

We ARE Family!



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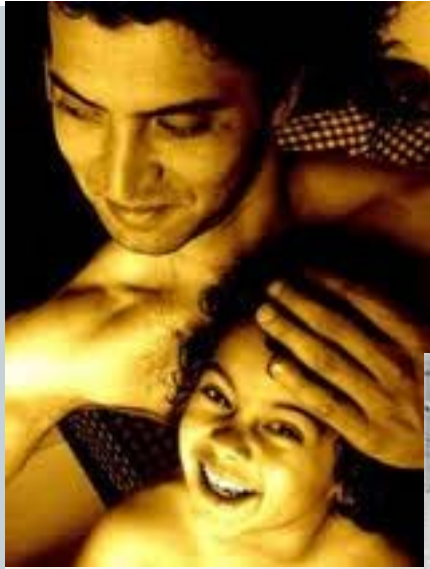
**ELMHURST COLLEGE
SHARING A VISION- SPRINGFIELD, IL
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Our responsibilities



- Code of Ethical Conduct & Statement of Commitment – NAEYC
- ***Above all we shall not harm children.***
- *...the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's well being...*
- *1-2.2 ...mutual trust and create partnerships with families we serve*
- *1-2.3... welcome all family members and encourage them to participate*
- *1-2.4 ...listen to families, acknowledge and build upon their strengths and competencies, and learn from families as we support them in their task of nurturing children*

Families we know and love



How do we define family?

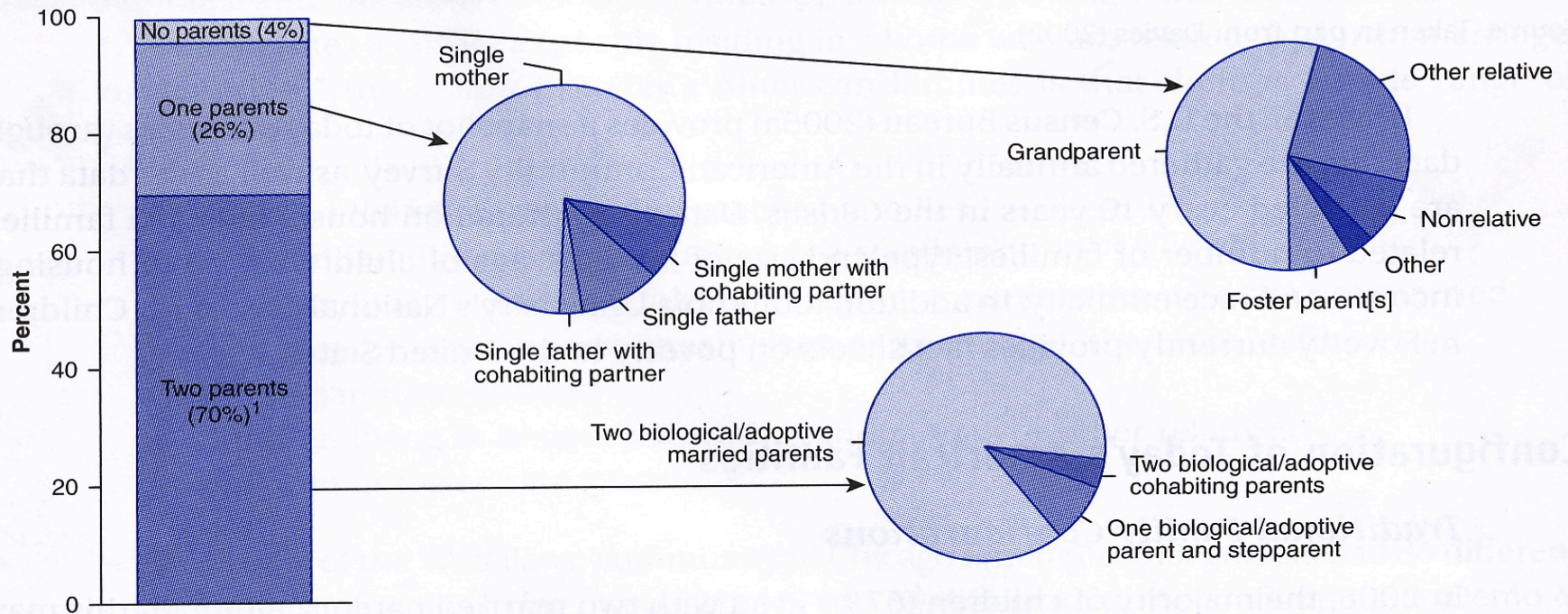


- US Census (2004b) defines ... *family as people residing in a home who are related by birth, marriage or adoption*
- NAEYC definition – *Family may include those adults, besides parents with the responsibility of being involved in the education, nurturing and advocating for the child.*

Today's families in the US



FIGURE 1.2 Today's Families in the United States: 2008



¹ Includes children living with two stepparents.

Source: ChildStats.Gov, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009

Family structures



Adoptive families

Extended families

Grand-families

Families with two dads

Families with two moms

Foster families

Long distance families

Nuclear families

Bi-nuclear families

Single parent families

Families are always evolving...

- *...first graders in one Chicago classroom found they had 86 different combinations of adults living in their households and 35 different family configurations (Demo & Cox, 2000).*



We know better so we must do better!



- The family unit is one of the first lessons young children encounter in school.
- 2012 study titled *Playgrounds and Prejudice* national sample of elementary teachers 80% revealed they did not include LGBT families when teaching about families – when asked why “it didn’t come up”
- 7 million LGBT parents who have children in U. S. schools – suggests a silence violating the code of ethical conduct which prohibits practices that are emotionally damaging and disrespectful

Family stories



- There is a huge connection between family representation and self-esteem...If a child doesn't see their family represented, it creates a disconnect and interrupts their learning. If you don't feel recognized by your peers and your surroundings, how can you thrive?"
- ...a mother's ears perk up when she overhears her 7-year old daughter say to a friend, I hate having 2 moms. "Why?", asks her friend. "I hate when the teacher says, take this home to your mom and dad".
 - Teaching Tolerance

Community stories



- “This (book) will give the impression to our young children that homosexuality is a normal behavior,” constituent Naperville D. 204.
- The 24 page book “*We All Have Different Families*” features references to single parents, adoption, foster families, divorce, children who live with grandparents, stepparents, and an image and a paragraph about a family with two dads, school district (204) officials said.

• CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MAY 22, 2013

Acknowledging conflict



- We must acknowledge our biases – breakdown our biases with knowledge/professional development
- We must be willing to offer instruction for all of our students – not those whose families replicate our own or those whose families we like or “can” accept.
- Not an elective – it is essential! The elective was becoming an educator.

Obstacles or opportunities



- Lack of knowledge
- Limited interaction with LGBT community members
- Lack of administrative support and fear of reprisal – loss of your job
- Presence of family opposition
- Offending religious beliefs
- Lack of materials for young children
- Fear that you will be perceived as a member of the LGBT community
- Misconceptions about what the learning goals or objectives
- Misperceptions that talking about LGBT means you are talking about sex

Agree or disagree



- Children are being harmed
 - All educators have a responsibility to make things better for children
 - Educators can take steps and actions that will make a difference
 - Support is available for educators who want to take action
 - Create your classroom community – your families are your richest resource.
 - Be sure your classroom reflects families served.
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- *Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Families in Early Childhood Settings*

Children's literature supporting young children with single parents or divorced parents



Where's Jamela? Daly, N. (2004).

When Mama Comes Home Tonight. Spinelli, E. (2001).

On the Day His Daddy Left. Adams, E. (2000).

Since Dad Left. Binch, C. (1998).

Dinosaur Divorce. Brown, M. & Brown, L.K. (1986).

It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear. Lansky, V. (1998).

Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce. Speman, C.Q. (1998).

Children's literature supporting young children living in blended families



- *To & Fro Fast & Slow.* Bernahrd, D. (2001).
- *Jennifer Has Two Daddies.* Galloway, P. (1990).
- *There's Only One of Me!* Hutchins, P. (2003).
- *Stepfamilies: Let's Talk about It.* Rogers, F. (2001).

Children's literature supporting young children living within grand-families



- *The Wednesday Surprise*. Carrick, D. (1990).
- *Abuela*. Dorrors, A. (1997).
- *Picture Me with My Grandma*. D'Adrea, I. (2000).
- *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*. dePaoloa, T. (1973).
- *Robert Lives With His Grandparents*. Hickman, M. (1996).
- *Annie and the Old One*. Miles, M. (1985).
- *What Grandmas Do Best/What Grandpas Do Best*. Numeroff, L. (2000).

Children's literature supporting young children with same-sex families



- *1 2 3: A Family Counting Book*. Combs, B. (2000).
- *A B C: A Family Alphabet Book*. Combs, B. (2001).
- *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Newman, L. (2000).
- *And Tango Makes Three*. Parnell, P. (2005)
- *In Our Mother's House*. Polacco, P. (2009).
- *Lots of Mommies*. Severence, J. (1983).
- *Daddy's Roommate*. Willhoite, M. (2000).
- *Daddy's Wedding*. Willhoite, M. (1996).

Children's literature supporting young children of adoption



- *I Got a Family*. Cooper, M. (1993).
- *Tell Me About the Night I Was Born*. Curtis, J. (1999).
- *Who's Who in My Family*. Leedy, L. (1999).
- *We Belong Together: A book about Adoption and Families*. Parr, T. (2007).
- *I Love You Crazy Cakes*. Lewis, R. (2000).
- *The Red Blanket*. Thomas, R. (2004).

Children's literature supporting ALL types of families



- *A Family Like Yours*. Dotlich, R. (2002).
- *Let's Look at Families*. Driscoll, L. (1999).
- *Family Pictures*. Garza, L. (1990).
- *How My Family Lives in America*. Kuklin, S. (1992).
- *Families*. Kuklin, S. (2006).
- *Why Are All Families Different?* Maynard, C. (1997).
- *Families*. Morris, A. (2000).
- *The Family Book*. Parr, T. (2003).
- *Who's in a Family?* Skutch, R. (1995).

Extending children's literature



- Expect questions – “Why doesn’t Tommy have a mommy?”
- Answer with a simple response or if you don’t know how to answer, you can say “I’m not sure. Let’s find out”.
- If you’re nervous or unsure about a book – select another.
- If family concerns arise – create a safe space for dialogue, but be clear about your commitment and ethical responsibility to all children.

ALL families deserve



- Emotional safety
- Visible diversity
- Teachers with experience working with gay and lesbian headed households
- Being part of the school community and beyond
- Support for issues related to adoption
- Opportunities for relating to other families
- Acknowledging our family as any other – not as though lesbian or gay was their only identity
 - Creating Safe, Just Places to Learn for Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents ~ James Clay

Research surrounding this topic



- **What outcomes/goals do early childhood education teachers have regarding families?**
- **How do teachers of young children teach their students about families?**
- **What are the barriers or challenges that teachers of young children face related to planning and teaching content on all families?**
- **Our goal as early childhood professionals is to ensure that *all* children and their families are welcomed in early childhood settings. What supports, materials or knowledge do teachers of young children need to expand their family unit to include all children and families?**

A tender topic



- Not every educator approves of same-sex marriage or is comfortable with LGBT issues. “Even if you believe that to be true, it’s important to think about the well-being of the child in that family.”
- “Not acknowledging the family would do real harm to the child.....”
- Most importantly, all families deserve a strength based model that highlights their efforts to nurture the growth and development of their young children.



- Be the change you wish to see in the world.
 - MAHATMA GANDHI

Resources



- Burt, T., Gelnaw, A., & Lesser, L. (2010). Creating welcoming and inclusive environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families in early childhood settings. *Young Children*.
- Clay, James (1990). Working with lesbian and gay parents and their children. *Young Children 45(3): 31-35*
- Parent Services Project, San Rafael, CA.
- Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center