

Research Report on LGB-Parent Families



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Executive Summary

The past several decades have seen a proliferation of studies on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parenting, with increased attention to (a) family building by LGB people; (b) the transition to parenthood for LGB parents; and (c) functioning and experiences of LGB parents and their children. The findings are consistent in suggesting that despite confronting heterosexism in a variety of social contexts -- including the health care system, the legal system, and the school system -- LGB parents and their children are functioning quite well. This report provides an overview of the contemporary LGB-parent family research. We emphasize research that has been subjected to scientific peer review. Critical areas for future investigations are noted, such as how race, ethnicity, social class, region of residence, and the changing legal landscape affect the experiences of LGB parents and their children.

Family Building by LGB People

LGB Parents Formerly in Heterosexual Relationships

- In the majority of contemporary LGB-parent families, the children were conceived in the context of different-sex relationships.
- Since most contemporary research on LGB parenting focuses on the newer phenomenon of planned LGB families, research is needed on LGB stepfamily formation post-heterosexual divorce, covering such topics as incorporating a new stepparent and a new family identity. This can inform the development of parenting resources for LGB stepfamilies.

LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Donor Insemination (DI)

- Because many states prohibit the nonbiological mother from legally adopting her child, female same-sex couples that choose DI to build their families face choices (e.g., who will be the biological mother; whether to use sperm from a known or unknown donor) that have profound legal and psychological implications.
- LGB-parent families continue to experience discrimination in health care settings (e.g., during the perinatal period).
- More research is needed on the influence of social class on the DI decisions of sexual minority women.
- Few studies have addressed the psychological consequences of infertility in LB women who fail to conceive through DI.

LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Adoption

- Same-sex couples are approximately 4.5 times more likely than different-sex couples to be rearing adopted children.
- LGB parents adopt through international, public domestic, or private domestic programs, with varied information about and access to the birth parents of the children they adopt.
- The legalities of adoption by LGB parents are complicated since many birth parents and all international agencies prohibit adoption by same-sex couples, resulting in a pool of available children that far exceeds the number of heterosexual prospective adoptive parents.
- LGB prospective parents are vulnerable to discriminatory attitudes on the part of adoption professionals.
- More research is needed on the impact of power and privilege (especially with regard to race, class, and gender) on LGB prospective parents' responses to perceived discrimination during the adoption process.

LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Surrogacy

- The limited available data on LGB-parent families formed through surrogacy suggest that this option is used primarily by affluent gay men.
- Studies are needed that explore the gender, race, and class dynamics of domestic and international surrogacy.

The Transition to Parenthood

- LGB prospective parents perceive less support from their families of origin than do heterosexual parents, but many LGB parents find that family ties strengthen after the arrival of the child.
- The involvement and support of the family of origin may vary depending on the LGB parent's biological and legal ties to the child.
- Similar to heterosexual parents, LG parents' mental health and relationship quality decline across the transition to parenthood, although support from friends, family, and the workplace buffers all parents from the challenges of new parenthood.
- Same-sex couples with children share childcare, housework, and paid employment more equally than different-sex couples with children.

LGB-Parent Families' Functioning and Experiences

LGB Parents: Functioning and Experiences

- Studies comparing LG and heterosexual parents in regard to mental health, parenting stress, and parenting competence have found few differences based on family structure.

- Conditions linked to poorer well-being for LG parents include: living in less supportive legal contexts, perceiving less support from family or supervisors, having higher levels of internalized homophobia, and encountering more child behavior problems.
- More research is needed that explores the unique strengths that LGB people bring to parenthood that may protect against mental health challenges.
- Studies are also needed to examine the intersecting identities of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation vis-à-vis family formation, mate selection, and overall family life.

Impact on Children of Having LGB Parents

- Researchers have found few differences between children raised by lesbian and heterosexual parents in terms of self-esteem, quality of life, psychological adjustment, or social functioning (research on the psychosocial outcomes of children with gay male parents is limited).
- Several studies, some of which have utilized nationally representative datasets, provide no evidence that children with same-sex parents demonstrate problems with respect to their academic and educational outcomes.
- According to self-, peer-, and parent-report, children and adolescents with same- and different-sex parents do not differ in social competence or relationships with peers.
- There is some evidence that the play behavior of girls and boys in same-sex parent families may be less gender-stereotyped than the play behavior of girls and boys in different-sex-parent families.
- Research on adolescents reared since birth by lesbian mothers found that youth with male role models were similar in psychological adjustment to adolescents without male role models.
- Although adolescents and young adults reared by LGB parents are no more likely to self-identify as exclusively lesbian/gay than those reared by heterosexual parents, having a lesbian mother was associated with a greater likelihood of considering or having a same-sex relationship, and more expansive, less categorical notions of sexuality.
- Adolescents and adults point to potential strengths associated with growing up in LGB-parent households, including resilience and empathy toward diverse and marginalized groups.

Bullying and Harassment

- Studies that compare the teasing/bullying experiences of children with LGB and heterosexual parents are conflicting, with some suggesting higher rates of reported bullying among children with LGB parents and others finding no differences in these rates, according to self- and parent-report. However, homophobic slurs were reported only by children with same-sex parents.
- Whereas perceived stigmatization by peers has been linked to compromised well-being in children of LGB parents, both the broader school context and family processes may offset some of the negative impact of bullying.

Relationships between Parents or Donors and Children

- Compared to heterosexual parents, LGB parents have not been found to differ, on average, in parental warmth, emotional involvement, and quality of relationships with their children. Children's relationships with their biological mothers appear similar in quality to their relationships with their nonbiological mothers, which researchers attribute in part to the fact that lesbian mothers tend to share coparenting. However, parent-child closeness and contact may be threatened when same-sex parents break up, suggesting that legal parentage may have important implications for parent-child relationships post-same-sex relationship dissolution.
- Compared to heterosexual parents, LGB parents tend to demonstrate less gender-stereotyped attitudes and to be more accepting of gender-atypical behavior in their children.
- In lesbian-parent families, the relationships that children have with their sperm donors vary in quality and intensity, and the nature of these relationships may change over time. More research is needed that explores children's, and LGB parents', relationships with known donors, as well as with identity release donors (i.e., anonymous donors who agree to be contacted when the child reaches some specified age, such as 18 years).

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to review the research on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parenting, with particular attention to theoretical and empirical advances, controversies, and gaps in this area. That is, our primary focus is LGB parenting; we do not focus on transgender parenting experiences, in that transgender parenting raises a different set of issues than LGB parenting, and thus we refer the reader to a review chapter by Downing (2013) which specifically examines transgender parenting. In addition, while we regard our review of the LGB parenting research as fairly comprehensive, it is important to note that we have relied largely on scholarship that has been subjected to rigorous peer review, but we also do include a select number of works that has not been published in scholarly journals.

The topic of LGB parenting has grown more visible over the past several decades, both nationally (within the US) and internationally (Goldberg, 2010). Topics related to LGB parenting are now regularly featured by mainstream media outlets (e.g., Saint Louis, 2013). Research on the experiences of LGB parents and their children has also expanded alongside this growing visibility. Yet this research, while providing insight into many aspects of LGB family life, has been somewhat limited in focus and scope. The populations that have been studied, the areas under investigation, and the conclusions that have been drawn warrant a critical perspective, which we attempt to bring in this report.

Next, we address (a) family building by LGB people; (b) the transition to parenthood for LGB parents; and (c) functioning and experiences of LGB parents and their children. In discussing these topics, we identify key areas that future research should seek to answer, such as how changes in laws and policies affect LGB-parent families, and how race, ethnicity, social class, and geographic region interface with sexual minority status.

Family Building

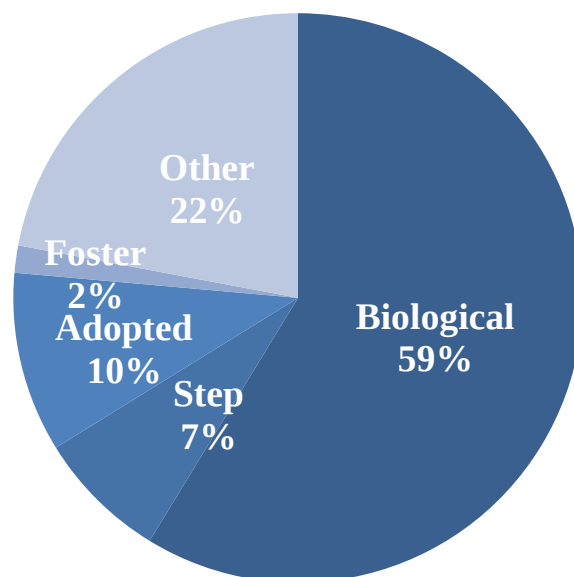
Some research has explored the issue of how sexual minorities become parents: that is, their choice of family building routes and their experiences with these varied routes. Sexual minorities build families in a variety of ways. First, many sexual minorities become parents in the context of heterosexual relationships or marriages, as opposed to conceiving or adopting in the context of same-sex relationships (Gates, 2011, 2013; Tasker, 2013). Some of these individuals may enter same-sex relationships once their children are born or adopted, and their children may ultimately be raised in LGB stepfamilies (Tasker, 2013). Other LGB people become parents in the context of same-sex committed relationships, a phenomenon that has increased due in part to advancements in reproductive technology and increased acceptance of LGB parenting (Goldberg, 2010; Savin-Williams, 2008). Families that are initiated in the context of same-sex committed relationships are often referred to as *intentional* or *planned* LGB-parent families. Same-sex couples typically choose one of several potential routes to parenthood: donor insemination (DI; for women); adoption; or surrogacy. Alternative parenting arrangements (e.g., when a lesbian couple and a gay couple elect to coparent) may also be pursued by some sexual minorities, but these types of family configurations have historically received less attention

in the literature (see Bos, 2010; Dempsey, 2012). Of the abovementioned family types, LGB stepfamily arrangements likely represent the dominant arrangement (Gates, 2011; 2013).

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) tabulates same-sex married and unmarried couples and asks one partner or spouse (known as the householder) how other household members are related to him or her. Analyses of the combined 2010-2012 data demonstrate the relative complexity of same-sex couples and their relationships to their children when compared to different-sex married couples.

Gates (2013), for example, showed that the majority of children being raised by same-sex couples are identified as either the biological children of the householder or as the householder's stepchildren; if the latter, those children are most likely biologically related to the spouse or partner (see Figure 1). While some of these children were born as a result of reproductive technologies like DI or surrogacy, it is likely that most were born as part of a different-sex relationship that has dissolved.

Figure 1. Relationship of children under age 18 to householder (person 1) in same-sex couple households, 2011 American Community Survey.

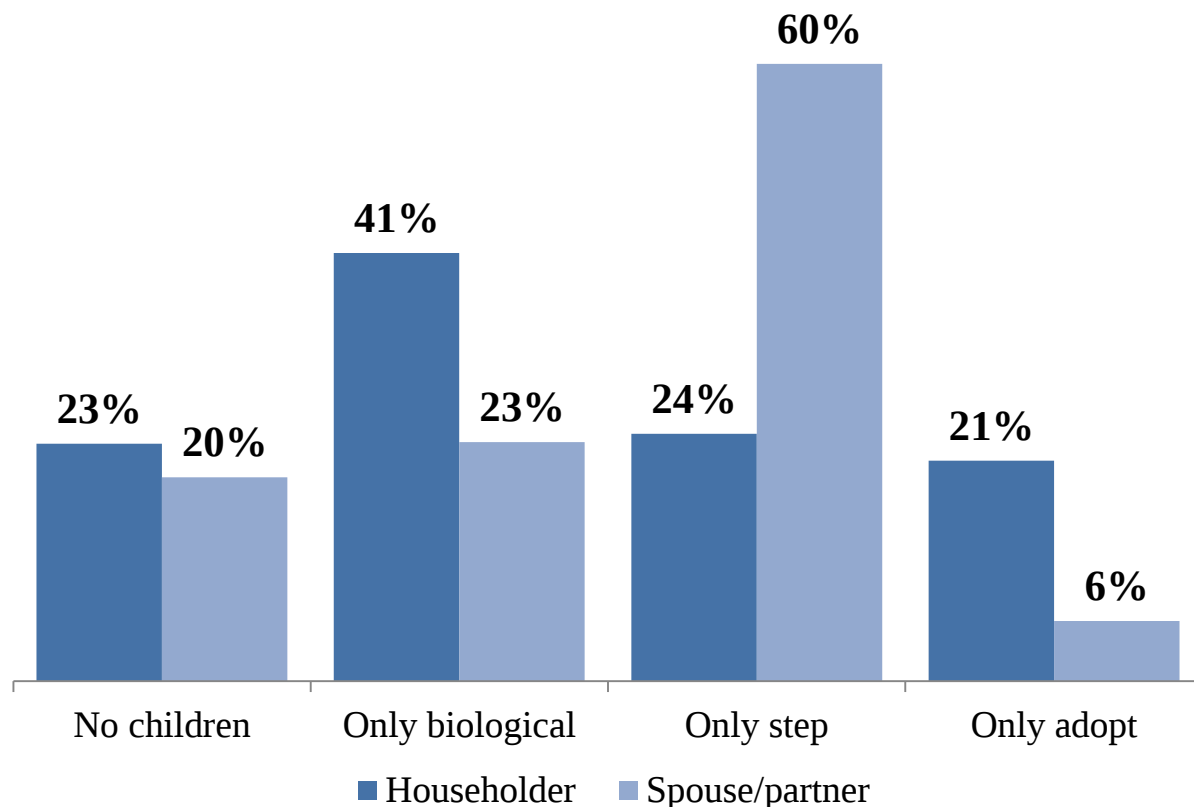


LGB Parents and Different-Sex Relationships

The majority of LGB parents likely have their children within different-sex relationships (Gates, 2011; Tasker, 2013). A 2013 survey of LGBT Americans conducted by Pew Research (2013) found that, consistent with other population-based surveys (Gates 2013), more than a third (35%) of LGBT individuals report having been a parent. But the findings suggest that parenting is substantially higher among bisexual individuals than gay men or lesbians. An estimated 59% of bisexual women and 32% of bisexual men report having had children, compared to 31% of lesbians and 16% of gay men. These figures, then, imply that nearly two-thirds of LGB parents (64%) are bisexual.

ACS data do not provide direct evidence of the circumstances of a child's birth, but the data do include information about the prior marital status of same-sex spouses and partners. Analyses of the 2011 ACS data offer evidence that same-sex couples raising biological and stepchildren are more likely than other types of individuals in same-sex couples to report a prior marriage. Among same-sex couples with no children under age 18 in the home, 23% of householders and 20% of partners or spouses report a prior marriage (see Figure 2). In households where the only children in the home are identified as the biological children of the householder, the householder is more likely to have been married than the spouse or partner (41% v. 23%, respectively). When there are only stepchildren in the home, then it is the spouse or partner who is most likely to have been previously married when compared the householder (60% v. 24% respectively). Adoptive parents have the lowest likelihoods of prior marriage—21% among householders and 6% among spouses and partners.

Figure 2. Percent of householders and spouses/partners reporting having ever been married among same-sex couples without children and those with biological, step, and adopted children, 2011 ACS.



Prior to the past several decades, LGB people had few family-building options available to them, and, thus, some LGB people entered different-sex unions (both long-term relationships/marriages and short-term unions) *because* they wanted to be parents (Goldberg, 2010; Tasker, 2013). Different-sex relationships, then, were viewed as the only obvious or feasible route to parenthood. Early studies of LGB parenting were initiated in part because lesbian mothers were losing custody of their children to their ex-husbands upon dissolution of their different-sex marriages, and empirical research was needed to establish that sexual orientation should not be considered a relevant criterion in determining custody (Tasker, 2013).

Early research on the experiences of lesbian and bisexual mothers who became parents in the context of different-sex marriages/relationships (and who then, in many cases, created lesbian stepfamilies once they entered into relationships with same-sex partners) has been somewhat supplanted by the recent wave of research on planned LGB and same-sex couple parenting (Tasker, 2013). Gates (2011) suggests that planned parenting among same-sex couples, as evidenced by the presence of adopted children in the household, is increasing. In 2000, only one in 10 same-sex couples with children reported having an adopted child. By the end of that decade, the figure was nearly one in five same-sex couples.

The new wave of studies on intentional LGB parenting was initiated in part to isolate the effects of growing up in a same-sex parent family from the effects of heterosexual divorce, as well as to assess the outcomes of children reared by same-sex parents from birth (Gartrell et al., 1996; Goldberg, 2010). Although the recent research on planned LGB and same-sex couple parenting is understandable and appropriate in light of the growing prevalence of this particular family form, the fact that studies of this type now dominate the field of LGB parenting research is problematic, given that these families likely represent a minority of LGB parents (Gates, 2011). In turn, many questions regarding the experiences of LGB parents who had their children in the context of different-sex relationships remain unanswered, and represent important areas for future research to explore. For example: What is it like to be a bisexual mother dissolving a relationship with a male partner, and entering into a relationship with a new female partner, in the second decade of the 21st century? Where should she look for guidance, now that LGB parenting resources, materials, and support groups focus so heavily on the experiences and needs of LGB parents who formed their families in same-sex unions? Likewise, what is it like to be a contemporary gay father divorcing his wife? Gay men who became parents via different-sex relationships are even more invisible in the literature (but see Bigner & Bozett, 1989, 1990; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989).

A new wave of research that addresses the unique historical and social location of LGB parents following divorce or dissolution of different-sex unions seems timely. In considering the experiences of a lesbian mother parenting post-divorce from a different-sex marriage, it is important to explore how her experiences (e.g., coming out, navigating custody arrangements, parenting with another woman post-divorce, etc.) are shaped by recent changes in laws, policies, and attitudes toward lesbian/gay parenthood, as well as by her race, ethnicity, social class, and geographic location. Additionally, relatively little is known about the LGB individuals who partner with these divorced parents (see Lynch, 2004; Lynch & Murray, 2000; Moore, 2008). For example, does a stepparent in a same-sex relationship who has been out as LGB for many years face unique difficulties in establishing relationships with stepchildren who may resent their legal parent's LGB identity or same-sex relationship? In what ways do the experiences of same-sex stepparents converge and diverge from those of different-sex stepparents? Lynch (2004) found that, like different-sex stepparents, same-sex stepparents may experience tension and competition with children, and may struggle with confusion over their roles (e.g., whether they should play a role in disciplining the children, given that they are not a primary/legal parent). Such relational tensions can be exacerbated if children have difficulty accepting their parents' sexual orientation; indeed, such children may be less likely to acknowledge, and accept, their parent's new partner (Lynch & Murray, 2000). Future research – particularly longitudinal work – should explore the unique dynamics of LGB stepparent families, including how they navigate strain and tension in establishing new familial roles, and how family relationships and roles change over time.

LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Donor Insemination (DI)

Some sexual minority women turn to DI to form families. Female same-sex couples that choose DI must decide who will carry the child, a decision that may have significant legal implications, in that the biological mother is automatically the legal parent, and statewide laws that allow nonbiological mothers to become legal parents to their children via second-parent adoption are present in less than half the states. In many states, access to second-parent adoption can depend on particular judges. Eight states have specific statewide obstacles to second-parent adoption for same-sex couples (HRC, 2012; 2014).

Same-sex couples choosing DI may confront legal anxieties in the context of deciding whether to use sperm from a known or unknown donor. Women who select unknown donors often do so out of a desire to avoid third-party involvement, unclear or fuzzy boundaries, and/or custody challenges (Chabot & Ames, 2006; Goldberg, 2006). Women who choose known donors may also experience legal worries but at the same time feel strongly that their children deserve access to their biological heritage (Agigian, 2004; Goldberg & Allen, 2013a; Tourni & Coyle, 2002). Sexual minority women may also choose known donors to avoid interfacing with potentially heterosexist institutions such as sperm banks and fertility clinics (Tourni & Coyle, 2002). Of note is that prospective mothers who choose unknown donors are increasingly likely to opt for identity release donors, when these are available; that is, they opt for donors who have indicated an openness to being contacted at some future time point (e.g., after the child is 18) (Scheib & Ruby, 2008). In this way, sexual minority women are able to balance their desire for primary decision-making authority with the wish to facilitate their future child's potential interest in contacting his or her genetic father.

In recent years, social change – as well as the growing invisibility of lesbian mothers – has facilitated greater awareness and sensitivity on the part of health care professionals who interface with sexual minority women who seek out DI -- although reports of insensitive treatment by such professionals continue to appear in the literature (Goldberg, 2006; Ross, Steele, & Epstein, 2006; Spidsberg, 2007; Wilton & Kaufman, 2000). For example, sexual minority women continue to encounter clinic forms that are inappropriate for lesbian and bisexual patients (e.g., they assume a heterosexual two-parent family), as well as health care providers who fail to acknowledge the nonbirthing partner at office visits and prenatal classes (Goldberg, Downing, & Richardson, 2009; Spidsberg, 2007; Wilton & Kaufman, 2000).

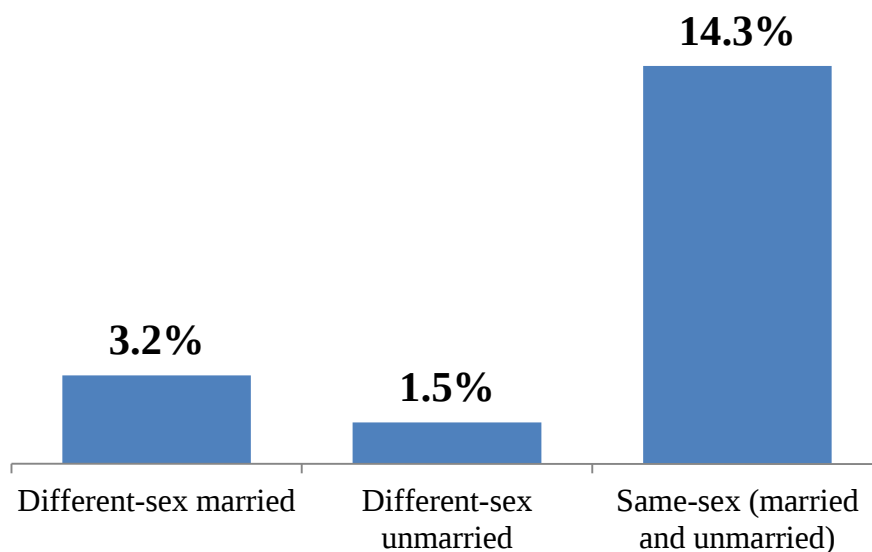
How social class may shape the DI decisions and experiences of sexual minority women is an important topic that has not been systematically examined (Agigian, 2004; Goldberg, 2010; Mezey, 2013). Sexual minority women with limited financial resources may be more likely to choose known donors to avoid the costs of anonymous DI; however, this choice may come with certain risks (e.g., the sperm may not be screened for sexually transmitted infections or HIV; Goldberg, 2010). How sexual minority women experience and negotiate failed conception attempts is another topic that has rarely been studied (Goldberg et al., 2009). Although research has found that sexual minority women may be less invested, on average, in having biological offspring (Goldberg & Smith, 2008a), some do experience infertility as a devastating and life-changing loss (Goldberg et al., 2009). One study found that, on average, lesbian women more easily transitioned from trying to conceive to pursuing adoption as compared to

heterosexual women; yet, some lesbian women still struggled with a lingering desire to have biological children (Goldberg et al., 2009). More attention to the infertility experiences of lesbian and bisexual women is warranted, especially in light of research showing that infertility can have long-term consequences for heterosexual women's psychological well-being and relationship quality (Klemetti, Raitanen, Sihvo, Saarni, & Koponen, 2010).

LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Adoption

Both female and male same-sex couples may seek to adopt as a means of becoming parents. In fact, same-sex couples are more likely to pursue adoption than different-sex couples (Gates, 2013). Analyses of the most recent available data (2012 American Community Survey, shown in Figure 3) indicate that, among couples with children, same-sex couples are approximately 4.5 times more likely than different-sex married couples (14.3% v. 3.2%, respectively) and nearly 10 times more likely than unmarried different-sex couples (1.5%) to have an adopted child.

Figure 3. Percent of couples with adopted children among couples with children under age 18, by couple type, 2012 ACS.



Sexual minorities and same-sex couples may elect to pursue international adoption, public domestic adoption (i.e., through the child welfare system), or private domestic adoption (e.g., through a lawyer or adoption agency). Although private domestic adoptions may be “open” or “closed,” open adoptions are becoming increasingly common in the U.S. (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).¹ This parallels

¹ Open adoptions refer to arrangements that allow birth parents and adoptive parents to have information about and to communicate with each other before and/or after placement of the child. Closed adoptions refer to arrangements in which the birth parents and adoptive parents do not exchange identifying information and there is no contact whatsoever between the birth parents and the adoptive parents.

the increasing trend toward identity-release sperm donors; there is growing awareness among professionals and parents that transparency and openness about children's genetic roots benefits their socioemotional and identity development (MacCallum, 2009).

All individuals and couples – including those who are LGB – consider number of factors in deciding which type of adoption to pursue. They may choose private domestic open adoption because they are attracted to the possibility of maintaining contact with birth parents or being able to provide their child(ren) with (possibly ongoing) information about the birth parent(s) (Goldberg, Downing, & Sauck, 2007; Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2011; Goldberg, 2012). They may also be drawn to open adoption because of the greater likelihood of adopting an infant compared to international or public adoption (Downing, Richardson, Kinkler, & Goldberg, 2009; Goldberg et al., 2007; Goldberg, 2012). By contrast, LGB prospective adoptive parents may be drawn to international adoption because they believe that birth mothers (who often select the adoptive parents in open adoption arrangements) are unlikely to choose them because they are gay; in turn, they worry that they will remain childless (Goldberg et al., 2011; Goldberg, 2012). Such concerns are not unrealistic: Some birth parents do resist the placement of their children with LGB parents (Brodzinsky, 2003). But, same-sex couples must weigh such considerations against the reality that they will need to closet their relationship if they pursue international adoption (no country currently allows same-sex couples to adopt; one partner must pose as a single parent). This situation can create intrapersonal and interpersonal stress, in that one partner is virtually invisible in the adoption process (Goldberg et al., 2007). Finally, sexual minorities who seek to adopt through the child welfare system (i.e., the foster care system) are typically motivated in part by finances or altruistic reasons (Goldberg, 2012). They may also believe that they have the best chance of adopting via public adoption, in that the number of children in the child welfare system far exceeds the number of heterosexual prospective adoptive parents. And yet, although some child welfare workers may be welcoming of LGB adopters, reports of insensitive practices continue to appear in the literature (Goldberg et al., 2007; Goldberg, 2012; Matthews & Cramer, 2006).

After settling on an adoption route, prospective adoptive parents must choose an agency or lawyer, a process that can be especially difficult and time-consuming for sexual minorities. Given their vulnerability in the adoption process, LGB prospective adopters often expend a great deal of effort and time researching potential agencies for evidence that they are open to working with sexual minorities (Goldberg et al., 2007; Goldberg, 2012). Even when they select agencies that they believe to be affirming, they may still encounter heterosexism in the adoption process (e.g., in the use of heteronormative forms, materials, and support groups; Goldberg et al., 2007; Goldberg, 2012). They may also confront adoption professionals who hold discriminatory stereotypes and attitudes toward LGB people and who sabotage potential adoptive placements (Goldberg et al., 2007). And because of their vulnerability in the adoption process, LGB prospective parents are sometimes silent about such incidents, thus possibly further jeopardizing their chances of adopting (Goldberg, 2012).

The burgeoning research on LGB parents' experiences during the adoption process has helped to shed light on the intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects of LGB parents' decision-making about adoption, as well as their experiences of navigating a system that, although increasingly open to them in practice, still operates in ways that are fundamentally heterosexist and therefore alienating. Indeed, research that specifically addresses *how* sexual minority parents respond to discrimination in the adoption process – that is, what they *do* when confronted with such experiences, has begun to emerge. This work reveals that sexual minority adopters with less power (e.g., fewer financial and educational resources) are sometimes less likely to challenge instances of discrimination than those with significant social, financial, and geographic resources, who can ultimately choose a different agency or lawyer if they are dissatisfied (Goldberg, 2012; Kinkler & Goldberg, 2011). More research is needed that examines how intersecting dimensions of power and privilege (e.g., with regard to race, class, and gender) shape how sexual minorities respond to perceived discrimination in the adoption process.

More studies are also needed to understand the effect of the rapidly disappearing option of international adoption on prospective LGB adoptive parents, as well as the last, most recent wave of LGB international adopters. Important questions to be addressed include: Where do recent cohorts of LGB international adopters look for resources and support? Among those LGB adopters who adopt subsequent children via domestic adoption, how does the experience of adopting domestically compare to the experience of adopting from abroad? How do LGB parents maintain the cultural heritage of each child who enters the family unit?

LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Surrogacy

Little research has examined sexual minorities' experiences of pursuing surrogacy (Bergman, Rubio, Green, & Padron, 2010; Berkowitz, 2013; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg, 2012). This work, which has exclusively focused on gay men, suggests that surrogacy is an option only among very affluent gay men (Bergman et al., 2010; Berkowitz, 2013). Further, this research suggests that a strong desire to have a biological child may be a powerful motivator in pursuing surrogacy over adoption (Berkowitz, 2013; Goldberg, 2012). The gender and class dynamics of gay men pursuing surrogacy deserve further attention. In order to become parents, gay men with significant financial resources are employing the services of women who likely have limited financial resources (Berkowitz, 2013). Thus, a question of interest is how gay men assess the power differentials in this scenario. Further of interest is how class, gender, and possibly race dynamics shape these men's relationships with surrogates.

Also to be considered are the experiences and perspectives of American gay men who consider or engage in "reproductive outsourcing" or "medical tourism" (Berkowitz, 2013; Jones & Keith, 2006) – that is, utilizing surrogacy services abroad as a means of avoiding the high cost of domestic surrogacy. Such efforts, although cost-effective, are fraught with ethical issues (Berkowitz, 2013). Future work should examine the decision-making process of gay men who contemplate – and then reject or select – surrogacy abroad as a means of family-building, with attention to the racial, class, and gender contours of their considerations.

The Transition to Parenthood

Hundreds of studies have examined the issue of the transition to parenthood for heterosexual, biological-parent families (e.g., Kohn, Rholes, Simpson, & Martin, 2012; McKenzie & Carter, 2013), yet little research has addressed how sexual minorities experience this key life transition. Over the past two decades, however, inroads have been made in this area. Despite the challenges of recruiting participants before they become parents, several large-scale research studies have recruited, and followed, lesbian and gay parents across the transition to parenthood and beyond (e.g., Gartrell et al., 1996, 1999; Goldberg, 2006; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Goldberg, Smith, & Kashy, 2010). This research has revealed that, similar to parents in different-sex relationships, same-sex parents' well-being (Goldberg & Smith, 2011) and relationship quality (Goldberg et al., 2010) declines somewhat across the transition, although high levels of support (from friends, family, and one's workplace) tend to buffer all parents from experiencing these declines.

Of note is that same-sex couples continue to share the division of unpaid and paid labor (child care, housework, paid employment) more equally than different-sex couples (Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004) when they become parents. This represents a strength inasmuch as disagreements and tensions surrounding the division of labor may increase once couples become parents (Goldberg, 2009). When differences in contributions to paid and unpaid labor among lesbian couples who pursued DI do occur, they usually occur along the lines of biology: biological mothers tend to perform more unpaid work and nonbiological mothers perform more paid work (Goldberg, Downing, & Sauck, 2008; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007), in part due to the early demands of breastfeeding as well as greater access to parental leave for the biological mother. Likewise, Moore (2008) found that, in lesbian stepparent families, biological mothers performed more housework than stepmothers, which facilitated their greater power over other aspects of the household (e.g., household decision-making). Notably, as Goldberg (2009) and Gabb (2005) have pointed out, researchers have tended to downplay any inequities between same-sex partners (e.g., in terms of paid and unpaid work), in part because of the dominant mantra that same-sex couples are more equal than different-sex couples, and the accompanying assumption that differential contributions inevitably cause tension and distress. One potential consequence of this inattention to inequity is that the popularized but potentially inaccurate discourse (i.e., that all same-sex couples share equitably, and equity is good for everyone) is upheld, perpetuated, and reified, which may further alienate those same-sex couples whose arrangements do not adhere to the "egalitarian utopia" (Gabb, 2005; Goldberg, 2009; Goldberg, 2013).

Changes in social support may also accompany the transition to parenthood (Goldberg, 2012). LGB parents may perceive less support from members of their family of origin than do heterosexual parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2008a), but tend to report greater support from family members than LGB individuals without children (DeMino, Appleby, & Fisk, 2007). Family members may become more supportive once a child enters the picture (Gartrell et al., 1999; Goldberg, 2006). Goldberg (2006) found that lesbians' perceptions of support from their own and their partners' families increased across the

transition to parenthood. Thus, some family members may push aside negative views of homosexuality or seek to repair problematic or damaged relationships in the interest of developing a relationship with a new grandchild or niece or nephew (Gartrell et al., 1999; Goldberg, 2012). In some cases, family ties may actually be strengthened by the arrival of a child, such that lesbian/gay parents enjoy closer ties to their parents after becoming parents themselves (Gartrell et al., 1999; Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2006; Goldberg, 2012).

Not all family members become more supportive, involved, and invested across the transition to parenthood. Some LGB parents encounter diminished support from their families upon announcing their intention to parent (Gartrell et al., 1996; Goldberg, 2012). For example, family members may express opposition to this decision to parent on moral or religious grounds, or because they believe that life as a member of a same-sex-parent family will be too difficult (e.g., they worry that children will be teased) (Goldberg, 2012). Family members may also oppose the LGB parents' chosen route to parenthood (e.g., adoption, in general, or transracial adoption, specifically) (Goldberg, 2012). Level of involvement and support by family members may also vary depending on their biological relationship to the child. For example, Patterson, Hurt, and Mason (1998) found that the extended family members of biological lesbian mothers were more involved in their children's lives than the extended family members of nonbiological lesbian mothers. Interestingly, the establishment of *legal* ties by the nonbiological mother may foster greater investment and involvement by family of origin. For example, Hequembourg and Farrell (1999) observed that when nonbiological lesbian mothers secured second-parent adoption rights (thereby legally validating their relationship with their children), their own parents often became more willing to acknowledge them as parents and to invest emotionally in their grandchildren.

Future research should seek to address the transition to parenthood experience for bisexual men and women – both those that are partnered with individuals of the same sex and those who are partnered with individuals of the other sex. Bisexual parents and prospective parents have received very little attention in research (Ross & Dobinson, 2013). Future work should also examine the transition to *stepparenthood* for LGB people (i.e., persons who partner with people of the same sex who already have children) as this is likely to differ from the transition to parenthood in important ways. Finally, future work should attend to how the transition to parenthood for sexual minorities is shaped by financial and educational resources. How such resources shape access to formal supports -- such as therapy and support groups -- is particularly important, as such supports may ease the stress of this life transition for sexual minorities.

LGB-Parent Families' Functioning and Experiences

What happens beyond the transition to parenthood for LGB couples and families? A growing body of research has addressed this question, by focusing on parent, child, and family functioning within LGB-parent households. This research has in part been motivated, and has served to dispel, concerns about the potentially negative impact of growing up with LGB parents (see Goldberg, 2010). The fact that this research was initially motivated by efforts to determine whether lesbian mothers' sexual orientation was relevant in custody decisions post-heterosexual divorce has had a long-lasting influence on the field

(Tasker, 2013). Specifically, early scholars focused on lesbian mothers' mental health, and children's psychosocial functioning, gender development, and sexual orientation, to determine whether children raised by lesbian mothers were at risk for developing atypically. To the extent that both parents and children "measured up" to the "heterosexual gold standard" (i.e., their psychosocial outcomes did not differ from those in heterosexual-parent families), lesbian mothers were presumed not to be a danger to their children (Goldberg, 2010; Tasker, 2013). Yet as Stacey and Biblarz (2001) pointed out, the relatively narrow focus on evaluating the well-being of LGB parents and their children against a heterosexual comparison group has had a stultifying effect on the field, ultimately foreclosing the possibility for new and exciting areas of inquiry. Fortunately, more recent work has taken up the charge of Stacey and Biblarz (2001) and other scholars (e.g., Gabb, 2004) to examine more deeply the lived experiences and dynamics *within* LGB-parent families, as well as the strengths of LGB parents (e.g., fluid attitudes regarding gender and sexuality; emphasis on preparation and education regarding heterosexism; inclusive definitions of family), from which all families can learn (e.g., Bos & Gartrell, 2010a; Bos, Gartrell, Peyser, & van Balen, 2008; Dempsey, 2010; Gartrell et al., 1996; 1999; 2000; Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Goldberg, 2007a; Goldberg & Allen, 2013a; van Gelderen, Gartrell, Bos, van Rooij, & Hermanns, 2012). Thus, in the following sections, we review the comparative research that has been done – but also emphasize studies that examine processes and dynamics *within* LGB-parent families.

LGB Parents: Functioning and Experiences

Despite concerns that the sexual orientation of LGB parents will negatively affect children in both indirect and direct ways, research is consistent in indicating that sexuality is not relevant to adults' mental health or parenting capacities. Specifically, studies that have compared lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents in terms of mental health (e.g., psychological distress; depression), perceived parenting stress, and parenting competence have found few differences based on family structure (Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2004; Goldberg & Smith, 2009; Golombok et al., 2003; Leung, Erich, & Kanenberg, 2005; Shechner, Slone, Lobel, & Schecter, 2013).

That LGB parents demonstrate such positive outcomes suggests remarkable resilience, given that they develop in a heterosexist society and are exposed to stigma in multiple contexts. Specifically, LGB parents are vulnerable to nonsupport and alienation from their families of origin (Goldberg, 2010). They also confront lack of recognition and support in the legal sphere (Goldberg, 2010). Consistent with this, research has found that lesbian and gay parents who perceive less support from their families, and who live in less supportive legal contexts, tend to report poorer mental health (Goldberg & Smith, 2011; Shechner et al., 2013; Shapiro, Peterson, & Stewart, 2009). Other conditions that have been linked to poorer well-being within lesbian-mother and gay-father samples include: higher levels of internalized homophobia (Goldberg & Smith, 2011), child behavior problems (Goldberg & Smith, 2008b), and low levels of supervisor support (Goldberg & Smith, 2013b). There is a need for additional research that examines the factors and conditions, both external and internal to the family, that influence adjustment in LGB parents. Qualitative research, for example, highlights the ways in which multiple system-level stressors (i.e., adopting via the child welfare system; encountering stigma in the adoption process) may

combine together to place stress on newly adoptive lesbian and gay parents (Goldberg, Moyer, Kinkler, & Richardson, 2012). However, more work is needed that explores both the unique vulnerabilities that LGB parents face that may compromise their well-being, as well as the unique strengths that they bring to parenthood that may protect against mental health problems. Research focusing on the intersecting identities of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation vis-a-vis family formation, mate selection, and overall family life is also important in understanding how the family experiences of LGB parents with multiple minority statuses differ from the White, middle-class, same-sex parent cultural narrative (Moore, 2011).

Children of LGB Parents: Functioning and Experiences

Insomuch as homosexuality continues to be stigmatized in society, research has often focused on determining whether the psychological, social, emotional (and less frequently, educational) outcomes of children with same-sex parents appear to differ from those of children with different-sex parents. Studies have also examined the gender development and sexual attraction/orientation of children in LGB-parent families. Thus, much of the research on children's experiences in LGB-parent families has been comparative: that is, children in same-sex parent families are compared (e.g., in terms of psychosocial adjustment) to children in different-sex-parent families.

Psychological Adjustment

Research has documented few differences in psychological adjustment outcomes in children and adolescents as a function of family structure (Goldberg, 2010). Specifically, studies have found few differences between children raised by lesbian parents and children raised by heterosexual parents in terms of self-esteem, quality of life, internalizing problems (e.g., depression), externalizing problems (e.g., behavioral problems), or social functioning (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Goldberg & Smith, 2013a; Golombok et al., 2003; Shechner et al., 2013; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright & Patterson, 2006; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; van Gelderen, Bos, Gartrell, Hermanns, & Perrin, 2012). Further, some studies point to potential strengths associated with growing up in a planned lesbian-parent family. In a study of 17-year-olds raised by lesbian mothers from birth, for example, adolescents were rated significantly higher in social competence, and significantly lower in social problems, rule-breaking, and aggressive behavior, as compared to an age- and gender-matched group of adolescents with heterosexual parents (Gartrell & Bos, 2010). Likewise, other studies have found that young adults and adults cite various strengths associated with growing up with LGB parents, including resilience and empathy toward diverse and marginalized groups (Goldberg, 2007a; Saffron, 1998).

Academic Adjustment

A few studies have examined the academic achievement outcomes of children with LGB parents. These studies, some of which have utilized nationally representative datasets, provide no evidence that children with same-sex parents demonstrate problems with respect to their academic and educational

outcomes (Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Potter, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2010; Wainright et al., 2004). Growing up in a same-sex parent family is not related to delayed progression through elementary school (Rosenfeld, 2010), or to children's academic achievement (i.e., grades; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Wainright et al., 2004). After controlling for family transitions, a large random sample study of Canadian families also found that the gender composition of parents was not a significant factor in predicting high school graduation (Allen, 2013). Further, Gartrell, Bos, Peyser, Deck, and Rodas (2012) presented data on 17-year-old adolescents raised by lesbian mothers from birth that showed that the sample's overall high school grade point averages typically fell in the A- to B+ range, illustrating higher than average academic performance.

Social Functioning

Studies have also found that the social functioning of children and adolescents with same-sex parents is similar to that of children and adolescents with different-sex parents (Gartrell et al., 2005; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Goldberg, 2010; Golombok et al., 2003; Wainright & Patterson, 2008). That is, according to self-, peer-, and parent-report, these two groups do not appear to differ in their social competence or relationships with peers. For example, in a sample of intentional lesbian-mother households, Gartrell et al. (2005) found that parents' ratings of their 10-year-old children's social competence were in the normal range, as compared to national age and gender norms. Further, according to the parents, 81% of children related well to their peers (Gartrell et al., 2005). By the time that these children were 17, they indicated that they had active social networks, as evidenced by many close and long-term friendships (Gartrell et al., 2012).

There is evidence that family process variables (i.e., what happens within the family) are more important in predicting social competence than family structure, or parent sexual orientation (Goldberg, 2010). For example, adolescents with female same-sex parents and adolescents with heterosexual parents do not differ in their self-reported quality of relationships with peers (Goldberg, 2010; Wainright & Patterson, 2008). Rather, regardless of family type, adolescents whose parents describe closer relationships with them report having more friends and higher quality relationships with their peers (Wainright & Patterson, 2008).

Teasing and Bullying

It is true that children with LGB parents may be socially skilled and have high-quality relationships with friends, but at the same time be bullied due to their parents' sexual orientation. In turn, some studies have examined teasing and bullying experiences, specifically, in school-age children (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Rivers, Poteat, & Noret, 2008; van Gelderen et al., 2012a). Studies that compare the teasing/bullying experiences of children with LGB parents with those of children with heterosexual parents are conflicting, with some suggesting higher rates of reported bullying among children with LGB parents (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008) and others finding no differences in rates of reported bullying experiences, according to self- and parent-report (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Rivers et al., 2008). Of note is that even if rates of teasing do not differ, the content of teasing – what children are teased *about*

– may differ for children of LGB versus heterosexual parents. Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, and Brewaeys (2002) compared school-age children from planned lesbian-mother households with children from heterosexual-parent families in Belgium and found no differences in rates of teasing between the two groups. Children in both groups reported being laughed at, excluded, and called names. Clothing, physical appearance, and intelligence were among the reported reasons for teasing in both groups. Family-related reasons for teasing, however, were mentioned only by children from lesbian-mother families: A quarter of the children of lesbian mothers had been teased about having two mothers, having a lesbian mother, not having a father, or being gay themselves. Thus, while the frequency of teasing was equivalent in both groups, the content of the teasing differed, pointing to the need for researchers to evaluate both frequency and content of teasing in future studies.

There is some evidence that children with LGB parents may be particularly likely to experience teasing at certain developmental stages (Gartrell et al., 2000, 2005; Kuvalanka, Leslie, & Radina, 2013; Leddy, Gartrell, & Bos, 2012; Ray & Gregory, 2001). Namely, there is evidence that while teasing and discrimination related to their parents' sexual orientation is rare among preschool-age children (Gartrell et al., 2000), such experiences become more common by the time children enter formal schooling, particularly middle school (Gartrell et al., 2005; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Notably, there is evidence that children and adolescents with LGB parents who encounter teasing rely more upon strategies of direct confrontation (e.g., telling the perpetrator of the stigmatizing comments that their comments are unacceptable) or support-seeking (e.g., turning to supportive teachers or peers; surrounding themselves with positive people) than avoidance (e.g., using strategies of concealment such as using the term "parents" rather than "mothers"; Goldberg, 2007b; van Gelderen et al., 2012a). Interestingly, some research shows that by young adulthood, some individuals with LGB parents find that rather than being a source of stigma, their parents' sexuality is met with positive reactions (e.g., their peers think that it is "cool" that they have lesbian moms/gay dads; Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2012; Leddy et al., 2012). More accepting peer attitudes are typically attributed by participants to their peers' increasing maturity, such that they "became less outwardly heteronormative over time" (Kuvalanka et al., 2013, p. 19).

Children with LGB parents who do not encounter peer discrimination sometimes attribute it to the geographic region or community in which they reside, and the type of school that they attend (e.g., progressive or private schools) (Leddy et al., 2012; Ray & Gregory, 2001), raising an important area to be pursued in future research. Indeed, there is some evidence that middle- and upper middle-class LGB parents may be at an advantage with regard to protecting their children from bullying (Casper & Schultz, 1999; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Having more economic resources may enable these parents to choose places to live that are safe from sexual orientation-related discrimination and to send their children to school where harassment related to their family structure is less likely to occur. Notably, class privilege inevitably protects White LGB parents more than LGB parents of color, who are vulnerable to harassment for reasons other than their sexual orientation (Croteau, Talbot, Lance, & Evans, 2002). Future work is needed that explores how intersections of gender, class, race, and geography impact children's experiences of and responses to bullying. Research is also needed that examines how

gender, class, race, and geography shape LGB parents' relationships with their children's schools, and their experiences of advocating for their children: Some work suggests that working-class lesbian parents, for example, may be hesitant to address their children's bullying experiences with their children's teachers, in part because of their own poor school histories and consequent insecurity in the school sphere (Nixon, 2011).

Linking teasing/bullying to mental health. Recent research has begun to examine the linkages between experiences of stigma/bullying and psychosocial outcomes in children of LGB parents. Several studies suggest that perceived stigmatization by peers is related to higher rates of absenteeism at school (due to lower perceived safety; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008) as well as compromised well-being in children of LGB parents (Bos & van Balen, 2008; Gartrell et al., 2005). Notably, some studies found that although perceived stigmatization and homophobia by peers had a negative impact on children's well-being overall, attending schools with LGBT curricula, and having strong parent-child relationships, buffered the negative impact of stigma on well-being (Bos & Gartrell, 2010a; Bos, et al., 2008). Thus, both the broader school context, and family processes, may have important implications for children's adjustment, even offsetting the negative impact of peer stigmatization.

Gender-Typed Play, Behavior, and Attitudes

Because children who grow up in same-sex parent families from birth typically lack either a male and female live-in parent, respectively, attention has been paid to whether these children demonstrate gender-typed play, behaviors, and attitudes that differ from those of children with different-sex parents (see Goldberg, 2010). Many major psychological theories (e.g., social learning theory; Bandura, 1977) posit that parents influence the gender development of their children. In turn, scholarly interest has centered on whether the presence or absence of a same sex parent in the household of LGB-parent families might impact gender-typed play and behavior to the degree that children model the same sex parent's behavior.

In one of the few studies to include lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents, Farr and colleagues (2010) examined the gender-typed play behavior of preschool-age adopted children and found no differences in gender-typed play behavior by family structure (i.e., lesbian-, gay-, and heterosexual-parent status). Similar findings were documented by Golombok et al. (2003), who studied school-age children (mean age = 7) in lesbian-mother and heterosexual-mother families. However, a study of preschool-age adopted children with lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents found that the behavior of boys and girls in lesbian- and gay-parent families were less gender-stereotyped than the play behavior of boys and girls in heterosexual-parent families, according to parent reports, and the sons of lesbian mothers were less masculine in their play behavior than sons of gay fathers and sons of heterosexual parents (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012).

Goldberg et al. (2012) suggested that both social constructionism and social learning theory can be useful lenses for understanding their study's findings. That is, according to social constructionism, lesbian and gay parents may (e.g., because of their own gender flexibility and more liberal attitudes

toward gender) be more likely to facilitate their children's cross-gendered play and activities by creating a social environment where such behaviors are not punished, and might even be encouraged (Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Social learning theory further suggests that boys in lesbian-mother families may engage in less masculine play than boys in other types of families not only because of a more liberal social environment, but also the influence of having two mothers/no father. That is, boys in two-mother households may develop somewhat different play styles than boys with fathers, in part because they are less likely to be exposed to and/or reinforced for playing with certain types of masculine toys and activities (Jacklin, DiPietro, & Maccoby, 1984). Yet regardless of the reasons for these differences in play behavior, it is important not to view them as necessarily negative. There is increasing awareness by both educators and parents that the socialization of strict adherence to traditional gender roles limits boys' and girls' development, inasmuch as different activities, toys, and types of play facilitate different types of learning and skill-building (Eisenberg, Martin, & Fabes, 1996). Consistent with this notion, Bos and Sandfort (2010) compared children in heterosexual-parent families and children in lesbian-mother families. Children's psychosocial adjustment did not differ by family type, but children with lesbian parents perceived less parental pressure to conform to gender stereotypes and were less likely to view their own gender as superior as compared to children with heterosexual parents. Similarly, Goldberg (2007a) found that adults raised by LGB parents often voiced their perspective that growing up with LGB parents had benefited their growth and development, inasmuch as they were not raised with rigid stereotypes of what "boys do" and what "girls do," enabling them to develop interests and abilities outside of the gender box.

The research on the gender development and socialization of children of LGB parents should be considered in the context of research showing that LGB parents themselves tend to demonstrate less gender-stereotyped attitudes, and are more accepting of gender-atypical behavior in their children, as compared to heterosexual parents (Sutfin, Fulcher, Bowles, & Patterson, 2008). In turn, they may – as social constructionism would predict – create an environment in which cross-gender behavior and activities are neither stigmatized nor discouraged. At the same time, LGB parents also possess a heightened awareness of "gender accountability" (Berkowitz & Ryan, 2011), such that they recognize societal pressures to accomplish their children's gender socialization (Goldberg, 2012). They may manage such gender accountability in various ways. For example, they may seek to procure gender role models for their children (e.g., brothers, friends), as a means of deflecting concerns that two women cannot successfully raise a son and two men cannot successfully raise a daughter (Berkowitz & Ryan, 2011; Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg & Allen, 2007). Alternatively, they may resist such pressures, emphasizing to themselves – and others – that more important to children's development than the gender of the parent is the quality of the parenting (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2005; Goldberg, 2012). Importantly, research on adolescents raised by lesbian mothers from birth has found that youth with male role models were similar in psychological adjustment to adolescents without male role models (Bos, Goldberg, van Gelderen, & Gartrell, 2012), suggesting that the presence or absence of male or female role models should not be viewed as a central factor influencing child well-being in LGB-parent families.

As other authors have pointed out (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010), it may be inappropriate and short-sighted to place so much emphasis on the significance of male and female role models in these families, when children in general tend to be exposed to a wide range of adults – male and female – in their daily lives (e.g., teachers, coaches, babysitters, family members, parents’ friends). Goldberg and Allen (2007) studied lesbian mothers who had children via DI, and found most women described existing, and often close, relationships with a wide range of men at the time that they became parents, including their fathers, brothers, and friends. In turn, they did not so much have “male role models” for their children, but, rather, simply “good men” who were already involved in their lives and who they hoped would be involved in their children’s lives. Future work should employ more nuanced ways of conceptualizing male and female involvement in LGB-parent families, inasmuch as the concepts of “male role models” and “female role models” are far too limiting to describe the range and complexity of contemporary LGB family arrangements.

Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

In addition to gender development, sexual orientation and sexuality have also been focal outcomes of interest in research on children with sexual minority parents (Goldberg, 2010). Again, drawing from both social constructionist and social learning theories, it is possible that children with LGB parents may be more likely to engage in same-sex behavior because it is constructed as a healthy and acceptable expression of one’s sexuality (social constructionism) or because that their parents are themselves in a same-sex relationship (social learning theory) (see Goldberg, 2007a; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). At the same time, scholars emphasize that social influences must be considered alongside evidence that genetics plays a role in determining sexual orientation, such that identical twins tend to be more similar in sexual orientation than non-identical (fraternal) twins (Kendler, Thornton, Gilman, & Kessler, 2000).

Existing research suggests that the children of LGB parents do not seem to self-identify as exclusively lesbian/gay at significantly higher rates than children of heterosexual parents (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Huggins, 1989; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). For example, a study comparing young adults with lesbian mothers and young adults with heterosexual single mothers found no significant differences between the two groups in rates of self-reported same-sex sexual attraction; further, the large majority of young adults with lesbian mothers identified as heterosexual (Tasker & Golombok, 1997). However, a significantly greater number of young adults with lesbian mothers reported that they had thought about the future possibility of having a same-sex relationship, and they were also more likely to have had a relationship with someone of the same sex. Further, daughters of lesbian mothers had a higher number of sexual partners in young adulthood than daughters of heterosexual mothers, while sons of lesbian mothers had fewer partners than sons of heterosexual mothers (Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Thus, in contrast to the children of heterosexual mothers, who tended to conform to gender-based norms, the children of lesbian mothers were more likely to challenge them.

In a more recent study, Gartrell, Bos, and Goldberg (2011) compared a sample of adolescents with lesbian mothers with a sample of age- and gender-matched adolescents with heterosexual parents, and

found that 17-year-old girls and boys reared by lesbian parents were no more likely to have engaged in same-sex sexual contact than their peers reared in heterosexual-parent households. Among those reared in lesbian-parent households, nearly one in five adolescent girls with lesbian mothers self-identified as bisexual, and none as lesbian; less than one in 10 boys self-identified as gay or bisexual (Gartrell, Bos, & Goldberg, 2010). These studies, taken together, suggest the possibility that adolescents with lesbian mothers may demonstrate more expansive, less categorical notions of sexuality. Future work should more explicitly examine *what* lesbian mothers seek to teach their daughters and sons about sexuality. Indeed, Cohen and Kuvalanka (2011) studied 10 lesbian mothers and found that a primary goal of their sexuality-related discussions with their children was to teach them about diverse notions of sexual orientation and reproduction. However, the authors did not explore in-depth whether their methods or aims in these discussions varied depending on the children's gender. Thus, more research in this area is needed.

LGB Parent-Child Relationships

A small body of research has focused on parent-child relationships within LGB-parent households. Studies that have compared two-parent lesbian-, gay-, and heterosexual-parent families suggest that parent-child relationships in these different family structures are more similar than different. Parents in these family structures have not been found to differ, on average, in parental warmth, emotional involvement, and quality of relationships with their children (Bos & van Balen, 2010; Golombok et al., 2003; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997). Further, studies of lesbian-mother families formed via DI indicate that children's relationships with their biological mothers appear similar in quality to their relationships with their nonbiological mothers, which researchers attribute in part to the fact that lesbian mothers tend to share coparenting (including child care and decision-making) more equally than heterosexual parents (Bos et al., 2004; Vanfraussen et al., 2003a).

However, parent-child closeness and contact may be threatened when parents break up. Several studies have examined the consequences of LGB parents' relationship dissolution for parent-child relationships and closeness. Gartrell and colleagues found that by the time the children in their sample of 73 intentional lesbian-mother households were 17, 40 couples (55% of the sample) had dissolved their unions (Gartrell, Bos, Peyser, Deck, & Rodas, 2011). Custody was shared in 25 of the 40 families, and the biological mother was the primary custodial parent in 10 of the 40 families. Custody was more likely to be shared if the nonbiological mothers had adopted the children. The percentage of adolescents who reported being close to both mothers was higher in families in which their nonbiological mothers had adopted them, and, further, adolescents whose nonbiological mothers had adopted them spent more time with their comothers. These data suggest that legal parentage may have important implications for parent-child relationships post-relationship dissolution.

Similarly, Goldberg and Allen (2013b) studied 20 young adults who had experienced their LGB parents' relationship dissolution and found that in nearly all cases, their parents had negotiated their breakups informally and without legal intervention (e.g., lawyers, mediators). Young adults perceived both advantages and disadvantages related to their family's non-legal status, and the fact that their parents

agreed on custody and child support informally, without the involvement of the court system. For example, some expressed appreciation for the fact that since their parents were never legally married, they did not get legally divorced, allowing their families to escape the headache of the legal system. Other participants, however, reported disadvantages. For example, most of the participants' nonbiological mothers lacked any legally protected relationship to them (i.e., they had not been able to legally adopt them via a second-parent adoption); in turn, some of their nonbiological mothers moved away or became less involved in their lives once their parents split up. These participants sometimes wondered whether they might have enjoyed a closer relationship with their noncustodial parents if their parents had been legally married, inasmuch as a judge would have ordered their parents to stay geographically close to one another. Thus, the implications of same-sex relationship dissolution for parent-child relationships deserve more attention in future work. Particularly important is work that examines the nature of children's relationships with their non-legal parent post-relationship dissolution in families in which children have a legally protected relationship to only one parent.

Although not social parents, sperm donors – and in particular, known sperm donors – may have relationships with the children being raised in lesbian-mother households. Very little research has examined children's relationships with and views of their known donors, although existing work suggests that children with LGB parents define their known donors in a variety of ways, from coparent to family member to stranger (Bos & Gartrell, 2010b; Goldberg & Allen, 2013a; Tasker & Granville, 2011; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003). Tasker and Granville (2011) studied 11 lesbian-mother families children conceived via a known donor (age range 4-11 years). Of the 11 studied children, there were only two with a known donor who played no role in the child's life. Of the nine children whose known donors were involved in their lives, four were described by parents as "acting like a father" (e.g., providing regular child care). Notably, all four of these children included their donors in the family drawings that they drew for the researchers. In the other five cases, there was greater variability and less agreement between parents and children about the donor's family membership, perhaps because of uncertainty surrounding the level, significance, and meaning of the donor's involvement.

In another recent study, Goldberg and Allen (2013a) studied 11 young adults raised by lesbian mothers who had used known donors and found that the majority of participants always knew who their donors were and had contact with their donors which ranged from minimal to involved. Further, participants perceived their donors in one of three ways: as strictly donors and not members of their family; as extended family members but not as parents; and as fathers. The developmental phase of adolescence into young adulthood emerged as a period during which participants often wanted more information about, and wanted to get to know, the donor. In turn, some participants described a recent increase in contact with their donors, which in all cases was described as satisfying.

These findings suggest that the relationships that children with lesbian mothers have with their donors vary in quality and intensity, and, further, that these relationships may change over time. More work is needed that explores children's, and LGB parents', relationships with known donors, as well as with identity release donors (i.e., anonymous donors who agree to be contacted when the child reaches

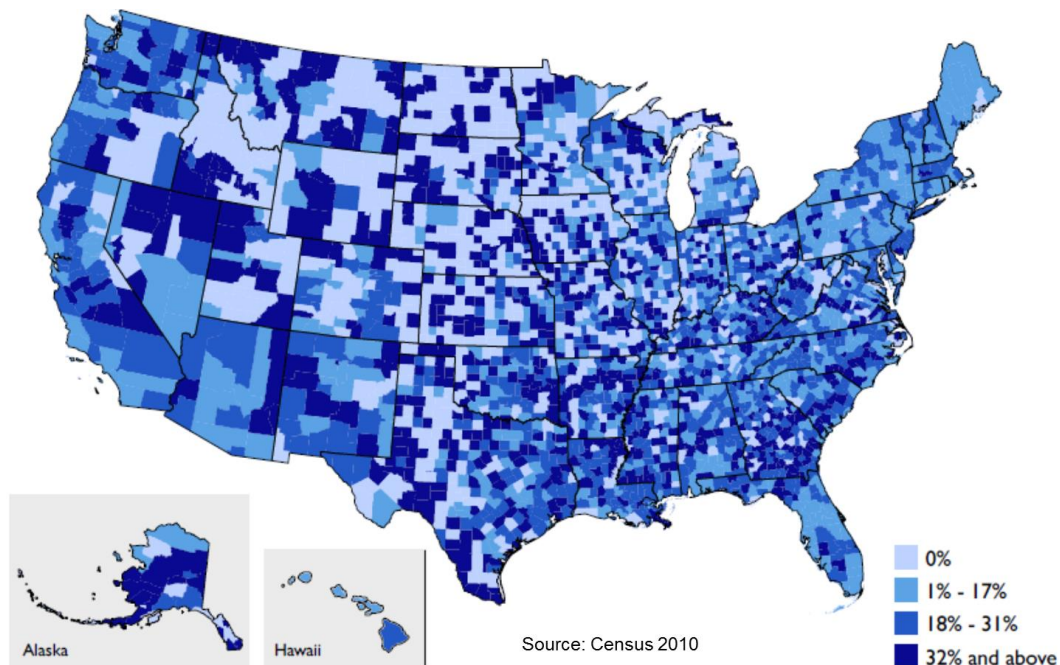
some specified age, such as 18 years). For example, in their longitudinal study of lesbian-parent families, Bos and Gartrell (2010b) found that of the 18 adolescents with ID release donors, 12 planned to contact their donors, four said they would not, and two were uncertain. Future studies focusing on the experiences of those who elect to meet their donors will shed light on how these adolescents cope with the discrepancy between their fantasies and the reality of their donors' lives.

Conclusions

Studies on LGB parenting have grown in number and scope over the past several decades. Findings are consistent in suggesting that despite confronting heterosexism in a variety of social contexts -- including the health care system, the legal system, and the school system --LGB parents and their children are functioning quite well.

Yet at the same time, the research on LGB parenting is characterized by a variety of sampling- and methodological-related problems. As reviewed extensively by Goldberg (2010) and others, the samples that are utilized in studies of LGB parents tend to be small, White, well-educated, and financially stable, and are often drawn from metropolitan areas. Thus, the representativeness of many of the findings is potentially limited, and much more research is needed that explores the experiences of working-class (Nixon, 2011) and racial minority (Moore, 2008, 2011) LGB-parent families, as well as LGB-parent families living in non-urban environments (Kinkler & Goldberg, 2011; Oswald, 2013). Such work is especially timely given demographic data showing that many LGB-parent families are residing in “unexpected” regions of the country (e.g., Gates, 2013). Specifically, same-sex couples are much more likely to have children in more socially conservative parts on the United States like the South (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percent of same-sex couples raising children, by county, Census 2010.



Furthermore, much more research has been conducted on lesbian mothers than gay fathers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010), and the research on bisexual parents is even more limited (see Power et al., 2012; Ross & Dobinson, 2013). Further, as noted early on, the research on transgender parents is scarce (Downing, 2013). Most LGB parenting research has been conducted in the U.S. or Europe; however, studies of LGB-parent families in South Africa (Lubbe, 2007), Slovenia (Sobočan, 2011), and other non-Western countries have recently emerged. There are also a variety of subtopics within the field of LGB parenting that have received little or no attention, including intimate partner violence in LGB-parent families (Hardesty, Oswald, Khaw, & Fonseca, 2011), LGB military families (Oswald & Sternberg, in press), sibling relationships among children with LGB parents, and family functioning when one or both LGB parents has HIV/AIDS or a chronic illness. Also, it will be interesting to explore how children in LGB-parent families feel about marriage equality in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2013 rulings on the Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8.

In this era of expanding civil liberties for LGBT people, we urge scholars to interrogate new questions and populations of interest, particularly those that have been sidelined or marginalized. In order to capture the full spectrum of LGB parenting, we need scholars who dare to pose unasked questions, probe uncharted territories, and push theoretical and epistemological boundaries. Building on the foundation of the existing LGB parenting research, future studies can truly innovate what we know about and can imagine for LGB-parent families.

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