



LGB-Parent Families: The Current State of the Research and Directions for the Future

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Abstract

Over the past several decades, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parenting has grown more visible. Alongside this enhanced visibility, research on the experiences of LGB parents and their children has proliferated. The current chapter addresses this research, focusing on several main content areas: family building by LGB people, the transition to parenthood for LGB parents, and functioning and experiences of LGB parents and their children. In the context of discussing what we know about LGB-parent families, we highlight gaps in our knowledge and point to key areas that future research should aim to answer, including how race, ethnicity, social class, and geographic factors shape the experiences of LGB-parent families.



1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parenting, with attention to theoretical and empirical advances, controversies, and gaps in this area. Over the past few decades, the issue of LGB parenting has grown more visible, both nationally (i.e., within the United States) and internationally. Once a topic that received marginal attention by news outlets, LGB parenting is now featured regularly in mainstream media (e.g., [Saint Louis, 2013](#)). Alongside this increased visibility, research on the experiences of LGB parents and their children has grown. Yet this research, while providing insight into many aspects of LGB family life, has been somewhat limited in focus and scope. Namely, 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 chapter.

In the following sections, 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. Throughout our discussion of these subtopics, we highlight key areas that future research should aim to answer, such as how recent changes in laws and policies affect LGB-parent families, and how race, ethnicity, social class, and region of residence interface with sexual minority status.



2. FAMILY BUILDING BY LGB PEOPLE

Given the growing attention to LGB parenting, it is not surprising that research has explored the issue of *how* sexual minorities become parents: that is, what family-building routes they choose and their experiences with these varied routes. Indeed, sexual minorities build families in a variety of ways. First, many sexual minorities become parents in the context of heterosexual relationships; that is, they become parents before coming out as LGB ([Tasker, 2013](#)). Other LGB people become parents in the context of same-sex committed relationships, a phenomenon that has become increasingly common due in part to advancements in reproductive technology and increased acceptance of LGB parenting and adoption ([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 received little attention in the literature (see [Bos, 2010](#); [Dempsey, 2012](#)). Of the abovementioned family types, LGB stepfamily arrangements represent the dominant arrangement ([Gates, 2011, 2013](#)).

2.1. LGB Parents Formerly in Heterosexual Relationships

Although the number of planned LGB-parent families is on the rise ([Gates, 2011](#)), experts emphasize that these numbers are likely exceeded by the number of LGB people who became parents in the context of heterosexual relationships ([Tasker, 2013](#)). Prior to the past several decades, LGB people had few family-building options available to them, and thus, some LGB people entered heterosexual unions (both long-term relationships/marriages and short-term unions) *because* they wanted to be parents ([Goldberg, 2010](#); [Tasker, 2013](#)). That is, heterosexual sex was regarded as the only feasible route to parenthood. The early wave of LGB parenting research was inspired by the fact that lesbian mothers were losing custody of their children to their ex-husbands upon dissolution of their heterosexual marriages; thus, research was needed to establish that sexual orientation should not be considered a relevant criterion in determining custody ([Tasker, 2013](#)).

Interestingly, as [Tasker \(2013\)](#) points out, early research on the experiences of lesbian and bisexual mothers who became parents in the context of heterosexual marriages/relationships (and then, in many cases, created lesbian stepfamilies once they entered into relationships with same-sex partners) has been somewhat supplanted by the new wave of research on planned LGB-parent families. This new wave of studies 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 lesbian/gay parents from birth ([Gartrell et al., 1996](#); [Goldberg, 2010](#)). Although the recent research on planned LGB-parent families is appropriate, given the increasing prevalence of this family form, the fact that studies of planned LGB-parent families now dominate the field of LGB parenting research is problematic, given that these families likely represent a minority of LGB-parent families as a whole ([Gates, 2011](#)). In turn, there are many questions regarding the experiences of LGB parents who had their children in the context of heterosexual relationships that remain

unanswered. For example: What is it like to be a lesbian mother divorcing her heterosexual husband in the second decade of the twenty-first century? Where should she look for resources, 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 heterosexual wife? Gay men who became parents via heterosexual relationships are even more invisible in the literature (but see [Bigner & Bozett, 1989, 1990](#); [Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989](#)).

Thus, a critical question that arises is: (How) can we address the current invisibility of this population of LGB parents? It seems that a new wave of research that addresses the unique historical and social location of lesbian/gay parents post-heterosexual divorce is especially timely. Namely, in considering the experiences of a lesbian mother parenting post-heterosexual divorce, it is important to explore how her experiences (e.g., coming out, parenting with another woman postdivorce, 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. In addition, little is known about LGB individuals who partner with these divorced parents (see [Lynch, 2004](#); [Lynch & Murray, 2000](#); [Moore, 2008](#)). For example, does a stepparent who already identifies as LGB face unique challenges in establishing relationships with stepchildren who may resent their legal parent's LGB identity? In what ways do the concerns and experiences of LGB stepparents converge and diverge from those of heterosexual stepparents? [Lynch \(2004\)](#) found that, like heterosexual stepparents, LGB stepparents may experience tension and competition with children and may struggle with confusion over their role (e.g., whether they should play a role in disciplining the children). Such relational tensions can be exacerbated by children's difficulties accepting their parents' sexual orientation, and consequent reluctance to acknowledge, much less embrace, their parent's new partner ([Lynch & Murray, 2000](#)). More research—particularly longitudinal work—is needed that explores the unique dynamics of LGB stepparent families, including how they navigate tensions and challenges in establishing new familial roles and how family relationships and roles change over time.

2.2. LGB-Parent Families Formed Through DI

As stated, sexual minority women are increasingly turning to DI to build their families. Female same-sex couples that choose DI must decide who will

carry the child, a decision that may have profound legal implications, in that the biological mother is automatically the legal parent, and only about half of U.S. states allow the nonbiological mother to become a legal parent to her child via second-parent adoption (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Lesbian couples may confront legal anxieties in the context of deciding whether to use sperm from a known or unknown donor. Women who choose unknown donors often do so out of a desire to avoid third-party involvement, fuzzy boundaries, and/or custody challenges (Chabot & Ames, 2004; Goldberg, 2006). Women who choose known donors may also experience legal worries but at the same time feel strongly that their child deserves access to their biological heritage (Agigian, 2004; Goldberg & Allen, 2013a; Touroni & Coyle, 2002). In addition, they may choose known donors out of a desire to avoid interfacing with potentially heterosexist institutions such as sperm banks and fertility clinics (Touroni & Coyle, 2002). Of note is that lesbian mothers who choose unknown donors are increasingly likely to opt for identity release donors when possible; 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, these women are able to balance their desire for primary decision-making authority with the desire to facilitate their future child's potential interest in reaching out to his or her genetic father.

Social change, combined with the increasing visibility of lesbian mothers, has gradually facilitated greater awareness, and more sensitive treatment, of lesbians who seek out DI, although reports of insensitive treatment by health care and midwifery professionals continue to appear in the literature (Goldberg, 2006; Ross, Steele, & Epstein, 2006; Spidsberg, 2007; Wilton & Kaufman, 2000). For example, sexual minority women routinely 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).

One question that has been raised, but rarely subjected to systematic empirical investigation, is how social class may shape the DI decisions and experiences of sexual minority women (Agigian, 2004; Goldberg, 2010; Mezey, 2013). Sexual minority women who have fewer financial resources may be more likely to choose known donors to avoid the costs of anonymous DI; however, this choice may come with risks (e.g., the sperm may not be screened for sexually transmitted infections or HIV; Goldberg, 2010). Another question that has received little attention is how sexual

minority women experience and negotiate failed conception attempts (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 loss (Goldberg et al., 2009). One study found that, on average, lesbian women had an easier time moving 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 given a large body of literature that shows infertility may have long-term consequences for heterosexual women's psychological well-being and relationship quality (Klemetti, Raitanen, Sihvo, Saarni, & Koponen, 2010), coupled with the fact that many studies show that lesbian mothers are older (i.e., in their mid- to late-30s) when they first become parents (Gartrell et al., 1999; Goldberg et al., 2009).

2.3. LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Adoption

Both female and male same-sex couples may pursue adoption as a means of becoming a parent. In fact, they are more likely to pursue adoption than heterosexual couples as a means of becoming a parent: Namely, among couples with children, same-sex couples are four times more likely than different-sex couples to be raising an adopted child (Gates, 2013). Sexual minorities and same-sex couples may elect 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 United States (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).¹ This parallels the increasing trend toward ID release sperm donors; indeed, there is growing awareness among professionals and parents that greater transparency and openness about children's genetic roots benefits their socioemotional and identity development (MacCallum, 2009).

Sexual minorities consider a number of factors in deciding which type of adoption to pursue. They may choose private domestic open adoption

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.

because they are attracted to the possibility of maintaining contact with birth parents or being able to provide their child with (possibly ongoing) information about their birth parent(s) (Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg, Downing, & Sauck, 2007; Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2011). 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, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2007). By contrast, LGB prospective adoptive parents may be drawn to international adoption because they suspect that birth mothers (who often select the adoptive parents in open adoption arrangements) are unlikely to choose them because they are gay, and they worry they will end up waiting “forever” (Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2011). Such concerns are not unrealistic: Some birth parents specifically protest the placement of their child with gay/lesbian parents (Brodzinsky, 2003). Same-sex couples who pursue international adoption must weigh such considerations against the reality that if they choose to adopt internationally, they must closet their relationship (no country currently allows same-sex couples to adopt; one partner must pose as a single parent). This situation can create both 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 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 and agencies may be welcoming of LGB adopters, reports of insensitive practices by child welfare workers continue to appear in the literature (Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2007; Matthews & Cramer, 2006).

Upon settling on an adoption route, prospective adoptive parents must then choose an agency or lawyer, a process that can be particularly challenging and time consuming for sexual minorities. Given their vulnerability in the adoption process, LGB prospective adopters often expend significant effort and time researching potential agencies for evidence that they are open to working with sexual minorities (Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2007). Even when they select agencies that they believe to be accepting and affirming, they may still encounter heterosexism in the adoption process (e.g., in the use of forms, materials, and support groups that seem to focus on heterosexual couples only; Goldberg, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2007). They

may also confront adoption professionals who hold discriminatory stereotypes and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians 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, so as not to “make waves,” and further jeopardize their chances of adopting (Goldberg, 2012).

The burgeoning research on LGB parents’ experiences during the adoption process has been important in shedding 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, an important empirical advancement in this area has been the investigation of how sexual minority parents respond to discrimination in the adoption process—that is, what they *do* when confronted with such experiences. This research has revealed that sexual minority adopters with less power (e.g., fewer financial and educational resources; geographic limitations, such as living in a rural area) are sometimes less likely to challenge instances of discrimination than those with considerable 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) impact how sexual minorities respond to perceived discrimination in the adoption process.

Another area that deserves immediate research attention is 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. 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?

2.4. LGB-Parent Families Formed Through Surrogacy

The research on sexual minorities’ experiences of pursuing surrogacy is scarce (Bergman, Rubio, Green, & Padron, 2010; Berkowitz, 2013; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg, 2012). This research, 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 warrant further attention. Gay men with significant financial resources are employing the services of a woman who likely has limited financial resources in order to become parents (Berkowitz, 2013). How do gay men make sense of the power differentials in this scenario, and how do class, gender, and possibly race dynamics shape their relationships with surrogates?

Further, of great interest are the experiences of gay men in the United States 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. As Berkowitz (2013) discusses, such efforts, although cost effective, are fraught with ethical issues. Further, U.S. citizens who pursue surrogacy abroad will need to ensure that they pursue the necessary steps to enable their child to gain legal citizenship in the United States (U.S. Embassy, 2013). Future research should examine the decision-making process of gay men who consider—and then reject or select—surrogacy abroad as a means of family building, with attention to the racial, class, and gender contours of their decision making.



3. THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

What happens when LGB people become parents? 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 successfully recruited, and have 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 heterosexual couples, lesbian and gay parents' mental health (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 heterosexual couples (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004) when they become parents, which 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 child care, housework, and paid work among lesbian couples who pursued DI do occur, they usually occur along the lines of biology: that is, 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 did more housework than stepmothers, which ultimately facilitated their greater power over other aspects of the household (e.g., household decision making). Interestingly, 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 child care, housework, and paid work), in part because of the dominant mantra that same-sex couples are more equal than heterosexual 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 and perpetuated, which may further alienate those same-sex couples whose work-family arrangements do not adhere to the "egalitarian utopia" (Gabb, 2005; Goldberg, 2009, 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 lesbian/gay nonparents (DeMino, Appleby, & Fisk, 2007). It seems that family members may become more supportive once a child enters the picture (Gartrell et al., 1999; Goldberg, 2006). For example, 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 their feelings about homosexuality aside and 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, for example, 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).

Of course, not all family members become more supportive and involved across the transition to parenthood. Some LGB parents confront reduced 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 and/or religious grounds, or because they believe that life as a member of an LGB-parent family will be too difficult (particularly for children). They may also oppose the LGB parents' chosen route to parenthood (e.g., adoption, in general, or transracial adoption, specifically) (Goldberg, 2012). The involvement and support of the extended family may vary depending on their biological relationship to the child, such that Patterson, Hurt, and Mason (1998) found, for example, 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.

Many questions remain unanswered regarding the transition to parenthood experience of LGB people. For example, what is 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? What is the transition to *step* parenthood like for LGB people (i.e., persons who partner with people of the same sex who already have children)? How is the transition to parenthood for sexual minorities shaped by financial and educational resources (and, in turn, access to formal supports, such as therapy and support groups, that may ease the stress of this life transition)?



4. LGB-PARENT FAMILIES' FUNCTIONING AND EXPERIENCES

Of interest, of course, is what happens beyond the transition to parenthood for LGB couples and families. A growing body of research has focused 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 researchers focused on lesbian mothers' mental health, and children's psychosocial functioning, gender development, and sexual orientation, in an effort 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, in a landmark paper challenging the state of the research on LGB parenting, 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 research (i.e., over the past decade) 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.

4.1. 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 men's and women's 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, & Schechter, 2013).

That LGB parents demonstrate such positive outcomes suggests remarkable resilience, given that they develop in a heterosexist society and are exposed to stigma and nonsupport in multiple intersecting, overlapping contexts. Specifically, as discussed, 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; Shapiro, Peterson, & Stewart, 2009; Shechner et al., 2013). 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/child difficultness (Goldberg & Smith, 2008b), and low levels of supervisor support (Goldberg & Smith, 2013a). There is a need for additional research that explores the factors, both external and internal to the family, that undermine positive adjustment in LGB parents. That is, under what conditions is parenting likely to be especially challenging for lesbian and gay 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 challenges. Research focusing on the intersecting identities of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation vis-à-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).

4.2. Children of LGB Parents: Functioning and Experiences

Because homosexuality continues to be stigmatized in society, research has frequently 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 heterosexual parents. Additionally, interest has been paid to 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 LGB-parent families are compared (in terms of psychosocial adjustment and other outcomes) to children in heterosexual-parent families.

4.2.1 Psychological Adjustment

Importantly, research tends to find 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., aggression, behavioral problems), or social functioning (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Goldberg & Smith, 2013b; Golombok et al., 2003; Shechner et al., 2013; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; van Gelderen, Bos, Gartrell, Hermanns, & Perrin, 2012; Wainright & Patterson, 2006; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). 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 comparison 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).

4.2.2 Academic Adjustment

Several 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 associated with disrupted or delayed progression through elementary school (Rosenfeld, 2010), and nor is it associated with children's academic achievement (i.e., grades; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Wainright et al., 2004). Further, Gartrell, Bos, Peyser, Deck, & 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 (GPAs) typically fell in the A – to B+ range, illustrating higher than average academic performance. Ninety percent of this sample hoped to attend a 4-year college, and 50% of the sample expected to enter a career that would require additional, postbaccalaureate training (e.g., they hoped to be a physician or teacher), suggesting high educational aspirations overall.

4.2.3 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 & Bos, 2010; Gartrell et al., 2005; 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 years old, they indicated that they had active social networks, as evidenced by numerous close friendships of many years duration (Gartrell et al., 2012).

Research suggests 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).

4.2.4 Teasing and Bullying

Of course, children with LGB parents may be socially skilled and have high-quality relationships with friends, but still be bullied due to their parents' sexual orientation or "atypical" family structure. In turn, some studies have examined teasing and bullying experiences, specifically, in school-age children (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Rivers, Poteat, & Noret, 2008; Van Gelderen, Gartrell et al., 2012). 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, & 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. In sum, while the frequency of teasing was equivalent in both groups, the content of the teasing differed.

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; Kivalanka, 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 reach elementary- and middle-school age (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 were 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, Gartrell et al., 2012](#)). 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, and 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” ([Kuvvalanka et al., 2013](#), p. 19).

Children with LGB parents who do not encounter bullying or 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 and/or private schools) ([Leddy et al., 2012](#); [Ray & Gregory, 2001](#)), raising an important area to be pursued in future research. Namely, 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](#)). Their socioeconomic and professional status may enhance their ability 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 unlikely to occur. Of note, however, is that 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 that examines how intersections of gender, class, race, and geography impact children’s experiences of and responses to bullying is needed. Likewise, research that examines how gender, class, race, and geography impact LGB parents’ relationships with their children’s schools, and their experiences of advocating for their children, is also needed: 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 ([Nixon, 2011](#)).

4.2.4.1 Linking Teasing/Bullying to Mental Health

An exciting new development over the past decade has involved research efforts to link the experiences of stigma/bullying to psychosocial outcomes in children of LGB parents. Several studies suggest that perceived

stigmatization by peers has been linked 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 research has 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 powerful implications for children's adjustment, even offsetting the negative impact of peer stigmatization.

4.2.5 Gender-Typed Play, Behavior, and Attitudes

Because children who grow up with lesbian or gay parents from birth typically lack 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 heterosexual 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-gender parent in the household of LGB-parent families might impact gender-typed play and behavior to the degree that children model the same-gender 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 in lesbian-, gay-, and heterosexual-parent families and found no differences in gender-typed play behavior by family structure. 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 same-gender 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, Kashy et al. \(2012\)](#) suggested that both social constructionism and social learning theory can be useful lenses for understanding the 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 may 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 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 families. There were no differences in psychosocial adjustment, 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. Along this same line, 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," thereby enabling them to develop interests and proficiencies outside of the gender box.

It is important to consider the research on the gender development and socialization of children of LGB parents 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 a variety of ways. For example, they may seek to secure gender role models for their children, 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 key factor influencing child well-being in lesbian- and gay-parent families.

As other authors have pointed out (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010), it may be inappropriate 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 research should push beyond the concept of "male role models" and "female role models" to consider other ways of conceptualizing male and female involvement in LGB families.

4.2.6 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 monozygotic (identical) twins tend to be more similar in sexual orientation than dizygotic (nonidentical) 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 served 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 identified as bisexual and none as lesbian; less than 1 in 10 boys 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. More research should explicitly examine what lesbian mothers seek to teach their daughters and sons about sexuality. Cohen and Kivalanka (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—but the authors did not explore in-depth

whether their methods or aims in these discussions varied depending on the children's gender.

4.3. 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, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003a).

However, parent–child closeness and contact may be threatened when parents breakup. Several studies have investigated the consequences of LGB parents' relationship dissolution for parent–child relationships. 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 postrelationship 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 nonlegal

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. Thus, the implications of same-sex relationship dissolution for parent-child relationships deserve more attention in future research. In particular, we need more research that examines what happens to children's relationships with their nonlegal parent postrelationship dissolution, in families in which children have a legally protected relationship to only one parent.

Although not social parents, donors—and in particular, known 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 et al., 2003a; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2003b). 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, 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 to know more about, and 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, 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 "ID 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, 4 said they would not, and 2 were uncertain. Future studies focusing on the experiences of those who elect to meet their donors will illuminate how these adolescents cope with the discrepancy between their fantasies and the reality of their donors' lives.



5. 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.

The research on LGB parenting, however, is characterized by a variety of sampling- and methodological-related problems. As reviewed extensively by [Goldberg \(2010\)](#) and other authors, the samples that are utilized in these studies 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 nonurban environments ([Kinkler & Goldberg, 2011](#); [Oswald, 2013](#)). 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). Most of the research has been conducted in the United States 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, 2014), 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.

As we march toward the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, 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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