SURVEYING LGBTQ YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE: LESSONS FROM LOS ANGELES

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The Williams Institute
UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW

PERMANENCY INNOVATIONS INITIATIVE
PII

LOS ANGELES LGBT CENTER
RISE

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About the Affiliated Organizations

The Williams Institute is dedicated to conducting rigorous, independent research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy. A national think tank at UCLA Law, the Williams Institute produces high-quality research with real-world relevance and disseminates it to judges, legislators, policymakers, media and the public. Examples of other Williams Institute work on youth and human services include: Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless (July 2012)[1] and Provider Perspectives on the Needs of Gay and Bisexual Male and Transgender Youth of Color (August 2013)[2]

Khush Cooper & Associates (KC&A) is committed to changing the human services landscape by providing innovations that cause families, organizations and communities to thrive. As a specialist in the study and implementation of what's next for human services, KC&A, led by Dr. Khush Cooper, brings long-standing relationships with policy-makers, leading practitioners, and consumers to shield and guide California's organizations, both public and private, through reform initiatives. Projects have included inventing a practical and staff-friendly system for performance management for foster care providers in California, initiating two of the multi-million dollar federal Permanency Innovations Initiative grants in the country, and managing the implementation of three of the five state-wide Residentially Based Services (RBS) foster care demonstration projects in California. KC&A is currently conducting the LA County LGBTQ Youth Preparedness Scan which assesses all 11 county departments' capacity to properly serve LGBTQ children, youth and families. KC&A is also currently developing an e-learning platform to support foster care providers with AB 403 implementation.

About the Funders

The Los Angeles LGBT Center has cared for, championed and celebrated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families since 1969. Today the Center provides services for more LGBT people than any other organization in the world through programs that span four broad categories: health; social services and housing; culture and education; leadership and advocacy. RISE (Recognize Intervene Support Empower) is a Center initiative that helps LGBT and questioning youth in the child welfare system strengthen family connections, become emotionally stable, and find a safe, permanent home where they are nurtured and loved into adulthood. RISE's partners include the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (LA-DCFS), the Department of Mental Health, and more than 20 foster care provider agencies and community organizations.

The Federal Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII) is a 5-year, $100 million, multi-site demonstration project designed to improve permanency outcomes among children in foster care who have the most serious barriers to permanency. PII includes six grantees, one of which is RISE, each with a unique intervention to help a specific subgroup of children leave foster care in fewer than three years.

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1 Available at: http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/safe-schools-and-youth/serving-our-youth-july-2012/

2 Available at: http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/safe-schools-and-youth/project-access-report-aug-2013/

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this report is to provide a methodology resource for those interested in learning more about LGBTQ youth in foster care in order to better meet their needs. This report will be useful to researchers interested in conducting traditional research as well as foster care systems who are adding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression measures to their current internal research and evaluation efforts or administrative records. We describe and assess the methodology used in a Los Angeles County study which surveyed youth in foster care about their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, other demographic characteristics, and experiences in foster care. We provide our survey instrument and recommended questions, summarize and assess our methodology in designing and conducting the survey, and review lessons that we drew from our experience. We hope this report will encourage further research on youth in foster care in general and LGBTQ youth in particular.

Key lessons learned included:

STUDY PREPARATION LESSONS

- Community Engagement : Consulting with colleagues and stakeholders from various parts of the communities of people who care about LGBTQ youth in foster care helped produce more precise and contextually valid instruments.
- Foster Care System Engagement: Inclusion of feedback from those working with youth in out-of-home care and within the research divisions and administration of the child welfare department streamlined review processes, helped ground proposed methods in the real-life workings of the child welfare field, and assisted in identifying needed safe guards for youth's confidentiality.
- Multiple IRBs and Approvals: Six months to a year should be built into a project to ensure awareness of and preparation for the multiple levels of research ethics and administrative approvals required.

MEASUREMENT LESSONS

- Deciding What to Measure: Sexual orientation and gender identity include more than just labels - we defined the target population in terms of identities, attraction, expression, and experienced discrimination related to their perceived sexual or gender identity.
- Recommended Questions and Question Placement: Specific items are provided for others to use and test. We especially found it useful to include the response options that allowed us to distinguish between whether participants were not sure about their identities (indicating a "questioning" status) and whether they simply did not understand the question being asked.

STUDY ADMINISTRATION LESSONS

- Taking into Account Accuracy of Contact Data For Youth: Oversampling may be needed to adjust for the potentially large numbers of cases with changed contact information since the data were obtained.
- Preparing Residential Facilities: Congregate foster care sites, including group homes and residential care facilities, differ significantly than the settings in which telephone surveys are typically administered - in terms of ensuring confidentiality, direct access to youth, and administrative bureaucracy. Additional interviewer trainings and extensive outreach to individual facilities may be needed to ensure successful implementation of the project.
- Choosing between an Independent Research Study vs. Administrative Data Collection: Conducting an independent research project provides accurate and responsive data on LGBTQ youth in the context of a system that may not yet be prepared to collect and manage these types of data. However, the most sustainable long-term solution would be to build the capacity of child welfare workers to accurately and respectfully collect SOGIE data and ensure that administrative data systems can capture at least:

    1) sexual orientation identity
    2) sex assigned at birth
    3) gender identity or preferred gender pronoun (to compare against sex assigned at birth)

    If possible and where relevant,

    4) gender expression
    5) sexual attraction (in terms of sex/gender)
    6) sexual behavior (in terms of sex/gender)
    7) evidence of peer or family conflict related to sexual and gender minority status

Surveying LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care: Lessons from Los Angeles

Authors: Bianca D.M. Wilson, Khush Cooper, Angel Kastanis, Soon Kyu Choi

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles Foster Youth Survey (LAFYS) was a telephone interview study with 786 randomly sampled youth ages 12-21 living in foster care in Los Angeles County conducted by researchers from the Williams Institute and Dr. Khush Cooper[3] at Holarchy Consulting. The LAFYS was a one-time study conducted as part of the RISE (Recognize Intervene Support Empower) Project, a five-year cooperative agreement awarded to the Los Angeles LGBT Center (The Center) by the federal Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII). PII was a 5-year, $100 million, multi-site demonstration project designed to improve permanency outcomes among children in foster care who have the most serious barriers to permanency.

> *The results of the LAFYS have been used to help fill the substantial gaps in the body of rigorous empirical research on LGBTQ foster youth...*

In order to provide data that may contextualize the service and evaluation components of RISE, the Center contracted the Williams Institute and Dr. Khush Cooper to design and conduct an assessment of the demographic characteristics and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth in foster care in Los Angeles County. The results of the LAFYS have been used to help fill the substantial gaps in the body of rigorous empirical research on LGBTQ foster youth and have given child welfare providers and policymakers in Los Angeles County a better understanding of the LGBTQ foster youth population so they can make informed decisions about programs and services that address the needs of sexual and gender minority youth. Yet, the study can also be understood as a demonstration project in itself – in terms of the methodology used to study the experiences of youth in foster care in general and LGBTQ youth in particular.

Prior publications have outlined the methodology of survey implementation in the context of the main findings (Wilson, Cooper, Kastanis, & Nehzad, 2014; Wilson & Kastanis, 2015). The current summary report provides greater detail on the development of the instrument and methodology, and reflections on lessons learned from conducting the study. The objective of this report is to provide a resource for those interested in pursuing a similar study in their jurisdictions.

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[3] Khush Cooper was formerly a co-owner of Holarchy Consulting and is currently the CEO of Khush Cooper & Associates.

DEFINING THE TARGET POPULATION

During the initial phases of the RISE project, a research committee was assembled to gather information that would inform the development of the multi-faceted research project and its associated interventions. Facing a lack of broad administrative data on LGBTQ youth within the LA County child welfare system, the research committee formulated a plan to understand the needs and experiences of LGBTQ foster youth. The background research plan included the following:

1. Conducting in-depth reviews of child welfare department data collection instruments, in this case, LGBTQ foster youth case files.
2. Examining data from services with similar population, for LAFYS this meant analyzing existing administrative data on youth formerly housed in the Gay & Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS) residential group homes.
3. Convening an expert roundtable discussion.

CASE FILE REVIEWS

While LGBTQ status is not collected and retained within administrative data systems such as the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) in California, there are several points during a youth's ongoing case when data about LGBTQ status may be documented. Thus, the RISE initiative's research committee decided that reviewing case file data would offer some insight into how LGBTQ youth experience foster care. The case review questionnaire used in the analysis was designed to assess how issues regarding sexual orientation and gender identity were managed within the child welfare system in Los Angeles.

The 40 child welfare cases used in the analysis included 20 "closed" and 20 "open" Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) case files. The "closed" cases were randomly drawn from the 392 foster youth placed at GLASS group homes between 1998 and 2008. The 20 "open" cases were randomly drawn from youth that were placed at one of five RISE foster care partner agencies[4] and identified by those agencies as being LGBTQ.

The case reviewers, retired DCFS children's social workers (CSW), completed the questionnaire for each assigned case according to information provided in the case file. The questionnaire was composed of sections regarding initial assessment protocol by County social workers, factors that may act as permanency barriers for youth, previous placement history, and overall permanency goals. The case notes often contained quotes, incident reports, and other information relayed to the child's social worker by the child, relatives, group home staff, lawyers, and other actors in the child welfare system.

The case review questionnaire inquired about the completion of a Department of Child and Family Services 709 form, also known as the Needs and Case Plan Summary. This form is given to caregivers each time the youth is provided new placement and is designed to alert caregivers to immediate and urgent issues known about the child at that point in time. It includes items regarding the youth's known allergies and the individuals with whom the child is allowed to have contact. Also included on the 709 form is a question on how the youth self-identifies with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity. When the 709 was included in the file, more often than not, case reviewers found this question on the 709 was skipped or answered incorrectly.

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4 Five Acres, Hathaway-Sycamores Children & Family Services, Penny Lane Centers, Southern California Foster Family and Adoptions Agency, and Vista Del Mar

The case reviews ultimately highlighted the limitations of using available administrative data with respect to the sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) of foster youth. For example, the case review questionnaire inquired whether there was "any evidence of community or family rejection, exclusion, bullying, or maltreatment due to the child's sexual orientation or gender identity (actual or perceived)." Of the 40 case reviews, 55% indicated evidence of rejection based on SOGIE. In some cases, the basis for rejection by community or family members was unclear. Some cases that indicated rejection included rejections based on "behavioral" issues in which the case reviewers used their own discretion in classifying the rejection as based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Though it is likely that many of these cases in which ambiguous language about behavior were genuinely about non SOGIE-related issues, yet, based on service provider accounts, we considered the possibility that caseworkers who were writing the notes and maintaining the file were being purposely evasive that the conflict was due to SOGIE issues and a "behavioral issue" code masked that the behavior was a response to caregiver rejection and not a true conduct problem due to some pathology. As such, there was room to misinterpret the lack of rejection based on sexual orientation and gender identity at face value, when it may have been hidden within coded language.

Finally, the case reviews gave insight on the quality of the interactions between youth and various actors within the child welfare system. While some positive relations with family, social workers, peers and caregivers were reported, many of the interactions identified were negative. These negative interactions included unapproved disclosure of LGBTQ identity, failure to address issues regarding SOGIE when they surfaced, questionable actions when the related issues finally were addressed, and failing to have administrative records keep up with the on-going development and fluidity of the sexual orientation and gender identity of foster youth.

GLASS ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

The second part of the background research plan was an analysis of administrative data available for youth placed at the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS). As a "Level 12" foster care provider, GLASS, like all Level 12 providers served youth who had serious mental or behavioral health service needs, yet GLASS was unique in that it explicitly served LGBTQ youth in the LA County DCFS or Probation systems. The GLASS group homes were operational 1998-2008 and closed due to financial problems. Using data from the DCFS and Department of Probation, PII analyzed 392 cases of children who were placed in GLASS group homes at any point between 1998 and 2008. The study of GLASS was conducted to determine common or distinguishing characteristics of LGBTQ foster youth who participated in the program in the interest of identifying key issues that may be relevant to the current study population definitions (Quinn & PII Evaluation Team, 2011).

The results also showed that more than half (51.8%) of the youth had experienced multiple placements prior to joining GLASS group homes and had entered the child welfare system before age 13...

Analysis results show that youth of color comprised nearly 85% of GLASS placements, and that 50% were male and 50% were female. The results also showed that more than half (51.8%) of the youth had experienced multiple placements prior to joining GLASS group homes and had entered the child welfare system before age 13, indicating that they likely came out while in the system and experienced placement disruptions as a result until they found stability at a GLASS group home. In terms of duration in foster care, Elizabeth Quinn and the PII evaluation team at Westat found that youth placed in GLASS group homes experienced foster care for an average 5.8 years - long-term foster care is defined as 3 years or more in the child welfare system. More specifically, female (6.2 years) and black children (7.6 years) had overall longer stays in foster care than male (5.4 years) and white or Hispanic children (about 4.2 years each). Using a survival analysis model that analyzes rates of exit from first foster care experience, the authors reported that the youth who ended up in GLASS group homes and who were in foster care the longest (median 6.3 years) were originally children ages 1-4 whose first foster care placement was with kin. This indicated that, contrary to conventional wisdom, LGBTQ youth do not enter the child welfare system at adolescence when sexual orientation

presents itself in most lifespan development models. In fact, this finding points to the possibility that LGBTQ youth who are overrepresented in group homes often enter the system early in life and are placed with caregivers who eventually "return" them to the County when they come out such that residential care becomes the only place that will take them. Seventy-five percent of children in this group had been in foster care for longer than 3 years (Quinn & PII Evaluation Team, 2011).

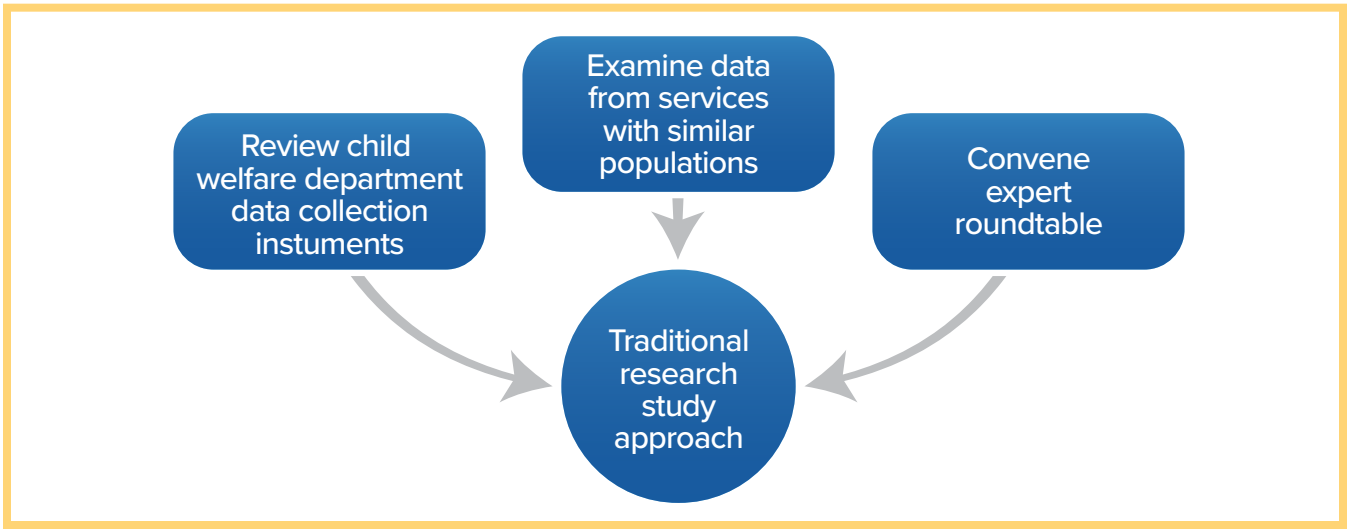
Aside from duration of foster care, the study also found that most youth who were placed at GLASS had serious health needs, and a history of probation involvement. Although 25% of the GLASS cases did not include information about the health condition of youth they served, among the cases with data, the majority (87%) of the cases involved a health condition and two-thirds (66%) of the cases included emotional or mental health disorders. Around 61% of youth with GLASS placement were also involved with probation at some point in their foster care experience, with more girls (65%) experiencing probation involvement than boys (56%) (Quinn & PII Evaluation Team, 2011).

EXPERT ROUNDTABLE

As the final step of the preliminary research plan, an expert roundtable was convened to inform the development of any RISE interventions aimed at collecting, recording and sharing information about foster care youths' sexual orientation and gender identity. Participants brought forward expertise in social work, law, demography, cultural studies, psychology and public policy. Child safety and the risk of isolation were mentioned as main factors contributing to a sense of discomfort or unease with identifying and documenting LGBTQ youth within the foster care system. Panelists also indicated concerns about the general lack of sensitivity present when introducing reported LGBTQ data in court proceedings.

Based on emerging recommendations, expert roundtable, case reviews and GLASS data, we could see that LGBTQ youth are in need of being safely counted and identified so resources could be allocated to address the significant issues they face while in care. It was evident that the safe, confidential, and accurate assessment of sexual orientation and gender identity characteristics of the foster youth population was critically needed. However, it also seemed clear that the current administrative system and organizational capacity for collecting and managing SOGIE data was not yet in a place to engage in these assessments directly. Due to the lack of data and a general distrust with how the child welfare system would handle documented information about LGBTQ foster youth in data systems and case files, the research committee focused on the need for an alternate way to determine the proportion of LGBTQ youth in the LA child welfare system rather than relying on administrative data.

Figure 1: Decision process behind conducting LAFYS study



PLANNING FOR A TRADITIONAL RESEARCH STUDY APPROACH

The following section summarizes three quantitative survey or interview studies of youth in the foster care or juvenile justice system that include sexual orientation and gender identity demographics. These studies helped inform the LAFYS study approach.

RELEVANT PRIOR CHILD WELFARE STUDIES

One previously conducted study, the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth ("The Midwest Study"), served as a resource in that it demonstrated both the ability to recruit a significant sample of youth previously in foster care and use of SOGIE items in the interview. The Midwest Study was a longitudinal study between 2002-2011 examining how foster care youth were transitioning into independent living in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin since the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act.[5] The final sample included 732 youth, with most youth aged 17 to 18 during the first wave and aged 26 during the fifth, final wave (Courtney et al., 2011). Interviews were conducted in-home with an interviewer, though topics deemed sensitive, such as questions about sexual orientation and behavior, were administered by Audio Computer Aided Self Interviewing (ACASI) technology.

The Midwest Study measured sexual orientation using one item that combined constructs of sexual identity and sexual attraction. Youth were asked which of the six statements best described themselves: "100% heterosexual/straight," "mostly heterosexual/straight but somewhat attracted to people of the same sex," "bisexual/attracted to men and women equally," "mostly homosexual/gay but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex," "100% homosexual/gay" or "not sexually attracted to either males or females" (Courtney et al., 2011). Using this data in a study comparing the economic well-being of LGB youth and non-LGB youth leaving foster care, Dworksy (2013) reported that 11-15% of foster youth identified as LGB and that LGB youth in foster care were less likely to be self-sufficient before transitioning to independent living than their non-LGB counterparts. Methodologically relevant to the current project, the Midwest Study highlighted the possibility of estimating disproportionality of LGB youth in foster care, yet it also highlighted possible problems that arise when using only one item to measure both sexual identity and attraction. For example, all youth who did not choose answer option "100% heterosexual/straight" were coded as LGB. This coding method may have both missed an opportunity to distinguish same-sex attraction rates from sexual minority identity rates and possibly inflated the proportion of youth who identify as LGB given that youth may have adopted a broader definition of "attraction" than sexual attraction. Finally, the survey did not include questions about gender identity, a missed opportunity to assess this population within the foster care system.

Though not specifically targeting foster care youth, Angela Irvine's (2010) large national survey of the juvenile justice system served as another resource and example of methods used to assess SOGIE dimensions among youth, including minors, in state and county institutions. Data were collected through a confidential self-administered paper and pencil questionnaire. All youth were provided with a questionnaire and an envelope and were asked to seal and place the envelope in a locked box. The sample consisted of 2,100 youth ages 11 to 21 years old. Irvine (2010) measured SOGIE using identity, attraction, and experiences of discrimination. Specific questions and answer options included: 1) "What is your sexual orientation?" Straight, lesbian/gay, bisexual, questioning, and other; 2) "Who are you attracted to?" boys/men, girls/women, or other; 3) "Have you ever been bullied or harassed at school because of your sexual orientation?" yes, no, not sure; and 4) "Have you ever been kicked out of your

[5] The Foster Care Independence Act was signed into law in December 1990 to help youth aging out of foster care to live independently. Funding to states was increased to help states develop, implement, and evaluate programs helping youth transitioning out of foster care to independent living.

home or ran away because of your gender identity (being transgender) or sexual orientation (being lesbian, gay, etc.)?" yes, no, not sure. Combing results for these questions, Irvine found that 11% of detained youth identified as LGB. The survey also included items measuring gender identity and expression. Two questions asked "What is your gender?" (male, female, other) and "Have you ever been bullied or harassed at school because people don't think you are masculine enough or feminine enough?" (yes, no, not sure). Taking into account these two items, Irvine found that a total 15% of youth in the juvenile justice system identified as LGB and/or gender non-conforming. In a more recent study surveying 1,400 youth in the juvenile justice system, Irvine and Canfield found 20% of youth self-identified as LGBTQ or gender non-conforming (as cited in Wilber, 2015).

Irvine's approach to asking about identity, attraction, and discrimination experiences reflects current understanding of sexual orientation as a multidimensional construct and recognizes that youth who are perceived as gender non-conforming are likely to experience systematic discrimination, regardless of their actual sexual orientation. Measuring sexual orientation with discrimination measures also provides another avenue, for youth who want to remain invisible, to disclose their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, as youth may be reluctant to reveal their sexual minority status directly through identity or attraction measures (Irvine, 2010).

Both the Midwest Study and Irvine's juvenile detention studies indicated the possibility of conducting relatively large sample studies with youth or young adults that asked SOGIE questions, and provided great resources for thinking through methodological issues that we would need to consider. Given that the current study did not have the resources to deploy a large interview team to conduct in-person interviews, the research group worked to identify examples of alternative data collection methods for a large sample of foster youth that would allow for probability sampling methods. The study conducted in 2008 by the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University served as such an example. The survey was a result of a class action lawsuit against Washington State by a group of youth who experienced three or more placements while in foster care.[6] The purpose of the survey was to evaluate whether youth felt the foster care system prepared them for independent living and inform the state of areas for improvement. Using the state's administrative record files, SESRC attempted to survey all youth ages 15 to 18, who were in the state's foster care system in 2007. The survey was administered using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing System (CATI) for the anonymous and confidential telephone surveys. Of the 1,679 youth identified, 698 youth completed the survey (Tarnai & Krebill-Prather, 2008).

Aside from being the first survey in Washington State to interview foster youth about their foster care experience, the survey also set a precedent in asking foster youth about their SOGIE via telephone survey. SOGIE measures included the following four questions: 1) do you currently identify as heterosexual or straight? (yes, no, don't know) 2) do you currently identify as homosexual (gay male, lesbian female)? (yes, no, don't know); 3) do you currently identify as bisexual? (yes, no, don't' know); 4) do you currently identify as transgender (gender queer, gender fluid)? (yes, no, don't know). Study results showed that 2% of youth identified as gay or lesbian, 6% as bisexual and 1 person identified as a transgender person (Tarnai & Krebill-Prather, 2008).

While adding SOGIE questions was an important step, it was not the primary goal in the SESRC study, and their approach was limited in that identification was the only dimension captured. Additionally, the methodology did not reflect current understanding of how to ask youth about their SOGIE; the survey employed a step-like logic between the items that likely affected the rate of response. Nonetheless, the study provided a useful guide for considering how best to design the current project, which required a probability estimate of youth currently in foster youth using a methodology that was more feasible than in-person interviews.

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6 In August 1998, Jessica Braam, on behalf of a class of foster care youth who experienced three or more placements while in foster care, filed a class action lawsuit against Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) for allegedly not providing constitutionally required services to foster care youth. In 2004, a settlement agreement was reached for Braam vs. Washington State to improve foster care services and a Braam Oversight Panel was created to develop goals and monitor DSHS' performance. The 2008 survey of foster youth is part of the monitoring and evaluation requirement.

In addition to the specific studies discussed above, we drew from the lead researcher's experience in measuring SOGIE dimensions in community samples (Wilson, Okwu, & Mills, 2011; Wilson, Harper, Hidalgo, Jamil, Torres, & Fernandez, 2010; Harper, Jamil, & Wilson, 2007), other large scale probability studies (such as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent of Adult Health and Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System), the Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (SMART, 2009) and Gender Identity in U.S. Surveillance (GenIUSS, The GenIUSS Group, 2014) reports, and consultations with colleagues in the field.

INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

DEFINING THE CONSTRUCT - WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "LGBTQ" IN CHILD WELFARE?

As a first step to designing the survey study, we identified multiple constructs that characterized the population of youth in foster care for whom interventions and programs addressing anti-gay and anti-transgender bias may be directly relevant. Specifically, we defined the target population as youth who:

a. identify with a sexual minority label, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning;

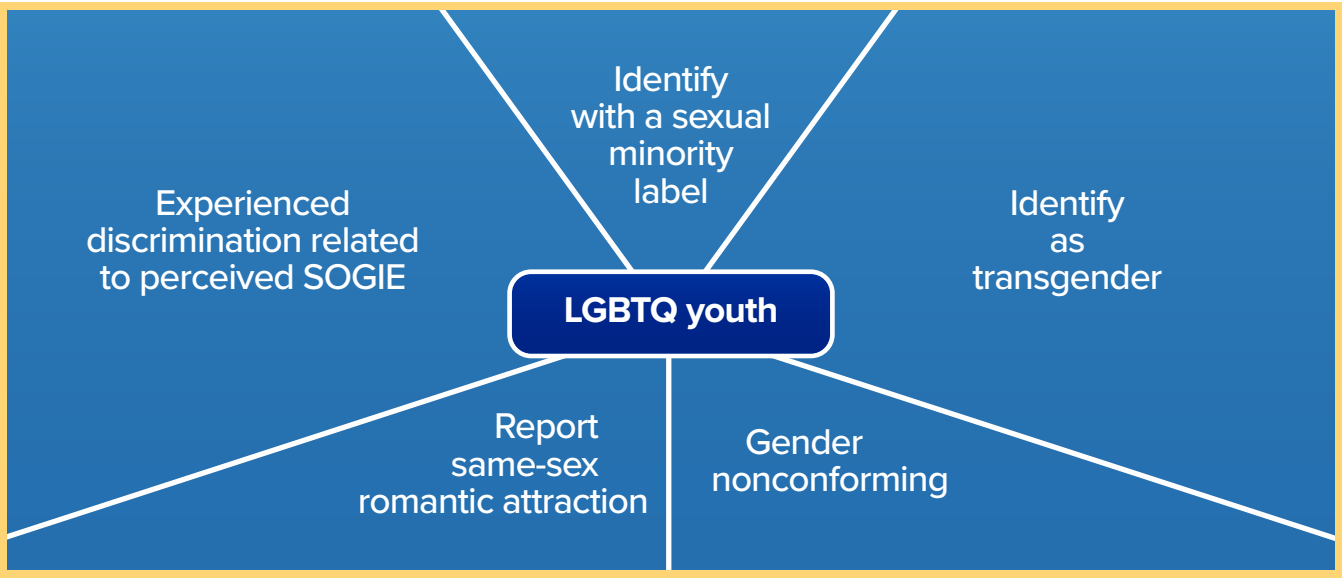
b. identify as transgender or with a gender identity that is different than their sex assigned at birth;

c. are gender nonconforming;

d. report same-sex romantic attraction; and/ or

e. have experienced discrimination related to their perceived sexual or gender identity.

Figure 2: Defining the construct of "LGBTQ" in child welfare



The instrument was designed to assess varying levels of these core constructs, as well as to measure several important wellbeing and foster care experience variables that have been shown to affect LGBTQ youth in other settings. Using multiple constructs to measure SOGIE ensures accurate counts and prevents the undercounts that could result if only one of the constructs is used. Initial drafts of the instrument were revised in consultation with other Williams Institute research staff, research scholars in LGBTQ studies at other academic and non-academic institutions, the LA LGBT Center RISE staff, and community collaborators from the child welfare and dependency court systems. We wanted to confirm that the draft questionnaire items and survey methodology were easy to understand, relevant, and not distressing to LA County youth in foster care. To do this, we did a cognitive interview study where we:

a. conducted a small qualitative study to assess youth response to the proposed approach and,

b. held feedback sessions with groups of caregivers and child welfare staff to gain insight about the proposed survey methodology.

We interviewed 20 volunteer foster youth and conducted six feedback sessions. The outcome of the cognitive interview study was the finalized survey instrument and methodology used in a pilot test of the CATI methodology (See Appendix A for final survey instrument).

INSTRUMENT TESTING

Selecting Items to Test

Given where research was on the level of testing SOGIE questions and the first author's prior experience in SOGIE-related research, we proceeded with making some minor alterations to pre-existing items that have been used on other large scale surveys. Both the SMART(Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team, 2009) and GenIUSS (The GenIUSS Group, 2014)[7] documents provide recommendations for SOGIE questions based on the best available evidence at that time. For example, the SMART document recommended including both response options that allowed for a participant to indicate that they "did not know yet" their sexual identity (indicating a "questioning" identity) and for a participant to indicate they did not know what the question meant (indicating a lack of comprehension of the item or response options) (2009). Though this approach was recommended, no other large scale survey had used these response options together. We felt that given the age of the population and the importance of distinguishing questioning and developing identities from miscomprehension of the item, we aimed to include both options. Because this was a relatively new approach, we also identified this set as items to test in the testing phase. Minor adjustments like these were made to the sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression items and were all tested.

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[7] The final GenIUSS document was not yet published at the time of development, however the authors had access to early drafts of the report which informed their thinking about the items.

Testing Procedures and Findings

A pre-survey cognitive interview study of 20 foster youth was completed in order to inform the final instrument (see Appendix B, for cognitive interview protocol). Participants in the study included both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ foster youth living in a variety of foster care settings. The sexual orientation questions regarding identity and attraction were understood by participants with no confusion. While some youth believed including both sets of questions was repetitive, many indicated that asking about attraction in addition to identity allowed some flexibility for respondents who may not feel comfortable identifying as bisexual or are unsure about how they identify. One of the younger respondents also thought the attraction questions might work particularly well for younger participants, so it made sense to ask both the identity and attraction questions.

The cognitive interview study also included both the 2-step process and the one question process for asking about gender identity. While the one question process was easier and less cumbersome for youth respondents, almost half of the participants indicated that they preferred the 2-step method because it more specifically captures youth who are transgender.

Finally, asking about masculinity and femininity using two separate 9-point scales was seen as quite intuitive for participants (higher # = more of specific trait).One issue that needed to be remedied going forward was dealing with confusing or unknown terms (ex: “genderqueer,” “masculinity,” “femininity”) by providing survey administrators a glossary of terms that they could reference when youth needed additional explanations.

All respondents said they would feel comfortable answering questions about their foster care experience. A few participants mentioned that questions about sexual abuse history or inquiring about the reason they are not with biological parents might make youth feel uncomfortable, but that they could not recall any other topics related to their foster care experience that would be too sensitive. A few respondents also stated that it is best if the interviewer makes it clear that youth can skip questions if they feel uncomfortable.

PLACEMENT OF QUESTIONS IN DEMOGRAPHIC SECTION

Another key consideration was the placement of the SOGIE questions within the survey instrument. Following prior research on asking SOGIE questions (SMART, 2009; Taylor, 2008) we were committed to keeping the items in the basic demographic section and avoiding any “special introductions” that indicated those questions were especially sensitive. Placement of the items was not tested however, and we have no data to present on the types of results obtained depending on questionnaire ordering.

ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATIONS

Prior to testing the survey in the field, there are two key administrative processes that are important to describe that have implications for the many decisions other researchers will make about the types of data collected, the sampling approach, and the data collection method.

CHOOSING A VENDOR

Throughout the process of testing the items, we simultaneously explored options for data collection staff. That is, we knew at this point that the methodology was a quantitative survey and the data collection method would be a telephone interview; however, we needed to determine who actually conducted the interviews. We landed on the decision to hire an external survey research firm and considered the following issues:

PERSON-POWER

Though the primary investigator had ample experience as an interviewer, it was clear that attempts at contacting, tracking, and interviewing up to 3000 youth was not feasible within the desired timeframe for completion (3-6 months, pilot to end). We also considered working with partnering organizations to have their social services staff make the telephone calls and conduct the interviews, but again, this confronted us with concerns regarding interview skill-set and resources needed to closely monitor the ongoing data collection to assess interview quality. The need for an ultimate sample size of over 700 participants also impacted our early decision to not attempt to collect the data face-to-face as this would require too many interview staff members. As such, we sought an external agency with experienced interviewers, a large enough interviewing team, and staff assigned to monitor the project, including a quality assurance team and system.

INTERVIEW SYSTEM CAPABILITIES

A major concern throughout the planning of the survey study was how to optimize candid participation among youth, including disclosure of sexual orientation, gender identity, and more personal information about their lives. The settings in which these interviews were being conducted had no guarantee of privacy as youth were likely to live in a range of settings from "home-like" settings with foster parents or kin, or in congregate settings in which staff supervised them, such as group homes and residential facilities. Either way, adults were responsible for their care and likely to be around. In some congregate settings, peers were also likely to be nearby. As such, we aimed to identify an agency that had capabilities for enhanced technology, such as interactive voice response (IVR).

COSTS

The costs associated with conducting the study affected multiple decisions made, including the decision to hire an external company and which company to hire. The available budget for this project, not including the existing staff resources from the co-authors and the LA LGBT Center, was approximately $200K. This limited budget (by survey research study standards) also had implications for the ultimate possible sample size. In the end, we chose a sample size that at minimum accomplished the primary goal: assess the population estimate of LGBT youth in foster care. But this decision in the context of funding limitations meant that decisions were made early to accept the limitations for making multiple subgroup comparisons, such as having enough statistical power to compare trans youth to LGB youth or looking at various ethnic subgroups of LGBTQ youth.

IRB REVIEW/PROCESSES

In order to conduct the instrument development study, pilot test, and full-scale administration of the survey, there were groups from which we needed to achieve approval.

COUNTY CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

The department or division responsible for reviewing and tracking data collected within the child welfare system or directly from dependents of the County was the first approval body we needed to work with. This department had a specific set of steps for obtaining approval, which for Los Angeles County, included submitting a preliminary proposal that received some review. Instructions were then given to obtain both Institutional Review Board approval and Dependency Court approval. Once we passed all of the reviews by those additional committees, we resubmitted a final packet for approval to the Department Research group. Working collaboratively with Department Research staff assisted the successful navigation of these systems. Several Department researchers participated in advisory meetings early on regarding ideas about the research design and helped to provide guidance for how to submit a comprehensive application for research.

COUNTY COURT OVER CHILD PROTECTION AND SERVICES

After the LA-DCFS Research Department reviewed the scientific merits of the study, we filed the petition with the court . At that point, Children's Law Center (CLC, the attorneys for foster children and youth), the Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers (LADL, the parents' attorney group), LA-DCFS and the Department of Probation[8] received notice of the study and had the opportunity to object to the proposed consent procedures or any other component. None of the parties raised any concerns with the court. As a minimal risk study asking relatively routine demographic questions, the court approved our procedures as described in the next section. The format for submitting these materials were explained to us by LA-DCFS.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

As a requirement of both the LA-DCFS Research department and the federal Department of Health and Human Services guidelines to which the principal investigator was bound to as a university employee, the project also needed to be approved by an IRB. The study application was submitted to the PI's university IRB, UCLA, and approved.

Once the project had been approved by the Dependency Court and IRB, the project was resubmitted to the LA-DCFS Research Department for final approval. Though complicated at times, these multiple steps of approval are designed to ensure that the many stakeholders involved in protecting the rights of children, who are currently dependents of the State and their families of origin, are protected legally and ethically with regards to research practices. It is important to note for future projects that the extent to which these multiple review processes are needed may vary by County or State. Further, the position or role of the PI (e.g., whether or not the PI is working with or from outside of the Child Welfare Department) will likely affect the need for review or type of review. For example, if an investigator is an external agent to the Child Welfare Department and also an independent contractor

[8] In some cases, foster youth are dually supervised by LA-DCFS and the Department of Probation if the foster youth has committed criminal or status offenses.

that is not housed within an institution with its own IRB, they may need to take extra steps to identify a supervising IRB or pay for a private IRB to complete the research ethics review process. Similarly, projects initiated from within the department are also likely to have a different, and perhaps simplified, process of approval.

PILOT

DATA QUALITY CONTROL STRATEGIES

After we modified the survey instrument using the data collected from the cognitive interview study (described in the Instrument Development section earlier), we conducted a pilot of the final survey instrument and methodology. The pilot tested the administration of the questionnaire through computer-assisted telephone interviewing techniques. Westat, the third-party contractor we hired experienced in conducting large-scale phone surveys, attempted to contact a random sample of 100 youth. Out of that sample, 14 youth agreed to participate and completed interviews. At the pilot stage, two primary strategies were used to identify potential concerns with the interview testing: reviewing the pilot data and conducting periodic monitoring of the calls made to potential respondents.

Using these two strategies, the pilot results revealed that the instrument and overall approach to interviewing (i.e., via telephone) performed well in that respondents typically appeared to understand the questions and were interested in participating once we achieved direct contact with them. Also, having the option of touch tone response worked well. These data indicated that we did not need to make substantial changes to the interview protocol.

POST-PILOT REVISIONS

However, the data also indicated several minor and few major issues that we attempted to address. Some of the issues were indicated as a minor concern because they either would not likely lead to major response bias, and could easily be resolved, or were common concerns to telephone survey administration that may not be resolved. These minor issues included:

a. Encountering answering machines

b. General problems with guardian refusal

c. General lead-in/ instrument issues, including the introductory consent questions were too demanding with regard to both time and comprehension

d. Male response rate lower than population proportion

In response to these minor issues, we made minor changes to the interview (e.g., fixed wording to make the lead in smoother, and easier to follow), decided to leave generic messages on voicemail or answering machines only once, and acknowledged that there would be guardian refusals and likely a lower than desired male response rate given the patterns seen in other telephone surveys (McAuliffe et al., 1998; Siemiatycki, et al., 1984).

There were also a few major issues to which we felt a more significant response was needed to reduce potential response bias.

a. Quality of contact information provided, including non-working numbers and numbers where youth used to be; rates of inaccurate contact information for youth ranged from 17-49% at various check points in the study

b. Residential and group care facilities shown to have extra road blocks

In response to these major issues, which had the potential to dramatically alter the number of youth enrolled in the study and the presence of youth in group care, we made two alterations to the process. First, we requested a second random (without replacement) sample to offset the number of youth who were expected to be non-locatable. The goal was to maintain the sampling frame (meaning, the eligibility to be included remained the same), but increase the list of possible working numbers by sampling more cases.

Second, we addressed the issues related to reaching youth who live in group home settings by conducting more outreach to these facilities and getting direct phone numbers to the specific youth residences in each facility. The training and outreach efforts are described below and the slide deck used for the training is included in Appendix C.

Trainings on Residential Facilities and New Efforts

The research committee was aware of existing practitioner reports and anecdotal data that LGBTQ youth tend to be over-represented in congregate care settings. Reasons for this include the reluctance of foster family agencies and counties to mandate that foster parents be prevented from categorically refusing to accept LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ youth being unwilling to risk rejection from yet another family, and LGBTQ youth being informally labeled as "unadoptable". This possible overrepresentation necessitated extra efforts on the part of the research team to ensure accurate counts from youth in these settings.

There are some major structural differences between the experience of youth living in foster homes and those living in congregate care settings.

There are some major structural differences between the experience of youth living in foster homes and those living in congregate care settings. The primary distinction is that foster home caregivers are "parents," who provide care to the youth 24 hours a day, 7 days a week versus group home or residential caregivers who are "staff" and provide care to youth in shifts, including awake overnight staff. Group home personnel work either Sunday-Wednesday or Thursday-Saturday so the same staff are never there an entire week, and information has to sustain itself through shift changes and turnover. In order to support communication between staff and shifts, we included two additional information sheets in the mailers to the youth in group homes and their caregivers. One was an individual information sheet for the youth's file, indicating that researchers from Westat would be calling, that the Department of Children and Family Services has authorized the interview, and that when the interviewers call, the youth is to be provided a private place to take the call. The second was a flier for the staff information board and/or staff log indicating the same information.

In addition, the standard for privacy and confidentiality is much higher in closed group home settings and unless the staff see documentation and hear it from their supervisors that youth can take phone calls, they would not allow the call to occur. To address this challenge, the research team made personal phone calls to the directors of each group home facility introducing the study so that the director could personally inform staff to allow the youth to take the call.

Lastly, schedules are significantly more structured in group homes in order to support the movement and control of 6-12 children at any given time, many of whom have behavioral challenges. Group home staff must juggle 6-12 different child schedules concurrently including family visits, health appointments, recreation, meals, education, and emergencies. In order to increase the chances of being able to interview selected youth the first or second time called, the research committee asked Westat to create a separate group care calling interviewer team and held a special training session for those callers. The training explained how placement in the child welfare system works, how foster homes and group homes are different, the kinds of day-to-day activities group homes manage, the best times to call a group home, and the introductory language and documentation needed to ensure staff know that this is an pre-authorized interview by the youth's county worker. The group home interview team was also given instructions to adjust the calling script based on whether multiple youth from the same home had been randomly selected to participate in the survey.

In sum, minor changes made to the protocol and substantial changes to the ways we approached group homes to obtain a sample were implemented in order to improve the response rates and reduce bias in the sample as best as possible. Before moving on to full scale survey administration, an additional 2-week trial period was used to assess the impacts of these changes on the sample and determine the feasibility of completing the study. After this 2-week trial period, the interview completion rate increased to where respondents who were currently in group or residential care made up 18% of the sample, which was more representative of the distribution of youth across group homes and non group homes throughout the County (an improvement from only 7% during the pilot and before the trainings and outreach efforts). The non-locatable rate for youth remained high (approximately 35% of the total sample drawn from the administrative database), but we anticipated reaching the target sample size given the working completion rate (increased to 27% of all youth sampled from 14% at the pilot) due to our successful request to obtain a longer list of potential respondents from the sampling frame.

SURVEY STUDY ADMINISTRATION

Once the team was satisfied with moving ahead with the full scale survey administration, the remaining interviews were completed over the subsequent five weeks. Detailed information on the survey method, response rates, and findings are provided in the original report (Wilson, Cooper, Kastanis, & Neshad, 2014).

LESSONS LEARNED, REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

MEASURING SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES

After completing the survey as well as a couple of major reports on the data, there are some lessons learned about measuring SOGIE statuses that warrant review and consideration for future studies or programs designed to collect this type of information within child welfare or similar systems.

QUESTIONING STATUS

Measuring the construct of a "questioning" identity in quantitative research is challenging because it aims to use brief survey responses as a way to capture a complex process of acknowledging that someone may not be identified with the sexual majority group (i.e., heterosexual) or cisgender group, and yet unsure about where they may fit into the other response items presented. One of the most challenging components is that the lack of certainty about where a respondent fits may be a function of their confusion over specific identity labels that reflect who they are, their level of attraction to same and different genders, their sense of the level of permanency of their current sexual and romantic feelings, or some combination of these dimensions. Following prior research, we used the single response option, "I don't know yet", to reflect this rather complex issue. However, we recognize that future research may want to explore and test additional ways to capture this concept, particularly among adolescent samples.

GENDER IDENTITY

This study includes the largest scale probability sample using the 2-step method for assessing gender identity among adolescents, in which first sex assigned at birth is asked and then current gender identity. This method is most recommended by scholars in the field as it provides the opportunity to assess transgender status as both a person's current identity as transgender or as the incongruence between their sex assigned at birth and current gender identity. There is great potential in integrating this method of assessing gender identity in the demographic sections of assessments and forms. In the LAFYS, the item tested well in the cognitive interview phase and appeared to perform well in the survey. However, the small proportion that this group makes up in any population, even in settings in which they are overrepresented, may call for additional measures to ensure that the population estimates are not skewed by a few people who are miscoded or created a response error. Given this, the lead author has since worked with a team on the measurement of gender identity in a probability survey, the California Health Interview Survey, in which the group collectively decided to include a follow up question for all those identifying as transgender, particularly for those categorized as transgender because they selected a "different" sex assigned at birth and current gender identity (see, Grant et al., 2015 for details). The follow up question is designed to confirm that the respondent had indeed intended to indicate both the reported sex assigned at birth (e.g., female) and current gender identity was (e.g. male or a boy). This was not a procedure employed for this survey, but we recommend it for future work as a validation of the rate of transgender identification among youth within and outside of foster care given the high potential for negative impacts on estimates of a relatively small population.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

In response to concerns expressed in the early research workgroup meetings from individuals currently working at DCFS about potential legal and developmental implications of asking children, particularly those 14 years of age and under, about sexual behavior, we opted out of asking any specific questions about sexual behavior. There are drawbacks to making this decision that other sites should consider. Sexual behavior is considered one of the three major dimensions of sexual orientation (in addition to identity and attractions). Our decision to exclude collecting data on sexual behavior likely limited our understanding of the interplay between identity and attraction, and also quite possibly resulted in an underestimate of the sexual minority youth population as there are likely youth engaging in same sex sexual behavior but reporting no sexual minority identities or attraction. Though youth like this are not identified as LGBTQ, they would have fit in the project's definition of LGBTQ as an experiential category including all those with the potential to be exposed to anti-LGBTQ bias. Those engaged in same sex behavior tend to be subject to this bias, regardless of stated identities and attractions (Gilman et al., 2001; Faulkner et al., 1998).

RECRUITMENT LANGUAGE

The current study was conducted solely in English and only recruitment materials had a Spanish version in order to communicate the goals and procedures of the study to Spanish-speaking caregivers. This decision was made out of cost and feasibility considerations; however we recognize that future studies may want to consider budgeting for the administration of their surveys with foster youth in other languages than English. Yet, it should also be noted that SOGIE measures need to be tested in the languages in which they will be administered. The California Health Interview Survey may serve as a useful example of sexual orientation and gender identity items administered in multiple languages.

RELYING ON TRADITIONAL RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Though the decision to approach the collection of these data from a traditional research standpoint was reasonable given existing institutional barriers to integrating data collection into the administrative system at that time, some limitations to this approach need to be considered. One issue to consider is the cost. While, the total cost for a one-time study (approximately $200K not including investigator staff time) is likely cheaper than the full overhaul of an administrative data system, this approach is not likely cost effective in the long run as re-administering it annually would then eventually exceed the resources needed to institutionalize the data collection. Another limitation is that a traditional research study approach relies on sampling and with that comes the inherent biases resulting from the available sampling frame and recruitment procedures. An efficient, confidential, and accurate administrative data collection process would result in full population level data, as opposed to estimates based on samples.

It might be valuable for other jurisdictions to inventory surveys that youth in care are already receiving, such as satisfaction surveys, and add SOGIE questions to the demographic sections of those surveys. We again acknowledge that the expert panel indicated that some changes in the awareness and sensitivity regarding LGBTQ issues would be needed to accurately capture this information. Nonetheless, the most sustainable long-term solution might be the overhaul of administrative data systems to capture:

1) sexual orientation identity
2) sex assigned at birth
3) gender identity or preferred gender pronoun (to compare against sex assigned at birth)

If possible and where relevant,

4) gender expression
5) sexual attraction (in terms of sex/gender)
6) sexual behavior (in terms of sex/gender)
7) evidence of peer or family conflict related to sexual and gender minority status

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APPENDIX A – SURVEY INSTRUMENT

NOTE: If the instrument is used, cite as: *The Williams Institute & Holarchy Consulting (2013). Los Angeles Foster Youth Survey. Unpublished. Information on source of items is available upon request.*

INTRODUCTION AND COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT

Los Angeles Foster youth Survey-Phase II Telephone Questionnaire Intro and Assent

Again, we are helping UCLA with a research project on youth in foster care. The survey includes questions about basic information like age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other questions about your experiences in foster care. DCFS has given permission for you to participate. Even though they have said it is OK for you to participate, it is up to you if you want to talk to me.

Before you decide if you want to do the survey, there are a few things I need to tell you:

- ***The questions I will ask you are part of a research project. They are not required by your social worker.***
- ***No one will be able to see how you answered the questions. Your name and other information will be kept separate from the survey answers.***
- ***I will be asking you questions about basic information like age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other questions about your experiences in foster care.***
- ***The interview will take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete, but could take up to half an hour.***
- ***All of the information that you provide will be kept confidential. The only exception to this is if you are in danger of hurting yourself, threatening to hurt someone else, or are being hurt now, I will have to report it to a government agency for your protection.***

Just so i'm absolutely sure you understand this, if you tell me that you are being hurt, may hurt yourself, or you may hurt someone else, will i have to report it to a government agency?

1. YES
2. NO

[If youth answers "YES", continue]

Ok thank you.

[If youth answers "NO", repeat the question using the following script]

Let me repeat the question. All of the information that you provide will be kept confidential. The only exception to this is if you are in danger of hurting yourself, threatening to hurt someone else, or are being hurt now, i will have to report it to a government agency for your protection.

Now, if you tell me that you are being hurt, may hurt yourself, or you may hurt someone else, will i have to report it to a government agency?

1. YES
2. NO

[If youth answers "YES", continue]

Ok thank you.

[If they answer "NO" twice, Thank them for their time and participation and code out as IC]

- ***As mentioned in the letter we sent, you don't have to do this study. It's entirely up to you. No matter what you decide, no one will be mad at you. You can start the interview and then decide to quit at any time. Just tell me that you want to stop. If you want to skip a question, that's ok too.***

Before i go on, let me make sure that what i'm telling you makes sense. Do you understand that doing the interview is completely up to you?

1. YES
2. NO

[If youth answers "YES", continue]

Ok thank you.

[If youth answers "NO", repeat the question using the following script:

Let me repeat that. You don't have to do this study. It's entirely up to you. No matter what you decide, no one will be mad at you. You can start the interview and then decide to quit at any time. Just tell me that you want to stop. If you want to skip a question, that's ok too.

Do you understand that doing the interview is completely up to you?

[If they answer "NO" twice, Thank them for their time and participation and code out as IC]

- ***You can answer the questions by saying the answer, pushing the number that goes with the answer, or saying the number that goes with the answer. Whatever is most comfortable for you.***
- ***To protect your privacy, you should be on a phone where you are comfortable and can't be overheard by other people, or on a phone that allows you to push the numbers to respond.***
- ***If not, I would be glad to call again later, or at a different number, or I can give you our toll free 800 number, and you can call us.***
- ***If you feel more comfortable having someone in the room with you, (guardian, CSW, or clinician), during the survey, I would be glad to call again later, when you are both available.***
- ***You will receive a $10 gift card for participating in this survey.***

ASSENT/CONSENT

Do you agree to do this interview?

1. YES *>>* ***Continue***
2. WOULD PREFER A CALLBACK AT THIS NUMBER
3. WOULD PREFER A CALLBACK AT A DIFFERENT NUMBER
4. WANTS 800 NUMBER

91. OTHER

INTERVIEW ITEMS

Demographics

Thank you again for being willing to talk to us. Remember that all of your answers to these questions will be kept confidential. No one will be told what you say, so feel free to answer them as honestly as you can. You may answer them using the buttons on their phone, or by saying the number out loud, or saying the answer out loud.

First, I have some basic questions about your background.

1. How old are you?

_____ # YEARS

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

2. What grade are you in?

_____ GRADE

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

3. What is your zip code where you live now?

_____

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

4. What is the language you speak most of the time?

☐ ENGLISH

☐ SPANISH

☐ KOREAN

☐ ARMENIAN

☐ TAGALOG

☐ OTHER _____

5. *Do you have a second language?*

YES >> ***If YES, go to 5b.***

NO >> ***If NO, go to 6.***

5b. *If yes, which one of the following is your second language?*

- ☐ ENGLISH
- ☐ SPANISH
- ☐ KOREAN
- ☐ ARMENIAN
- ☐ TAGALOG
- ☐ OTHER _____

6. *Were you born in the United States?*

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

7. *Where was your biological mother born?*

- ☐ MOTHER WAS BORN OUTSIDE OF THE U.S.
- ☐ MOTHER WAS BORN IN THE U.S.
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

8. *Where was your biological father born?*

- ☐ FATHER WAS BORN OUTSIDE OF THE U.S.
- ☐ FATHER WAS BORN IN THE U.S.
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

Now, I am going to ask you a few questions about how you see yourself or how you identify. I want to remind you again that at any point you are welcome to respond using the number keys on your phone. For each response I will also give you a number code to press.

9. *Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino?*

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

10. Which term do you use to describe your race?

- ☐ AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE
- ☐ ASIAN
- ☐ BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
- ☐ NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER
- ☐ SOUTH ASIAN
- ☐ WHITE
- ☐ BI/MULTI RACIAL OR ETHNIC
  (Allow skip to page where they select groups)
  - ☐ AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE
  - ☐ ASIAN
  - ☐ BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
  - ☐ HISPANIC/LATINO
  - ☐ NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER
  - ☐ SOUTH ASIAN
  - ☐ WHITE
  - ☐ OTHER _____
- ☐ OTHER _____
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

11. What was your sex at birth? (Check one)

(If needed:** what the doctor put on your birth certificate?**)
[Single response; do not randomize]

- ☐ MALE
- ☐ FEMALE
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

12. When you think about how you see yourself, which of the following terms best fits how you describe your gender? (Check all that apply)

[Randomize]

- ☐ GIRL
- ☐ BOY
- ☐ TRANS OR TRANSGENDER
- ☐ I AM NOT SURE YET; OR
- ☐ I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS QUESTION MEANS

13. Do you consider yourself to be:

- ☐ STRAIGHT OR HETEROSEXUAL
- ☐ GAY OR LESBIAN
- ☐ BISEXUAL
- ☐ I AM NOT SURE
- ☐ I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS QUESTION MEANS

14. Are you romantically attracted to boys/men?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO
- ☐ I AM NOT SURE YET
- ☐ I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS QUESTION MEANS

15. Are you romantically attracted to girls/women?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO
- ☐ I AM NOT SURE YET
- ☐ I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS QUESTION MEANS

Many people describe themselves as some combination of feminine (girlish) and masculine (boyish) because of how we act, talk, or dress. The next two questions are about how you describe yourself.

16. On a scale from 1–9, where 1 is not at all feminine and 9 is extremely feminine, how would you describe yourself at this point in your life?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
NOT AT ALL FEMININE								EXTREMELY FEMININE

17. On a scale from 1–9, where 1 is not at all masculine and 9 is extremely masculine, how would you describe yourself at this point in your life?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
NOT AT ALL MASCULINE								EXTREMELY MASCULINE

LIFE EXPERIENCES

Now, I have a few questions about your general life experiences. Again, feel free to answer them as honestly as you can.

18. How many times have you been suspended from school in the past year (since June 2012)?

_____ # OF TIMES

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

19. How many times have you been expelled from school in the past year (since June 2012)?

_____ # OF TIMES

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

20. Have you ever been homeless after being kicked out of home or running away

(If needed:** By homeless, I mean that you did not have a place to sleep at night that is intended for regular use or living?**)

☐ YES

☐ NO

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

21. Have you ever been kicked out of your home or placement, or run away because you are too feminine or masculine, or because someone assumed you were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?

☐ YES

☐ NO

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

22. Have you ever spent a night or more in a hospital?

☐ YES *>>* ***go to Q22b***

☐ NO *>>* ***go to Q23***

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW *>>* ***go to Q23***

*22b. **[If Yes]**, was this because of emotional reasons or physical reasons, such as illness or injury, or both?*

☐ EMOTIONAL REASONS

☐ PHYSICAL ILLNESS OR INJURY

☐ BOTH EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL ILLNESS OR INJURY

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

23. Have you ever been arrested, been on probation, or been picked up by the police because they thought you were doing something wrong?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

This next section will ask about experiences you may have had in the last year. Please tell me whether each experience has never happened, rarely happened, sometimes happened, or happened almost every day.

***[For each question, repeat** "1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, or 8 - Don't know?"]*

24. How often in the last year (since June 2012) have you ...

	NEVER 1	RARELY 2	SOMETIMES 3	OFTEN 4	DON'T KNOW 8
24a... been treated with less respect than others?					
24b... received poorer services than others in restaurants or stores?					
24c ... experienced people treating you as if you're not smart?					
24d... experienced people acting as if they are better than you are?					
24e... experienced people acting as if they are afraid of you?					
24f ... experienced people acting as if they think you are dishonest?					
24g...been called names or insulted?					

>> ***If all are marked NEVER - skip to Q27.***

For the next set of questions, I want to follow up on the events that you mentioned happening in the last year. You may choose as many categories as you want that apply to the event or events you are thinking about.

25. You mentioned one or more ways that you were treated poorly in the last year. Would you say that being treated poorly was related to your...? (check all that apply)

[Randomize]

- ☐ BEING IN FOSTER CARE
- ☐ GENDER
- ☐ BEING TRANSGENDER
- ☐ BOYISH MANNERISMS OR NOT BEING WOMANLY ENOUGH
- ☐ GIRLISH MANNERISMS OR NOT BEING MANLY ENOUGH
- ☐ IMMIGRANT STATUS
- ☐ RACE OR ETHNICITY
- ☐ BEING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, OR UNSURE ABOUT YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- ☐ WEIGHT
- ☐ CLOTHING AND SHOES
- ☐ OTHER

    >> If OTHER, ask *"why do you think you were treated this way?"*

_____

26. You mentioned one or more ways that you were treated poorly in the last year. What type of settings would you say you were treated like that in? (check all that apply)

[Randomize]

- ☐ FOSTER HOME
- ☐ GROUP HOME OR RESIDENTIAL CAMPUS
- ☐ SOCIAL WORKER OFFICE
- ☐ FAMILY SETTING
- ☐ LOCAL BUSINESS
- ☐ NEIGHBORHOOD
- ☐ SCHOOL
- ☐ OTHER

    >> If OTHER, ask *"why do you think you were treated this way?"*

_____

Foster care experiences

Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about your experiences in foster care.

27. About how many years have you spent in foster care, including placements with relatives?

_____ # YEARS

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

28. What type of place was your first placement?

☐ HOME OF A RELATIVE

☐ HOME OF SOMEONE NOT RELATED TO YOU

☐ FOSTER HOME

☐ GROUP HOME

☐ RESIDENTIAL CAMPUS

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

29. Where do you live right now?

☐ HOME OF A RELATIVE

☐ HOME OF SOMEONE NOT RELATED TO YOU

☐ FOSTER HOME

☐ GROUP HOME

☐ RESIDENTIAL CAMPUS

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

>> If age is reported to be 18 or older, ask Q30. if not, skip to Q31.

30. ***[If the child is 18 years of age or older, ask:]*** *"Is your current placement a voluntary placement which you asked to stay in even though you are eligible to leave the system?"*

☐ YES

☐ NO

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

31. How many TOTAL placements have you had since you've been in foster care, including placements with relatives?

_____ TOTAL # PLACEMENTS

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

32. How many different placements did you have since June of last year?

_____ # PLACEMENTS IN LAST YEAR

☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

33. How has the foster care system treated you since June of last year? Would you say …

- ☐ VERY WELL
- ☐ SOMEWHAT WELL
- ☐ NOT VERY WELL
- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

We are almost done, I have one more question and it is about your hopes for the future.

34. In the next five to ten years, which type of work or career do you most likely see yourself working in?

_____

- ☐ 8 - DON'T KNOW

That was my last question. Do you have any questions for me about the study?

Ok, as I explained, we will not share the information you have provided with your social worker or placement. But would you like me to let a DCFS social worker know that you would like to be contacted about any concerns you have?

If YES, follow contact form completion protocol. If no, thank them for their time and end call.

APPENDIX B – COGNITIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Survey Item Interview Protocol (Youth)

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this interview.

This survey asks questions about sexual orientation and words you may use to describe yourself when thinking about gender, masculinity or femininity. If you do not understand the questions or if you want to know more, you can ask at any time. You can also stop the question or interview at any time, if you do not want to continue.

As I mentioned earlier, the goal is to hear your thoughts about some questions that I want to include on a survey of foster care youth. But before we begin the main section, I would like to learn some basic information about you.

Please tell me again, how old were you on your last birthday?

- ☐ 11 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 12 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 13 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 14 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 15 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 16 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 17 YEARS OLD
- ☐ 18 YEARS OLD OR OLDER

What grade are you in?

- ☐ 6TH GRADE
- ☐ 7TH GRADE
- ☐ 8TH GRADE
- ☐ 9TH GRADE
- ☐ 10TH GRADE
- ☐ 11TH GRADE
- ☐ 12TH GRADE
- ☐ COLLEGE/VOCATIONAL TRAINING OR EDUCATION
- ☐ OTHER

Which term do you use to describe your race? (Select one)

- ☐ AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE
- ☐ ASIAN
- ☐ BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
- ☐ HISPANIC OR LATINO
- ☐ NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER
- ☐ WHITE
- ☐ BI/MULTI RACIAL
- ☐ OTHER _____

Which of these best describes where you live currently? (Select one)

- ☐ HOME OF A RELATIVE
- ☐ NON-RELATED EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS
- ☐ WITH FRIENDS
- ☐ REGULAR FOSTER CARE
- ☐ SPECIALIZED OR TREATMENT FOSTER CARE
- ☐ RESIDENTIAL CARE
- ☐ STREET
- ☐ DETENTION
- ☐ DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FACILITY
- ☐ EMERGENCY SHELTER
- ☐ HOSPITALIZED
- ☐ OTHER (SPECIFY) _____

Okay, now I will ask you a question or set of questions about how you see yourself or about your experiences. Then, I will ask you some questions about your responses. These questions will help us to learn where and how we can ask these questions better. If you need to take a break at any time, let me know.

[Interviewer instructions: Read question and possible responses for all items; and show the response cards for each]

1. *Do you consider yourself to be:*

   - ☐ STRAIGHT OR HETEROSEXUAL;
   - ☐ GAY OR LESBIAN;
   - ☐ BISEXUAL;
   - ☐ I AM NOT SURE YET; OR
   - ☐ I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS QUESTION MEANS

a. *What is this question asking?*

b. *How did you decide to pick **[participants' response]** as your response?*

c. *Was this question hard or easy to answer? Why?*

2. *Are you romantically attracted to boys/men?*

   - ☐ YES
   - ☐ NO
   - ☐ I DON'T KNOW

3. *Are you romantically attracted to girls/women?*

   - ☐ YES
   - ☐ NO
   - ☐ I DON'T KNOW

a. *What are these questions asking?*

b. *How did you decide to pick **[participants' response]** as your response?*

c. *Were these questions hard or easy to answer? Why?*

4. *What sex were you assigned at birth (what the doctor put on your birth certificate)? (Check one)*

   - ☐ MALE
   - ☐ FEMALE
   - ☐ DECLINE TO ANSWER

5. *When you think about how you see yourself now, which of the following terms best fits how you describe your gender?*

   - ☐ GIRL OR YOUNG WOMAN
   - ☐ BOY OR YOUNG MAN
   - ☐ TRANS OR TRANSGENDER
   - ☐ GENDER QUEER
   - ☐ I AM NOT SURE YET; OR
   - ☐ I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS QUESTION MEANS

a. *What are these questions asking?*
b. *How did you decide to pick **[participants' response]** as your response? **[ask for #4 & 5]***
c. *How are these questions asking different things?*
d. *Were these questions hard or easy to answer? Why?*

6. *How do you identify?*

   - ☐ MALE
   - ☐ FEMALE
   - ☐ MALE TO FEMALE TRANSGENDER
   - ☐ FEMALE TO MALE TRANSGENDER
   - ☐ OTHER

a. *What was this question asking?*
b. *How did you decide to pick **[participants' response]** as your response?*
c. *Was this question hard or easy to answer? Why?*

a. *Which question about gender identity is more understandable, asking the two questions or just this one? **[Point to response cards]***
b. *Which one do you like better?*
c. *Please explain.*

7. *On a scale from 1–9, where 1 is not at all feminine and 9 is extremely feminine, how would you describe yourself at this point in your life?"*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
NOT AT ALL FEMININE								EXTREMELY FEMININE

8. *On a scale from 1–9, where 1 is not at all masculine and 9 is extremely masculine, how would you describe yourself at this point in your life?"*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
NOT AT ALL MASCULINE								EXTREMELY MASCULINE

a. *What is this question asking?*

b. *How did you decide to pick **[participants' response]** as your response?*

c. *Was this question hard or easy to answer? Why?*

9. *A person's appearance, style, or dress (such as the way they walk or talk) may affect the way people think of them. On a typical day, how do you think people would describe your appearance, style, or dress?*

- ☐ VERY FEMININE
- ☐ MOSTLY FEMININE
- ☐ SOMEWHAT FEMININE
- ☐ EQUALLY FEMININE AND MASCULINE
- ☐ SOMEWHAT MASCULINE
- ☐ MOSTLY MASCULINE
- ☐ VERY MASCULINE

a. *What is this question asking?*

b. *How did you decide to pick **[participants' response]** as your response?*

c. *Was this question hard or easy to answer? Why?*

d. *Do you think #7 & #8 and #9 are different?*

10. *For the following questions, please tell me how much you agree with each statement about your level of religiousness. This time, 1= strongly disagree and 4 equals strongly agree.*

	1 STRONGLY DISAGREE	2 DISAGREE	3 AGREE	4 STRONGLY AGREE
a. *My caregivers' religious/ spiritual beliefs are very important to them.*				
b. *My caregivers' religious/ spiritual beliefs influence their decisions.*				
c. *It is important that my caregivers' friends share their religious/spiritual beliefs.*				

a. *What are these questions asking?*

b. *How did you decide to pick [participants' response] as your response?*

c. *Who are you thinking about when you answer the question about your caregiver?*

d. *Were these questions hard or easy to answer? Why?*

We are also planning to ask some questions about how youth feel about their foster care experience. Would you mind telling me in general how you would feel being asked questions about:

11. *How long you have been in foster care?*

12. *Whether you had ever run away from foster care?*

13. *How satisfied you are with the support you get from your social worker?*

a. *In general, how would you feel answering these types of questions on a survey?*

b. *Are there any types of questions related to your foster care experience that you would not feel comfortable answering?*

Okay, the next set of questions are all about hearing what you think about a method we hope to use to do this big survey we have been referring to. Basically, we are planning to do a survey of foster care youth by telephone. The survey will ask basic questions like the ones we discussed, including sexual identity, ethnicity, gender identity, foster care experiences, as well as some questions about social support and well being. We would have an outside company that is not at UCLA, Department of Children and Family Services(DCFS), or the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center(LAGLC) call foster care youth 12-17 years old at the number registered for them through DCFS.

14. *What problems do you think might come up by us doing the survey this way?*

15. *What might be good about doing the survey this way?*

16. *How do you think the survey should be introduced?*

    a. *What do you think about them saying this is a survey from DCFS?*

    b. *What if they said this is a survey from UCLA?*

    c. *What if they said this is a survey from LA Gay and Lesbian Center?*

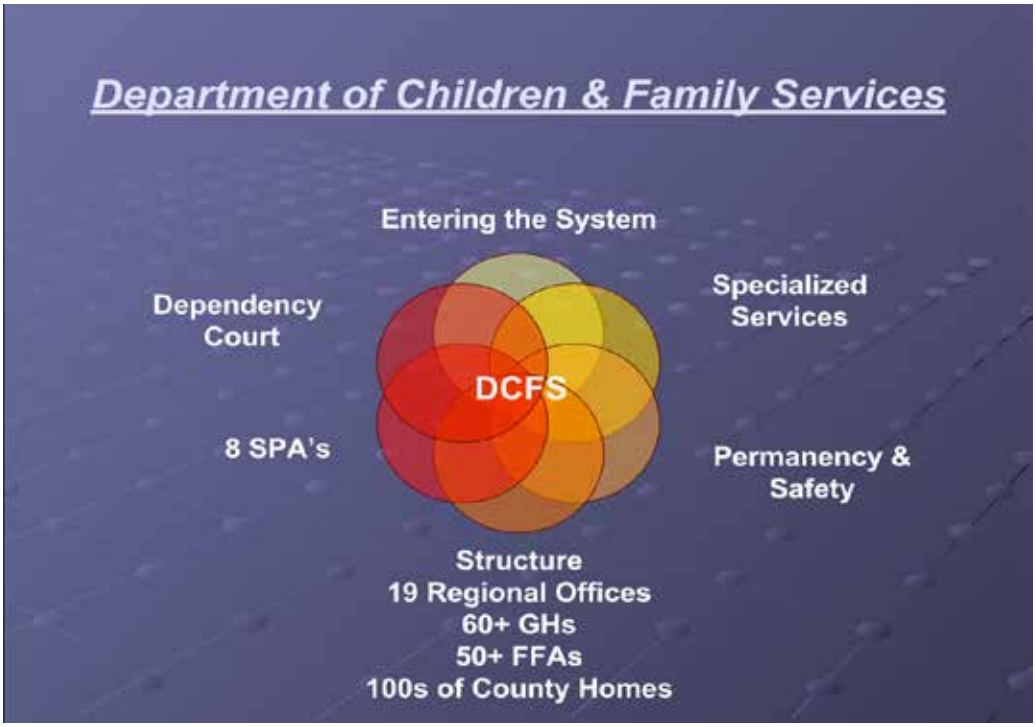
17. *What about actually completing the survey? What do you think would be the maximum amount of time that youth would take to do the survey?*

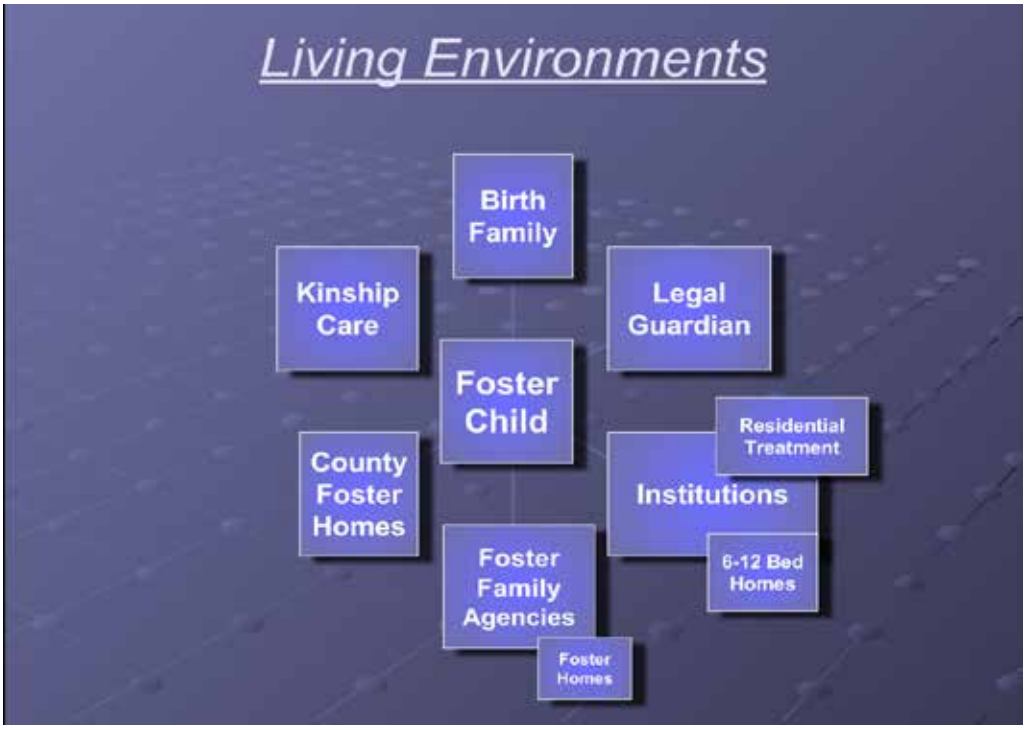
18. *What do you think about using response cards?*

Okay, that is the end of all of my questions! I really appreciate you helping out this project. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX C – SLIDE DECK USED FOR GROUP-HOME TRAINING

In 2010:
• 662,000 children were served by the foster care system in the United States.
• 254,000 were removed from their biological families due to abuse and neglect.
• 64,000 children had their parental rights terminated.
While in foster care they may live with relatives, in foster homes, group homes and/or institutions.
Taken From: AFCARS data, U.S. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. Trends in Foster Care and Adoption FY 2002 - FY 2010


Department of Children & Family Services
Entering the System
Dependency Court
Specialized Services
DCFS
8 SPA's
Permanency & Safety
Structure
19 Regional Offices
60+ GHs
50+ FFAs
100s of County Homes



CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

Relative/Non-Relative Extended Family Member Home	8,850
Foster Family Home	1,309
Foster Family Agency Certified Home	5,087
Small Family Home	47
Group Home	1,076
Supervised Independent Living Placement	386
Other (County Shelter, Tribal, and Court Specified Homes)	200
Total Out-of-Home Placement	**16,955**
Non Foster Care (NFC) Placement	177
Adoptive Home - Adoption Not Finalized	850
Guardian Home	2,054
Total Placement (Includes NFC Placement, Adoptive Home, and Guardian Home)	**20,036**

NOTE: In the above, 1,157 children received D Rate and 404 received F Rate care.

FOSTER CARE RESOURCES

	Homes	Beds
Foster Homes **	534	1,639
Foster Family Agency Homes (self-report)	2,941	7,206
In Los Angeles County	*2,196*	*5,352*
Out-of-County	*745*	*1,854*
Small Family Homes **	*59*	*58*
Group Homes *	176	2,480
In Los Angeles County	*139*	*1,902*
Out-of-County	*37*	*578*

County Jargon
Children's Social Worker – CSW
Supervising Children's Social Worker-SCSW
Foster Family Agency – FFA
Foster Care Social Worker - FCSW
Service Planning Area – SPA