

Family Dynamics and Romantic Relationships in a Changing Society

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Chapter 6

LGBTQ Relationships: Families of Origin, Same-Sex Couples, and Parenting

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides an overview of research regarding the familial and romantic relationships of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals. The topic of families of origin, describing the coming out process for LGBTQ individuals and its ramifications for individual outcomes, as well as for relationships with immediate and extended family members are covered. What is known about same-sex couple relationship dynamics, both in comparison to other-sex couples and in ways that uniquely characterize LGBTQ couple relationships, are highlighted. Finally, the literature about LGBTQ parent families, including child and parent outcomes and family processes unique to these family systems, are discussed. Throughout the chapter, areas for future LGBTQ relationship research, particularly the inclusion of underrepresented samples within the LGBTQ population, are emphasized.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we begin with an overview of the numbers of LGBTQ persons in the United States, and then primarily emphasize what is known in the research literature about the relationships of sexual and gender minority individuals – particularly with their families of origin, in their couple relationships, and as parents. In general, far less research attention has been given to gender minorities as compared to sexual minority individuals. Thus, research on LGBTQ relationships predominantly focuses on family relationships among sexual minorities, same-sex¹ couples in which partners identify as cisgender (i.e.,

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gender identity is consistent with biological sex), and sexual minority parenting. Moreover, the context for this research has largely been the United States, but we include reference to international samples when possible.

A substantial number of American adults identify as sexual and gender minorities (Gates, 2015). As a term, sexual minority refers to individuals whose romantic and sexual identities, attractions, behaviors, relationships and/or desires are non-heterosexual in nature and are not exclusively oriented toward the other sex. Sexual minority refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (LGBQ) and any other non-heterosexual identities. Gender minority is a term that refers to any individuals, including transgender (T) and gender diverse persons, whose gender expression and/or identity differ from their assigned biological sex or do not exclusively fit within the male/female binary. We use the acronym LGBTQ to refer to both sexual and gender minority persons.

NUMBERS OF LGBTQ PEOPLE IN THE US

To begin with, LGBTQ individuals represent a substantial minority population within the US. A common estimate is that about 3.5% of the adult (age 18 or older) population identifies as LGBTQ, or approximately 8 million Americans (Gates, 2011a, 2013). Estimates for transgender individuals range anywhere from 0.3% (Gates, 2011a) to 0.6% (Flores, Herman, Gates, & Brown, 2016) of the adult population, or approximately 700,000 to 1.4 million individuals. These numbers are likely to be a conservative estimate of these populations. One reason this may be the case surrounds the definition and identity of being LGBTQ. The 3.5% estimate usually references individuals who exclusively identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and as such, other identities (such as queer) may not be captured, nor are individuals who engage in same-sex behavior but who may not identify as LGBTQ. As a case in point, when explicitly tracking individuals who engage in same-sex sexual behaviors, the estimate goes from 3.5% to 8.2%. Moreover, when surveys track same-sex attraction, the number goes even higher to 11% of the population, or roughly 25.6 million American adults (Gates, 2011a).

A secondary reason that these statistics may underestimate the numbers of LGBTQ people in the US is the reliance on Census data, which are in some ways limited in their representation of the LGBTQ population. As Cianciotto (2005) has noted, while the Census does capture information on same-sex couples that live together, it cannot account for single LGBTQ people, LGBTQ couples who are not living together, LGBTQ seniors who live alone, LGBTQ youth, undocumented immigrants or homeless individuals, and those who are uncomfortable listing themselves as “out” on a federal document such as the Census. It is imperative to consider that estimates of the US population are limited by how particular identities are operationalized, and thus, in representing the true diversity of the LGBTQ population.

Numbers of Same-Sex Couples in the US

According to 2010 Census data, there are at least 650,000 cohabiting same-sex couples in the US (Gates & Newport, 2013). Same-sex couples are currently the highest growing population of householders in the US, as compared with other-sex² married and unmarried couples, with numbers almost doubling (an 80.4% increase) from 2000 to 2010 (Gates, 2012). The 2000 U.S. Census was the first time in which the government officially began to track LGBTQ households. As stigma associated with LGBTQ individuals has decreased in the US, it is likely that more LGBTQ individuals have become comfortable ‘outing’

themselves to the government (Gates, 2006). The U.S. Census Bureau, however, did not release specific data that showed comparisons among same-sex couples who were in domestic partnerships or civil unions compared to those cohabiting, so the growth rate may seem inflated compared to rates among other-sex couples, who are sorted into married and unmarried categories (Gates, 2012). On the other hand, the estimated number of same-sex couples may be conservative due to limitations in the wording of Census questions. For instance, the only way researchers know that an individual is in a same-sex relationship from Census data is when the respondents listed themselves both as a “householder” (i.e., someone who is the owner of apartment/house, or if renting, the holder of a lease) and as being in a same-sex relationship. This method does not capture same-sex relationships in which one individual lives in a different household for any number of reasons (e.g., long-distance relationships, living with other family members, living alone, etc.).

Recently, the Department of the Treasury released a tax analysis of ‘joint-filers’ as another way of assessing the number of same-sex couples in the United States (Fisher, Gee, & Looney, 2016). Although still with limitations, the data suggest that same-sex couples who file their taxes jointly, indicating a high level of financial commitment as a couple, has increased dramatically since the 2013 Supreme Court ruling that overturned the Defense of Marriage Act. The major limitation to these findings is the nature of the methodology used to assess the number of same-sex couples, as the only couples captured in these analyses were those who filed their taxes jointly. This means that couples who filed separately were not included. Moreover, given that these data only extend to 2014 (the Treasury Department has not yet released information for 2015 or 2016), it is important to recognize that same-sex couples often traveled from their home states to other states in order to get married. As a result, these couples would not have been able to file jointly before the 2015 Supreme Court ruling. Even then, the dramatic increase in same-sex couples filing jointly, up by 40% between 2013 and 2014, suggests that the numbers of same-sex couples in the United States will only continue to increase (Fisher et al., 2016).

Due to these constraints, we can currently only speak to the numbers of same-sex couples ($N = 650,000$) represented by U.S. Census data. While likely an underestimate of the total number of American same-sex couples, this number provides important understanding about general demographics of LGBTQ individuals in the US. In terms of ethnic-racial identity³, when looking at just the “householder” who reported being in same-sex relationships, 81% were White, 12% Hispanic, 9% African American, 3% Asian, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 4% another race, and 3% were two or more races (Gates, 2012). Although the overall number of same-sex couples appears to be predominantly White, this may be due to the constraints of the way in which the U.S. Census gathers data on the population. Since White individuals tend to be wealthier than non-White individuals, White respondents may be more likely to be the householder in an interracial or interethnic relationship (Cianciotto, 2005). Further some ethnic-racial minorities in the US, particularly those who identify as Asian or Hispanic, are less likely to be counted in demographic surveys than their White counterparts, in part due to issues related to U.S. citizenship. This may further decrease possible total counts of LGBTQ individuals (Cianciotto, 2005; Dang & Vianney, 2007).

Numbers of LGBTQ Parents in the US

Current estimates indicate that between 2 and 3.7 million LGBTQ parents are raising children under age 18, and at least 6 million people in the US have LGBTQ parents (Gates, 2015). While more than a third (37-38%) of LGBTQ individuals have been parents at some point in their lives, this number remains

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lower than the “traditional” number (64%) among cisgender, heterosexual individuals (64%; Gates, 2013; Stotzer, Herman, & Hasenbush, 2014). Of the 650,000 same-sex couple households in the United States, about 120,000 of these couples are raising children, with each couple typically having an average of one to two children (Gates, 2013). About 13% of these children are adopted, and the proportion of same-sex couples who adopt compared to other-sex couples who adopt is about 4 times higher (Gates, 2013). Same-sex couples are also more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to adopt transracially (Farr & Patterson, 2009; Goldberg, 2009). The majority of same-sex parents, however, are those who have had biological children in the context of a previous other-sex relationship (Gates, 2011b). Although the proportion of same-sex couples who adopt are likely to be White and wealthier than other same-sex parents, when considering all same-sex couples who are parents, 20% are living at or below the poverty line. This is double the number of other-sex parenting couples who are living in poverty (Gates, 2012a). Furthermore, ethnic-racial minority individuals within the LGB⁴ community are much more likely than their White counterparts to be raising children, particularly when comparing African American and Latinx⁵ LGB adults (Gates, 2011b)

A conservative estimate, then, indicates that at least 2% of all children in the US are being raised by sexual minority parents (Gates, 2011b). Interestingly, although the total number of sexual minority parents in the US has grown, and adoption rates among same-sex couples have increased, the proportion of sexual minority parents has actually been declining (Gates, 2011b). From 2006 to 2009, the proportion of LGB parents declined by roughly 3% even though the gross number of LGB parents still increased (Gates, 2011b). Queer People of Color (QPOC) are more likely than White LGBTQ individuals to have biological children, usually through previous other-sex relationships, perhaps in part because QPOC often come out later in life compared to White LGBTQ individuals (Morris, Balsam, & Rothblum, 2002). Given increasing societal trends of favorable attitudes toward sexual minority people, fewer sexual minority individuals are having children in the context of previous heterosexual relationships, and instead, having children in the context of their sexual minority identity. Increasingly, sexual minority individuals with financial resources are becoming parents through assisted reproductive technologies or adoption (Gates, 2011b). Thus, the proportional decrease in numbers of parents among all LGBTQ people may reflect changes in sociopolitical climate, resulting in greater numbers of younger LGBTQ individuals (who are not yet parents) coming out and fewer LGBTQ individuals who are parents as a result of prior heterosexual relationships.

Population estimates of LGBTQ parent families may also be biased in that not all gender and sexual minority parents are accurately represented by extant research. Current methods of counting LGBTQ individuals through the U.S. Census and several other national survey sources (e.g., Gallup polls) reveal that parenting rates vary dramatically among sexual and gender minority individuals – for instance, about half (49%) of all LB women are parenting children, which is higher than the 19% parenting rate among GB men, and closer to the 64% parenting rate among cisgender, heterosexual individuals (Gates, 2011b). Further, there is an increasing number of individuals with non-Western gender variant identities, including Two-Spirit (indigenous North Americans, simultaneously feeling a feminine and masculine spirit), Fa’afafine (males at birth in Samoa who embody both feminine and masculine traits), and Mahuwahine (those who are born male at birth in Hawai’i, and come to identify to varying degrees as female; Roughgarden, 2013). Given that non-Western community-oriented approaches to raising children, such as informal adoption of kin, are also common among indigenous populations, transgender parents among these communities may be particularly unlikely to be captured by current population estimates (Stotzer et al., 2014).

Among transgender individuals, parenting is more likely among those who are older – likely a result of individuals having children before they began transitioning, coming out, or identifying as transgender (Stotzer et al., 2014). Moreover, if models for transgender identities do not exist or are not as clearly visible in particular cultures, it may be even more likely that individuals would be older before transitioning or identifying as transgender. This phenomenon runs parallel to the experiences of various sexual minority individuals, such as women of color, who tend to come out later in life as lesbian (Morris et al., 2002).

RELATIONSHIPS TO FAMILIES OF ORIGIN

Sexual and gender minority persons are uniquely tasked with navigating relationships with their families of origin, who often do not share the same minority identities. The term family of origin typically refers to the family into which one is born (or in some cases, adopted), including not only the immediate nuclear family, but also the extended family of aunts, uncles, grandparents and so on (Bertone & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2014). This term is in contrast to the term family of choice, which refers to the small community of close companions that one chooses over the course of their life, including significant others and LGBTQ friends (Oswald, 2002; Weston, 1991). These are in no way mutually exclusive categories, and for many people, members of their family of origin will also be members of their family of choice.

This distinction between family of origin and family of choice becomes important for many sexual and gender minority individuals, as the experience of realizing and coming to terms with one's sexuality or gender identity could lead to strain in relationships with families of origin (Oswald, 2002). As most LGBTQ people have family members who are heterosexual, families of origin often lack models regarding typical trajectories and transitions common in the LGBTQ life experience. Distinct from other minority groups, such as persons who are ethnic-racial or religious minorities, it is rare for LGBTQ persons to have family members who share their minority identity (Rothblum, 2014). Recent research has focused upon how these relationships to the family of origin are impacted by the development of one's identity as LGBTQ (e.g., Schneider, Glover, & Turk, 2016). Findings have demonstrated the benefits of having positive relationships with one's family of origin, and the complexities that revolve around coming out (Ryan, Legate, & Weinstein, 2015).

Coming Out to Families of Origin

While coming out is typically depicted in the media as a monolithic event in which the individuals admit their orientation, typically in a moment of conflict, in reality the ways in which people come out vary greatly (D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2008; McCormac, Anderson, & Adams, 2014; Troiden, 1989). Even with growing cultural acceptance and visibility of LGBTQ people, coming out to one's family is among the most challenging tasks for LGBTQ individuals. Coming out is a rite of passage and formative experience for LGBTQ persons, as well as their family members (Rothblum, 2014). In some cases, coming out may not be a verbal exchange, but is simply revealed through behaviors, such as appearing at a family function with a same-sex partner (Villicana, Delucio, & Biernat, 2016). In other cases, one may only disclose to one family member, and keep it a secret from others. Alternatively, one might choose to come out very publicly by broadcasting it over a social media platform (Gray, 2009).

Differences in how one decides to come out could be due to familial or cultural pressures related to sexual orientation or gender identity, differences in how sensitive topics are handled in a particular

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culture, or any number of other possible influences (Bertone & Franchi, 2014). The timing of coming out sometimes coincides with realizing one's gender or sexual minority identity, but it may also occur later as a result of various personal and social considerations; often, coming out to families of origin takes place during adolescence or young adulthood (Dunlap, 2016). Although most LGBTQ people do disclose their identities to their families of origin at some point in time, it is common to tell close friends prior to parents (Dunlap, 2016). Within families, mothers are typically told before fathers, and siblings often react with more support (at least initially) than parents (D'Augelli et al., 2008; Maguen et al., 2002).

Following disclosure of one's LGBTQ identity, parents often experience parallel "coming out" feelings. During this time, parents must decide who they will discuss or reveal their child's LGBTQ identity in their social circles (Baptist & Allen, 2008). A host of contextual, sociodemographic, and cultural variables impact how families react to their child's coming out, and how families either reject or embrace their child's LGBTQ identity. Frequently, having more conservative political or religious beliefs is related to greater challenges with acceptance of being LGBTQ – both for the individual and the family (Hilton & Szymanski, 2014). Particular life milestones, however, such as becoming a parent or getting married, often evoke strong responses among family members of LGBTQ people – in some cases, these events result in greater support, while in others, support may become more limited (Wells, 2011).

Cultural considerations have received greater research attention as it has become evident that being LGBTQ does not carry the same meaning cross-culturally. A recent study comparing how White and Latino men come out to their families revealed a stark difference in how the two groups managed the challenge of coming out to their families (Villicana et al., 2016). In general, Latino men pursued a strategy of tacit acceptance, in which the family became aware of the individual's orientation through their actions, but these men did not confront their family directly about the fact, nor was it ever openly discussed. Those who pursued this sort of strategy did not report any differences in well-being as compared to those who engaged in direct verbal revelation. White men were more likely to come out of the closet verbally than were Latino men when talking to their families, yet those who did attempt to pursue the tacit strategy reported lower well-being (Villicana et al., 2016). This research demonstrates the importance of considering cultural variations in assessing healthy coming out experiences to family.

What tends to be true across different coming out practices is that the reactions from family members have noteworthy impacts upon individual well-being (Legate, Ryan, & Weinstein, 2012; Ryan et al., 2015). Having a positive coming out experience tends to increase perceptions of closeness among family members and provides a stronger support system for the LGBTQ individuals as they attempt to navigate the social pressures that come with having a sexual or gender minority identity (D'Amico, Julien, Tremblay, & Chartrand, 2015; Schneider et al., 2016). What constitutes a positive experience varies depending on a host of individual contexts; thus, further research is required to examine which factors may be culturally bound and which are significant cross-culturally.

Rejection and Acceptance from Families of Origin

How relationships change with the family of origin after coming out has become more heavily researched in recent years (Bertone & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2014; Schneider et al., 2016), primarily directed toward the parents' reaction in discovering their child's sexuality, factors motivating decisions to come out to family, and the ways in which parental rejection or acceptance impact child development. Concerns relating to the family are rated as being some of the most important health issues to discuss with a health care provider for LGBTQ youth and with good reason (Hoffman, Freeman, & Swann, 2009). Facing rejection from

one's family of origin after coming out has been consistently linked with a number of negative outcomes, ranging from lowered self-esteem to acts of self-harm or suicide (Hilton & Szymanski, 2014; Ryan et al., 2015). Individuals who suffer this rejection also tend to be less able to deal with other social pressures that accompany being a member of a sexual minority in Western society (Hilton & Szymanski, 2014).

The potential for damage from such negative reactions shapes a great deal of how one chooses to come out, particularly with regard to which family members to confide in. Sexual minority individuals are more likely to come out to their mothers rather than to their fathers (Rothman, Sullivan, Keyes, & Boehmer, 2012). That being said, fathers tend to discover their child's identity at around the same time as the child would reveal this event to the mother, but fathers tend to discover this independently, rather than the child coming out to them in particular (Baiocco et al., 2015). This difference in disclosure is a reasonable choice, given the literature that surrounds this issue. While parent reactions to a child coming out do not differ by gender of the parent, the impact of the parental response upon the child does differ by parent gender (Puckett, Woodward, Mereish, & Pantalone, 2015). D'Amico and colleagues (2015) discovered that fathers' attempts to change a child's sexuality to the perceived norm tends to lead to increased suicidal thoughts on the part of the child, while mothers' attempts to do the same did not have the same impact.

Given how important acceptance is from families of origin in producing healthy outcomes for LGBTQ individuals, research has turned to examining what factors encourage positive relationships after coming out (Legate et al., 2012). The family make-up is one element that has recently been of interest, with researchers investigating factors such as how the number of siblings or parents in the household impacts the ways in which the family reacts to the coming out experience (D'Augelli et al., 2008). Several important factors have been identified as a result, such as the finding that the more siblings one has, the less likely one is to come out to one's parents in adolescence, and the lower one is in the birth order, the less likely one is to come out to parents. In contrast, coming out is more likely when living in a single parent household, and LGBTQ persons are more likely to have positive relationships with their family after coming out if siblings are told first and parents are informed afterwards (D'Augelli et al., 2008).

The belief structure of the family could also impose a substantial impact upon the family's rejection or acceptance of a member who has come out. Those family members who have already had positive interactions with LGBTQ individuals are likely to be more accepting, as are those who hold more liberal political ideology (Hilton & Szymanski, 2014). Religious beliefs, however, may lead to rejection of the LGBTQ family member, especially in the case of especially conservative religious identities (Baiocco et al., 2015; Hilton & Szymanski, 2014). Having a background in conservative religious traditions could be difficult for individuals during the coming out process, since they must not only come to terms with their sexual or gender identity, but they also must navigate feelings of pressure to reconcile their LGBTQ identity with their religious identity (Figuroa & Tasker, 2014). Even in this case, however, belonging to a religious family is not synonymous with complete and automatic rejection. A religious mindset can help to maintain familial bonds when the preservation of familial harmony is more important to the maintenance of the religious identity than is abjuring the LGBTQ family member (Bertone & Franchi, 2014). Even so, in this case, the family does not typically accept the LGBTQ identity, but instead finds a doctrinal way to allow the individual to continue participating within the family unit (Bertone & Franchi, 2014). As a result, this experience may render significant stress for LGBTQ individuals in these families.

In contrast, families of origin can also provide major sources of support and acceptance to LGBTQ individuals who are coming out. Sustaining positive relationships with families of origin has been associated with healthy romantic relationships and reduced suicidal ideation, as compared with those who

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experience familial rejection (Carnelley, Hepper, Hicks & Turner, 2011; D'Amico et al., 2015). Moreover, LGBTQ persons may find support through sources outside of their families of origin. For example, some research has found that having access to a supportive LGBTQ community has helped sexual minority men integrate their sexual and religious identities more effectively (Shilo & Yossef, 2016). In addition, access to internet communities in particular has been shown to be very beneficial to those attempting to develop a support system as they come to terms with their sexuality. Online resources such as Facebook or blogs can help provide a sense of comradery that may counter the negative influences of an unaccepting religious or family of origin atmosphere (Etengoff & Colette, 2015).

The diversity of factors and responses of families of origin to the coming out experience of LGBTQ individuals brings to light the need for specific research targeting diverse family structures through many cultural lenses. Only recently has work begun on looking at how relationship to the family of origin changes across cultures or in single-parent households (Rothblum, 2014). Given the various perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity, family duty, and other relevant factors that exist across different cultural groups, it is important for researchers going forward to be aware of the limitations in the generalizability of their findings and to ensure that greater diversity is represented in the literature.

SAME-SEX COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

To understand the dynamics of same-sex couples, studies have often been conducted to compare the relationships of lesbian and gay couples with those of heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 2005, 2006). This research has generally yielded few differences among same-sex and heterosexual couples in predictors of relationship quality, commitment, satisfaction, and longevity (Fingerhut & Peplau, 2013; Kurdek, 2006). Similar to the couple relationships of cisgender heterosexual adults, LGBTQ adults experience long-term, healthy romantic relationships characterized by strong emotional attachments (Kurdek, 2005). Indeed, both same- and other-sex couples report comparable feelings of love, trust, attachment security, and satisfaction in their couple relationships; greater relationship satisfaction is linked with longer relationship endurance among all couple types (Fingerhut & Peplau, 2013; Kurdek, 2005). Observations of couple interactions reveal similar patterns, such that same-sex and other-sex couples were virtually indistinguishable in terms of conflict resolution patterns and sharing positive views of their couple relationship (Gottman et al., 2003; Roisman, Clausell, Holland, Fortuna, & Elief, 2008). For same-sex and other-sex couples, relationship quality has been found to be higher when partners manage conflict effectively, perceive greater support for their relationship, espouse patterns of greater equality in their relationship, and are less neurotic (Kurdek, 2004).

The number of sexual minority and heterosexual people that report being in romantic relationships and cohabiting are similar (Carpenter & Gates, 2008; Lippa, 2007). Moreover, sexual minority and heterosexual individuals describe similar characteristics when imagining the “ideal” romantic partner (i.e., having similar values and interests, being dependable, affectionate, etc.), although sexual minority people tend to place less emphasis on parenting ability and religion than do heterosexual people (Fingerhut & Peplau, 2013; Lippa, 2007). Moreover, when partners are similar in their attitudes and backgrounds, all couples (i.e., lesbian, gay, and heterosexual) tend to be more satisfied in their relationships (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006). Interestingly, both gay and heterosexual men underscore the importance of physical attractiveness in a partner, while both lesbian and heterosexual women stress the importance of certain personality traits (Fingerhut & Peplau, 2013; Lippa, 2007).

Unique Dynamics of Same-Sex Couple Relationships

While many dynamics of same-sex couples are similar to those of heterosexual couples, there are also several unique aspects to consider among same-sex couples. In what follows, we describe the role of sexuality, as well as ethnic-racial identity, in influencing same-sex couple relationship dynamics. We also discuss how same-sex couples with and without children tend to divide family labor, the role of open disclosure to others about the relationship, and the impact of legal relationship recognition.

Sexuality

Patterns of sexual frequency and satisfaction have been found to vary among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples. Blumstein and Schwartz's (1983) seminal study revealed that although the association between sexual frequency and satisfaction was nearly identical across couple types, there were stark differences in the frequency of sex among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples. Gay men generally reported the highest frequency, lesbian women the least, and heterosexual couples are intermediate (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010a). Regardless, for all couples, sexual satisfaction is positively associated with overall couple relationship satisfaction, which has been demonstrated among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples with and without children (Farr et al., 2010a; Fingerhut & Peplau, 2013). Another aspect of sexuality found to vary by gender and sexual orientation is sexual exclusivity (i.e., monogamy), particularly among committed romantic partners. Several studies have indicated that lesbian and heterosexual individuals are more likely to endorse monogamy than are gay men (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Solomon, Rothblum, & Balsam, 2005).

Dividing Household Labor

One area in which same-sex couples have been consistently shown to demonstrate distinct couple dynamics from heterosexual couples is in the arena of divisions of family labor. In studies conducted in the US and Netherlands, lesbian and gay couples with and without children are more likely to report sharing household tasks and paid labor more evenly as compared to heterosexual couples (Goldberg, 2013; Jaspers & Verbakel, 2013; Kurdek, 2005; Patterson & Farr, 2011). Among adoptive parenting couples in the US, same-sex couples often report more equal divisions of household and childcare labor (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012). Gay father couples, formed through surrogacy, adoption, and other means, also report egalitarian divisions of housework and childcare (Tornello, Kruczkowski, & Patterson, 2015; Tornello, Sonnenberg, & Patterson, 2015). Indeed, same-sex couples, and perhaps particularly sexual minority women, appear to particularly value egalitarianism in divisions of family labor and decision-making (Goldberg, 2013). Similar to heterosexual couples, however, same-sex couples who report being satisfied with division of labor arrangements also report higher relationship quality (Patterson & Farr, 2011; Tornello, Kruczkowski et al., 2015).

The Role of Ethnic-Racial Identity among Same-Sex Couples

There is a greater proportion of interracial couples among same-sex than other-sex couples (Gates, 2012). Recent estimates indicate that 20.6% of LGBTQ couples are in an interracial relationship compared with

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18.3% of other-sex married couples and 9.5% of other-sex unmarried couples (Gates, 2012). It is unclear whether these figures indicate that there are more racial minority individuals who identify as LGBTQ or whether there is something distinct about being LGBTQ that encourages interracial relationships; future research is needed to address this question. Demographic research has also revealed that same-sex (same-race) African American relationships are affected by greater poverty than both White same-sex and African American other-sex couples (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013). This economic disparity also holds true for Hispanic-identified individuals such that same-sex (same-race) Hispanic couples are affected by greater poverty than both White same-sex and Hispanic other-sex couples (Cianciotto, 2005). These findings indicate that individuals who are both LGBTQ and racial minorities may be disproportionately impacted by legal and economic disparities.

The experiences of ethnic-racial minority individuals who are also LGBTQ are distinct from those who identify as heterosexual, cisgender, or White. For instance, ethnic-racial minority women who identify as LGBTQ are sometimes referred to in the literature as being in “triple jeopardy,” simultaneously oppressed by society through racism, sexism, and heterosexism (Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003). Even though these individuals, who identify as ethnic-racial, sexual, and/or gender minorities, are arguably disproportionately affected by discriminatory legal policies as well as relational or physical victimization (Cahill, Battle, & Meyer, 2003), the data, overall, do not support a linear stacking trend in terms of how identities influence outcomes (Bowleg, 2008; Bowleg et al., 2003; Jeong & Horne, 2009; Rosenthal & Starks, 2015; Totenhagen, Butler, & Ridley, 2011). Thus, it is likely inappropriate to assume that the addition of two or more minority identities will produce a linear trend in terms of positive or negative outcomes for any individual; rather, our social identities are intersectional (Bowleg, 2008).

One of the possibilities as to why the existence of a “triple jeopardy” (Bowleg et al., 2003) does not translate to disproportionately greater negative outcomes is that the overall amount, as well as the variety of sources, of stigma experienced by individuals that identify as both ethnic-racial and sexual minorities remains comparable to that experienced by individuals with “single” minority identities (Rosenthal & Starks, 2015). It is important to note, however, that this does not necessarily mean the lived experiences of these groups are the same. Another possibility explaining the lack of disproportionate outcomes is the resilience that QPOC, as well as White sexual minorities, display in response to stressors in their life. One source of resilience for these groups may come through families of choice (Oswald, 2002; Weston, 1991). Through chosen family, other QPOC understand the unique struggles that may occur to them and, as a result, are more supportive of one another.

In contending with stigma, we know from initial research that interracial same-sex couples are likely to use coping strategies that rely on seeking support, meaning-making, humor, active-problem solving, or avoidance (Rostosky, Riggle, Savage, Roberts, & Singletary, 2008). In conjunction with these specific coping strategies, same-sex interracial couples are likely to rely on one another, as many couples are, when stressors are experienced. Individuals in same-sex interracial couples may experience stressors related to ethnic-racial identity and/or sexual orientation, but the effects of these stressors may be buffered by being able to rely on their partner for support (e.g., direct care, venting frustrations, etc.; Totenhagen et al., 2011). It is important to note, however, that these dynamics of same-sex interracial relationships are likely dependent on whether or not relationship satisfaction is high for both members of the couples, as individuals who are not satisfied with their relationship are probably unlikely to rely as heavily on their partners for support (Totenhagen et al., 2011).

Disclosure and Couple Discrepancies in Being “Out”

Coming out to others is a unique and often difficult task that faces LGBTQ persons not only as a one-time event (i.e., revealing to others for the first time that one is LGBTQ), but countless times across the lifespan. LGBTQ individuals employ a variety of strategies in deciding to whom, when, and under what circumstances they will disclose to others their sexual or gender minority identity (Troiden, 1989). In couple relationships, partners may be congruent or discrepant in their levels of “outness” (i.e., to how many and in what settings the LGBTQ person has come out) to others, and discrepancies in outness can sometimes be problematic. For instance, Jordan and Deluty (2000), in their study of 300 lesbians in committed romantic relationships, found that women were more satisfied in their relationships when their partners openly disclosed their sexual orientation and there were not discrepancies between partners in disclosure. Knoble and Linville (2012) also note that while outness among same-gender partners may be associated with relationship quality, it is not singularly a determinant of satisfaction. Indeed, Todosijevic, Rothblum, and Solomon (2005) found that among male and female same-sex couples, outness was not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. Regardless, LGBTQ people in couple relationships are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation than single LGBTQ people, and this greater level of disclosure is associated with having broader social networks, including with family (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Emler, Muraco, & Erosheva, 2011).

Relationships with the family of origin are not stagnant after one comes out, but instead tend to evolve as one grows older. Just as is often the case with relationships among heterosexual children and their families, LGBTQ individuals tend to find that their relationships with their families of origin change significantly as they begin to develop a family unit of their own (Oswald, 2002). In some cases, relationship changes may be the result of social capital (e.g., legal recognition, social status) provided by the institution of marriage. The marriage of a LGBTQ family member has a tendency to be a force for family relationships, either tempering them into a stronger form, or harming them under further stress (Ocobock, 2013). Once a same-sex couple becomes married, their relationship may carry a greater legitimacy in the eyes of their family members, which could allay some critiques. Demonstrating the commitment associated with marriage can also provide a context for some family members that do not understand the relationship (Ocobock, 2013). In any case, marriage is important to many LGBTQ couples seeking to legitimize their relationship in the eyes of their family or the public (Rothblum, 2014).

Marriage Equality

Up until the marriage equality decision by the Supreme Court in June 2015, same-sex couples were not afforded comparable legal relationship recognition benefits as were married heterosexual couples. Gallup polls from March 2015 suggest that at least 40% of same-sex couples are now married. While some research has indicated that same-sex couple relationships have shorter longevity and stability than heterosexual couple relationships (Kurdek, 2004), other research has revealed that when afforded legal relationship recognition, same-sex couple relationships are more enduring (Balsam, Beauchaine, Rothblum, & Solomon, 2008; Rosenfeld, 2014). Indeed, more recent studies demonstrate that relationship dissolution rates are comparable among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples, especially among those couples who are married or report “marriage-like” relationships (Goldberg & Garcia, 2015; Manning, Brown, & Stykes, 2016; Rosenfeld, 2014).

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In terms of outcomes for same-sex couples, past research has established that marriage bans, and the passing of marriage amendments barring same-sex couples from marriage have been associated with higher levels of psychological distress (i.e., symptoms of depression, affective stress, etc.), minority stress (i.e., negative advertisements or conversations specifically aimed at a minority identity), and anxiety among sexual minority individuals (Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009; Tatum, 2016). On the flip side, past research also indicated that same-sex couples in a legally recognized committed relationship report less internalized homophobia, fewer depressive symptoms and higher individual well-being (i.e., having meaning in life; Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010). Given the positive mental and emotional benefits of being in a legally recognized relationship, as well as the added economic and healthcare-related benefits, it is likely that the Supreme Court ruling will benefit many same-sex couples living in states that did not afford same-sex marriage rights previously. It is also possible that these benefits for same-sex couples will have positive trickle-down effects for children with LGBTQ parents, as well as LGBTQ adolescents and young adults who may now envision greater possibilities for marriage in the future. No research, however, has yet been published with a sample collected after the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling.

LGBTQ PARENTING

It is normative for LGBTQ people to have desires to become parents, since parenthood is perceived as a universal developmental milestone during adulthood (Riskind & Patterson, 2010). LGBTQ adults become parents through a variety of pathways, including adoption and fostering, coparenting arrangements, donor insemination, surrogacy, other reproductive technologies, and/or via a prior heterosexual relationship. In what follows, we describe outcomes for children and parents in LGBTQ parent families, as well as unique dynamics characterizing LGBTQ parent families.

Outcomes for Children and Parents in LGBTQ Parent Families

The literature regarding outcomes among members of LGBTQ parent families now spans over 30 years of research conducted in the US and in many other countries worldwide. This literature, although largely focused on lesbian and gay parent families, demonstrates a clear consensus that both children and parents in these families show similar outcomes to those in families headed by heterosexual adults (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013). Children with LGBTQ parents develop in ways that are typical, healthy, and on par with the development of children with heterosexual parents. Across a variety of measures such as emotional and cognitive functioning, gender role behavior, or behavioral adjustment, no group level differences have been found to the detriment of the children when comparing the outcomes of those with lesbian and gay parents to children with heterosexual parents (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010b; Wainright & Patterson, 2008; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

Although largely exploratory, there is some research that has been conducted on bisexual parents (Power et al., 2012). This research suggests that, although similar to lesbian and gay parents, bisexual parents represent another unique parenting structure that is not yet well understood. For instance, conversations of disclosure among bisexual parents may be more polarizing and distinct than those family conversations among parents who are lesbian and gay, specifically because conversations around parental sexual identity may require further explanation (e.g., as compared to a child understanding the concept

of having two mothers or two fathers; Farr, Crain, Oakley, Cashen, & Garber, 2016; Power et al., 2012). In the study by Power and colleagues, individuals described parenting as being a continual negotiation between all individuals with a parenting relationship to the child, including current and ex-partners as well as coparents. Thus, dynamics among bisexual parent families are likely distinct from other sexual and gender minority parent families and are deserving of further study. Lastly, although little research has been conducted on transgender parents, particularly addressing long-term outcomes for their children, what data have been collected suggest no negative outcomes for children, consistent with the broader literature on LGB parent families (Downing, 2013; Stotzer et al., 2014). Similar to bisexual parents, issues surrounding disclosure of gender minority status likely occurs for transgender and gender non-conforming parents as well.

The transition to parenthood for LGBTQ adults also represents a potential time of change in relationships with families of origin (Oswald, 2002). For instance, some gay men have found that after adopting children of their own, their relationships with family improve (Wells, 2011). Moreover, research has shown that children with lesbian and heterosexual parents are equally likely to have contact with grandparents (Fulcher, Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 2002). Extended family members, frequently grandparents, become interested in children's upbringing, which can reinvigorate familial ties that have previously fallen by the wayside (Almack, 2008; Tornello & Patterson, 2015). In other cases, the strengthening of connections could be driven in the other direction, with the estranged individual reaching back to the larger family unit. This could be driven by the desire to have a connection to someone who has already experienced the challenges of childrearing and could provide assistance, or out of a desire to provide the child with a broader familial support network (Wells, 2011).

Research examining parenting abilities among LGBTQ and heterosexual adults clearly demonstrates comparable capacities to be effective parents (Farr et al., 2010b; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg, 2010; Patterson & Farr, 2011). For instance, parenting stress levels do not appear to differ among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents (Farr et al., 2010b; Goldberg, 2010). While some differences have been observed in coparenting behaviors among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples, supportive coparenting tends to be more common than undermining coparenting among all couple types (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Lesbian and gay parents report positive family functioning and demonstrate relatively great warmth toward their children (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013). Compared with research on lesbian mothers, research on gay fathers has been relatively sparse. Existing research about gay fathers, however, indicates that gay fathers may be warmer and more responsive to the needs of their children as compared to heterosexual fathers (Golombok et al., 2014). Further, gay fathers are even less likely to enact corporal punishment on their children than either lesbian mothers or heterosexual parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). It has been suggested that one of the reasons that gay fathers may appear especially nurturing is a possibly higher level of commitment to their children. Unlike lesbian mothers and heterosexual parents, there are significantly fewer avenues in which gay fathers may have children, and as such, choosing to raise a child may indicate a high level of commitment that is unexpected among other men (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Stacey, 2006).

When differences have been uncovered between children with LGBTQ versus heterosexual parents, effects have generally been small and often have favored the children of lesbian and gay parents (Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterøy, 2002; Bergman, Rubio, Green & Padrón, 2010; Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013). For instance, lesbian mothers tend to play with their children more often, score higher on awareness tests of their children's needs, are less likely to use corporal punishment, are less likely to elicit or encourage strict gender norms for their children, and typi-

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cally have warmer and more communicative relationships with their children as compared to heterosexual parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). When specifically comparing lesbian mothers who are not biologically related to their children (i.e., “social mothers”) with heterosexual fathers, these women have been found to show higher emotional involvement, parental concern, and respect for children’s autonomy (Bos et al., 2007). Taken together, these findings indicating that lesbian and gay parents tend to be more responsive and warm to their children, less likely to use physical punishment, and are generally more supportive early in life as compared to heterosexual parents, suggesting that children with lesbian and gay parents might derive particular benefits from these parenting behaviors as they grow older (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). It may be the case that other negative experiences that children with LGBTQ parents face, such as teasing due to their family structure (Farr et al., 2016), are buffered by the overwhelming support from their parents. Indeed, some evidence suggests that lesbian and gay parents are likely to socialize their children in such a way as to prepare them for experiencing stigma, similar to processes of ethnic-racial and cultural socialization among ethnic minority parent families (Oakley, Farr, & Scherer, 2016).

Overall, research suggests that it may be family processes, including the ways in which parents interact with and raise their children, that more strongly influence childhood outcomes than does family structure, namely families headed by same-sex versus other-sex parents (Farr et al., 2010b; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Lamb, 2012). Few group-level differences have been found in childhood outcomes between same-sex versus other-sex parent families (Anderssen et al., 2002), and when negative group differences have occurred, they appear to largely be a result of other processes, such as number of major transitions in a child’s life, rather than familial structure (Potter, 2012), or other common confounding variables such as income or age (Kurdek, 2004; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013).

Experiences Unique to LGBTQ Parent Families

Stigma and Discrimination

LGBTQ adults are faced with many important decisions, as well as challenges, in becoming and being parents (Farr & Tornello, 2016). As individuals and in their family relationships, LGBTQ people experience discrimination. In forming their families through donor insemination and/or adoption, prospective lesbian and gay parents report fears of or actually facing discrimination, and they also report worries about raising children in a heteronormative society that stigmatizes LGBTQ identities (Gartrell et al., 1996; Gianino, 2008; Goldberg, 2006). Indeed, these concerns are not unwarranted; a recent study indicated that heterosexual health care providers demonstrate unconscious bias toward sexual minority people as compared with heterosexual people (Sabin, Riskind, & Nosek, 2015). Although children with LGBTQ parents are observed to have comparable psychological adjustment to children with heterosexual parents, children with LGBTQ parents may encounter discrimination and stigma on the basis of their parents’ sexual orientation or gender identity. Research has shown that stigma is related to worse physical and mental health among children in same-sex parent families (Crouch et al., 2015; Crouch, Waters, McNair, Power, & Davis, 2014). Family compatibility may help to buffer these negative experiences of stigma, and “gay-friendly” social climates appear to be positive for the well-being of heterosexual adult children with LGBT parents (Bos & Gartrell, 2010; Lick, Tornello, Riskind, Schmidt, & Patterson, 2012).

Multiracial LGBTQ Parent Families

Similar to research conducted on same-sex interracial relationships, very little attention has been paid to multiracial same-sex families (Cahill et al., 2003). Of the studies conducted in this area, many have focused on transracial adoption among same-sex parent households (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007; Farr & Patterson, 2009; Goldberg, 2009; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007; Samuels, 2009). The literature regarding both heterosexual parent multiracial families (Schlabach, 2013), as well as heterosexual parent transracial adoption households (Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008; Lorenzo-Blanco, Bares, & Delva, 2013), in conjunction with what is known about LGBTQ parent families (Farr & Patterson, 2009; Gates, 2011a, 2012; Goldberg, 2009; Morris et al., 2002; Oakley et al., 2016) may help to provide some initial understanding about the unique dynamics of multiracial same-sex families.

As transracial adoptees are children who are adopted across ethnic-racial lines, by definition, all families with a transracial adoptee are also multiracial families. From the limited research available, it appears that households headed by same-sex parents are significantly more likely to transracially adopted children than are other-sex households (Farr & Patterson, 2009). One explanation for this discrepancy may relate to parents' motivations to adopt children. Parents who have reasons that are more parent-centered (i.e., fertility issues) as opposed to child-centered (i.e., understanding that there are many children in need of families, not wanting to be pregnant, or not having a strong biological attachment) are more likely to adopt within race or ethnicity than transracially—among both same-sex and other-sex parents (Farr & Patterson, 2009). Lesbian and gay parents, however, may be more likely to have child-centered (vs. parent-centered) reasons for adoption as compared with heterosexual parents. Another proposed explanation for greater numbers of transracial adoptions among same-sex versus other-sex parents is related to having a minority identity. For example, research suggests that lesbian mothers are intimately aware of the fact that they are part of a marginalized group, and as a result, they may be more open to the idea of transracial adoption (Goldberg, 2009).

Generally speaking, the majority of transracial adoptees do well compared to children who are not adopted; for instance, transracial adoptees are equally well-adjusted, in terms of self-esteem, as are their same-race counterparts (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). In addition, with regard to internalizing and externalizing behaviors, transracially adopted children seem to fare equally as well as do their same-race counterparts, including among families headed by lesbian and gay parents—that is, no differences have been found between transracial adoptees and same-race adoptees in terms of self-esteem, as well as negative internalizing or externalizing behaviors (Farr & Patterson, 2009; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2007). In a study highlighting the perspectives of adult transracial adoptees, Samuels (2009) asked participants about their experiences growing up, particularly what it was like to live with parents whose ethnicity or race did not match their own. One common narrative from these interviews was that White parents typically encouraged a “color-blind” approach to parenting and did not appear to understand their transracially adopted children’s lived experience as someone of color in the US. Recent evidence indicates that while some LGBTQ parents may engage in a “color-blind” approach with their transracially adopted children, it appears more likely that many lesbian and gay parents take a proactive role in socializing their children around issues of ethnic-racial identity, as well as adoption and family structure (Goldberg & Smith, 2016; Goldberg, Sweeney, Black, & Moyer, 2016; Oakley et al., 2016).

From the literature regarding heterosexual parent multiracial families, there is some evidence that multiracial adolescents whose mothers are of color and whose fathers are White experience higher levels of negative social consequences (i.e., lower social and emotional well-being) as compared to multiracial

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adolescents where the ethnic-racial makeup of their parents is reversed (Schlabach, 2013). This begs the question then as to whether or not multiracial children of interracial lesbian or gay couples experience higher (or lower) levels of criticism as compared to children with same-race same-sex parents. Given that many LGBTQ individuals are likely to be ethnic-racial minorities (Gates, 2012), and these individuals are more likely to be raising children (often from previous heterosexual relationships) than their White counterparts (Gates, 2011b; Morris et al., 2002), it is important to understand whether or not children may receive more criticism based on their multiracial identity and being part of a same-sex parent family. Attempting to disentangle how children of color with same-sex parents experience both heterosexism and racism is relevant to intervention and prevention efforts against stigma and discrimination (D'Souza, 2010).

Research with ethnic-racial minority families headed by heterosexual parents indicates that multiracial families often struggle with and must negotiate how to socialize their children given the parents' mixed cultural backgrounds (Caballero et al., 2008; Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2013). Little is known, however, about how LGBTQ parents in multiracial families navigate cultural differences, and whether or not engaging in additional cultural socialization around having sexual minority parents influences these negotiations (Goldberg, 2009; Goldberg & Smith, 2016; Goldberg et al., 2016; Oakley et al., 2016). The dynamics of various forms of socialization efforts by LGBTQ parents and the impact on children are an interesting area for future research on QPOC who are also parents.

CONCLUSION

A growing body of research now addresses the relationships of LGBTQ individuals, including relationships with families of origin, same-sex couple relationships, and parenting relationships with their own children. As a result, much has been revealed about the unique strengths and challenges characterizing LGBTQ relationships. Future research will extend the literature and our understanding of contemporary family relationships if more diverse samples are studied, particularly underrepresented populations such as bisexual, transgender, and other gender diverse groups. Greater attention to intersectionality and the ways in which various identities (e.g., age, class, race, ethnicity, ability, religion, etc.) influence experiences will more adequately address the diversity of life experiences represented among LGBTQ relationships. More extensive and rigorous study, including longitudinal research, incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods, and utilizing representative, population-based data collection, has the potential to yield more expansive knowledge about LGBTQ relationships. As such, examining the lives and relationships of gender and sexual minority people not only offers promise for meeting the needs of LGBTQ people in the future, but also contributes to our wider understanding of the function and dynamics of all human relationships.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Cisgender: Individuals who identify with the same gender with which they were assigned at birth.

Coming Out: The process of acknowledgement and disclosure of one’s sexual or gender minority identity.

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Families of Choice: Phrase used to describe the network of close contacts developed by choice over the lifespan, which can include, but is not limited to, significant others, close friends, and adopted children. The phrase is often used to differentiate this group from the family of origin.

Families of Origin: Phrase that describes the family to which one is born (or sometimes adopted), including not only the immediate nuclear family, but also to the extended family of aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.

Gender Minority: Term that refers to any individual, including transgender and gender diverse persons, whose gender expression and/or identity differ from their assigned biological sex or do not exclusively fit within the male/female binary.

LGBTQ: Inclusive acronym used to refer to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer / questioning identity.

Queer: A term used in academic and social circles to be inclusive of all sexual and gender minority individuals. Beginning in the 1980s this word started to be reclaimed by individuals within the LGBTQ community to remove its historical connotations as a slur. Not everyone, however, is comfortable with its use. Similar to other words that have been reclaimed by minority groups, it should be used with caution and care, particularly if the individual using it is not a part of the broader LGBTQ community.

Sexual Minority: Term that refers to individuals whose romantic and sexual identities, attractions, behaviors, relationships and/or desires are non-heterosexual in nature and are not exclusively oriented toward the other sex. Sexual minority includes reference to lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (LGBQ) and any other non-heterosexual identities.

Transgender: Term describing individuals who have a different gender identity than the one assigned at birth.

Transracial Adoption: Families in which at least one parent is of a different race than the child adopted into that family (typically, when White parents adopt children of color).

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The phrase same-gender is often preferred over same-sex because of the biological connotations implied with the phrase same-sex. However, because research in the field has primarily used biological definitions as a way of categorizing and sorting individuals into these groups for design purposes, we generally use the term, same-sex. In the future, use of the phrase, same-gender, should be considered for greater inclusivity among sexual and gender minorities.
- ² The term, “other-sex” is used to describe couples in which partners have gender identities that are distinct from one another; this phrase is preferred over “opposite-sex” or “different-sex” such as to avoid assumptions that gender identities such as male and female are opposite or different from one another.
- ³ Race is often construed as representing an individual’s biological or genetic makeup. At the same time, ethnicity is commonly thought of being more culturally bound. Although both of these terms are distinct, they are often used interchangeably in the literature and in popular culture. More recently, the terms have been hyphenated together, “ethnic-racial identity,” to be inclusive of both notions. For this reason, we have generally used this hyphenated term as well (Hughes, Watford, & Del Toro, 2016).
- ⁴ We use LGB when no data are available for Q or T identities.

- ⁵ The term Latinx (pronounced “La-TEEN-ex”) – is an alternative to the traditional terms Latino/a, and Latin@ as a way to broadly describe people of Latin American descent with inclusive and gender-neutral language (Padilla, 2016; Scharrón-Del Río & Aja, 2015).