How Do LGBTQ+ Parents Raise Well-Adjusted, Resilient, and Thriving Children?

Rachel H. Farr[1] iD**, Samantha L. Tornello**[2]**, and Sharon S. Rostosky**[3]

[1]Department of Psychology, University of Kentucky; [2]Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University; and [3]Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology, University of Kentucky

Abstract
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) parents raise well-adjusted children. How do they accomplish this feat despite stigma and discrimination? Psychological scholarship (often based in the United States and other Westernized countries) has typically used atheoretical, deficit models based on biased assumptions to compare the outcomes of children of LGBTQ+ parents and children of cisgender heterosexual parents. However, research on processes and socialization within LGBTQ+-parent families suggests that LGBTQ+ parents demonstrate flexibility, creativity, and intentionality, which are associated with children's positive outcomes and resilience. We recommend moving from deficits-based, comparative approaches to intersectional, queer-theory-based, and strengths-based alternatives. We argue that this conceptual shift will generate new questions and thus new knowledge about the unique strengths of LGBTQ+ parenting that positively influence children's development. Such findings may provide insights about parenting practices and ways to support effective parenting that could benefit all children and families.

Keywords
family socialization, intersectionality, LGBTQ+ parents and children, queer theory, resilience

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) adults engage in effective parenting, and their children show similar, as well as uniquely beneficial, outcomes, compared with children who have cisgender hetero-sexual (cis-het) parents (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020; Patterson et al., 2021). (See Table 1 for a glossary of the specific terms used in this article.) Even so, LGBTQ+ people in the United States and worldwide who wish to become parents face considerable stigma and discrimination at interpersonal and institutional levels, including health-care barriers and few legal protections (APA, 2020; National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2020). Stigma and discrimination are chronic stressors (Brooks, 1981) that explain psychosocial and health disparities that disadvantage LGBTQ+ adults relative to their cis-het peers (NASEM, 2020). These disparities, however, do not show up when children of LGBTQ+ parents are compared with the children of cis-het parents, a finding

consistently and repeatedly documented in the research, which has primarily been conducted in the United States and other Westernized countries, such as Australia, Israel, Italy, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (APA, 2020; Goldberg & Allen, 2020). Psychological research in this area often has been atheoretical and based on biased assumptions (Fish & Russell, 2018), but we describe several expansive frameworks that can be used to move beyond previous assumptions and instead synthesize existing research in a novel way to explain how LGBTQ+ parents raise well-adjusted, thriving, resilient children amidst numerous inequalities. These frameworks can also support new lines of inquiry about strengths and resiliencies, and we propose using these frameworks in future research to address current

Corresponding Author:
Rachel H. Farr, Department of Psychology, University of Kentucky
Email: rachel.farr@uky.edu

Table 1. Glossary of Terms Used in This Article

Term	Definition
Bionormativity	A term describing cultural attitudes and norms in which superiority is placed on biological ties (Farr & Vázquez, 2020)
Chosen family	A group of individuals with close ties not based on biological relatedness (Goldberg & Allen, 2020)
Cisgender	An identity descriptor for individuals who feel that their gender aligns with their sex assigned at birth; a common colloquial term is "cis" (Patterson et al., 2021)
Cisnormativity	An emphasis on prescribed gender roles that follow a rigid binary distinction between women and men (McGuire et al., 2016)
Gender expansive	A term referring to gender identities and expressions that go beyond cisnormative notions and include transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, and additional gender-diverse identities (Goldberg & Allen, 2020)
Gender minority	A term referring to individuals who identify as transgender or nonbinary, or who view themselves in other gender-expansive ways (Patterson et al., 2021)
Hegemonic heteronormativity	Assumptions of heterosexual identities and partnerships as the natural defaults; "hegemonic" refers to the dominance of one group, behavior, practice, or identity over another in cultural, social, structural, political, and institutional realms (Allen & Mendez, 2018)
Intersectionality	An analytic framework in which individuals' experiences (particularly of advantage or disadvantage) are viewed as created by the combination of their multiple social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class; Crenshaw, 1989); this perspective emphasizes that persons must be understood in their complexity rather than as a sum of individual identities
LGBTQ+	An acronym referring to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer or who have other sexual- or gender-minority identities; the plus sign represents and acknowledges those additional identities, to encompass new and emerging identity terms (Patterson et al., 2021)
Nonbinary	An identity term for individuals who do not feel that they fit within traditional gender binaries of female and male; a nonbinary person may see themselves in fluid ways as both female and male, as part female and part male, or as neither (Patterson et al., 2021)
Plurisexual	An identity term for individuals who are romantically or sexually attracted to multiple genders; plurisexual individuals may have bisexual, queer, pansexual, or other identities (Goldberg & Allen, 2020)
Queer	An identity term and an inclusive umbrella term for LGBTQ+ people (Goldberg & Allen, 2020); originally derogatory, the term "queer" has been reclaimed by many LGBTQ+ people (Patterson et al., 2021)
Queer family theory	A conceptual framework that emphasizes the importance of intersections of gender and sexuality (as well as other identities), and avoidance of cis- and heteronormativity as defaults, in understanding individual lived experiences, particularly in realms of parenting and family life (Goldberg & Allen, 2020)
Sexual minority	An identity term referring to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, or asexual and/or who identify their sexual orientation using additional terms beyond heteronormative notions (Patterson et al., 2021)
Transgender	An identity descriptor for individuals who feel that their gender is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth; a common colloquial term is "trans" (Patterson et al., 2021)

gaps in knowledge about specific processes and practices that facilitate positive outcomes for children with LGBTQ+ parents, and likely would translate to all children and parents.

Moving Beyond Cis-Het Normativity to Understand LGBTQ+-Parent Families

Regardless of parental sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE), the same processes (e.g., effective coping with stress, high relationship quality) predict positive adjustment among children across developmental domains, ages, and family-formation pathways (Patterson et al., 2021). Yet existing literature has been limited by implicit assumptions that cis-het parents are the ideal with which LGBTQ+ parents should be compared (Fish & Russell, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). This deficits-oriented, comparison-based approach (e.g., do children with LGBTQ+ parents have more behavior problems than those with cis-het parents?) has produced a body of research used to argue that LGBTQ+ parents are "as good as" cis-het parent families and therefore worthy of legal recognition, an argument prominent in the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 marriage-equality decision (i.e., *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015; APA, 2020). When differences in child outcomes are reported, the interpretation is often negative. For instance, the finding that children with LGBTQ+

parents may be more likely than children with cis-het parents to explore their own SOGIE or identify as LGBTQ+ (Goldberg & Allen, 2020) is interpreted as a negative outcome. In a society without anti-LGBTQ+ prejudice and stigma, arriving at one's own gender or sexual identity through autonomous exploration, rather than rigid socialization devoid of agency or choice, might be seen as a beneficial and preferable process for all youth, whether they (or their parents) identify as LGBTQ+ or cis-het (Kuvalanka et al., 2018). Failing to consider social contexts of stigma that LGBTQ+-parent families experience and then using cis-het-parent families as the normative comparison group perpetuates a biased perspective in social science, policy, and practice (NASEM, 2020).

Children with LGBTQ+ parents do report distinct negative experiences, such as stigma-related teasing and bullying (Carone et al., 2022; Koh et al., 2019; NASEM, 2020). Many of their experiences, however, are also positive, as they involve or confer unique benefits or skills that cultivate resiliencies (Fish & Russell, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). Growing scholarship about the unique strengths of LGBTQ+ parenting and how the children of LGBTQ+ parents thrive in stigmatizing social contexts underscores why the field must move beyond the false narrative that cis-het-parent families are the normative "gold-standard" with which all families should be compared (Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). Strengths of LGBTQ+ parents and their children, which we describe here, will remain hidden if not conceptualized and studied directly.

Integrating (New) Theories in Studying LGBTQ+-Parent Families

Rather than being driven by theory, research on LGBTQ+-parent families has primarily responded to questions of public debate (Fish & Russell, 2018; although see Goldberg & Allen, 2020, for examples of studies grounded in, e.g., ecological, stress, and family-systems perspectives). Thus, we highlight a constellation of queer family theories, conceptual models that decenter hegemonic heteronormativity (particularly in realms of parenting and family life; Allen & Mendez, 2018) and, rather, focus on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), strengths, and resiliencies. Queer family theorists and scholars, such as Battle and Ashley (2008), offer strategies for incorporating intersectionality in studying the diversity of LGBTQ+-parent families. Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) articulated a conceptual model of queer family resilience to promote understanding of unique strengths of LGBTQ+-parent families (e.g., flexibility, adaptability) that allow for healthy functioning despite stigma and discrimination.

Research on LGBTQ+-parent families could be enriched by more extensive integration of these existing conceptual frameworks. For instance, Allen and Mendez (2018) put forward the framework of hegemonic heteronormativity (noted above) to describe how "family" tends to be defined (and, therefore, who and what society privileges) and then offered an expanded, inclusive reconceptualization of "family." McGuire and colleagues (2016) proposed transfamily theory to move past cisnormativity in describing how families "do" gender. In this theory, "gender" is conceptualized as a verb rather than a noun to emphasize that people perform or enact gender (in contrast to it being a static identity). Transfamily theory underscores how gender is challenged and expanded for all family members when one member comes out as transgender, nonbinary, or another gender minority.

From these queer family theories emerge new questions about how LGBTQ+ families' diverse strengths and resiliencies might contribute to children's outcomes. Queer family frameworks will help address critical gaps and create new understandings of families about which relatively little is known, including families whose members have gender-expansive and plurisexual identities and multiple-partner families, and will promote better understanding of how intersections of race, ethnicity, geography, class, ability, family-formation pathways, and religion affect families (Battle & Ashley, 2008; Goldberg & Allen, 2020). Also, social science research about LGBTQ+-parent families has focused primarily on the experiences of lesbian mothers (and, to some extent, gay fathers), who tend to be White and middle to upper class and to live in urban areas (often in the United States; APA, 2020; Fish & Russell, 2018). Thus, much remains to be understood about the actual diversity of LGBTQ+-parent families, who, at least in the United States, are proportionately more likely to be people of color with lower incomes and to live in the South and Midwest (Patterson et al., 2021). A more comprehensive understanding of LGBTQ+-parent families will allow society to better support and affirm all families. Next, using lenses of queer family theories (Allen & Mendez, 2018; McGuire et al., 2016) and strengths-based perspectives, we review findings of research studies about unique, distinctive, intentional, and identity-based processes within LGBTQ+-parent families that are linked to children's positive outcomes. We provide a summary of exemplar studies highlighting these themes in Tables 2 and 3.

"Doing Family"

LGBTQ+ people, directly or indirectly, often resist cultural expectations for how to "do family." When viewed as a static object, "family" remains tethered to traditional

Table 2. Exemplar Studies Illustrating Parenting Strengths of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) Individuals

Parenting strength	Exemplar study	Key points	Study strengths
"Doing family"	Manley et al., (2018, as cited in Goldberg & Allen, 2020)	• 29 plurisexual women with different-sex partners were interviewed on four occasions, during late pregnancy and three times after giving birth • Women engaged the LGBTQ+ community as a source of support when transitioning to parenthood • Women expressed deep desire for their children to establish connections in the LGBTQ+ community	• Underrepresented sample (i.e., plurisexual women) • Longitudinal qualitative methods
Egalitarian division of labor	Tornello (2020)	• 163 transgender and nonbinary parents responded to an online survey • Parents desired and reported having an egalitarian division of household and child-care labor • Parents who reported performing more child-care tasks than their partners also reported fewer hours of paid employment and having a genetic relationship to the child	• Underrepresented sample (i.e., gender-minority parents)
Positive parenting, high-quality coparenting, social support	Green et al. (2019, as cited in Patterson et al., 2021)	• 68 gay fathers with young children (ages 3–10 years) who were conceived through surrogacy reported on measures of parenting, partner and coparent relationships, coparenting, social support, and child adjustment • Gay fathers with more effective parenting styles and more positive couple interactions, as well as more social support from friends, had children with better psychological functioning • Gay fathers who experienced fewer microaggressions reported better-quality coparenting, greater support from family and friends, and less anger and aggression from their partners	• Sample reflecting an underrepresented pathway to parenthood (i.e., surrogacy among cisgender gay fathers)
Ensuring emotional and practical security	Crouch et al. (2017, as cited in Goldberg & Allen, 2020)	• 6 families were interviewed in their homes (5 same-sex couples, 1 single mother who previously had a same-sex partner) • Parents described strategies for building stigma-related resilience, including fostering children's positive self-views through understanding diversity, facilitating parent-child and family communication, and encouraging reliance on multiple family supports, use of role models, and engagement in accepting environments	• Australian sample • Qualitative methods
Collaborative coparenting after relationship dissolution	Goldberg et al. (2015, as cited in Goldberg & Allen, 2020)	• 190 adoptive-parent families participated in a longitudinal study • 7 lesbian, 1 gay, and 6 heterosexual couples had separated during the first 5 years of parenthood • The majority of lesbian women described a cordial relationship following separation and improved coparenting through creative collaboration • Coparenting dynamics were collaborative and egalitarian	• Longitudinal study • Qualitative methods
Affirmation of gender identity, gender expression, and racial diversity	Goldberg et al. (2015, as cited in Goldberg & Allen, 2020)	• 82 adoptive parents (41 couples: 15 lesbian, 15 gay, 11 heterosexual) were interviewed about how they talk about social identities in their families • Same-sex couples were more likely to talk with their children about being adopted, as well as about being a multiracial family (if applicable) and having LGBTQ+ parents • Same-sex parents were more likely to communicate with their transracially adopted children about issues of race, racial identity, and racism • Same-sex parents were particularly likely to affirm sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and racial diversity by seeking communities that reflected their children's and family's identities	• Longitudinal study • Qualitative methods • Examination of multiple types of identity-based socialization

Table 2. *(continued)*

Parenting strength	Exemplar study	Key points	Study strengths
Flexible gender roles	Sumontha et al. (2017, as cited in APA, 2020)	• 172 adoptive parents (44 lesbian, 52 gay, 76 heterosexual) and their young children (mean age = 8 years) completed questionnaires about their gender-related attitudes and behaviors • Daughters of same-sex parents reported less rigidity in their gender-related attitudes, compared with daughters of different-sex parents (although gender self-expression did not differ by family type) • Lesbian mothers reported particularly flexible gender-role behavior and attitudes	• Longitudinal study • Analysis of both parents' and children's reports • Assessment of multiple dimensions of gender attitudes and behavior
Flexible gender expression and labeling	Riskind & Tornello (2022)	• 64 transgender and nonbinary parents of young children (ages 1½–6 years) completed surveys about their child's gender expression and identity • Parents allowed their children to self-identify their gender, taking a child-led developmental approach • Parents reported typical gender expression and development, although boys were perceived as more flexible than girls in their gender expression	• Underrepresented sample (i.e., gender-minority parents) • Incorporation of transfamily theory
Expansive gender socialization	Kuvalanka et al. (2018)	• 8 sexual-minority mothers raising gender-minority children (ages 6–11 years) participated in semistructured interviews • Mothers described being open to variations in gender expression (rather than having rigid expectations), which allowed the children to develop positive identities and ultimately arrive at their own gender or sexual identity through autonomous exploration	• Underrepresented sample (i.e., sexual-minority mothers with gender-minority children) • Incorporation of transfamily theory • Qualitative methods
Family flexibility, open communication, and family unity related to gender identity	Dierckx et al. (2017, as cited in APA, 2020)	• Qualitative interviews with 13 children and 15 parents (7 transgender) from 9 families (each with at least one transgender parent) explored protective family processes during a parent's transition • Families exhibited a high level of cohesiveness (or unity), which was related to open and honest communication, meaning making, and support and flexibility for all family members • Challenges were noted as difficult, but participants were grateful for the opportunity to learn new skills and have new life experiences	• Underrepresented sample (i.e., gender-minority parents) • Family resilience framework • Qualitative methods
Thoughtful engagement with religious discourse	Rostosky et al. (2016, as cited in Goldberg & Allen, 2020)	• 75 LGBTQ+ parents completed an online qualitative survey regarding how their parenting was influenced by their religious and/or spiritual identities • Parents engaged with religion and/or spirituality to instill beliefs, pride, a sense of community, and belongingness • Parents cultivated religious and spiritual dialogue with their children to promote critical thinking and informed decision making • Parents engaged their children in religious and spiritual activities (i.e., communication about these topics, attendance at church events and workshop services) in the context of acknowledging LGBTQ+-related stigma and discrimination their family might experience	• Underrepresented sample (i.e., diverse LGBTQ+ identities) • Intersectionality framework (religious, spiritual, and LGBTQ+ identities) • Qualitative methods

Note: This table is not intended as a comprehensive or systematic literature review. Rather, each listed study is offered as an illustration of LGBTQ+-parent family research that incorporated queer family theories, intersectionality frameworks, and/or strengths-based conceptual or methodological approaches. As possible, we included studies that were relatively recent (i.e., conducted within the past 10 years), were published in psychology or family science journals, and represented a range of distinct and diverse samples in and outside of the United States, as well as studies that generally de-emphasized comparison with families with cisgender heterosexual parents (or a deficits-oriented approach).

Table 3. Exemplar Studies Illustrating Positive Outcomes for Children of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) Individuals

Positive child outcome	Exemplar study	Key points	Study strengths
Effective coping with LGBTQ+ discrimination	Van Gelderen et al. (2012, as cited in APA, 2020)	• 78 adolescents (mean age = 17 years) who were conceived through donor insemination and came from 77 lesbian-parent families responded to online open-ended survey questions • Adolescents described coping with stigma by not taking it personally, using self-talk strategies, being assertive, and surrounding themselves with supportive people	• Longitudinal study • Adolescents' reports • Qualitative methods
Social competence	Simon & Farr (2022)	• Adopted school-age children and their 44 lesbian and 52 gay parents completed surveys and interviews in this mixed-methods study about identity-related socialization in families • Children who reported that their parents engaged in more LGBTQ+ socialization (e.g., attendance at pride events, reading books with LGBTQ+ families represented) also were more likely to show understanding of LGBTQ+ identities (e.g., what "gay" means) and exhibited greater social competence	• Longitudinal study • Examination of multiple types of identity-based socialization • Analysis of both children's and parents' reports
Acceptance of diversity	Bos et al. (2016, as cited in Goldberg & Allen, 2020)	• 32 children (ages 11–13 years) with same-sex female parents were matched demographically with 32 children with different-sex parents in this national survey study of Dutch children's outcomes • Children with same-sex parents scored significantly higher than children with different-sex parents on measures of attitudes and skills related to democratic decision making, dealing with conflict, and openness to individual and cultural differences	• Dutch sample • Data from a nationally representative school-based sample
Advocating for equality and social justice	Clarke & Demetriou (2016)	• 14 adult children with parents who identified as lesbian, gay, or transgender were interviewed about their childhood • Participants recalled being protective of their families and advocating for or educating peers about their parents	• European sample • Qualitative methods
Family pride and resilience	Farr et al. (2016)	• 49 adopted children (mean age = 8 years) with two mothers ($n = 22$) or two fathers ($n = 27$) were interviewed • Children expressed positive conceptualizations of their family as well as resilience	• Children's reports • Qualitative methods

Note: This table is not intended as a comprehensive or systematic literature review. Rather, each listed study is offered as an illustration of LGBTQ+-parent family research that incorporated queer family theories, intersectionality frameworks, and/or strengths-based conceptual or methodological approaches. As possible, we included studies that were relatively recent (i.e., conducted within the past 10 years), were published in psychology or family science journals, and represented a range of distinct and diverse samples in and outside of the United States, as well as studies that generally de-emphasized comparison with families with cisgender heterosexual parents (or a deficits-oriented approach).

beliefs about heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and bio-normativity (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Farr & Vázquez, 2020). When viewed as an active and dynamic process, "doing family" becomes a starting point for new possibilities. These new possibilities include forming and expanding families through diverse pathways to parenthood (e.g., adoption, assisted reproduction, previous relationships; Patterson et al., 2021). Choosing to become a parent usually involves a high degree of intentionality and planning among LGBTQ+ people, and the resulting story of how children "came to be" (e.g., who and what were involved) often becomes an important part of queer families' communication, culture, and lore (Farr & Tornello, 2022; Mendez, 2020).

Freedom from constraints of bio-, hetero-, and cisnormative family structures also allows for innovation and creativity in negotiating the division of family labor and coparenting tasks and roles (Cao et al., 2016; Kuvalanka et al., 2018). Same-gender partners often value egalitarianism and shared decision making and enact these values with the goal of mutual satisfaction rather than adherence to gendered social scripts (NASEM, 2020; Tornello, 2020). As they negotiate coparenting tasks, same-gender partners tend to enact supportive behaviors (i.e., cooperation, warmth) and avoid undermining ones (i.e., competition, coldness), communication processes associated with greater child adjustment (Farr et al., 2019).

Given persisting legal inequalities (e.g., Patterson et al., 2021), LGBTQ+ parents, regardless of legal status, often go to great lengths to ensure emotional and practical security for their children and families by establishing protections (e.g., shared last names, written documents of parents' wishes; Clarke & Demetriou, 2016; Wheeler et al., 2018). Even amidst relationship dissolution, LGBTQ+ parents often collaborate creatively and effectively, drawing on chosen-family values and rejecting common hetero- and cisnormative, post-divorce coparenting scripts (e.g., children staying at one parent's house weekdays and at the other's on weekends); these dynamics are linked to closer parent-child relationships (Goldberg & Allen, 2020). Qualitative research with transgender-parent families has shown that family ruptures, such as divorce, are painful, yet also create spaces for all members to develop positive, expanded identities, suggesting overall resilience in these families (Farr et al., 2020; McGuire et al., 2016).

Chosen Family and Role Flexibility

LGBTQ+ parents often emphasize chosen family and affirming communities, while downplaying cis-, hetero-, and bionormativity in close relationships (Goldberg & Allen, 2020; NASEM, 2020). Chosen family may include LGBTQ+ friends or coparents, donors (i.e., egg, sperm, or embryo donors), surrogates, or birth relatives who connected with the parents along their pathway to parenthood (Farr et al., 2018; Goldberg & Allen, 2020). Social support from chosen family and an integrated, positive LGBTQ+ identity (Rostosky et al., 2018; Tornello et al., 2011) are linked to better well-being and health outcomes among LGBTQ+ parents (NASEM, 2020) and, seemingly, their children. Children with LGBTQ+ parents have described feeling "culturally queer" or "queer by proxy," a valued part of the positive identity and belongingness they attribute to their engagement with the LGBTQ+, chosen-family, and religious communities to which their parents belong (Cashen, 2022; Goldberg & Allen, 2020; Oswald et al., 2020). For children who come to identify as LGBTQ+, having LGBTQ+ parents may provide built-in support through access to affirming communities and resources (Cashen, 2022; Kuvalanka et al., 2018).

Although all parents influence their children's beliefs and practices related to gender, sexuality, race, culture, religion, politics, and family structure, LGBTQ+ parents tend to show particular openness, creativity, flexibility, and intentionality in raising their children (Goldberg & Allen, 2020). For example, LGBTQ+ parents often model expansive gender-role behavior and attitudes, and their children show less rigidity than other children in these domains (APA, 2020; NASEM, 2020). Similarly, LGBTQ+ parents frequently model open-mindedness and critical thinking in conversations with children about gender, sex, and sexuality, and they often teach thoughtful engagement in religious, civic, and political discourse (Goldberg & Allen, 2020; Oswald et al., 2020). This flexibility, openness, and critical thinking about sexuality, gender ideology, roles, and activities, as well as encouragement to actively engage in religious and political discourse, is beneficial to all children (APA, 2020).

Coping With Stigma and LGBTQ+ Family Socialization

LGBTQ+ parents engage with their children in unique socialization practices that may equip these children with specific skills, including how to disclose to other people that they have LGBTQ+ parents, affirm SOGIE diversity and queer culture, and effectively respond to microaggressions and discrimination (Mendez, 2020; Oswald et al., 2020; Simon & Farr, 2022). LGBTQ+-parent families often attend community events (e.g., Pride parades, festivals), engage in LGBTQ+ and other social-justice activism, and intentionally seek out books and media portraying LGBTQ+ families. In doing so, LGBTQ+ parents instill values of pride, acceptance, and inclusivity, providing their children with stability, belongingness, and protection amid societal and interpersonal stigma (Goldberg & Allen, 2020; Mendez, 2020; Oswald et al., 2020). For example, in Mendez's (2020) study in the United States, one lesbian mother described how she and her partner prepare their 14-year-old child for experiences of homophobic bias:

> [Our Pride flag has] been stolen a couple times, and one of the things that I've made sure Aden [pseudonym] was aware of was that when it was stolen, that we called the police, the police came, they took the statement. . . . I tried to make sure that Aden saw a part of that so that Aden could see the police having a good interaction with us, but also so he had a sense that there's some things that just aren't right and that's one of them. (p. 11)

Similarly, in another U.S.-based study, a 9-year-old child adopted by two mothers said, "I have a rainbow family that always sticks together" (Farr et al., 2016, p. 95), demonstrating feelings of stability and belongingness to her own family and to the broader LGBTQ+ community.

The socialization practices of LGBTQ+-parent families are associated with positive child outcomes, including knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities. For example, children adopted by same-gender parents in the United States exhibit understanding of what it means to identify as

gay (Simon & Farr, 2022). Although children with LGBTQ+ parents are not immune to stigma and victimization, they demonstrate effective coping strategies, acceptance of diversity, and positive feelings about their LGBTQ+ families (Farr et al., 2016; Patterson et al., 2021)—all indicative of socioemotional strength and resilience. For example, one 9-year-old child adopted by two mothers in the United States demonstrated ability to cope with heterosexism as well as positive feelings about her family in the following quote:

> When they [other children] think it's a little weird, it's like I don't take it personally at all, because it's not like I got to choose if I wanted two moms or not, but I'm blessed with two moms . . . it's like I have two times the loving because I have two of my moms. (Farr et al., 2016, pp. 94–95)

Indeed, in the face of stigma, children with LGBTQ+ parents are resilient, are protective of their families, and often advocate for their LGBTQ+ parents (Clarke & Demetriou, 2016; Goldberg & Allen, 2020; Zadeh et al., 2020). For instance, one 15-year-old participant in Zadeh et al.'s (2020) study of youths with transgender parents in the United Kingdom said, "Then people who aren't [supportive] . . . I give them a very long lecture about it . . . it's just a bit like . . . accept people for what they are, if you were this, would you like it if people did this?" (pp. 9–10). LGBTQ+ family socialization, creative coparenting, and supportive LGBTQ+ communities may be powerful influences on children's positive outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Research

We offer three recommendations that could expand current knowledge of LGBTQ+-parent families. First, scholars should thoroughly integrate queer family and intersectionality theories and incorporate considerations of strengths as well as challenges (Allen & Mendez, 2018). These theories could be used to generate new hypotheses that link individual, family, and community strengths to child outcomes. Second, scholars should increase sample diversity via targeted and creative efforts to reach hard-to-access populations, employ diverse personnel, and devote concerted attention to cultivating mutually beneficial relationships with key community stakeholders (Fish & Russell, 2018; Goldberg & Allen, 2020). Scholars must prioritize greater inclusion of samples diverse in gender and sexual identity, racial and/or ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, particularly in the Global South and non-Western cultures (Goldberg & Allen, 2020). Third, scholars should incorporate rigorous and diverse methodological tools, including sophisticated quantitative

statistical techniques as well as qualitative or mixed-method approaches. Community-based participatory action-research approaches, underutilized in family research, would allow researchers to collaboratively conduct studies *with* participants rather than *on* them (Fish & Russell, 2018). To move the field forward toward truly understanding how LGBTQ+ parents and their children "do family" (Allen & Mendez, 2018), researchers must use a full array of methodological resources and conceptual lenses to examine these families' unique strengths, resiliencies, and family practices and processes that contribute to positive child outcomes.

Implications for Policy, Law, and Practice

Supportive environments are clearly positive for children with LGBTQ+ parents; thus, reducing discrimination at interpersonal and institutional levels is critical (NASEM, 2020; Patterson et al., 2021). For instance, in the United States, LGBTQ+ parents who experience less homophobic stigma have children who tend to describe closer relationships with them as parents (Farr & Vázquez, 2020). Teachers and a supportive school climate are also key for children with LGBTQ+ parents. In Italy, a study of children of sexual-minority parents found that those with higher-quality relationships with their teachers also demonstrated better social skills, even in the context of more intense peer microaggressions (Carone et al., 2022). Similarly, a U.S. study of older children (i.e., emerging adults) of lesbian mothers found that those who experienced less stigma based on their family structure also reported fewer negative mental health symptoms (Koh et al., 2019). Access to legal protections is also vital to LGBTQ+-parent families. For example, in the United States, LGBTQ+ partners who had equal parenting rights, compared with those who did not have equal rights, reported fewer worries about identity disclosure and discrimination, lower parental stress, and greater relationship satisfaction (Horne et al., 2022), factors that can create a family environment important to positive child outcomes. Gender-minority parents may be particularly vulnerable to discrimination in child-custody and coparenting arrangements (APA, 2020), so laws and policies that support and protect LGBTQ+-parent families (e.g., the John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act), must protect everyone regardless of SOGIE (Patterson et al., 2021).

Existing health disparities among LGBTQ+ people have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Patterson et al., 2021). Difficulties faced by parents and children during this time have been well established (Feinberg et al., 2022), and LGBTQ+-parent families have likely experienced increased vulnerabilities (e.g., in financial, practical, legal, and emotional domains). The pandemic has also exacerbated difficulties in placing

children in the child-welfare system into foster or adoptive families, a systemic issue affecting a disproportionate number of LGBTQ+ youths (Patterson & Farr, 2022). Many LGBTQ+ adults wish to be foster or adoptive parents, so focusing on their unique strengths may facilitate more child placements. Such strengths-based approaches to research and practice with LGBTQ+-parent families will ultimately serve children's best interests.

Conclusion

LGBTQ+-parent families are diverse and generally thriving (Fish & Russell, 2018). To best serve LGBTQ+ parents and their children, research must represent and honor the demographic and experiential diversity of this population by integrating queer family theories, strengths-based approaches, and new methodologies. Such research will provide important insights into aspects of child, parent, and family functioning among LGBTQ+-parent families, but also may apply broadly to all families.

Recommended Reading

American Psychological Association. (2020). (See References). An evidence-based statement about the experiences and outcomes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people and their families.

Goldberg, A. E., & Allen, K. R. (Eds.). (2020). (See References). A comprehensive guidebook to LGBTQ+-parent families, including a diversity of chapters that highlight intersectionality, theory, and research methods related to understanding the experiences of children and parents in these families.

National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. (2020). (See References). An in-depth overview of LGBTQ+ lives, with focused attention on how stigma and discrimination negatively affect health and adjustment, including in family domains.

Patterson, C. J., Farr, R. H., & Goldberg, A. E. (2021, October). (See References). A recent policy brief summarizing literature about outcomes for LGBTQ+ families and the children in those families.

Prendergast, S., & MacPhee, D. (2018). (See References). A presentation of a conceptual model for understanding queer families' resilience despite stigma and discrimination.

Transparency

Action Editor: Robert L. Goldstone
Editor: Robert L. Goldstone
Declaration of Conflicting Interests
　The author(s) declared that there were no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship or the publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Rachel H. Farr ○ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1377-3291

References

Allen, S. H., & Mendez, S. N. (2018). Hegemonic heteronormativity: Toward a new era of queer family theory. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *10*(1), 70–86. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12241

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Resolution on sexual orientation, gender identity (SOGI), parents, and their children*. https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/sexual-orientation

Battle, J., & Ashley, C. (2008). Intersectionality, heteronormativity, and Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families. *Black Women, Gender + Families*, *2*(1), 1–24. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/blacwomegendfami.2.1.0001

Brooks, V. R. (1981). *Minority stress and lesbian women*. Lexington Books.

Cao, H., Mills-Koonce, W. R., Wood, C., & Fine, M. A. (2016). Identity transformation during the transition to parenthood among same-sex couples: An ecological, stress-strategy-adaptation perspective. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *8*(1), 30–59. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12124

Carone, N., Innocenzi, E., & Lingiari, V. (2022). Peer microaggressions and social skills among school-age children of sexual minority parents through assisted reproduction: Moderation via the child–teacher relationship. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *51*(6), 1210–1229. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01588-3

Cashen, K. K. (2022). Community connections among emerging adults with sexual minority parents. *LGBTQ+ Family*, *18*(2), 151–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/27703371.2022.2058670

Clarke, V., & Demetriou, E. (2016). 'Not a big deal'? Exploring the accounts of adult children of lesbian, gay and trans parents. *Psychology & Sexuality*, *7*(2), 131–148. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2015.1110195

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1989*(1), Article 8. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8/

Farr, R. H., Bruun, S. T., & Patterson, C. J. (2019). Longitudinal associations between coparenting and child adjustment among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parent families. *Developmental Psychology*, *55*(12), 2547–2560. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000828

Farr, R. H., Crain, E. E., Oakley, M. K., Cashen, K. K., & Garber, K. J. (2016). Microaggressions, feelings of difference, and resilience among adopted children with sexual minority parents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *45*(1), 85–104. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-0353-6

Farr, R. H., Ravvina, Y., & Grotevant, H. G. (2018). Birth family contact experiences among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parents with school-age children. *Family Relations*, *67*(1), 132–146. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12295

Farr, R. H., Simon, K. A., & Goldberg, A. E. (2020). Separation and divorce among LGBTQ-parent families. In A. E. Goldberg & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *LGBTQ-parent families:*

Innovations in research and implications for practice (2nd ed., pp. 337–348). Springer.

Farr, R. H., & Tornello, S. L. (2022). The transition to parenthood and early child development in families with LGBTQ+ parents. In M. Nolan (Ed.), *Contemporary issues in perinatal education: Knowledge for practice* (Chapter 13). Routledge.

Farr, R. H., & Vázquez, C. P. (2020). Stigma experiences, mental health, perceived parenting competence, and parent-child relationships among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parents in the United States. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, Article 445. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00445

Feinberg, M. E., Mogle, J. A., Lee, J.-K., Tornello, S. L., Hostetler, M. L., Cifelli, J. A., Bai, S., & Hotez, E. (2022). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parent, child, and family functioning. *Family Process*, *61*(1), 361–374. https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12649

Fish, J. N., & Russell, S. T. (2018). Queering methodologies to understand queer families. *Family Relations*, *67*(1), 12–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12297

Goldberg, A. E., & Allen, K. R. (Eds.). (2020). *LGBTQ-parent families: Innovations in research and implications for practice* (2nd ed.). Springer.

Horne, S. G., Johnson, T., Yel, N., Maroney, M. R., & McGinley, M. (2022). Unequal rights between LGBTQ parents living in the U.S.: The association of minority stress to relationship satisfaction and parental stress. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, *11*(2), 141–160. https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000192

Koh, A. S., Bos, H. M. W., & Gartrell, N. K. (2019). Predictors of mental health in emerging adult offspring of lesbian-parent families. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *23*(2), 257–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2018.1555694

Kuvalanka, K. A., Allen, S. H., Munroe, C., Goldberg, A. E., & Weiner, J. L. (2018). The experiences of sexual minority mothers with trans* children. *Family Relations*, *67*(1), 70–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12226

McGuire, J. K., Kuvalanka, K. A., Catalpa, J. M., & Toomey, R. B. (2016). Transfamily theory: How the presence of trans* family members informs gender development in families. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *8*(1), 60–73. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12125

Mendez, S. N. (2020). Queer socialization: A case study of lesbian, gay, and queer (LGQ) parent families. *The Social Science Journal*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2020.1727240

National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. (2020). *Understanding the well-being of LGBTQI+ populations*. The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25877

Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 644 (2015).

Oswald, R. F., Holman, E. G., & Routon, J. M. (2020). LGBTQ-parent families in community context. In A. E. Goldberg & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *LGBTQ-parent families: Innovations in research and implications for practice* (2nd ed., pp. 301–318). Springer.

Patterson, C. J., & Farr, R. H. (2022). Sexual orientation, gender identity, and foster care: What can social science offer in a case like *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia? Family Court Review*, *60*(1), 10–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12623

Patterson, C. J., Farr, R. H., & Goldberg, A. E. (2021, October). *LGBTQ+ parents and their children* [Policy brief]. National Council on Family Relations. https://www.ncfr.org/policy/research-and-policy-briefs/lgbtq-parents-and-their-children

Prendergast, S., & MacPhee, D. (2018). Family resilience amid stigma and discrimination: A conceptual model for families headed by same-sex parents. *Family Relations*, *67*(1), 26–40. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12296

Riskind, R. G., & Tornello, S. L. (2022). "I think it's too early to know": Gender identity labels and gender expression of young children with nonbinary or binary transgender parents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, Article 916088. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.916088

Rostosky, S. S., Cardom, R. D., Hammer, J. H., & Riggle, E. B. (2018). LGB positive identity and psychological well-being. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, *5*(4), 482–489. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000298

Simon, K. A., & Farr, R. H. (2022). Identity-based socialization and adopted children's outcomes in lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent families. *Applied Developmental Science*, *26*(1), 155–175. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2020.1748030

Tornello, S. L. (2020). Division of labor among transgender and gender non-binary parents: Associations with individual, couple, and children's behavioral outcomes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, Article 15. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00015

Tornello, S. L., Farr, R. H., & Patterson, C. J. (2011). Predictors of parenting stress among gay adoptive fathers in the United States. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *25*(4), 591–600. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024480

Wheeler, E. E., Horne, S. G., Maroney, M., & Johnson, T. (2018). "Everything that we can do": A content analysis of the protective strategies used by GLBTQ parents. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *14*(3), 196–212. https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2017.1325812

Zadeh, S., Imrie, S., & Golombok, S. (2020). Stories of sameness and difference: The views and experiences of children and adults with a trans* parent. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *17*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2019.1683785