A Strengths-Based Assessment of Diverse Adoptive Families: Experience of Young Adult Women Raised by Lesbian Mothers

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Abstract

The primary goal of this study was to identify themes around the strengths of lesbian adoptive families and their children by obtaining the unique perspective of young adult children of adoptive lesbian mothers.

Central questions included:
• Are they more open to difference?
• Do they identify ways in which lesbian mothers are uniquely qualified to be adoptive parents?
• Do they have an integrated sense of identity?
• How do they see their family as different or similar to heterosexual-parent led families?
• What aspects of their identity are most salient?
• How do they navigate discrimination?

Data Collection and Analysis

Recruitment
Snowball sample method, community organizations, professional organizations and adoption events
Participants = 7 Young-Adult Women
Ages 20-28
All adopted prior to age 3
Type of Adoption
International = 4
Domestically = 3
Child-parent racial difference = 4
Mothers’ marital status separated = 5

Method
Semi-structured interviews lasting between 1 - 2.5 hours

Analysis
Qualitative analysis of transcribed interviews utilized a modified grounded theory method

Results

Participants’ sense of core identity, which include feeling that they have an openness to difference, citing “what matters” is having loving and supportive parents, and maintaining a strong sense of self and advocacy. Participants consistently discussed their ability to think flexibly and understand difference in a way that they perceived to be above and beyond others who have not experienced the same aspects of minority status as a core personal strength and something on which they pride themselves.

Aspects of Identity Described by Adult Children of Adoptive Lesbian Mothers

- Parents
- Lesbian Family
- Adoption
- Race
- Multiple Identities

Core Identity

Analysis

Promote opportunities for open dialogue as is developmentally appropriate and as children are ready
• Participants note that they “are just like any other family” thus promoting same-sex parent adoption within private and government funded adoption agencies
• Provide training within these organizations to educate about same-sex parents being not only a viable option for prospective parents but as having unique strengths

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References: Please see handbook for cited works