopt my daughter I'm just this person that's kind of around. So that was a really
tough time for me during, that was really a struggle for me during MayBe Baby. I'm
more involved than just what MayBe Baby was trying to say. What's up with the groups?
The Bio mom versus the non Bio mom. That part used to bug me about MayBe Baby.
She and I would go home and talk about it because I didn't want to be mommy's friend.
I'm the mom too.

Try being like in the group of four for adoption. You're way off in the corner like. It was
primarily lesbians that were going straight to fertility. We were with the one gay couple
in group that was considering adoption.
It was pretty obvious, I think kids are awesome. I'm not going to do it. She has wanted her entire life to have a baby. So it was really easy for us to decide who was going to do it.

Researcher - OK, how about for you guys.

I think we both had always wanted kids. And I think it was the thing when are they going to fit into our lives. We were never going to have the money to do it. And I think we thought we would, one of us would give birth to a child. Adopt anyway, thought about adopting later. So we were pretty convinced I think that we were going to have a child and then we hurried up and got married. Because we were like well if we are going to have a commitment ceremony we should probably do it before we have a child instead of wait until he's a teenager. We've been together seven years or something. So we did the MayBe Baby class. We had already decided we were going to do it. We should probably go because they might have something important that we should think about, you know. But it wasn't really anything that we hadn't already thought about and they did separate us. Which we hadn't, we didn't know. So it was like you go to the Bio mom and I'll just go to the non-Bio mom and that's not how it turned out. But we had already decided that we were going to have a child. So than we finished that in October and started trying to get pregnant I think in February. And that group finished in October and then outside of that one of the couples pulled us all together. So we all met, seven couples out of that met. And we continue now four years later to meet on a every other month basis. But so, we were the second couple to get pregnant because somebody got pregnant during MayBe Baby. But so that was ours. So I think I had a friend who said you're never going to feel like you have enough money to have a child you just need to do it. Which I think really hit home for me. The process of deciding to have kids wasn't any different for us than if I had been with a man or something. It was just, I always took it for granted we were going to have kids. We never really had that discussion it was more about when and how.

It's a big process

Researcher - Okay
(9:04)
I've always knew that I wanted to have kids. And so when I was sort of dating and screening people saying "OK I'm not looking to date very long." I want to have a relationship, that was sort of one of my screening things, I want to have kids. If not I'm not going to pursue this. My partner and I knew pretty early on that was something we wanted to have. It was sort of when and how. So we work together five years before he was? Six years, seven years? Before he was born. We too, we went on a trip to Mexico and then came home and said all right let's go. We had our appointment with the doctor like a week after we got back. And we knew that I was the one that would carry the first child because I was a couple years older and little further along in my career. She was just sort of getting established so.
Researcher - OK. How did you guys decide who was going to carry the child when you finally did decide? (10:13)
I was taking antidepressants and I didn't want to mess with that, the risk of that is what it finally came down to. Did a ton of research. It was definitely going to be me for the longest time she had no interested. And then she's also older, so it started to seem like something that she might like to do.

Researcher - OK, nice. Okay. Second question. Describe your extended families reactions to the addition of children to your home.

You want to take that one first

Yeah. I had the old, “you had better not bring a child up in that relationship.” I got the “how dare you raise a child with two parents of the same-sex.” Which I responded to your children are being raised by a Catholic Republican, I'm not the problem. After I informed my mother who has never really been to supportive of the decision I told her there is not going to be a grandma come lately. This was the reality Minnesota does allow same-sex adoption, it's going to happen. And if you're not on board now you're not coming on later. And she and I were going to go to a Twins game that night. I freaked out, “I can’t go I’m just going to stay home.” My mom called back about three hours later and she ended up saying. You know what, I don't understand it, and how's it happening and can I be a part of the name picking. OK. It was in a voice mail. (11:48) So I was like all right you know she's at least on board so she wants to know how, because she doesn't understand “how can you get pregnant without a man.” She's 54 or something and for some reason she is a cavewoman so. But she's on board now and she loves our daughter as much as any other grandparent does. She just doesn’t, she just doesn't like it, but she's accepted it.

Researcher - She doesn't like?

Us together, even though it's been eleven of years. It's about time you get used to it. She’s come a pretty long way. Course she does blame softball for our relationship. And this is probably one of the most unathletic people on the planet. So softballs not really what's really happening here.

Researcher - Okay

I'm really trying not to talk over her. In the interest of science and research trying not talk over you. Great.

Researcher - How about for your extended family?

Well my parents were obviously on board because they paid for all the insemination's. And there were many. My grandmother who's now 90, it was absolutely no big deal, she
thought it was great. In fact she thought there would never be a child because I was a lesbian and if there is that's even better. They all love Doris. I'm glad my grandfather's not alive any more. It's really terrible to say that. But he would not have accepted that. Her husband. But he. But she's just fine with it. She loves her daughter, aunts and uncles, just fine with it. I haven't had any problem. Even the more conservative ones, just seems to be. If they're talking about us bad it's behind our backs (13:45)
Researcher - Did that feel like there was a shift with your family, your extended family? (14:10)
No they were always on board, pretty much.

Researcher - All right.

My parents were, for the most part, okay. They were in the process of a pretty stinky divorce after 40 years of marriage. So they were sort of in their own stuff. And coping in their own, what I deem problematic ways. So my mom was pretty depressed and negative and made comments about, well you're too old, and why are you doing this, your kids going to have Down's syndrome. And at that point I said I'm all done and goodbye. And so I didn't have contact with my mom from the time that I was about three months pregnant until our son was about two months old. I was like, I'm not going to deal with your insanity. I felt because of the divorce sort of helping her cope and trying to manage and do stuff and just thought "I can't do it I just, I'm not going to put myself through this while being pregnant." And I didn't have any contact with her at all. And I was challenging because I wish I had a mom. And I've really never had a mom that could be there (15:43) in that way. So I was like sort of grieving what I never had. Now we see her maybe once a month. Every six weeks. You know it's very much focused around, I want to allowing you to have some contact with your grandson but we're never going to have a stunning relationship. But she's very appropriate to me and my partner, respectful of our relationship, it's not about that. So usually meet, in the summertime we meet for more go out to eat and then go play in the park so. We can do that. And that's sort of the way we've managed it, for now. And my dad, my dad likes to be, he wants to do Rainbow Families, he wants to do Out Front, and he wants to do this stuff but it's more about him and not about having a relationship with us. So it's a little funky. We see him about a once a month, so it's not stunning relationships but more about sort of their drama and not about us being a couple. (16:50)

Researcher - OK (16:56)
My partner's family is pretty respectful, for the most part. Her 91 year-old grandmother just died. And just adored our son. her And we pushed her a lot, she was Missouri Senate Lutheran. We just really challenged her but she was always right there. Our commitment ceremony when all the other family drama was happening she said “well if you're going to have Oreos and Kool-Aid in the backyard I'll buy the Oreos.” And I’m like “rock on.” So it's all right.
Researcher - OK, who's next?

My, immediately family was totally fine, wouldn’t you say? My mom said some weird stuff when I was pregnant. Just typical weird mom stuff. Not about your relationship, not about being lesbian parents or anything. Just weird stuff that moms sometimes say that don't make sense. And my siblings have been great, very important. Extended family has been fine. We just have uncles and aunts who are very good evangelical Christians and so don't really talk with us any more, to us, to me. Since he's been with us I think my family has been great. My mom has made really supportive comments “like he's like to have lucky to have two parents who love him so much.” Really supportive stuff, and he interacts with all of his cousins, and everything just feels normal.

The only weird story is with Char's mom is when. I guess it was the first Mother's Day. After he was born she came to visit, right? She was here, not for Mother's Day, she was just here visiting. She never once mentioned the fact that I was also having my first Mother's Day. Over and over again she said it. She wanted to get Char a Mother's Day present. Sent her a card and stuff but there was never any. So that was kind of weird but. I think she just didn't know what to do. And since then she hasn't done that again. And my family is just great. They, they were thrilled that we were having kids. For me I don't think anyone in my family. There was never any issue.

Researcher - All right

My family, since I came out, my parents I've actually had less and less contact with them. My dad hasn't really spoken to me more than to maybe pick up the phone when I call than just hands it off. And my mom it's really strained, my parents are religious and the family is very insular I guess. So when we first came out there was, we were kind of ostracized from my extended family also but that was only for maybe a year or something. Then my aunt and cousins call. I have invited, those kind of replaced my immediate family for us. I think, you know my aunt. Now that we have Leslie we'll go visit her every once in while and she says Leslie you call me Grandma. So that's nice, they've all been much more accepting than my family. I have four siblings. Two of them that are the closest to me, two brothers not either, one completely not supportive very, listens to Rush Limbaugh all day long. He wants to preach to me if he does talk to me and the other one is kind of, you know, sometimes he's says something a little supportive but most of the time he's not. And then my sister's are much younger and their supportive. So I think for us when we had decided to go into the adoption process part of what I needed to take care of is I called my mom and said “we're going to do this. And if you want to be involved all here's our rules. You have to respect, it's OK that up to this point you haven't respected us but we won't visit. We won't visit won't do, we won't feel obligated if you're not going to respect that we're a couple and having a child.” So we've seen her three times. Since Leslie’s 2 ½. And it's always been like we're coming to Indiana and both of our families are there. So will see Sally's family whose very supportive. And who'll go have lunch with my mom for an hour. For a defined time at a
restaurant where there’s other people around soon you can't have. So that's kind of where we are at.

Researcher - Okay

And my parents are very, ecstatic almost too happy for us. They're retired now so they come for like the whole summer. Their RV. So they're just here all the time and they're very, very excited and like my extended family is just like ecstatic. And we are actually in the process of adopting another child. So they're like just beside themselves with what to do. Leslie’s (23:19) African-American so that was a big thing. You got to deal with your stuff.

Sally's family you know her parents are very supportive and very knowledgeable, you know about but when we go back to Indiana it's like. They're saying things about her hair or you know, whatever, and so part of what we do is we're trying to educate them about

Researcher - Culture things

Yeah cultural things more so than, they could care less about us being lesbians. That's old news. The new news is that Leslie's African-American and that's really exciting for the whole family.

So they're come and tell you things they’ve found out about African-Americans. Oh this is you know, or I read this book.

I mean they're just very supportive like

Researcher - Bought you a bottle of Pink

Yeah, exactly they're so proud of themselves. You just have to give them kudos for, but they really try.

Wanna piggyback a little bit about families that are trying to be supportive but. I have one brother and he’s the Catholic Republican and that stinks but. He likes to think that he doesn't consider our child any less of a niece than and he does any other child. But yet it's problematic for him. So he's got many other nieces by his wife and her family because their Catholic and have millions of kids. But all I had to say is treat her like you do other kids but you don't because you don't respect how we had her and the relationship that we have and that's the problem. Or the fact that her daughter has a hyphenated name yet her mother will send us Mother's Day cards and my mother won't even acknowledge it. And she still writes the name wrong until I corrected her about the 18th time then she'll what little arrow in there, put Bruington at the end of it. Instead of having Jones Wegner. She'll put Jones. From my grandmother being 80 something. That's fine. Grandma doesn't even know. She doesn't care. But for my own mother to not acknowledge the fact that this child has a hyphenated last name and she is legally my child. That's a
problem. So she thinks she is on board being accepting but all the subtleties I know that
she's not.

Researcher - OK
(25:50)
My partner's family their a little crazy. Jill and her sister are both adopted. And ended
up kind alike not being at home during their teen years because the family so crazy. So
their dad in particular saw her daughter as a chance to do it all again. Like a try over, like
a do over. And actually said that. Starting at the baby shower it was freaking us both
out. Actually this is a totally different person. And then it turns out our daughter looks a
lot like Jill. And so that just compounded things and we still hear that sometimes. So
they're generally really positive but rather strange. (26:34) Jill’s sister is probably
Amanda’s favorite person in the whole world and is a wonderful aunt to her. And she is
also lesbian. Her and her partner bring Amanda to their house all the time and watch her
a lot and stuff like that. So they are really a big part of Amanda's life. Jill's extended
family, my grandparents, aunts, and uncle's. In general they are pretty positive and
especially on one side of the family. (26:54) Nobody's there to me and says there are any
great details of people sucking or being awesome. Even though they only live two hours
away we don't see them very often. That's more about Jill's relationship with them than
Amanda's. I'm sure there's lots of gossip. There's like a hundred cousins or something,
so they can't stop themselves. My side of the family is much smaller. When we're
together my entire familial and it's just 13 and hers is like 60 or something. They are
Catholic we are atheists. My folks had a hard time with it. In fact, they came to visit
when Jill was about five months pregnant. Like we are Scandinavian and so one of
things is when we are not comfortable about something we don't talk about it. If Jill
would talk about her feet being swollen or some other side effects of pregnancy. And it
would be like silence all of a sudden. The only other person in the room that's been
pregnant is my mom and she is a nurse and all of a sudden there's nothing there. We
never had a conversation while she's here but after she left. Cause they live in
Washington state. I talked to her about it and said that I was upset. She expressed a
couple things. One that, this is very classic Scandinavian thing, people aren't going to
know really what to think. It was hard for her to feel like she couldn’t brag about it. She
couldn't explain it in her community to her friends. She has like one or two close friends
that their very supportive of me or something. In general I don't have a sense of, if
everybody knows or nobody knows. And I don't really what the deal is and I don't ask.
Don't ask don't tell really works well in Scandinavian families. But basically she
expressed that this was a big challenge for her is having how do I get excited about
having a grandchild in my life, I don't feel like I can just be excited everywhere all the
time. I told her “I don't really care about that she'd had to deal with it herself.” The baby
came and there were no plans for them to come out anytime soon. Every family has their
own ways and my family, like when I was born or my little brothers were born my
grandmother was always there. She would come before the baby came and be there for
the first couple weeks. Like there was no plan. I was like “what the hell.” My little
brother lives in Australia and they were planning to go see them. And as I was like
they're not having babies they don't even have girlfriends. There was a fight about that.
My dad came out, my mom had to work. It took a while, I would say maybe the first holiday season after Amanda was born. She was about seven months old things kind of got sorted out. So that took a little while and for me that was really hard because I'm really close to my mom in general. But this hasn't been the easiest thing for her to accept from the beginning of Jill to the birth of Amanda has been a challenge for her. You know I would say also for my dad but we don't have the same kind of relationship so we don't have to fight about it so much. For other extended family, my older brother is a born-again Christian. He prays for me and stuff and Amanda. We don't see each other much and that's fine. He didn't say anything. He nice to her when he sees her and sends her really gross girl toys at the holidays. Like this obnoxious daughter of Chucky baby that made the most disgusting sounds and motions, it just really freaks me out. They're getting their girl thing out on our daughter. Leila's the first daughter. My older brothers actually a half brothers so this is like my mom's first grandchild. She's the first girl for a lot of people and my younger brothers are really awesome with her. (30:59) My aunts and uncles, I have a few of them, I think are pretty positive. I'm not out to my grandparents. I don't know, maybe that's pretty unusual but. They know Jill, they know we've been roommates for 15 years or whatever and we have a daughter together too. But how they think that happened is a thing of a Scandinavian mind trick that I can't even explain. It's challenging like my grandma decided that Amanda was adopted from the streets or something, that somebody didn't want her. When Amanda was really new my grandma talks a lot about how nobody could want this wonderful child. It was very hard and awful. Then she got a little older. She forgot where Amanda came from. My grandpa doesn't talk about anything. I don't really know what he says. He lives in a retirement community. Leila and I have been to visited him a couple of times. He’s never met Jill, where my grandmother has. (32:00) So I don't really know what he thinks. I mean he’s not an idiot but I don’t know, so we don’t talk about. And that’s challenging and I don’t know how that will be. It’s largely been at my parent’s wishes because in our family what will happen is they will have to deal with it if my grandparents are having a hard time with it and I won’t. Because maybe they won’t talk to me about it. And I do think it would be hard for them so I'm not closed to that. But I’ve drawn a line, I won’t lie to them but we can omit all kinds of information but I won't let them say things that invalidate Leila’s life so we'll just have to see how that goes. As Leila gets older, if they stick and they’re both 90 it might not be an issue in the long run but it might be, I don’t know. I just wanted to add one more extended family. Our donor is family to Leila as well. We call him very special uncle, his wife very special aunt, his daughter very special cousin. And their parents and step parents are also in her life. There were a lot a challenges when we were starting a family. Sorting that out, our daughter is older than their daughter and there was a lot of like anxiety, especially for me as the nonbirth parent, about how. Like at one point before when we were pregnant but we hadn't told his family yet his mom said to me something about being about finally being a grandmother or something I was like “no you're not.” And we’ve kind of a chilled down a little on that that cause our intentions about having known donor in addition to having. You know there’s all kind of reasons. But one of them was for there to be more love in our daughters life not less. In general their siblings and their parents. And them their just really great like. Sort of like aunts, uncles, and cousins I mean that’s kind of their
relationship. They have a big part in sort of our description of our family and how our family works.

Researcher - Okay. As different people were talking I saw heads nodding. So if you guys wanna take add to anything or say yes when so-and-so was saying that it was totally the way it was for me in or whatever, you get a shot at it.

Researcher - OK. Anybody anything you want to add?

(34:33) Something that came out while we were talking was, what was interesting for me was seeing my mom come out to a lot of people when I was pregnant and then since Elliot has been in our lives. That when I was pregnant, told her like, explained the whole insemination process to her. And she then in turn explained it to her brothers because they were like “well how does that really work.” And she was like yeah “I explained it to Ed today.” And we were like “oh great”. I think some of your family as well, much more comfortable if I think about the relationship and having a family but I think there was still. Like now their grandparents and there’s something to brag to people about or something. So my mom comes out all the time that she has a lesbian daughter and this grandson. That’s been really, I think, helpful in our relationship in her acceptance of it is that she has taken that piece on. And I saw it with Marcy’s parents as well. Ya my mom started becoming an advocate, not I mean. It was a whole process with her, I mean, but by the time we got to where we were having a kid she was accepting of our relationship and loving of Char and all that. But she did, I think once Elliot was born she was at the point where she would be so excited if she would meet someone else who had a gay kid and was uncomfortable with that, cause here was her chance to turn them around. You know, I mean really she would find them everywhere. Parents of gay children you know. That was not where she started at all when I first came out so. I think there’s something to, you can’t deny a grandchild.

(36:34) I kind of have the exact opposite of that. My mother will admit that she is the grandmother to our daughter but they have no idea how she was created. She will not speak of me. But she has a lot of gay friends, she’s been to gay bars. She will never refer to me as her gay daughter she just kind of says “oh I have this granddaughter” or my daughter’s coming to visit, my daughter and her friend are coming to visit. As much as the woman tries to say she’s on board she just, her subtleties are just so loud. She does have a granddaughter, she has two of them. My brother has a daughter and we have a daughter. But it’s more I have four grandchildren. My brother has his three children and my daughter has a child. Doesn't really acknowledge the fact that we have a child. But when we’re there it’s totally different.

But nobody else that doesn’t know is there.

Right, yeah. But I kinda of get to the point where I just start being as gay as possible and start talking about everyone who I think is hot, just to freak them out a little bit. Because
why not, I mean they’ve put me through hell for 35 years, I might as well just take a little back. So I kind of get the look. I embarrass her a lot. But yeah its, my mother will acknowledge she has a granddaughter but doesn't really explain our situation to have a granddaughter. I consider that to be crap. But that's my cross to bear I guess.

Even Joyce's mom actually admitted, however it killed her to say, that we were actually good parents. I call it convenient Catholicism, when you can just pick out whatever you want to throw at someone. You know you don't really believe anything that's in there, you just sort of have your little bag of stuff to chuck out so you don't really have to form your own opinions but about that was a big day when she said that. We should have had a tape recorder.

I forgot to talk about, I have one sister who is fabulous. She adores our child she is wonderful to my partner and I and been on board from the very beginning. She lives in California and moved to DC so she's not here. But we probably see her at least a couple of times a year. It’s fabulous and he adores her. And she wrote letters, wrote a letter of support for the second parent adoption. We have also created a really intentional nonbiological family. An older lesbian couple that are our closest friends who are his grandparents. And they're the ones that go to grandparents Day and they're the ones who see him every weekend and they're the ones that we call and go “oh my god biological grandma is dying we need to drop the kid on your doorstep in an hour.” So that he has, I mean he has four related grandmas with all the step parents. But these two women are his grandmas. And they're the ones that were there when he was born, with us in the hospital. They're the ones that we talked to about oh my God what are we doing. Or what have we done or what's going or how much should do we put in his therapy fund today. They're there, they are our family. I mean we have parents that we sort of deal with. They are our family. And so my sister and also my best friends who lives in Tucson but is his Guardian if something happens to us. None of our family is his guardian. That was a very deliberate choice on our part. It was not biological family to do that. So that's the other piece. It just feels really important.

Researcher - OK anybody else?

One more thing. I think that it was almost like, we didn't have a commitment ceremony, more than just between us and a couple of friends. And so both of our families never had a chance when they really . . and we needed kind of we made it because we moved away and made it easier for them to just kind of ignore or not talk about it. But I think when we had a kid it was some people, I would agree, they were, all of a sudden they became our, we gave them a chance to be our advocates and they were, you know. Talk, talking about it and about us and about you know, that we were adopting and telling all their friends and were excited. And then advocate part, also my sister who is younger. I'm able to just say to my parents and my brothers. If you guys aren’t going to be supportive than we are not going to be a part, but she's kind of straddling between. She’ll come and visit us and she's also you know, she's fourteen, one is 12 and one is 14 years younger than me, so they were still at home and so I think that she struggled. For a long time my
parents just said she would have no contact when I first came out. But you know as she's
gotten old enough to travel on her own and make her own decisions she's the one that's
maintaining a relationship with me. And she'll talk about dad said this and I told him... She's the one that's going back and aggressively defending us and defending you know.
She'll go back and just, like last time she was at our house she went around made a little
video of our house because my parents had never set foot. They’ve come to Minnesota
and they won't come visit us. They’ll come visit family across the street but ignore our
house. And so, she's very aggressively like putting me in their face all the time you
know, that they have a grandchild that's up here that they don't see. You know. It's a role
that I just, but she's in the middle of us so she.

Researcher - OK, anybody else? I’m going to give you guys a definition for
heterosexism and homophobia. So that we're all talking the same talk when we get to
this next question. Heterosexism is a belief or argument that male-female sexuality is the
only natural normal or moral mode of sexual behavior and is also used to refer to the
effects of that cultural ideology. Homophobia is prejudice against, fear or dislike of
homosexual people and homosexuality. I'd like for you guys to describe any experiences
you have had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding
children to your family.

Well the whole thing is heterosexist and homophobic. I mean we have to go and buy
sperm at $500 of vial. We have to pay for the process that straight people don't have to.
(44:21) We have to legally protect their families. I mean we spent a fortune in lawyer’s
fees for drawing up agreements before our child was born. To make sure that if anything
happened to me that my partner would be his Guardian before the adoption could be
completed.

We had to get letters of support.

Letters of support to adopt

To let people know we were okay people.

That we’re acceptable to be parents. We had to go to court to prove that we’re parents
and that we can do this.

Somebody had to approve that we were parents.

Somebody had to approve that we were fit to be parents. Now I am a therapist, a social
work. My specialty is child development. In my utopia, people would have to have a
license to be a parent. In my reality in my perfect world that would be true. I spend my
life cleaning up people's disastrous childhoods.
To piggyback on that, I work with people on welfare trying to help them find employment so they can support the children they've already, had in a way that they don’t have to pay for.

And then, but you want test me in being a parent but not everybody else that can go out and have random sex and have children. And the amount of money that we spent to have our families that you know, to go have the baby we have got to take all the papers with us. This is my partner, she gets to be here. She gets to make the medical decisions if something happens. She gets to do this. You have to do father search when you're going to adopt, with the second parent adoption, even if you used an unknown donors you have to do a father search that delays the process by 30 days. So that no man steps forward and says “that's my kid.”

You have to pay for a profile.

And you to pay for that. Right. I mean you have to pay for the profile from the website. You have to do . . . I mean it is all heterosexist and homophobic.

We have to explain how we got a baby. That's not fair.

Ya, you have to explain to uncle Ed.

Because clearly that’s . . . you know not how babies are made.

Insurance, health insurance. My partner just left her job that had partner benefits. So now, you know, she and the kid are covered, I'm SOL, I’m self employed I’m SOL. All right here we go again. The whole thing is a challenge, I mean every step. And we do it, I mean, one of my friends says “well it sucks that we have to but at least we can.” And I'm like at least we can. We have some methods to do it but you know, straight people don't have to spend $20,000. And the hassle to do this.

They don't have to prove that they, you know, that they could be, that they are parents. That they are good parents.

(47:33) So on the adoption side. The other thing when we went in to the adoption program in 2000. I think we were pretty new at that point. Some of the social workers were just delighted that we were there and ya know. But then we also got, we got a call once and it was a birth mother looking at us and, it turned out really weird but. It came down to, what we think happened, and we kind a got some of this in phone conversations. Is that the social worker told that, the birth mother was having a boy, and she said well wouldn't it be better if

Aren’t you worried about the male role model.
And so then we were slotted. Then the social worker didn't schedule us until after she'd scheduled a heterosexual couple to meet with them. You know, and then later when we called and said what's going on. She said well they always pick the first couple that meets with them. It was just, you know, we'd had kind of similar with Leslie's birth mom we had a social worker that was just terrible. She wasn't just terrible, she was worse. She was, you know,

Just inappropriate.

Inappropriate about us being lesbians, she was also very bigoted toward the birth mom and just would say things that we, we started going to visit our birth mom on our own because we were like, we don't want her to reflect us and we don't want her turning this whole the wrong way. So we kind of had to pull through.

Cause her attitude was that because of the situation the birth mother was in. Pretty much was probably no one else, of a normal couple, would want is child. There's nothing wrong with Leslie, there was nothing wrong with the situation, it was just someone’s bad choices and you know but it’s okay you can take this kid, sort of attitude.

Researcher - OK, garbage child

(49:40) Here you’re cleaning up what no one else will take, so good for you. You won’t mess that one up.

And she, would I mean, she was just rude.

Well even initially going in a lot of people go in as one person so they can adopt from foreign adoptions and things like that. Well we came in as a couple and said “you need to do with us as a couple” whatever issues you have, you deal with that. And we were in their face from the very beginning. We had this really great social worker. Who was very like “we say we’re diverse so let's act like we are.” And she would just, I mean, she would run up to stairs practically saying “this is what they said we need to change this” you know and we weren't really aggressive but we were just like this is who we are this is what it is, you deal with us you know. And just sort of gave them the avenue to do it. And some of them stepped up and did and some of them didn't. So you just sort of said “okay, well thank you we’ll go with this person then.”

And that was originally why we went adoption was because we wanted to be equal in the decisions, we wanted to have equal to adopt together as a single and neither of us felt a strong need to have the child.

And also, not that my family would have done that if either one of us have had the child but, Joyce's family, not that they're that accepting now but there would have been no way that they would have accepted a child that I had. You know or if Joyce had the child then
it's only hers. We just didn't want to deal with that of all. This way we're both her moms, this is what it says, you know that's the way it is.

In the open adoption we wanted a connection to the birth family. For a family, we thought that was really important. We really liked the idea of children.

I just wanted to say, I'm uncomfortable with anything that suggests that because our families are planned and chosen they're necessarily better than the families that are unplanned or unchosen. I have in fact found that some of my best allies, in talking about my nontraditional family are single moms, where dad is not in the picture. That's my experience. I would just mention a couple of experiences. One was birth class. To take it back a little ways. There was all straight couples and then us and I was dad partner. Either I was not there or I was dad hyphen partner, I think how that would be worded. It drove me F'n crazy. I'm not dad partner, I'm just partner. Just like it was really hard for a lot of the instructors in a couple of different ones to like treat me as an equal. And to see me there. Like if they saw there then I was totally different and they had to like. That was challenging for some of them and really frustrating from me. Another one was kind of different. In the workplace, I had a lot of challenges with my employer. My immediate supervisor in terms of. . . Well my partner and I both work at the University and my boss knows we both work a block from each other or whatever. And any time our daughter was sick if I would call in or make a plan to go to a doctor's appointment with her, my supervisor would always asked “can't Jill do it.” I really think my supervisor saw Jill as the primary parent and me as something else. And that was really hard to accept. I think a lot, the only other example I would give, is just something you mentioned earlier. Whenever people, I still struggle with sort of the “coming out.” So we're in the grocery story and someone says “Who's your daddy?” you know. I like, I struggle with don't know. And like I struggle with, she'll just say “I don't have one” and she’s three so that's going to work for a while. But I struggle with because, aside from my grandparents, I'm not at all closeted. But I still get to make a choice every day about who do and who I don't talk to about my private life. With my daughter it's a new challenge. It's like, it's really hard to make like a socially conscious choice as well as like a individually protect the baby and me choice. There’s a lot of conflict I guess between what’s best for her in that moment and then sort of in her development and the world and her self identity. And I'll say I've had way less negative experiences than I imagined having. Yet I still almost always, like in the last month, where somebody asked a question like that and I basically didn't tell the true and she's right there. And she said something different than I said, you know. And that’s just a real challenge. I don’t know, that may not caused by an individuals homophobia than society and that really shapes a lot of how we choose to interact with the world and a lot of those choices are really different when you have another person involved and, as I said, a person you are trying to teach to be proud of herself. To be proud of her family. (55:03) With that said my baby sees two mommies everywhere. You do don’t you. We'll be at a restaurant and she’ll see a couple across the way. I’m just joking, but seriously like two people with Mullets and they're actually not two women. And she’s like look there’s two mommies. So I love that she's very proud of herself and us right now. But I want to do everything I
can to protect her from negative experiences. And I don’t want her to shy away from that and also get to foster that feeling of awesomeness and pride. Something like that.

Researcher - OK

(55:46) I was thinking. She brought that up. We get, and it's not homophobia, I think it's heterosexism where we'll all be in Target or something or anywhere. And some stranger will ask which one of you is the mom. There's no way that you're both the moms. It's just not even and then we both say that we both are. And we get this contorted face weird like. Maybe the more liberal people will look like “I just put my foot in my mouth, why did I say that.” Just kind of thinking “that's weird.” Just forms for preschool that say father and mother. I just cross’em out and say parent one, parent two. We don't even do Mother, Mother because there's Father, Father.

Right

Parent number one and parent number two.

I tend to be a little more aggressive when it comes to people making generalizations about us. I was at the grocery store and there was a soccer team that was bagging the groceries and I was with my daughter and she was at home and the woman said “do you want take a sucker home for Dad” and I said “mom!” I'm yelling at this woman who was just trying to be polite. I didn't know she was calling me a boy or referring to, assuming that I have a husband at home. So I got kind of aggressive with her. And I'm like “oh thank you.” I'm walking around going “God I'm a jerk” and I was referring to myself but. I tend to view the, we're kind of the pioneers in Coon Rapids. Where even our daughter, her little preschool group. At the end of the holiday season they yelled out “Merry Christmas Mom and Dad.” And we sent an e-mail saying that's offensive because there's Grandmas and Aunts and Uncles. And they stopped saying that. It's been two years they haven't said that. We tend to be the aggressive pioneer types.

Researcher - OK, anything else? How about for you two?

(57:48) I remember birth class, they actually used partner. I was trying to think of all the prenatal stuff. Which was kind of.

We've been really lucky.

Sometimes you get a weird medical assistant. Showing you to the room and they were like “is that your sister.” Just weird stuff or “is that your daughter.”

Which we get all the time.

But for the most part everybody was really good and I think people at the birth class used the word birth partner as their set thing. They didn't burden us and it was at HCSC so I
think they see a wide variety of families. But clearly not everybody got that we were a lesbian couple. I think it was more that she was my sister.

I think we randomly have questions. Like “who's the mom” and it's really annoying if it's not coming from a lesbian.

Everybody who was involved in getting me pregnant. That was all. Everybody got it. We never had anything.

Elliott goes to preschool and that's been fine. All the forms there say parent. Everything been fine actually. I don't know that we've had a lot of negative experiences.

Researcher - Individually but systemic?

(59:32) Systemic, yeah. I mean we had, we've found a doctor through Rainbow families that did my, that helped us with my insemination. We had a lesbian midwife. Who was like a “rock on.” The midwife part was great. I ended up needing to have a C-section with a lesbian OB. My partner is now pregnant. We had to do a whole bunch of really intense fertility stuff. The doctor they referred us to is a lesbian. So we had a really good, in that sense, really good people who get it. Supportive of us. The hospital and birth process was good. His school is great about, you know, we get two Mother's Day cards. For Father's Day they made him grandfather cards to give to his grandfather's. They do that stuff without us saying. The experiences is more of the societal stuff that I really struggle with.

Researcher - All right so I'm going to let you guys know that we've got about less than 20 minutes left and I've got a few questions to go some of these will take less time. But maybe keep your answers shorter and tighter and then maybe we'll get done. What if any legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family?

We just got, when we were starting to think about a family we had a health-care directive done and wills. And if there were ever to be children we would have custody of each other's children.

Researcher - A health-care directive is similar to a living well.

Yes exactly. Apparently the default in Minnesota is save the baby, not save the mother, and we wanted that to be reversed. So that she would make that decision if I were incapacitated. And then after she was born we had it added, a Guardian added to the will. And then the second parent adoption was a couple thousand dollars, that kind of thing. Because it took so long, she was almost a year old before Doris was able to adopt her. And it kind of felt like a relief. Emotionally she was hers the whole time but it was just you know when we took this picture with the judge and we had that on our mantle, you know, and that's just the way it is. We celebrate that day, that adoption day, she gets an
extra present and those kinds of things. She knows, she's five, she knows mommy adopted her mama had her. But legally we had to, it was a lot of that.

Researcher - OK

(1:02:10) That's what we did. We had the living wills, the health-care directive. We had the wills drawn up for guardianship so before she could be a guardian until the adoption, the second parent adoption went through. I think Karen was three months old and we were able to get it done pretty quickly. We also do adoption day. A special Gotcha Day. We’ve got a first day Gotcha Day. He just turned three so he's starting to understand that we’re talking about that. Talking to him about . . . We have a book that we read him about his family. The birth mother and the adoptive mother. And now that he knows he's going to be a big brother, talking about this baby is going to come from mama and then I'm going to adopt that baby. So he's sort of.

Researcher - OK

We did the same. A living will, the will, all that go ahead and, several drafts based on exactly when it would happened. And we did it a couple months before the due date. We also have to do the father search, which is pretty funny, since we knew where the sperm had come from. But also our donor sent a letter of support. Our adoption went through about two months after the Lena was born. Which is pretty fast. There was just one little funny thing. The donor family was maybe coming to visit us around the time of the adoption. We told the lawyer the donor family was coming to the adoption hearing. And it just made the lawyer, she totally freaked out. In general there was known donor phobia with the legal process. Because it's untested territory so much more. But we didn't have any written agreement with the donor, like a donor agreement or anything like that in writing.

Researcher - OK

We did everything. We did the final adoption together. Leslie was about four months old. And did all the assigning who would take care of her if something happened to us. We did go to the extra step and signed a paper that said basically right down someone's name that if this person ever tried to take her away or if something happens to either one of us that these people cannot have, “no right to say anything.” Just to protect you even further if something happens.

Researcher - OK

We did all the same.

Researcher - Okay, did any of you who give power of attorney?

Yes
Yes

Yes

Researcher - (1:05:13) For in your case those two were the same document, power of attorney and medical?

It was sort of like package. The will, the power attorney, the healthcare directives were all that sort of. The lesbian package.

The lesbian special.

The attorneys in town have them all.

Researcher - What legal resources did you guys access?

We went to a workshop at Rainbow Families. And the presenter thought sperm was dirty, so we didn't like her. She was giving us medical advice when we asked some questions. But the partner was just as smart as her so we went to her legal partner, who also presented at the Rainbow families conference.

Researcher - OK

We wanted to Chrysalis. Got to go meet with an attorney about lesbian legal issues. And she knew nothing about adoption or any of that but was fascinated by the fact that we were going to having a child. She was proud of us for doing that but she wasn't able to answer questions. And she was a lesbian attorney. She was like wow, oh. So that was.

Char actually did a lot of our stuff for the adoption.

We found her just because she was the attorney that spoke at our MayBe Baby class. So we were like. We had friends that used her for their adoptions. We were like whatever. It's a pretty easy process for an attorney.

We picked ours out of Lavender Magazine. We saw an ad.

We did our adoption finalization with lawyers recommended Children's Health Care. Our will in all that was done at the same time.

We did call around and there's a couple lesbian women in town that sort of do the partner adoption deal. So, and my partner’s an attorney and she sort of asked around and looked at Lavender.

Researcher - OK. What motivated you guys to access legal resources?
Heterosexism.

Fear.

Find every way possible to bind yourselves together without having to bring a piece of paper.

Such a horrible time when you have to make sure all the bad things that can happen.

Yeah

How people can try to tear your family apart.

Researcher - OK I’m going to give you guys another definition this one's for culture. Culture is the system of shared beliefs values customs and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another. Should I whip through that one more time?

The family culture?

Researcher - Cultures the system of shared believes values. This will make more sense after I’ve asked the question. Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your family of origin.

That's a dissertation in itself.

I think we’re more accepting. Not that my parents weren’t. It's a given. I have to accept whatever Leslie comes to do the table with. Because of what we've created. I don't have a right to be prejudice.

I think that we utilize a lot more resources. Like we go to parenting groups, Rainbow families, adoption group, and we purposely looked for an adoption group that wasn't just lesbians. We want Leslie to see all kinds of families and different race, mixed race families. We're consciously trying to make it easier for her first of all. She sees people like her around all the time. If we’re uncomfortable that's okay but she needs to be comfortable.

To go outside our comfort zone.

That's our priority for our family. My, the culture of my family, my younger brother is African-American because he was adopted. And we never saw any, we were in Indiana, completely different now, not accepting at all. The family was. No contribution going on. Religion was really important we went to Christian schools.
Researcher - OK

Chosen family and their role versus extended family and family of origin. I wouldn't say had zero role actually when I was growing up. In fact, I think a lot of things that we made big in our family, their words fits them. In our family of origin is like that. Like there were one or two aunts and uncles who were just sort of somebody's friend. Everybody in the family knows. We've done a lot with our family. And Jill and I are both activists. In different areas. That's a big part of Leila's life. That was not any part of my life. So she's definitely being raised with a strong sense of justice and a strong sense of that she has a part in making something come to be.

I don't know a lot of difference except technological generational anyway. I tried to do a lot of community work with her. She's still pretty young but I talk to her about when I go down to the shelter and do some things there. Or if I'm doing some other community involvement. She's a little bit too young for a lot of the things that I do. She knows that I do that and she will ask. I was thinking, I was going to answer this, there's not really a whole a lot of difference. I grew up pretty liberal area. My parents were pretty liberal. I think I say no to the same things. I'm an only child, she's an only child. I think you probably have a lot more differences

Missouri Senate, yeah, small-town around 6000 people. Now that I'm no longer living in that town most of my friends are gay. It's just funny that we all came around at the same time like "you too, I knew it." But yeah, I had my past life pretty much was so different than it is now. I'm not afraid, I really don't care what people think. So my daughter has two moms, OK, you know what, it's a reality. There's a lot of other things that I could be doing that are a lot worse. But there's a lot of other things are happening right now that are a lot worse. And the fact that she and I are raising a daughter, we are not that bad of people. We're doing nothing wrong. Our child is in a loving home. She has a very strong nonbiological family. We've been adopted pretty much by this family that lives up here. I'm from small-town Illinois, she's from Iowa. We don't know anybody up here but each other and our daughter and this family that's adopted us. Not adopt us but they've kind of taken us under their wing. I really don't care about things as much as I thought that I used to.

Researcher - OK

This is it, this is me, I'm me all the time.

(1:13:35) We try to be really open. We didn't talk about much in my family, you don't acknowledge it, you don't do it. I ended up a therapist. So we talk about feelings, we talk about what's going on, we talk about what's happening. And have that open relationship where you can talk about stuff, where you can come together. We think about what are our values, what do we want to teach, who do we want to be, and have him have that and have this chosen family. Also in our desire to have other people outside of our biological family have eyes on how we are parenting. Sort of, checks and balances, of people that
we really trust that will give us feedback. Both my partner and I grew up with families where it looked good but it wasn't so good. And nobody knew what was real because it looked good on the outside but there was no cultural protection when you live on somewhere Avenue. So to have a more open system and know that these lesbian grandmothers, one’s a county Social worker, you know she's got child protective services on the speed dial. She'd be on my ass. To have that kind of thing where there are people watching, there are people giving us feedback. There are people, and he knows. He knows he has people he can go to. In the midst of my partner’s grandmother dieing and we dumped him at their house. Came back and there's a jar of peanut butter sitting on the steps by his backpack. We said, OK? We set down the dinner and he said “Grandma Mommies don't have any peanut butter for peanut butter toast for breakfast would you borrow me some.” Part of me is like “oh my god” he's begging for peanut butter. And then on the other hand I'm going, he's barely 3 and he can say “we don't have this, I know these people that love me and care about me and I can ask them for what I need and they will help me.” And I think, well okay, that's what you have these neighbors is all about. (1:16:00) And so, in part, my embarrassment and my pride at the same time. I'm like, okay this is what we want for our family. He can go and he can say this is real and know there are people that will assist to him and help him and be there. So now we joke about the eating breakfast food in our shelf.

Researcher - How about for you guys?

I think there's a lot of similarity and my family. The way my culture was growing up.

And I think mine is just, we didn't talk about anything, there's no emotion, there's nothing. And I think having boy was really important for me too. It's work I've done in my life to be able express my own emotions and to recognize them. So for me, in particularly having a son, it's been very important for me to help him identify his emotions. I think that's important, we do that a lot. And like that never, to this day, doesn't happen in my family of origin. But yeah, I think we're quite similar to Marcy's.

There's a lot of sharing in my family. We share everything. I agree, we have more openness

Researcher - OK. I going to tell you guys what the last questions are. And I promised you eight so if you want to leave then you can but you know what the last questions are so you can make an informed decision about whether you're going to stay or not. The next one is how is your current parenting style and family organization similar to or different from that of your family of origin? Describe those whom you consider to be your extended family now. And the last one is describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents. Did you access older generations for their knowledge of anything in relation to parenting. OK, so with those three out there if you guys wanna go I understand cause I told you eight.
What was the first question again?

We have a baby sitter issue is this going to hurt your research

Researcher - No

One of those questions sparked my interest. What was the first question?

Researcher - How was your current parenting style and family of organization similar or different than that of your family of origin?

For me personally, my family was a bunch of yeller's, you know, you get mad you yell and pretty soon have ice cream and forget that it ever happened. And we're not really like that, we're more of a sit down discuss before we decide what's going to happen.

Which is how I grew up.

Right, and so I kind of adapted my parenting to yours because it seemed to work a lot better than mine did. And still to this day, my mother and I will go head-to-head and then we just all have cake. Because that's just what you do in my family. But with our daughter if something happens like the window gets busted, “OK, why don't you go upstairs to your room for a little bit,” and we'll talk. And then we decide together as a family unit what's the consequence to this, what are we going to do, who's going to tape the window shut because now it's busted. So I think that, you know, my parenting style is a lot different from the one that I had when I was growing up. Because we were always yelling at each other. Everybody was a yellin’, and then you would just pretended that it didn't happen.

Researcher - OK. Is anybody else going to need to go? Cause then what I think I'm going to do is ask you two the other two questions real quick.

We're sorry

Researcher - Describe those who you considered to be your extended family now.

Our babysitter.

Researcher - So it could be your biological family and it might be additional people. Several people have already talked about other people that they have that they consider part of their family.

And it was part of that different.

Researcher - No, there is another question described those that you think are in your extended family now.
Well, we have auntie. We have a great friend of ours who is just auntie. And her entire family has embraced us.

That's the family we talked about earlier that’s taken us under their wing.

Yeah. They felt bad that first year that we didn't have anywhere to go on Easter. Which isn't really a big holiday for us. They felt bad so we had a brunch. Ever since then we’ve been kind of in her whole family.

Our friend, her names Karen. Karen's mom came to our house for Mother's Day. We had a cookout, she didn't really have any place to go either, so Karen brought her up to our house. This family's incredible, you know. We see a rodent out in our yard. We'll e-mail Uncle Jay and find out what is this thing in our yard. They kind of know us as the city dorks. They've taken us under their wing and because of our living situation, our friend Karen's niece, probably had an easier time coming out as a lesbian.

I think so.

Because the families like, even Karen's moms like “I know lots of lesbians.” Well she knew us and that was it. But when came Lena came out it was like, “hey Lena, whatever, you like it I love it.” I think the family kind of accepted their family because of us. And they are very important part of our family.

Along with our real extended family.

Researcher - The biological one?

Yeah. Yes there really isn't anything better than a family reunion in the middle of Nebraska.

Yes, there really isn't, Red cloud Nebraska.

Researcher - I've been there.

Have you

Researcher - I have

I'm sorry

Were you studying Willa Cather

Researcher - I went to new to school in Nebraska for awhile.
There's a Wegner Cemetery and she is the Wegner in the cemeteries.

Researcher - Okay the last one is described information or resources from previous generations if any that you guys found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents.

I think we look to your parents a lot.

I think we look to my parents a lot, yeah, definitely. To a fault maybe. Because I think that they were so great that everything they did was right.

(1:22:14) I'm not dousing the fact that your mother thinks that everything that goes through Anna's life has to be the same as it was for yours. So even the first doll's name, was named, the same for her dolls that she had. As far as a resource to learn things. The resource, they've helped us a lot. They've helped us just with, you know, we call them up and like, what do we do? We have to take this baby home now what do we do? And her dads like, “I know what you mean we had to take her home too.” The first couple of nights her mom stayed with us because we didn't. There's a baby in our house, what are we do? I'm 29 years old I don't know what to do. Her family is extremely important to us and they're extremely helpful.

But I don't do well listening to her mother.

Nobody really does. You know my mom's the yeller. She has two children, one is successful, I'm in social work. We're pretty much on the opposite ends of the spectrums with our families. I'm in a relationship with my biological family but it's just because they're my family. I really do think that things will change if my grandma passes. Because she's pretty much the only reason that I even communicate with people. And I don't think I need them, that's my thing. I'm perfectly okay with who I am. Her family has accepted me tremendously. I wouldn't change anything for the world.

We'll take all their advice for parenting.

Exactly because they kind of know more.

Researcher - All right

So were sorry for leaving.

Thank you for letting us trump you.

We live across the street from the redneck that watches us. He'll call us your garage doors open you.

Thank you.
We'll see you in a few months

Researcher - Yes, December, hopeful. OK, how it your current parenting style and family organization similar or different than that of your family of origin?

Researcher - Are you guys needing to go too?

No

Researcher - Okay, you guys feel the need to go please do. I don't wanna keep you here past when I told you that you needed to unless you're comfortable with that. OK

Okay

Researcher - It's up to you

Okay. Mostly family organization probably a lot more communication, little more sharing of tasks, now the same, we’ve attempt a 50-50 split for parents who work. Although my parents worked opposite shifts when I was growing so there wasn't as much day care in our lives as there is in our daughters potentially. Organization and what?

Researcher - Similarities and differences in parenting styles

We talk. I got put in the corner. We do timeouts on the steps but you know. I think we do borrow a lot from my parents and I think the main differences. I would describe them as family generational. We’re all about attachment Dr. Stevens and that crap. But not like that total exactly like what that all is. But just a lot more that integrated for a style and it wasn’t for my parents. But their basic approach to parenting wasn't out-of-the-box.

Researcher - OK

We try and do, my parents are pretty traditional my mom didn't work until I was out of high school and was the primary parent. My dad went to work and were pretty equitable. I work part time and so probably more of the primary because I'm at home a couple days a week. My partner works full-time. But that was more about a choice we made sort of for our family versus one of us being more primary than the other. We try to do more equitable and talking. Really evaluate the relationship versus the power. Although, I also believe in a benevolent dictatorship. So is the power of the parents but it's a very authoritative sort of process.

Researcher - OK

I stayed home and both my parents worked.

And both my parents worked.
Yeah so that's totally different. We use timeouts we respect them.

Researcher - OK

I think there's a lot more one-on-one connection. We don't, there's no TV, I mean we don't sit around the TV like my family and just watching. You know we don't do that, there's more music, there's more classes, and there's more involvement I guess with both of us doing things together, where my dad was home more than my mom, so we did more things with him. We went camping but there wasn't a lot of, the little things like music classes were done with one parent or the other, so we try to do it together.

Researcher - OK

Yeah things are more family centered or child centered. It's about, you know, I plan my days off on tasks we need to do but we're going to the park, we’re going to music class, we’re going to play versus cleaning the garage. Some of that. But that we’re really trying to focus on, this is child centered, we don't turn the TV on unless it’s for watching Lion King for the 79th time. That kind of stuff

Researcher - Okay, how about for you guys?

I think I'm, I see my mom when I parent. There are things that I do that she does. Those are mostly positive things I’m trying to adapt into my parenting. The positive ones about her. My dad wasn't around very much. Were both very active in Ellie's life. We used to do opposite schedules until just very recently so probably even split now. But very child centered. We don't spank, we use timeouts, just that is different.

Researcher - OK

Yeah like the culture is pretty similar to the way I was brought up. Although my mom was home, stayed home she didn't work. But the fact that that's all I know is, and knowing that that's not going to be the case for Ellie. I don't worry about it but it's hard to imagine what that existence is going to be like.

Researcher - OK

I just want to add one thing. We made a really conscious decision to like try to avoid anger. There was a lot of that in both of our houses growing up. So, and you know, trying to make me much more conscious than our parents were about how feelings are expressed to our child.

Researcher - OK

We think that. Not a lot of affection in my family. And really, yeah her family.
Researcher - OK.

My family was just like that. My mom does a lot of good things but mostly.

Researcher - Okay, extended family, who do you consider to be your extended family?

My biological family and then we have a set of friends, adoption groups, and just people that we’re bringing in to support us that have similar views, or even different views that we want Leslie to experience that not everybody is the same as how they live their life. More so probably than my biological family.

Researcher - Okay

Researcher - How about for you?

Our biological families but we try to bring, people who are really, you know, this lesbian couple that are really our family. And my best friend is this girl that are part of our close support system. Checking every day about how’s the kid.

Researcher – OK

I think for us is just biological.

Researcher - OK. The last question describe any information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while you were becoming parents are after you’ve become parents.

Researcher - Oh, did you want it to the extended family?

Yeah just the donor family, our donor family, and our biological family, also we have a lot of aunties. No uncles which we’re not against in theory. Except for special uncle. Resources? Potty training is one. But other than that it's been pretty lacking. I think it's partly geography and distance, partly family being where it is, it being hard to gather advice from some people in our family is. Just the physical way I think that our family, our parents, in particular, are present in our daughter’s life. I think that's maybe societal. Where people were away from their parents. So maybe it's just for gay people I don't know. Why would we do that, I don't know. Actually we haven't had a lot of like friends who were a little bit older or generational whose parents have been able to pass on those things.

Researcher - OK, all right, thank you.

We really look to the his Grandma's. (1:33:34) The one woman was married and had three biological children that are like our age and older I think, actually. So they, so we
looked to them, and what they have learned. And also both my grandparents and my partner's grandparents were very integral and sort of protecting us in growing up and being really positive loving forces in our lives. And while they're not. My grandparents weren't alive while my son's been alive and sort of that love and connection knowing how important that was and sort of trying to take that and pass that along. And I think also my partner's grandmother, the love that she has given. My partner, and us a couple, and then passed on to our son and trying to carry that on down.

Researcher – OK, all right

Yeah my mom, I mean my mom. My mom and I had sort of had some issues but we when I became a parent was becoming a parent sort of closed the rift. We were talking on the phone all the time. And you know if I would have a, we were working out the schedule, I would just have a meltdown, I could always call her at work. I could call my mom and that kind of stuff. But people are just talking about relationships with, I lived far away from all my grandparents when I was a kid. And so we sort of missed out on having that. Elliott also lives far from his grandparents but I feel like there's been an effort on both of our parts. And the grandparents parts to be as much of a frequent part as can considering the distance. I saw my grandparents once a year or something.

Researcher - OK, all right, how about you guys?

To a fault almost, we don't ever ask for help. So I think people just sort of sat back and waited to say anything, you know, they didn't just jumped in and say “okay you need to do this you need to do that.” I think they just sort of waited until, you know, I called them and said “oh my god I don't know what I'm doing what we do, we brought her home and holy cow.” So they sort of, when you open that door, sort of throw things out here and there. Nobody really, actually we’ve had people ask us parenting advice. I don't know why that is. I mean Leslie is just this great little kid. People say it's 50% personality 50% you. So at least we have half a chance. So I don't know if that’s just her or because it's different we do things differently than our family did. And maybe they're like “oh maybe that was a better way to do that than the way you we did that.

Researcher - So you're getting asked by your family members.

Yeah or my mom makes comments like “you handled that really well or.”

Researcher - OK. Wow that is

Yeah and that’s kind of a struggled too because her dad is a yeller. And Leslie, she, and we don't yell at home at all, you know, we talk. But she's, so she just kind of has a meltdown or stops completely and doesn't know what to.

“Are you okay, you okay?”
He's also hard of hearing so sometimes like he is not.

Is he's actually had to tone himself down a lot.

He's scary.

He scars her and realizes woe, maybe that's not. Scared us to. This is what happens. When you’re a parent you don't see what you're saying or doing at the time. So then when you're not actually primary parent all the time. It's kind of a slap in the face. He is coming along fine with that.

But Sally's grandfather, he passed away this last year. Not that he gave us a lot of advice but he was very accepting and he was extremely excited to be Leslie's great-grandfather. He, Sally sent him pictures once a week and he'd show them to everyone in this little town. Everyone is saying “oh this is Leslie.” People on the street.

You’d be walking and someone would talk to me. How do you know me. Oh you’re Joe’s granddaughter I know all about you. Which was big for my grandpa to be almost like “I dare you to say anything” to some people. And a lot of people who actually talk to us and think it's so great. They’ve gone way beyond their comfort zone, and would probably never have approached us if it hadn’t been for that.

He just made it clear that, you know, we were important to him, Leslie was important and we, when we came to town, we were staying with him, and we were going to see all his friends and we were going to his church with him and sitting by him and, you know. And so that, I think that, was really important to us.

Researcher - Great, thank you guys very much. I appreciate you staying the extra 20 minutes. I will send you guys an e-mail for sure some time by late December or early January or something like that.
Appendix M

*Second Analysis Themes arranged by interview for each question.

| Describe the decision-making process leading up to the addition of children to your home? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Sunday Interview** | **Monday Interview** |
| • Desire for children and a family | • A shared desire, rationale, decision, and planned roles related to having children |
| • How to create the family | • Seek knowledge and advice using various personal and community resources |
| | • Stressful process |
| | • Establish first plan and backup plan for adding children |
| | • Explore barriers and limitations to plans for adding children |
| | • Chose agency on ability to be “open” |
| | • Moved forward on both plans for adding children to the family |
| | • Fertility attempts and limitations lead back to adoption |
| | • Conscious planning of family makeup |
| | • Previous positive experience with an agency is a strong influence in returning to that agency |
| | • Desire to use an adoption process that is the most beneficial for positive impacts on the attachment of the child |
| | • Networking and gathering resources from friends, LGBT community, agencies, and the internet before starting the adoption process |
| | • Decision for adoption agency based on most lesbian friendly |
| | • Gave back to the system |
| | • In retrospect the time frame for the adoption was relatively quick |
| | • The adoption process was an emotional time |
| | • There was a search and use of resources during the adoption process to help navigate bureaucracy and problems |
| | • Unexpected event (9/11) causes concern |
| | • Accessed resources for information, support, and ideas of how to facilitate the process |
| | • Fearful of discrimination because of LGBT status and avoided by being closeted in some situations |
| | • Used several resources to help guide and facilitate the process including US and foreign government offices |
| | • The process created high levels of emotions throughout and required determination |
| **Tuesday Interview** | **Positive family support – financial support – emotional support** |
| | **Final act as a couple** |
| | **Having a family became important after being together** |
- Felt time constraints because of age
- Finances important
- Planned on adoption but tried fertility and were unsure of making a family because of the length of time waiting
- Participated in one last act as a couple
- Was not comfortable with segregating the parents by labeling adoptive versus biological
- Mutual desire for a family
- Monetary concerns
- Made a public commitment to each other before starting a family
- Preparedness – utilized community resource
- Created resources
- Process more complicated because of same-sex pairing
- Mutual desire to have children
- Final act as a couple
- Roles and factors in child-bearing/relationship

**Describe your extended families’ reactions to the addition of children to your home?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday Interview</th>
<th>Changes in the family through increased acceptance by adding children, an increased sense of belonging in the family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday Interview</td>
<td>Family of origin supportive even though they don’t understand the orientation issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The children knew that they are supported by someone they have not met</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sister saw homosexuality as an illness but was supportive of sister in the face of homophobia from family friends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support from sister came in spite of the sibling relationship not being maintained as a close relationship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Coming out” was a negative experience with family of origin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most of the “coming out” problems with family of origin were resolved prior to adding children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The couple is more “out” now because of children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children helped move the family forward in resolving issues around daughter being a lesbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children made being accepted easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday Interview</td>
<td>Family responded negatively to same-sex couple adding children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter placed an ultimatum on mother and mother’s involvement with her grandchild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Views, opinions, or attitudes toward same-sex couple positively changing after addition of child but still contains negative views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A variety of acceptance within family and no open disapproval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents supportive of same-sex pairing but poor relationship with both parents unrelated to orientation. No change before or after adding children except mother’s involvement is limited and father</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
became a “super ally”

- Multi generational acceptance
- Positive family reactions
- Negative family reactions
- Initial confusion and errors over protocol and response to gender based roles (Mother’s Day)
- Extended bio family accepting and supportive
- Mixed reactions from siblings
- Ethnicity big news, lesbians old news
- Family member are tolerant versus accepting of same-sex family
- Family is mostly positive and supportive
- Negative response to pregnancy with cultural overtones
- Bio parents difficulty dealing with telling others about their new grandchild
- Past traditions broken because of same-sex pairing
- Bio parents difficulty in coping with same-sex pairing and resulting children
- Being lesbian a problem but daughter accepted into family
- Positive family support
- Not out to older generations
- There are limits to how much hiding is done of same-sex relationship by the couple
- Donor included in family system in a place of honor
- Having a known donor and including him in the family system is extra work and challenging
- Bio parents “come out” as parents of a lesbian as a result of grandchild
- Mother/daughter relationship improved as a result of adding child
- Mother became an advocate when they decided to have children
- Bio parent accepts grandchild but avoids dealing with same-sex relationship
- Child pushes same-sex relationship into face of bio parents to pay them back
- Pleased to be seen as good parents
- Positive support from sister
- Non biological family are treated like actual bio family and relied on more extensively
- Non biological family placed at higher level than biological
- Because same-sex relationship was not in the family’s view it was easy to avoid. After adding children the same-sex relationship was more visible
- There was a change of opinion and attitude after the birth of their child
Here are the definitions of heterosexism and homophobia I would like you to use when answering the next question: **Heterosexism** is a belief or argument that *male-female sexuality* is the only natural, normal, or moral mode of sexual behavior, and is also used to refer to the effects of that *cultural ideology*. **Homophobia** is prejudice against (fear or dislike of) homosexual people and homosexuality.

Describe any experiences you had with heterosexism or homophobia with regard to the process of adding children to your family?

**Sunday Interview**
- Adding children into a same-sex relationship exposed prejudice that had appeared to be tolerance or acceptance before the addition of children
- Reactions to creation of a family varied across friends and family
- A bias within the medical community exists but equal treatment can also be found
- Inequality in medical benefits for same-sex couples required searching for additional resources
- Insurance coverage for domestic partner benefits not equal with nongay employees
- Need additional resources to fill gaps caused by inequality between nongay and partner benefit insurance
- Government regulations prevent equal treatment and attempt to limit access because of potential partner benefits

**Monday Interview**
- Government forms are heterosexist. Same-sex couple’s families do not match forms
- Same-sex couples advocate for self by changing the forms to match their family
- There are exceptions to heterosexist forms found in employment and state government
- Some ways heterosexism impacted the family system: same-sex parents were unable to be completely “open” about their relationship during the adoption process. A legal process called coparent adoption is required to make both parents in the same-sex pairing equal parents. There was a need to find an adoption agency willing to do extra work, take extra steps, and keep some information hidden from the country the child was being adopted from
- People react and are curious concerning the unusual makeup of the family unit

**Tuesday Interview**
- Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:
  - Purchase sperm
  - Establish legal protection non-gays don’t have to do
  - Get letters of support to become parents
  - Prove to court that we’re acceptable as parents
  - Expensive
  - Bring documentation along to prove people have rights
• Perform steps that are sometimes pointless which slows the process down
• Pay for a profile
• Explain how you got a baby
• Health insurance for the family
• The whole process is a challenge
• Expensive – not same for non-gays
• Non-gays don’t have to prove they are fit
• The process is new for some agencies
• Some social workers are positive
• Sometimes non-gays are given preferential treatment
• Judgmental attitudes
• Attitude of “damaged children can have damaged parents”
• Deception needed to access the system
• Need to self-advocate
• Just being a same-sex couple challenges the system
• A variety of responses from people in the system
• Adoption creates more legal equality than birthing a child
• Adoption creates more equality with families of origin. No “blood” lines to confuse issues
• Traditional expectations and roles can make those who don’t match invisible or treated “differently” than the traditional
• Some of the choices around “coming out” are removed
• Don’t always disclose family structure. This sometimes conflicts with what the child says
• Want to instill pride which is sometimes in conflict with desire to be “out”
• Strangers assume one is mom “which one of you is the mom”
• Forms are heterosexist
• Advocating for knowledge of differences
• Pioneers must be more active
• People assume the status of the relationship as non-gay
• Non-gays held to a different standard
• Non-gays roles are assumed in same-sex relationships by outsiders
• Societal problems, not with individual experiences
• Legal steps to provide health care decisions
• Need to create options

• Some advocates in the system
• Employers want other parent to be the primary
• Most responses are positive and some forms and language are
- The uniqueness of the family is celebrated not hidden or ignored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday Interview</th>
<th>What, if any, legal involvement did you engage in when adding children or after adding children to your family?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                  | - A large amount of legal work needed  
                          - Local laws impact the adoption  
                          - Legal documents needed to make financial and medical decisions for partner |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday Interview</th>
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</table>
|                  | - Legal resources are needed to protect the children in the event of death of one or both parents  
                          - Friends and community resources were important in finding legal assistance  
                          - The attorney needs additional expertise in working with same-sex couples specific needs |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday Interview</th>
<th>Reasons or examples of how the system is heterosexist and homophobic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                   | - Legal needs and associated expense  
                          - Emotional realities are in place long before legal realities  
                          - Need for legal so reality matches emotional and structural family dynamics  
                          - Legal steps to protect family unit  
                          - Create awareness, knowledge and comfort about family creation  
                          - Legal steps required to protect family unit  
                          - Unnecessary steps in the process  
                          - Need for second parent adoption  
                          - Legal grey areas  
                          - Extra steps to protect family from particular people  
                          - Professional awareness increasing  
                          - Accessed local resources to find legal assistance |

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<tr>
<th>If so, what legal resources did you access?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday interview</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>What motivated you to access this(ese) legal resource(s)?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Monday Interview | - Same-sex parents are not being responsible if they don’t take steps to protect their children in the event of death  
                          - Legal involvement is required in order for same-sex parents to |
stipulate who will care for their children in the event of the death of one or both parents
- The process of adoption, readoption, and second parent adoption required the involvement of someone with an expertise in legal issues

| Tuesday Interview | General sense of fear of heterosexism and homophobia negatively impacting their families |

Here is the definition of culture I would like you to use when answering the next question: Culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors that family members use to cope with themselves and with one another.

Describe cultural similarities and differences between your current family and your family of origin?

| Sunday interview | Grew up bi-cultural and sees LGBT culture as being predominantly hidden
- Family backgrounds similar but different
- Coming out to family of origin was easy
- Being lesbian was okay, being lesbian with children was not
- Family’s response more valued than friend’s response
- Positive and negative responses from family of origin
- Some family responses are the same for opposite-sex and same-sex offspring’s families
- Some responses are a result of the changes in relationship when the parent’s child becomes a parent |

| Monday Interview | There are similarities and differences between current family and family of origin
- Some aspects of current family’s culture are very intentional
- It appeared that some parts of family of origin culture were either accidents or habits
- Diversity is an important aspect of current family’s culture
- Changes in culture from family of origin have been made in the areas of diversity, more involvement with other cultural groups, and broadening the definition of family
- Family of origin parents made changes because of same-sex relationship of daughter
- Fearful societal influences will win over parenting influences (heterosexist society)
- Frustrated and maybe confused – feels like they are failing to teach their daughter that differences are okay
- Fearful of heterosexist media – limit TV exposure time |

| Tuesday Interview | Feels creating a family has forced a higher level of acceptance as parents
- More intentional in all decisions than family of origin
- Chosen family and family of origin similar
- More activism in current family then family of origin |
- Created family is the most important family
- There are differences between current family and family of origin
- They have outsiders who will check their parenting
- They are more accepting of outside help and advice
- More similarity to partner’s family of origin
- More openness in communication in current family than family of origin

### How is your current parenting style and family organization similar and/or different from that of your family of origin?

| Sunday interview | - Current parenting style different from families of origin
|                  | - Partners provide balance in parenting
|                  | - Critiquing of family of origin’s parenting elicited very specific changes in current parenting approaches
|                  | - Common parenting goals are achieved through different means
|                  | - There is a clear recognition of the differing roles for each parent
|                  | - Examined both families of origin and extracted the best qualities
| Monday Interview | - Parenting style similar to family of origin
|                  | - Roles in family similar to dominant culture’s stereotypical roles
|                  | - Parenting styles have evolved and continue to evolve
|                  | - Rules are consistent between parents
|                  | - Intentional planning and mutual parenting values and goals
|                  | - Used state, local, and family resources to help planning for parenting values and goals
| Tuesday Interview| - Differences between family of origin and current family in spite of still participating with family of origin in perceived negative ways
|                  | - Family of origin = yelling. Current family = discuss issues

### Describe those whom you consider to be your extended "family" now?

| Sunday Interview | - Their extended family includes friends as well as biological relatives
|                  | - Some labeling of “family” is new or unique when compared to traditional family labels
| Monday Interview | - Extended family includes friends, neighbors, and biological family members
|                  | - Extended family defined as reliable people
| Tuesday Interview| - Extended family is nonbiological – close relationship = family
|                  | - Still close with biological family

### Describe information or resources from previous generations, if any, that you found helpful while becoming or after becoming parents?

| Sunday Interview | - Used notes from own childhood kept by parents
|                  | - Critiqued previous generations for pluses and minuses in parenting
|                  | - Search for resources that use inclusive language
|                  | - Avoid “cookie cutter” approach to children
| Monday Interview | - General information about normal baby development/behaviors
|                  | - Advice seeking
- Accessed parents from family of origin and siblings for advice
- Parents are either non-intrusive or nonjudgmental in their support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Partner’s mother an important resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difficulties with family of origin and maintain limited contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Acceptance from partner’s family of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There are similarities and differences with families of origin, attempting to be intentional in choices of parenting skills used and avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parents have power but the same-sex relationship is not a system based on power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parenting roles are intentionally more equal with the family organized around the children and their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conscious change in how emotions are expressed in current family from family of origin. Want to create a safe emotional environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- More communication happens between current parents than families of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parenting more about a blend of styles; open to new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Resources are limited by circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Specific information is sought from specific family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Having a child improved relationship with mother and she is used as a resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Previous generation highlights good parenting when it is seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grandfather adjusting his style to better match grandchild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Two generations back become advocates for granddaughter’s family and great grandchild. Pride in family shared between generations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N

CODERS QUESTIONS

What thoughts did you have while coding these manuscripts?

What memories did you have while coding?
  Positive?

Negative?

Was there anything surprising to you?

Was there anything disappointing to you?