

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND PARENTING STYLES  
IN LESBIAN HEADED HOUSEHOLDS:

QUALITATIVE AND  
QUANTITATIVE  
PERSPECTIVES

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Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
July, 1999

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**July, 1999**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When this project first began I had trouble finding faculty members who did not mind being associated with work dealing with lesbian mothers. To Dr. Kay Murphy, Dr. David Fournier, Dr. Patti Self and Dr. Lee Maril, thank you for not allowing heterosexism get in the way of a need to seek information on a family relationship not readily accepted by your peers. I especially wish to thank Dr. Kay Murphy who was the first to say yes to being a part of this project and all the energy and politics that went with it, not to mention delaying her retirement until the project finally ended. May you enjoy your travels and all the adventures awaiting you! Ten years after serving as my Master's advisor, Dr. David Fournier agreed to join my committee once again and continued to teach me the fine art of statistical method. Dr. Patti Self was the first instructor I had as I was deciding whether or not to begin the doctorate effort; her enthusiasm for the program convinced me it was a goal I wanted to achieve. Finally, in a class on qualitative methods in which I piloted my dissertation topic, Dr. Lee Maril shared with me his encouragement of the subject matter and eagerly accepted my invitation to be on this small, but powerful committee. Thanks to all of you – I could not have achieved the final results without your commitment and motivation.

A dissertation topic on lesbianism required more than just hours of research and dedication. It also required explanation as to why I chose such a topic. Although my sexual orientation was not the cause of the topic, it did help people understand why I was interested in such a type of family. As a result I found myself coming out to a myriad of people, most importantly my family. Although terrified at the possibility of rejection from such important people, I was delighted to find unconditional love truly exists as parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, niece and nephews accepted my news with little consequence. They are the reason I



believe the family unit is not in trouble but rather just at a crossroads; if the world could pattern itself after my family, there would be no concerns about “family values”.

My parents, Joan and John deserve a few special words. Their never ending support as I continued my education has been appreciated and so often not recognized. Thank you both for being the individuals you are. I hope one day you will truly realize the impact you have had on your children. Speaking for myself, middle child though I am, I know you love me best. Jan, John and Joe will simply have to deal with it because now I have it published.

There are numerous other people who have supported me, my friend Michelle who encouraged me to start the program and Amy who along with Michelle has supported me from the beginning and stuck with me until the end. Long distance has slowed down our communication but has not affected the special friendship between us. The Department of Residential Life supported me over the past years with time off and words of encouragement. A special thanks for the Taylor Grant folks who honored me with a grant to assist in the finances of travel for the research. Thanks also to Keisha, Smokey and Shadow who survived the insanity of fulfilling the requirements of a Ph.D.

Finally, to the woman who joined me during this project and has stuck with me until the end. Thank you Marie for your words of encouragement, the way you have of bringing me back to reality, and your endless hours of support and comfort. I look forward to the postponed trips we will share together.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter.....	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	
Introduction.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	2
Purpose of Study.....	4
Theoretical Models.....	6
Family Circumplex Model.....	6
Family Ecology Theory.....	8
Feminist Theory.....	10
Research Questions.....	12
Assumptions and Limitations.....	13
Definitions of Terms.....	14
Summary.....	15
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Introduction.....	16
Microsystem and Mesosystem.....	16
Parenting.....	16
Parenting Styles.....	18
Family of Origin.....	20
Biological Father.....	22
Children’s Peers.....	23
Teachers.....	24
Exosystem.....	24
Disclosure of Sexual Identity.....	25
Federal, State and Local Governments.....	28
Macrosystem.....	30
Heterosexism.....	30
Sociohistorical Perspective.....	31
Historical Perspective.....	32
III. METHODOLOGY	
Overview.....	44
Research Method.....	45

Qualitative Method.....	47
Reliability.....	51
Interview Questions.....	52
Quantitative Instruments.....	53
Demographic Data Sheet.....	54
FACES II.....	54
The Family Satisfaction Inventory.....	54
Family Circumplex Model.....	55
Parental Authority Questionnaire.....	57
ENRICH.....	57
Acquiring Social Support.....	58
Quality of Life.....	58
Disclosure Scale.....	58
Procedure.....	58
Operational Hypothesis.....	61
Hypothesis 1.....	61
Hypothesis 2.....	61
Hypothesis 3.....	61
Hypothesis 4.....	62
Hypothesis 5.....	62
Rationale for Statistical Analysis.....	62
z-test.....	62
Crosstabulation.....	62
Limitations.....	62

#### IV. RESULTS

Overview.....	64
Characteristics of Participants .....	65
Findings.....	66
Hypothesis 1.....	66
Hypothesis 2.....	72
Hypothesis 3.....	78
Hypothesis 4.....	86
Hypothesis 5.....	96

#### V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction.....	104
Summary of Findings.....	105
Organism.....	105
Microsystem.....	107
Mesosystem.....	110
Ecosystem.....	112
Macrosystem.....	113

Research Implications.....	115
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	118
APPENDIX.....	127
APPENDIX A - INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM.....	128
APPENDIX B - ANY WORDS OF WISDOM YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?....	129
APPENDIX C- HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE THE TEACHERS OF YOUR FAMLY?..	132
APPENDIX D - HOW SUPPORTIVE IS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OFYOUR FAMILY? .....	136
APPENDIX E - WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS FOR YOUR CHILD BEING RAISE IN A LHH.....	139
APPENDIX F - HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU TO BE INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHILDREN’S PEERS.....	146
APPENDIX G - HAVE YOU COME OUT TO YOUR CHILD?.....	152
APPENDIX H - HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE YOUR FRIENDS OF YOUR FAMILY?.....	157
APPENDIX I - HOW HAS YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY INFLUENCED YOUR METHOD OF PARENTING.....	162
APPENDIX J - WHAT IS THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER.....	170
APPENDIX K - WHAT DO YOU SEE ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS YOUR CHILD HAS EXPERIENCED BY BEING RAISED IN A LHH?.....	175
APPENDIX L - QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET.....	182
APPENDIX M - CONSENT FORM.....	192

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic Characteristics.....	65
2. FACES II Means.....	67
3. Family Satisfaction .....	70
4. Comparison (by %) of Lesbian and Heterosexual Couples of the 16 Family Types of the Circumplex Model.....	71
5. Family Strengths .....	71
6. Relationship Satisfaction .....	72
7. Parenting Styles.....	73
8. Current Sample Means Compared to National Heterosexual Normed Data.....	79
9. Family and Friends Scale.....	80
10. Family and Friends (Family) .....	80
11. Acquiring Social Support (Family) Scale.....	82
12. Acquiring Social .....	82
13. Family of Origin Instrument.....	82
14. Family of Origin .....	83
15. Family of Origin - Cohesion and Adaptation.....	83
16. Mean Comparisons with National Norms.....	87
17. Friends and Family (Friends) .....	88

18. Friends and Neighbors .....	89
19. Neighborhood and Community Instrument.....	90
20. Neighborhood and Community .....	90
21. Mobilizing Family Support .....	90
22. Individual Disclosure.....	97
23. Couple Disclosure.....	98
24. Disclosure and Relationship Satisfaction.....	97
25. Disclosure and Parenting Styles.....	99
26. Ecological Model and Parenting Styles.....	106

#### LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Circumplex Plot.....	69
2. Parenting Styles and the Circumplex.....	75

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the alliance between one male and one female and the ability to procreate is the cornerstone of committed relationships. According to Alfred Kinsey and supported by a number of researchers (Barrett & Robinson, 1994, Bozett, 1987; Evans & Wall, 1991 & Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991), 90% of the population is heterosexual. Therefore, the majority of individuals and couples who constitute the basis of research on parenting are heterosexual and little is known about lesbian parenting. The lesbian and gay population face many issues their heterosexual counterparts do not encounter. The idea of two women trying to raise a child is not supported by the general public and is considered wrong especially by conservative religious organizations. Nearly six in 10 Americans answering a 1996 Newsweek poll think that gays can be just as good at parenting as heterosexuals, yet almost half oppose adoption by gay couples. Forty-seven percent of the respondents said gay spouses should be denied adoption rights for a partners child; 36 percent were in favor and 17 percent were undecided (ACLU, 1996).

It is estimated between eight and ten million children (Allen & Demo, 1995) are raised in gay or lesbian-headed households. Families who have lifestyles different from the traditional intact nuclear family household may be considered deviant and the parents are often perceived as being inappropriate role models for their children (Wall & Amadio,

1994). Flaks, et al (1995) suggest openly gay and lesbian parents and their children represent just one alternative family structure in which the potential for raising well-adjusted children has been questioned. "As such, these families generate considerable sociocultural, psychological, and legal interest" (Flaks, 1995, p. 105).

### Statement of Problem

For the majority of society who are heterosexual and accustomed to legal recognition of their families, it is often hard to imagine the difficulties presented by living in a family not authorized by state or federal governments. Because lesbian families and their rights are unprotected, parenthood for lesbians entails a number of risks. As long as the parental rights of lesbians are not guaranteed through legislation and case law, these parents and their children will continue to be vulnerable to what Holley (1994) refers to as "judicial homophobia," (court rulings which create a way to remove custody from the lesbian parent).

Many issues faced by lesbian-headed households are similar to those faced by divorced, stepparent, and various other heterosexual custodial arrangements. The position of the coparent (second female caretaker of a LHH) of a child born to his or her partner is generally undefined and unprotected. In almost all situations, the coparent may claim no rights in relation to the child. Repeatedly, coparents have lost when they have approached the courts for the establishment or protection of their rights (Hartman, 1996).

It is the child who is deprived of legal rights and benefits afforded children of married heterosexual parents when the courts do not permit a coparent adoption. Adoption creates a legal parent-child relationship that includes the legal responsibilities



associated with child rearing (providing clothing, food, shelter, medical care, and education). A child is also ensured child support in the event the parents end their partnership. Just as important, a coparent adoption ensures that a child will have a continuing relationship with both parents in case of death or separation. If only one of the parents has legal ties with the child and that person dies, the child has no legal right to remain with the surviving parent (Bryant, 1995).

Literature exists to provide evidence that lesbian mothers do not harm their children either mentally or physically, yet many lesbian mothers feel they must hide their sexuality to protect their children from societal harm (Benkov, 1994, Belcastro et al, 1993, Bennett & Abbitt, 1992, Falk, 1994, Green, 1978; Hare, 1994; Hare & Richards, 1993, Holley, 1994, Mason, 1994; Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1990). Society does not legally sanction lesbian marriages or families. Lesbian couples and their children to provide for such needs as housing, insurance benefits, emergency room visits, and school permission forms often develop creative ideas. Consideration must be given to the potential effects of an inhospitable social environment in terms not only of how it may impact upon the mother-child relationship but also of how it may directly affect the child (Tasker & Golombok, 1997).

Olson & DeFrain (1994) suggest societal support is important in the face of problems families encounter. Social support networks include the family of origins, friends, neighbors, and social service institutions. Despite the restrictions placed upon them by society, lesbian families do exist and research continues to indicate the children raised in these families may have strengths equal to, if not exceeding, those of their heterosexual counterparts. For instance, In her review of studies, Hare (1994) reports that

Golombok, et al. (1983) found that children living with their lesbian mothers saw their fathers more frequently than did children living with heterosexual mothers. Kirkpatrick, et al. (1981) found that lesbian mothers are more concerned about their children having opportunities for good relationships with adult males than were heterosexual mothers. Another study found children growing up in a lesbian household tended to have a greater tolerance for diversity than those children growing up in a heterosexual family (Hare, 1994).

In the three leading journals dedicated to family research (Journal of Marriage and the Family, Family Relations, and Journal of Family Issues), Allen and Demo (1994) found 2,598 published articles between 1980 and 1993, of which 12 articles (less than half of 1%) focused on the families of lesbians and gay men. Accordingly, a review of the literature found little has been written which focuses on the impact of sources outside the immediate family on the parenting styles and family relationships of lesbian-headed families. Several researchers suggest this may be due to our knowledge of families being based primarily on data from heterosexual single-parent families, stepfamilies, and traditional two-parent (male-female) families (Demo, 1992; Gecas & Seff, 1990, Hare, 1994).

### Purpose of Study

Demo (1992) suggests that the ever-increasing diversity of American families require that we broaden our research agenda beyond traditional concepts and notions of family normality. Children's well being depends much more on enduring parental support and satisfying family relationships than it does on a particular family structure.

Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, and Steinmetz (1993) suggest lesbian and gay family research to be one of the "major streams of family scholarship that have not yet influenced mainstream family science" (p. 16).

Growing attention has been paid in recent years to the social context of families and to the processes through which hostile social environments may disrupt family relationships (Tasker & Golombok, 1997). External environmental factors, such as the mother's access to social support, have been shown to influence the formation of secure attachment relationships in heterosexual mother families (Crockenberg, 1981). It is conceivable that the specific pressures to which lesbian mothers are exposed, such as possible disapproval from family members, and prejudice on the part of members of the local community, may interfere with effective parenting, particularly for lesbian mothers who are not part of a supportive social network

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact the social environment has on Lesbian-headed Households (LHH) who are raising children. This was accomplished by utilizing three strategies. First, the Circumplex Model was used to compare lesbian-headed households with children with heterosexual couples with children on the variables of family cohesion, adaptability, and satisfaction. Second, the family ecology theory was used to examine the independent variables of family of origin, social environment, heterosexism and individual disclosure on the dependent variable of parenting styles. The third was a heuristic purpose involving in-depth interviews to explore the subject's ideas, perceptions, and realities regarding LHH and parenting styles.

This study is exploratory for two reasons. First, the sample size is limited; second, it is anticipated thoughts and questions will be generated into the area of LHH. It

is hoped the information provided by the results will add to a small but growing body of literature on parenting and lesbian-headed households.

### Theoretical Models

A trend in parent-child research and theory has been to recognize the importance of studying the family and its surrounding network as holistic entities that socialize children. The proponents of systemic models have both incorporated and gone beyond the logic of reciprocal (dyadic) models of socialization. That is, according to the systems perspective, socialization is not only bi-directional; it is multidirectional (Peterson & Rollins, 1987).

This study incorporated two systems theories; the Family Circumplex Model and Family Ecology Systems theory as the broad conceptual frameworks to understand lesbian-headed household parenting styles. Peterson & Rollins (1987) explain the systemic approach as a

Focus on the complex transactions between the parent-child dyad and the surrounding social environment. This approach tends to view the parent-child dyad in terms of its relationship with the family, the neighborhood, and larger social institutions (e.g., the educational and political systems). All of these settings, including the parent-child relationship, influence each other (p. 487).

#### Family Circumplex Model

The Family Circumplex Model is built on principles and concepts from family systems theory, which emphasizes how all family members and their behaviors are

connected. Formulated by Olson, Sprenkle and Russell, (1979) the model was used to graphically demonstrate the relationships within lesbian-headed families. The FACES II Inventory is used to assess the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability. Family cohesion (togetherness) assesses the degree to which family members are separated from or connected to their family while family adaptability has to do with the extent to which the family system is flexible and able to change. As explained by Olson, et al. (1992) in the book Family Inventories

Within the Circumplex Model, specific concepts used to diagnose and measure the cohesion dimension are: emotional bonding, boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, decision-making, interests and recreation. Family adaptability is defined as: the ability of a marital or family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress. Specific concepts used to diagnose and measure the adaptability dimension are family power (assertiveness, control, discipline), negotiation style, role relationships and relationship rules (p. 1).

The four levels of family cohesion ranging from extreme low cohesion to extreme high cohesion are disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed. The two moderate or balanced levels of cohesion have been labeled separated and connected. The four levels of adaptability that range from extreme low adaptability to extreme high adaptability are rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic. The two moderate or balanced levels of adaptability have been labeled flexible and structured. For each dimension, the balanced levels (two moderate levels) are hypothesized to be most viable for healthy family functioning and the extreme areas are generally seen as more problematic for couples and

families over time.

By combining the four levels of cohesion and adaptability dimensions, sixteen distinct types of family systems are identified. Of these 16 types, four are balanced (moderate) types on both the cohesion and adaptability dimensions. Mid-range types (eight possible) are those, which are extreme on one dimension and moderate on the other; extreme types, are the remaining four types which are extreme on both dimensions.

### Family Ecology Theory

Family Ecology is a general theory that can be used to study a wide range of problems related to families and their relationships with various environments including diverse levels and kinds of external systems. Since this theory is not based on any particular family type or configuration, it is appropriate for use with families of diverse structures and national, ethnic, or racial backgrounds, in different life stages and life circumstances (Berns, 1997).

Family ecological theory provides a multidisciplinary approach to understanding parenting styles that incorporates individual, environmental (e.g., family) and social system factors that may be connected to parenting styles. Lesbian-headed households can be conceptualized as occurring within a set of interrelated systems which each include variables at multiple levels of the ecological context composed of the organism, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992).

The individual development of lesbian parents is one important aspect of understanding parenting. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1992) who is best known for his

contextualization of ecological theory believes human development must be in the context of the developing person. His levels of analysis were used to aid the researcher in understanding parenting styles of LHH. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains each level as they pertain to parenting.

- The organism level of analysis allows for consideration of characteristics or qualities of the specific parent that may be related to her experiences as a parent. Each parent brings to parenting a unique set of individual qualities related to the family environment.
- The microsystem refers to the actions, attitudes, and personalities to which family is exposed. People in the immediate environment of the child and the parents - relatives, neighbors, baby-sitters, and schoolmates - are part of the microsystem, and have the most direct influence on child rearing.
- The mesosystem is an ecological perspective suggesting that the development of parents and children be enhanced when the microsystem connects.
- The exosystem are factors within the broader environment or community where the parents do not have an active role but have a direct impact on the parent's life (policies at work, the media, or current state or federal policies relating to family life). For instance, how a parent feels about their work environment may impact on them in their interactions with their child.
- The macrosystem is the basic blueprint for life. It serves as the foundation of social, economic, medical, legal, and political systems. Societal standards as well as the culture surrounding the child affect the child's development.
- The chronosystem is the combination of sociohistorical events, personal

maturity, and life history that provides a temporal context for parenting (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). For purposes of this study, the chronosystem will not be used.

### Feminist Theory

Feminist theory will be utilized as a model for “understanding the importance of sociohistorical, cultural context, and environment in the problems of individual and families (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). “Attention to suppressed realities and to connections between knowledge and power, has deepened as feminists have become more attuned to other lines of difference - social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age - that undermine any unitary notion of woman” (Osmond & Thorne, 1993, 428). In the book, Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions, Thorne (1982) defines five themes central to feminist rethinking of the family.

1. Feminists have challenged prevalent assumptions about the family. They have argued against the ideology of “the monolithic family,” which elevates the contemporary nuclear family with a breadwinner husband and a full-time wife and mother as the only natural and legitimate family form. Feminists have challenged beliefs that any specific family arrangement is natural, biological, or “functional” in a timeless way.
2. Feminists have sought to reclaim the family – including topics such as the sexual division of labor, heterosexuality, male dominance, and motherhood – for social and historical analysis. This analysis has been furthered by an analytic decomposition of “the family” into underlying structures of sex and



gender, and of generation. By taking gender as a basic category of analysis, feminists have made important contributions to family theory.

3. Because families are structured around gender and age, women, men, girls and boys do not experience their families in the same way. Feminists have explored the differentiation of a family experience mystified by the glorification of motherhood, love, and images of the family as a domestic haven. Feminists have voiced experiences that this ideology denies: men's dominance and women's subordination within as well as outside of the family, and the presence of conflict, violence, and inequitably distributed work within the "domestic haven".
4. Feminists have raised questions about family boundaries. On the one hand they have shown the troubled consequences of privatized modern families for women and children who are cut off from outside contact and support. On the other hand, some feminists have argued that family isolation may be partly illusory, since there are close connections between the internal life of families and the organization of the economy, the state, and other institutions. This line of analysis challenges a series of dichotomies – private and public, family and society – that are often taken for granted.
5. These dichotomies are linked to ambivalence embedded in feminism since the nineteenth century and strongly evident today. The ambivalence is between values of individualism and equality, which are derived from the capitalist market, values that women have historically been denied and now are claiming; and values of nurturance and collectivity, which are strongly

associated with women and the family. These values, which have also been affirmed by some feminists, contain an implicit critique of capitalism (p. 2-3).

Feminist theory, as with the ecology theory, recognizes several family forms and rejects the ideology of “the family” as a firm, unchanging, historically given entity (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). As this is a study of lesbians, it is appropriate to use this theory since it begins with women’s experiences and questions the notion of traditional families (heterosexual, nuclear) and gender types.

Feminist theory is applied throughout this research but most notably within the methods section by use of in-depth interviews. Interviewing offers access into the ideas, thoughts and memories of the participants. Reinharz (1992) states this is especially true when studying women as “learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women” (p. 19). For lesbians this is especially true as not only have their voices been silent but the concept of women being with women crosses the gender boundary lines of heterosexual men and women. It is not uncommon to hear the question, “who has the male role” in a lesbian relationship from both men and women. This indicates the stereotypes we have about the male and female roles; lesbian relationships offer us an opportunity to observe and understand a new family structure exists, one that crosses gender boundaries.

### Research Questions

1. Are the parenting styles of a lesbian-headed household with children similar to those of heterosexually headed households with children?
2. Will a supportive family of origin reflect positively on family relationships in lesbian-

headed families with children?

3. Does a supportive social environment (parent's friends, school system, state/local government, teachers, neighbors) aid positively in the parenting of children in lesbian-headed families?
4. Does being "out" (disclosure) as individuals and as couples provide for a more successful relationship and more effective parenting than those who are not "out"?
5. Does heterosexism impact the parenting of children in a lesbian-headed household in a negative way?

#### Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions for this study were adopted from the ecosystem perspective. Bubolz and Sontag (1993) outlined some basic concepts that are especially relevant to the study of lesbian-headed households.

- Families, in interaction with its environment constitute an ecosystem. The quality of life of the participants and the quality of life of the environment are interdependent.
- Families interact with multiple environments.
- Environments do not determine human behavior but pose limitations and constraints as well as possibilities and opportunities for families. (p. 426)

Other assumptions include

- The need to consider the entire family situation when assessing the impact of any single variable.
- In-depth interviews offer an insight into the stories of the participants and are a

vital component to studying lesbian-headed households

### Definition of Terms

1. Lesbian-headed households (LHH) - household in which two lesbians consider themselves in a committed relationship. At least one child has been brought into the home from a previous heterosexual relationship (Hare, 1994).
2. Parenting Styles - includes Baumrind's typology model of authoritarian, permissive and authoritative. Definition also includes communication, time spent with child(ren), and discipline (Baumrind, 1966).
3. Family of Origin - perception of couple toward their parents and what they did/did not appreciate regarding parenting styles. Includes support/nonsupport of siblings and grandparents. Also seeks information on whether the couple is "out" to their family of origin. The interaction of the natural father will be included.
4. Individual/Couple Disclosure - issue of coming out (stating of one's sexual orientation to the surrounding public). To what extent have the individuals within the couple as well as the couple "come out" to the children, to the family of origin, to the workplace setting and to the social environment (Hare, 1994).
5. "Outed" -slang term for purposefully or accidentally disclosing another individuals sexual orientation. It is different from "coming out", as the latter is an individual choice.
6. Family cohesion (emotional bonding)- one of two dimensions central to the Family Circumplex Model. Balance between the extremes of separateness and togetherness in family relationships. Balancing these two extremes entails experiencing both

autonomy and intimacy but not remaining stuck at either extreme for long periods (Olson, et al., 1992).

7. Family adaptability (flexibility) - one of two dimensions central to the Family Circumplex Model. Balance between stability and change. The most functional family systems have both characteristics, and are able to move back and forth between them (Olson, et al., 1992).
8. Coparent – individual in a LHH who is not the natural/biological mother but acts as a caretaker for the child(ren) (Hartman, 1996). Preferred term to “step” parent.

### Summary

Lesbian parenting styles and family relationships are an area in need of research. Lesbian couples have been tolerated by general society but most of the heterosexual society does not believe lesbians should be allowed to parent; judicial homophobia exists to insure parenting does not occur. As the literature of parenting by oppressed groups continues to grow it is important to include lesbians as one of these groups. There is a need however to look beyond just parenting and look at the holistic impact the larger society has on this family structure. By using LHH in this study, information was gathered which may be of use by family researchers and family therapists.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first purpose of this review of the literature is to examine the ecosystem perspective as it relates to the Lesbian-headed household. Explained in the introduction, this theory will be applied to the literature review. The second objective of this literature review is to examine the sociohistorical perspective of the LHH over the past several decades.

#### Microsystems and Mesosystems

Each parent is a member of several Microsystems; or immediate setting such as the home or other place of residence, the workplace, friendship networks, or community involvement where the parent interacts with others on a regular basis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The linkages and processes occurring between two or more of a parent's specific microsystems are known as the mesosystem.

#### Parenting

It is estimated between eight and ten million children (Allen & Demo, 1995) are raised in lesbian and gay households. Most of these children live with parents who were formerly in heterosexual marriages or relationships and then came out as lesbian or gay.

Lesbians who are parenting children from previous relationships face at least two areas of uncertainty. The first is that of custody. Until quite recently, lesbians and gay men frequently lost custody of their children to their former spouses on the grounds that their sexual orientation made them unfit parents (Hartman, 1996). Any former spouse of a gay man or lesbian could use these grounds to obtain custody of minor children and even to prevent visitation. One of the most famous examples of this is the Sharron Bottoms case. Ms. Bottoms, a lesbian, lost custody of her son to her mother when a judge ruled that Sharon had violated the state's sodomy law. Although this ruling was later overturned and custody was returned to Sharon that ruling was later reversed by the state Supreme Court of Virginia. The reason given: "living daily under the conditions stemming from active lesbianism practiced in the home may impose a burden on the child by reason of the 'social condemnation' attached to such an arrangement, which will inevitably affect the child's relationship with its peers and with the community" (Hartman, 1996, p.75).

In most jurisdictions, the legal criterion employed in child custody cases is the so-called "best interests of the child" standard. This standard is ambiguous and highly subjective, and legal decision-makers, therefore, have a considerable degree of discretion (Falk, 1989). There is no empirical evidence at this time to suggest the "best interests" standard is accurate.

The position of the coparent of a child born to her partner is generally undefined and unprotected. In almost all situations, the coparent may claim no rights in relation to the child. Repeatedly, coparents have lost when they have approached the courts for the establishment or protection of their rights. (Hartman, 1996). The majority of states have

used a parent's sexual orientation to deny custody, adoption, visitation, and foster care.

One of the questions that arise with lesbian parents is, are they competent as parents? Therefore, parenting styles was selected as the dependent variable for study in this research project.

### Parenting Styles

A variety of parenting styles have been conceptualized in which a blend or mix of control and support are used to perform the child socializer role (Peterson & Rollins, 1987). A microsystem effect on children is the parent-child relationship within the family. Research has shown parents' child-rearing practices to have an impact on children's behavior. Berns (1997) states that “parenting styles are usually described in terms of major dimensions or degrees: authoritative (democratic), authoritarian (parent centered), or permissive (child centered); warm versus hostile; and demanding-controlling versus accepting responsive” (p. 152). It must be realized that parents are never simply one category or one extreme; they are often a mixture.

Diana Baumrind (1966; 1967; 1968, 1971, 1978) studied child-rearing practices by observing the behavior of preschool children and classified them into the three groups: competent, withdrawn and immature. Baumrind and her staff then observed and interviewed the parents of these children and classified them into categories of authoritative, permissive and authoritarian. In a 1991 study, a fourth classification, rejecting-neglecting was added. The operational definitions of these four classifications - authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting are described by Baumrind (1991).



*Authoritative* parents are both demanding and responsive. They monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive or restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self regulated as well as cooperative.

*Authoritarian* parents are demanding and directive, but not responsive. They are obedience and status oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation. They provide an orderly environment, a clear set of regulations, and monitor their children's activities carefully. Not all directive or traditional parents are authoritarian.

*Permissive* or nondirective parents are more responsive than they are demanding. They are nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behavior, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation.

*Rejecting-neglecting* or disengaged parents are neither demanding nor responsive. They do not structure and monitor, and are not supportive, but may be actively rejecting or else neglect their childrearing responsibility altogether (p.62).

Baumrind (1966), Pardeck and Pardeck (1990) suggest that the authoritative style of parenting appears to be most effective for developing social responsibility and independence within children. Although the child is allowed input into the decision making process, limits are set by the parents.

In their review of the literature, Maccoby and Martin (1983) found parenting styles to be characterized by how demanding or controlling they are with their children, and how accepting or responsive they are. Demanding controlling parents regulate their children

by monitoring children's behavior to guarantee the parental rules are followed; undemanding uncontrolling parents allow their children to do pretty much as they want. There are few restrictions on children's behavior, interests, and activities. The accepting/responsive parents tend to be demonstrative and accept the needs of their children needs as primary; unaccepting unresponsive tend to be the opposite of the accepting/responsive parent as they see their own needs as primary and may be hostile to their children (Berns, 1997).

The literature on parenting styles provides evidence that parental authoritativeness and an accepting-responsive attitude are associated with developing social responsibility and independence among children.

### Family of Origin

The family of origin is a factor in determining the support or non-support of the lesbian-headed household. It is not unusual for a lesbian to fear that her family will reject her totally if they learn she is a lesbian. Still others worry that their families will try to take their child away because of their lesbianism. Many lesbian women, however have said that "coming out" to their parents decreased their sense of isolation and acknowledged the person they are (Murphy, 1989).

Sauerman (1991) suggests several stages of understanding parents will go through after the initial disclosure of a daughter's lesbianism. These include (a) shock; (b) denial; (c) guilt; (d) feelings expressed; (e) personal decision making and (f) true acceptance. His model, not unlike the Kubler-Ross model of stages of bereavement begins with an initial stage of shock, particularly if the parents are taken by surprise with their child's

disclosure. As with death, the next stage of denial is a viewing of the child as unfamiliar or estranged. The most productive dialogue typically takes place during "feelings expressed." This is the stage when parents are ready to ask questions and acknowledge their feelings. After this process the parents are hopefully ready to deal more rationally with the issue although it is not unusual for them to retreat for awhile while they consider all the information they have received. Finally, true acceptance is a stage few parents get to as it is an admission of their own homophobia and a movement from these homophobic tendencies to a celebration of their child's uniqueness.

Weinberg (1972) and Jones (1978) reported parental reactions as consisting of two facets. The first is the result of the parents applying their negative conceptions of homosexual identity to their child. This creates for the parent a subjective perception that the child is suddenly a "stranger." This perception often stems from the misconceptions, the parent has about homosexuals (i.e., my son is a child molester, my daughter is a pervert), and partly because there is no family role for homosexuals. The second facet is a powerful feeling of guilt and failure. The parents somehow feel they have caused their child to become homosexual, and are therefore responsible for their child's new identity.

The extent the parents' are homophobic must also be taken into consideration. Seven predictors were taken from the literature, which have been shown to relate to homophobia: (a) religious orthodoxy; (b) belief in traditional sex roles; (c) authoritarianism; (d) age; (e) education; and (f) being raised in an urban or rural setting (Cramer & Roach, 1988). Religion plays a large part in determining family reaction. This is not surprising as both official religious teachings and the social traditions that stem from them negatively sanction homosexual behavior in both sexes. (Strommen,

1989). Elderly parents may have more difficulty accepting their child's homosexuality because of the social and political climate of their childrearing years (Savin-Williams, 1989).

Pies (1990) reports that parent and other family members have a wide range of reactions to the lesbian who is a parent. Pies suggests that family members have just started getting used to the fact that their daughter (or sister or aunt) is a lesbian, and that may have taken time and effort. To family members, this may mean they will have to “come out” as the parent, brother or sister of a lesbian, thereby putting themselves in a situation with which they are not comfortable and ill-equipped to handle. For some, the decision may bring positive responses. Much depends upon the quality of the family relationships, religious values, moral rules, communication styles, and family traditions.

The coparent is faced with an even more complex task. She must convey to her family members that she will be the parent to a child that her partner is bringing into the relationship. In addition she may want to instill in her family a feeling of “relationship” to this child, so that the parents identify as grandparents, sisters as aunts, and brothers as uncles (Pies, 1990).

### Biological Father

In the context of this study, the family of origin will include the biological father for the children. Hare & Richards (1993) evaluated two studies in which it was found that, when compared to heterosexual single mothers, lesbian mothers have more congenial relations with ex-spouses and include men more regularly in their children's lives. Of the 29 children conceived in heterosexual marriages and living primarily with

their mothers, only three (10%) had no contact with their fathers. This stands in stark contrast to the patterns of contact reported in heterosexual single-parent families.

In her review of studies, Hare (1994) reports that Golombok, et al. (1983) found that more congenial relationships existed between lesbian mothers and their ex-husbands than between heterosexual ex-spouses. Children living with lesbian mothers saw their fathers more frequently than did children living with heterosexual mothers. Moreover, Kirkpatrick et al. (1981) found that lesbian mothers were more concerned that their children have opportunities for good relationships with adult males than were heterosexual mothers. The lesbian group included male friends and male relatives more regularly in the lives of their children than did heterosexual women

### Children's Peers

Hare (1994) found that the number one potential problem reported for children being raised in a family headed by a lesbian couple was peer prejudice regarding the unconventional family structure. Lewis' (1980) interviews with children of lesbian mothers revealed that the younger children focused on the need for secrecy, felt a sense of separation or "differentness" from peers, and feared being ostracized by them. However, as Hare (1994) reported, Golombok et al (1983) compared 27 lesbian and 27 heterosexual families and found there were no differences between the two groups of children in terms of peer group relationships, popularity, and social adjustment.

Cramer (1986) and Riddle and Arguelles (1981) indicated that some children, primarily adolescents, experience relationship problems with other people because of their knowledge of their parents. They often attempt to hide the truth about their parents'

sexual preference from friends, classmates, and strangers outside the home. This isolated environment tends to exaggerate the feeling of difference these children already experience. In addition, they often experience confusion, depression, and may exhibit open rebellion when they are unable to adapt and cope with the need for secrecy about their homosexual parents (Baptiste, 1987).

Green et al. (1986) used a variety of measures, including interviews, questionnaires, and psychological tests, to compare children and mothers in lesbian and heterosexual households. They found no difference between the two groups of children in terms of peer-group relationships, popularity, and social adjustment. Eighty per cent of the daughters of lesbian mothers and 75% of their counterparts in the heterosexual group reported that they were liked “much more”, “somewhat more”, or “as much” by their same-sex peer group. More than 80% of the sons in both groups gave similar popularity ratings with their male classmates.

### Teachers

Benkov (1994) found homophobic views were often evident among schoolteachers and administrators as professionals discussed their concerns about the children in these families. When some educators knew a child had lesbian or gay parents, they were likely to attribute any difficulties the child had to the family structure. If the school system is a hostile environment the child's well being and self-esteem may be threatened.

## Exosystem Factors

The exosystem are factors within the broader environment or community where the parents do not have an active role but have a direct impact on the parent's life

### Disclosure of Sexual Identity

Coming out refers to a complicated developmental process in which a person becomes aware and acknowledges homosexual thoughts and feelings. For some persons, coming out ultimately leads to public identification as a gay man or lesbian. This process involves stepping out of the metaphorical closet where one's homosexuality has been hidden from others and often even from oneself. A parallel process is not possible for a person who is heterosexual simply because there is not a similar need to hide heterosexuality in this society (Stein & Cohen, 1986).

The acquisition of a gay identity appears to be a complex, lengthy process in which the actual disclosure of one's homosexuality to others is a late event (Cass, 1979; Evans & Wall, 1991). Disclosure becomes necessary because unlike skin color or gender, which are overt physical indicators of social group membership, homosexuality is a way of feeling and acting; homosexuals are thus "invisible" both as individuals and groups (Strommen, 1989).

Whether it occurs in the age-appropriate years of sexual identity development or after years of heterosexual living, part of the coming out process includes grieving the loss of the heterosexual self. From early childhood the gay person is confronted with cultural, moral, social, religious, sexual, and psychological expectations which assume

heterosexuality.

For most gay people, this means growing up behaving, believing, or hoping that they could be other than what they are. Sometimes the discrepancy between what is felt to be true to the self and what is expected by others is so profound that suppression or even total repression of true feelings, erotic drives, and affectional needs occurs. Others, unable to develop such defenses for whatever reason face their true selves early on, only to deal with the consequences of that reality with all of its negative social implications. (Forstein, 1986).

An initial difficulty is defining the gay or lesbian to the self and others, especially to the family. For many gays and lesbians, the most difficult decision to make after recognizing, and then accepting to some degree, their nontraditional sexual orientation is to reveal to their parents that they will not be fulfilling the heterosexual dream of the parents (Cramer & Roach, 1988, Murphy, 1989, Savin-Williams, 1989, 1990, Strommen, 1989).

Perhaps the most often cited example of a "coming out" model is by Vivienne Cass (1979). She states that there are six stages of development that individuals move through to acquire an identity of "homosexuality" that is fully integrated with an individual's overall self-concept. At each stage, "identity foreclosure" (an individual may choose not to develop any further) is possible. Homosexual identity formation is viewed as a process during which an individual progresses from an image of self as a heterosexual or nonhomosexual to an image of self as a homosexual. Her stages state (a) identity confusion begins with an awareness that homosexuality has some relevance to oneself and one's behavior (either overtly or internally), (b) identity comparison sees the



individual accepting the possibility that their identity may be homosexual, and their task is to handle the social alienation that arises, (c) identity tolerance is the time the individual is free of confusion, and is able to acknowledge social, emotional and sexual needs, however, feelings of alienation still exist, (d) during identity acceptance the individual is able to normalize homosexuality as an identity and a way of life, (e) identity pride is when the individual is aware that although self-concept is totally acceptable, society still rejects homosexuality. (f) identity synthesis, the final stage sees the person looking at their self as an individual, not as a "homosexual."

Cramer and Roach (1988) cited the benefits of coming out to include improved self-esteem, enhanced identity formation and better overall psychological adjustment. Lee (1992) notes that those people who "pass" as a heterosexual were more likely to score high on indicators of depression, interpersonal awkwardness, and anxiety about their gayness. For many, the ability to share was a major step toward self-acceptance.

Patterson (1995) studied thirty-seven 4-9 year olds and found that the lesbian mothers who did not conceal their sexual orientation, and who maintained supportive relationships with extended family members and adults in the community, were better able to protect their children from prejudicial experiences. Baumrind (1995) reports that open disclosure assures children that their parents are not ashamed of their sexual orientation or fearful of disclosure. Further, open disclosure also means that lesbian mothers can tell their offspring at a young age of their sexual identity rather than in early adolescence when children find the information more difficult to accept.

## Federal, State and Local Governments

Throughout history, gay and lesbians have faced a variety of oppressive policies. The laws enacted are often a product of popular consensus. The extent to which our public policies are family based on every level of government is dramatically evidenced by the fact that in the United States Code, the term family appears no less than 2,086 times and appears in every area of governmental functioning (Hartman, 1996).

If family policy is thought of as everything governments do that affect families (Zimmerman, 1995) it follows the social environment created by these policies impacts gay and lesbian families. The decision makers of these policies are implied in the legal system where “judge-made law is the result of the socioeconomic class of the judges, e.g., male, over 50, white, upper-middle-class, mostly Christian, and, of course, outwardly heterosexual” (Rivera, 1991, p. 81). The law dealing with sexual orientation issues is not based on “a search for truth, reason or justice but often tends to reflect the limited knowledge and homophobic biases of legislators and judges” (Rivera, 1991, p. 81).

Regulatory policies deal with freedom, choice and individual rights issues while channeling “the behaviors of individuals, families, and organizational entities, including governments, in ways considered desirable from a societal point of view” (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 12). An example of a regulatory policy is the recent Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which was passed in response to the upcoming decision by the Hawaii Supreme Court to legalize same sex marriage. DOMA allows each state to pass laws on whether these same sex marriages will be recognized by the state. Some policies are explicit and have an obvious affect on families such as the Family Leave Act. Other policies such as

the military “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy are implicit; however, such a policy, while affecting gays and lesbians in such areas as job security and personal identity is less obvious as a family policy.

Perhaps implicit in nature, another example of a regulatory policy is the definition of the family. The definition of family defines which relationships are eligible for certain entitlements on the basis of being a family and which are excluded from certain advantages such as tax breaks, health insurance, family leave, adoption, Social Security benefits, and other public and private policies. These definitions or lack thereof, affect the gay/lesbian family as “the lack of validation for and protection of gay and lesbian family relationships affects these families on a daily basis in ways that cannot be anticipated. This is true from custody issues for the coparent to issues around burial” (Hartman, 1996, p.74).

Zimmerman (1995) found in a 1993 survey, most respondents were willing to define longtime, cohabiting heterosexual couples as family but did not agree that two gay men or two lesbian women living with the children they were raising constituted a family. Even fewer agreed that two lesbian women or two gay men living together in a committed relationship without children were family.

In recent years the legal definition of family has resulted in the denial of benefits to a growing number of individuals involved in many different types of nontraditional relationships that do not possess the ties of blood, adoption, or marriage associated with the traditional nuclear family (Harvard Law Review, 1989). This affects cohabiting couples, unwed fathers, foster families, invitro babies and gay and lesbian families.

One of the first examples of a successful legal battle over the definition of family

for the gay/lesbian population occurred in New York City. After living together in an apartment for over a decade one partner of a gay couple died. The man who died was also the individual who signed the apartment lease. The landlord attempted to take control of the apartment stating the deceased man's partner was not a family member and therefore had no right to the apartment. New York Court of Appeals ruled that a gay couple could be considered a family under New York City's rent control regulations. The court said that protections from eviction ought not to rest on fictitious legal distinctions or genetic history, but instead on the realities of family life (Zimmerman, 1995).

### Macrosystems

Each of these levels are nested within a set of broader ideologies, belief systems, institutional patterns, or values of the culture, referred to as macrosystems that serve as the foundations of social, economic, medical, legal, and political systems.

### Heterosexism

Heterosexism is defined as the ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community (Herek, 1995). "Heterosexism creates the climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual along with its display of power and privilege as the norm. Heterosexism enforces compulsory heterosexuality and one of the favored terms of patriarchal power - the nuclear family" (Pharr, 1988, p 16).

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation affects lesbian-headed households in a wide range of contexts in both the public and private sectors. As will be

illustrated in the historical perspective of this paper, a number of affirmative steps have been taken to protect lesbians and their families from discrimination. However, relying on legislation to protect lesbian families is inadequate to protect them consistently. There is no way to anticipate, identify, and seek protection from every encounter with heterosexual privilege.

Heterosexism is evident at both the cultural and the individual levels. Cultural heterosexism operates through a dual process: homosexuality is usually rendered invisible and, when people who engage in homosexual behavior or who are identified as homosexual become visible, they are attacked by society (Herek, 1995). Discrimination in employment, housing, and services; the “don’t ask, don’t tell” military policy; the inability to marry are examples of cultural heterosexism. Psychological heterosexism is reflected in feelings of personal disgust, hostility, or condemnation of homosexuality and of lesbians and gay men, which continue to be widespread (Herek, 1995). Significant numbers of gay men and lesbians have been the targets of verbal abuse, harassment, discrimination, or physical assault because of their sexual orientation. The Mathew Shephard case is one of the most recent examples of a man being killed because of his sexual orientation.

It seems clear, however, that the cultural, social, and psychological roots of heterosexism warrant increasing attention from family scientists, family policy makers, and the lay public throughout the next century.

### Sociohistorical Events

There is an old saying that you can’t move forward unless you first look back.

There is a need to understand history, learn from mistakes and move purposefully forward with a positive goal. This brief historical perspective of the lesbian movement throughout the past decades is written to aid in understanding what has improved for today's lesbian and what is yet to be. Researchers must not just make assumptions based on national norms or stories occasionally presented by the media. Researchers must understand the culture of the lesbian household to understand why this is a little researched area and one where subjects can be elusive.

### Historical Perspective

The term homosexual comes from the Greek prefix Homo, referring to the sameness of the individuals involved. There is a tendency however for the term homosexual to refer to two men therefore there is a growing trend referring to sexual relationships between females as lesbian or sapphic. Both of these terms reflect the homosexual history of Sappho who lived on the isle of Lesbos in Greece (Rubenstein, 1993).

Historical evidence regarding lesbianism is difficult to gather as society has a long tradition of fear and hatred of homosexuality. Much of what has been learned about lesbians and gay men has come from criminal records as journals and written letters to lovers may have been burned or written in code (Goode & Wagner, 1993).

Throughout much of American history, women were the property of men and discouraged from exploring their sexuality. Most of the early sodomy laws in the American colonies did not even mention the possibility of sex between women. Blumstein & Schwartz (1983) in researching their book American Couples found

“romantic friendships between young women in previous centuries were often encouraged as "training" for heterosexual marriage. Sensitivities could be developed so that women's gentler nature would blossom even more and be of great benefit to their future husbands” (p. 40).

The editors of the Harvard Law Review (1989) believe four conceptions of homosexuality have developed throughout history. The "sin" conception views homosexual acts as immoral and wrong; the "illness" perspective sees homosexuality as a negative part of an individual's personality and thereby curable. Third the "neutral difference" believes in the concept of sexual orientation as identity and finally, “social construct" views same-sex acts and relationships as not significantly different from opposite-sex ones (p. 2).

The sin conception of same-sex sexual activity prevailed in the colonies and in the United States before the late nineteenth century. During this period, the modern concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality did not exist; rather, almost all nonprocreative or nonmarital sexual activities were considered immoral and made criminal (Harvard Law Review, 1989). As the family was the basic economic and social unit during the colonial era it is not surprising that nonmarital and nonprocreative sexual acts were regarded as sinful. Those who transgressed the society's sexual moral code however were not stigmatized as long as they repented. Documents such as diaries and letters of the last three centuries lead modern readers to conclude that these “women were lovers who had sexual contact with one another. They describe their longing for one another in the same sensuous terms female lovers today would use” (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, p. 40).

The concept of homosexual and heterosexual individuals emerged during the late

nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, as science and medicine replaced religion as the major influences in society. The medical and psychiatric professions invented the term "homosexuality" and began to study the illness it described (Harvard Law Review, 1989). According to Freud" homosexuals were stuck at one point in sexual development, a stage that "normal" people passed through on their way to "mature" (hetero) sexuality (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Most other therapists however considered homosexuality a problem in need of cure. This is not necessarily unusual when it is considered that most of the people these therapists were exposed to were troubled people, who came to them confused, unhappy, and guilt-ridden. Psychiatrists, starting from the proposition that there could be no such thing as a healthy homosexual, prescribed long-term therapies, shock treatments, and even brain surgery.

Homosexuality became an interest for physicians in particular because they saw it as an unhealthy biological condition they could reverse. At the time, this was considered to be an enlightened approach because it offered an alternative to incarceration and physical punishment. They categorized homosexuality as an illness, not a crime (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). In the early 1900's the medical profession was determined to find a cure and locate the same sex desire. From the size of the penis, to a deep voiced female to the structure of the pelvis, a cause was meant to be found. Homosexuality was considered everything from degeneracy, to genius and inevitably, misguided parenting. These speculations about causes resulted in attempts at treatment including "castration, hypnosis, electric shock, hysterectomies, and later, in a slightly less brutal era, psychoanalysis" (Goode & Wagner, 1993, p. 51).

The late nineteenth century produced a rise in industrial capitalism and America



saw more and more individuals move to large urban centers. This move resulted in decreased importance of family units in determining morality and law (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). These social and economic changes inspired the formation of gay communities and between the 1870'S and 1930's, gay and lesbian communities appeared in American cities and continued to grow during and after World War II. In the postwar years, the publication of the Kinsey reports, which analyzed human sexuality in North America more thoroughly than ever before, had a profound impact on the homosexual minority in North America (Licata, 1980). Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (1953) gave a stamp of academic approval to homosexual acts, placing them in the realm of natural sexual response rather than among disturbing abnormalities.

During the time frame of the Kinsey's report both the increase of anti-gay sentiment and official harassment occurred in the 1950's. McCarthyism resulted in " a heat wave of accusations and anti-homosexual associations. Patriotism and anticommunism became issues of public morality, dominating the American consciousness and tyrannizing many independent thinkers and reformers. Deviation, whether sexual or political, was a cardinal sin. "Red-baiting" and "queer-baiting" forced people from government, employment, and home" (Licata, 1980, p, 167).

The Lesbian Almanac (1996) reports a number of historic incidents that occurred in the 1950s. In 1952, Congress enacted a law banning lesbian and gay foreigners from entering the country (this law was on the books until 1990). Executive order 10450 was signed by then President Eisenhower making sexual perversion grounds for exclusion from federal employment. The Los Angeles postmaster seized copies of ONE (a

gay/lesbian publication) magazine and refused to mail them, because they were "obscene, lewd, lascivious and filthy." In 1958, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a "legal and publishing landmark," (p. 12) reversed the rulings of two lower courts, ensuring the distribution of lesbian and gay materials through the mail service (p. 12.). A landmark historical moment in the lesbian movement was the founding of The Daughters of Bilitis the first lesbian organization in the United States, in 1955 - its first publication, The Ladder was put out the following year.

In 1957 The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) adopted a national policy statement that sustained the constitutionality of state sodomy laws and federal security regulations denying employment to gay men and lesbians. The ACLU finally reversed this policy in 1964.

The period of the late 50's and early 60's saw various groups reject the view of homosexuality as wrong or sick, and instead view lesbians and gay men as an oppressed minority whose civil rights deserved protection. In the late 1960's and early 1970's gay and lesbians began to successfully challenge federal civil service dismissals, and other anti-gay state actions. Legislative changes also reflected the shift toward a civil rights conception of sexual orientation. The women's movement's attack on traditional gender roles, increased openness about and lessened taboos on sexuality, and the "culture of protest" in the 1960's all contributed to the increase of "gay liberation" (Harvard Law Review, 1989, p. 6).

Finally, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association reviewed available data on homosexuality and made a general statement in the early 70's regarding the health of homosexual people and the nature of homosexual

conduct. Both these organizations agreed that homosexuality is not a manifestation of psychological problems. The majority of the psychological community had finally and clearly stated that “homosexuality is not an illness nor is it a cause, in and of itself, for medical intervention” (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, p.44).

The decade of the 1960's was a time of change and challenge within the United States and along with numerous other items, gay and lesbian issues made some positive steps changing attitudes post the McCarthy era. In 1960, The Daughters of Bilitis held the first national lesbian conference in San Francisco. In 1962, the American Law Institute issued its Model Penal Code recommending decriminalization of consensual private same-sex activities between adults (Harvard Law Review, 1989). In 1962, Illinois became the first state to abolish its laws against consensual homosexual sex (it would be another 10 years before Connecticut would become the second state to repeal its sodomy laws). The Mattachine Society led a picket in front of the White House in 1965 protesting the government's discriminatory employment practices. Seven men and three women participated in the action. The first of its kind ever, the picket received national TV coverage. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in New York in 1966 and in 1968, The Metropolitan Community Church was founded in Los Angeles for gay people who wanted to worship together.

In late June, 1969, plainclothes police raided the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village meeting with violent resistance from gay patrons of the bar and people on the street, including transvestites, butch lesbians, and gay teenagers. Arguably, many view this weekend of riots as the start of the modern gay liberation movement. In 1969, NOW approved its first resolution supporting lesbian rights. A similar resolution in the

previous year had been attacked and defeated by NOW founder Betty Friedan, who labeled lesbians "the Lavender Menace" (Boggis, et. al, 1996).

Where the '60's seemed to indicate a step toward openness, the 1970's held mixed messages for the gay/lesbian population. The first half seemed to hold hope. What appeared to be an important but obvious step for women was the approval in 1972 of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender. When the bill was sent to the state assemblies for ratification, a ten-year fight resulted and the ERA was defeated in 1982. During this same period, a U.S. district judge ruled that the Civil Service Commission could not discriminate against gay employees unless it could prove that being gay would interfere with their jobs, East Lansing, Michigan, became the first city in the United States to ban antigay bias in city hiring. Also, in 1972 the first open lesbian was awarded custody of her children in a divorce case (however the judge restricted her lover from moving in with her and the children). After much discussion and debate, the American Psychiatric Association decided that homosexuality should no longer be classified as a mental disorder while the American Bar Association passed a resolution recommending the repeal of all state sodomy laws. In 1974 the first openly gay official in the United States was elected to the Massachusetts state legislature and Santa Cruz County, California, became the first U.S. county to ban antigay discrimination in 1975. Two more important custody cases were won in 1977. The first occurred in Michigan where joint custody rights for two children was won in spite of the ex husband's charge that the mother was morally unfit because she was a lesbian and the other in Denver where custody of the deceased former lover's daughter was won despite opposition by the child's aunt and uncle.

For the most part however, the latter part of the 1970s held setbacks beginning in 1976 when in *Rose v. Locke*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that cunnilingus was covered by Tennessee's "crimes against nature" statute, even though it was not expressly mentioned. One of the more famous cases occurred in 1977 where voters in Dade County, Florida, repealed a gay rights law by a two to one margin. The fight to repeal was led by fundamentalist singer, orange juice industry spokesperson, and former Miss America contestant, Anita Bryant. The 1978 U.S. Supreme Court, in Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation, approved restrictions on broadcast material that was "indecent," but not "obscene." The case was used to block the broadcast of gay themed programs. During this same year San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk, an out gay man, and Mayor George Moscone were murdered. Their murderer was later acquitted of first-degree murder in the deaths and was convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter when his lawyer successfully argued that the accused mental capacity was diminished by his excessive consumption of junk food. In 1979, the Moral Majority which listed among its goals opposition to abortion, feminism, and gay rights was founded.

This time line as found in the Lesbian Almanac (1996) continues into the 1980s when in 1981 a new Kinsey study reported neither parental nor societal influences had much effect on sexual orientation and the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays was formed. What would begin an eight-year struggle for legal guardianship of her lover started when Sharon Kowalski was hit by and drunk driver and left in critical condition. Her lover, Karen Thompson was refused by Sharon's parents access or input into her care. In 1982 Wisconsin became the first state to enact statewide gay rights legislation

and in 1984 Berkeley, California became the first U.S. City to pass a domestic partners law for municipal employees. This awarded gay and lesbian (as well as unmarried heterosexual couples) the same benefits as married couples in areas such as health care and bereavement leave. The landmark case *Bowers v. Hardwick* was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1986 which upheld the constitutionality of Georgia's sodomy law. In 1987 approximately 2,000 same-sex couples were "married" in a mass wedding on the steps of the Internal Revenue Service in Washington, D.C., on October 10 to dramatize the tax benefits for married people that lesbian and gay couples are denied.

The year 1989 began with the legal argument of the definition of family when a New York State court ruled that a gay couple could be considered family for purposes of rent-controlled apartments. The California Bar Association urged that lesbian and gay marriage be legally recognized, and in Seattle, San Francisco, and other cities, partners regulations extending certain protections and rights to unmarried couples—straight and gay—were adopted. Also in 1989, the Center Kids, was founded in New York to provide support and networking opportunities for lesbian and gay parents and their children and Massachusetts became the second state to pass a gay civil rights law.

Late in the current decade, the struggle is not over for an oppressed population. In 1991 Pediatrics magazine reported nearly half of the lesbian and gay teenagers interviewed for a study reported they had attempted suicide and the Minnesota Court of Appeals awarded guardianship of Sharon Kowalski to her lover, Karen Thompson over the objections of Kowalski's parents. Domestic partners of employees of Levi-Strauss & Co. were granted full medical benefits in 1992 and Massachusetts granted lesbian and gay state workers the same bereavement and family leave rights as heterosexual workers.

During 1992 an otherwise gay friendly New York had a heated debate, demonstrations and threats of violence toward gay parents after a multicultural curriculum for first graders that included references to lesbian and gay parents was introduced. This resulted in the forced resignation of the New York City school chancellor, and the largest turnout for a school board election in the city's history. The curriculum was revised to delete virtually all mention of lesbian and gay families. The first lesbian serial killer in the United States, Aileen Wuornos, was sentenced to death in Florida in 1992 while Democratic candidate Bill Clinton, in his acceptance of his nomination for president, mentioned gay people in his speech—the first time a presidential candidate had so done. Antigay initiatives were introduced in Oregon and Colorado in 1992 - while gay people and their supporters rejected Oregon's, Colorado passed, initiating a national boycott of Colorado by gay people and their allies.

In 1993 the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that a lower court improperly dismissed a lawsuit challenging a state policy of denying marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples. This higher court ruled that the prohibition of same-sex marriages constitutes sex discrimination and is probably unconstitutional. Lesbian mother Roberta Achtenberg was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to become the assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (the first time an openly gay person had ever been confirmed by the Senate for a high-level government position) and voters in Cincinnati, Ohio; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Lewiston, Maine; approved antigay ballot measures. President Bill Clinton directed the Secretary of Defense to overturn the 1981 ban on gays in the military but settled for a "don't ask, don't tell" compromise.

The Virginia Court of Appeals overturned a lower court ruling stripping a lesbian mother of custody of her son based on her sexual orientation in 1994 which also saw a resolution passed at the convention of the Oregon PTA that read: "Resolved that the Oregon PTA rejects prejudice, harassment, discrimination or intolerance directed against students, parents, teachers or staff members as a result of their sexual orientation; and be it further resolved that the Oregon PTA opposes all legislative attempts to suppress discussion of family diversity and sexual orientation" (Boggis, et al., 1996, p. 237). Portland, Oregon also voted that year to allow nonmarried city employees' domestic partners to be eligible for full spousal benefits and the American Medical Association finally adopted a statement removing all references to "sexual orientation related disorders" from its official policy.

The year of 1994 held its share of setbacks when the commission of Cobb County, Georgia voted unanimously to cease its arts-related funding when it realized it might be subsidizing lesbian and gay art and artists. The national midterm elections saw the Republicans win in a sweep and take over the majority in both houses of the U.S. Congress as well as win gubernatorial elections in many large states. As the "homophobic Christian Right" (Boggis, et. al, 1996, p. 29) strongly backed many of these candidates, a pessimism among the gay and lesbian population occurred as it was believed their future was now threatened. This seemed a prophetic concern when in 1995 a representative publicly referred to an openly gay congressman as "'Barney Fag.'" The representative was not reprimanded, denied responsibility, and would not acknowledge that using the label "fag" was detrimental to the gay population. In 1995, Rhode Island became the ninth state to pass a statewide gay rights bill, protecting lesbians and gay men



in housing, public employment, credit, and public accommodations and the first out lesbian won a Tony Award for Best Leading Actress in a Play.

If a lesson is to be learned throughout history it may be that there is no lesson to learn. To say life is much improved for lesbian-headed households in 1999 than it was even twenty years ago would not be an accurate statement. There is improvement however so much depends on who is in political power at the time as well as the geographical location of the household. There is still no definitive definition of family and much rides on whom has the power. An important lesson that continues for all oppressed populations however is that the power does, indeed, belong to the individual. As anthropologist Margaret Mead has said, “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

It has been argued that the family is the most difficult institution in human society to study. The reason for this is that families tend to be closed to outsiders and they often "put their best foot forward" (Olson & DeFrain, 1994, p. 25). To study important issues such as parenting in a non-traditional setting, it is important to get below the surface and deal with both the positive and negative aspects of family life. This study was designed to explore the impact the social environment has on parenting children within lesbian-headed households. From custody issues to job security, all areas affect the ability to parent in some manner. Each hypothesis in this study, was designed to relate to the ecological framework (see chapter 1) as it is believed a parent can not raise a child by themselves; rather, the impact of friends, school, community, neighbors, and public policies all combine to impact on how a child is raised. The holistic environment impacts all parents no matter what their family type however, due to societal stigmas and stereotypes the LHH may be impacted in ways in addition to or different from the heterosexual household.

Due to the sample size and broad scope of this study analysis of the quantitative data are descriptive. For the same reasons in-depth interviews were used to capture the

rich detail as presented by the participants regarding their perspectives on the issue of holistic parenting. It is hoped the information gathered from this study would identify variables for future research.

Exploratory studies are designed to research areas of which little information is available. This study on lesbian parenting in an ecological framework is exploratory. Although not synonymous with exploratory studies, descriptive research will also be employed. Descriptive statistics, according to Miller (1986), begin with specific variables and seek to describe them or their distribution among a certain group of people (in the case of this study, lesbian mothers). Miller continues to explain “exploratory studies maintain considerable flexibility and rely heavily on subjective insights, descriptive aim for completeness and accuracy and must be more structured to guard against errors and biases” (p. 31). As is explained later in the chapter it is appropriate to use both methods, as the research design is a multimethod design.

### Research Method

This study incorporated qualitative methods in conjunction with the standard quantitative techniques of family research. This combination of methods, known as a multimethod approach, was used in this study to increase the likelihood the researchers will more fully understand LHH (Reinharz, 1992) through the outcomes of the study. Multimethod is desirable as each method reveals areas other methods do not and because validity is strengthened when information is corroborated in different ways (Denzin, 1989, Rosenblatt & Fisher, 1993).

Between-method triangulation uses different methods to study the same

phenomenon. The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies (Denzin, 1989). The basic research feature is the combination of two or more different research strategies in the study of the same empirical units. The goal of using complementary methods is to enhance the analysis and understanding of each component by using varied methods. The concept of “triangulation” is based on the assumption that any “bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator, and method will be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods” (Creswell, 1994, p. 174).

Lesbian parents are a challenging sample to research. It is often difficult to find participants for reasons including lack of time to participate and fear of losing a job and/or custody of their child should their sexual orientation be made public. Due to the importance of examining such a family relationship this study primarily used in-depth interviews to facilitate the exploration of the research and descriptive statistics to describe the results of the various measurements used. In reference to this study, the methodologies used included several survey measurements and in-depth interviewing. Reinharz (1992) compares qualitative and quantitative methods as “survey research typically excludes, and interview research typically includes, opportunities for clarification and discussion. Interview research explores people’s views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory. In this way it complements quantitatively oriented, close ended interview research that tries to test hypotheses. Weiss (1994) concurs with Reinharz, “because the fuller responses cannot be easily categorized, their analysis will rely less on counting and correlating and more on interpretation, summary

and integration. The findings of the qualitative study will be supported more by quotations and case descriptions than by tables or statistical measures”(p. 3).

### Qualitative Method

Qualitative family research is described by Gilgun (1992) as research “with a focus on experiences within families as well as between families and outside systems; the subjects are persons who mutually define themselves as family, are in committed relationships and have a shared sense of personal history” (p. 24). In-depth interviewing is the most frequently used method of qualitative family research. Rosenblatt and Fischer (1993) describe “The heavy reliance on interviewing stems from the crucial importance of capturing meanings and other subjective information that may not normally be available through other research approaches” (p. 171). McCracken (1988) adds, “without a qualitative understanding of how culture mediates human action, we can know only what the numbers tell us. The long qualitative interview is useful because it can help us to situate these numbers in their fuller social and cultural context” (p. 9).

Interviewing offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than the words of the researcher. Mishler (1994) states “one of the primary ways - probably the primary way- human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form” (p. 68). This asset is particularly important for the study of lesbians because in this way learning from lesbians is an antidote to decades of ignoring these women’s ideas altogether or having the heterosexual majority speak for these lesbians. This study will aid in better understanding how these lesbian mothers lead their daily lives, experience their joys and challenges with their children,

experience their frustrations with their own family of origins and share the joys of their friends and co-workers. This is a slice of real lesbian parenting.

In his book Learning From Strangers, Weiss (1994, pp. 9-13) describes seven thoughts when undertaking a qualitative interview study. These are listed below as they pertain to the current study:

1. developing detailed descriptions - from the participating mothers detailed descriptions were received of their parenting styles, family relationships and the environment, which surrounds them.
2. integrating multiple perspectives – each participant offered their individual perspective - every respondent had different observations to contribute.
3. describing process- as they responded, these women guided the researcher to understand how they got to where they are now - not just what they were thinking but what had transpired in their lives to get them to that point.
4. developing holistic descriptions – aids in understanding how a system works or fails to work. By interviewing these women, the process of understanding of the nature of their family life began.
5. learning how events are interpreted – the discourse of these women facilitated learning about perceptions and reactions known only to those who participated in the study.
6. bridging intersubjectivities – the narratives offered will guide the reader in understanding not just the numbers presented in the quantitative statistics but the reasons behind the responses.
7. identifying variables and framing hypotheses for qualitative research – this

study was the result of a previous pilot study conducted for a class in 1994. The original purpose was to compare heterosexual stepfamilies with children with lesbian-headed households with children. The results of that study aided in formulating the questions used in the interviews as well as the measures used for the quantitative data. Perhaps more importantly the results from the original interviews were interesting and strong enough to “stand on their own” meaning there was no reason to do a comparative study as the preliminary results indicated LHH are unique enough to warrant their own family relationships study. Comparisons can not truly be done if a topic must be studied from the inside versus making assumptions about such a topic – to compare is still to suggest one form is better than another.

For this study the in-depth interview questions investigated the family of origin, the social system, individual and couple disclosure, the child’s interaction with their peer group (as perceived by the child’s mothers) and the involvement of the coparent. The questions used were piloted from a previous research project that resulted in the rewording of some of the original questions. Additional questions were included after this pilot study. Interviews were semistructured, meaning the questioning style falls in between the rigidity of an ordered, formal interview schedule and the looseness of an unstructured exploration of what appears to be meaningful to participants (Reinharz, 1992). Broad questions are given followed with reflective comments, probes and clarifications. Perhaps the richest responses were solicited from the last unstructured question asked of the participants “is there anything that you would like to add that I did not ask?”

One of the many advantages to in depth interviewing is the ability of the researcher to listen to the many stories offered by the participants. Each of the thirty-two women involved in this study has a story to tell. Perhaps one of the hardest areas in qualitative research, however is coding based on what the participant states and how they believe vs. what the coder may want to infer. For instance, there are several examples of women who were abused in their childhood but who stated they are not as bad as the abusing parent and seemed to accept that the other parent who stood by was powerless to help. The best example of this is Charissa whose children are now grown and over 18, only the daughter remains at home. She describes her role models for parenting as: “I came from a very violent childhood, uh, my dad was one of those who beat the crap out of us and my mother and everything and ...I tend to be a very laid back parent, I’ll tell them they get 10 licks and I literally try to kill them with those 10 licks and (if) they let go and smart off between the 10 licks I stop, then I will start over at one again (chuckle). My mother was a very laid back person who because of the violence of my father, I tended to take her, her attitude.”

While this initially elicited a negative reaction in the interviewer and probably most who read the excerpt, it is important to remember that it is her perception and her reality. As a slice of real descriptive experience, is not open for outsiders to judge. As much as the interviewer wanted to negatively code this example it was – negative for the father whom she acknowledges abused her but positive for the mother she saw as laid back.



## Reliability

Reliability of in-depth interview typically consists of one or more people reviewing the results of the researcher interpretation of the themes and coding of the transcription of the interview tapes. Another method consists of sending the transcript back to the individual interviewed for their review of the researcher interpretation of their comments. A weakness of this study was the lack of use of either method. However some measures were taken to present a reliable study.

The researcher was involved in two classes involving in-depth interviews. Through these classes eleven interviews were administered, transcribed, coded and interpreted by the researcher. In each class the instructor listened to at least one of the tapes and instructed the researcher on ways of improving her style of interviewing, coding and creating themes. With that background, the researcher began the current study. A committee member who was also one of the instructors referred to above reviewed the first transcriptions. He felt the process of the interviewing and coding was proceeding positively, thus giving his permission to continue the study.

The interview questions themselves were set up thematically. For instance the question, "How has your immediate family influenced your method of parenting?" was asked to reference the theme of parenting style. With this in mind the researcher was able to code those references as they related to the family of origin. As this is a study on parenting styles and family relationships, the coding was a (+) for a positive contribution to the interviewees current parenting style or a (-) if the contribution of the family of origin was negative as it applied to the interviewees parenting style. In some cases both a

(+/-) was applied as, for instance the interviewee may have felt her mother to be a positive influence but her father a negative influence on her parenting style. Themes which developed from individual questions but had no reference to the question asked (i.e., a question on family of origin might prompt a participant to discuss her coming out to her family of origin) were removed from the parenting style theme and placed in a miscellaneous themes category. These miscellaneous categories were later reviewed for common themes and categorized as new themes developed. For instance, although not a question specifically asked by the researcher, several women did discuss their coming out stories to people other than their children which eventually resulted in a theme entitled “coming out stories”.

In summary, the interrater reliability of this study was pursued but not as fully as it should have been. Prior to future use of the findings of this study, further input will be sought regarding the coding and themes of the transcripts.

### Interview Questions

The specific research questions, which guided this study, were:

1. How has your immediate family influenced your method of parenting?
2. What is the current relationship with the biological father?
3. As a parent, what are the major concerns you have for your child?
4. How important is it for you to be involved with your child's peers?
5. How supportive are your friends of your family?
6. How many of your friends are heterosexual?
7. How supportive is the school system of your family?

8. How supportive are the teachers of your family?
9. How supportive are your neighbors of your family?
10. Have you “come out” to your child?
  - If yes, at what age and how has your child responded to this
  - If no, why have you chosen not to come out to your child?
11. What are the most significant benefits you believe your child(ren) have experienced being raised in a lesbian-headed household?
13. What are the most significant problems for your child being raised in a lesbian-headed household?
14. Is there anything you would like to add that I did not ask?

### Quantitative Instruments

In addition to the interviews, numerous rating scales were used to yield a comprehensive picture of the parenting styles of lesbian-headed households through the ecological framework. The following measures were administered in a packet form: (a) Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991); (b) Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales (F-COPES) (McCubbin, H., Thompson, A. & McCubbin M. 1996); (c) FACES II; (d) Family Strengths; (e) two subscales (Family and Friends and Relationship Satisfaction) from the ENRICH scale; (f) Family Satisfaction; (g) Quality of Life. The latter measures are located in Olson, et al (1992), Family Inventories. The comparison heterosexual data came from Olson, et al. 's norms located in Family Inventories (1992) and McCubbins' (1996) norms located in Family Assessment.

### Demographic Data Sheet

Demographic items were presented with a variety of categories the respondent could check as true for them. The information was used for the purposes of describing the sample. The demographic data sheet is located Chapter four.

### The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES) II

This 30-item scale contains 16 cohesion items and 14 adaptability items and enables the researcher to place individual family members within the Circumplex Model. There are two items for each of the eight concepts for cohesion: emotional bonding, family boundaries, coalitions, time space, friends, decision making and interests and recreation. Six concepts relate to the adaptability dimension: leadership, assertiveness, discipline, negotiations, roles and rules. In a sample of 2,412, Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the two concepts. The results were .87 for Cohesion, .78 for Adaptability and .90 for the combination of the dimensions. Face and content validity of the scales was found to be very good.

### The Family Satisfaction Inventory

Family Satisfaction is a 14-item measurement used to assess family satisfaction on the dimensions and subscales of family cohesion and family adaptability. In a sample of 2,076, Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the reliability of cohesion and adaptability. The results were .76 for Cohesion, .67 for Adaptability and .75 for the combination of the dimensions.

### The Family Circumplex Model

This concept was used as a graphic representation of relationships within families. Formulated by Olson, Sprenkle and Russell, (1979) the model is built on principles and concepts from family systems theory, which emphasizes how all family members and their behaviors are connected (Olson & DeFrain, 1994). The FACES II inventory is used to assess the dimensions of cohesion and flexibility. Family cohesion (togetherness) assesses the degree to which family members are separated from or connected to their family while family flexibility has to do with the extent to which the family system is flexible and able to change. As explained by Olson, et al. (1992) in Family Inventories

Within the Circumplex Model, specific concepts used to diagnose and measure the cohesion dimension are emotional bonding, boundaries, coalitions, and time, space, friends, decision-making, interests and recreation. Family flexibility is defined as: the ability of a marital or family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress. Specific concepts used to diagnose and measure the adaptability dimension are family power (assertiveness, control, discipline), negotiation style, role relationships and relationship rules.

The Circumplex Model has four levels of family cohesion ranging from extreme low cohesion to extreme high cohesion: disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed. The two moderate or balanced levels of cohesion have been labeled separated and connected. There are also four levels of family adaptability ranging from extreme low adaptability (change) to extreme high

adaptability (change): rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic. The two moderate or balanced levels of adaptability have been labeled flexible and. For each dimension, the balanced levels (two moderate levels) are hypothesized to be most viable for healthy family functioning and the extreme areas are generally seen as more problematic for couples and families over time.

Combining the four levels of the cohesion and four levels of the adaptability dimensions identifies sixteen distinct types of family systems. Four of these 16 types are moderate on both the cohesion and adaptability dimensions (balanced types). Eight types are extreme on one dimension and moderate on the other (mid-range types) and four types are extreme on both dimensions (extreme types)” (p. 2)

The Family Circumplex Model has been used in several studies and offers norms for couples with children. An assumption of heterosexuality is made with this model (nothing indicates lesbian/gay couples) thereby offering a large database of heterosexual couples with children. These norms will be used to compare the data in the present study with parenting styles.

The normative data used for comparison on the Olson scales are a result of a study done in 1981 of 1124 couples from 31 states. There was an average of three children per family and nearly all the families surveyed were Lutheran church members. The families were predominately white, middle income couples in their first marriages; 14% had been married five years or less; 13% had been married between six and ten years and 11% had been married between 11 and 15 years. The remaining couples (approximately 62%) had been married sixteen years or more. Of the women interviewed, 32% had no jobs and

32% were employed full time.

### Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)

The current study measured parenting styles through the parenting version of PAQ. PAQ is a 30-item questionnaire developed of the purpose of measuring Baumrind's permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parental authority types.

### ENRICH

ENRICH is a synthesis of relationship issues reported by couples into three levels: personal issues, interpersonal issues and external issues. In a sample of 1344 the total scale had a reliability of .74. Two subscales of the ENRICH inventory were used, family and friends and relationship satisfaction.

Family and Friends, a ten-item subscale assesses feelings and concerns about relationships with relatives, in-laws, and friends. Items reflect the attitudes of friends and relatives toward the marriage, expectations regarding the amount of time spent with family and friends, comfort felt in the presence of each other's family and friends, and perceptions of the situation as either potentially conflicted or satisfactory. Internal reliability was measured at .72 and test-retest reliability was measured at .82.

Relationship Satisfaction, a ten-item subscale provides an overview of satisfaction within a relationship. These areas include the major categories of the ENRICH scale: i.e., personality, financial concerns, role responsibilities, and parental responsibilities. The test-retest reliability for this measurement is .86 and the Alpha reliability was .81.

### Acquiring Social Support

Acquiring Social Support is a subscale of F-Copes and consists of nine items that measure a family's ability to actively engage in acquiring support from relatives, friends, neighbors, and extended family. Cronbach's Alpha for this scale was .83 and the test-retest reliability was .78.

### Quality of Life

This scale measures levels of satisfaction within individuals' life experiences. Each subscale focuses on a particular facet of the life experience such as marriage and family life, friends, home and housing, education, employment, religion, etc. The test-retest reliability for the Neighborhood and Community scale (6 questions) was .50.

### Disclosure Scale

This scale is an adaptation of one used by Hare (1994) in her article, "Concerns and Issues Faced by Families Headed by a Lesbian Couple". This scale was a part of the demographic questionnaire and included both an individual disclosure scale and a couple disclosure scale.

## Procedure

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board (#HE-98-0321) the search began for qualified participants for this study. The sample was solicited in a number of different ways which included snowballing (i.e., asking people if they knew of participants for the study), advertising in a local women's newsletter, attending a



women's retreat and attendance at various Gay/Lesbian pride activities during Gay Pride month.

Participants had to be in a committed relationship with at least one member who had brought a child into the current relationship from a previous relationship (i.e., a previous heterosexual relationship). All children were born to at least one of the women from a previous heterosexual relationship and at least one child was currently living with his/her mother. Six couples were solicited at a women's retreat, two couples were "snowball" referrals from friends; three participants were solicited at various Gay/Lesbian Pride activities and five couples were solicited from the women's newsletter. One woman was interviewed but her partner did not follow up for the other half of the interview, which invalidated using those participants. Another couple broke up prior to the interview process and two additional couples were solicited through the newsletter but did not follow up with the interviewer.

The women willing to take part in the research were requested to use a pseudonym with the researcher to insure as much confidentiality as possible. Names, addresses, and phone numbers were destroyed immediately after contact with the participants to insure confidentiality. Participants were asked to participate in three areas: the completion of a questionnaire packet, a personal interview with each individual and an interview with the couple. All the participants chose to be interviewed during a block of time when the couple was together. While one was interviewed, the other retreated to a private location to fill out the packet of survey questions described earlier in this chapter.

Not all the data was complete, including one woman who chose not to answer the

PAQ, F-Copes and relationship satisfaction scales. She was removed and not included in the tabulations of these three measures, which brings the possible N for these scales to 31. Other missing data was dealt with by taking a total average of the missing question and inserting that score.

With permission from the participants, all interviews were audiotaped and a detailed transcript was made of each interview. Upon completion of all research, the audiotapes will be destroyed. Twelve interviews were held at a women's retreat, one in the interviewers home and the remaining eighteen interviews occurred in the participants home. The interviews consisted of an interview with each participant and with each couple. The individual times varied from 30 minutes to over two hours. The average individual interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

As suggested by Langenbrunner and Blanton (1993), the following four step process was utilized: (1) transcribing each of the tape-recorded interviews; (2) reading and rereading the transcripts and extracting significant statements that pertain to the investigated phenomena; (3) formulating meaning by interpreting the subjects narrative about the phenomenon, attaching meaning to their statements, and (4) clustering themes which involves grouping statements dealing with the same issue across subject transcripts.

Confidentiality of the participants was critical due to the subject matter of the interviews and the potential for custody concerns, employment concerns, or accidental disclosure of the participants' lesbianism. The process of participant protection was explained to the participant. The IRB agreed the greatest protection for the participants was to have the women read the consent form and verbally agree with its' contents.

Therefore, no written record exists of who participated in the research. Further safe guards included the use of pseudonyms – no real names are used in the write up of this study. The researcher conducted the interviews and the researcher transcribed the tapes, which prevented outside assistants misusing the information gathered.

## Operational Hypothesis

### Hypothesis One

The parenting styles of lesbian-headed households are similar to those of heterosexually headed households. As parenting styles are a typology, this will be a comparison of the styles Baumrind defines as preferred.

### Hypothesis Two

Lesbian-headed households with children will be similar to heterosexual couple households with children on the variables of family cohesion, family adaptability and family satisfaction. Z-tests were used to determine if the LHH is similar to the national norms. The Circumplex Model graphically depicted the results.

### Hypothesis Three

A supportive family of origin will reflect positively on family parenting styles in lesbian-headed families. Means and z scores were used to assess this hypothesis. When appropriate, comparisons were made with available national norms. Crosstabulations were used to compare the family of origin and parenting styles.

#### Hypothesis Four

A supportive social environment (parent's friends, school system, state/local government, teachers, and neighbors) will aid positively in the parenting styles of lesbian-headed families. Z-tests were used to compare the different measures to the national norms. Means were also reviewed and crosstabulations were used to assess the variables of the measures on parenting styles.

#### Hypothesis Five

Partners who are "out" (disclosure) as individuals and as a couple will have a positive relationship and be democratic (authoritative) in their parenting style than those who are not "out". Mean scores were used to rank the results of these scales. Crosstabulations were used to compare disclosure with parenting style.

#### Rationale for Statistical Analysis

Z-test. This analysis uses the mean, standard deviation, and sample size to calculate the estimated differences between two samples. The z-test will be used to assess the difference between national norms and results from the current study.

Cross Tabulations allows a percentage comparison between the dependent variable and the selected independent variable.

#### Limitations

Limitations in the study are primarily the sample size and the non-randomness of

the sample. This prevents the study from being generalizable. This study would have been enhanced if more interviews could have been completed especially with minority participants.

Geographical location is a consideration as participants from this southern state could be different from lesbians in other parts of the country. For this study lesbians may not feel as free to disclose information as much as they would if they were from a city such as San Francisco.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact the social environment has on Lesbian-headed Households (LHH) who are raising children. This study was designed to include both quantitative and qualitative measures in the analysis and description of the participants. Frequency analysis was conducted to examine the characteristics of the sample. Z-test ( $p \leq .05$ ; two tailed test) and crosstabulation were conducted to assess differences between the various instruments and national norms. In-depth interviews were used to explore the participant's ideas, perceptions, and realities regarding lesbian-headed households and parenting styles and selected passages were used to support these hypotheses.

#### Characteristics of Participants

The sample consisted of 32 women (16 couples) self identified as lesbian, all of whom lived in a state located in the southwestern part of the United States. Additional demographic characteristics are located in Table 1. The mean age for the women was 36; the youngest woman interviewed was 23 while the eldest was 52. The average income of the women was \$38, 765 but incomes varied from \$1,000 (student) to \$75,000; 30 of the

participants had a job or qualified for financial aid; two were unemployed. The average time in their relationship was four years, with one year being the least time together and 14 years being the maximum. The 32 participants had 40 children; 23 females and 17 males. The children ranged in age from three to twenty-five.

Table 1

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Variable	f	%
Current Residence		
Farm	2	6.3
non farm non rural residence	3	9.4
large town	9	28.1
small city	13	40.6
large city	5	15.6
Respondents Education		
Professional School	7	21.9
College Graduate	8	28.1
Some College	13	40.6
Completed High School	2	6.3
Some High School	1	3.1
Respondents Mother's Education		
Professional School	2	6.3
College Graduate	3	9.4
Some College	10	31.3
Completed High School	9	40.6
Some High School	3	3.1
Grade school	1	3.1
Respondents Father's Education		
Professional School	7	21.9
College Graduate	6	18.8
Some College	6	18.8
Completed High School	9	28.1
Some High School	3	9.4
Grade school	1	3.1

Continue table on next page

Table 1 continued

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White	28	87.5
Other	2	6.3
African American	1	3.1
Asian American	1	3.1
Religious Preference		
Protestant	9	28.1
Religious Scientist	4	12.5
Nondenominational	4	12.5
No Preference	4	12.5
Not Listed	4	9.4
WICCA	3	9.4
Agnostic	2	6.3
Universal Community Church	2	6.3
Catholic	1	3.1
Religiosity		
Very Religious	11	34.4
Somewhat Religious	13	40.6
Religion is not important to me	7	21.9
I am quite opposed to religion	1	3.1
Job		
Professional	13	40.6
Sales, Technician, Clerical	4	12.5
Student	4	12.5
Other	4	12.5
Skilled construction, trade	2	6.3
Unemployed	2	6.3
Laborer, factory worker	1	3.1
General service employee	1	3.1

## Findings

Hypothesis One: *Lesbian-headed households with children will be similar to heterosexual couple households with children on the variables of family cohesion, family*



*adaptability and family satisfaction.* The Family Circumplex Model was used to evaluate and summarize the characteristics of lesbian parents and then compare these to the national norm data. Although not specifically stated, the assumption is made that the national data provided by Olson, et al. (1992) consists of heterosexual households as the writing of the material refers to men and women as the surveyed parents. The Circumplex Model, which was measured using FACES II, measured the dimensions of cohesion and adaptability. Family cohesion (togetherness) assessed the degree to which family members are separated from or connected to their family while family adaptability had to do with the extent to which the family system is flexible and able to change. This 30-item scale contains 16 cohesion items and 14 adaptability items. Table 3 compares the national norms with the current study on each of the levels. There are two items for each of the eight concepts for cohesion: emotional bonding, family boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, decision making and interests and recreation. Six concepts are related to the adaptability dimension: leadership, assertiveness, discipline, negotiations, roles and rules.

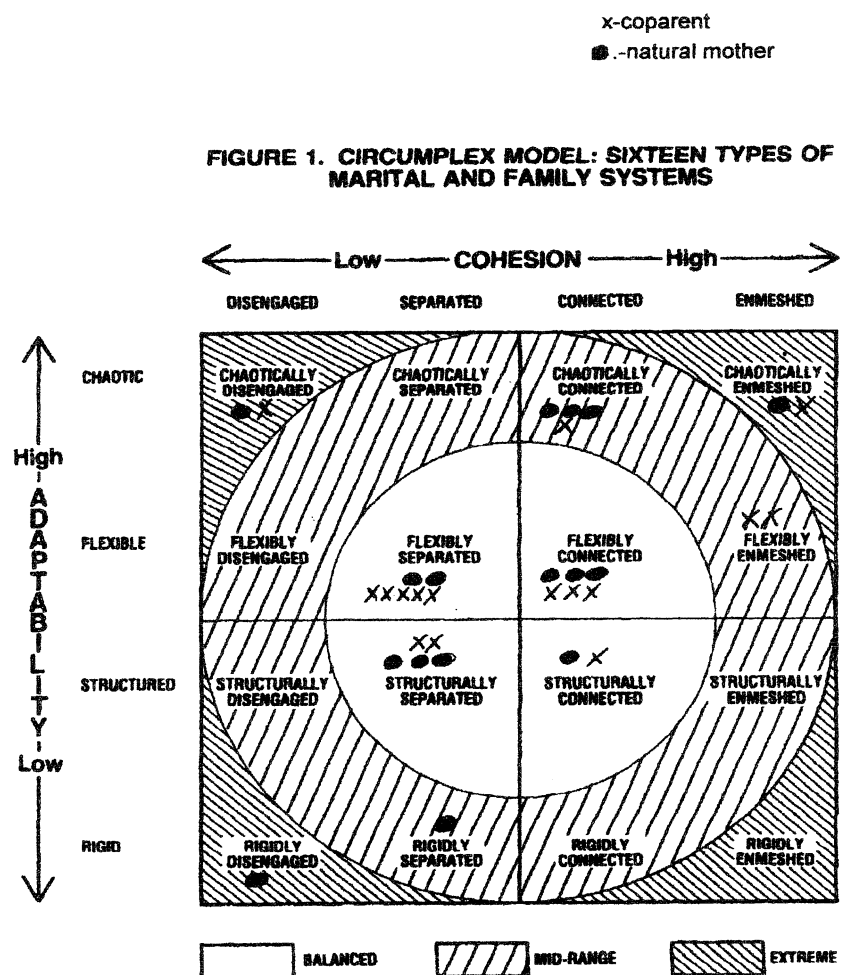
The z-test formula, using mean, standard deviation and sample size was used to calculate the estimated differences between LHH and the heterosexual norms (Table 2).

Table 2

FACES II MEANS

	Current Study (n=32)	SD	Heterosexual Norm (N=2280)	SD	Z-test
Adaptability	M =52.09	5.43	M =49.9	6.6	2.22*
Cohesion	M =65.28	7.84	M =64.9	8.4	.25

The cohesion scores of the LHH do not show any significant difference with the heterosexual scores. Adaptability however does show a significant difference indicating lesbians, more than heterosexuals, are adept of handling situations defined by the characteristics of the adaptability dimension (leadership, assertiveness, discipline, negotiations, roles and rules). Figure 1 plots the individual reports of family adaptability and cohesion (FACES).



In her study of 104 lesbians (52 couples), Zacks et al. (1988) found a similar result with adaptability among lesbian couples. The result may be indicative of lesbians having to question traditional values and assumptions. "Once having opted to live with another woman, she has the freedom in her relationship to develop new nonsexist rules, to reject traditional heterosexual roles, and to develop extremely flexible structures with regard to power and control" (Zacks, et al., p. 479). Gender roles may impact this significant finding as we continue to place traditional definitions on individual differences. For instance Blumstein & Schwartz (1983) surveyed 300 couples, 90 of whom were lesbians. They found, in regard to adaptability, the lesbian couples ranked equality and independence in daily chores and relationships as important, however the heterosexual couples adopted the traditional role assignments in male-female relationships. In summary, it is important to note the definitions placed on many of our daily interactions may be gender biased which impacts negatively on the preferred ways of doing things by women.

The Family Satisfaction Inventory consists of 14 items designed to measure family satisfaction on the dimensions of family cohesion and family adaptability. This measure directly assesses satisfaction with family. Table 3 provides information based on the current participants as well as the national means provided by Olson, et al. (1992). In both cases the results are based on the parental viewpoint of cohesion and adaptability. As this scale is unidimensional, Olson, et al. (1992) recommends the total score to be the most valid for research projects however family cohesion and family adaptability are valid in cases of exploratory research.

Table 3

## FAMILY SATISFACTION

	Lesbian Couples(n=32)	SD	Heterosexual Couples (N=2280)	SD	z-test
Total Score	M =52.50	9.18	M = 35.3	9.18	6.18*

A z-test was used to compare the national sample of family satisfaction participants and the current sample. There is a significant difference between the means indicating the lesbian couples are more satisfied than the heterosexual sample with family satisfaction. Satisfaction based on family cohesion considers the issues of emotional bonding, family boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, decision-making and interests and recreation. Satisfaction is based on family adaptability and considers issues of assertiveness, control, discipline, negotiation, roles, and rules.

Olson et al. (1992) stresses “it is less important where the family is located in the (Circumplex) model than how they feel about their levels of cohesion and adaptability” (p. 21). Table 4 demonstrates the frequencies of each level of the Circumplex. Approximately 15% of the participants are on the extreme corners of the model. While this is not a large number of the subjects (5), Olson, et al. stresses this may be satisfactory with the couple at this point of their development. The significant difference on this scale between heterosexuals and LHH defines for us the higher satisfaction level of the LHH participants with their families at this stage of their life.

Family Strengths is a measure which considers family pride and accord. Pride refers to loyalty, trust, and respect while accord looks at a family’s sense of competency. The national female norms are used as a comparison to the current participants. As can

be seen, there is no significant difference as provided by the z-test statistic (Table 5) between the “wife” (as defined by Olson, et al., 1992, p. 69) and the members of the LHH.

Table 4

COMPARISON (BY %) OF LESBIAN AND HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES ON THE  
16 FAMILY TYPES OF THE CIRCUMPLEX MODEL

Adaptability	Disengaged	Cohesion		
		Separated	Connected	Enmeshed
Chaotic				
Lesbian	6.2	0	12.5	6.2
Heterosexual	3.0	4.7	5.4	2.9
Flexible				
Lesbian	0	21.8	18.7	6.2
Heterosexual	4.7	10.0	11.3	3.5
Structured				
Lesbian	0	15.6	6.2	0
Heterosexual	5.8	13.3	14.1	5.0
Rigid				
Lesbian	3.1	3.1	0	0
Heterosexual	2.9	5.7	5.7	2.1

These results suggest both heterosexual and LHH households are similar in regard to their perceptions of the pride, loyalty, trust, respect and competency of their respective families.

The Relationship Satisfaction category of ENRICH consists of 10 questions which offer a “global measure of satisfaction” (Olson, et al., 1992, p. 47) in the area of the couple’s relationship. These items include the major categories of ENRICH such as personality characteristics, role responsibilities, and communication. A z-test was performed to compare the national norms with the current sample (Table 6). This

suggests the LHH of the current study are more satisfied with their relationships than is the heterosexual sample. This may indicate, as women, lesbians place a higher value on relationships than men traditionally do (Zacks, et al. 1988), however it is important to recall the mean length of time together for the LHH was four years versus the heterosexual couples in which over 62% had been together more than sixteen years.

Table 5

## FAMILY STRENGTHS

Heterosexual Female Norm	Current Study	Test Statistic
N = 1280	n = 31	
M = 47.01	M = 47.39	z = 0.35
SD = 6.88	SD = 5.90	

Table 6

## RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Heterosexual Norm	Current Study	z-test
N = 1344	n = 32	
M = 37.31	M = 41.97	z=5.45*
SD = 6.45	SD = 4.66	

Of the four scales utilized for this hypothesis, significant differences were noted for relationship satisfaction and adaptability but not cohesion or family strengths. Therefore, this hypothesis is not supported by the quantitative data but does suggest potential questions in regard to gender issues.

Hypothesis Two - *The parenting styles of a lesbian-headed household will be similar to those of heterosexually headed households.* Parenting style was assessed on a thirty-item questionnaire; parents rated, on 5-point Likert scales, statements based on

Baumrind's (1966) definitions of permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parental prototypes (Buri, 1991). Items pertaining to the rejecting-neglecting parenting were not included in the scale and therefore this parenting style was not examined.

As is evident in Table 7, the preferred parenting method among lesbian parents is the authoritative style (M=42.6). All of the women rated authoritative as their preferred style of parenting. This supports the point that these lesbian mothers, whether the natural mother or the coparent have characteristics that tend to be controlling but flexible, demanding but rational, warm, receptive to communication, and value discipline, self reliance and uniqueness. The authoritative parenting style encourages children who are self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative, content and cooperative. Baumrind (1966) believes the authoritative style appears to be most effective for developing social responsibility and independence. Although the child is allowed input into the decision making process, limits are set by the parents.

Table 7

PARENTING STYLES

Parenting Style	N	Mean	SD
Authoritative	31	42.32	4.11
Authoritarian	31	25.74	7.10
Permissive	31	26.06	5.96

\*one of the 32 respondents chose not to participate in this questionnaire and was removed prior to analysis

Berns (1997) stresses the typology parenting style relates to a preferred method but that we all fall into different categories depending on the situation. While they will typically revert to their authoritative style, both authoritarian (M=25.74) and permissive (M=26.06) tendencies will appear. Thus at times the lesbian parents would show

tendencies of being permissive, noncontrolling, non demanding, and accepting of the child's impulses while still being consultative with the child on policies. The authoritarian characteristics of parenting include strict control, an absolute standard in evaluating a child's behavior and attitudes, a value toward obedience, respect for authority and tradition.

A disadvantage with the PAQ instrument is it did not include a social desirability score for the participants. Such a score aids the researcher in understanding if the participants are answering the questions as honestly as they can or if they may be answering the question as they believe it should be answered. This is not to suggest the participants are lying, rather they are seeking the answer that fits best into the socially desired response or the response they believe the researcher is attempting to find. The information gathered in the interviews does not consistently support the PAQ score and leads to questioning the results.

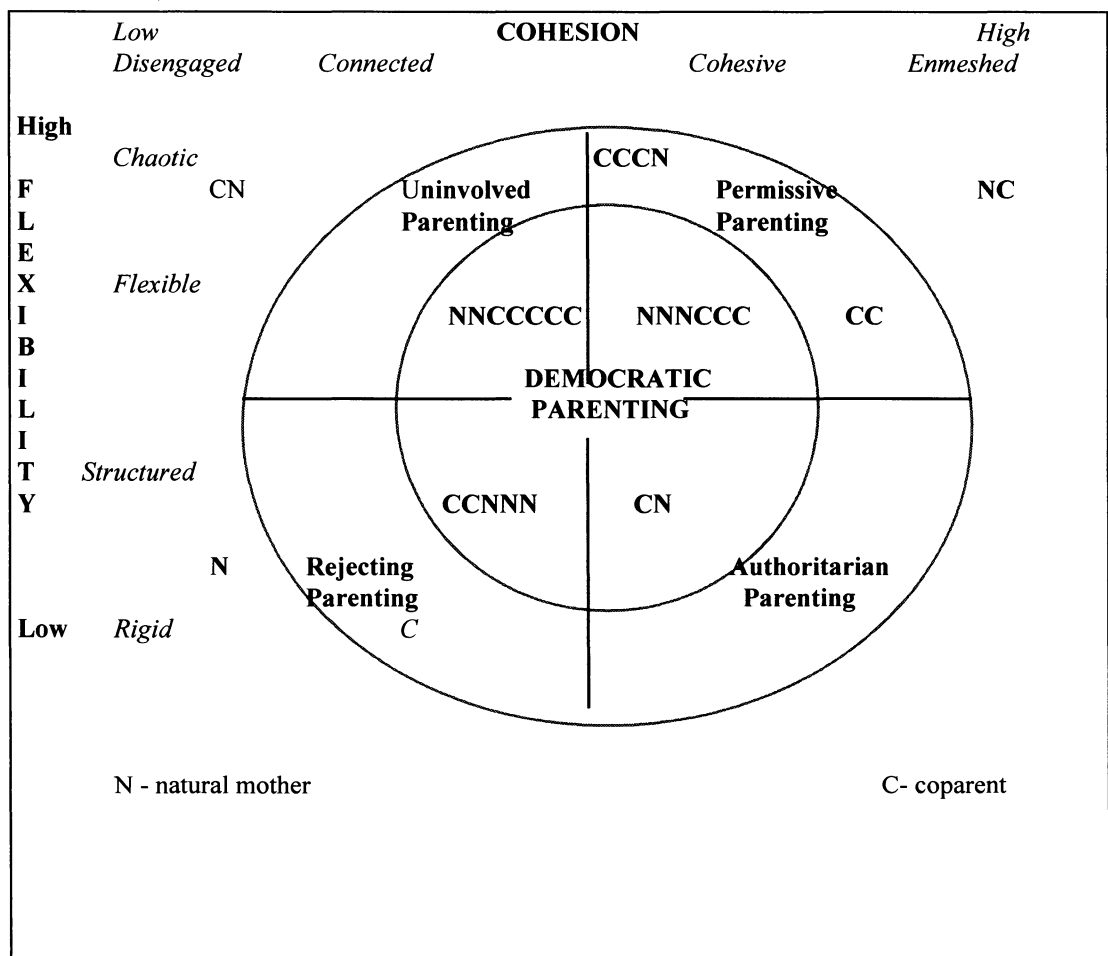
FACES II did account for social desirability and offers an alternative for studying Parenting Styles based on Baumrind's typology. Much of parent-child research has focused on the concept of parental warmth, which is closely related to the cohesion dimension of the Circumplex Model and on the concept of parental power, which is related to the flexibility dimension of the Model (Olson & DeFrain, 1994, figure 2). Therefore it is suggested the authoritative (democratic) style of parenting falls into the balanced area of the Circumplex model; the permissive style falls into the very high chaotic (adaptable) and enmeshed (cohesive) dimension while authoritarian will be found in the high dimensions of enmeshed and rigid. Baumrind's fourth type which was not included in the PAQ instrument is a rejecting style that reflects in very low cohesion and



flexibility. Olson and DeFrain (1994) discuss an uninvolved style, often considered a part of the rejecting style but located in low cohesion and high in flexibility. Figure 2 demonstrates the results of the FACES II instrument and the Circumplex Model (see hypothesis 1 as it applies to parenting styles).

Figure 2

PARENTING STYLES AND THE CIRCUMPLEX MODEL



This model does not support the PAQ results although it does demonstrate all but five individuals fall into the democratic parenting dimension (either in the balanced or the mid-range area). Three individuals would be considered uninvolved or rejecting and two

individuals fall in the permissive style. It is important to note that lesbians scored significantly higher in the Family Satisfaction scale in hypothesis one suggesting the five “outliers” on this comparison of the Circumplex Model and Parenting Styles is not deviant for that particular household. Therefore the PAQ findings can not be ruled out.

The family of origin plays a role in developing the individual members of a family and according to these participants significantly influenced them on the type of parent they are today. The narrative question asked of these women was “How has your immediate family influenced your method of parenting?” The response to the question on the direct impact their family of origin had on their way of parenting was analyzed from the microsystem perspective. Each question was coded according to a negative (not a positive impact) or a positive (a positive impact). Most women (52%) believed their family of origin had a negative impact while 16% thought it was a positive influence. In their opinion 32% of the participants believed the family of origin had both a positive and negative impact (typically positive with one member of the family of origin or negative with another member) on their parenting.

Who is categorized as a member of the family of origin was left up to each participant. Two notable comments came from Shirley who placed her parents as having a negative impact on her yet she recalls: “but my great aunt, who I love to death, she, she was always loving unconditionally.” Similar is Kendra who despite the strictness of her parents, found her grandmother to be the one who impacted her parenting style “she’s not real quick to pass judgment and she really wasn’t, she’s not a disciplinarian, but I wouldn’t say she’d let you run all over the place either, she was just more laid back about letting you make decisions.” All other participants referred to their mother, their father,

or both parents as their family of origin.

When describing the negative impact their parents had on them, Chris, Stephanie, Kasey, Suzanne and Laura all stated they are doing the opposite of what their parents did or that their parents “they taught me what not to do (chuckle). Mom was just not the best parent,... her parents weren’t the best of parents either so, it’s kind of like gradually, you know. I’ve learned what not to do.”

Inconsistencies, especially for discipline were reasons Kelly, Kay, Claire, and Suzanne noted they wanted to parent differently from their role models. Denise remarks: “Personally, I kind of had to build on my own parenting skills because I was not raised very well. The rules would always change this way or the other so I kind of built my own skills. I’ve integrated some of my own you know what I think should be, how a child should be raised they should have their own, you know decisions but they shouldn’t be allowed to rule, you know (chuckle).”

The individual who seems to sum up the impact of role modeling by the family of origin on parenting styles comes from Cathy who reflectively states: “ there’s no way parents can’t affect your relationship or your parenting styles, it’s impossible. I believe everybody falls into ritualistic things they have learned from their own cultural and ethnic background, I don’t think, I think it’s unavoidable. I’ve got this big thing about fair, cause my brother was sick all the time and he, and no matter what, I was always wrong, so I go out of my way to see both sides of the story before I make a decision and put my proverbial thing down on the ground, whatever that thing is, judgment gavel, and that, sometimes I do it to the point that it’s so stupid it’s ridiculous because sometimes there’s just no winner and instead of and, and instead of always assuming that someone’s always

right, like my mom did.”

The results for this hypothesis demonstrate lesbian parenting and heterosexual parenting are similar. Although the PAQ instrument clearly shows the LHH are 100% authoritative in their parenting style the results are not confirmed with the Circumplex Model of parenting styles. Narrative comments, as with the Circumplex model, question the PAQ results. It would appear therefore, LHH and Heterosexual households are similar in their parenting styles.

Hypothesis three: *A supportive family of origin will reflect positively on family parenting styles in lesbian-headed families.* Three measurements were used to explore this hypothesis. The Family/Friends scale from the ENRICH inventory, the Acquiring Social Support scale from the Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales (F-COPES) and the Family of Origin scale from the PREPARE (Olson, Fournier & Druckman, 1986) instrument.

Table 8 demonstrates the mean comparisons of the current sample with the national heterosexual norm totals for each scale. A z-test was run to compare the means of the current samples with the national norms of this same instrument. There were no significant differences of the current sample with the heterosexual sample found on any of the three instruments used for this hypothesis.

To further test this hypothesis, a 2x2 crosstabulation was performed on each independent variable on the dependent variable (parenting styles). The Circumplex Model as explained in Hypothesis two is consistent with Baumrind’s parenting styles. This data was gathered by creating ordinal variables of the Circumplex Model and each instrument. The Circumplex Model was divided into (1) unbalanced (mid-range and

extreme scores) and (2) balanced categories. As each instrument utilized a Likert-scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4= Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree) a median split was used to divide the data into (1) low scores and (2) high scores. The crosstabulations procedure was then run on the SPSS with each independent variable.

Table 8  
CURRENT SAMPLE MEANS COMPARED TO  
NATIONAL HETEROSEXUAL NORMED DATA

Family & Friends	Mean	SD	Test Statistic
LHH (n= 32)	37.70	4.2	$z=.50$
Heterosexual Female (N=1344)	38.55	5.90	
Acquiring Social Support			
LHH (n=31)	25.61	7.10	$z =1.68$
Heterosexual Female (N=1295)	27.813	6.51	

The Family and Friends subscale of the ENRICH instrument (Table 9), consists of 10 questions designed to assess the attitudes of friends and relatives toward the lesbian relationship. Items consider expectations of the time spent with family and friends and the comfort level of the individual women in the presence of their partner's family and friends. The perceptions of the respondent's view of the situation as either potentially conflicted or satisfactory is also examined. Six items concerning family (1,2,3,4,7 and 8) were used to explore this hypotheses. Of these, items 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8 were reversed score.

The crosstabulation results (Table 10) demonstrated the family members of the LHH had a positive effect on parenting styles. Sixty percent of those with the democratic

(balanced) style of parenting indicated the participants felt positive about their family's impact on them.

Table 9

## FAMILY &amp; FRIENDS (ENRICH)

(n=32)	Mean	SD
*1. Some friends or relatives do things that create tension in our relationship	2.72	1.51
2. We spend the right amount of time with our relatives and friends	3.75	.92
*3. I think my partner is too involved with or influenced by her family	4.19	1.01
*4. I do not enjoy spending time with some of our relatives or in-laws	3.13	1.31
5. My partner likes all my friends	3.19	1.15
*6. Sometimes my partner spends too much time with friends	4.44	.76
*7. I feel that our parents expect too much attention or assistance from us	4.34	.87
*8. I feel that our parents create problems in our marriage	3.91	1.42
9. I really enjoy being with all my partner's friends	3.75	1.08
10. It does not bother me when my partner spends time with friends of the opposite sex	4.16	1.04
Family and Friends Total Score	37.56	4.36

\*indicates a reverse score item

The opposite is true for the non-balanced responses where 58% of the respondents show a low response from their family members. This hypothesis is supported with these figures. The more positive the scores, the more likely a lesbian parent will be a democratic parent, the lower the scores, the more likely a lesbian parent will be a parenting style different from democratic.

Table 10

## FRIENDS AND FAMILY (FAMILY)

	Low Family Impact	High Family Impact	Total
Other Parenting Styles	7	5	12
Percent	58.3	41.7	100
Democratic	8	12	20
Percent	40	60	100
Total	15	17	32
Percent	46.9	53.1	100

F-Copes was created to identify effective problem solving and behavioral strategies utilized by families in difficult or problematic situations. The Acquiring Social Skills subscale (Table 11) considered the interaction of the family to social environment or the ways in which the LHH externally handles problems or demands that emerged outside its boundaries but affected the family unit and its members. This subscale, consisting of nine items, measured a family's ability to actively engage in acquiring support from relatives, friends, neighbors, and extended family. Four items concerning family (1,3,7, and 8) were used to examine this hypothesis.

The crosstabulation information demonstrates the participants rated their families as supportive or someone the lesbians would seek out for help. Higher (57.9%) scores were assessed for the democratic style of parenting while lower scores (66.7%) were given for those with parenting styles other than the democratic style (Table 12).

Table 11

## ACQUIRING SOCIAL SUPPORT (FAMILY)

n=31	Mean	SD
1. Sharing our difficulties with relatives	2.65	1.31
2. Seeking encouragement and support from friends	3.42	1.23
3. Seeking advice from relatives (grandparents, etc)	2.61	1.31
4. Receiving gifts and favors from neighbors (e.g. food, taking in mail, etc.	3.26	1.24
5. Asking neighbors for assistance	2.52	1.31
6. Sharing concerns with close friends	3.90	.87
7. Doing things with relatives (get-togethers, dinners, etc)	3.06	1.18
8. Asking relatives how they feel about problems we face	2.48	1.23
9. Sharing problems with neighbors	1.71	1.01
Acquiring Social Support Response Total	25.61	7.10

The hypothesis is supported with these figures. The high scores indicate the

democratic parent is more likely than the lower scores (other parenting style parents) to seek social support from their families.

Table 12

## ACQUIRING SOCIAL SUPPORT (FAMILY)

	Low Social Support	High Social Support	Total
Other Parenting Styles	6	4	10
Percent	66.7	33.3	100
Democratic	8	11	19
Percent	42.1	57.9	100
Total	16	15	31
Percent	51.6	48.4	100

The family of origin scale (Table 13) considers the relationship the participants had with their family members as they were growing up. In addition to a total score, (Table 14) the Family of Origin also breaks down into the dimensions of adaptability and cohesion (Table 15).

Table 13

## FAMILY OF ORIGIN INSTRUMENT

n = 32	Mean	SD
1. Family members asked each other for help	2.50	1.22
2. Different persons acted as leaders in our family	2.50	1.46
3. Family members liked to spend free time with each other	2.22	1.24
4. Our family changed its way of handling tasks	2.06	.95
5. Family members felt very close to each other	2.34	1.29
6. Rules changed in our family	2.34	1.23
7. Family members consulted other family members on their decisions	2.25	1.19
8. We shifted household responsibilities from person to person	1.97	1.09
9. Family togetherness was very important	2.81	1.33
10. It was hard to identify the leader(s) in our family	1.87	1.09
Family of Origin Total Score	22.88	6.63



The Crosstabulations for the adaptability and cohesion subscales of the Family of Origin have similar scores. The difference is the non-balanced portion of the cohesion scale. These women recalled from memory that their family of origins responded to the positive even if there might be a negative outcome for parenting style. The Cross Tabulations for the adaptability scale indicated an even 50/50 split among the 2x2 matrix.

Table 14  
FAMILY OF ORIGIN

FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Low	High	Total
Other Parenting Styles	6	6	12
Percent	50	50	100
Democratic	9	11	20
Percent	45	55	100
Total	15	17	32
Percent	46.9	53.1	100

Table 15  
FAMILY OF ORIGIN - ADAPTABILITY AND COHESION

Cohesion in parenthesis	Low	High	Total
Other Parenting Styles	6 (5)	6 (7)	12
Percent	50 (41.7)	50 (58.3)	100
Democratic	10 (10)	10 (10)	20
Percent	50 (50)	50 (50)	100 (100)
Total	16 (15)	16 (17)	32 (32)
Percent	50 (46.9)	50 (53.1)	100 (100)

Two questions were asked in the demographic section about the natural father. The first was whether the natural father was involved and at what level he was involved in parenting the child(ren); the second question dealt with how much the father was involved. One individual did not answer the question. Of the 31 remaining mothers 53% said the natural father was involved in some way with the child(ren) while 44% indicated

the natural father was not involved with the child(ren). Sixty five percent of these mothers reported the fathers had little to very little contact with the child(ren); 15% indicated an average involvement and 9% felt the father was very involved.

The narrative response to the question “what is the current relationship with the biological father?” offered great insight into how the women’s relationship and the relationship with the children with the biological father affects parenting. Some women still hid their lesbianism from the father for fear of losing custody of their children. Others acknowledged the only true involvement was financial support and others noted the anger their children were still feeling over the divorce or separation from the natural father. When considering the mesosystem perspective it is not surprising the impact many of these factors have on parenting styles. Fear of being “outed” and losing custody, financial concerns and “picking up the pieces” after a visit with the father all impact parenting. All are issues the lesbian couples do not have direct control over but they are issues that directly affect their parenting styles. Dealing with the frustration, anger or complacency about their fathers will affect the entire household. JoAnn states “I think a lot of it has to do, my middle child is really, really angry at her father and when she gets angry at him, we all catch hell and I mean... we will have to literally sit her down and say look, we know you’re mad at him, don’t take it out on us.”

It is interesting to note a few women were fortunate to have an average to above average relationship with the father even after a divorce and the revelation to the father of the mother’s lesbianism. One of the most positive relationships is described by Cherry as “great. (he) is very respectful of my relationship with ... we have joint custody, he pays child support and um, we go down once a month to see him. We’ve even gone down and

spent the night at his house so and we have holidays together when we can.” Cherry and her families’ positive relationship with the natural father however represents only 9% of the women’s responses.

Time with the children, or an erratic use of time with the children was a recurring theme for several of the women. Laura repeated a story involving the daughter’s perception of her father, “he was supposed to call her Thursday night about coming to visit on Saturday and I had, had just seen her and I said you do remember that your dad’s supposed to call about coming this weekend and she went, oh yeah I penciled him in with very real awareness that he probably wouldn’t follow through and he didn’t, so he didn’t come and she made some comment to my partner about how tough it was raising a, a father (chuckle), just, so, it’s been very um, erratic, he doesn’t make any decisions about her, he doesn’t see her on any regular basis...”

There are a few examples of fathers signing rights away or just not caring enough to keep in contact. Kasey believes she was lucky as “we had the children out of wedlock, he never claimed them to be his children, I don’t have him anywhere on the birth certificates, it was just one of those freaky things, no one ever asked, no one ever mentioned, so, he went his way and I went mine and that’s it, no child support no contact, no nothing.” Kendra says “she’s seen him twice in the last year, she did not choose to live with him so ..., he told her that he would not buy her a Christmas or birthday presents anymore because she does not live with him so he’s not obligated to do that, he’s made the bed and you know his relationship with her, I finally got to the point where I don’t feel like I’m responsible to help them mend that relationship but I do feel like I’m responsible to help her mend her anger and deal with that however she needs to.”

The role the biological father takes in raising/not raising his children crosses many of the gender lines faced by all women, not just lesbian. Many of the examples presented thus far could be from a heterosexual home just as easily as they could come from LHH stories. What can not be denied however is the threat made regarding sexual orientation and issues over custody. Stephanie angrily recounted, “when he’s not happy with me about something else he’ll call and tell me I’d better get an attorney and he’s going to come and get me and all my pussy eating friends.”

Joan had a particularly interesting story. Upon their divorce her ex received custody of both daughters and moved to a different state. After problems with the oldest daughter however he brought her back to her mother and “dropped her off and my daughter said I did not once let my dad see one tear fall and she said daddy, are you going to write me and he says, yeah, I’ll be in touch, he didn’t hug her, he didn’t say I love you, she opened the door to the car, got out and didn’t look back, never seen him since. No acknowledgment on birthdays, she’s dead to him.”

The family of origin has an impact on parenting styles as is evidenced in the quantitative data as well as the qualitative information regarding the question on the natural father’s involvement with the child(ren). The greater the level of involvement with family members, the more positive parenting style will be of the child(ren). This hypothesis was supported as evidenced by the data presented.

Hypothesis four: *A supportive social environment (parent’s friends, school system, state/local government, teachers, and neighbors) will aid positively in the parenting styles of lesbian-headed families.* This hypothesis was measured using the subscales of Family/Friends, Mobilizing Family to Acquire and Accept Help, Acquiring

Social Support and Neighborhood and Community. Four in-depth interview questions were asked.

A z-test was run to compare the means of the current samples with the national norms of the same instruments. There were no significant differences of the current sample with the heterosexual sample found on any of the three instruments used for this hypothesis (Table 16).

Table 16

MEAN COMPARISONS WITH NATIONAL NORMS

Variable	Normative Sample	Current Sample	Test Statistic
Mobilizing Family	N = 730 M = 12.66 SD = 3.312	n = 31 M = 12.94 SD = 3.81	z = 1.08
Family & Friends	N = 1344 M = 37.52 SD = 5.63	n = 32 M = 37.56 SD = 4.36	z = 0.50
Neighborhood & Community	N = 2123 M = 130.28 SD = 17.70	n = 32 M = 127.31 SD = 11.08	z = 1.46
Acquiring Social Support	N = 1295 M = 27.81 SD = 6.51	N = 31 M = 25.61 SD = 7.10	z = 1.68

To test the current study based on this hypothesis, a 2x2 crosstabulation was performed on each independent variable on the dependent variable (parenting styles). The Circumplex Model as explained in Hypothesis two is consistent with Baumrind's parenting styles. This data was gathered by creating ordinal variables of the Circumplex Model and each instrument. The Circumplex model was divided into (1) unbalanced (mid-range and extreme scores) and (2) balanced categories. As each instrument utilized a Likert-scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4=

Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree) a median split was used to divide the data into (1) low scores and (2) high scores. The crosstabulation procedure was run on the SPSS program and the results are listed below along with a summary of each independent variable.

The Family and Friends subscale (see Hypothesis 3) was used and items concerning friends (1, 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10) were used to explore this hypothesis. Of these, items one and six were reversed scored. Crosstabulations was used with the results listed in Table 17.

Table 17

FRIENDS AND FAMILY (FRIENDS)

	Low	High	Total
Other Parenting Styles	7	5	12
Percent	58.3	41.7	100
Democratic	9	11	20
Percent	45	55	100
Total	16	16	32
Percent	100	100	100

The results demonstrate the friends of LHHs do have a positive effect on parenting styles. Fifty-five percent of these participants with the democratic (balanced) style of parenting felt positive about the impact friends have on them. The opposite is true for the non-balanced responses where 58.3% of the respondents indicated a low response regarding their friends. These results support the current hypothesis.

The Acquiring Social Support category of F-Copes consisting of nine items was described in detail in hypothesis three. Items 2, 4, 5, 6 and 9, (see Hypothesis three) which focus on neighbors and friends, were used to explore this hypothesis. Crosstabulations compared the neighbor and friends items with parenting styles as

defined by the Circumplex Model. As reported in Table 18 the results point to a supportive environment provided by friends and neighbors. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents felt positive support from neighbors and friends on the balanced (democratic) parenting style, while 75% report a low response by the participants of the other parenting styles (unbalanced). These results support the current hypothesis.

Table 18

## FRIENDS &amp; NEIGHBORS

	Low Support	High Support	Total
Other Parenting Styles	9	3	12
Percent	75	25	100
Democratic	6	13	19
Percent	31.6	68.4	100
Total	15	16	31
Percentage	48.4	51.6	100

The Quality of Life Inventory measures satisfaction within the realm of individuals' life experiences. The six item neighborhood and community scale (Table 19) of the 40 item Quality of Life Inventory was utilized for this hypothesis.

The crosstabulation of neighborhood and community with parenting styles indicated a total unlike the other measures. Forty percent of the respondents with the balanced or democratic style felt supported by neighborhood and schools while 66.7% of the non-balanced or other parenting styles such as permissive, rejecting and authoritarian felt support (Table 20). These results do not substantiate the current hypothesis.

The final quantitative measure for this hypothesis was Mobilizing Family Support, a subscale of the F-Copes instruments. These items study families' ability to seek out community resources and accept help from others. Table 21 displays the figures; it would

appear the democratic parent is more likely to seek out resources to aid her family than would other parenting styles. These results support this hypothesis.

Table 19

## NEIGHBORHOOD &amp; COMMUNITY INSTRUMENT

N = 32	Mean	SD
1. The schools in your community	3.31	.93
2. The shopping in your community	3.19	1.00
3. The safety in your community	3.66	.79
4. The neighborhood you live in	3.88	.71
5. The recreational facilities (parks, playgrounds, programs, etc.)	3.44	.88
6. The health care services	3.28	1.02
Neighborhood & Community Scale total	20.75	3.75

Table 20

## NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY

	Low Support	High Support	Total
Other Parenting Styles	4	8	12
Percent	33.3	66.7	100
Democratic	12	8	20
Percent	60	40	100
Total	16	16	32
Percent	50	50	100

Table 21

## MOBILIZING FAMILY SUPPORT

	Low	High	Total
Other Parenting Styles	8	4	12
Percent	66.7	33.3	100
Democratic	6	13	19
Percent	31.6	68.4	100
Total	14	17	31
Percent	45.2	54.8	100



Four in-depth questions were asked to solicit additional insight into this hypothesis. This hypothesis as well as the questions asked revolves around the mesosystem perspective. The mesosystem is closely connected to the microsystem but has components that may not directly affect the parent and child. The first question asked was “how supportive are your friends of your family?” Each question was coded according to a negative (not a positive impact) or a positive (a positive impact).

Friends are an important part of the lesbian couples' lives. The first question asked therefore was, “How supportive are your friends of your family?” the majority (84%) indicated they were very important and supportive. The most common responses came from several women who used phrases such as “they're very supportive” and “my friends are all for it.” Upon further examination however the results were found to be somewhat confused as to what the definition of a friend truly is. For example, Suzanne discusses the need to be cautious about who you can and can not trust “Isn't that awful, you only tell people you know will be supportive (chuckle) but that's what we, I guess that's how we protect ourselves because we like what we have, uh, Keisha and I value our relationship a lot and um, we want to protect that so we just kind of let people in who know us and who we can trust.” This turned into the common theme within the responses of these women. Friends are very important and those friends they have allowed into their lives are indeed special people as they are being trusted with, in some cases, a family secret.

Some participants however keep a distance from people they know and as with Kay, believe there are different levels of friendships. She discusses the confusion this can create: “ok, um, I don't have a whole lot of friends really um, because it's hard to, it's

awkward... Uh, so you can have friends on some level, more like an acquaintance where you kind of keep your personal life to yourself ... I have a few friends, they're more co-workers that are more knowledgeable about me than that and they're friends but they're kind of at arms length, they're friends with me, they're not friends with my situation and they're polite where they'll ask occasionally, how's everything going or did you all have a good time at this party or something but they don't want to get too close to it, it's kind of like they're afraid they might catch some cooties, um, I have friends that won't go to lunch with me because, alone, only if there's a group, you know there's that perception that while I accept you and I'm not going to criticize you I don't really want to be considered that I'm like you so if I hang around with you then people might get the wrong idea so, I don't have that many friends and we haven't found a lot of uh, uh, I guess for gay people we're kind of conservative, we don't do parades and put stickers all over our cars and you know, we're really discreet and we have a hard time finding people like that who are just regular people not, you know, not brandishing the cause."

Cherry recalls what it was like when parent's of her daughters softball team discovered she was in a lesbian relationship. "At first they were like oh my god we have lesbians as parents, what do we do. And at first they sorta like we don't know what to do with you but now they're finally starting to, you know, they know that Denise is a part of our life and you can't really hide it when she drops off your kid, you know and Kayla runs up to her just as equally to me." Time is also a factor and if a couple does not have much outside support from family members or other friends they often find themselves immersed in daily life. As Angela explains, "I have several female couples that have kids but ... their experiences have been much like mine in that they don't have a lot of support

from society, from their nuclear family and so what ends up happening is that they have to put so much energy into raising the kids that they don't really have time to be involved with other parents who are in the same boat."

Overall the strong theme from this first question is that friends are very supportive of the LHH but who is let into that circle of friends is examined carefully by the LHH.

The second question asked was "are your neighbors supportive of your family?"

Neighbors can be friends and Tish states: "um, well I guess our friends really encompass this neighborhood and uh, the support here is incredible um, we don't know that there's a person on this street that really doesn't accept us, ... no one disregards us because of our sexuality at all. Tish states an example of positive support shared by 44% of the other LHH. Either not knowing neighbors or not knowing them very well was shared by 44% of the parents and 12% have had experiences that left them not wanting their neighbors to know they are a LHH. Perhaps not unlike most neighborhoods, 14 of the women knew their neighbors enough to "talk over the fence to but no involvement really in our lives."

Four women had experiences such as the following. A former friendly neighbor overheard Charissa discussing a gay issue and his response was not positive, "and the next time I talked to him he was, stay away from me, stay away from my kids, you people don't need to be in my neighborhood, I hate you uh, don't ever step over in my yard, stay away from my yard, my, my son can never come back and play with your son, stuff like that." Neighbors can be an unknown quantity as most begin as strangers. Those women who are experiencing a positive relationship with their neighbors were very appreciative and perhaps a little surprised by how comforting it can be to truly know those who live around you.

The indirect impact children's teachers can have on a LHH was question 3 "how supportive are the teachers of your family?" This question raised a variety of answers but the basic theme was one of caution as, like neighbors, the women don't know the teachers well enough to know if their child will be safe with them for several hours on a daily basis. Fifty-nine percent of the women have found positive support with the teachers. What is not unusual within LHH is how the teacher finds out about the family type. At least two women shared a common story of being "outed" by their children. "She was just kinda like, when Angela went for the conference she was, Angela had mentioned who I was in relation to her and the teacher simply said "oh yes, your (8 year old) daughter, you know filled me in all ready." Other women experience the teachers as described by Denise "they're understanding, it's her education that's important to all of us in the long run."

Four women have had negative experiences even to the extreme of removing a five year old son from his kindergarten class after he explained to his friend "my mommy and her girlfriend are going to make a baby, I'm going to have a baby brother and one little girl said, really, you mean two girls can get married?...and Tony said well yeah and that's when the kindergarten teacher stepped in and said, whoa, no, that's not the way it is, no, can not be married, can not happen, so." The remaining 30% of the women didn't really know if the teachers knew or not as Kendra explains. "I don't think it ever even occurs to them, they don't deal beyond the child. They don't, they don't question it, you'd be surprised how many people, I uh think probably not purposefully don't question cause they really don't want to know."

The final question asked of these women about this hypothesis was "how

important is it for you to be involved with your children's peers?" For the same reasons as would be true for heterosexual households, 91% of these women believe it is important to be involved with their children's peers. The level of involvement varied from knowing who the friends were to talking with parents prior to allowing their child to spend the night at a friends house. Why is this so important? Sexual orientation is not the issue at stake here according to these mothers. Kasey firmly stated "because I do not want them at an alcoholic or drug addicted household, I do not want them exposed to any kind of, um, molestation or I don't want them watching violent, gross, chop em up movies on TV..." Angela echoed this statement "it was very important because I felt like my eldest daughter especially was at high risk for use of drugs and she did engage in some sexual behaviors that I didn't believe was safe. So it was very important I know her friends and have some kind of influences as far as bringing people around that might give her some other choices as to friends." Support of their children through social activities was also important as Cathy describes "I'm highly involved with their peers well, with baseball, I mean I go to every game, I go to every practice, I like their friends and we have like end of the year parties for Katie and her group... if you don't know who they're hanging around with how do you know what they're doing?"

Only three women mentioned they did not believe peer involvement was important and Traci, who's one son returned to another city to live with his father says with a sigh, "it should have been (important), I can see that now but I just really didn't, I guess I didn't pay attention to the kids he was running around with and what they were into." The other women believe they have raised their children to take care of themselves as Kay says, "he's a pretty good judge of character, he's got a good sense of character for

other people. I mean I'm friendly to them but it's not that important to me, I mean, they're his friends."

Peer groups, teachers, neighbors, and friends all involve indirect influences on parenting. Mothers can not be with their children 24 hours a day and the ecological framework models to us how these influences can affect parenting styles. The findings of both the quantifiable data and the qualitative findings support this hypothesis.

Hypothesis Five: *Partners who are "out" (disclosure) as individuals and as a couple will be happier in their relationship and more effective in their parenting than those who are not "out"*. A disclosure scale, similar to one used by Hare (1994) in her article, "Concerns and Issues Faced by Families Headed by a Lesbian Couple" was a part of the demographic questionnaire. A list of categories of persons to whom the participants could potentially have disclosed their sexual orientation and/or the nature of their relationship was presented to each woman to be answered from the viewpoint of the individual (Table 22) and from the viewpoint of the couple (Table 23).

The respondents checked one of three items, "no disclosure", "partial disclosure" and "complete disclosure". The first question, "how much have you disclosed (come out) your sexual orientation to the following" included the categories non-gay friends, children, siblings, mother, father, coworkers, employer, clergy, physician, ex-spouse, neighbors, and children's teacher. An "other" category was also listed as a category although the results are not indicated. The highest levels of exposure were to siblings and children, the lowest to co-workers and the children's teacher. Of those who responded, 47% indicated they chose not to disclose to protect employment status and 37.5% did not disclose to protect their children from criticism.

TABLE 22  
INDIVIDUAL DISCLOSURE

Disclosed Nature of Relationship (%)	Complete Disclosure	Partial Disclosure	No Disclosure
Child	71.9		28.1
Siblings	71.9		28.1
Mother	68.8		31.3
Father	62.5		37.5
Ex-husband	62.5		37.5
Non-Gay Friends	56.3		43.8
Clergy	56.3		43.8
Doctor	40.6		59.4
Employer	25.0		75.0
Neighbors	25.0		75.0
Coworkers	18.8		81.3
Child's Teacher	18.8		81.3
<b>Reasons for non-disclosure</b>			
To protect employment status	46.9		
To protect children from criticism	37.5		
Fear of rejection from colleagues	25.0		
To protect custody rights	25.0		
Fear of rejection from parents	15.6		
No reason to disclose	18.8		
Fear of rejection from friends	9.4		

To test the first part of current hypothesis a crosstabulation was performed to compare relationship satisfaction with disclosure. The results (Table 24) point to an inverse relationship between satisfaction in both the individual and the couple's relationship on disclosure. This hypothesis anticipated the higher the relationship satisfaction the higher the disclosure however the opposite occurred and it would appear the less an individual discloses their sexual orientation, the higher their relationship satisfaction will be. This part of the hypothesis can not be supported.

TABLE 23  
COUPLE DISCLOSURE

Couple Disclosure (%)	Complete Disclosure	Partial Disclosure	No Disclosure
Child	71.9		28.1
Siblings	71.9		28.1
Mother	71.9		28.1
Father	62.5		37.5
Non-Gay Friends	56.3		43.8
Ex-husband	53.1		46.9
Clergy	53.1		46.9
Neighbors	31.3		68.8
Employer	21.9		78.1
Child's Teacher	25.0		75.0
Coworkers	18.8		81.3
Reasons for non-disclosure			
To protect children from criticism		40.6	
To protect employment status		40.6	
Fear of rejection from colleagues		25.0	
To protect custody rights		25.0	
No reason to disclose		18.7	
Fear of rejection from parents		18.8	
Fear of rejection from friends		6.3	

Table 24

DISCLOSURE AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Individual Score in Parenthesis	Low Satisfaction	High Satisfaction	Total
No Disclosure	9 (8)*	7 (8)	16
Percent	56.3 (50)	43.8 (50)	100
Complete Disclosure	9 (10)	7 (6)	16
Percent	56.3 (62.5)	43.8 (37.5)	100
Total	18	14	32
% within couple	56.3	43.8	100

\*Individual score

The second half of this hypothesis considered disclosure with parenting styles. It was anticipated that democratic parents would disclose more than the permissive, and



authoritarian parenting styles (table 25). The results, the same for both the individuals and the couples, specify democratic parents will have a higher level of disclosure than parenting styles other than democratic. Only one set of scores is shown as the individual and couple results are identical. This portion of the hypothesis was supported.

Table 25

## DISCLOSURE AND PARENTING STYLES

	Other Parenting Style	Democratic Parenting Style	Total
No Disclosure	9	7	16
Percent	56.3	43.8	100
Complete Disclosure	3	13	16
Percent	18.8	81.3	100
Total	12	20	32
Percent	37.5	62.5	100

The disclosure question is a broad one that encompasses the rationale behind the exosystem. The exosystem are those factors within the broader community, which the parents do not have control over but are directly impacted. The school system and state and federal law relating to family are examples of the exosystem. The first of the narrative questions asked was “how supportive is the school system of your family?” was not answered by everyone. Approximately 67% of those who did respond had mixed feelings; the most predominant feeling being one of ambivalence, not knowing how the system felt and not sure they really cared to know. When asked why the school system was not aware of her family relationship, Kelsy responded, “I choose not to tell them. I don’t feel there’s a need for them to know.” Another approach to stating this was by Laura who responded the school system is “open, open as we’ve let them.”

Others felt the school systems prefer to “keep it’s head in the sand” says Patti, “it

has to be very obvious to them what the relationship is at this point but they sort of do the don't ask, don't tell, pretend it'll go away thing (chuckle)." Suzanne, Kendra and Cathy agree "as long as you don't throw it in their face, they're happy."

Karen doesn't believe in keeping quiet "I kind of almost push it on them, I think they need to know, I think they need to have more presence of that, you know (chuckle)." However Cherry states "it makes me a little uncomfortable to have to deal with the office and the teachers sometimes but they eventually by the end of the year are okay with it, uh, they're not openly supportive but they're not against us either." Thirty-four percent of the respondents had positive reactions to the school system. This was typically due to the systems' response to the couple as they attended events, "they have always been very supportive whenever we go to teacher's conferences or open house or whatever, they always acknowledge my partner."

Another narrative question asked was "have you come out to your child(ren)." As indicated in the disclosure table, most (72%) of the women have come out to their children. The ages of discussing this issue with the child ranged from three to seventeen, the latter due to the participant having come out to herself at the time her son turned 17. Those who have not come out to their child generally are waiting until they feel their son/daughter is ready to hear the words. "The youngest, I don't think would comprehend it, but she's very open and tells everybody she has two mommies, the middle one, I could, she's my emotional child and I really, I just don't think she's ready yet." Another group of these women haven't sat down with the children and said "I'm a lesbian" but have made the assumption the children know as Beverly explains, "we haven't blurted it out and said, you know, we're gay, uh but conversation in the family, I'm almost, I'm

100% sure they know, we just don't say, point blank tell them that we're gay." Kendra reminds us that for some children they haven't known any other type of family relationship "but we don't really discuss it...for her she was so young when we became a family, this is just life, this is the way it is, you know, we're the two people she depends on, we're immediate family...and so it's never been a question."

Some women were outed before they had the opportunity to talk to their children. Keisha recalls, "Well, his father told him probably when he was seven that I was. That he divorced me because I was kissing a girl and that's not right and I shouldn't be kissing girls." Charissa related a rather long, involved story the summary consisting of an ex girl friend who came to her home resulting in the police being called in. During this time her ex was yelling lesbian divorce, lesbian divorce in front of her two children with whom she had not yet disclosed. Taking her son aside and explaining, his reaction was, "what's new mom, he always knew." Her daughters' reaction was not as well received and she responded with, "that's gross, turned around and walked off." After her daughter saw her kiss another woman, Kelcy came out to her daughter. "she responded in shock, horror, she was very, very angry...uh, she wouldn't talk to me for a long time. After a while she wasn't angry with me anymore, she wished I would have told her instead of her finding out the way she did."

The women who did come out to their children generally had positive responses. Marie, Joan, and Angela discussed how they were "scared to death" yet their children responded with "uh, what's the problem mom, they said, that's cool mom, if it makes you happy, it's cool." Laura proudly says "she plans on having the two of us walk her down the aisle." While not all the initial responses are this positive, the children have all

come to accept their mother's decision. Kay painfully recalls how "he cried and he said I don't want it, I don't want it. And he cried and um, I don't know what happened, I talked to him, he saw that I was happier and then he became sort of folded into the interaction. He gave me permission at that point ...and he encouraged me to date and meet someone."

Disclosure to other family members was not specifically asked of the participants but many brought it out during the interviews. "I just had a chance two weeks ago to come out to her (daughter's) boyfriend's parents, kind of scary...but it went well." In this case Angela also relays that it is not just the mothers who must come out it is the children as well. When her daughter started dating her current boyfriend "she came out to him (i.e., my mom's are lesbians) as soon as they started seeing each other. Her philosophy is kind of like mine, you're better off knowing how they're going to respond early on before you get too emotionally tied in."

Kay indicated her mother was able to reconcile with her coming out prior to her death but "my dad no and ...there (is) just absolutely intolerance there so, uh, I keep my distance from him." Tish came out to her parents "when I was 16, probably 24 hours after I did that, I went right back in the closet (chuckle), I guess I could say I officially came out when I was 19, that's when I had my first relationship." Kendra's ex-husband outed her to her parents. "I mean they knew, I didn't know that he had done this until after, you know, probably it was six months...they don't welcome my partner down there." Kasey relays "I am (out) to my siblings, I'm not to my parents. They've asked me not to mention it to my parents because of their beliefs and they're just so against all of it."

Another aspect of the exosystem is state and local laws as they affect the lesbian

families. “The laws are just, they make it really difficult to be happy legally...because you’re constantly worried about, you know discrimination and what if something was to happen to one of us, you know, how would she (daughter) be supported?”. Denise continues referring to her daughter, “her well being, it takes more than one person, everyone has to work together.” Two women referred to the lack of resources for lesbians, “I mean, just the number of stores (gay run or gay friendly), the number of restaurants you have to choose from, you know, just those kind of things that are not here in this community, the diversity of people, the way of thought.” As Ann anticipates an upcoming marriage of her daughter, she adds “and I don’t have anybody to say well this is what worked for me, and I miss, sometimes I feel like I’m blazing the trail on my own.”

The purpose of this hypothesis suggested positive relationship satisfaction and disclosure were related. The inverse was found to be true signifying the less a couple/individual has disclosed, the more satisfied they are in their relationship. The other purpose of this hypothesis compared parenting styles with personal and couple disclosure. There does appear to be a positive relationship between the democratic parenting style and personal/couple disclosure. The narrative questions offered further insight into the exosystem as it is affected by disclosure and local policies. Through these participants there is a better understanding of why there is a low disclosure frequency on areas dealing more with the general public which directly affects the child and not just the parent (i.e., teachers). There was also a brief look into how state resources may affect a couple.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored lesbian-headed households and the impact the social environment had on parenting styles and family relationship on these households. Family Ecology Theory provided a forum to investigate the impact of the holistic environment on lesbian family relationships. The Circumplex Model offered the specific conceptual dimensions and provided a means of evaluating and comparing lesbian families with normative data on heterosexual families. Feminist theory was incorporated to aid in the qualitative method and the exploration of gender issues.

The review of the literature summarized the growing body of knowledge of LHH. Presented in a form to support the ecological theory, it included a partial history of lesbian life throughout history with a concentration on the past three decades. Laws and policies affecting these families were also included.

The design in this study was multimethod. Descriptive-comparative statistics were used to consider differences and similarities between the LHH and the heterosexual household as well as consider selected social environmental variables on the LHH. In-depth interviews were utilized to provide the story behind the numbers, to better aid the researcher in understanding, through personal narrative, how LHH are affected by the social environment.

Over a 14 month period 32 women (16 couples) were interviewed and asked to fill out a packet of materials containing several quantitative measures. Four additional couples were contacted but did not complete the process. The hypotheses focused on describing the experiences, adjustments and parenting styles as impacted by the social environment. This was done by comparing the data collected for these families with normed samples of heterosexual families and through personal narrative.

### Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the results found in this study. One of the goals of this research was to apply the Family Ecology Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992), and the results are presented according to the six concepts of this theory: organism, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. Table 26 outlines each family system and the methodology used for it's assessment.

#### Organism

The organism level of analysis allows for consideration of characteristics or qualities of the parent that may be related to her experiences as a parent. Each parent brings to parenting a unique set of individual qualities related to the family environment. To study the characteristics of the parents in this study, demographics were used.

It was important to establish the characteristics of these 32 women, the unit of the organism. Demographic characteristics provided an overview of the participants in this study. On average they were white, middle-income, well educated women who considered themselves either religious or spiritual. Nineteen of the 32 women were

involved in a heterosexual marriage prior to coming out as a lesbian.

Table 26

## ECOLOGICAL MODEL AND PARENTING STYLES OF LHH

<b>Family System</b>	<b>Item To Be Measured</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<b>Macrosystem</b>	Homophobia	Policy Review/Interview
<b>Exosystem</b>	Parent's Friends Parent Disclosure	Disclosure Scale Interview
	School System	Quality of Life Questionnaire Interview Acquiring social support (9 items)
	State/Local Government	Historical Analysis/Interview/ F-Copes
<b>Mesosystem</b>	Parent's Friends	Interview Family/friends Acquiring social support)
	School Teachers	Interview Acquiring social support
	Family of Origin	Family/friends Acquiring social support Family of Origin Interview
	Biological Father Involvement	Demographic Questions Interview
	Neighbors	Quality of Life Acquiring social support (9 items) Interview
	Child's Peers	• Interview
<b>Microsystem</b>	Parenting Styles	FACES II Family Satisfaction PAQ Interview
	Couple Relationship	Relationship satisfaction
<b>Organism</b>	Parenting Characteristics	Demographics



### Microsystem

The microsystem refers to the actions, attitudes, and personalities a parent is exposed to. This level of the Family Ecology Theory was measured with the Circumplex Model, family satisfaction, relationship satisfaction the Parental Authority Questionnaire and the Family of Origin scale. The family of origin was also studied through in-depth interviews.

The Circumplex Model was used to assess the adaptability and cohesion of the lesbian family unit and compare the national data available for heterosexual parents. It was believed there would be no significant differences between the two family types. However a significant difference was found in the areas of adaptability and family satisfaction. Only cohesion showed no significant differences.

Adaptability refers to the ability of a family to respond to stress, to change and adjust as needed but also to maintain the individuality of the family unit. The results therefore indicated the LHH is more adaptable than the heterosexual household. While too much adaptability can be chaotic, which can lead to stress and lack of stability, high levels of adaptability do not necessarily mean the family is unhealthy (Olson, et al. , 1992). These parents are likely to be more flexible in an effort to respond to the daily concerns of disclosure and the reactions general society might have on the individual, the couple or their children. It is also important to note that two women running a household do not adhere to the traditional values and assumptions of a heterosexual household (Zacks, et al. 1988). In a biographical study of 10 lesbian women, Wheeler –Scruggs (1997) found lesbians have experienced a sense of independence for most of their lives.

“Often knowing they would be self-supporting, not feeling like they had to follow any specific role, feeling confident in who they were and their ability to take care of themselves” (p. 169). Thus the high adaptation of the LHH may not be abnormal. Indeed these results may in fact, suggest the need to reevaluate the definition of adaptability for LHH.

The LHH varied on cohesion in a way similar to the heterosexual household. There were LHH on each of the four levels of cohesion. Cohesion assesses the degree to which family members are separated from or connected to the family and considers such concepts as emotional bonding, family boundaries, time, space, friends, and decision making. The combination of high adaptability and “normal” cohesion found here may indicate LHH have developed coping mechanisms for adapting to the unique challenges presented to the LHH.

Relationship satisfaction was found to be significantly higher for the LHH than the heterosexual household. This inventory assessed such variables as communication, role responsibilities, and personality characteristics. Gender differences may impact the results of this scale since two women are more likely to have an egalitarian relationship. High adaptability and high relationship satisfaction combine to suggest this is true. That is, development of coping mechanisms to adapt to the environment coupled with the notion that lesbians are independent and do not follow role norms (Wheeler-Scruggs, 1997) may result in higher relationship satisfaction. Roles are not defined rather communicated and compromised. Who bathes the child, takes out the trash, picks the child up from school, etc. are roles decided on, not assumed.

A variety of parenting styles have been conceptualized in which a blend or mix of

control and support are used to perform the child socializer role (Peterson & Rollins, 1987). A microsystem effect on children is the parent-child relationship within the family. Research has shown parents' child-rearing practices have an impact on children's behavior. Parenting styles are considered the microsystem of the Ecological model as it considers the preferred method of parenting by the participants in the study.

The original measure, the Parental Authority Questionnaire produced questionable results (i.e., all participants were assessed as democratic) especially when compared to the interview question soliciting narrative regarding parenting styles: “how has your immediate family influenced your method of parenting?” Comments such as, “I’m very strict, I expect certain things of children,” “Um, my father was very authoritarian,...my mom did this whole passive-aggressive routine and I find myself doing those same things and mostly I’m okay with that” or “I tend to be a very laid back parent, I will not spank them unless I have to” are comments which do not fit the democratic description (Baumrind, 1966).

The Circumplex Model was used to assess parenting styles to allow for a graphic visualization of the parenting styles as defined by Olson and DeFrain (1994). This model demonstrates a dispersion of scores across the Circumplex figure and supports the narrative responses.

The Family of Origin instrument assessed the impact immediate family have on the LHH. The results suggest positive influence provided by the family on the participants as they were growing up, resulted in a positive parenting style.

### Mesosystem

The mesosystem consists of interrelationships between two or more of the parents' microsystems. The parent is directly influenced by these variables which will affect the child, depending on the lesbian mothers' control over these variables. The mesosystem includes such issues as relationships with friends, neighbors, family members, peers and the natural father.

Several measures were used to assess the mesosystem: Family and Friends, Acquiring Social Support, Neighborhood and Community and Family of Origin. The narrative questions of how peers, friends, neighbors, natural fathers and teachers accept the LHH family added to the understanding of the variables of the impact on the mesosystem with the LHH. There were no significant differences found between the LHH and heterosexual household on any of these scales. This would indicate these LHH are receiving sufficient interaction with resources outside of the home.

One discrepancy occurred among the variables studied. The Neighborhood and Community scale showed an inverse relationship result when compared to parenting styles. That is lower scores on this scale were associated with the democratic parenting style for LHH. These results do correspond with the negative narrative responses to the questions, "is the school system supportive of your family" and "are your neighbors supportive of your family."

The responses from the interviews, however indicate there may be a deeper meaning to the numerical results. These women did express concern in regard to the biological fathers, the neighbors, friends and, to a lesser degree the teachers.

Friendships on the outside appeared to be satisfactory for the LHH. Upon closer examination however the women discussed only one or two friends, and there was a lack of disclosure to many friends. It seems the LHH have built “boundaries” to keep people they feel they can trust off to one side and people they can not trust on the other.

Neighbors were another topic of discussion during the interviews and had a positive impact 44% of the time although, 66% of the participants reported they have had negative experiences with neighbors. As with the neighbors children’s teachers, were discussed with caution as a theme. However, 59% have had some positive interaction with teachers. Finally on the importance of being involved with their children’s peers. A resounding 91% were in agreement. These mothers were not as concerned about sexual orientation issues as they were the influence peers might have on their children.

For LHH it is conceivable that the specific pressures to which lesbian mothers are exposed, such as possible disapproval from family members, and prejudice on the part of members of the local community, may interfere with effective parenting (Tasker & Golombok, 1997). The mothers in this study dealt with threats from their ex’s, (custody issues), lack of financial support and children angry with their fathers. Essentially, the LHH were trying to raise a family with little support from the natural father. Many of the problems the LHH have with their ex husband are the same ones heard among the heterosexual population. Yet the LHH has to contend with additional heterosexist factors as well. Threats over custody, refusal to allow one participant to visit one of her two daughters without an armed escort, negative comments to the children regarding their mother’s sexuality all impact the lesbian mother which will in turn affect the child or the entire household. Caution is exercised with neighbors, teachers and even friends for fear

of being “outed”. The fear is constant for job security and the impact an “outing” might have for their children.

Sharing information and concerns with friends, feeling safe discussing issues with neighbors, relying on the ex-husband to support his child(ren) financially and emotionally as well as consideration to the impact of peers on the children all intertwine to impact on the mesosystem level of parenting styles and family relationships.

### Exosystem

The exosystem refers to settings in which parents are not active participants but which affect them directly. Examples of this include state and local government policies, personal and individual disclosure, coming out to the children and the school system. The measures used for this level of the Ecological theory included Acquiring Social Support, Quality of Life questionnaire, interviews and a brief examination of public policy.

Support of the school system for their family was another of the questions asked and resulted in mixed messages. It appears most women are cautious of coming out to the school system for fear of the unknown result it might have on the children. Only 34% of LHH had positive experiences including attending school events and teacher conferences together.

It was found the democratic parents disclose as individuals and couples more than other parenting types. Disclosure is a very private decision and one that is impacted by all the factors discussed thus far and some yet to be discussed. The narrative question “have you come out to your children” found that 72% of the LHH had disclosed to their children. These women were constantly confronted with decisions on how to, or if, to

disclose personal information about their sexual orientation when they participated in the larger society. Their concern throughout was not for themselves as much as it was for the impact of their disclosure on their children. Patterson (1995) found children were better protected from prejudicial experiences among mothers who did not conceal their sexual orientation Baumrind (1995) suggests a mothers open disclosure aids the parent in communicating to the child that they are not ashamed of who they are.

The reasons given for not disclosing their sexual orientation included protecting their jobs and protecting their children from criticism. State and Federal laws do not protect gays and lesbians from discrimination on the job site. The best known example of this is the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy of our federal government. Within the state this study took place there are no laws protecting lesbians on the job, or to prevent a hate crime against a lesbian; the state sodomy law, which applies only to gays and lesbians, can be used in custody cases as an example of a parent breaking the law. There is no coparent adoption available. The media the children are often exposed to rarely includes lesbians and when it does there is a warning previous to a show where a lesbian kiss may occur – what signal does this give to these children? These are examples of how the exosystem affects family relationships and parenting styles.

### Macrosystem

Throughout this study one underlying theme continued to be brought up – heterosexism. Public opinion, religion, stereotypes, media and ignorance all join forces to create a heterosexist society. This is the reason many of the participants are anxious about coming out or content to do their best to stay “in”. A recurring theme for these

women is a concern in regard to social pressure and safety for their children. The women in this study make choices daily on who to come out to and who to be cautious around. Some are fearful of openly showing affection in front of their children let alone walk hand in hand down their neighborhood street. They have made choices on the level of their disclosure but often there is a feeling of no choice where their children are involved. It seems it is the children more than the adults who are the victims in an oppressed society.

Another predominant theme when talking to these mothers is how much they love their children and how they will do anything to keep them safe. In many ways these mothers have given up an important part of their personal identity for their children. Some children have asked they not attend Gay Pride Activities for fear of the news media camera zooming in on them and friends seeing them on the 10 o'clock news. Many mothers "blame" themselves for who they are and the situation they have put their child in. Chris commented: "You know people see, you know, people going oh well you're mom is gay and that is just not natural and her being bombarded constantly by the negative images of homosexuality and how wrong it is and I think, you know, I hope that my lifestyle doesn't, everything we do influences our children." Pat continues the thought, "Um, probably other people being critical about her or criticizing her because of, um, her having, you know a lesbian couple as her parents". Kelcy adds, "yeah, the fear if anybody finds out what may happen to her. You know, the teasing, she is, she is a teenager and she has those fears that somebody, one of her friends will find out."

The "fear if anybody finds out"; in many ways sexual orientation is treated like a contagious disease and the fear of ostracism which will occur should someone believe



they can “catch it.” Kay is so concerned about someone “finding out” she will not host a birthday party at her home for her son. Kay stood on a soapbox once she started talking about the societal pressures, her comments are interesting and worth including in full: “having to limit his activities because he can’t bring them home, you know, he can’t bring the kids over, you know like maybe have a birthday party here, it would be too awkward for him, he can only invite certain kids, we always have the birthday parties at public places, uh, you have to maneuver your life a little bit because, we’re not worried about offending anybody because we’re not ashamed of who we are but we are worried about causing a problem, you know, having some person with certain religious beliefs saying something, I mean, I always worry about legal things, somebody saying well I just don’t think that’s appropriate over there why don’t we get a look into that, you know and somebody meddling into my business whether I’m fit to be a parent, they’ve said already I guess in this state that I’m not fit if I wanted to foster a child, I’m not fit to be a teacher, I’m not fit to adopt a child, you know, that’s ridiculous!”

It is important to understand the many ways heterosexism seeps into the lives of these lesbian mothers.

### Research Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact the social environment has on LHH. Studies have considered various dimensions of child development, such as Pattersons’ (1992, 1995) work with the Bay area group, and several reports exist on public policy as it affects gay/lesbian families (Falk, 1989; Holley, 1994 & Kirkpatrick, et al., 1981). Most studies that have taken place take place on the East and West coasts

where the social environment is more open to diverse families. Geography must be taken into consideration when generalizations are made about diverse family relationships.

Current research might lead one to believe things are improving for the LHH and in some cases they are. Some of the women who risked being a part of this research were concerned for their jobs and were concerned for their children. In one case the researcher took a rainbow flag decal off her car because the couple to be interviewed was concerned about a neighbor seeing it and maybe assuming then, that they were gay since they had a gay friend visiting.

Heterosexism is a constant factor in the lives of these women. From fear of losing a job, to hoping their children will not grow up to be gay, to the consistent stereotypes on the television, these women seem to be on guard at all times. However, they are happy. Consider the relationship satisfaction scores that are significantly higher than heterosexual couples. High adaptation indicates they have strong coping abilities and perhaps they have just adjusted over the years to taking things as they come. Due to a need to communicate so every family member is aware of who knows what about who is out and who is not, perhaps these participants have stronger communication skills than the average couple.

Further examination into the coping skills of these women could be of benefit to the general population. Resources are needed to help these women as their children grow older and begin to date or marry. What is a mother to do if her son or daughter brings home someone who does not like, albeit hates, gays and lesbians? Marriage brings with it a whole new set of people to decide how much to become intimate with. The in-laws. Do we dance at the reception, who walks my daughter down the aisle? These are just a

few of many questions these women are facing as time goes on.

Public policy must change to accept these families as what they are, two people trying to make ends meet and raise some healthy children. It just so happens the two people are women. Family policy must stand up to the overt as well as covert discrimination that occurs. Lack of resources, lack of insurance benefits, lack of protection against hate crimes is just a few areas to consider. This study was interesting but leaves more questions than answers. It is hoped further research will occur as to the holistic environmental impacts on lesbian-headed households.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: January 16, 1998

IRB #: HE-98-032

Proposal Title: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND PARENTING STYLES IN LESBIAN HEADED HOUSEHOLDS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Principal Investigator(s): Kay Murphy, Dave Fournier, Jill Rohrbacker

Reviewed and Processed as: Full Board

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

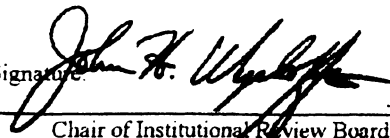
ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

=====  
Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature



Chair of Institutional Review Board

Cc: Jill Rohrbacker

Date: January 26, 1998

## Appendix B

### In-Depth Interview

#### ANY WORDS OF WISDOM YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

##### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Chris: well, I think the one thing that I truly believe about parenting is that whether you're gay or you're straight, you're still responsible for your children and you can't make the, you can only influence them and stuff like that, still when it comes down to it, we're ultimately responsible for our children, I really believe that and every decisions we make should, as a parent, when we make the decision to be a parent then we have to realize that every decision you make must, make that decision. That's my opinion, take it for what it is.

Pat: I think it's important that kids have, you know, someone who's supportive and who cares about, whether it be male or female as long as that person really loves the kid and, you know is trying to be always be there and, and they have a mutual understanding that they're there for each other, you know, I think that that's important.

Angela: I think that if you have children that are of school age the best thing you can do is to make relationships for those kids that are that is like your relationship. Kids need to know they aren't the only ones being raised in a gay family. I think that's what made us successful parents, is that uh, you know, we let the kids have people, kids that they could talk to you know, and some of those friendships for both my girls have lasted a long, long time, um. Who else do you go to when you're having trouble with your mom's girlfriend? You know. You go to somebody who's got the same kind of situation at home and to provide that kind of support I think was very wise of us to be able to do that. It made a big difference

Grass: Just, actually I'd say on, on the kids side you know that they, they're pretty much know where they're going with all this kind of thing that it's tolerance for them but I think it's teaching me things you know as the kind of stepmother (chuckle) just, also to be tolerant because they've already kind of grown up and they've got there values in place whereas if I'd raised them with my partner as children they'd probably be different and since I don't have that history with them I'm having to learn a kind of tolerance of their being they way they are and you know accepting them the way they are...I am, I'm

learning a lot, I mean there are days when you know I'm pulling my hair because I'm not used to, I've taught teenagers but I'm not used to living with them, and you know their habits like I'm a really fussy person I like everything, wash the dishes afterwards and that's not, they're not into that so I'm having to learn uh, to negotiate and say hey you know this is about respect to me and they'll say well, it's to me it's nothing and they say I don't care if you never wash the dishes or clean the tub so I'm learning how to talk and negotiate with them things like that (chuckle).

Laura: I think that one of the things right now that we're proud about is her vision is, that she could be President one day and that she doesn't see that her family system could, in some peoples eyes be a liability to that. And I think that right now that's true, it would be, I mean, I think that in my opinion there would be people that would hold us against her but it's not her, she thinks that she could be President of the United States one day she could be President of the US one day. But I think that that's an indication of her comfort and acceptance of the family system that she has, that she doesn't see it as a limitation or a hindrance in some way, you know, so.

Claire: Just treat your kids as people and don't, don't think that they don't know because they do, they are smart and they are tender and they have everything that an adult has just in a smaller package, they need to be treated with respect and kindness and, and, they'll give it right back.

Patti: (chuckle) um, I think in some ways I've had it easier 'cause the kids are young, if they were older it would be a little harder to step in and take control as it is, John learned very quickly that 'you're not my mom' didn't have any bearing on anything (chuckle). Uh, words of wisdom, talk to your partner very early on about what boundaries they expect with the children because if they are not willing to make you an equal then it's not going to do you any good to try to be an equal partner. I can't think of anything else.

JoAnn: give them lots of love and affection, be straightforward, don't hold anything back, I feel like if you try to cloud issues that only clouds them more. And give them those choices. Choices, choices, choices.

Charlotte: (chuckle). Be patient, I don't know. I'm still learning, too.

Joan: Love them, unconditional love, not conditional is the main thing. Unconditional love no matter what, I love you, I'll be here for you.

Karen: just let them be who they are and, as far as freedom and expression, whatever, don't be closed in any area whatever they want to express, whatever they want to feel whatever they want to, whatever because you have that freedom as an adult so why close it off to a kid. I mean because they have the same, you know rights...that's why I think me and my daughter we just kind of talk out everything if there's a problem, you know, we have family meetings a lot, sit down and discuss everything. If anyone's got any complaints, whatever, sit down and everybody gets everything off their chest, whatever, I



don't care what it has to do with.

Beverly: it's hard, you know, especially in a step parent situation. I have another child (from a previous lesbian relationship) which was an artificial insemination and, it's not my biological child and the mom has her in x city and I get to see her... And I never really got the opportunity to parent, I mean we broke up when she was 18 months old and I see her occasionally... discipline is hard, I think that's the hardest part of being a parent is discipline, you know, but, you expect your kids to meet a certain standard, when you tell yourself am I doing the right thing, am I being too hard, am I being a bitch and you're hoping that you're not, you're hoping you're not going to damage these guys forever (chuckle), you know what I'm saying and you just hope they're going to be good kids as a result. We'll just have to wait and see... the only thing I can say is don't force things down people's throats just go with the flow. I mean you know, I can't see marching into the elementary school and, and screaming, you know, I'm a gay parent and expect this and that, I mean just go with the flow.

Cathy: I just don't think you should lie to your kids. Don't ever lie to your kids cause they know you're lying to them and then from then on your credibility as a parent is shot, always, forever, I don't think you ever get it back.

Keisha: That people need to look at their own lives, be it gay people or straight people in a family relationship, they need to look at their own lives before they look at mine and say you can't have children and you can't take care of children cause you're gay. They need to look at their own, don't throw a rock if you live in a glass house,

Suzanne: keep learning, keep your mind open, be ready to try new things but don't try every new thing that comes along. Don't hide your feelings, be considerate.

Noel: lay down the rules and then bend them if necessary, make sure they remember please and thank-you (chuckle) and how to write thank-you notes. Uh, that sounds superficial but in looking at some other people's kids now, (sigh), you can be your child's friend when they grow up, as long as they're living at home you really can't be a friend, not and do them the best job you can do, you kind of sort of need some perimeters, kids need to know where their perimeters are.

## Appendix C

### In-Depth Interview

#### HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE THE TEACHERS OF YOUR FAMILY?

##### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Cherry: uh, the teachers initially were just didn't, were kind of clueless at first and then they kind of caught on and they were kind of, they didn't know how to cope and then by the end of the year, you know, they would come around...um, we're not outrageously open we don't kiss or hold hands or hug or anything like that but we both show up to important functions and um, you know, so, you know because we're both there and Kayla wants us there, we both go.

Denise: they, they're understanding. It's her education that's important to all of us in the long run.

Chris: The school she's in now, her teacher's not, is not okay with it and we've been, we've had a lot of problems with it because of her treatment of Erin and it's... you know, talking to the staff, like the office staff, they don't seem to be very supportive either, so.

Pat: Well, uh, I don't know if it's because of financial reasons or because of outward appearance or if she kind of assumes, you know, that, you know that her mother is gay or what. Cause I don't even know if the teacher even knows (chuckle), you know, who I am or anything, I just, I've been to a lot of events and she's seen me here and there so she doesn't really know who I am specifically, um, uh, it's just, it seems like she tends to give our daughter a harder time as far as uh, instruction and discipline and everything else because of I think partially financial and because of who we are as parents.

Shirley: I think teachers are a lot more open minded than they used to be but a lot of times it's the school system that doesn't allow them to express their opinions and I don't really see a problem. You know, I don't see where it would become an issue.

Kelcy: they don't really know.

Stephanie: But we've always, we started telling the teachers and we generally tell the teachers, when we interviewed teachers, we went to different schools before we enrolled

him and we interviewed teachers, what I would generally say is, this is of no consequence to you but I feel you should know, you know, that Tony spends the majority of his time at my home and I share my home with my partner and I go on to tell them a little bit about our home, that it's just the three of us that live there and that my partner and I work all day so he's the product of a, you know a working environment and that there's not somebody there with cookies the minute he walks in the door, you know he's going to have to go to the after school program and then I say, you know my partner, her name is Jan, you know and I just kind of put it in that way and I say, um, oh by the way if you hear anything, if you feel that there's anything that needs to be addressed, I would just appreciate it if you feel you can't handle it that you feel free to call me on the phone, you can call me right then.

Denise: . Although the oldest daughter did tell the teachers all about us one time and (chuckle) uh, she was just kinda like when Angela went for the conference she was, Angela had mentioned who I was in relation to her mother and the teacher simply said "oh yes, your daughter, you know filled me in all ready (chuckle) and she was probably in second grade so she'd be eight, nine... Well, we know a lot of teachers and we know that a lot of them happen to be gay and as far as we can tell they have been supportive. I, I haven't had any feelings that they've been negative about it.

Jennifer: Um, I thought they were very supportive when we went to parent/teacher conferences. I, you know we asked for some changes in her schedule, they didn't seem to shun us or anything and, and I've been in x school since then as a substitute and the teachers always, you know, greeted me and talked to me so I don't think there's any kind of shunning

Laura: L: um, I just listed myself as mother, I didn't list anything about Jennifer, um and then I list my partner as the friend who is the emergency contact with the same address and phone number but we both showed up to parent conferences together, um, and actually my partner subbed in this school after that happened and um, you know, people were aware that she was connected somehow to, to our daughter but we never spelled it out, just kind of left it up to them, so, they didn't ask, why are you here to or anything like that when we showed up together and something had happened at school one day and my partner was summoned there and they had told her all about what had happened to Nancy, you know, these other teachers and stuff and wanted her to know what had happened and what her reaction had been and everything, you know just what had happened and so they obviously felt, I know I can tell this person about what had happened to this girl. But, they, in the other city, we never got a negative reaction

Claire: um, I would say very supportive, you know the uh, the teachers uh very supportive and, and uh, we've talked about just personal difficulties within a family and why there might be uh, um, emotional struggles and whatever ...But yeah I'd say they've been, they've been very helpful

Patti: Uh, the teachers will talk to me but it's more like I'm an aunt or a friend of the

family, I'm not a mom, whereas the daycare's has me signing permission slips and, you know, no big deal. For mother's day both daycare's did something for mom's and they sent home two of everything.

JoAnn: um, you know with all of the teachers that my middle child has had, um, especially since we've been in this area, which has been the last three years, um, have always been very supportive whenever we go to teacher's conferences or open house or whatever, they always acknowledge my partner

Charlotte: they've been okay so far cause I go up, go up there for all the school functions and stuff so they see us as a family. Whether they want to see us that way, they don't have a choice but, I don't know what they actually think.

Joan: The same. They wouldn't have known about us anyway, I wouldn't have, uh-uh for fear of rejection, fear that the word would get out and then my daughter, you know, kids can be cruel like we said earlier kids can be very accepting but if they're not because of their parents the way they brought them up you know like people hate blacks and Jews you know they're very narrow minded they could, you know gays fit right in there and if they're a hate group and they can be very mean, they could hurt her. So I'm very protective, that's just the way the world is, it's not fair but we gotta do what we gotta do.

Karen: Well they didn't know anything about us anyway, whatever, but, they aren't really in our life, you know.

Kasey: yeah, but I don't think that, in X the whole town knew that I was a lesbian, it was just like the gossip of the town when it got figured out but um the teachers were really nice to me and very supportive of whatever I was doing with my kids and my partner came with me to all the parent teacher meetings and came with me to all the children's programs,

Cathy: I mean they know, I know Katie's teacher knows, cause Katie never keeps her mouth shut and I'm pretty sure, I didn't even register him last year, I never even met his teacher I was so sick I couldn't get out of bed. So basically, I mean, they never even saw me. And you know she's (partner) on all the call first and under the things, you know they know, they just, I guess they'd rather not address it. Both my kids teachers love them so I don't worry...his teacher's have been great, I think he's the class pet. X really likes Katie so, they're really good to them.

Keisha: they didn't have no qualms, they never said oh my god, it was like normal everyday dealing with people. Um, his teacher was a real sport, she's not really in school yet but her teacher was pretty much too cause she was in day care school type thing, they, they, would talk to us, help me out when I needed help so they were, were really nice.

Kendra: I don't, you know I don't think it ever even occurs to them, they don't deal beyond the child, if I was school everyday and made an issue they might not be supportive and they might, I can not honestly say that I know that but they don't, as far as

I know, they never question anything about parents other than when are they going to pick you up.

Kay: we've never had any, I mean we're not real blatant, uh, I'm sure that some of the teachers have known um, especially in the last school I'm pretty sure that the, the uh one teacher did know, uh, I didn't detect any negativity, you know, and I think a lot of the reason for me has been because my son is so, you know, when you're dealing with the top student in the class, what are they gonna say, I mean they're dealing with a kid who's, they like, I mean, great personality and he's, all these things that I, you know so far so good, I think they're puzzled, how do, you know, how does this work, how does this uh, how does this family work so uh, efficiently and this child turn out so well with no male in the household, they're puzzled and I don't feel negativity about it so

Charissa: as far as, as long as their is no gay involvement, they've been very supportive.

## Appendix D

### In-Depth Interview

#### HOW SUPPORTIVE IS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OF YOUR FAMILY?

##### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Cherry: Well, I don't have to, I, it makes me a little uncomfortable to have to deal with the office and the teachers sometimes but they eventually by the end of the year are okay with it, uh, they're not openly supportive or anything but they're not openly against us either.

Denise: If they knew about it... They're pretty supportive, you know, I'm out so anything they need her to coordinate, then their okay with it, I mean...

Chris: Well see that's kind of weird because, the school, the other school that my daughter was in last year, her second year, they seemed to be more okay with it because actually I think that the teachers were gay and you know basically the school hired but the didn't talk about it you know - by the way your kids' gonna be in a class with a, has a gay teacher - they never said that but a number of the teachers I met, I would have bet money on it, you know, but I never asked because I didn't think it was any of my business. The school she's in now, her teacher's not, is not okay with it and we've been, we've had a lot of problems with it because of her treatment of Erin.

Pat: I think the school system is, is ok, I think the problem we're having right now is the teacher in general.

Shirley: I think teachers are a lot more open minded than they used to be but a lot of times it's the school system that doesn't allow them to express their opinions and I don't really see a problem. You know, I don't see where it would become an issue.

Kelcy: uh, they don't know, so...I choose not to tell them...I don't feel there's a need for them to know.

Stephanie: S: um, the public school system has been really supportive and the private school system was not. We pulled him out of that...um-hm, we spent our first year in private school, we checked around to a number of private schools thinking that would be

the way to go and after our experience with the first school and then after having talked to the other schools, kind of got the feeling that they were all the same that it was going to be a response that was not going to be positive for Tony and that if it was outed at school that his mom was gay or somebody thought she was that it would be a negative response.

Laura: L: open, as open as we've let them, in the other city we put my partner's name on the forms and never listed a father, never, um, you know both of us always showed up for parent's conferences, showed up, you know, um, because of her age when we moved here and where we were moving to when I enrolled her in school this year, I didn't put that, I didn't feel very comfortable with that.

Claire: I'm not sure how much the school system knows of my family, um, ...and, um, I don't know if I'm just afraid that they're going to, this may seem unreasonable when I sit down to think about it, that they would treat my children any differently just because the new mommy was gay but you never know I guess so I don't want to cause them any problems through my personal choices in life, my own lifestyle. I don't think it should effect them but I know that it does.

Patti: um, well, the actual school system, we have both school and daycare, um, the school system prefers to keep its' head in the sand I think, it has to be very obvious to them what the relationship is at this point but they sort of do the don't ask, don't tell, pretend it'll go away thing (chuckle).

JoAnn: um, you know with all of the teachers that my middle child has had, um, especially since we've been in this area, which has been the last three years, um, have always been very supportive whenever we go to teacher's conferences or open house or whatever, they always acknowledge my partner

Kasey: um, it's a hit a miss on that I have to say, um, X schools (city smaller than present city) when I was out there were actually better than what I have found here in X.

Beverly: well, the school system, I don't believe that they really know, they really never gave us any problems, you know, they've been supportive as far as Katie's needs and Alex's needs but we haven't had any problems as far as them thinking that we're a gay couple and give us, you know, we haven't had that problem.

Cathy: C: they don't know, well they know but they don't know, this is x City, as long as you don't throw it in their face they're happy.

Keisha: I think the school system really, the good thing is the principal she worked with, she ended up finally telling her (that she is a lesbian) and uh, she said, cause she was thinking of moving into a neighborhood nearer the school and uh, she said what if they see me with her and they find out and the principal said, all she's got to tell them is it's none of their business it does not interfere with her work, she's not teaching them that in school and uh, there's nothing I can do about it if she's not doing anything to your

children or trying to teach them her ways. Because she's not, and so, her principal, toward the school system wise is supportive, other than that, I don't think too many people know.

Suzanne: the less they know the better is kind of their philosophy as long as the kids are at school and they're clean and they're happy, they don't care what we do in our home but if they suspect anything they'll report it, it's just like anything else, you know. I think that if they suspected we were lesbians with it being this big of a town, with it being this late in the century (chuckle) they probably wouldn't say to much but they would probably be pretty shitty about it to the kids, uh, well, and they'd probably talk about it among themselves because that attitude is still there, but legally I think they know our rights and I think they know their limits so I think that as professionals they would know that that was none of their business

Kendra: the feeling I've gotten from the public school here in X is the less they have to deal with the parents, the better off they are.

Tish : uh, the school system I don't think under, knows at this point um, we don't want to take a chance and breach that um, they are aware that I am an emergency contact, they're aware I live in the home, they have my work phone numbers, I'm a person who can pick him up from school, however the nature of the relationship has never been expressed to them

Charissa: they don't know, didn't know, they never knew, I hope they never knew.

Noel: they don't know...to protect the kids. I would hate to see and I'm sure that there are some kids that Cora and/or Ed have drug over here that figured it out but nobody ever addressed it, nobody ever said yes we are, no we aren't, as far as the entire school system, she's my sister.



## Appendix E

### In-Depth Interview

#### WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS FOR YOUR

#### CHILD BEING RAISE IN A LHH

#### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Denise: Uh, jeez, well, uh, it's real hard, she wants another, she wants a little brother basically and that's kind of hard for us being, you know two females but, and we don't have the money to, to do that and we also, you know

Chris: yeah, social problems.... school, acceptance from people and prejudices from people. You know people see, you know, people going oh well your mom is gay and that is just not natural and her being bombarded constantly by the negative images of homosexuality and how wrong it is and I think, you know she, and you know, I hope that my lifestyle doesn't, everything we do influences our children but I hope that, you know, she and I've talked to her about it, I don't expect her to be gay, I don't expect her to be straight, she's going to have to come to that. But I think because of my being straight, or living a heterosexual lifestyle and then becoming homosexual, part of her is kind of confused with that and I think that she will have problems making that, I think that there will be a period of time where she's kind of like, have problems making that decision because she's going to have to decide. It's not like, I was raised, you're gonna raise, you're gonna be grown up, you're gonna have, you know, 2 point, 1.2 children and you're gonna be with a man you're whole entire life, that's how I was raised and she's not being raised that way so there's no week, and I don't know if that's a bad thing or a good thing.

Pat: Um, probably other people being critical about her or criticizing her because of, um, her having, you know a lesbian couple as her parents and maybe her questioning her own sexuality because she knows that, you know, one day that's going to be, you know something she has to decide or, you know, she's going to have to figure out on her own.

Shirley: I, I mean I don't see any drawbacks unless her peers had the blinders on and she tried to say something. Now that's where it could cause problems in her life and it might happen, it might not. But there's a lot of youth out there that are a lot more accepting than we give them credit for, you know, so, they're not just all skin heads or stuff like

Kelcy: Um, yeah, the fear if anybody finds out what may happen to her. You know, the teasing, she is, she is a teenager and she has those fears that somebody, one of her friends will find out. And, um, that's an issue that we've been dealing with for a while and will probably deal with for a long time. And uh, but I think that's the only thing, is just the fear that somebody's gonna find out and the repercussions from that.

Stephanie: the discrimination, the thing we fight, the same thing that holds us together seems to be what drives us apart, you know, I mean the fact that we're all here (referring to retreat) and we're all trying to enjoy the rights of America and the rights to own your own company and the right to do with it as you please, you know, all of these different things that we've done, you still find these idiots who insist, you know, you're in America, speak American,

Angela: Well, you know we can't always fix the car when the car is broken down. A lot of the male dominated things although we do do some of those kind of things. There are some things that we just aren't always able to do for them that, to, they just have to have someone with a little more muscle behind them to do. Um, negatives of growing up in a lesbian family? Maybe less exposure to men, positive role model men. Like I said their father is not the best role model he's had his share of trouble. I just haven't had enough relationships myself outside of gay men, straight men that I've been comfortable to allow my children.... Although I've always made sure my girls know that there are good men out there, you will find them. Now I've had a few short term relationships with straight men in 12 step programs that I've had a chance to have my kids exposed to but they've been pretty, really short lived. So I guess if there is anything I'd say, a drawback has been it's probably been that. They've been mostly exposed to women.

Denise: well, you know I think, uh, from my perspective that any child is going to have a hard time with their biological parents not being together you know. So, you know I think it's been real difficult for them uh, as well as I think it is for any child not to have both of their parents, you know, together. I think that although I have a lot of respect for lesbian families and all different kinds of other families, I really think that mother and father is very important to children um, and not in the sense that a marriage is necessary but to me a child is a part of both no matter how you slice it they are still a part of the mother and part of the father and I think that, I think that they miss that, you know I really do. And that's, some of my own issues are building into that so (referring to her family of origin)

Jennifer: Right now I don't think so. I think, I don't know if there could be, I don't know, I think we're very, I'm very cautious, you know when I'm with other people and they say is that your daughter and I say I claim her because I don't want to put her in a situation that she could end up being rejected or hurt or what, whatever either. Um, you know, in that other city it was just oh yeah Nancy has two mom's, it was just more of, but that was people we grew up with in the sense of from her kindergarten years on and it was just much more of a that's just how it is, you know. But I'm just very cautious I don't do anything that would put her into a jeopardy situation. So I, I don't know if there's disadvantages, I don't know, I don't think so.

Laura: I think there is always the fear that people will tease her and that it's not, and that they'll take it all the way to the level of her. That our choice also in their eyes makes her less of human being and you just, you don't want that for your child which is somehow, not being invited to a certain event, But, that's never been an issue at least out there (the other city) people are willing to, I was the girl scout leader (laughter) of her troupe and everybody in the troupe knew what our family was like and I was the girl scout leader for two years, you know, and it's, they trusted those girls to spend the night at a sleep over and all of that kind of stuff, so, I don't think that she's experienced it. Here I'm a little more careful, I am. I just don't want her to be seen less than who she is because of us. I think that I've always managed to make options available so that she knows what, that there are men out there and that they play an important role in her life and that they have a different relationship and so, I wouldn't want her to not have that and so I think that I've made sure that she did see and have relationships with men. If we would want to have, it would be a concern if she wasn't having that, if they were limited in her world from always being there, that would concern me but I haven't made that choice, you know, I've made the effort.

Claire: Hmm, I guess just societal reaction from peers or possibly from teachers or from peers, I think. I think I fear peers parents more than I fear parents, um, because if the peers are going to cause my children trouble they've learned it from the parents and the parents are big people and big people hurt. And, uh, the kids wouldn't be a threat to my kids if they hadn't been raised, taught to hate or to, to, yeah, learn to hate I guess, um, I can't, I can't think of anything else negative about being raised in a LHH personally (chuckle). Um, I think that uh some of the male influence, especially for male children may sometimes may be missing but, uh, right now we have that taken care of with the roommate situation (note: a male gay friend was living with them at the time of the interview). But, uh, I know the kids have really enjoyed having him around and, uh, I think it is important for the guys to have male role models in their lives and it doesn't have to be necessarily have to be a gay man but, uh, I don't, at the same time think that their dad is the greatest role model either, he uh, he uh, drinks too much and he's very often verbally abusive to the two of them and to his girlfriend and that's not exactly what I want them to see of, you know, the kind of man they should aspire to be so, uh, and my dad isn't anybody I want them to try to be like either, sometimes I think they might miss some of that and they might have to figure out to be, uh, a man without having a particular daddy role model, but, I'm not so sure that's a bad thing either (chuckle), I'm really not so sure that's a bad thing and, I, I would like to believe there doesn't need to be such a large difference between men and women but there sure has been in the past and I think it's also a learned behavior and if, if, uh my children tend to be less than typical of males then more power to them (chuckle). I think I'm a less than typical female so that works for me.

Patti: Well, since we are raising males, they don't have a male role model, most of their teachers are female, their parents are female, um, it's interesting teaching somebody to pee in the toilet standing up and they wonder why you don't do that. Um, they don't have anyone to show them how to basically to do sports and outdoorsy manly man bonding

stuff. They've got a family friend who tries but lets face it he's a flaming queen so it's not quite the same, um, John was disappointed that we didn't have anyone to do something for on father's day, his daycare had a picnic the day after and he was upset that he didn't have someone to take. It wasn't so much that his dad wasn't here it's that our friend Damon wasn't available to go (chuckle) and we didn't have a good substitute really.

Charlotte: Not really problems just, um, I think they need to have a man around just for some, to know how to have a relationship with a man of any kind, you know, uh, they see their dad, you know, not very often but when they do it's not good usually, you know he treats them like dirt and if that's the only idea they have a man then that's not going to be good, you know, so.

Joan: Hmmm, ...she had dated this guy, X, and he told fag jokes and stuff and he didn't like them (gays/lesbians) at all and he'd call them names. Well my daughter didn't say nothing, you know, and so, therefore it would have been a real problem. And in the future say they don't make it, something happens and she's got a child and she's dating again you know it's a big thing to say, hey my mom because if you can't accept her mother and her partner then what kind of relationship would you have with my daughter so therefore that is a big problem is acceptance from the other opposite sex of your children. In relationships, major problem -other than that, that's it, there is no other.

Kasey: my son doesn't have a role model which is sad because there are not grandparents or uncles or anyone around to give him a role model, there's no male role model that's really a significant person in his life and my daughter doesn't have a positive male role model also which is something they need. They need to see men as being positive, neat, wonderful people, too,... I hate that lesbian male bashing crap, you know, my son is a male, he's going to grow up and turn into a man and I sure don't want him to feel that I hate men or that men or bad or that, you know, and um, now that I've been with Mary it's been really cool because her dad is this wonderful man, her family's totally accepting of me, her mother is having problems but she lets me in and she's trying very hard, you know so there's a lot of effort there, but her dad is just this wonderful guy and Charles and him just really click and Chris and him do too so now there is a male role model coming into there life which is really good and then her sister's fiancée is this really neat guy and, um, he's fun and both my kids really like him a lot so they're know coming into having that. But for this whole time they haven't, I think that's been a real negative, you know. And they both wish their dad was involved and he's not and that's been kind of sad and they don't blame it on me because they've seen all the effort I've put into trying to allow him to be involved and um, I don't care if he ever pays me a penny, that has nothing to do with it, I just wish he'd write them a letter every now and then or, you know, have some contact with them, they're great kids, you need to know these kids and you know they have heard from that which is a shame I wish they didn't have that kind of hurt but that was kind of unavoidable.

Mary: um, I think that, um, them being already socially withdrawn kids, I think it maybe

makes them even more um,... maybe (when) they get older, they start dating,... I know that the girl child has already, she's just 11, has already expressed some concerns about, you know, when I'm dating, you know, when I come on in is it already going to be my lesbian mom and her partner or kind of just have mom meet him and go from there (chuckle), you know, so how can I, and she's just 11 and she's already thinking about this a little.

Cathy; I honestly think that they're um, one, as they're coming of age as an adolescent, I think that having two women living together who are obviously intimate and sharing parental roles will be a problem if it isn't already. Now currently he defends himself and shrugs it off and accepts it but there's going to be that age where it's going to be a problem which I believe is why you really have to come out to them way before they hit that age. To establish yourself and the normalcy before it becomes a question of his personal identity, because you have to separate his identity from your identity and that's hard to do unless you start early, personal self esteem.

Keisha: Their dad, their fathers on both sides. I guess cause we have hurt both father's feelings by turning out the way we have, they try and hurt us and the kids have to see that, that's the worst part I see about it is, because I'm not with him anymore and I'm with a woman, he, it seems like every time he turns around he's trying to hurt me, and he does it with the kids.

Suzanne: Stuart is very ashamed of it, he feels very ashamed that I'm with another woman and he has told me straight forward that he doesn't think it's right and that he's afraid his friends will make fun of him and uh, he's embarrassed, so I feel like that's kind of made him feel a little bit inhibited but I don't think it's something, he goes to counseling so he is dealing with all this and he has someone to help him besides me, um, but you know it's been hard for him, uh, I just, I think that right now they're so young they haven't had too many problems with it but I think that as they get older there's gonna be some things that we have to deal with as far as peers go because kids are so awful to each other and they try to pick anything they can, um, to pick on somebody and that would be a real good one (chuckle) you know, your mom's a faggot (chuckle), you know. But, you know you just have to, I guess that's why we talk to them and try to have the experiences with them that they do and try and build a good foundation for them here so that when they get slammed like that in public they can come home, vent it out and know that they're still good people and that the people who said that are trash and it was stupid for them to say that and maybe eventually their eyes will be open and they'll realize it doesn't matter, you know.

Kendra: well I think that they've probably suffered from some discrimination, see a lot more anger but on the other hand sometimes I think that makes you stronger, makes you a more well rounded person, you can see that there is diversity out there and it has to be dealt with, he has to be, you know you have to come to terms with your feelings on it and realize that you're not in control of the world and, you know, so I, I think that whatever problems it poses, it's like everything else, what is the old saying what doesn't kill you

makes you stronger

Traci: no, I don't see that um, I really don't see that she has any problems at all, if anything it seems to have made her more aware of people, it seems to have made Mary more aware of people, um, she talks about um, she knows some, I, I really even think that some of the, maybe one or two of the kids she runs around with are gay and she openly talks about that with us and uh, you know, she doesn't mind having those conversations and she doesn't mind those people, she doesn't seem to judge people, she just seems to be, you know, that's just who they are, you know, everybody's okay.

Kay: having to limit his activities because he can't bring them home, you know, he can't bring the kids over, you know like maybe have a birthday party here, it would be too awkward for him, he can only invite certain kids, we always have the birthday parties at public places, uh, you have to maneuver your life a little bit because, we're not worried about offending anybody because we're not ashamed of who we are but we are worried about causing a problem, you know, having some person with certain religious beliefs saying something, I mean, I always worry about legal things, somebody saying well I just don't think that's appropriate over there why don't we get a look into that, you know and somebody meddling into my business whether I'm fit to be a parent, they've said already I guess in this state that I'm not fit if I wanted to foster a child, I'm not fit to be a teacher, I'm not fit to adopt a child, you know, that's ridiculous ...but um, he has to limit himself and that's the thing he has to give up and there are certain things he can't participate in like the father son stuff, he begs off of that and uh, he's going to need to be careful when he starts dating girls, he does like girls, so I know that's the way he's going but he'll have to be careful when he chooses them because he already told me, I'll have to choose people that are not, you know, gonna have a huge problem with my mom and he already told me if she has a huge problem with it then she's not the right girl for me, you know,

Tish: Probably, um, probably not enough male influence, but uh, we try to work that in, he doesn't seem to desire it but if it's necessary or he feels like he needs it, if we feel like he's lacking that and we make arrangements like, now he plays golf with my dad and he um, every summer he visits his grandfather and when he does that he visits his aunt and his uncle so he gets exposure, he does a lot of male things with his uncle about, you know, hunting and fishing and so he, he's usually gone for six to eight weeks in the summer, so he has exposure there, he hangs out with all the men on the block, the men on the block love him,

Charissa: (sigh), the fact that I've never asked them to lie for me, I've told them that if somebody asked them to tell them the truth, I said save your ass, I said you tell them whatever makes you comfortable, if you want to tell them I am, fine, if you want to tell them I am and you don't like it, tell 'em, I said, I'll hold my own, you don't have to lie for me and I said in my society, in my life and with me I'm happiest here and I said but I'm not going to torture you with it, you know, I'm not going to be blatantly gay so that you have to be embarrassed because I show up in town and somebody is whispering behind my back and that does periodically happen, they'll be somebody who wises off as I turn my back and I know very well what they're saying, butch or dyke or whatever they can't

spell that particular day and everything but I think that the stress of them thinking that they have to lie, I think that a person needs to go to them and say you don't have to, but it's okay in this society but in this little town you need to be more careful and I said if you want to tell one person that's fine...But, I think it's been hard on them in that era between 13 and 15 maybe era there that their scared that, because your family is different whether you were with a man and you were poor or um,

## Appendix F

### In-Depth Interview

#### HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU TO BE INVOLVED

#### WITH YOUR CHILDREN'S PEERS?

#### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Cherry: Um, pretty important, as much as you possibly can. She's into sports so we, you know, she's been playing soccer this past year and she's going to be spending some time with her father this summer so she's not going to be playing softball like she has in previous years during the summer. Um, but, you know we go and do that, I'm, I was a lot more involved in her school going and being, this is the first year I haven't been able to go to the zoo with her when she goes to the zoo, it's sad but I'm just in the middle of finals and just don't have time to go. Uh, so, I'm involved in her social, yeah I want her to be socially involved as much as possible with her peers and um, feel comfortable...

Denise: I really don't know how to answer that one. It's good to a point right now but as she gets older, you know mom you're getting in the way (chuckle) and also to know, you know what's she doing with her life.

Chris: very, because I need to know for her own protection and not to like, I don't want to rule her life but just to know that she's safe because there's a lot of stuff going on now a days and people aren't, you know a lot of people are well, hey who's your kid hanging out with so and so down the street and that kid could be toking up or you know (chuckle). If your kids friends are doing it then your kids going to be doing it.

Pat: um, somewhat important um, sometimes I'm kind of hesitant because I don't want them to I guess, freak out because you know, some of them don't know or some of them don't even understand you know, any of that yet because they're still at that, you know, elementary school age.

Shirley: I would like to know them but I think that if she had, I think she's got a good enough head on her shoulders that if there was somebody she didn't want us to know that she knew it wouldn't be right. It's not like we're judging her or anything, cause we're not, we're the last people to judge (chuckle) but even at, at their house she's had friends



over like even with me there which is good, so she feels comfortable with that and she knows that.

Kelcy: Very important, I have to know who they are, you know, I, I before she goes to stay the night with anybody I meet them and their parents, uh, and I, I have a pretty good sixth sense of, of, you know being able to figure people out if, if it's a good environment for her, and what I think and, uh so I have to know those things and I'm, I wanna know who she's hanging out with

Stephanie: um, gosh, I'm really involved with his peers, I don't know how important it is, um, we've been involved with them always, I, I love kids and Jan gets a bit annoyed by them and we have our differences, you know. I don't know how important it is to Tony either, he doesn't seem, he doesn't really whenever he wants to be with them, he wants to be with them and, um, the more I'm permitted to say hi and bye and watch when I want but, you know they want to do their own thing so, um, I found that with some of the older kids, now that he's getting a little bit older, I have a tendency to kind of listen in a little more often and be a little more careful about, you know, what they're doing and, and who's influencing and saying what and, um, I've never banned him from anybody but their are a couple children that I've been concerned about his exposure to them because of the things that they've been exposed to and, um, we, we seem to have done pretty smoothly by just talking to Tony about it, he still plays with the same kids it's just that he's aware too of their problem.

Angela: It was very important because I felt like my oldest daughter especially was at high risk for use of drugs and she did engage in some sexual behavior that I didn't believe was safe. So it was very important that I know her friends and that I have some kind of influence as far as bringing people around that might give her some other choices as to friends. Rather than just running with the gang type people or the drug people or the ones who were sexually abusive and overly active. I wanted her to know that there were other kinds of people in the world. So, I did try to be somewhat involved. Like I took an active part in helping them with social groups, um, at the church. We had for a long time when the children were little a gay parents group that allowed them exposure to um, other kids who were in the same living situation. We'd have people come, like nurses to come talk to them about AIDS awareness, we'd have just social events for the kids so that they could exposed to that, um, I, I was active at her school to the level that she would allow me to be. That's kind of where she picked up her "bad friends", I guess I could call them although no kids are really bad. Um, and she didn't really want me involved there so I did the best that I could to stay involved?

Denise: very important. We met all their friends and where they lived and meet their parents and that didn't help them always the way we wanted it too but as often as we could as much as we could we knew who their friends were, where they lived and had at least some, uh contact with their parent.

Marie: Very. Um, Because that's part of their life and that's our circle, our family circle

includes their friends, my friends. I mean, not that I don't intrude on their private life but they are, they are an important part of our family.

Jennifer: With her peers? It's not because it has to be her call, because she's in a situation where if it's comfortable for her then fine and if it's not comfortable for her then I basically bow out. Um, it's not, I mean I like to know who they are and what they are doing but I don't have to be involved on any level.

Laura: I like to know who they are, I like, um, to know them enough to trust the judgment, you know, I don't mind if she brings them over here, if she's going to go to their place I want to know who they are and what their parents

Claire: as far as being involved with them its, it's not a, I don't put much of importance on that at this point. um, probably, I think it's going to become more important to me to, to know his peers and know who they are and what they're all about as people, but at six no, not as much (chuckle).

Patti: with their peers, really important. Um, when I was growing up, our house was the one the kids always came to, I think the main reason was so our mom could keep an eye on us and I want to be the same way. I like knowing what they're doing and who the people are in their lives, also it does give me a degree of control over what goes on.

JoAnn: very important, um, she doesn't like it but oh well (chuckle). The oldest girl, whenever she started having problems that's where the uh problem came in, uh, she was running with a really bad crowd and I just kept having to tighten my foot and tighten my foot and tighten my foot, she just decided she couldn't handle it any more and she went to live with my mom, which was really the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, it was harder than deciding to finally be what I want to be and get a divorce was letting her go to my mother.

Joan: Very important. I like to know who she's hanging with and most of the time you know I don't, I'm always friends with the friends she's friends with (laughter) you know so um, I don't always approve of some of her friends actions but, they're her friends. My mom didn't like a lot of my friends but I did so, I give her that freedom.

Karen: When she has them that's good, you know I like to know where their going, what, if their going to do drugs, whatever, alcohol and all that crap. I don't, I don't want any of those problems. I kind of like to know, you know know them and meet them at least up front and stuff and then after that we just kind of have to trust her, you know.

Kasey: very, I know all their friends and I'm the cool mom as far as I can tell, yeah, with all their friends, we have a lot of fun and you know, I want to know who all their friends are and they don't ever go to anybody's house without me meeting the family first and knowing who the household people are and I usually go and sit with the parents and talk to them first. They've always thought that was a little bit annoying, the children have but

they don't go anywhere without me knowing where they're going and who their with and definitely don't spend the night at someone's house unless I know the parents somewhat well. I do not want them at an alcoholic or drug addicted household, I do not want them exposed to any kind of, um, molestation's or I don't want them watching violent, gross, chop em up movies on TV there are certain thing that I do not agree with and I want to know that the people that they are at for the evening is at least within the ballpark of where I am, they don't have to be totally by any means, where I am but they have to at least respect where I am and know what my parameters are with my children, what I will and will not accept. I'd like it to be a non-smoking household or if they're going to smoke I want for them not to smoke in my children's face, you know, at least don't smoke in the kid's room, when my kid's there, that kind of thing. I'm kind of particular about that type stuff so I want to know where they're going and what they're going to be exposed to...-uh, I don't really say anything, I just pretty much go over there and see what they're like and if a friendship develops and their kid wants to come over and spend the night at my house I let the parents know that I'm a lesbian so that there won't ever be a legal issue that they can bring up to me later, you know. I kind of let them get to know me and realize I'm okay and get to know my kid and realize my kid's okay and see that they interact well with their kid, then if it feels like the relationship is blooming then I just kind of let them know. I never ever have a kid spend a night at my house without the parent knowing.

Mary: um, well actually it's hard, they don't have a lot of peers but, um, I would like to, I would like to see that happen, you know and, um, some of the friends that they do have I have known and um, and I do know them and ... but I'd kind of like to get to know their peers and get to know who they hang out with and I try to talk some, I get to learn more through their mom, then I do through them,

Beverly: well, their friends come over, you know, I don't get involved as far as activities with them but um, I, I, I am concerned about what type of friends they have, you know Alex had a couple of friends that uh, were little delinquents and that was, and that wasn't a good, I didn't like that at all 'cause I didn't want, he's very um, impressionable at times and I didn't want him to be, uh, sucked into that type of um personality, cause he's like a sponge and sometimes, you know he uh, so having, having good friends is important, you know, good influence is important.

Cathy: I'm highly involved with their peers well, with baseball, I mean I go to every game, I go to every practice, I like their friends and we have like end of the year parties for Katie and her group, I, they come over here, they go over there and we're just very, Church, same way, their friends are either here or we go over there.

Keisha: to me, I like to know the children they're playing with cause I don't want them running around them with a bunch of, I don't know what word you use, the easiest word for me to use is thugs. I don't want my children in a gang, that's why I don't let them run free, I ask them where they're going and usually I've met that child and I go over there and try to meet their parents or whoever. I try to meet their parents to cause I don't want

them over where, even though where you know people things can happen with adults, you know what I'm talking about. I don't want it to happen. It's always important to know who your kids are hanging with, not running free, not, well can I go play well go ahead and go play, I ask who you going to play with, where are you going and then I'll tell them if they can or can't go.

Suzanne: I want to know who they are and who they're with that's real important, especially with Stuart getting older, he's 11 now and he's doing that hormone thing and he's also, it's been proven to me at times that 11 years old is when children start experimenting with sex and drugs and I want to know who he's with and what he's doin' and if he's with kids who are doing that I really don't want him to be around them and I will let him know that, of course ultimately the decision is up to him but he also has the responsibility of dealing with me when he finds out that I found out that he was with them

Kendra: I mean it's important to me that I know who they are and that I see them occasionally, it's not all that important to me to go and do things with my, of course my children are older, you know, um, but it's not all that important, now when they were younger it was very important, we did, you know, I was team parent, brownie leader, girl scout leader, uh, cub scout mom, soccer mom, you name it, but as they got older, I still see their friends, they come and go with them but, I don't really go a lot of places with them anymore...and basically if I want to have a good conversation with my children or meaningful, or one other than what did you do in school today, I don't know, that kind of thing then you kind of have to know who their friends are and kind of keep up with their lives and you know where they went and what they did

Traci: (sigh) well it wasn't important, it should have been, I can see that now but I just really didn't, I guess I didn't pay attention to especially like my son when he was living up here, I didn't pay close enough attention to the kids he was running around with and what they were into and, you know things like that.

Kay: um, not, not really, um, he's a pretty good judge of character, I'm not, I mean I'm friendly to them but it's not that important to me I mean, there his friends and as long as they come over here and behave themselves and they're not bringing him down some bad road, you know, if they're doing something negative, your know, kids that are in trouble or anything like that but he doesn't pick kids like that, you know, he's got a good sense of character for other people.

Tish: Um, we always make it a point to find out how comfortable they're going to be and um, with the young man who's having the problem at this point, we're very involved with him um, regular outings, we take him to theater, um we expose him to a lot of cultural things and we're very involved with him, um, his other friends, he has another friend that he plays golf with and things like that that we're still getting to know, we don't know him really well yet, but he's getting ready to move so we won't have an opportunity with him but for the most part the one friend that's really important to him, we're pretty involved with.

Charissa: I told Cora, this, this is exactly what I told her I said I want to know your friends Cora but I don't want to go to supper with ya (chuckle), that's exactly what I told her I said I'd kind of like to know who you're running with and I'd like to meet them I said but I don't need to know them like my best friend, I said I don't want them to be my best friend, you don't want them to be my best friend, I said they're your friends and that's all that matters, I said now I don't want you running with the trashiest whatever and I said if I think you're running with the trashiest whatever I will tell you but otherwise, not much of a problem, they were raised to speak their mind and they're as opinionated as I am. I think any parent needs to know who their kids are running around with because they have such an influence on them, they make a difference of where they go, what they dress, what they drink, what they do and you meet one kid who's parents don't care.

Noel: With my own it was very important, everybody came to my house uh, and I allowed it, I encouraged it cause as long as everybody came to my house, I knew what mine were doing uh, I am not particularly involved with Cora's friends per se, I guess you could say I was more involved with some of Ed's buds, um,

## Appendix G

### In-Depth Interview

HAVE YOU COME OUT TO YOUR CHILD?

IF YES, HOW DID HE/SHE REACT?

IF NO, WHY NOT?

### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Chris: She was probably about seven when I came out you know because, she'd hear us talk and a lot of our friends were, are gay and had, were gay at the time and she's kind of been raised around it so she's never learned that it's an unacceptable thing, you know, she hears about it at school but she's living her life and she's, you know, and she can judge for herself whether it's okay, you know, she's never had any problems so, yes she knows.

Kelcy: I came out to her she responded: (sigh) Shock, horror (chuckle). I, she was very, very angry. Uh, wouldn't talk to me for a long time, several days and I knew what she was angry about but I wanted her to bring it up so I let her alone and, for a little bit and then slowly I started saying, girl child what's wrong, you know, talk to me, you don't need to be keeping this in and you know, told her all the bad things that could happen, look at your mother (chuckle) that kind of thing. Finally after a while she started talking to me and I explained to her, um, the problem was the girl, the lady, the lady I was seeing had told her we were just friends and she had lied to her from the beginning and that didn't help matters any and I tried to explain to her why she had said that she didn't want to hear it, um, she wasn't going to accept it. After a while she wasn't angry with me anymore, she wished I would had told her instead of her finding out the way she did but she wasn't angry with me any more but she still didn't like the other, she didn't like my partner.

Stephanie: uh, he responded really well until he got input from the outside. Tony responded by saying he got it, he understood, I just explained that sometimes, you know the things that his daddy feels for his daddy's girlfriend sometimes, you know, mommy might feel that way for another person and that person might be a man or a woman ...and we painted some yellow people and some people with blue hair and some people with breasts and some people with penis' and things that were different on the paper, you

know, we'd draw masculine figures and feminine figures and I'd say, anyone of these people could be somebody I could fall in love with if it's the right person.

Angela: their first remark was, mommy if that's what makes you happy, we want you to be happy that's what we want you to do and that was wonderful. At the time they weren't dealing with their own sexuality and I think we didn't really run into any problems with my sexuality until that point. When they started to have their own sexual feelings I think they started having more of a problem with it. Maybe because you can't really deny that there is sex going on if there is a gay relationship there and I think every kid wants to think of their parents as asexual. Right? When they begin that. But in a situation where the parent was straight and then they came out I think, that you have to, even a child has to admit that there is sex is going on and I think that was difficult for them.

Denise: uh, they were positive, I think the youngest one uh, didn't really understand um, really what it meant. But I had become really good friends with the kids before they really knew exactly what our relationship was about and that was, one small problem that we had since I had been kind of, almost a playmate with them, you know, that uh, we had to define who I was and who our family unit was once we started living together you know. It was a little difficult you know but (wind - indecipherable) and the kids they say, this is my mother and this is my other mom, uh

Marie: They said, "that's cool mom", "if that make's you happy, it's cool". yeah. I was scared to death and they just "uh, what's the problem mom" (laughter)

Grass: Well, like I said they don't talk much about their feelings, you know you ask them are you okay with this and they say, yeah no problem, why do you make such a big deal out of this, it's not a big deal (laughter), you know it's cool. They say, 'we're cool, we're cool'.

Jennifer: I think she responds fine. I don't, I don't, I mean I think it's, we're not openly what, affectionate or anything in situations where there are other people around and I don't think it's an issue for her, I think she knows that we will, we will protect that and not embarrass her.

Laura: Well, the moment we moved in as a family of three, we began to set up where my partner and I shared a bed and a bedroom and hers was next store and, you know, I mean, that was just always the way it was... at some point we talked to her a little bit about, not every family might look just like ours, you know, so she would have been five when we first said some things. Somewhere in early elementary school, I remember that we checked the library book out, Heather Has Two Moms and she's been through a period of wanting to have a brother or sister and you know we talked, you know, more then. On the level that she could accept pretty much all along. The amount of information shared changes over time but there's always been an understanding there. Right now her plans are she's going to marry a man and she's going to have children and, and, and stuff and I just say well I hope you can find someone that will allow you to be the best that you can

be within a relationship and, and, uh, and male is easier (chuckle) and

Claire: But John understands and he knows, but uh, I just for a time, I came out when they were two and four and never attempted to hide anything from them at all so it's just kind of always been like that at all so it's just kind of always been like that probably at this point for them and children how far back they can remember and I would think John would just, would uh, think, I've just always been this way (chuckle) so, uh, there wasn't really any big moment were I had to sit them down and say, mom's a lesbian..

JoAnn: (the youngest) I really don't think would comprehend it, um, but she's very open and tells everybody that she has two mommies, the middle one, I could, she's my emotional child and I really, I just don't think she's ready yet, um.

Charlotte: (has not come out) ...just the other day, the 11 year old saw something about, about it on TV about it, and uh, I guess she saw someone kissing or something and she was like, ooh gross, you know and we're like, uh, you know, I, I don't know, we just haven't felt comfortable with doing it I guess, I know we need to but I, I don't know what we need to do.

Joan: Uh-huh. That was a scary thing to do. Well, when we first got her, you know, I told her, I was handling it with, you know I was very, very gentle and I said, I'm with Karen, and we're not just friends. You know I had to, you know and I said, and I was just like, please understand, I mean I was just. And she was like well mom I kind of figured that anyway, you know. And she says as long as your happy. But you know my daughter had some problems at first you know it, it, at first she thought it was gross even... my daughter wanted to be with me at all costs. You know, I love you mom and we'll work it out kind of thing. So...

Karen: She just learned to accept it,... we really left it up to her if she wanted to tell her friends or not or whatever but if anybody came over to the house they were, you could tell, I mean, but it was kind of left up to them and if they accepted it, it was fine if not we kind of left it up to her if she wanted to keep them as friends or not, whatever

Kasey: So their whole life they were raised knowing that mom likes women, it was never an issue, there was never a coming out time it was just common knowledge, you know, just kind of odd that way but I was with daddy, you know, and I loved daddy and I still love their daddy, I mean he's a special person to me, I just can't live with him, you know (chuckle), so.

Beverly: well, we did, haven't, we haven't blurted it out and said, you know, we're gay, uh, but conversation in the family, I'm, I'm almost 100% sure that they know, we just don't say, point blank tell them that we're gay... they've never asked and I don't have a problem with telling anybody that I'm gay if they ask me but nobody just, just nobody asks! How many people have come up to you and asked you directly if you're gay.



Cathy: no, I wouldn't say, not exactly, I think I have with Alex but I don't think he got it or wouldn't accept it and he shut down some ways, he didn't, it was like a black out thing he didn't want to process. I don't know how else to explain it. So I figured it wasn't time for him, he wasn't ready to hear, to hear it, pushed in his face. I know when we first started they wanted to know why we were living together and the answer was because we love each other, now these are children you have to understand so I don't know what you're supposed to say but, and we went along that line quite awhile and I believe he questioned me sometime last year and I, I said, well what do you think and that's when he shut down and so I, I said think about it Alex, think about it, what do you think and he goes I don't know and I don't want to talk about it anymore. I said okay, we'll take that, 'till next year (chuckle), he's not ready. If he was ready, I mean he knows but he's not ready.

Keisha: um, she was probably, well I really never came out to her cause she was only three but she knows since I've been with her um, George, I asked him, well, his father told him probably when he was seven that I was. That he divorced me because I was kissing a girl and that's not right and I shouldn't be kissing other people and I shouldn't be kissing girls, so that he, George learned that when he was about seven. Probably four with her cause when she came with me, when she started hanging around with me and Suzanne, she knew, we didn't really have to explain it to her.

Suzanne: S: uh, ever since we've had this relationship we've had to talk about it cause we didn't have any other choice, my ex would call and yell and make allegations and her ex would, I mean it just, they know, we've just been open about it, we've always shared the same room, we, I guess you could say we haven't tried to hide it, we've been discreet but we haven't tried to hide it from em. Um, because, because when you start sneaking around they think something's wrong with it, you know so we haven't been sneaky, Stuart has a real problem with that, why can't you and Keisha just be friends, she's okay but why do you have to be gay (chuckle). And I'm like well son, I don't know either, my life would be easier if I could just blow this off, you know but I happen to care very much for this person and that makes it very difficult to just not do it and he's like, whatever (chuckle),

Kendra: basically all of Traci's children are aware, it was probably was not a pleasant thing cause she and her husband fought over it a lot before, they were aware from the very beginning, my children, the one who lives here is aware but we don't really discuss it, not because we can't but because it's just, for her she was so young when we became a family, this is just life, this is the way it is, you know, we're the two people she depends on, we're immediate family and we're her parents and her dad is still her parent but we're her immediate family and the three of us have been together from the beginning the other kids have moved in and out but the three of us have been a family from the beginning and so it's never been in question, it doesn't really come up in conversations, she assumes we're going to be together, that we're going to go together.

Kay: uh, he cried and he said I don't want it, I don't want it. And he cried and, um, I

don't know what happened, I talked to him, he saw that I was happier and then he became sort of folded into the interaction and uh, got to go places and do things and he started to see some of the benefits of it, in that I was happier and uh, I gave him some ultimatums, you know I said uh you have this option if you wanted to, he could go live in this other place, he could, a friend of mine, some relatives or something and he said no, no, no, I'm staying with you, he said this is where I belong, you know and I said okay and you know, we just talked a lot and worked on it and uh when that relationship ended I talked to him about well, I think it would be best if I just didn't do this anymore until you're grown up and gone. When you're grown up and gone then I'll have my own life and that's the way it'll be and he said no, I think that's wrong, and he encouraged me to date and meet someone and, um, he was mature

Tish: We're always aware of that, we always make sure that um, anyplace we go that we're extremely discreet, um, we, we're always open and honest with him about it and we always make sure that he is with us and uh, if there's ever anything that makes him uncomfortable he more than lets us know and, and vice-versa, so uh, it's very open, the whole family is very open about the whole thing because we don't want anybody to be hurt or uh, for him to be, certainly ridiculed at school is of major importance so we're very cautious.

## Appendix H

### HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE YOUR FRIENDS ARE YOUR FAMILY?

#### Selected Exerts

Note: No Real Names Have Been Used.

Cherry: They all accept Denise and I's being and even like I said Kayla is in sports and um, they are learning to be supportive as well. At first they were like oh my god we have lesbians as parents, what do we do and the area of town that Kayla goes to school in is very North, North X, yuppie, rich, all have the, you know nice cars and the nice houses and the nice blah blah blah and they all socially conform. And at first they sorta like we don't know what to do with you but now they're finally starting to, you know, they know that Denise is a part of our life and you can't really hide it when she drops off your kid, you know and Kayla runs up to her just as equally to me and uh, so our friends are very supportive, they don't even question it. Um, and even outside in you know, other social circles, learning.

Chris: pretty supportive, uh, a lot of my friends, most of my friends are gay anyway and I think that's totally weird because in my last relationship I knew, I, I came out before we were divorced but he was okay with it and at first I tried to, you know, for me it was like oh I woke up one day and I was like, all my friends are gay, and you know, uh, maybe, maybe that's not such a bad idea, you know (chuckle). And it was, was, most of my friends were pretty supportive of it so, you know. We're family and Erin (child) you know and especially since Pat and I have gotten together and.

Pat: Around the time we met, well we met and then I moved in kind of quick so, um, basically the only friends I have are mutual friends and, um, co-workers but they're pretty much, they're supportive and they understand and I don't have a problem with any of them.

Angela: um I wish that had more friends that had kids. I have several female couples that have kids but what typically happens in that is from my experience is that their experiences have been much like mine in that they don't have a lot of support from society, from their nuclear family and so what ends up happening is that they have to put so much energy into raising the kids that they don't really have time to be involved with other parents who are in the same boat. So, that support was less than I wished it could have been but we did manage to gather together when the kids were younger a good size core group of gay parents that had kids. So they were involved I guess you would say.

Grass: I'd say very supportive. We go to the , sometimes the xxx Church and you know it's not a really um, dogmatic kind of place, it's very open, all of our friends are there. They're just pretty liberal people. Like we're going to have a family and we're all going to be there and be very supported.

Jennifer: Um, here I have very few, so it's not an issue and they, I'm not out, I'm out to no one.

Claire: well very supportive. Um, a lot of my friends are very, have, being in a college town, you graduate and everybody just kind of goes vumm, and you go wait, where did all my friends go. So uh, we're at, we're all at that point I think now of needing to establish some new friends in the area and uh, um, my partner just moved here just about 2-3 months ago so, um, we'd, I think we're looking to find more couples to do things with....lesbian couples hopefully that would be great. Ones with children would be even better but that's, as you know, hard to find (chuckle).

Patti: very. Very supportive. Um, a couple of my good friends, actually one of my best friends before I moved over here married a man with two children, so we talked the step mom talk for a long time (chuckle) and she helps to keep me sane at times, we've done that for each other a lot. But for the most part their all good, my friends at work will ask how things are going, swimming lessons over yet for the guys, do you need me to take that last application so you can get out of here and get to the daycare? You know, they're good.

JoAnn : um, actually we're not out and when I say we're, I'm meaning Charlotte and I are not really not out to anybody except a couple really close friends, um, and actually they're all really supportive of our relationship, they come quite often (chuckle), we do lots of gatherers, we have cook outs or whatever. They all know that the children don't know, um, even though I say the children don't know I'm, I'm like 98% sure that the 17 year old knows and that was part of the problem at the age of 14 was dealing with that and I think she was getting peer pressure to that fact, um, the 11 year old knows what she sees on TV and of course she makes little comments and so we try to discuss those comments, um, but as far as anything else, I mean they know we sleep in the same bed, they know we're best friends and you know, that's it

Charlotte: really supportive....um, like anytime if we, if we need them to do something for us they're willing to do it. Like we went on vacation a few weeks ago and they came over and fed the dogs and the cats and helped us out that way. Um, they'll watch the kids if we want to go out or whatever, so, stuff like that.

Joan: My friends, I had to leave them behind in Y but they were all 100% supportive, everyone of them. I could just name them all, they were all tight with me, they all knew and they didn't care.

Karen: Um, well, we don't really have any so I don't know (chuckle), we don't have any friends, it's sad, but we don't really. Here we have, we have her boyfriend's aunt is

“family” so like she’s our friend, whatever. But when we see them when we go to X and their cool with it ‘cause it’s all, we’re all kind of all together. The boyfriend and then her mom and all them they’re all pretty much our family, friends, whatever but their the only people we know.

Kasey: very, but I have very few friends, I mean I have a very limited group of friends, I’d say, honestly, I have three friends, and that’s fine with me. I used to have two male friends but then with Mary, um, my friend, Jack just dropped out of the scene pretty much, uh, and now I have my friend (male) and I have (female) and we have a couple friend that, um we enjoy being around but they’re just a hit and miss, every now and then we get together and they aren’t really involved with the children so pretty much it’s just a couple of people that are involved with the children. And they’re fine and a very good friend of mine, Jan, she’s very supportive of me and my children and whatever we do.

Mary: well, um, I don’t really have any friends, so, um, my one friend that I have, I haven’t talked to since we’ve been together pretty much, she doesn’t know anything, she’d be fine with it, but she doesn’t know and it’s just because of our relationship, she got married, she had a kid and, I went over here, she’s at a different University, so, but I’ve known her since HS but I really don’t, as far as friends, most of my friends have been like my family I guess, I’ve been, so that’s we’ve always gone to the fair together, done that kind of stuff together, and gone on trips together, so, I guess that, my cousins and stuff and so that’s, they’ve been, it’s pretty much fine with that I guess.

Beverly: well a lot of friends are in different parts of the country because of my past occupation, so, my working friends really don’t know, my friends at work don’t really know my family and my friends that were in the navy are spread out, I have one friend who stayed with us for a while who’s stationed in another country and she, she liked the family and she, she keeps in contact, and she’s pretty supportive but I don’t believe my other friends really know, not yet anyway.

Keisha: I’ve got quite a few friends that, that are very supportive, I mean (female friend) will watch our kids so we can go out. She’ll watch them for the evening like if me and Suzanne wanted to out and see a movie tonight,

Suzanne: Uh, there’s just a few of my friends who know um, and they’re all very supportive. Isn’t that awful, you only tell people you know will be supportive (chuckle) but that’s what we, I guess that’s how we protect ourselves because we like what we have, uh, Keisha and I value our relationship a lot and um, we want to protect that so we just kind of let people in who know us and who we can trust like the lady who was here earlier, she’s very supportive, the lady that I work with figured out what was going on but she was like, whatever, you know and she’s very supportive too and um, another friend of mine, um, she says just be who are, you know but I think that they can tell that we have the best interest of the kids at heart that we’re not going to doing something to hurt them and if they even suspected that we were going to be inappropriate to the kids they would say something, you know but I think that they know that we’re not going to be awful to

these kids, that we really do care about them.

Kendra: And even the ones who are not necessarily aware that it's a lesbian relationship are all aware that, we have all lived in the same household together for so long that it is like a family, so I would say that everyone that I am friends with or related to, consider s a family, they may not realize in their mind, but they do, but they never, they always question if they don't see us together where the other one is or um, even my parents when they call to talk to me, somewhere in the conversation they always ask how Traci's school is going, is she working, you know, that sort of thing so I think they think they still consider us a family, whether they think about it or not.

Traci: well, like I said, um, we have a friend in x that, she started out as a neighbor of mine when I was married and we were military and she was married to military also and um, we confided in her a long time ago about our relationship and she, you know, she, although she didn't really, I guess condone it, she understood it so she's been kind of the contact point when I was not close to the children, when I was not in x city, you know, she would, she would let me know if something, if I needed to know something or she would just help out with the kids, kind of be a second mom, you know.

Kay: ok, um, I don't have a whole lot of friends really um, because it's hard to, it's awkward, so, um, well, if you have straight friends then it's awkward because then eventually you're gonna get to that point of uh, familiarity where they know more about you than you're comfortable with and you don't know how that's going to go with it. Uh, so you can have friends on some level, more like an acquaintance where you kind of keep your personal life to yourself if, I have a few friends, they're more co-workers that are more knowledgeable about me than that and they're friends but they're kind of at arms length, they're friends with me, they're not friends with my situation and they're polite where they'll ask occasionally, how's everything going or did you all have a good time at this party or something but they don't want to get to close to it, it's kind of like they're afraid they might catch some cooties, um, I have friends that won't go to lunch with me because, alone, only if there's a group, you know there's that perception that while I accept you and I'm not going to criticize you I don't really want to be considered that I'm like you so if I hang around with you then people might get the wrong idea so, I don't have that many friends and we haven't found a lot of uh, uh, I guess for gay people we're kind of conservative, we don't do parades and put stickers all over our cars and you know, we're really discreet and we have a hard time finding people like that who are just regular people not, you know, not brandishing the cause and even though I think that's important I'm not that kind of person, I'd rather just live my life quietly and show by example than, than get to over, overly political, maybe one day when my son's all grown up and I feel that complete safety zone, then maybe I can, you know, be an older lady who's out there with the placards, you know but my son's very concerned about things like that, you know, I don't, we don't even go down to the parade or anything cause he's concerned, well what if the camera shoots on you, what if you're on the news and my friends see it, you know, he's very big concerned, so I don't do it and we have a hard time finding friends that that's okay with, they're either completely closeted professional

people who you never meet, you'll never see because they're so discreet that you'd never know or they're people who are so involved with the community that, you know, we're afraid to be around with them, that they'll out us to people that are of concern to us for employment reasons and different, so it's kind of like, it's hard to meet people, you, you kind of go in between, we're anomalies, we don't fit either way into groups. Now our neighborhood is an exception, everybody on this street knows and they all accept us completely and uh, we socialize mostly with them...uh, we've like to have some more friends that are, are like us but it's hard to find them cause they're like us they're not real out there.

Tish Jones: um, well I guess our friends really encompass this neighborhood and uh, the support here is incredible um, we don't know that there's a person on this street that really doesn't accept us um, while there are a few couples that tend to be more conservative I don't necessarily think it's us, they're like that with all the neighbors, uh, the family next door is like an adopted family, they have a one year, two year old daughter that, she's like our own, we baby-sit her consistently, they have no problem with her being in our home, um, we uh, went to her, we were invited to her baptism, so we're a major part of the families in this area, no one disregards us because of our sexuality at all.

Charissa: not, it's not addressed, they don't want to talk about it, I can be gay if I want to be but I better not be when any of em are around, I don't bring it up, I do not get close to my lover, I do not talk about anything personal about this lover, I'm not allowed to be gay, I can be the friend all day long but I'm not allowed to be gay  
we all know everybody is it's not addressed

Noel: well, in, since we've moved up here there are not that many people that know about it, I have friends still in X state, I have one up in, up North and they're quite aware of the relationship and are very supportive, they like Charissa they think she's really a nice person. Uh, they think she's got the most marvelous sense of humor

## Appendix I

### HOW HAS YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY INFLUENCED YOUR METHOD OF PARENTING

#### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Cherry: in some ways positive. my mother was very much into seeking answers, psychologically making some changes but at the same time she was permissive and she figured we should suffer the consequences and learn by that another main rule that I had while growing up was so long as she didn't, have to deal with the schools it was fine so I couldn't didn't really get really good grades and I couldn't get really low grades I had to be just in the middle round and I didn't like that a whole lot. so it's influenced me in that I'm not as permissive but I'm not the extreme,...my grandmother was the extreme of being overbearing and aggressive whereas I'm sort of in the middle around assertive

Denise: Personally, I kind of had to build on my own parenting skills because I was not raised very well. The rules would always change this way or the other so I kind of built my own skills. I've integrated some of my own you know what I think should be, how a child should be raised they should have their own, you know decisions but they shouldn't be allowed to rule, you know (chuckle)

Chris: They taught me what not to do, chuckle...mom was just not the best parent, I really think she should have waited to have a child or maybe not had a child at all because, I mean, it's a progressive thing, her parents weren't the best of parents either so, it's kind of like gradually, you know. I've learned what not to do.

Pat: as far as my father I guess he was lacking as a parent, And to where as my mother was a strong role in my life and very active in my life. That's where I've, I guess got encouragement and kind of like my guide.

Kelcy: Oh, very much. I mean, my parents growing up were really strict, they used to, punish us very severely as in beating us, uh, I mean razor straps, belts, brooms, whatever they could find...I wasn't going to raise her the same way that I was going to raise her very independent and talk to her and, you know, kind of I guess kind of reason things out the best I could with her. Why this is wrong and why this is right. With my parents it was no it's my way or no way.



Shirley: They've influenced, they do all they can do...my dad did all he could do but, you know, he just wasn't happy... my mom wasn't happy... dad was a student, well my dad was a student teacher and my mom was a student and they had to get married, ok, in those times and they had twin girls and so that was hard on them. But, my great aunt, who I love to death, she, she was always loving unconditionally, As far as parenting, like I said, my dad did his best and, you know, you take the best that you've been experienced to and the worst and then you look around and see the worst in everyone else and to me it, I, it makes me know what I don't want to be. It's like a boss, you know, I've had some pretty bad bosses and it makes me know that I don't want to be that kind of boss. So, I think I take the negative and put it into the positive.

Stephanie: more along the lines of what I won't do and what I very clearly won't do...we don't use any form of physical discipline in our home, we don't feel, we feel like more violence begets violence, we don't allow, we don't have weapons to protect ourselves, uh, we protect ourselves with preventative methods, you know we attempt to, uh, keep the predators outside and us safe inside and that kind of thing and uh, uh, my family was sort of a, the kid was a spare the rod and spoil the child and uh, you know weapons, very, very heavily armed, very physically violent family and ...we both had a lot of abuse in our households as we were growing up and, um, I think we both just kind of completely steered away from it ...found that it's a far more effective method to uh, show the child how far they can get without becoming physical, you know, let you, use your brain to work it out instead of becoming violent so.

Angela: I think probably I parent a lot the way my parents parented...but I did have a lot of input from therapist that helped me to be a little bit less authoritarian. But I do think that how I was parented in that I was never told that being gay was bad. There are societal things like that that my parents never said that allowed me from the very onset to be openly gay to the kids. So I feel very fortunate about that.

Jan: Um, pretty good, a lot. Uh, especially my mom, not really my dad but...Just everything overall, and, she's a good mom.

Denise: My family of origin was they're strictly undisciplined, I guess you could say...Very uh, you never really knew what the rules are or when the rules were gonna change and uh, it's still that way...I say strictly undisciplined by, well, what mean is like sometimes the rules are very strict and sometimes the very exact rules doesn't apply at other times.

Marie: just through example that's...in a positive way through example and offering unconditional love

Laura: some of it is to do the opposite of what I experienced from my family, I think the biggest influence has been, not repeating the patterns....I grew up in a system where we didn't talk about feelings ...kind of recognizing the impact of life upon her, you know recognizing that even though as a little kid you remember stuff, you notice stuff even if

you don't talk about it you're aware of what's happening...I do that with my daughter, help her be aware, you know, what's happening in life..but, I didn't have that kind of awareness of life growing up.

Grass: I guess my grandmother, my paternal grandmother, and both my grandmothers were somebody who would be there to listen...but it's hard to put into words because I struggled with my parents for many years but still I think that they have had a positive influence.

Jennifer: what I grew up in influences what I do and I have to try and change what I do with Nancy because of what I grew up with so I think it's definitely influenced...put downs, um, violence definitely, there was a lot of violence in my family, those kind of things. I try to be more positive.

Claire: I'm trying to give my children more choices than I had... I was raised in a very strict household. Strict in, we just didn't think about disobeying, we didn't think about having an original thought, it was their way or not, at all...I'm not real big on spanking either, I think that's just, that just teaches people that big people can hit little people but it doesn't do much ...yeah (spanked) but a, very occasionally, it was not a frequent thing, we knew we were in big trouble ..we had decent childhood's, we were raised to know right and wrong, my children, I think have a good sense of right and wrong...I' rather him (son) tell me about something and, uh, be able to discuss it than try to hide it and I spent so many of my childhood lying to my parents to, to please them, would not tell them about certain behaviors, certain things I had done because I knew that it would disappoint them, told them what they wanted to hear and became very good at it and I don't want that with my children (chuckle).

Charlotte: mom was like real quick to jump on ya and tell ya how it was and I have a tendency to do that. My dad was real cool so I try to be more like he was...they believed in spanking,

Patti: oh they very definitely influenced it...I hear my parent's out of my mouth all the time...Um, my father was very authoritarian, he said something and he expected you to do it and why are you asking questions, why is it not done and I find myself doing that same thing and mostly I'm okay with that, I think it freaks Claire out a little more than it does me...my mom did this whole passive-aggressive routine and I catch myself doing that too, telling the kids to do something that they've not done, I may turn into my father briefly and yell and scream and then and then later on I sit down and say fine, fine, sigh...I also find myself responding to questions the way my dad did. I remember once when I was little asking why something did something and I wanted it this way because of this kind of answer and I got this 30 minute long explanation and I really hurt his feelings because I finally said I just want an answer I don't want to know the whole thing and I do the same things with the kids. If they ask something I tell them everything they could never want to know about it.

JoAnn: a lot, I'm from a country home, mom stayed at home when we were younger, dad

always worked and mom stayed at home, we did all the activities, girl scouts, ball, everything....discipline to a certain point, um, I can only remember one spanking in my life, I wish I could say that for my kids but I can't, um, only one and I was six and I told a lie, I still remember that, very vividly...our family was uh, pretty close, to a certain point. My dad had a really bad car wreck 24 years ago and that kind of changed everybody's life, um, he went Um, both of my parents were very active with the kids, with us kids...As far as discipline, as far entertainment wise, it's pretty much the same, my folks used to go dancing, I like to dance

Joan: They influenced me a great deal. My parents respected my personality, I was free to be me...I had a really good relationship with my mother, she's my buddy, she still is but I can't reveal that one little aspect of who I am to her - she could not handle it...I'm an only child, all my grandparents are dead.

My friends were my family because I was an only child...my parents were stricter than I am. I don't know, maybe that's why I'm more lenient with my daughter...I wasn't the one who had to be in by 9 o'clock I was the one in the middle and then I had the friends who stayed out till 1 or 2 and I was always in the middle my parents said well anything that happens after midnight is nothing good anyway you know

I used some of their, the way they raised me, some of their attributes and mixed it with my own to work it out for myself but a lot of times I look back now and my parents were right in a lot of things they did and at the time I thought that was just the most ludicrous thing I'd ever heard, um, but, it wasn't when you get older you know they're doing it for your best interest...Sometimes I catch myself saying exactly like what my mother said...I take a little bit of what they did, add it to my own who I am and come out with I think a pretty good relationship with my daughter

Karen: They raised me up with good values and morals and all that whatever but I am also more open minded so didn't influence me in that and all...I was raised real super strict military, really strict Southern Baptist, so...Super strict military, yes sir, no sir, stand at attention, the whole nine yards. I was pretty much ready for boot when I went

Kasey: not a whole lot because I really don't have any contact with my immediate family, I've seen my mother for the first time in like ten years last Thanksgiving and so, um, from going back to childhood experiences it's made it where I do not want to discipline the way they disciplined....It's made it where I don't like to be yelled and, you, I didn't like being yelled and screamed at so I don't yell and scream at my kids, um, ...we don't spank, we don't have any hands on discipline at all, um, because we had a very hands on discipline style as children, so I kind of took an opposite approach and sometimes I wonder if there's not a medium, you know somewhere there's a midline but I went to the opposite extreme of what my parents were like...my parents, my father was a strict authoritarian, ...my mother was a very strict religious woman, we were at church every time the doors were opened...spanking was almost a daily event, being hollered at was common, being pulled up by our hair was common it was a very abusive household and they've even gone so far as to admit that if they had us today and behaved the way

they did, we would have been taken away from them. So they realize it was an abusive household, um, ...and it wasn't much of a relationship between kids and parents it was they were the parents and we were the kids, it was the whole you are to be seen and not heard, um, children are there to, you know, obey and listen and all that, very strict, very patriarchal household and, uh, ...my idea of parenting is we're a democracy, we talk about everything, they're in on all the decisions, there's nothing that we do that I don't sit down and tell them what I think we're going to be doing and ask what they think about it and what would they rather, so we have a completely different style of household than the household I grew up in, I mean just completely different

Mary: I was always brought up in a family, we were very open and we were always what do you think about this, what do you think about that, we want you to have responsibilities and uh so this is kind of you knew to think about what you were doing, here's your allowance and you can use it however you like and, you know that kind of stuff...my mom is a little different from my dad, my dad and my mom have very different parenting styles. my mom is very, she's the dominating parent who wants me to call every time I turn my head and um, she's having more troubles now and...my dad just the hey, you know and mom was just well, why don't we go get this you don't have money for that and why don't we buy that and dad's like well they've got to learn responsibility somehow (chuckle) so, I'm sure they had a lot of parenting battles on their own, ...I tend to think I'm more like my dad...my mom's very much let's sit down and have conversation,...my dad's just like I don't know, kind of like the buddy but, you know you can still kind of approach him and, you know so, I guess that's kind of the way I try to take it as, you know. And often they tell me what they don't want to tell me and, but I'm there for them when they need me so, I guess that's the

Cathy: there's no way parents can't affect your relationship or your parenting styles, it's impossible. Either you go with it because it's what you know and moreso I think most parenting styles come from that and everything you were adverse to as a child and made a big difference or detrimental or you find on your inside it's detrimental you go, you either try to mediate it or you go far to the left or the right or whichever you want to say, so, I, that's basically everything I couldn't stand,...I'm totally swinging the other way and, but basically you fall in, I believe everybody falls into ritualistic things they have learned from their own cultural and ethnic background, I don't think, I think it's unavoidable...I've got this big thing about fair, cause my brother was sick all the time and he, and no matter what, I was always wrong, so I go out of my way to see both sides of the story before I make a decision and put my proverbial thing down on the ground, whatever that thing is, judgment gavel, and that, sometimes I do it to the point that it's so stupid it's ridiculous because sometimes there's just no winner and instead of and, and instead of always assuming that someone's always right, like my mom did ...punishment? see I don't really spank unless I do spank it's gotta be real important and it's really never in the heat of anger, rarely....well I've had to had, take a back seat to uh, on parenting styles, I was like a single parent who was married prior to this pretty much, he didn't do anything, he was like an observer in his own household and now I have actually uh work it out with someone else. But it's changed dramatically, I'm not the

boss, I mean, I might be the boss but I'm not, I'm not totally 100% in charge of that question anymore. That's a big issue.

Beverly: probably in an adverse way...my mother was distant, she didn't show affection, my father was more, he was overprotective, he was distant and so I'm trying to break out of that mold and it's hard to do that...I'm not saying that I'm overprotective in this relationship but I think that uh, I'm very strict, I expect certain things of children and I'm always told that well that's the 60's way of doing things, you know, cause I was raised in the 50's and 60's and, children were just raised in a different uh fashion back then than they are now, things have changed and I, I'm having a hard time with that change.

Suzanne: A lot, because uh they kind of showed me what I didn't want to do...I was raised by my adoptive parents from the time that I was about six weeks old and uh, my mother was very strict, she was very harsh but she was loving so it was almost like a split personality type thing and I always felt like I was a peacemaker, I had to just keep her happy, you know, just keep her happy and I won't get a whoppin, you know, and she wouldn't sit down and play games with me, board games and things like that and I always told myself I'd do that with my kids and uh, I don't really remember her reading to me very much, I remember her taking me to the park a few times after they were divorced, um, she would spend Sunday with me but I remember resenting a lot of the free time that she would have to herself after she had worked so long and I'd waited all this time for her to come home and then she'd go out with her friends and I thought, well I don't want to do that to my kids, my dad was kind of the, uh, provider of the family and I felt like as a dad he should interact more, and my dad is also very sexist, extremely sexist and, as a matter of fact he went so far to say that he thought it was good I get a college degree because women need to be educated and they spend all the time with the children, so we want, you know kids that grow up to be smart (chuckle), yeah, he's really, he's a sweet man and he has his own ways of showing that he cares and I've just learned to come to terms with that but when I was younger it was really hard for me cause he adopted another child who was a boy and uh, my brother got all their time, he was in sports, he was a goalie, uh, he uh, every weekend was dominated by his games and where he needed to go and his practices and during the week the same and... I just didn't really feel like I fit his new family and um, I didn't fit in my mom's family cause I was too much trouble for her, I was too emotional for her so, it, I thought I never want my children to feel that isolated from me, so they, they influenced in ways of not, how I don't want to treat my children.

Keisha: I guess I would follow more of my mom's side, she was more mellow and didn't want to spank us unless she had to and ...I really tried to stay away from my dad. My dad, he wasn't abusive but he was close to it, he'd go off and the first thing you did you'd get popped instead of getting a warning and with well they were both in the military that's probably one of the reasons I went into the military but um other than that, I don't know cause my mom started going to college and then she went into the military and I guess she was probably going to finish college afterward, I'm not sure but she never did, she got with my dad and my dad was an

alcoholic and he was never abusive to her or nothing but she had to do, it was uh, I guess the same thing I, co-dependent, covering his rear, helping him out when he needed it or lying for him for work, um, I just tried to stay away from that type thing, I didn't want to get in a relationship to where my husband was always drinking and stuff and he didn't, he would, he'd go out every once in a while but he wasn't like my dad, my dad was drinking every day, so I guess they taught me to stay away from, in a way my mom by staying with him taught me to stay away from something like that, why get into a relationship with a guy who was going to be drinking all the time and luckily I never went into one...even though everybody was saying no he's not (ADD), no he's not, um, but my mom was, I take more of my mom's side and try and stay away from my dad's side, I don't want to pop them straight up, that's not the right thing to do, it's better to warn them first and then let them know you're gonna spank them or what you're gonna do and wait and go in the bedroom and go to bed, it's, to me a lot better way to deal with kids then straight up harshness

Kendra: I think my immediate family probably made me a lot more understanding of my children's choices as far as friends and activities and um,...I think my grandmother's probably did, my fathers mother more than theirs...I guess I was with her (grandmother) a lot but she just has a tendency to step back and look at the whole picture and she's not real quick to be, pass judgment and she really wasn't, she's not a disciplinarian, but I wouldn't say she'd let you run all over the place either, she was just more laid back about letting you make decisions, ...my parents were very strict and they made decisions for us, for me and expected me to go by the rules, there was no give and take.

Traci: probably a lot, um, when I was grew up it was the nuclear family,...both my sets of grandparents lived right there, within a few minutes of my house, you know and they, they helped raise me because both my parents worked and that was pretty much how I grew up, with the, with ...the family raising, you know raising me and I was an only child until I was like ...I guess I raise my kids pretty much the way they raised me, I was pretty strict with them because my dad was pretty strict with me, ...oh, curfew and well, he yelled a lot and I probably yelled a lot at my kids, looking back on it, my mom didn't do much of the discipline, my dad did

Kay: ...my family was very strict, military . I grew up in a, kind of a strict, uh, rule-oriented military, children should be seen and not heard, that kind of thing, everything, high, high anxiety, highly strung...um, a lot of it (parenting) is the same but I think I tempered it to where you get good outcomes but it's not negative or destructive, you know I put the best of it to work, ...one thing my family was, everything had to be done, there was a way to do things, there was a way to, you know, decorate for Christmas and there was a way to have a party and there was a way to dress for an occasion, and so those certain little tapes are in my head. ...So when my son goes to a certain thing there are times when I am rigid and I make him wear a tie and a shirt and you know, a pair of dress pants where other kids they just let em go and, just certain little strict things like that, that I have and those are the things I picked up from the family but I let go of the anxiety part, I hope, ...the fanaticism for poor perfectionism that was in my family where people were,

you know, so afraid to take risk because they were too afraid of failing, so they were afraid to take risk, afraid they'd step on a land mine somewhere, you know, outside of this rigid structure, we're not like that or I tried to change from that

Tish: my parents tended to be less strict with me ...they were more as friend because they were so young when I was born so I felt like I didn't have much parenting from them so I tend to be a little stricter with him, maybe more than I should be at times...well I didn't have much parenting from them so mostly my parenting techniques are largely different ...uh, I'm more strict and uh, probably a little more demanding of him.

Charissa: I came from a very violent childhood, uh, my dad was one of those who beat the crap out of us and my mother and everything and...I tend to be a very laid back parent, I will not spank them unless I have to but when I do they have to lean over and hold on to the counter and they get, I'll tell them they get 10 licks and I literally try to kill them with those 10 licks and they let go and smart over between the 10 licks, then I will start off at one again (chuckle)...my mother was a very laid back person who because of the violence of my father, I tended to take her, her attitude toward, ...mother was always a listener and she always tried to solve anything that was wrong, if you came to her and told her this, this and this she'd give you 40 different things to fix it, you might not follow any of them but you felt better because she gave you options, very supportive.

Noel: I'm not nearly as strict as they are but um, mother was very much the boss in the family, ...my father was an alcoholic, and he might have been there but he wasn't there, ...mother was the law giver, the rule maker and uh, once she made a rule, household rule it wasn't broken, this is written in stone, you know, this is just the way it is, uh, I had a tendency to, with mine, I'd try to make a rule but it was subject to being bent, maybe not broken but bent with special circumstances um,... I never told them when I blistered their rears that this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you, a kid doesn't understand that, I didn't, it was my bottom that was on fire when mother got through with me and she always told us that and I said I would never tell them that um, and I didn't... mother's basic theory is children are to be seen and not heard, you know, if you have company, if she had company when we were growing up we were allowed to say hello, good-bye and we were shunted off somewhere else and I didn't, I guess mine ended up being children should be seen and heard occasionally in other words they were allowed a little more lee way than, no actually they were allowed a whole lot more lee way than I was and ...I guess that comes into the how that made me bend over backwards to be more fair to them because I never felt like mother was fair, I was also the oldest and if I did something wrong I was always told, you're the oldest, you should know better and I'm sitting here going, this is something that never came up before, why should I know better since I've never been in that situation before, I tried not wanting to do my first born that way, uh, nor did I tell any of the others that they were older than the next one down, that they should know better, uh, it just made me a whole lot more liberal, but they still had to learn

## Appendix J

### WHAT IS THE CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER.

#### Selected Exerts

Note: All Names Are Fictional

Cherry: great. He is very respectful of my relationship with Denise and, you know is very supportive uh, we have joint custody, he pays child support and um, we go down once a month to see him...we get along great. We've even gone down and spent the night at his house so and we have holidays together when we can so. It's important to me for Kayla to have a good friendship, yeah, we may have made a mistake in marrying each other but you know, Kayla wasn't a mistake and, you know, it's important to keep a good, amicable relationship, so we're friends.

Denise: oh it's great. He helps out quite a bit he, um, he's a big part of it, he helps out when he can, he's there for her and he helps the whole family out actually.

Chris I have no contact with him, I do not talk to him, I have nothing to do with him...her dad has not really been a part of her life...there were great gaps of time when he would even contact, and he has so very little contact with her and at this point of time I'm in the process of working on seeing if he will, would give up rights to claim her. He'll go months without calling and he doesn't, he doesn't, he views parenting as, he thinks he's a really good parent but he doesn't really know how and it's been really hard for her and hard for Pat because that in between thing, you know, she's, Erin has, um, ideas about, you know, she had kind of what she thought a parent would be and the parent role she's had has kind of fallen through for her except for the mothering because I've always been there, you know I'm the constant factor in her life...for a long time I protected him, I never, her, Erin's real father and I protected him, you know, tried to, you know, kind of give her the illusion of that he was okay and stuff and never really told her what happened and, the things that he has done since we separated and things like that,

Pat Not good at all. he's barely involved and basically she knows, you know, how he's not involved, he's barely existent in her life.

Shirley: don't know, he's just kind of whacked if you ask me, he's one of those people who I think my life is better for not knowing him, you know

Kelcy: Right now it's, it's getting okay. For awhile, uh, probably about two years or



more she hasn't wanted to have anything or very little to do with her dad. And even though we were living with him at the time she didn't really like being around him. The past, I'd say the past, oh, six months or so she's wanted to start seeing him again and spending time with him. She doesn't go to his house, still won't spend the night with him because of his, uh, religious views, and um....He's very controlling and he expects, he expects certain things out of her which, which is okay but to me they go a little overboard and she thinks the same thing,

Stephanie: he's approached us and he's said I know that you all are gay and uh, and I understand everything's fine and then the following week when he's not happy with me about something else he'll call and tell me I'd better get an attorney and he's going to come and get me and all my pussy eating friends and I'm just kind of left hey, so I obviously can't trust, you can't really trust somebody with that kind of information when they've got such leverage, you know (chuckle)...until I was outed, or until he started figuring out that I was possibly gay he didn't have any problems with me whatsoever, there were no issues... he (son) thinks his father hung the sun, hung the moon and it's not my duty to tell him that his daddy didn't...and the way I like to think of it is, is he's going to go along believing that daddy, you know put the stars up there and we're going to let daddy show him he didn't and whenever Tony sees that, he'll see that, uh, I allowed him to make that decision, I respect him enough, I don't need to tell him what a louse his dad is (chuckle),

Angela: Favorable....but he tends to be somewhat authoritarian in his parenting style and so they don't respond well to him he is very much the man with the money. They know that so they maintain a relationship with him and do other things to stay in his good graces because of that.

Marie: They see him about once a month. I'd say pretty positive. It's more positive now than when we were living together. We have a good relationship

Laura: erratic, uh, he, uh, she does not have any regular visitation with him on weekends, he was supposed to call her Thursday night about coming to visit on Saturday and I had, had just seen her, she had been visiting my mom for the last two weeks and I just picked her up on Thursday and I said you do remember that your dad's supposed to call about coming this weekend and she went, oh yeah I penciled him in with very real awareness that he probably wouldn't follow through and he didn't, so he didn't come and she made some comment to my partner about how tough it was raising a, a father (chuckle), just, so, it's been very um, erratic, um at first, financially he supports it and always has, um, but he doesn't make any decisions about her, he doesn't see her on any regular basis and

Claire: distant but very civil, he sees the kids twice, maybe three times a year it seems like. He's not been real involved, so, he made some, some really nasty comments as we were getting divorced about the children and, and what he thought, he, uh, the lack of importance that they had in his life, I guess, he said, uh, go ahead and take them 'cause I'd ignore them. He's, he's not exactly what I want for the father of my children, but

there he is anyways.

Patti: He doesn't come get them anytime, he lives about four hours from here and he will call, probably an average of four or five times a year just to check on them. They've been down there, um, it's almost been six months now since they've been down. He did ask for them, for some time this summer at least, so they're gonna go next month. He's a reasonably good father not someone I would chose to have in their lives because of alcohol and lack of ambition but he's adequate (chuckle) he could be a lot worse.

JoAnn: nil and void, no. Um, the kids haven't seen him since Christmas, um, he has general visitation like he's supposed to have every other week-end, that kind of thing, doesn't return phone calls, um, just pretty much out of the picture. He lives just almost 30 miles away, not even 30, more like 15...from the day I told him to get out it was you can have the house, you can have the kids, I'm outa here... my middle child is really, really angry at her father and when she gets angry at him, we all catch hell and I mean it's just, and we will have to literally sit her down and say look, we know you're mad at him, don't take it out on us. Go write in your journal, go write him a letter, you know, go in your room and throw a fit but don't yell and scream and holler and take it out on us because you're mad at him.

Joan: There is none. He signed away his parental rights and doesn't want to see his daughter or me ever again and he keeps my other daughter away from me, I haven't seen her for 5 years, I try, I don't like to talk about it...to get supervised visitation w/my younger daughter, I'm supposed to have an armed guard around my daughter because I'm a lesbian supposedly. I'm not a criminal, you know, I can't afford legal, I have went to so many different attorneys and they don't even want to touch it so, I'm kinda of... they said, don't reveal yourself, deny it or your in serious trouble. So I've been in denial, I've never admitted it, ever and I won't. That's the only reason I won't contact the gay and lesbian help groups because then that's admittal...(long pause) I haven't seen her in five years, touched her, I write letters and she don't get them. (Stepmother) takes them away. She don't let my daughter get her mail. She takes it and reads it before my daughter gets it and if it doesn't meet her approval she throws it away. Sigh, so, it's a cross I have to bear.

Kasey: pretty much non-existent. We had the children out of wedlock, he never claimed them to be his children, I don't have him anywhere on the birth certificates, it was just one of those freaky things, no one ever asked, no one ever mentioned, so, he went his way and I went mine and that's it, no child support no contact, no nothing.

Mary: I've never talked to him and they, it's a, they don't have a lot of contact with him, I think the last time they saw him was two summers ago and they were supposed to go out this summer and they canceled it at the last minute, the father pretty much likes the son better, it's pretty obvious, like he gave him \$50 for his birthday and then he didn't even give a card for the other one so (chuckle). It's real, he's not consistent at all, so he, the male child pretty much, you know, I've pretty much got dad figured out, you know if dad

comes around that's fine but if not I'm not never going to expect anything and the daughter keeps saying, hoping he'll come along so it's just kind of one of those things sporadically talked to him on the phone, since I've been around I think, think he's mailed them one package and, you know one birthday present (chuckle), and so it's just been real sporadic and he hasn't so, and he's not, he's real inconsistent as far as a father figure, so it's kind of, they do handle it pretty well but I think it's really rough in their own way and I know my partner has picked up a lot of pieces with them and stuff too

Beverly: doesn't have a hands on relationship with them at all so I think he needs some growing up to do himself, he really has a problem. He uh, doesn't, he has no role as far as raising them, he's one of those fair weather fathers who, you know, gets them every other week-end and doesn't uh, doesn't take responsibility for any, uh, anything like medical care, he just wants to have them there on the weekends, every other weekend and uh, not do anything, have a good time but he, he has to take his kids to the baseball game or something he'd rather have Cathy to do it, doesn't want responsibility, no responsibility.

Cathy: he gets them as much as he wants to, if he wants to go take them, he even picks them up for practice like twice a week sometimes, it's pretty open. He's not the problem with the ex's, he's not, it's the mother-in-law and his wife, he's remarried...you know I think there's a love hate relationship there but, uh, you gotta, he was gone out of the house for two weeks before they realized they hadn't seen him in awhile... They do love him, deep down, just don't want to be around him more than a couple of days at a time.

Keisha: oo-hoo, not good, um... and then his wife recently has told me he has smacked her within the past year, so hopefully that can help me in court but we can't make her testify against him, that's the only bad thing and he's going to be really surprised when in court I bring up that she has told me in the past year that it might cause quite a few waves, He's even letting my son see his papers telling about when he got caught in the xxx with marijuana and stuff and has my son saying he's mad at me, or he did, a few weeks ago and that, I thought that was pretty sad using the kids to get back at me basically I think, that's what it felt like to me and hopefully it won't keep happening. With me it won't keep happening he can have them for the full summer if he wants, he can see them every week-end if he wants to, I just want to be the one that's the major role model in their life cause I think I'll teach them a little better, how to act right,

Suzanne: oh, uh he is very bitter... he took Stuart last August and sat him down and took a very volatile situation and kind of turned Stuart against me and destroyed Stuart's trust with me so Stuart is with him, but Stuart and I see each other all the time, every two weeks,

Kendra: actually it's probably a complete turnaround, he is an alcoholic and always has been, I was, um, I don't know how to describe, I didn't fight back with him, but I was pretty much in charge of the household but I was pretty much in charge of the household, it was kind of like being a single parent with an alcoholic who came home late at night

and, you know, wasn't a very nice guy...she's seen him twice in the last year, she did not choose to live with him so, um, he doesn't really choose to be a very active parent with her, she sees him a couple times a year, I make sure that she still sees his mother, his brothers and sisters, I make trips down there to meet them and exchange and, uh, he'll see her once or twice a year while he's over there, he might say hi to her, give her a hug and that's about it she's real angry with him...you know, um, he told her that he would not buy her a Christmas or birthday presents anymore because she does not live with him so he's not obligated to do that, he's made the bed and you know his relationship with her, I finally got to the point where I don't feel like I'm responsible to help them mend that relationship but I do feel like I'm responsible to help her mend her anger and deal with that however she needs to.

Traci: nope, there's probably no interest on his part which is really kind of unfortunate for him but, um, my son can go visit when he's of age if he wants to, now I've let that completely open and uh, if he wants to do that, doesn't show any interest in that right now, but there really hasn't been any contact with him since my son was about 3 or 4 months old, I've pretty much been on my own with, you know the whole situation. He lives quite a distance away

Charissa: good, I guess,...And as far as the kids and their father, I've not run their father down to them, I've told them the truth about how I felt about their father and that our relationship died of boredom and that they were welcome to go to their father after they were old enough to be able to get in the car and drive off if they wanted to (chuckle) but they I wanted to raise them and then through the years he came back and made the comment that his career was too important to raise children while I was in the hospital, uh which hurt their feelings big time...and um, we talked, he's came back and apologized to them a couple of times since then saying their were

Noel

I like her ex, he's got some faults; I do to, Cora deals with her dad, Cora takes more care of her dad's feelings than she does her moms and I haven't figured that one out other than daddy has the bucks. So she generally, maybe I shouldn't say daddy's got the bucks, daddy's retired service, he works civil service and he has a large income and he's been very generous with the kids, uh, he's not only paid the child support which their perfectly aware of, if they need extra clothes or something we couldn't give them then he would step in and pay out, did that make sense, so she has a pretty good relationship with her dad.

## Appendix K

### WHAT DO YOU SEE ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS YOUR CHILD HAS EXPERIENCED BY BEING RAISED IN A LHH?

#### Selected Exerts

NOTE: All Names Are Fictional

Cherry: Oh, well for one thing, Denise and I do really well together and there's not a lot of conflict and argument whereas in my prior relationship we had a Friday night divorce every week, um, or that may have been because we were just, you know trying to,... um I think she sees' women doing everything and without even thinking about it, you know (indecipherable) and you know, that's a man's job and uh, you know I mean, I'm the more femme of the two as far as housework is concerned and Denise is the more "butch" so to speak, but, you know, Denise cooks and I'll still put oil in the car, you know, there isn't a whole lot of well I can't do that because I'm not that sex, whatever, you know, whatever needs to get done gets done and everything can be worked out and we talk and, um, you know, it's and hopefully also she will come out with the opinion if someone doesn't accept you for who you are

Denise: Uh, chuckle, not to be judgmental, that really it doesn't matter what sex you are, it's a matter of trust and love and understanding is a big part of it, you know. Just being who you are and not what others think you should be, just be yourself

Chris: I think there's more attention and more love to her and I won't say that for every heterosexual relationship but, or every lesbian relationship but I do know that the men in her life have been very disappointing to her, you know. Her father, um, my ex-husband ...friends were, they weren't bad people they just weren't really people who wanted to do anything or had any plans for their lives and they, she's kind of seen, and you know, she's learned more tolerance she knows uh, a tolerance of diversity and there's more caregiving, she has more attention and more caregiving than I think she did in the heterosexual relationship. uh, not to discriminative but women just are more nurturing, I just really believe that, you know and from all my experience through my, you know my short period of life I guess I really believe that because I don't think, some men are capable but a lot of them don't understand.  
It's a woman thing, you know (chuckle)

Pat: I think she gets more of the feminine or woman point of view on things. I know that

we as parents feel like I pick up where her father is lacking, you know, um, I don't believe that to have, it doesn't matter the quantity or the quantity of parents it's basically the quality and, um, I don't believe that, you know, not to have a mother and a father doesn't matter as long as you have people who are supportive and who love you.

Shirley: I think, uh, bigger horizons, you know it just opens, it's, everything is open minded... I mean, she comes home with a situation, you know instead of just going back on the way we were raised or what we see other people doing, I mean we sit at times and talk about it and say well how is she looking at this, you know and we'll, we'll talk to her about it and see how, why this would be important and we don't understand why it's important, you know and it's like we don't jump right into an answer, sometimes we'll just sit back and, and um talk about it first.

Kelcy: Hmm, oh gee, I don't know, I don't know if there's' any more benefits with a LHH than with a heterosexual couple, I mean, it's all good. I mean, you're going to have, she'll have two people that love her and that she can talk to, uh, no she won't have a man's influence but I don't, to me I don't think that's real necessary, um, she does have her father, I don't keep her away from him, uh, so she still has that but, um, I don't see that's there's, no real big benefits.

Stephanie: I think the wonderful thing is that his mommy is liberated enough to do what she knows is right for her and she's also liberated enough to not allow it, not allow outside forces to stop her from doing what's right for her and those two things seem to be the biggest and most positive influence on him, um, as far as being raised in a LHH. But, I think that, uh, I'm able to show him that, it's okay to be who you are, not be afraid, not be ashamed, and deal with it in a dignified manner.

Jan: Uh, social diversity...Just that he won't have any prejudice as far as we're concerned. I mean I think that's a good thing...Uh, he's got two mommies (chuckle)...Because, uh, I don't know, we're just really supportive of him and we help him out, you know...

Angela I think they got a lot of strength, how strong women can be. I think that they learned a lot about making decisions about being self supportive, about wholeness, that you don't have to have another person to compliment who you are and I think they learned that not only by living in our LHH but by being around the other LHH they've had experience with because my partner and I are real individual and so are our friends that are in lesbian relationships. We're not the kind of people that have to protect each others feelings we're not the kind of people that have to have everything our way and so I think that the kids had a good feeling for how to manage a relationship equally. My youngest daughter says she learned a lot about love. She'll tell you that right out. That she learned a lot about love.... She says she loves it that we use a lot of terms of endearment that she wants a relationship just like we have. And she has modeled her relationship with her boyfriend very much like that.

Denise: I think they're very, they're both very open minded and I think that uh, I think that they had a whole lot more tolerance for different, other than traditional family and (indecipherable) I think they have a lot of acceptance for you know biracial families and uh, you know, self made families where you have friends come together these, I think that they have a lot more tolerance for that. The definition of family is not uh, the nuclear mom, dad, two, five children today.

Jennifer: I think she has definitely a stable family life. She's had stability for the, what, past 8 years or 8 1/2 years, she's had a parent at home almost all the time she's not latch key for more than an hour or so, um, I think that she's experienced things in life and is more open because of it. She doesn't, I don't want to say, categorize or look at people narrowly or judgmentally, she's much more, I think accepting of people and that kind of thing. And I think that has to do with the fact that there are two women in the family, so... I think it's because of the gay/lesbian issue that, that that's also, she can look at that and accept it as different and be okay with that... I think I, I bring an element of a different side of life than Laura does and I think that's been good for Nancy. I'm much more handy, crafty and I think Nancy's picking some of that up, she's you know being more well rounded and I don't know that's necessarily gay/lesbian but I think that's, I'm much more sports minded, athletic, that kind of thing.

Laura: well, it does make you pretty immediately aware of how important it is to accept differences that not everybody is the same and not everybody's household is the same, um, I don't think that the benefits that she's seeing are necessarily because we happen to be two women as much as we happen to have the caliber of the relationship between us. In a way we can support each other and bring out the best in each other but still be our own selves, not what I had when I was married, you know (chuckle) in terms of, uh, so I think she's had quite a model of what it takes to make a relationship work and, and the nature of how you make a relationship work and they just happen to be two women, you know, I think is a greater gift than she'd gotten... well I also think it shows her that women can do just about anything, I mean, my partner in particular does a lot of the repairing things, swinging hammers, you know (chuckle), you know so, when you only have women in the house and stuff has to be taken care of and it's going to be the women, so, that would probably be something, um, you see a real blurring of gender than expectations because what might in a male/female household be thought of as the man's and father's role, that doesn't exist in this house, so that kind of opens up a broader perspective of what it means to be a parent or family member and it can't be tied to gender.

Claire: well, it got away from daddy's drinkin (chuckle). Um, I think by seeing two people who really honestly love each other they gain a lot about learning how to love and that they, they don't have to, they don't have to minimize the experience of love and they don't have to, they don't have to exclude any group of people from their field of people to love either and we've talked extensively to John about being gay vs. being straight and that it... Um, I think they, they have a big head start on everybody else as far as being open minded, as far as not hating any one group of people because they're different, I

think that, uh, oh gosh, Patti read me a quote the other day that said, uh, something about learning to hate and how much time it took and how much energy and all that wasted, wasted energy that people spend learning to hate and hating, I don't, I don't think that these kids have any learned behavior at all about hating another group of people because they're different at all and so, that's also so different from when I grew up,

Patti: having two parents in general, whether their gay or straight or whatever. I think the kids do benefit because the parents are usually a little bit more stable and in a better mood if there's a back up system for them. Um, in particular a LHH, they are encouraged to show their feelings possibly a little more than if they were in a male oriented household, um, they get twice as many hugs and kisses and twice as much nurturing, they don't get all the manly man scratching of the balls, but oh well, (chuckle) I just don't think of that as a loss. Um, I can't think of anything else.

JoAnn; a lot of love, a lot of affection, um...I think that, um, most lesbians or gays or whatever are just more open with their affection, um, I know whenever I was growing up, I mean my parents would hold hands or they would hug or the occasional kiss here and there, um, to whereas, you know, with my partner and I, no we don't kiss in front of the kids, we hug constantly or, you know, we're rassing or we're playing or whatever, um, my folks did that however with my heterosexual marriage there wasn't a lot of that, that went on for whatever reason, either he was gone or it just wasn't there, just, you know, I, I truly feel like the love wasn't there between us two in order for us to give it to the children.

Charlotte: um, maybe they're more open to other people and um, different ideas.

Joan: Oh, wow, a lot of them, open mindedness, um, she don't, she's not prejudiced toward anything or anyone, I mean, you know even people who pierce themselves up like a pin cushion, you know (chuckle) she's totally free to expression...She doesn't judge a book by it's cover my daughter whether you are with your boyfriend or a girl at any time of your life it would not matter, and color, it would not matter, nothing, you know as long as you love each other and they treat you good I don't have a problem, you know and she's seen another side of the world kinda. She feels sorry for us. Because we have to stay hidden sometimes for protection. Um, because we don't have benefits like insurance, um, job benefits, you know, um, the, the, the times you have to stay in the closet at your church because all their doing at the pulpit is pounding out, you know, homosexuality is a sin, read Romans, you know and that always kind of hurt. But you know I, when you get into the religion part of it I, God knew us before we were born. You know. He created us perfect. There's not a one of us that's a mistake. So, you know that's why she feels sorry for us. Because we don't have everything that heteros do, so

Karen; She's more open minded and accepts people right off the bat instead of, she don't question, she don't judge, she don't condemn uh, just real accepting and more open minded toward how people want to be or how they want to live or what they want to wear or what they want to do whatever, she's not more, she's not all that society stuff ...she's



just more open minded and accepting and stuff and not prejudiced and um, I think it helps her be more, more friendly and more, sometimes it can be bad though because she tends to trust people more but you have to give and take too, whatever. And as far as what society thinks and stuff she's getting an advantage because she, she doesn't have those problems because she's a lot more open minded (chuckle).

Kasey: hmm, open mindedness I think is one of the best, um, exposure to diversity, the idea that family is not mom, dad, 2.2 children, the, the concept of love going beyond gender, um, those type of things. There are so many things to be gained from seeing the truth of what love involves instead of the idea that is promoted in the commercial world and I think that it's a wonderful thing for them to see and then they can go out to the world and make a fully knowledgeable decision about what choices in life they want. It opens up doors that weren't open to me, it took me years to feel okay opening those doors and it gives them so many more options in life and it gives them a much better example of what a relationship is, instead of the ridiculous presumptions that are portrayed on what a relationship is...(chuckle). I am not Mary Poppins. Yeah, I don't like um, patriarchal, societal ideas of what male, female relationship should be, I think it's pathetic to see the roles that are given to women and men both and that it has opened up a lot of ideas to them of the different roles that they each have available to them which is completely their decision on who they want to be, it has nothing to do with anyone telling them who they need to be. I think it's given them that we're in a normal family dynamic you probably wouldn't get much of that because you're trying to all play into the position that's dictated to you instead of finding the position that is you so, yeah, that's what I think...we're all a lot happier, we're a lot happier, we have a lot more love in our house, it's a calmer household, it's a funner household.

Mary: um, well I think that they're, they're much more, and I've seen it, not just with like gay issues but with anything, disabilities, um, racial issues, they're very much more open and I know that the um, uh, for example, I can use the example, um, male child came home from school and was talking about a kid who had kind of a limp or whatever and some of the other kids kind of make fun of him and he didn't think that was very nice and he made a point to talk to him... if they have any problems at all I think the male child has a problem being around gay males and um, I don't know, maybe just, that's why he didn't want to come to the gay pride parade but I think maybe just what he, he reflects, never really been around any, I've never been around any and um, I think he reflects the stereotypic, what he sees on TV and I think that's what he's afraid and um, so other than that but I think maybe, I don't know find some and (chuckle) and make them show him they're people too then he'd probably be okay...well as far as them, I think that it, I think it's good for them to have a second parent, I mean, I don't know, I do because they uh, the only influence they've had is from their mom and I know that a lot of times and she has said several time times, well, they're actually listening to some stuff that I say cause they're hanging, coming out of someone else's mouth rather than just mine, you know and I think that that's always good for kids to have a second influence rather than a first influence and having their absentee dad, (chuckle)

Beverly: though I'm not their biological father I'm still kind of a pseudo, you know step

mother or whatever you want to call it and two is always better than one.

Cathy: well they currently have two parents instead of one (chuckle)...financially they're a lot more secure, um, I think, I know currently, I can't really say it's because of lesbian, I can only say because it's the way it is, I think they have a very stable, very ritualistic, very realistic life and for these children that really makes a difference. I think, I can't really say, I think it's better because they're also learning diversity within the household and hopefully that will preclude them from being prejudice not just about homosexuality but racism, sexism, I mean there's a lot of other things that people just won't accept because they're different and hopefully they'll be able to apply that somewhere else...he looks deeper and I don't think he'd do that if he was raised in a narrow minded, heterosexual, male dominated world...he's more conscientious about women, they're weaknesses, they're faults and the fact that they're just as strong as men...everybody pitches in, it's a family, it's not, it's not a male patriarchal, privileged because of lineage and sperm society and I think that's the difference.

Keisha; I think that they're gonna learn that um, not to put other people down cause of prejudices ...they have learned this is a decent relationship, his, their father and their step mom always argue, they don't argue over here, um, we openly display affection, not erotic affection just kisses and hugs in front of them and to me that's important for kids to learn that you can give your wife a hug or you can give your spouse I should say a hug and a kiss and not have to worry about the kids seeing it and being all paranoid, cause that's, that's wrong...I don't particularly want them to be gay but if they end up that way, that's good too, as long as they're happy...because of the way the world is around us, a lot of, that's the only reasoning behind that word, that sentence is the people around us, a lot of people don't like it and I've gotten a taste of that already and it hurt my feelings and I don't want their feelings to be hurt but it's their decision and if they can deal with, I can deal with the world, I don't care what the world says about me, I'm happy.

Suzanne: uh, because we know that we're going to have problems we try to take things in stride and be positive and I think both of us being women we give them a lot of nurturing, I'm not saying that men are not nurturing and I don't hate men, I think that men can be very nurturing but I think that there is a difference between a mother's nurturing and a father's nurturing and so ...I think that when she wears out, I can kind of pick up where she left off in nurturing the kids or when I wear out she can pick up where I left off and that way they can always get what they need, their emotional needs are always met and because we are women we can talk to each other and be positive and be progressive about problems that come up, we don't try to hide them away because there are certain things about men that are just genetic to men, like not wanting to deal with problems, not wanting to, you know, uh, kind of being extravagant with money here and there on things that don't really benefit the group, whereas we're more group oriented...um, I think economically my kids benefit because if I didn't have somebody to help me, uh, we wouldn't be in such a nice neighborhood and they wouldn't be able to have the things that they have because they aren't getting that support from their dad.

Kendra: I think that they probably have more respect for, the fact that a woman can be strong and not necessarily live alone but um, develop a career, have a positive attitude and not necessarily be in a relationship and be submissive all the time. I think they, I think they're more, they're more accepting of a dual relationship where both partners contribute equally whether it's heterosexual, homosexual, it doesn't matter.

Traci: the most important thing I see is she just seems real content, she seems real content with us because we, we don't fight and, we don't openly show affection in front of her other than we set together on the couch and she may put her feet on me or whatever, we don't openly show affection in front of her but she knows there is affection here, she knows that we get along and work together and we work together for a common goal and we both do whatever we have to, to help her do whatever she's involved in, she just seems really happy.

Kay: oh he has a great respect for women...uh, I think he's, you know, he's above macho but I think he has a respect for women and what they can do, he sees men and women more equally than most kids and uh, I don't think he'd ever be abusive to a woman, he wants a woman who's equal to him um, and he's more tolerant of, he's more tolerant of alternative lifestyles and races and just more tolerant in general, even though he still has that, I've got to go with the crowd, he won't always blurt out in a crowd from white, upper-class, republican families that I don't think drag queens are such a bad thing...yeah, yeah, I mean, I think he's uh, he's just more tolerant, he's more accepting of people and he's, he's not uh, he just doesn't, uh, disregard people just because they're in a certain category, he takes them as individuals, because he wants people to take his mom as individuals and not as a label, which a lot of people do.

Tish: he's not at all critical of people, he doesn't judge a book by its' cover I guess you could say for sure um, he is very aware of differences in people and that just because they're different doesn't mean they're bad or mean or anything so he's, he's, uh his eyes are open to the world as a whole and not just black and white.

Charissa: I think they've seen two sides of the world, I don't think they've seen just one way in this world. I, like I said I think they've seen a whole lot more of what the world can be, they know that you don't have to be a blonde haired, blue eyed person to survive in this world and as my daughter said just the other night, she said, mom, she said if this lady comes out (referring to this research) and you do this, she said, you tell her that it's okay because kids turn out all right.

Noel: I think they've learned a lot more tolerance than straight kids, children raised in a straight family do, they've had to, um, and I think that, that's a big benefit, you know they're more tolerant of other people's lifestyles, other peoples religions, other peoples politics, now I'm not saying that's the way with all of them but with mine and I think with theirs, with Charissa's they're just a whole lot more tolerant...I don't know, I think my girls always enjoyed having two mothers because if they couldn't tell me something they could tell who I was with something, you know, it might be something that you'd want to talk to another female about but not necessarily your mother.

## Appendix J

## QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET

# QUESTIONNAIRE PACKET

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. Your responses to the following questions are important in evaluating the parenting styles and family relationships in households such as yours. If feasible, please find a quiet time of your day to answer these questions. To keep the answers as individual as possible, do not discuss the questions or your answers with your partner. While I will be happy to share the results of this research, I will maintain your individual responses as confidential.

Please use only your assigned “pseudonym” on this packet.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographics

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where do you currently reside:

1. Farm
2. Non-farm rural residence
3. Small Town (population under 2,499)
4. Large Town (population 2,500 - 24,999)
5. Small City (population 25,000 - 100,000)
6. Large City (population over 100,000)

3. What was your approximate mean total income (as a couple) last year? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many brothers and sisters do you have? Indicate by filling in the chart below (include yourself)

<b>Age</b>						
<b>Sex</b>	M F	M F	M F	M F	M F	M F
<b>Married</b>	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

5. What is the highest grade or level of education your parents completed and the highest level you have completed?

	Mother	Father	Self
1. Graduate or professional school	_____	_____	_____
2. Graduate of four-year college	_____	_____	_____
3. Some college	_____	_____	_____
4. Finished High School	_____	_____	_____
5. Some High School	_____	_____	_____
6. Grade School	_____	_____	_____
7. Don't Know	_____	_____	_____

6. What is your current occupation:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Professional, Doctor, Lawyer, Executive
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Other Professional, Manager, Teacher, Nurse
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Skilled and Construction Trade
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Sales, Technician, Clerical
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Laborer, Factory Worker, Waitress
6. \_\_\_\_\_ General Service Employee
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Student
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Housewife
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Retired
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Unemployed
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Other

**7. What is your current religious preference:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Jewish
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Catholic
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Protestant
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ Not Listed \_\_\_\_\_

**8. How religious would you say you are?**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Very religious
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat religious
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Religion is not important to me
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ I am quite opposed to religion

**9. What is your ethnic background?**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ African American/Black
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Asian-American
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian/White
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ Other

**10. Length of time in current relationship:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ less than one year
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ number of years

**11. How many natural or adopted children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_**

**12. Please list the age, sex whether the child(ren) is living at your home and if you are the natural or legally adopted mother or if you are the stepparent:**

<b>Age</b>						
<b>Sex</b>	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>Living at Home</b>	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
<b>Natural/Legally Adopted Child</b>	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
<b>Stepparent</b>	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N

**13. Is the biological father involved in the raising of the child(ren)?**

\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

**14. If yes, please rate the amount of his involvement (1=very involved; 5 = very little involvement):**

\_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

**15. How much have *you* disclosed (“come out”) your sexual orientation to the following:**

	<b>Complete Disclosure</b>	<b>Partial Disclosure</b>	<b>No Disclosure</b>
Nongay friends	_____	_____	_____
Siblings	_____	_____	_____
Mother	_____	_____	_____
Father	_____	_____	_____

Co-workers	_____	_____	_____
Physician	_____	_____	_____
Ex-spouse	_____	_____	_____
Children's teacher	_____	_____	_____
Employers	_____	_____	_____
Neighbors	_____	_____	_____
Clergy	_____	_____	_____
Other (please list)	_____		

**16. If you have not disclosed to any of the above, please check the reason(s) listed below:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ To protect children from criticism
- \_\_\_\_\_ To protect employment status
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of rejection from parents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of rejection from colleagues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of rejection from friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ To protect custody rights
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

**17. How much have you disclosed (“come out”) your status as a *lesbian couple* to the following:**

	Complete Disclosure	Partial Disclosure	No Disclosure
Nongay friends	_____	_____	_____
Siblings	_____	_____	_____
Mother	_____	_____	_____
Father	_____	_____	_____
Co-workers	_____	_____	_____
Children	_____	_____	_____
Physician	_____	_____	_____
Ex-spouse	_____	_____	_____
Children's teacher	_____	_____	_____
Employers	_____	_____	_____
Neighbors	_____	_____	_____
Clergy	_____	_____	_____
Other (please list)	_____		

**18. If you have not disclosed to any of the above, please check the reason(s) listed below:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ To protect children from criticism
- \_\_\_\_\_ To protect employment status
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of rejection from parents
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of rejection from colleagues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of rejection from friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ To protect custody rights
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** For each of the following statements, circle the number on the 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to you and your family. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

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**RESPONSE CHOICES**

1 = Almost Never                      4 = Frequently  
2 = Once in Awhile                    5 = Almost Always  
3 = Sometimes

---

**FACES II:**

**Describe Your Family:**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. In our family, it is easy for everyone to express his/her opinion.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. It is easier to discuss problems with people outside the family than with other family members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Each family member has input regarding major family decisions.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Our family gathers together in the same room.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Children have a say in their discipline.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Our family does things together.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Family members discuss problems and feel good about the solutions.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. In our family, everyone goes his/her own way.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Family members know each other's close friends.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. It is hard to know what the rules are in our family.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Family members consult other family members on personal decisions.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Family members say what they want.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. We have difficulty thinking of things to do as a family.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Family members feel very close to each other.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Discipline is fair in our family.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Family members feel closer to people outside the family than to other family members.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Family members go along with what the family decides to do.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. In our family, everyone shares responsibilities.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Family members like to spend their free time with each other.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. It is difficult to get a rule changed in our family.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Family members avoid each other at home.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. When problems arise, we compromise.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. We approve of each other's friends.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Family members are afraid to say what is on their minds.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Family members pair up rather than do things as a total family.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Family members share interests and hobbies with each other.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN**

Please answer the following ten questions in terms of how you perceived your family when you were growing up as a teenager.

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Family members asked each other for help.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Different persons acted as leaders in our family.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Family members liked to spend free time with each other.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Our family changed its way of handling tasks.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Family members felt very close to each other.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Rules changed in our family.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Family members consulted other family members on their decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. We shifted household responsibilities from person to person.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



9. Family togetherness was very important. 1 2 3 4 5  
 10. It was hard to identify the leader(s) in our family. 1 2 3 4 5

**Instructions:** Please notice the following scale is different from the one used in the previous questions. For each of the following statements, circle the number on the 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to you, your spouse and your family. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

<b>RESPONSE CHOICES</b>				
1	2	3	4	5
Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Generally Satisfied	Very Satisfied

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

**HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH:**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Your family  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Your marriage  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Your children  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Number of children in your family                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Your friends   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Your relationships with relatives (aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc)   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Your own health  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Health of other family members   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Your current housing arrangement                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Your household responsibilities                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Other family members' household responsibilities                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Space for your own needs  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Space for your family needs   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. The amount of education you have                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. The educational programs designed to improve marriage and family life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Amount of free time   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Time for self   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Time for family   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Time for housework  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Time for earning money  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. The religious life of your family                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. The religious life in your community                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Your principal occupation (job)                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Your job security   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. The amount of time family members watch TV                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. The quality of TV programs  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. The quality of movies   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. The quality of newspapers and magazines                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Your level of income  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Money for family necessities  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Your ability to handle financial emergencies                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Amount of money you owe (mortgage loans, credit cards)                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Level of saving   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Money for future needs of family                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. The schools in your community   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. The shopping in your community  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. The safety in your community  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. The neighborhood you live in  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 39. The recreational facilities, parks, play grounds, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. The health care services.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**FAMILY SATISFACTION**  
**HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU:**

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. With how close you feel to the rest of your family?                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. With your ability to say what you want in your family?                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. With your family's ability to try new things?                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. With how often parents make decisions in your family?                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. With how much parents argue with each other?                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. With how fair the criticism is in your family?                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. With the amount of time you spend with your family?                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. With the way you talk together to solve family problems?                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. With your freedom to be alone when you want to?                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. With how strictly you stay with who does what chores in your family?     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. With your family's acceptance of your friends?                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. With how clear it is what your family expects of you?                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. With how often you make decisions as a family, rather than individually? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. With the number of fun things your family does together?                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Instructions:** Please notice the following scale is different from the one used in the previous questions. For each of the following statements, circle the number on the 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to you, your spouse and your family. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

<b>RESPONSE CHOICES</b>				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

**Parental Authority**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. As my children are growing up, even if they don't agree with me, I feel that it is for their own good if they are forced to conform to what I think is right.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. If I ask my children to do something, I expect them to do it immediately without asking questions.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. As my children were growing up, once family policy had been established, I discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I always encouraged verbal give and take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I believe that what my children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do even if this does not agree with what I might want. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. As my children are growing up, I do not allow them to question any decision I have made.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. As my children are growing up I direct the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. I have always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. As my children are growing up I do not feel that they need to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. As my children are growing up they know what I expect of them in the family but they also feel free to discuss those expectations with me when they feel that they are unreasonable.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I feel that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. As my children grow up I seldom give them expectations and guidelines for their behavior.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Most of the time as they were growing up I did what the children in the family wanted when making family decisions.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. As the children are growing up I consistently give them direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I get very upset if my children disagree with me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I feel that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities decisions and desires as they are growing up.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. My children know what behaviors I expect of them, and if they don't meet those expectations I punish them.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I allow my children to decide most things for themselves without a lot of direction from me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I take the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions but do not decide to do something simply because the children want it.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I am not as responsible for directing and guiding my children's behavior as they are.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I have clear standards of behavior for the children in my home but am willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I give my children direction for their behavior and activities and expect them to follow my direction but am always willing to listen to their concerns and to discuss that direction with them.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I allow my children to form their own point of view on family matters and generally allow them to decide for themselves what they are going to do.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I feel that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to as they are growing up. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I often tell my children exactly what I want them to do and how I expect them to do it  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I give clear direction for my children's behaviors and activities, but I also understand when they disagree with me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I do not direct the behaviors, activities and desires of my children in the family.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. My children know what I expect of them in the family and I insist that they conform to those expectations out of respect for my authority.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. If I make a decision in the family that may hurt the children, I am willing to discuss that decision with the children and admit if I have made a mistake.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

#### **FAMILY CRISIS ORIENTED PERSONAL SCALES**

##### **WHEN WE FACE PROBLEMS OR DIFFICULTIES IN OUR FAMILY, WE RESPOND BY:**

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Sharing our difficulties with relatives   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Seeking encouragement and support from friends  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Knowing we have the power to solve major problems   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Seeking information and advice from persons in other families who have faced the same or similar problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5. Seeking advice from relatives (grandparents, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
6. Seeking assistance from community agencies and programs designed to Help families in our situation.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Knowing that we have the strength within our own family to solve our problems.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Receiving gifts and favors from neighbors (e.g. food, taking in mail, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
9. Seeking information and advice from the family doctor.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Asking neighbors for favors and assistance	1	2	3	4	5
11. Facing the problems "head-on" and trying to get a solution right away.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Watching television.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Showing that we are strong	1	2	3	4	5
14. Attending church services	1	2	3	4	5
15. Accepting stressful events as a fact of life	1	2	3	4	5
16. Sharing concerns with close friends	1	2	3	4	5
17. Knowing luck plays a big part in how well we are able to solve family problems	1	2	3	4	5
18. Exercising with friends to stay fit and reduce tension.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Accepting that difficulties occur unexpectedly	1	2	3	4	5
20. Doing things with relatives (get-togethers, dinners, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
21. Seeking professional counseling and help for family difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Believing we can handle our own problems	1	2	3	4	5
23. Participating in church activities	1	2	3	4	5
24. Defining the family problem in a more positive way so that we do not become too discouraged.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Asking relatives how they feel about problems we face	1	2	3	4	5
26. Feeling that no matter what we do to prepare, we will have difficulty handling problems	1	2	3	4	5
27. Believing if we wait long enough, the problem will go away	1	2	3	4	5
28. Sharing problems with neighbors	1	2	3	4	5
29. Having faith in God.	1	2	3	4	5

#### **FAMILY STRENGTHS**

1. We can express our feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We tend to worry about many things.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We really do trust and confide in each other.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We have the same problems over and over.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Family members feel loyal to the family.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Accomplishing what we want to do seems difficult for us.	1	2	3	4	5
7. We are critical of each other.	1	2	3	4	5
8. We share similar values and beliefs as a family.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Things work out well for us as a family.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Family members respect one another.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There are many conflicts in our family.	1	2	3	4	5
12. We are proud of our family.	1	2	3	4	5

#### **Relationship Satisfaction:**

1. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am very pleased about how we express affection.	1	2	3	4	5

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Family and Friends**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Some friends or relatives do things that create tension in our marriage.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. We spend the right amount of time with our relatives and friends.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I think my partner is too involved with or influenced by her family.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I do not enjoy spending time with some of our relatives or in-laws.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. My partner likes all of my friends.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Sometimes my partner spends too much time with friends.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I feel that our parents expect too much attention or assistance from us.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I feel that our parents create problems in our marriage.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I really enjoy being with all my partner s friends.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. It does not bother me when my partner spends time with friends of the opposite sex. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Appendix K

## CONSENT FORM

**General Information**

You have been asked by Jill Rohrbacker, a graduate student working on her Ph.D. in Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University to participate in a study regarding family relationships and parenting styles. The two components to this study are completion of a questionnaire packet and a personal interview. The questionnaire consists of several different scales requesting information on parenting styles, family behaviors and community interaction, will take approximately 20 - 30 minutes to complete. The interview will last approximately one to one and one-half hours and will be (audio) tape recorded. Ms. Rohrbacker and/or an assistant will transcribe the interviews verbatim for analysis. All questionnaires, audio tapes and transcripts will be treated as confidential material and destroyed upon completion of data collection.

All participants will be assigned "pseudonyms." These "pseudonyms" will be used in any discussions and written materials dealing with interviews. If an individual or couple have not disclosed the nature of their relationship it is requested only pseudonyms be used in all communication including preliminary discussions between the participant and researcher.

**Understanding**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty, after notifying Ms. Rohrbacker.

I understand that this study will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the interview will be tape recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees. It should be understood however that total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as accidental disclosure of the participants identity could be a possibility.

I understand the interview will cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability according to current state law. I understand the interview will not cover topics which deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

I may contact Ms. Rohrbacker's dissertation director, Dr. Kay Murphy, Department of Family Relations, College of Human Environmental Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater Oklahoma, 74078; Telephone (405) 744-8353, should I wish further information about the research. I may also contact Gay Clarkson, University Research Services, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; Telephone (405) 744-5700.

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent and provided the respondent with a copy of this form.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ (A.M./P.M.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interviewer

Vita

Jill Rohrbacker

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND PARENTING STYLES IN LESBIAN HEADED HOUSEHOLDS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE PERSPECTIVES.

Major Field: Human Environmental Sciences

Education: Graduated from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1979; received Bachelor of Science in Psychology with minors in Sociology and Family Relations and Child Development. Received Masters of Science degree with major in Family Relations and Child Development from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 1982. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University Stillwater, Oklahoma in July 1999.

Experience: Residence Halls Coordinator at Oklahoma State University. Taught classes in Human Sexuality, Student Development for Resident Assistants, Leadership Concepts and Freshmen Orientation. Advisor of various student groups.